

Manchester Championship Show - Thursday 16th January 2025

Thank you to the committee of Manchester for the invitation to judge at the first show of 2025 and to my stewards Ray and Pat for keeping things running smoothly. The biggest of thanks to the exhibitors for the lovely entry not least for braving the freezing temperatures and for sticking it out until the bitter end of what must have been a long, cold day. My entry was good numerically and with a number of quality dogs in attendance.

It often seems to me that there are some wildly differing interpretations of the breed standard out there, however, this is just my understanding of it, and this critique is simply based on attributes that I feel are 'key' to making an English Springer the dog it is. I was looking for one that is medium-sized, compact and balanced, with ribs and strength through the body, preferably one with a beautiful head and expression and definitely one that can cover the ground in 'strictly his own' way. I am not a head fanatic - I have other priorities - but I really found so few typical examples and find myself writing about it in every critique. There were many weak heads, in skull, but particularly in foreface and many that lack the chiselling and fluting that is so essential to a kind and gentle expression. I had very few overdone heads in this entry and eye colour and shape was generally good, but suitably balanced and chiselled heads were hard to find. Another disappointment was the number of exhibits that appeared to be quite narrow throughout, lacking width in body, spring of rib and with the inevitable close movement both in front and rear. Toplines and correct movement are on my 'must have' list. There is simply nothing better than seeing effortless, smooth and ground-covering movement and yet it is as rare as hen's teeth. My CC winners on the day both demonstrated the breed specific action that I was looking for and it warmed my springer-loving heart to watch them moving around together in the final challenge. A pleasure for me was to see well-filled puppy classes with some really encouraging quality for the future. From these little acorns, surely some oak trees will come! Temperament throughout was as it should be and timidity was not in evidence.

Minor Puppy Dog (4)

1st Topliss' Beresford Stand At Ease

Headed what I thought was a lovely puppy class of four promising 7-month-old babies. This youngster was so well grown, full of potential and with the best bone and substance of them. Super compact shape and the correct proportions with the very best of forehand angulations. Very decent feet too. Well-made and let down quarters with good broad thighs. Head is pleasing, of course still to develop, but is refined with almond eye shape. Very babyish movement but covered the ground well and is most definitely a happy and enthusiastic soul. Will watch him with interest as he develops.

2nd Turrell's Forgespring Tomfoolery Impressed too by this BW puppy boy, who in many ways shares the same attributes as 1st. Similarly correct in proportions being short-coupled with good leg length. A beautifully balanced head already with the fullness in foreface that I preferred over 1st, with the darkest eyes as you would expect from a black and white. He also possesses very pleasing bone, legs and feet. Very moderate but balanced in angulations. A little lacking in body condition and could benefit from more weight, but a very promising baby that moved really well and happily keeping a super firm topline.

3rd Such's Gleadbury Whataboy

Puppy Dog (2)

1st Topliss' Beresford Stand N' Stare

Litter brother to first in MPD and my choice for overall BPIB today. Top quality baby and one that appealed very much. Carrying a little more body length than his brother which also gave him a bit more scope on the move, and it was his ground covering stride that brought a smile to my face! Another baby with lovely substance and body condition. Excellent bone and compact feet. Another that has a refined, but masculine head, still to develop but with a soft expression from correctly shaped eyes of good colour. The best of toplines already that held firm on the move. An exciting and stylish prospect for the future.

2nd House's Gleadbury Mad About The Boy

Solidly marked liver & white baby, not quite as forward in development as 1st. Pleasing masculine head without being overdone with a kind expression. Has enough bone for his size and has a very neat and unexaggerated outline. Moderate in angulations. Lovely flat coat. Did nothing wrong here, just needs time for everything to come together and there is no fault in that.

Junior Dog (1)

1st Hills' Teignvalley New Beginnings

An elegant and showy young male standing alone in this class. A black and white with the loveliest of well- balanced heads. Chiselling already present and with correct almond-shaped eyes giving the desirable, soft expression for this breed. Correctly sized and proportioned and presenting a picture of moderation. He has enough bone for his size and the neatest of feet. Compact through the body with decent spring to rib. Could have a tad more upper arm angulation for better forward reach on the move but otherwise is sound and true and maintains a firm and level topline that impressed. Happiest of youngsters turned out in gleaming coat condition.

Yearling Dog (3)

1st Hills' Teignvalley New Beginnings

2nd Weymans' More Than Amazing Wanna Be A Gangster at Spuffing

Smart liver, white and tan youngster presenting a very different outline to 1st. A different kind of head too, stronger and steeper in stop without perhaps the softness in expression although his tan markings probably don't help in this respect. Correct size but would prefer a bit more leg length for better balance. Really super forehead angulations, long neck and a well laid shoulder with corresponding angle to upper arm. Short muscular loin. Holds an excellent topline moving in profile, but a little narrow coming towards me. Turned out in good coat and condition.

3rd Hoare's Lymnoares Enoch Arden

Post Graduate Dog (1)

1st Eyeington's Meadowdale Twix

A strong, upstanding and mature male also sadly alone in his class. His head is heavier than I usually prefer but is undoubtedly masculine with a kind expression from dark, well-shaped eyes. Tremendous substance and bone on this boy, no mistaking his gender on any level. Compact body shape with good ribs and a deep, well filled chest. Well-padded, round feet. Balanced fore and aft in angulations. Moved out soundly and with animation holding a very good topline. A bit too much of him all over for my ideal, but much to appreciate, nonetheless.

Limit Dog (5,1a)

1st Gledhill's Greg De Les Tres Llacunes (imp Esp)

A very strong class headed by this four-year old male that I have always liked. Smaller than some, but for me, nearer to the correct size for the breed than not. Very typical in make and shape, completely moderate in outlook without any excess. Has the most gorgeous head and expression with symmetry in skull and foreface and correct depth to flews, that desirable but so elusive chiselling and a lovely dark eye, all combining to produce the gentlest of expressions. More than decent length of neck and well-constructed shoulder assembly. His body is well coupled with lovely ribs, ample substance and fill as well as a super forechest. Excellent bone and the very best of tight, well-padded feet. Moves soundly from all angles holding a firm level topline with correct set on and carriage of tail. In gleaming white condition. I could wish only for a bit more of a 'look at me' attitude as that would complete an otherwise very lovely picture. That said, I was happy to award him the RCC today over some quality exhibits.

2nd Rowlinson's Meltarose Midshipman

Another lovely male that pushed 1st really hard. Looking superb today, has the best of proportions with a compact body and plenty of leg length. Another that is the correct size and classic in outline. I did slightly prefer the head of 1 but this boy also has a very handsome masculine head, well-moulded with correct ratios in skull and foreface and a soft expression. Really nice body and spring to ribs, with super fill to his frame that pleased me no end. Looked especially well on the move, covering the ground with long and easy strides, true on the away and back, and holding an excellent topline. Handled to bring out the best in him and turned out in great coat and condition.

3rd Tracz's Beresford On My Way with Acregate

No shame in being third in this class as this male has much to commend him too. Just loved his happy and buoyant temperament which showed in his stylish movement. Presented to perfection and in ideal body condition. Lovely bone and feet. His head is balanced and very masculine in outlook with the desired chiselling. Would change little other than a fraction less of him all round but another quality exhibit!

Open Dog (8, 1a)

1st Eyeington's Sh Ch Meadowdale Daisydale Lightning Bolt

An absolute privilege to judge this fabulous Open Class headed by this impressive BWT male. For me, he is a springer from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. In an ideal world, I would like him a shade smaller, but he possesses so many breed-typical attributes and for me is the 'real deal'. A very pleasing masculine head that is free from coarseness with dark eyes and a soft expression. Fairly broad in skull with corresponding depth to flews. Balanced in angulations and he is built on beautiful soft and flowing lines throughout. Admirable substance with beautiful bone and tight feet. Such a well filled front with elbows tight to his body. A topline that is hard to fault with correct set on and carriage of tail. Shown on a loose lead, he has movement to make your heart sing. Sets off with a toss of his head, totally engaged with his handler and covers the ground with long and easy strides and plenty of drive from the rear. Turned out in wonderful well-muscled condition with a coat that was plentiful and correctly presented. For me, he was an easy CC winner today, finally taking BOB over the equally lovely bitch. Congratulations.

2nd Wilson & Connor's Pinereoch No Stunts Larrie

Another lovely male out of a smaller mould and I preferred him in this respect. Another

that is compact and presents a picture of balanced moderation. Liked his head which was refined and male without any sign of coarseness. Good bone and also another that is well filled in frame. He is young still, so not quite the substance and finish of 1st yet but it will come. He also sports a fantastic topline on the move and covers the ground with ease and with the correct reach in front and power from behind. Very close up for the RCC but just slightly preferred the head and expression of the Limit Class winner. However, I suspect this young male will continue to do a lot of winning and I would not be complaining if he did.

3rd Topliss' Sh Ch Sandylands Stand N Deliver

An unexaggerated male that I have much admired from the ringside. Upstanding, compact and very typical boy of quality. Loved him for his desirable proportions and classic style. His head is pleasing and not overdone in anyway with good eye colour. Correct for bone, substance and is well balanced throughout. Today, he was not showing with his usual aplomb and although he covered the ground with enthusiasm and is sound, I would have preferred less slope to topline and unfortunately this cost him today.

Special Beginners Dog (2)

1st Hoare's Lymnoares Enoch Arden

This dog was not being especially co-operative today and wasn't totally convinced that standing still was really his thing at all! Sported a pleasing masculine head and I liked his neck and nicely assembled shoulder and forehand. Decent bone and moderately angled rear. He was so much happier moving than standing and covered the ground with enthusiasm and a firm level topline.

2nd Warreners' Eastfalla Sherlockholmes

A black and white male of nice type. A little round in eye and lacking a bit of strength in muzzle. More squareness to the flews would give better balance to his head. He is substantial in body with a forechest that I appreciated. Shoulder a little forward placed and he was roaching in topline both standing and moving today. Presented well and moved soundly coming and going.

Minor Puppy Bitch (4)

1st Nicklin & Ainsley's Daenerys Girl On Fire at Dexbenella

A delightful class of baby girls giving hope for the future, headed by this charming and typical young bitch showing much promise. At seven months she showed with such confidence and maturity, beautifully reared and full of substance. Correct for size, compact, deep through the body with super bone and tight feet. Beautiful neck and a lovely forechest for a baby. Still to develop in head but is most promising there. Turned out to perfection and in glorious coat and condition. A little bit rolling in topline on the move, but she is so young and has time to firm up. BPB.

2nd Topliss' Beresford Stand Aside

A delightfully pretty and feminine darkly marked puppy girl. Pleasing head, I would prefer more strength in foreface currently but time for that to improve, and she still has a very sweet expression. Lovely arch to neck and she is moderate in angulations fore and aft. Plenty of substance and good ribs already. Correct for size. Erratic on the move and not so easy to assess. Time is most definitely going to be her friend on every level, and I look forward to seeing how she blossoms.

3rd Pattison's Forgesping Foolproof

Puppy Bitch (5)

1st Taubman's Meonstoke Wild Thyme

Another cracker of a class, all five of which are exciting prospects for the future. 1st was a nine-month-old, substantially made female. Really loved that about her and in particular her forechest. She is slightly stronger in head than my ideal and a little deeper in flew but she does have a lovely dark eye and dreamy expression. Just super body on this youngster with correct spring of rib and strength in loin. Great body depth and she is well muscled already. A beautiful level topline both stacked and moving which gave her this class. Cleanly marked with a dark liver coat that was turned out to perfection. Moved confidently and happily, a fraction narrow coming towards me but still a stylish puppy with so much to like.

2nd Topliss' Beresford Stand On Ceremony

Seven-month puppy girl of super size and completely feminine throughout. A typically compact shape with good bone and feet and just lovely proportions. Sweetest of heads, would prefer more strength in foreface. Beautiful reach of neck into an excellently constructed forehand. Deep through the body, with tight elbows. Very erratic on the move and quite hard to assess but saw enough. Definitely one for the future.

3rd Macbain & Harrison's Daenarys Winter Solstice at Fecimus

Junior Bitch (3)

1st Hill's Teignvalley Rags To Riches

Headed a top-quality class of three very differently styled young bitches. This prettiest youngster is very feminine and elegant with the loveliest of heads and expressions. Correct proportions being both compact and with decent leg length. Strong neck and super forehand with well laid shoulders. Level in topline with good spring to ribcage and the right set on and carriage of tail. Very well let down rear with broad thighs and she is short from hock to heel. So appealing on the move with correct forward reach and demonstrating the appropriate happy temperament. In impeccable condition and with a pristinely presented coat.

2nd Cokell's Carlyquinn Winter Storm JW

Another lovely bitch, so feminine, built on flowing lines out of a slightly smaller mould. A tad lower on leg than 1. Appealing and properly balanced head with soft expression. Good reach of neck and I liked her body that is both well ribbed and has depth all through. Correct bone for her size and a beautifully constructed rear too, with well bent stifles and short neat hocks. Moved positively with a firm and level topline. Turned out in full coat with lovely feathering. Just slightly preferred proportions of 1st.

3rd Corbett's Sieger's See Eye To Eye with Trimere

Yearling Bitch (5, 1a)

1st Hill's Teignvalley Rags To Riches

2nd Hydon's Loxbourne Hustle And Bustle

Another ultra feminine bitch of the correct size. Darkly marked and presents a very neat and petite outline. Correct, balanced and well-worked head with strength in muzzle. Excellent neck and forehand assembly with good depth and fill through the body. Beautifully assembled rear to match the front and she holds a lovely topline on the move showing off what is a very happy temperament.

Post Graduate (8, 2a)

1st Ternents' Hunterheck Carianna

I absolutely adored this young bitch and would happily steal her. A liver and white that

ticks a lot of my boxes. Just right for size and she has the correct outline for the breed. A super head that is balanced in skull and foreface with the desired chiselling. A fraction round in eye possibly, however her eyes are of good colour and she has a kind and typical expression. With a lovely compact body and well sprung ribs, she is nicely coupled and firm in topline. Her angles are excellent and are balanced both fore and aft with a broad and well- let down rear end. Strong bone and tight feet. In the best of well-muscled body condition. Exuberant and full of herself on the move which I love to see but still maintains that beautiful outline. Considered strongly for the RCC but decided that a little more time, maturity and furnishings will make her even better. However, I loved her, and it was close!

2nd Harris' Melverly Amy Dorrit with Coastalglows

A black and white beauty sired by the same male as 1st, and very similar in style to the winner of JB. Stacked, she makes the most captivating picture and is completely up my street for type. So very unexaggerated all through with a delightfully kind and feminine head. The very darkest of correctly shaped eyes giving a melting expression. Moderate and symmetrical in angles with nice bone and feet. A quality bitch who placed second here on her movement, which although sound and precise, lacks a little in energy and power. I so wish she could just learn how to show off her many attributes with a little more enthusiasm as I'm sure it would make her hard to beat. Nevertheless, she is still a cracker and was presented in perfect condition.

3rd Topliss' Shersona I Believe In Angels at Beresford
Limit Bitch (6,1a)

1st Rowlinsons' Meltarose Mystique

This one topped a conundrum of a class filled with different shapes and sizes. However, this is a quality bitch of the correct size and is balanced. Compact and full of substance. A fraction less weight would suit her small and neat frame more. Perhaps she could be a little bit more feminine in head but is another that possesses the balance in skull and foreface that I was looking for and she has dark eyes of the correct almond shape. Really beautiful bone and great spring to rib cage that I appreciated. Moved really well today, covering the ground with ease with super reach at the front and drive from behind. So well handled to bring out the best in her.

2nd Rose's Pinereoch Amethyst of Rosannoch

A totally different style of bitch, quite a bit taller and rangier but nevertheless is proportioned well and has good leg length. Not really my kind of head being longer and leaner without the work of 1st. She is another with plenty of substance and a well filled frame. Lovely forechest, depth and rib cage with enough bone and decent feet. Her movement is not easy to assess as she is quite erratic on the up and back without the stride length of 1st. But beautifully presented and put down in the most immaculate coat and condition.

3rd Pattison's Crackerjanne Cassiopeia

A black & white of the most feminine make and shape. Another who is the correct size and compactly made. Sweetest of heads that is well proportioned with velvety soft dark eyes. Built on the most attractive classic lines with decent substance, enough bone and tight feet. Having recently reared a litter of puppies, she did lack the finish of the two above her today, but I liked her a lot, nevertheless.

Open Bitch (9,3)

1st Smith's Sh Ch Melverly Vignette

Outstanding bitch with an outline and silhouette that I would gladly sell my soul for. She is beautifully constructed and full of substance. I just loved her sweet head that is balanced and correctly chiselled with a dark-eyed beguiling expression. She is the right size, compact and strong while all the time, retaining femininity in outlook. Exceptional bone and the absolute best of compact, well-rounded feet. Great depth of body with a well-developed chest and spring to rib cage. A faultless rear assembly with wide, muscled thighs and short, neat hocks. She is utterly sublime with just one exception, that of the rolling topline that, for me at least, spoiled her shape on the move. I could not overlook it but her many, many other attributes earned her the RCC today.

2nd Corbett's Sh Ch Trimere Time Fly's

As a younger bitch this one wasn't always my 'cup of tea' as I felt from the ringside that she lacked the depth in body and substance that I usually prefer. However, I was surprised, in a good way, to find that she has matured and blossomed into a lovely exhibit with a well-filled frame and a more than decent forechest. Balanced in angulations with correctly assembled forehand and matching rear with well bent stifles. She is taller and longer than 1st without quite the bone maybe but she possesses a pretty and appealing head that I liked very much with the darkest of eyes and melting expression. A very typical bitch of quality, moving with long, easy strides and presented in first class order.

3rd Taubman's Meltarose Madeleine at Meonstoke

Loved this bitch too who really was unlucky to meet the two placed above her. Another in immaculate condition. Adored her head and expression and she has a compact and balanced outline with the desired proportions. Not maybe quite the feet or bone of 1 and 2 but I did so appreciate the effortless ground covering movement and firm topline of this girl.

Veteran Bitch (1)

1st Wilson & Connor's Potrail Turns The Swag on for Pinereoch

An exquisite bitch from every angle . I found her very classic in style, beautifully put together with every part of her flowing into the next. She has such a lovely balanced and sculpted head with dark eyes and a delightfully soft expression. Reachy neck and correct forehand assembly, compact in body with a short, strong loin and a correspondingly well-made rear without any exaggeration in hindquarters. The right amount of bone for her size and her frame is well filled. Superb topline both standing and moving, and it was her breed typical movement that set her apart today. So easy and economical with such desirable long strides and throw forward from the shoulder. Add to this, the very happiest of temperaments and a wagging tail and I was sold. I would be more than happy to see her on my sofa at home and delighted to award her the CC today, her second. I hope that the third is not far off because she so deserves it. Congratulations.

Special Beginners Bitch (3)

1st Turvey & Murray's Meonstoke Wild Cherry at Harvancourt

4th in a top-quality puppy class, this is a very nice, correct and neat liver and white youngster. Just perfect for size, with a pleasing head and feminine expression. Compact in body with excellent substance. A little narrow coming towards me but a very happy and confident mover with the kind of topline and tail carriage that appeals. Super dark liver coat presented in impeccable order. Best Special Beginners and topped the Group too. Congratulations.

2nd Unwin's Allenies Lady Marmalade

An upstanding and slightly longer-cast female with a very pleasing and feminine head. A little bit round in eye shape. I would like more substance and width through the body.

Presented very well and moved soundly.

Jacky Mitchell (Judge)