

Watchdog!

WALLINGFORD DOG TRAINING CLUB

February 2007

From the Chair

Already, this year has been very busy indeed! The club held a training workshop for its agility trainers on Saturday 27th January, organised and run by young Tasha Wise. It was excellent, and there have been one or two or a few hundred emails whizzing backwards and forwards as all the trainers come up with ideas on how we can provide even better training for everyone. Immediately, exercises will be shorter and more focussed, we will be offering better weave training, everyone will need to record their aims and objectives and trainers will report on progress at the end of each course. Lots more ideas are in the melting pot - but we need time to do everything, and with the show coming up, there won't be much of that spare... See report on pages 2 & 3.

Another young handler - Anthony Clarke - ran an agility workshop for members on Saturday 3rd February. This was also extremely useful for everyone who took part. There is another agility workshop on Saturday 24th March - this time with Nancy Hudson. See right for details.

The Knights - Wallingford's flyball teams - have come to the end of a very successful season, with many members achieving significant milestones. See Jean's flyball news on page 2 - along with a description of flyball tournaments!

They do seem to get more runs than agility handlers get in their competitions!

The flyball certificates, along with agility awards, will be presented at the AGM - which this year will be held at **East Hagbourne Village Hall on Wednesday 28th March**. You will be getting a formal invitation to this, along with a reply slip (we need to know how many to cater for). This year is the Club's 30th anniversary; I hope to see lots of you there. See below for information about the AGM.

Ian Hutchinson

Agility training day

On **Saturday 24th March** Nancy Hudson will be running an agility training workshop. Nancy has been competing in agility for 20 years, coaching and training for 15 years and judging since 1992. She has won through to all the major finals on many occasions including Olympia ten times with 3 different dogs and Crufts on numerous occasions in different classes. Her young dog - Niamh, a red and white BC - won into grade 5 last year, despite Nancy being out of action with an ankle injury for 3 months.

Please add your name to the list on the noticeboard if you wish to attend, and complete a form so Nancy appreciates your aims.

News in brief

It was with great sadness that I heard from Pete that he and Maureen had said a final goodbye to Gibson - their laid back, easy-going goldie. Gibson never really took to agility or flyball - he was a dog for the easy life. He passed on his good nature to his offspring so his spirit lives on.

This newsletter highlights the highs and lows of owning dogs. Last week Pete sent me an article full of hope, looking forward to a 'Rosy future' with the young dogs that have entered his extended family.

Then this week he was phoning me with the sad news of his oldest dog - who was just two weeks short of his 14th birthday.

Pete will write something for the next Watchdog, but in the meantime our thoughts are with Pete and Maureen.

WDTTC
Open
Agility
Show

Sat 21 April
and
Sun 22 April

Newbury
Showground



AGM

The **AGM** will be held at the **East Hagbourne Village Hall** on **Wednesday 28th March 2007**. This is the night when **YOU** vote members onto the committee. This year there are some vacancies and if you are interested in joining the committee, please talk to a member of the committee, and complete the attached form.

Annual awards for both agility and flyball are presented at the AGM, and this year we have decided not to have a speaker, but to use the time to socialise. The evening finishes with nibbles and wine. We hope to see as many members as possible at the AGM - it offers a rare chance to relax and chat to other members. Please let the secretary, Jacky Hutchinson, know if you would like to attend the AGM (so we can cater for the correct number) by **Thursday 15th March**.





Flyball news

We do all our training outside; in winter this is on Sunday mornings. Any member is welcome to attend but please ring me first. As we can't run in deep mud, we've managed only 2 training sessions so far this year. We have attended one tournament - The Knights ran in Division 2 at Maidstone in Jan. The 5 dogs (Flicker, Tonto, Bronwen, Jasmine and Millie) won 3 races and lost 2, coming 3rd (as usual at Maidstone) but this time only a few milliseconds away from 2nd when Millie fumbled the ball at 2 legs all! Our best time was 20.06 sec, not quite as fast as last time but with different dogs. It is gratifying that we can select different teams from our best 5 or 6 dogs and still achieve good times.

Most of our team dogs have received BFA awards in 2006 and each gets a certificate. Some of those achieved will be formally presented at the Club AGM, together with shields for the dog who has made the most progress in 2006 and the one who has won the most points. I hope the members of the Flyball section will come to receive their awards and cheer their colleagues. Summer training starts on **Tuesday 3rd April**.

March

Sun, 4th : Training - beginners at 10.30 am, others, 11 am

Sun, 11th : **NO TRAINING - Tournament at Maidstone.**

The Knights - Flicker, Tonto, Jasmine, Jade, Millie.

Sun, 18th and 25th : Training as above.

April

Tues, 3rd : Training - beginners at 6.30 pm, others, 7 pm

Sat, 7th : **Starters tournament at Frimley Lodge Park.**

Knighties - Sir Willow, Jake, Katie, Rico. (Serin reserve)

Mon, 9th : **Tournament at Frimley Lodge Park.**

The Knights - Flicker, Bronwen, Jade, Jasmine, Millie.

Tues, 10th : **NO TRAINING.**

Tues, 17th and 24th : Training as above.

I will ring you if training has to be cancelled in bad weather.

Flyball tournaments - how they work

There are now over 180 active teams, running with times between 17 and 29 sec (seed times), registered with the British Flyball Association. (BFA), but only 24-30 teams can run in a tournament in 1 day. The organisers will list the teams in order of their seed times and put in cut-offs every 5-7 teams to make 4 or 5 divisions, each containing teams having similar times and with Div 1 the fastest. During the day, each division will run in turn, completing half the races in the morning and the rest in the afternoon. In each race 2 teams will run against each other - best of five. Each team will run against all the others in the division and the winning team will be the one winning most races. Any teams ending up with the same number of wins may run off or the winning team may be the one with the fastest best time of the day.

Each team may contain up to 6 dogs but only 4 dogs run in each leg. Only one dog may be on the course at any time and its entry and exit are recorded by breaking a light beam. If dogs fault - run too early, drop a ball or run round jumps - they have to run again. The leg is finished when each dog has managed a clean run. Each dog running in a leg wins points, 25 if the whole leg is completed in below 22 sec, 5 points for 22-26 sec and 1 for 26-30 sec. The points are added up for each dog over all the races they do, to achieve BFA awards. The highest awards achieved by our team dogs are shown on the WDTTC website.

Jean Hatchard, Flyball Rep & Team Captain

Agility Trainers' Workshop

With not more than 5 handlers per trainer we have some of the best-run classes amongst the agility clubs in this area. However, this stretches our trainers and has the added disadvantage that there is often a lack of continuity between them. We also want to keep up with the most effective training methods. So - we arranged a workshop for our trainers and potential trainers, and we chose one of the best handlers and trainers in the country (and a former member of the club) to run it - Natasha Wise.

Tasha decided to go right back to basics - and many of you fed in your comments through questionnaires - highlighting what works well at the club, and 'areas for improvement'. In the theory part of the workshop, 17 of us crammed into our living room where Tasha covered basic handling techniques and training methods, and after a morning packed with the theory - we had the practical. The whole day was fantastic and we finished with lots of ideas on how we can improve our training. Some things will take a while to implement - but you will have noticed some changes already.

One concern from many of you is aggressive and out-of-control dogs. This is something the club is concerned about and we are taking steps to improve the situation. We all recognise that dogs get excited doing agility and we don't want to stop dogs enjoying it, but we need to make sure that the environment is as safe as we can make it.

To prevent dogs running from one ring to another we will put up netting between the rings. (We'll review this from time-to-time and hopefully our veteran escapees will eventually stop running off.) Dogs are most excited at the start and end of their exercise, a situation exacerbated when this is along the walkway between the rings. So exercises will start and finish away from the walkway. Trainers will be watching for other situations that could cause problems so please support your trainer and the club by being aware of your dogs and keeping them under control. This is not the start of a nanny state, nor is it the end of enjoying agility. We just want a safe environment for everyone. While on the subject of safety, a reminder about an existing regulation which is there for your and your dogs' safety. While equipment is being put out or away, dogs need to be in your vehicle, or safely tied up (not to jumps please - which could tip over if the dog pulls).

To provide continuity in training we have asked you to complete forms outlining your goals and your shorter-term aims for the year. These can be as grand or as basic as you want. For example, if you are starting to compete with your dog, your goal for the year may be to get a clear round in a competition, and to achieve this your short-term aims might be to get a good solid wait at the start and faster weaving. Your trainer will devise exercises to help you achieve your aims, and will talk to each of you towards the end of each course to determine how well you are doing, methods that worked (or didn't work) and whether you have new aims or objectives. A bit like a school report - but more friendly, and invaluable to your next trainer.

Jacky Hutchinson



Feedback

Louise Crone was one of our rookie trainers:

<<First, I would like to say how pleased I was to have been invited to such an informative and fun day. It was excellent to see all the trainers getting together and I know that a day like this will be of great benefit to the Club.

Spangle is my first agility dog but I've really caught the bug!! I hope to gradually get more involved with the training side and cannot thank Tasha enough for her insight into the partnership between dog and handler. The confidence she instils in people is second to none and as she says "you never stop learning". Role on more trainers' workshops!>>

Karen Parker - another Rookie trainer - also enjoyed the day:

<<It was with trepidation on an early Saturday morning that I entered a living room full of WDTC trainers. What on earth was I doing here? I have only just completed a years' dog training with the club, I knew nothing about training, I haven't won anything, I'm still a starter and I haven't even managed to train Sasha to do a sit and stay yet. A quick look around soon quenched a few fears, a hot cup of coffee and a few kind words of encouragement did the rest. So I settled down and Tasha took us through a well structured series of slides which firstly delivered the results of the recently completed training night questionnaire and then went on to discuss in more detail some training concepts. There were quite a few interesting debates through the presentation on items such as unruly and uncontrollable dogs – ooh err cringe into the corner time – minis, toys and weaves, ok ish there. The questionnaire results showed that although a few members train at more than one club, many train only at WDTC, and some don't compete - so we have quite a selection of handler expectations. Its from this sort of data that the club can review their methods so it was great that so many members completed their questionnaires. There was so much information to go through and different techniques and suggestions to discuss that the time flew and it was soon time to put our new found knowledge into practise.

Whoo what a surprise – for me anyway – when we arrived at the training venue to see the Peacheys and a couple of other advanced dog handlers and their equally advanced dogs!! Yes I didn't know the connection with Tasha, no one tells me anything!! And we were going to have to train these partnerships....gulp. Initially Sasha and myself were to be trained by the "new handlers"....wow weren't they keen, and full of some great ideas and suggestions. Sasha seemed to realise that something was special and did everything on cue. We then had to swop "sides" and become the next generation of trainers, what on earth was I going to say to these pros?? 'Luckily', oops sorry, 'unfortunately' I didn't have to as we ran out of time. However, I had been earwiggling on lots of conversations and was beginning to realise that there is not a right or wrong way to agility training. There are many different solutions to a problem and each is as good as the others; and if one thing doesn't work, you need to have a re-think, go back a stage, and change something. And you shouldn't be afraid to ask other people's opinions. And if you're really stumped - you can even ask the handler, who often don't know that they made a mistake, but when told - will often know the answer themselves!

I was quite shattered at the end of the day, but felt as if I had picked up some very useful tips and techniques. I also felt great about the club, it feels like its on the verge of a new chapter and there is a vibrancy running through everyone which is infectious. I just hope that I can be part of that. Overall, I felt that the whole day could be epitomised by Hattie; she did a great run up some diagonally off-set jumps followed by an acute turn into some weaves, "What training suggestions could I give Lin about that run", I said aloud. Another trainer turned and said "nothing - it was perfect". And that's what I think of the day..... Perfect.>>

Our Agility Show

So that we can all participate in agility, clubs have to run shows, and Wallingford's contribution to the sport is its annual agility show, which takes place this year at **Newbury Showground on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd April**. We will need all the help we can – from you, and your friends and family if they can help out. We usually make a small profit, which is always ploughed back into agility – to buy new equipment, subsidise training workshops, and so on, thereby keeping down the training fees.

The weekend will start on Wednesday when members of the club take their caravans and tents to the showground and pitch up, ready for the first job: marking out around 250 camping pitches with spray paint so that they're ready for the first camping punters to arrive on Friday. The marquee, and 9 rings worth of equipment will arrive on Friday. The lorries need unloading and the rings and the courses need setting up. And all the time we need someone booking in the caravans, showing the trade stands to their pitches, putting up signs, etc etc...

Then the show starts. We especially need non-agility people to help on the Saturday and Sunday mornings. Punters start arriving in cars at around 6.45am, and from then on until the show starts there will be a stream of cars which need parking. This car parking is very important – but happens at a time when all those with dogs to run need to walk their courses. If you have an older child or partner who could help with the car parking in the mornings, please contact me, or Yvonne, or your trainer.

On the Saturday evening, once all the rings have been set up for the following day, we all chill out and enjoy a communal supper in the marquee – time to relax, exchange stories from the day, and chill. Before day 2.

With 9 rings to run each day, this will be one of our largest shows, so we will need absolutely every single one of you to help out. There are many, many jobs that need doing throughout the day, from helping on a ring, to providing refreshments to the ring party members, to checking the loos to make sure there is a supply of loo paper! We will be contacting you individually soon to allocate you to jobs, but if there's anything you'd love to do, please contact me.

The weekend is brilliant – extremely busy, but with everyone working together to run the show – a great experience. I look forward to working with you all.

Jacky Hutchinson, Show Secretary



A Rosy Outlook

Three years ago the Sanderson families' interest in agility shows suffered a devastating blow. At the peak of her career our collie, Jenny, suffered a serious disc injury. As most of you know she made a courageous recovery to such a degree that she is able to strut her stuff in the agility ring at demonstrations – a pleasure we never thought possible again.

However, unknown to Maureen and me, our eldest granddaughter Gemma had been planning a pet for her son Ollie. It had, of course, to be a collie and our first glimpse of 'Tiggy' was on the website of a sheep farmer in - *Wales*!! Just as well our youngsters take no notice of their elders these days, because Tiggy has just started training at our club, and is showing great promise in the experienced hands of Gemma's younger sister Rosy.



Another addition to the pet/agility dog to the family came because Wendy, our daughter, had been looking for a suitable dog for Gio-Gio our granddaughter. 'Bambi' was the result of numerous phone calls, between mother and daughter while Maureen and I were on holiday in Woolacombe, North Devon (David Kennard* country) which culminated in a 'detour' on our way home - to a Pyrenean Sheepdog breeder deep in the heart of – you've guessed it B***** *Wales*!. By the time we found the place – the miles we drove on this 'detour' would have taken us home!

I was not impressed! 'We're only half a mile down a lane on the outskirts of the village' said the instructions. What village? Picture me driving up this lane that only a 4x4 could negotiate, bottoming out twice busting the exhaust system. Apparently heavy rains in the spring had washed most of the track away. However, I calmed down, once we reached our destination.



We spent 2½ hours chatting to Mr & Mrs Weston about dogs at a most idyllic place 'out in the sticks'. Set out in the huge garden was some agility equipment and I soon found out which dog could do agility, and couldn't resist a couple of runs with her; this looks encouraging for **Bambi** as it was her mum I was running. I hope it runs in the family.

Looking at **Bambi** now, I'm pleased we went 'off track' to collect her. I think she'll do well. Wendy, who has successfully trained and run other people's dogs over the past years, can

now look forward to the special enjoyment she will get with a dog of her very own.

We might just go on holiday to *Wales* this year. However, although the mobile phone might accompany us as far as the Severn Bridge, I think we might then switch it off!

With the new dogs in the family, the future for the Sanderson family is looking 'Rosy'.

Pete Sanderson

*David Kennard - www.mistthemovie.co.uk/indexHTML. I have his wonderful books & his first video – I hope to get 'Mist the Sheepdog puppy' for my birthday (hint, hint!).

Dates for your diary

Thursday 8th March to Sunday 11th March - Crufts at the NEC

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Wednesday 28th March - AGM at East Hagbourne Village Hall

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Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd April - Wallingford Open agility show at Newbury Showground. Please enter this if you haven't already!

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Flyball dates

Sunday 11th March - Tournament at Maidstone.

Tuesday 3rd April - start of summer training.

Saturday 7th April - Starters tournament at Frimley Lodge Park.

Monday 9th April - Tournament at Frimley Lodge Park.

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Agility dates

Saturday 24th March - Nancy Hudson agility training day

Saturday 28th April - Haslemere Show at Milford in Surrey - Wallingford is running a ring at this show, so please enter if you can. Classes for all sizes & all levels.

Monday 7th May (Bank Holiday) - Vyne Show at Newbury Showground. Wallingford is running a ring at this show, so please enter if you can. Classes for all sizes & all levels.

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Thursday 15th March

Deadline for the next edition of Watchdog. News, articles, successes, photographs are all welcome - please pass to Ian or Jacky.