

Starters' League Final

Sunday April 14th dawned cold but dry. We arrived at Monmouth at 7.15am giving me plenty of time to walk Bear before locating the rest of the team. We had a lovely team again this year, Jude and Argo, Susie and Dixie, Angie and Lexi, Jackie and Spice, Fiona and May, Sarah and Amy, Mike and Merryn, Stu and Flake, Andy and Lucht and myself and Bear. The team spirit was great. Everyone helps each other out on the day, from walking the course, to cheering each other over the finish line. Kylee our team captain was on hand as usual giving us advice, telling us not to worry if we made a mistake and to just go out there and have fun. It also helped to have Ali our trainer there, together with previous trainers who had turned out to support us.

The team we were competing against was Tuffley, who were the winners of the other half of the League. They are a very nice, friendly team. It was such a shame that after all the League matches that had taken place in order to qualify, one team had to lose.



The competition is in 3 sections. Having walked the Agility course it did not appear to be too bad, but there are always what I refer to as traps, where the judge likes to test the dog and handler's ability. It was then time to get Bear down to the starting line. This for me is when the nerves really begin to kick in. I could hear my heart pounding and all I could think about was getting around the course without incurring too many penalties for the team. At the end of the Agility section South Cots were losing by a small margin.

performed brilliantly; to name just a few Mike and Merryn, Fiona and May and Sarah and Amy went exceptionally well, and we were hoping that we had closed the points gap.

The jumping course was erected and there, sat right in the middle of the course, was a big, red wall! Thank goodness Michele had made us a brand new wall, which we had all been practising on. Our team

It was now time to walk the final section, the Relay course, and oh look, there were two tunnels side by side! This would test the dogs and handlers' ability to make sure they went in the correct tunnel. Entering the wrong tunnel would mean elimination. Our team was first to go. As each of us finished the course and handed the baton to the next team member waiting to go, Kylee was taking us to one side and telling us that we did not need to win the Relay to win the competition. We had scored enough points in the Agility and Jumping sections to win the match. South Cots had won the Starters' League for the second consecutive year!

The presentation came next and it was a very proud moment as individual team members collected their rosettes. We were all then called up to receive our Starters' League rosettes and the Shield. We applauded Tuffley as they collected their runners up rosettes, as they had put up tough competition and only lost by a few points. There just remained the trophy for the League's top scoring dog to be handed out, followed by the runners-up trophy. The trophy for the dog that had scored most points during all the league matches was awarded to the Captain of the Tuffley team. Then to my amazement I heard Bear's and my name called out. Bear had finished second in the League and won the runners-up trophy. I was so proud of him.

However, we would never have achieved this award without our past and present trainers. From Susie, Pat and Jill who taught Bear Obedience together with our Agility trainers Jeanette, Jill, Julie, Titch, Caroline and Simon (who have all been so dedicated and patient when I was unsure of what I was supposed to be doing) and, last but not least, Ali our present trainer, under whose guidance Bear and I have improved so much over the last 18 months.

If anyone reading this is interested in taking part in Agility, please enrol. It is a wonderful sport and the trainers make learning great fun.

Starters' League Final



Open Obedience Show

We held our annual show on Saturday, 9th May in Nympsfield.

We set up rings and things on the Friday afternoon: Apart from some difficulty organising the campers - some of whom were determined not to park where they had been designated, all went well. The afternoon was dry but we weren't able to put the tents up due to a fresh wind. We had our usual small band of helpers, who just kept going until all was done and we could go home for showers and food.

Back to the venue by 6am. Tents erected, tables and chairs out, rubbish bags ditto. All the score-sheets and kit for each class distributed.

Judges, competitors and catering van arrived and the show started.

All ran smoothly through the day. We had a through soaking in the morning but after that the day turned fine and fairly sunny.

We had to do only partial clearing up after the show as we hosted the annual Ten Teams Rally the following day.

Ten Teams Rally

We hosted the annual Ten Teams Rally on Sunday, 10th May.

In fact there were only seven clubs this year, but competition was intense as always. Mary worked B, Val and Susie worked A, Caroline, Jill and Shelley worked Novice, Jill, Angie and Adam worked Special Beginners.

Only three of the above actually compete in obedience competitions, the rest are agility trained or simply pet dogs. We had really good work from all the team and places for the following:

Mary with Shadow - 4th in B

Val and Cindy Lou - 2nd in A

Susie and Dixie - 5th in A

Caroline and Sheila - 6th in Novice

Jill and Pancho - 5th in Special Beginners

Everyone's score counts in the competition and our team members who were unplaced did well enough to earn us 3rd overall.

Whisper

A few weeks ago I had to have Whisper put down. She was 13. She was the best and sweetest dog and we loved her dearly. We live through the loss, sadness and emptiness because of what our dogs give us, a joy for life, cleverness, stupidity, holes dug, things chewed, hairs shed; incredible happiness and excitement when we come through the door, whether we've been away for 15 minutes or 2 hours; making us go out in the rain and cold when there's a fire indoors, muddy feet, wet dog smell.



And almost more than anything, they want to stick with us, even when we're stressed and unreasonable, they're always ready to be happy when we are. They come with us when we want them to, they stay behind when we don't. They try to understand our language and our ways, they give us all they can. It's worth asking ourselves sometimes - do we give back to them in equal measure?

Whisper was a true Shepherd dog, she looked out for her family until the end. Some breeds gallop over the Rainbow Bridge, but any German Shepherd owner will know that it doesn't work for them because they'll be looking back all the time for their family. This reminded me of a little poem I knew as a child, which I managed to find. It's not great literature, but the sentiment's so true, for my dogs anyway. Written by someone called Muriel Whitehead Jarvis.

MESSAGE FROM A LITTLE GHOST

I've explained to St. Peter I'd rather stay here
Outside the Pearly Gate.
I won't be a nuisance,
I won't even bark,
I'll be very patient and wait.

I'll lie here and chew a celestial bone
No matter how long it may be.
I miss you so much,
If I went in alone,
It wouldn't be Heaven to me.

In memory of Dorothy

How time flies! It is three and a half years since we lost our friend, trainer and long-time committee member Dorothy Blair. We still miss her greatly and have been searching for a way to celebrate this lovely lady's commitment to the Club.

One of Dorothy's favourite charities was the Hearing Dogs for the deaf. We (the committee) thought it would be appropriate to sponsor a puppy during its training period, but this proved to be beyond our means. We then considered donating agility equipment for the dogs in training. Unfortunately, although it was happy to accept a sizeable donation in Dorothy's memory, the charity felt unable to acknowledge it with a plaque on the equipment, or a certificate on public display. We felt this was a stumbling block, and we looked elsewhere.

As you probably know, the local branch of the RSPCA does not currently have kennels of its own, having to board its rescued dogs, cats and other animals at various private kennels, which is inconvenient and far from cost-effective. To rectify this, and following a long fund-raising campaign, it is building its own premises at Beechmeadow farm, off the A38 at Cambridge. (Each local branch has to be self-financing, the building programme is not supported by the central RSPCA). We were much happier with the appealing way they have devised to acknowledge donations: In the new reception area there will be huge wall panels depicting copper-leaved Beech trees. Each leaf will be inscribed with a name and/or brief message. We decided to support the appeal in Dorothy's memory and have chosen for our leaf to read 'Dorothy Blair, who loved dogs'. That, we think, says it all, and we look forward to being able to visit and search for Dorothy's leaf.



Artist's impression of the Beech Tree sculpture

p.s. It was with great sadness we heard that Trymm, Dorothy's collie, has recently passed away.

She was a real character, and spent her last years very happily with Dorothy's daughter, Sue. She loved both obedience and agility in her younger years, and kept all the newbies in order at the Town Hall, from her regular place under the table.

The 2015 Open Door Display



The team, from left to right:

Ellie-May: Silver Standard Poodle, almost 10 years old, owned by Pat Jones

Abbie: 27 month old Yellow Labrador, whose staff are Val and Gordon Scott

Ellie: Airedale Terrier, aged 5 and a half, owned by Lynda Hinton

Dixie: 4 years old German Shepherd, owned by Susie Thomson

Pip: Australian Shepherd / Collie cross, 8 years old and owned by Jill Syms

Lottie: 9 year old Blue Roan Cocker Spaniel, owned by Doreen Hoskin

What a change from the weather last year when it rained so hard we had to present the display in a very small hall. This year it was cool but dry. The audience sat around the edge of the lawn and we demonstrated a variety of exercises.

All went well until the recall with distractions (toys and a bowl of food each side of the course). Most dogs did as they should have and returned to their owners without delay. However, Lottie decided food in one of the bowls was more interesting than answering the recall and Abbie decided both bowls should be cleaned before returning. Both dogs caused much amusement to the onlookers.

The audience, made up of adults with special needs and their carers, clearly enjoyed the display and as usual were given the opportunity to stroke and talk to the dogs. Both audience and dogs clearly enjoyed this experience.

The display, which is an annual event, gives everyone involved a great deal of pleasure and we think is very worthwhile. Roll on 2016!

Dogfest 2015

Kennel club agility is currently split into 3 height groups. Dogs that measure under 43cm at the shoulder are classed as medium and jump 45cm height : Dogs over that are large and have to jump 65cm. A number of people feel that this is unfair and that an intermediate height of 55 cm should be introduced and are pushing the kennel club to do this.

That view is also held by TV Supervet Noel Fitzpatrick and so this year he sponsored a 4th height jumping cup. This was open to large dogs of all grades with a number of qualifying heats throughout the country and with the final being held at Dogfest. There has been a lot of competition to qualify with most heats having between 150 and 250 dogs in the class and only the top 6 dogs qualifying.

Roo and I managed to qualify at a show in Matlock in May by coming 5th - a position I was very pleased with as he beat several grade 7 dogs - we were on our way to Dogfest!

Dogfest is held at Loseley Park in Guildford a large country house set in beautiful and extensive grounds. Special parking had been provided for the exhibitors but in order to access it we had to be there before 8.30 in the morning so a 5am start for me!

Once there I had to book in at the agility ring where a special hospitality area had been

provided for the qualifiers. At 10.00am we were given a briefing by the judge and a course plan for the steeplechase warm-up course and for the jumping final as there would be only a very limited time to walk the course before we ran.

At 11.00 the steeplechase course started. Roo and I were drawn to run 10th which I was pleased about as it meant I did not have quite so long for nerves to build up. We were started as we would be at Crufts which most of the competitors were quite familiar with but was strange to me. Roo was a good boy and we put in a steady clear which I was pleased with (I was anxious not to make a mess of things with such a large audience) but put us outside the places.



After the presentations I put Roo back in the car for a rest and went back to hospitality where competitors were provided with a lovely lunch.

At 14.00 we all had to assemble at the agility ring again and then were escorted through the crowds to the main arena. We were drawn to run 11th in the final. The previous event in the main arena had been one where dogs ran over obstacles (A frames, jumps and hoops) that had been on fire and we had to queue near this equipment which smelt strongly of petrol. Most dogs didn't seem to be affected by this but Roo was unsettled. As we got to the start line I had a feeling he would break his wait - which he did. Fortunately I had planned accordingly and was able to save the situation but I heard the commentator state it was a nifty bit of footwork! The rest of the run went well but he seemed to catch himself in the weaves and was quite slow and we finished in 12th place.



There were some fantastic dogs there and some brilliant handlers. The winner was Jenny Kimber with REANNES FALCON who I believe is an agility champion, second place was Donna Kerse who had travelled down from Scotland (14 hours) with her dog TRY-N-FLY AMAZING GRACE who competed in the championship class at Crufts this year, was Scottish Dog of the Year and is representing her country in the world championships.

After the presentations we lined up for a photcall with Noel Fitzpatrick. I was placed behind the winners with Roo in my arms. Noel stood beside me and put his arm around my shoulders for the picture. Roo was obviously getting bored at being held for so long by this time and took this as an invitation to reach up and do some serious full-on snogging as only a Kelpie can. I have to say Noel was brilliant about it and took being kelpied very well, not even flinching under the assault.

We might not have come away with a prize but we both had a lovely time. Maybe if we are lucky we will qualify again next year - I am certainly going to try.

Our Charity for 2015:

The charity chosen at our AGM this year is the Peoples' Dispensary for Sick Animals.



It is 100% funded by donations and since 1917 has been a lifeline for sick and injured pets, providing free vet services and promoting responsible pet ownership. It has 51 hospitals and over 380 practices in the UK providing help to 470,000 animals each year. It is leading the debate on pet obesity, conducting Britain's biggest annual pet wellbeing survey, and doing its best to raise the status of animals, celebrating their contribution to our lives.

Overall review of Obedience Classes

The review was conducted as our Obedience classes have now been running for 50 years. It was carried out anonymously, and asked if there are any exercises that we don't do that members would like included. The Wednesday class was happy overall, and the Friday class enthusiastically suggested heelwork that includes a stay and recall to heel, also retrieve and scent exercises, more tricks, heelwork to music, jump, weave and tunnel work. Oh, and training dogs not to eat cow poo! No-one was unhappy about exercises that we do practise.

The review asked (hypothetically) which day members would prefer if the day of their class had to be changed. The results were complicated to say the least, and inconclusive. Let's just hope we can keep things as they are (for the next 50 years?).

As for the timing of the class, the Wednesday class favoured an early class, around 6.30pm, and the majority of the Friday class favoured a slightly earlier time to the existing 8.30pm start. Unfortunately this isn't possible unless we cut an earlier class, which isn't likely to happen, given our waiting list for places.

Happily, most people said they did not mind missing an occasional class due to trainer shortage. Given our trainers' dedication, this hasn't happened yet, and is unlikely in the future, but we can't take them for granted. We have lost 2 trainers recently, (Helen moved away and Angela, although still heavily involved in the Club, just wanted a breather). Although other people have stepped forward to help deliver classes, there is absolutely no leeway.

Asked if they would like small inter-club competitions most members asked were up for the challenge, especially if it was on a week night. This will be considered further, to see what can be organised.

The idea for an annual club meal/skittle evening met with almost unanimous approval (though last year when we tried to generate interest support for this was very poor), and possible weekend seminars, on subjects such as canine first aid, also proved popular.

Abbie the Yellow Labrador: a second progress report

Abbie has now lived with us for 2 years and is very much at home. There does not seem to be anything she does not understand. For example, she has a dish of tea when we have a cup of tea in the afternoon and she has learnt that the kettle whistling is a signal for tea and sits in the kitchen waiting to be served (not that she is spoiled, well not much anyway!)

She is still wildly over-friendly with everyone and every dog she meets and does not seem to understand aggressive signals from dogs, although she does now stop a reasonable distance from a strange dog, waiting to see if it wants to play.

Being a Labrador Abbie is still dedicated to food and that includes anything disgusting she finds in fields on a walk. She also still clearly believes that life is all about fun and games, especially if a ball is involved - like a football or her ball on a rope that she chases during her walks in the fields. One of the fields we walk has a seasonal pond which in winter is full of water, and she swims in that most days. Last winter she ran into the pond carrying her ball on a rope and dropped it into the water. It immediately sank to the bottom which is thick mud and despite a long search by us we came to the conclusion the ball had gone deep into the mud and was lost. The pond has now dried up. Last week Abbie went onto the pond bed, dug a hole, found the ball and ran around showing off her find. We have no idea how she knew where to look.

We are hoping that by next Spring she will have tired of the game of bringing frogs (alive and well) into the house - well, we can hope.

In our last report we said Abbie was working towards her Silver Good Citizen award. She passed, and we are now working towards the Gold test.



Good Citizen Scheme

Congratulations to the dogs & handlers who achieved the Silver Award on July 17th:
Daphne Beale with Winnie - Labradoodle.
Emma Leyfield with Ciara. - Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier.
Sue Cook with Bella. - Shetland Sheepdog.
Jenny Cox with Millie. - Labrador cross Collie.
Janet Taylor with Indi. - Cocker Spaniel.
Susey Bamber with Jack - Labrador.

Club Contacts for The Good Citizen Dog Scheme:

Obedience —Please contact Pat Jones for more details — Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.

Agility —Please contact Julie Bearder, julie@bearder.co.uk who is happy to liaise with Pat to set up Bronze classes for agility dogs .

We value your contributions: Remember, this is your newsletter.

Please feel free to submit doggie stories, photos, news & views.

These can be emailed to the editor Liz, at : liz.steele@btinternet.com

TROPHIES AWARDED at the AGM for 2014/5

<i>Tryfan Trophy (Personality dog) ; Dizzy (Papillon)</i>	<i>Seeka memorial (Superdog Achievement)</i>	<i>Oscar (H. Visla)</i>
<i>Shepherd Boy Cup (Crossbreed): Millie (Lab/Collie)</i>	<i>Crumble Cup: Ben (Collie)</i>	
<i>Tansy Tangles Cup (Gundog): Abbie (Labrador)</i>	<i>Agility 'A' frame: Lexi (Cocker Spaniel)</i>	
<i>Pastoral Cup: Jago (B.S.D)</i>	<i>Barnaby Challenge Cup (Agility) : Tia and Simon Coventry</i>	
<i>Terrier Cup: Daisy (Jack Russell)</i>	<i>Agility: Best League dog and handler: Bear and Sue</i>	
<i>Toy Dog Cup: Dizzy (Papillon)</i>	<i>Daisy Dish (Utility): Tashi (Tibetan Terrier)</i>	
<i>Mickey memorial (Open Show): Dixie (G.S.D)</i>	<i>BC/WSD Plate: Glen (Border Collie)</i>	
<i>Multi-crossbreed Cup: Pancho</i>	<i>Agility Cup: Most improved in Simon's class: Rory and Chris</i>	
<i>Rio Cup (Advanced obedience); Jago (B.S.D)</i>	<i>Dorothy's Trophy for Outstanding service to Club : Angela Morton</i>	

Club Officials

Chairman	Obedience Trainers	Agility Information	
Susie Thomson (01453 835045)	Susie Thomson Pat Jones Jill Sims	Julie Bearder (01453 827829)	
Secretary	Liz Davis	Agility Trainers	
Pat Jones (01453 860696)	Angela Morton	Julie Bearder	Kylee Noad
Treasurer	Obedience Helpers	Caroline Coventry	Titch Noad
Tracey Meadows	Angie Swann	Simon Coventry	Pete Gibbons
Newsletter	Hannah Vaughan	Alison Edgington	Michele Phillips
Liz Steele (01453 833235)	Doreen Hoskin Liz Steele		