

Watchdog!

WALLINGFORD DOG TRAINING CLUB

From the chair

This is the first newsletter since the Club's AGM in February and our agility show in April.

We didn't have a speaker at this year's AGM - instead Wendy brought the posters created for the Club's 30th anniversary celebrations for display. My thanks to the committee members for their work during the year, and special thanks to Jason Bruce, who resigned as secretary when work and home commitments left him with little spare time. Karen Parker agreed to step into his shoes, and was duly elected - the only change to the Committee.

During March the show committee were fully involved in the final arrangements, as it became obvious that Saturday was going to be a very busy day! As ever, it was a professionally-run, successful and friendly show. The comments in the book, and afterwards on agilitynet showed that everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. The show committee have had a well-earned rest, but before long will be holding a meeting to review the organisation of this year's show and starting the organisation of next year's show (despite some mutterings overheard in the marquee on Saturday along the lines of 'Never again!'). If you are interested in helping with next year's show, do let Jacky or Ian know. Thanks to everyone who helped out before, during and after that rather hectic weekend - especially to Yvonne who not only organised all the helpers for the rings, but also took on liaising with the judges, and then took the tannoy for the weekend.

The year has started very well for both agility and flyball - please check out the appropriate articles in this newsletter. See photos below taken at one of our most successful KC shows this year - Golden Valley. Saturday on top, Sunday below. Lots of lovely crystal glasses

Ilan Hutchinson - Chairman

Committee

2008 / 09

Ilan Hutchinson · chairman
Kevin Pearce · treasurer
Karen Parker · secretary
Jacky Hutchinson · agility rep
Lu Potter · flyball rep
Wendy Botto · demonstrations
Louise Cronk · member
Carolyn Davies · member
Julie Morgan · member
Kath Rayson · member
Pete Sanderson · member
Joanna Tidmarsh · member

Do contact any of these committee members if you would like to raise any comments about the running of YOUR club.



June/July 2008

Winning
out and
qualifying
so far
this
year

Ian & Dash - at Easter, won G3 agility at Dog Vegas to win into **Grade 4**.

Gillian Johnson & Berry - after many, many top 5 places got the agility win she needed at Supadogs to win into **Grade 3**. Gillian has suspended training at Wallingford for the time, but wants to remain a member.

Ian & Stig - after lots of 'if only' rounds and a couple of wins, won G3 agility at one of the club's most successful weekends for a long while (Golden Valley) - winning into **Grade 4**.

And at the same show **Kevin & Solo** won into **Grade 7** following his Grade 6-7 agility win.

Lisa & Sky - won G5 agility at Tuffley to win into **Grade 6**. Sky also won CSJ dog food, as this was a sponsored class.

Lin & Hattie have qualified for the finals at **Olympia** by winning the medium KC Olympia Medium Agility qualifier at Tunbridge Wells.

Congratulations to everyone.



Agility Successes

Though the weather at many shows this Spring has been abysmal (with one or two exceptions), Wallingford members have been doing exceptionally well.

There are far too many to list here in the newsletter - do checkout the Wiki Boasts site for a full list. Just sticking with top three places, we have this staggering list:

UKA-RDA Chelt'ham 21 - 24 March

Lin & Hattie 1st Champ steeplechase
Jenny & Deke 2nd in Nov Ag (32)

Easter Celebration: 22 - 23 March

Yvonne & Shankly 3rd G3-5 Nov Ag (238)

Dog Vegas Easter: 21 - 24 March

(cancelled after 2 days - snow!)

Ian & Dash 1st G1-4 Agility (24) **(winning into Grade 4)**

Jacky & Lazer 3rd G3 Agility (129)

Easter @ UKA : 21 - 24 March.

Jill & Katie 2nd Senior Jumping (18)

Spring at Shuttleworth 29 - 30 March

Jenny & Tess 2nd G3 Jumping (313)

UKA Scrambles: 4 - 6 April

Jill & Katie 2nd Senior Steeplechase (12)

Yvonne & Shankly 1st Novice Agility

Yvonne & Shankly 2nd Nov P & S

Yvonne & Shankly 2nd Novice Jumping

Wallingford 19 - 20 April

Sophie & Jinx 1st G3 jumping (176) *Brilliant - 1st KC show*

Wendy & Bambi 2nd G1-2 Med Ag (55)

(*Brilliant - 1st KC show. Now Wendy wishes she'd joined the Agility Club!*)

Lin & Hattie 1st G5-7 Med Agility (62)

Lin & Hattie 2nd G6-7 Med Agility (50)

Lin & Hattie 3rd G6-7 Med Jumping (50)

The small team of Josie (& Pera), Pam (& Ashley), Jenny (& Poppy) and Sue (& Sky) did very well against all the larger dogs,



getting a 4th place in the Team Dash.

Photo below - without camera-shy Sue!

WBSDS 26 - 27 April

Gillian & Berry 3rd G1-2 Jumping (227), and 3rd G2 Agility (105)

Dordale 3 - 4 May

Gillian & Berry 2nd G2 Jumping (50), and 3rd G2 Jumping (60), and 3rd G2 Agility (57).

Carolyn & Jazz - 3rd G3 Jump (148).

UKA GT Newbury 3 - 4 May

Jenny & Deke 1st Nov Jumping (70), and 3rd Novice Agility (28)

Jose & Honey 3rd Novice Agility

Vyne Newbury 5 May 5

Wendy & Bambi 1st Med Jump G1 (21)

Tunbridge Wells 10 - 11 May

Lin & Hattie - 1st KC Olympia Med Ag G1-7 (111) **(qualifies for the finals at Olympia)** and 3rd in something else?

Carolyn & Max - 2nd G6 Agility (177)

Carolyn & Jazz - 2nd G3 Jump (165)

and 3rd G3 Jumping (157)

Jenny & Tess - 2nd G3 Jumping (157)

Leamington Sat 17 May

Jill & Misty - 1st Allsorts Jumping (32)

Supa Dogs 24 - 29 May (*Sadly cancelled after 2 days when the river alongside the venue burst its banks...*)

Gillian & Berry 1st G2 Agility (95)

(winning into Grade 3) and 2nd G1-2 Jumping (204)

Cippenham 25th May

Lin & Hattie - 2nd & 3rd in Meduim G1-7 ? (75 - 78)

UKA Kats 1 June

Jill & Katie - 2nd Sen Stplechase (10)

Wye Valley 31 May - 1 June

Ian & Stig - 1st G3 Jumping (230)

Jenny & Tess - 2nd G3 Jumping. (*Ran early, led from start, until Ian ran. Hard luck Jenny ;)*)

Ian & Dash - 2nd G1-7 Agility (85)

Thames 7 - 8 June

Emily Ratcliffe & Sky - 1st under 12s juniors (41) *See page 8.*

Wendy & Bambi - 2nd Med G1 Jump (40) and 3rd Med G1-2 jump (53)

HJ UKA 13-14 June

Jill & Katie - 1st Sen Jumping (5) *moves up to "Champion" in Performance Programme*

Jill & Katie - 2nd Sen Steeplechase

Annette & Roxy - 1st Beg St-chase (20). *Qualified for Beginner's Steeplechase Challenge 2008 & moves up to Novice in Steeplechase*

Annette & Roxy - 1st Beg Jump

Wendy & Bambi - 1st Beg Steeplechase (7). *Qualified for Beginner's Steeplechase Challenge 2008*

Wendy & Tiggy - 4th Beg St-chase (20).

1st reserve for Beg St-chase Challenge

Jill & Misty - 1st Casual Agility (3+)

Donna & Katie - 1st Sen St-chase (6)

Wendy & Tiggy - 3rd Beg St-chase (18)

Gill & Lexie - 1st Med Beginners Ag (20)

Golden Valley 14 - 15 June

Ian & Stig - 1st G3 Agility (280) **(winning into Grade 4 - with apologies to Jenny who was 2nd again)**, and 1st G3 Collie Agility (172), and 3rd G3 Circular Collie Jump (203),

Kevin & Solo - 1st G6-7 Agility (90) **(winning into - Grade 7)**, and 1st Collie Circular G4-7 Jumping,

Yvonne & Shankly - 1st ABC Circ jump

Karen & Sasha - 2nd G1-3 Collie Ag (172), and 3rd G2 Jumping (107),

Lin & Hattie - 2nd Med G3-7 Ag (50),

Jenny & Tess - 2nd G3 Agility (280),

Jacky & Lazer and Carolyn & Jazz - 2nd large pairs G1-3 relay (109prs) (*lead from beginning by 4 secs to the end then pipped by a tenth of a second! Ian & Stig with Jenny & Tess went faster than the winners - but Tess rolled a pole....*)

RVA 14-15 June

Jose & Honey - 2nd G5 Agility (49)

Jose & Poppy - 3rd G5 Agility (49)

Lansdown 28-29 June

Lin & Hattie - 3rd ...?

UK Agility 28-29 June

Jo & Bronwen 1st Beg Steeplechase (48)

Jill & Misty - 1st Casual Agility (9)

Jenny L & Deke - 2nd Nov St-chase (47)

Lin & Hattie - 2nd Champ St-chase (6)

Lin & Hattie - 3rd Champ Jumping (8)

Tuffley 5-6 July

Lisa & Sky - 1st CSJ G5 Agility **(winning into Grade 6)**

Jenny K & Tess - 1st G3 Jumping (160)

Lisa & Sky - 2nd G5 Jumping

Jenny K & Tess - 3rd G3 Jumping (166)

Paws @ Play (BAA) 5-6 July

Ian & Dash - 3rd Novice+ Agility

The number in brackets indicates the size of the class. Karen needs this for the allocation of points.

With apologies to anyone I have missed - and for the ?s when I wasn't sure....

Jaclly Hutchinson - Agility Rep

Flyball news

Flyball continues to grow. We now have 15 members. Welcome to **Gill Rhodes & Bertie, Jose & Pera** (with **Honey** making a comeback), **Pat & Kali, Heather & Cokey, John-Lucas & Gyp, Gill Allen** with her second dog, **Red, Jacky & Kip**, and **Ian** making a comeback with **Gunner**.

Congratulations to **Liam & Megan, and Heather & Cokey** who have completed the beginners course and received their Beginners Shield.

Leanne's dog, **Willow** has picked up an injury and is not able to run at the moment. However we hear that he had enjoyed being massaged! Get better soon Willow...

John and **Leanne** have been leading training and we are all enjoying training with different dogs, having a go at box-loading (and box loaders having a go at running dogs)!

The Knights have only had one tournament since last October. We had a rookie dog in this and it was asking rather too much of him to run in an open tournament first time out. We ran not-for competition, and used it as a training session.

Our Starters are beginning to attend tournaments. The first was on 5th May at **Stockbridge Farm**. We took **Archie, Cokey, Jazz, Winkey** and **Gyp**. The dogs all did really well, coping with crowds, strange dogs, two lanes, marquees, noise, and unfamiliar surroundings. **Cokey** found it a bit bewildering and was rather unsure of what to do at the start line. However with encouragement from **Heather** and loud calling from **Kate**, she made it there and back each time. **Jazz** and **Gyp** took to flyball tournaments immediately remaining focussed, and largely ignoring all the distractions, **Archie** thought it would be more fun to go and play with the dogs in the other team, so we lost a couple of races due to interference. We raced against four other teams, lost 3 and won 1 heat. We came 5th with a fastest time of 32.87 seconds.

We ran the **Knightmares Starters** team and an the **Knights Open** team at **Frimley Park** on 24th and 25th May. The Starters team comprised **Gyp, Bertie, Pera, Cokey, and Megan**, with **Kate** as boxloader. This was the first time these dogs had all run together and they did a really good job. On the very first run of the very first race, **Bertie** had the misfortune of having a dog from the other team run over, steal his ball from our box and then chase him along our run. This certainly confused **Bertie**, and he lost the plot a bit. However, we were able to give **Bertie** three races when we had a "Ghost team" to run against, so he got the hang of it again and finished the day on a positive note. **Pera** flew up and down like a little black missile, and **Cokey** regained her poise and confidence after being a little unsure during her first Starters competition earlier in the month. **Megan** amazed us by taking everything in her stride, and it was great to see **Liam's** enthusiasm for winning! **Gyp** was the start dog and did a great job getting us off the mark. The Knightmares won three out of their five races coming 3rd overall, with a fantastic fastest time of 27.71 seconds.

Frimley Lodge is a lovely venue and during the break, all the dogs and handlers had time to chill out in the sunshine, enjoy the canal and get to know each other a bit better.

The Knights team for the Open comprised **Gunner, Tonto, Jade** and **Flicker**, with **Kate** box loading. Waking up at the crack of dawn to the alarm and the sound of the wind and rain lashing against the window, **John** began to question why he had come out of flyball "retirement" and put himself down to run **Gunner** who had been kindly lent to us by **Ian**. Now it would be nice to say that by the time we had got down to the show

the sun was shining and running surface was good to firm, however after a lower division was run it was beginning to look more like a mud bath than a flyball lane. After a slight administration hiccup at the start we were back up and racing with really close racing and some good old friendly banter we went in to the break winning two of our three sets of races. Late morning the sun managed to make an appearance and helped to dry us all out (well apart from the dogs who insisted on going for a swim in the canal during lunch). We kept to the same four dog combination throughout the races, with **Gunner** starting, reminding **Kate** of just how hard a dog can hit the box. Poor **Lu** at two getting a resistance training session having to hold **Tonto** back when **John** had pushed the starts a little too much and getting the odd false start, **Jade** with **Jill** at three, fast and reliable as ever and finally **Flicker** with **Luce** bringing us home. In the second half of the division we were narrowly losing against our first opposition, and our final race of the day came down to a nail-biting 2 a piece (best of five races) with both sides getting false start lights, and with good changes on both sides it came right down to our fourth dogs (we really couldn't have asked for a better race to write about), **Flicker** got her determined racing head on and flew back just beating the other to the line - flyball racing really doesn't get much better than this! Overall we came a fantastic third.

As ever we would like to say a big thank you to **Kate** who, as always, did a cracking job box loading - she really is a most crucial member of the team! These were three great shows, and nice to see the **Knights** up and running again, with just over a month until our next show just enough time to sharpen up those changes!

Training:

As we now have quite a few dogs, and several new beginners, we are going to run three training sessions – **Beginners, Intermediate** and **Advanced**. This will allow the trainers to better match the training to the abilities of the dogs and handlers.

Training times will now change to:

Advanced – 6.30 to 7pm (please arrive by 6.15 to help set up)

Beginners – 7 to 7.30pm

Intermediate – 7.30 to 8pm (please help put away at the end)

The Wiki site is now being well used, and will be the place to look for forthcoming tournament date and information about WDC Flyball. If you are a Flyballer and have not been invited to n the Wiki, please contact me.

Lu Potter - Flyball rep



Chris and Fly go to Crufts!

I first got into agility when I was about 12 years old when I had a go in a Junior class with Bryn. It obviously wasn't the best round I've ever done but I have to admit, not the worst either! From then on I ran the occasional Junior class and began to enjoy it more and more and more. We had talked about getting a second dog for a while and in September 2002 Mick told us of a litter born in Gaydon. When we arrived to choose a puppy there was only one left, a blue merle called Basil. He was going to be Mick's new agility dog until I said that I wanted to give it a go at training Fly. After a couple of one-to-one training sessions I was well and truly hooked on my new favourite sport and was itching to compete. Unfortunately Fly was just short of 18 months at the time of the Wallingford show so had to wait until Vyne. Here, I had a realistic introduction to the competitive side of the sport in which I experienced typical British weather (rain) and had my first senior moment! Despite getting three eliminations I couldn't wait until the next show and it wasn't long until I got my first clear round. The year after that I managed to win out of Elementary (Grade 1 to you new bods) and the following year I won Starters Jumping at Wye Valley and then gained a fourth at Tuffley to guarantee a place in Grade 5 in 2007.

In August of 2007 Mick and I went to Peterborough for the KC International. As I was in Grade 5 I competed in the Novice Cup which was held over a Jumping and an Agility course on the Friday with the final of the best 30 dogs being held on the Saturday over an Agility course. I was in the Jumping first and came out with 5 faults and a dented ego after trying to execute a blind turn and Fly took me out and I ended up on my backside! (*One that didn't work, eh? Ed*). Before I competed in the Agility I was told that a clear round would give me and Fly a top ten place as very few handlers had gone clear as it was such a difficult course. This suited me and Fly as my 'velcro dog' excels at tight courses but I was still surprised to get a clear and then to be placed fourth. The following morning I was even more surprised to find that qualified for the final. I was third to run and the two handlers that ran before me (Nancy Hudson and Marc Wingate-Wynne) both went clear. When Fly and I ran we had 5 faults at the weaves which left us with 10.207 faults (including time faults) and with the likes of Simon Peachey and Amanda Pigg still to run I realised that a faulted run had no chance of being in the places. It wasn't until Sunday morning when I found out that I had been placed sixth and



therefore qualified for Crufts. Reeling from the shock that I had qualified for the biggest dog show on Earth with a dog that used to run under jumps and had bitten me in every place imaginable in the ring, I went to see the list of the teams for the Nations Cup. Checking the names of the Welsh competitors it wasn't a surprise to see Stuart Harmes' name on there, but it was a massive shock to find my name alongside those of Stuart and Barrie James, especially as the teams were supposed to be picked from best of the Grade 6 and 7 handlers who had competed in the British Open on the Saturday. As often happens in teams the handler who wasn't a senior was the only to go clear and both Stuart and Barrie were eliminated. It put the icing on a multi-tiered cake to hear some of the best handlers in the sport giving their congratulations and apologies for messing up courses to this lowly Grade 5 handler who was just out to enjoy the day.



The 8 months to Crufts came round quickly and a mixture of excitement and nerves was filling me with just a few weeks to go. When we arrived we were directed to the competitor benches where we were to wait until the competition began. The course was fairly simple which wasn't what I wanted, as I believed I would have a better chance with a trickier course. I was second to run and I don't mind admitting I was absolutely bricking it! The round started well and we were flying round until Fly jumped a jump on the right after the A-Frame (obstacle 14) instead of turning left. It was a pity to get to Crufts and end the experience with an elimination but I didn't really mind as my only target with Fly was to win out of Starters, and after achieving that, representing Wales and competing at Crufts was all a bonus.

Now that I've got the opportunity I would like to thank; Ian, Jill, Sam and Natasha, who have been my most regular trainers especially in the months leading up to Crufts. I would also like to thank everyone at the club for their support and wish them the best of luck for the future and look forward to hopefully reading about their exploits at Crufts in the coming years.

Thanks for reading

Chris Chambers

Members corner

Golden wedding anniversary

Huge congratulations to everyone's favourite member - Pete - and his other half Maureen, who celebrated 50 years of marriage recently. Those of us at Thames Show - the weekend of the anniversary - celebrated with balloons, nibbles, champers (well, sparkling wine) and cake. Sadly no-one had a camera to record the occasion, but Pete & Maureen sent the following in for Watchdog, together with a photo taken 50years ago. Pete hasn't lost his cheeky grin, has he?

“ Many thanks from Maureen & Pete to all members who helped us celebrate our Golden Wedding Anniversary after the Thames Show. What a lovely surprise - with a beautiful Golden Bouquet, 'champers' and goodies. It certainly made a memorable weekend for us both.

Thank you so much.”



Good luck with the operation

On behalf of WDTC members, I'd like to wish Jean Hatchard the very best wishes for a successful operation this month. Jean has not had the best of luck over the past few months. She came down with shingles towards the end of last year, that hung on for ages and refused to clear up. She was in hospital in February having a hip replacement operation and a couple of months ago had a heart attack. She is due to go in for a triple bypass operation this month, and we all wish her a successful operation and a very speedy recovery.

The secret of collecting rosettes - the easy way!

Get yourself a Picnic chair, sit by the ring-side and watch your daughter (Wendy) run your grand-daughter's (Gemma) dog, which you have trained. Then celebrate with a slurp of coffee when the tannoy blasts out 'And in third place Peter Sanderson with Grandad's Challenge'. This has worked 3 times so far!

Luckily our Wendy finds it amusing, especially on the start line when the scriver, obviously not looking up, says 'When you're ready Peter'. Maybe one day the real Peter will get to shake hands with the Judge, but even supreme athletes fade away into

the sunset, which is where I appear to be heading.

Pete - trainer of Grandad's Challenge
(Tiggy)

Goodbyes

Sadly, along with the celebrations, there are tears....

Carolyn had to say goodbye to dear old Stumpy - who had reached a grand old age. Carolyn started agility with Stumpy - who never quite saw the point of all this jumping stuff. Neither did he see the point of NOT eating the sausages at Christmas parties!

Carol had a similar heartache when she said a final farewell to Gem - a collie from the early days who also lived to old age.

Both these were older dogs who had lived a good life. The saddest, and most difficult decision was made by Jo, who decided that her rehomed dog Fergus was just too dangerous to keep. He could be the most loving, friendly dog, but in an instant, could become very aggressive. Jo took advice from a very experienced behaviourist, but despite following the advice, Fergus did not improve, and after a particularly upsetting day, and talking to lots of people, including Val Phillips and Collie Rescue, made the sad but very brave decision. The thing that made Fergus dangerous was the speed he became aggressive - and the fact that he gave no warning. Whether it was a brain tumour, or just a character trait, we'll never know. But with young children, Jo could not keep him and she decided not to pass him onto another unsuspecting family, in the same way that she took him on.

No-one can say anything to take away the pain of losing a friend, but time does heal.

Agility news

Trainers

I usually end with a thank-you to all our trainers, but this time I'm going to start with a BIG thank-you to you all. Any club is only as good as its trainers, and I'm sure our success is predominantly down to you all.

And you'll see a couple of new faces taking your classes.

Iain Fraser, after being a guest trainer for a couple of courses, is now a fully fledged member of the club. I'm sure you'll all agree that it's great to have Iain back (he was a member before he left to set up the very successful Crazy Maesy club).

Sophie Macbeth's collie Jinx had an unfortunate accident and has severed some leg tendons while chasing rabbits (ouch!!). While Jinx is recuperating (with Sophie trying VERY hard to keep her quiet and inactive!!!) she has agreed to take a training stint. Although new to the club - Sophie has been in agility a long time, and has a huge amount of experience across all grades.

Another 'new' face that some of you will recognise is **Isabel Morris**. One of my favourite dogs from years ago was Isabel's mad but loveable staffie - Defor. Although not running a dog at the moment, Isabel returned to help with the beginners. This has come at a very opportune time as talking of beginners...

New Faces

...The agility section had room for a small number of **new members**, so Wendy invited those on our long waiting list to 'try out' agility - and give us a chance to see handlers and dogs before inviting them to join the club. After an initial 2 evenings, the trainers involved couldn't choose (they were all a very enthusiastic bunch showing great potential), so they were all invited back for a course. Some came on Thursday evening in the beginners section, and some were trained on a Tuesday evening. It was very hard to choose even after the extra time, but eventually 10 were chosen to be invited to join the club from 19th June.

Thanks to Wendy, and all the trainers who helped over the whole process - including Pete, Julie, Karen, Ian & Isabel.

So welcome to: **Aileen & Rockett, Dave & Clippy, Dinah & Cinders, Gill & Bertie, Helena & Alf, Hollie & Dermut, Minna & Nelson and Sue & Megan**. Current club members **Sophie & Chase** and **Tanya & Dollar** also join this class. I'd also like to welcome **Alison & Alf** - who have gone straight into Improvers.

Training groups

I have swapped the small/medium group and group 1. The 2 main reasons behind this change are:

First, small & mediums more often than not find themselves running open classes (grade 1-7) - usually aimed at the top end of Novice (ie grades 4-5). It has always been difficult to plan exercises that are challenging for small / mediums and easy for beginners (sharing the same equipment).

Second, Group 1 comprises grade 1 & 2 dogs - with some grade 3 dogs, and sometimes trainer's more advanced dogs. To win up into grade 3, grade 1 & 2 dogs have to win grade 1 & 2 classes - starter level. By getting them doing lots of more complicated handling (pull-throughs, front crosses etc) I think we may be slowing these dogs down, making it more difficult for them to get that win. More straightforward courses should help these dogs keep their speed - with introductions to handling at novice level for when they get that win. I suggest this group is split by grade as far as possible.

This means that it will be easier to create slightly more straightforward exercises for the far end (beginners, improvers and group 1 - ie, up to lower-end novice), and more challenging exercises for the kitchen end for the dogs from novice up to advanced.

Putting out equipment

More and more of you are late arriving, and there's a tendency to have a natter before the equipment is put out. I realise that some of you find it difficult to get to Blewbury for 7.30, but the more people who are there early, the more time you have to train. With the trolleys carrying the jump wings, and copies of the courses available, we should be able to get up and running by 7.50pm.

So please: get to Blewbury by 7.30pm, set up the courses quickly & efficiently - THEN natter (during or after your training).

Equipment - a plea

The new soft piped tunnel cradles are easier to carry and nicer for the dogs (no metal edges sticking into the tunnel). BUT - please do up the velcro after the tunnel has been removed. I have noticed the velcro on some has been completely 'gunked up' (technical term!) with all the crud from the floor at Blewbury.

Points for places

Those who compete successfully can get points allocated for a variety of leagues.

You can pass on your success stories to Karen - who will allocate points according to place and size of class for the **club league**. The **Agility Club** has a scheme you can sign up to. You then send in your top 10 place results and you, and your nominated club (hopefully Wallingford!) gets points. If you subscribe to the **Agility Eye** your top 15 points are allocated to you - and your nominated club. (Because results are sent to the Eye by show secretaries - you don't need to inform them.) There are other national leagues about, too, including a league for rescue dogs (DARL), a league for Weimeraners, and a lurcher league. Do check these out on the web - and sign up for them.

But most of all - enjoy your agility.

Jacky Hutchinson - agility rep

Gill Kimber has attended two canine-related courses, and reports on them.

Learning to massage your dog

I enrolled on the "Pre & Post Event Massage" day run by the Galen Therapy Centre after reading various posts on the agility forum about warming up your dog. Although I could have bought the DVD of Canine Massage for a lot less money I wanted to be reassured I was going about the massage in the correct way. The course was held at a farm near Horsham. There were 8 people on the course, 2 instructors (Julia and Caroline) and the dogs. At one time there were 12 dogs in the room - a Pyrenean, 2 flat coated retrievers, 2 labradors, 3 collies (including Tess), 2 toy/miniature poodles and 2 Jack Russells.

We started off with the principles behind massage and some basic anatomy of the dog. We were shown a massage technique on a toy dog. Before we started massage on the dogs we had to identify certain points and put orange stickers on them! The instructors were really helpful checking that you understood the technique and were using the correct hand movements. There were also some slides of dogs before and after massage. We also covered passive movement and post-event massage. The course was really enjoyable and informative.

I was able to use what I had learned the very next day at the Corton Limited Show Chi won the Grade 4-7 agility class after a massage – was that a coincidence?

This course only enables you to give your own dogs a short massage and wouldn't replace the deeper massage a trained therapist could give your dog.

Note: It is illegal to practise on anyone's dog without the permission of their vet.

Sports Psychology For Dog Agility

In November I attended a Sports Psychology for Dog Agility day run by Mark Laker of UpAndOver.

The course was very thought-provoking! It covered the principles of agility psychology and reasons that affect our performance, and ways of overcoming the problems. Mark made very good use of quotes from different sportsmen but my favourite was "Whether you think you can or think you can't you are probably right!" attributed to Henry Ford.

There was also a session on goal setting. This was done in teams of three. This was quite difficult when you didn't know the handlers and hadn't seen them working their dogs. It was also quite difficult for me with a dog already in grade 6.

After lunch there were some exercises. We were given hand outs of a couple of courses and put in a team. I had had problems with my car in the morning and hadn't brought a dog but Karen (Laker) very kindly let me run her dog Flint. The courses were designed to follow on from the morning's session. Flint was lovely to run but I still made the same mistakes that I would have made with Chi. It was interesting to watch the way different teams approached the exercise and how they coped with the distractions going on around them.

I had a follow up session with Mark on the goal setting aspect of the course and how to go about achieving the goals I set. This has really put me in a positive frame of mind for the coming season.

Gill & Jenny Kimber shared a judging appointment for Thames' Diploma night - here is their report.

Back in August Rosemary Tappin was looking for people to judge at a Thames Diploma night. Jenny and I would take on the role one evening in September with me doing the jumping and Jenny the agility.

The first thing was to sort out a course. I downloaded a trial of the Clean Run package. Amazing how much easier it is to build a course with software rather than changing everything around on paper! We had to supply 2 courses one for Grades 1-4 and one for Grades 5-7. Well not too much of a problem doing the higher grades but there could be a big difference in capability of the lower grades. I made up a couple of courses where I only had to change a few jumps round between the 2 classes. These I then passed on to Rosemary for her comments.

Rosemary's son, Graham, had checked that there was enough room for the courses, and Jenny & I reviewed where we were going to stand. However, a new outbreak of foot and mouth postponed our judging appointment a few weeks and the venue had changed. Unfortunately there was less space at the new venue. This meant immediate changes to the course – 6 weaves instead of 12 and a few jump changes. I was judging the higher classes first and I was pleased with the course. I felt it was challenging without being impossible. There were the usual eliminations and some clears. The next task was changing the course for the lower grades - not too difficult. The standard in this class varied a lot from the dogs that had only been training a few weeks to those knocking on the door of the higher grades.

You certainly have to plan for all contingencies. I had my own copies of the course but I panicked when we arrived and didn't check them so I ended up with an extra jump I then had to take out! I certainly worried about planning the courses and judging the dogs but I did enjoy the experience.

Gill Kimber

Even though I had been a bit nervous beforehand, the atmosphere was so welcoming I immediately relaxed which was helped by the familiar faces. Before the night it had taken me a while to come up with courses that I was completely happy with and I ended up creating two completely new ones the weekend before. I was judging grades 1 to 4 first and I was pleased with the compliments on my course. At least I'd done one thing right! The class ran smoothly and I was pleased with the way it went.

Although I was planning on just changing a jump or two for the next course, I decided it wasn't hard enough for grades 5 to 7 so I added a cross behind here and an extra turn there. Just to keep them on their toes! I then sat back and watched the handlers walking the course and figuring out how they were going to run it. An interesting experience! Overall the evening went well, I got a few clears and there were no major hiccoughs. I enjoyed the judging experience and might some day want to try it again.

Jenny Kimber



My First Trophy

On June 7th I woke up at 6.30 in the morning – and I was very excited, as I was running my dog Sky in the junior agility. When I was walking the course I felt quite nervous because I didn't know if I was going to go wrong. As I was watching the other juniors run I didn't feel so nervous. Then an hour later it was my turn to run. My dog, Sky, ran like a bullet coming out of a gun. When Sky was coming over the second-to-last jump I shouted "Left" – and she turned, but almost missed the last jump. But she got it OK. A lady came over to me and said that that was the fastest time so far. I kept on looking to see if I was still first (even though I wasn't supposed to). When it came to the presentation all my agility friends came to the secretary's tent. When they said "The winner of the Junior Under 12s is Emily Ratcliffe" (that's me) all my friends did a massive cheer for me – and it felt amazing. My trophy was very heavy but I love it to bits. And I love my rosette to bits. And most of all I love my dog Sky to bits. And that's the story of my first trophy.

Emily Ratcliffe.



Demonstrations

Hi, anyone not away at shows (or back early enough) you are always welcome to come along to the demonstrations we run at various venues throughout the summer. We set out a full ring of equipment and we usually do a few set displays, with the rest of the day is free for training (as long as you don't mind the public watching!)

We have just bought a new PA system, which we'll use during the set demonstrations and maybe to play some music. These demos offer a great opportunity for free training and the opportunity to work on any problem areas or particular sequences that you find difficult; we will have the training weaves at each demo. This is a good way to train in a different location, and is great for families as there is usually something else to do apart from watch (and do) agility. It can also offer the opportunity to run a more experienced dog, or let the juniors have a go.

There are notices up at club each week and on the wiki and website. If anyone is able to make any of them it is handy if I know beforehand, although you can just turn up on spec. Tel Wendy on 01235 817932 or email the bottos@tiscali.co.uk.

We have held 2 demonstrations so far this year - Saturday 28th June at Rush Court Nursing Home, and Harwell Primary School Summer Fair on Saturday 5th July.

Future demonstrations include:

Sunday 13th July - South Moreton Fete (at South Moreton school).
From 1 to 4pm. Set up from 11.30am (ish)

Saturday 19th July - Berinsfield Community Celebration. 10-4pm, ring all day. 10am - 4pm. Set up from 9am. 3 demos throughout day and ring for the duration. Directions and postcode from Wendy (or see posters on Thursday).

Saturday 23rd August - Binfield Heath Flower & Dog Show. Afternoon, with exact time tbc.

Saturday 6th September - Upton Village Fete. Times tbc.

Wendy Botto - Demonstrations Organiser

Wiki Webs

The club has both an agility and a flyball 'Wiki' website which is viewable just by club members. To see either site you need to be 'invited' to join. Ian will be inviting the new agility members to join - and if anyone else needs access, please let Ian know. It includes agility boasts (Karen picks up places for club points from the Wiki), teams, camping lists and demonstrations. For access to the club's flyball Wiki site you need to contact Lu Potter. Shows, results, training and information on BFA are all here.

Watchdog Aug/Sept 2008

The next Watchdog will be produced in early September. Please send articles, photographs, successes, ideas for articles, letters, etc... by end of August. Preferably by email to:

jacian@ntlworld.com