

Tina Male: I feel in love with the Irish water spaniel about 10 years ago, when I was introduced to my friend's Eddie and Carol's young dog Cruiser.

It was love at first sight. As a family we got involved with The Sporting Irish Water Spaniel Club, helping at events, etc and then in 2011 I was lucky enough to be chosen by John and Di Rolfe to have one of their puppies and my ownership journey began.



Never one to do things by halves, this was not only my first IWS, but also my first gun dog, I had a lot to learn!

Thanks to the help and support of Neil Varney but mostly Eddie Jones, Fergus and I have grown and learnt together. It was a rocky start, he is a head strong male and I am inclined to give in quickly. He had a habit of disappearing into the distance over the fields, even onto the main road, at rush hour! There were tears.

We went to formal training and this helped, and gradually with a sense of humour and a bucket load of patience we have managed to start to win.

My husband and I run a very small pheasant shoot, at which Fergus and I pick up, so once the birds have been shot, I send him out and he brings them back, one at a time until the birds are all collected, we are part of a small team.



This was our 2nd season, and now he is approaching the magic 4 years, it has been a fantastic season, with lots of firsts. I have learnt to trust my dog and he has learnt to trust me, we are now a team, for example: this is what I wrote after shoot day number 4. 'For Fergus and I a truly memorable day due to the two best retrieves my boy has ever done. He used his brain and nose worked it out and dug a hen shot into the rough. Then back through the maize down the feeding line. A blind hunt and oh No! he's gone!, but no there he was trotting back cock bird in mouth! My IWS is certainly coming of age.

Others will write of the breed history, their ability and personality. This is a very short piece on the bond between IWS and handler, the trust and the love.

They are an exceptional breed, and I am so grateful to share my life with one.

