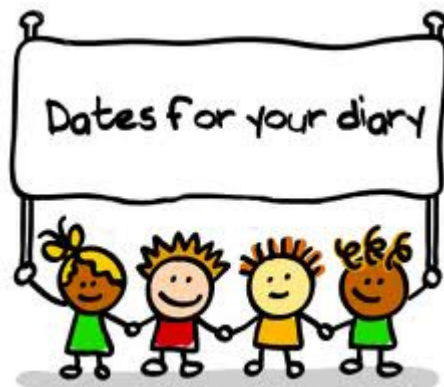


Watchdog!

WALLINGFORD DOG TRAINING CLUB

September 2015



17th Oct 2015
28th Nov 2015
16th Jan 2016
20th Feb 2016

}
}
}
}
} Winter League match dates
- all at BCA

Saturday 5th December 2015 – Home Match with Andover. Venue TBC.
(please talk to Jenny and your club trainer if you are unsure which level would be suitable for your dog)

Sunday 14th February 2016 – Away Match at Andover. Date TBC.

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th April 2016 – Wallingford DTC agility show
(all hands on deck – put this in your diary now!)



Reminder for all those training on Thursdays:
Please arrive at 7.30pm promptly to set up.
Please finish promptly at 10pm to pack away.
Thank you



Show Results



Top 10 places only shown!

Blackdown 12-13 September (KC)

Kevin & Fig 1st G4-5 Agility (14 G4) – *into G5*

Alison & Herbie 3rd C1-3 Jumping (168)
Alison & Herbie 3rd G3 Jumping (170)
Alison & Basil 5th C3-5 Jumping (42)
Alison & Herbie 6th G3 Agility (139)

Southam 12-13 September (KC)

Claire & Indy 1st C3-5 Agility (22)
Claire & Indy 1st G1-4 Agility (9)

AJAX 11-13th Sept (UKA)

Leigh Wilkinson & Tatti 1st Senior Stch (3)
Gill & Mindy 1st Senior Gamblers (8)
Gill & Bertie 1st Senior Gamblers (4)
Debbie & Flo 1st SWAG Beginners
Steeplechase - *qualified for final*
Gill & Mindy 1st Senior snooker (8)
Gill & Bertie 1st Champ agility
Caroline & Tia 2nd SWAG Beginners
Steeplechase (25) - *qualified for final*
Gill & Mindy 2nd Senior Agility (?ish)
Gill & Mindy 2nd Senior agility (7)
Wendy & Tatti 3rd CSJ Novice Agility (9)
Sarah & Merlin 3rd Champ s/chase1 20ish?
Gio-Gio & Bambi 5th overall Agility for Juniors all heights

Letchworth 5 September (KC)

Jill & Cass 4th G6/7 Jumping (81 G6)

Gillingham 5-6 September (KC)

Alison & Herbie 2nd G3 Jumping (198)
Sarah & Merlin 3rd G3 Jumping (202)
Alison & Herbie 5th G3 Agility (186)
Jenny & Guv 7th G7 Jumping (100+)
Jenny & Guv 10th G7 Agility (100+)

Prestbury Park 29-30 August (KC)

Claire & Indy 1st G4-7 Agility (20 G4) - *into G5*
Wallingford & Friends Juniors - Gio-Gio & Tatti, Lucy & Robin, Gemma & Dizzy, Jack & Bailey, Rory & Mint 1st YKC Teams (4 teams) – *qualified for Crufts*
Ian & Dino 3rd C1-7 Power & Speed (210)
Leigh & Tatti 3rd G6 Agility (25)
Claire & Indy 4th C1-7 Power & Speed (48)
Claire & Indy 4th C4-7 Agility (48)

Claire & Indy 5th C4-7 Jumping (50)
Jenny & Guv 5th CG6-7 Jumping
Jenny & Tess 7th Anysize (70+)

Adams 25-31 August (KC)

Jill & Cass 2nd G6/7 Jumping (60)
Sarah & Merlin 8th G3 Jumping (150)

Adams 14-19 August (KC)

Pam & Martha 1st G5-7 Agility (15) - *last G5 win - into G6*
Pam & Martha 1st G5-7 Agility (15)
Pam & Martha 1st G5-7 Jumping (15)
Pam & Martha 1st G5-7 Jumping (15)
Kevin & Fig 1st C1-3 Jumping (10)
Kevin & Fig 1st G1-4 Agility (12 G3)
Kevin & Fig 1st G1-4 Agility (6 G3)
Kevin & Fell 1st Veteran Jumping (20)
Kevin & Fell 1st Anysize Jumping (16)
Kevin & Fell 1st Anysize Jumping (16)
Pam & Martha 2nd G 5-7 Agility (15)
Kevin & Fell 2nd Veteran Jumping (12)
Kevin & Fig 2nd C1-7 Agility (18)
Alison & Herbie 2nd G1-7 Agility (70 G3)
Alison & Herbie 2nd G1-3 Jumping (40 G3)
Alison & Herbie 2nd G1-3 Agility (~50 G3)
Kevin & Fell 3rd Anysize Jumping (17)
Alison & Herbie 3rd G1-3 Jumping (50 G3)
Alison & Herbie 4th G1-4 Agility (70 G3)
Alison & Herbie 4th G1-3 Jumping (70 G3)
Alison & Herbie 5th C1-3 Jumping (44)
Alison & Herbie 5th C1-3 Agility (56)
Alison & Herbie 6th G1-4 Agility (50 G3)
Alison & Herbie 7th C1-3 Jumping (80)
Alison & Herbie 8th G1-3 Jumping (70 G3)

Dogs In Need (KC) 18-22 August

Jo & Pip 1st G5 Agility (134)
Jo & Sonic 1st G3 Agility (126) – *into G4*
Ian & Dino 1st G6 Jumping (96)
Wendy & Foxie-Botts 1st G4 Agility (40) – *into G5*
Leigh & Molly 1st G2 Agility – *into G3*
Leigh & Molly 2nd G2 Classic Final
Jo & Pip 2nd G5 Jumping (146)
Wendy & Foxie-Botts 2nd G4 Jumping (40)
Sarah & Merlin 3rd G3 Jumping (143)
Gio-Gio & Bambi 3rd YKC Agility Dog of the Year Over 12(30)
Debbie & Flo 4th G1 Jumping (80)

Jo & Pip 5th G5 Agility (146)
Jenny & Guv 9th G7 Jumping (120)
Jenny & Guv 9th G7 Agility (120)
Jenny & Guv CR G7 Classic Final

KCI 13-16 August (KC)

Jenny & Guv 3rd British Open 6/7 Agility (159)
Gio-Gio & Tatti 4th YKC Agility Dog of the Year Over 12 (30)
Wendy & Foxie-Botts 4th G4 Jumping (51)
Sarah & Merlin 6th G3 Jumping (146)
Jill & Cass 7th G6 Jumping (187)
Jenny & Guv 7th C5-7 Agility
Wendy & Foxie-Botts 8th G4 Jumping

Jenny & Guv 9th British Open Semi Final (30)
Wendy & Arthur 10th G3 Agility (146)
Jenny & Guv 29th Senior Olympia Qualifier (76) – *qualified for Olympia*

WBSDS 1-2 August (KC)

Sue & Mischief 1st G1-3 Agility (65 G3)
Sue & Mischief 1st C1-3 ABC Jumping (29)
Sue & Mischief 1st G3-5 Jumping (46 G3)
Sue & Cookie 1st C1-3 Jumping (70)
Sue & Mischief 2nd C1-3 ABC Agility (37)
Sue & Mischief 3rd G3-5 Jumping (58 G3)
Sue & Mischief 4th G1-3 Agility (56 G3)
Sue & Mischief 5th C1-3 Jumping (70)

Show results for Watchdog are taken straight from the Wiki; if you are not on the Wiki yet please talk to Gill Rhodes about getting access. If you do this your show results will also be added to the club spreadsheet by our spreadsheet magician Richard Kimber, and you will be eligible for the annual awards given out at each AGM – don't miss out!

Dogs In Need Beginners by Caroline, Leigh and Debbie

Now it all started September 2014 hearing all the amazing stories, memories and successes from 2014 DINAS it made us want to attend in 2015. All year we spoke at length and lots of thought went into the planning of our trip, from the early start to ensure we had enough time for Grace pit stops, the slow cooker contain a pre-made dinner of spaghetti bolognese and trying to figure out how on earth Caroline was going to fit everything in her car!!



Monday morning 6 o'clock we all set off, Grace was as good as gold and we managed to get more than half way before Caroline alerted us to a very strong smell coming from a sleeping baby needless to say yep we had to deal with an explosion in a car park!!!

The arrival at DINAS was brilliant 'Who Let The Dogs Out' and the refreshing cocktails were definitely gratefully received. Just from the scene at the entrance we knew it was going to be a show like no other! With the help of Dawn (and a very loud little lady who showed us all for the very 1st time she could roll over....proud mummy moment!!) we had our homes for the week set up by mid-afternoon.



Day 1 of competition we woke up to a downpour of rain, flooded tents and leaking gazebos! Despite the weather at 8 o'clock we were up and walking courses!

Molly started with graded 1-2 agility, not really expecting much I was forced to run as molly zoomed off the start line at full speed! Managing to get round the course and feeling very happy with our run, we

were shocked when we found out she had won the class making us grade 3! Her runs for the rest of the day were all good to giving us a 3rd and clear.

Although Tia's 2 runs resulted in 2 E's one very nice judge made my day by commenting on how amazing Tia is. That rain nearly killed me off but thanks to my amazing company/baby sitters I was able to keep Grace warm and dry for the day. Flo started off the day with a couple of E's and shocking waits but she was so excited! We did manage a jumping round with only 5 faults and it was just the weave entry.

Day 2 we have sun yay!!!!!! Thankfully we were able to dry everything from the day before. Tia: So another day another 3 runs and another 3 E's but again one very nice judge made my day by commenting on Tia's potential.

Molly: After hearing that a 1st and a 3rd in the Classics qualifiers on Tuesday meant that me and Molly could be close to qualifying for the finals the fear and competitiveness set in. I was adamant that if I was to make the finals I would be too scared to run but determined to try and qualify! Getting another 1st and 3rd on Wednesday meant I had qualified joint top of my grade! And that's when the fear began to sink in!! Feeling sick with nerves all evening, then having nightmares all night, at 3am I gave up trying to sleep, laying as still as I could to not wake Molly I just replayed the nightmare over and over again!

Flo: Only 1 E today so that was better. We managed a little wait on a couple of runs - that was if there was no tunnel in sight!! The agility run was good apart from flying off the seesaw and getting her weave entry so 10 faults today.

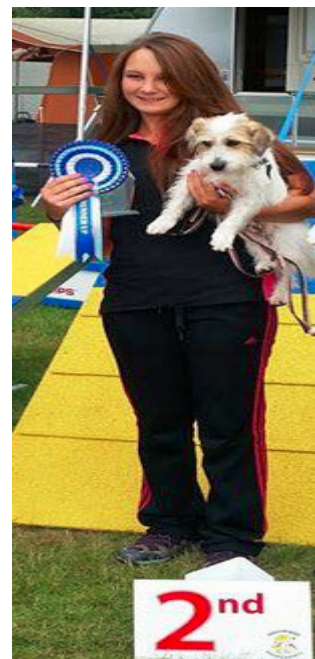
Stephen arrived!!! His first agility camping trip with people he thought were too 'posh' for us to socialise with. That evening we had planned this great bbq we even invited guests and it turned out not many of us was very good at bbqing so the guests ended up cooking our dinner.

Day 3 'GO LEIGH' 'GO MOLLY'

We knew Leigh was super nervous and anxious but all of us on the sidelines were also nervous and anxious for her!!!! But they both did us so proud!!!!

I can honestly say I have never been so nervous about doing anything in my life! Queuing up with Debbie by my side and everyone else sat round I tried to concentrate on remembering the course but just ended up panicking about everything that could go wrong. Even the lady behind me said she wasn't nervous until she was stood behind me!

We started off slow but picking up pace and a near miss with a dodgy contact but we made it round and ended up coming 2nd! I've never felt more proud of Molly and am so happy with how she ran that day! A feeling that overwhelmed me was the reaction of other people – Wendy crying as she filmed me and my mum in tears on the phone as I told her and all the lovely comments from all the other club members. WELL DONE LEIGH & MOLLY!!!!



The funniest moment for me that day, Grace decides she's hungry and wants feeding. I was sat watching the Juniors final running while feeding Grace the heavens open and the only shelter I could get is the brolly in front so I stand up with Grace who I thought at this point was still attached to discover she wasn't and I had my whole boob on display milk going everywhere. After composing myself I was then informed the finals were being live streamed and I'd just exposed myself to everyone watching. I believed this for a number of hours!!!! Lol

Day 4 Tia – here we go again – 3 runs 3 E's (has anyone got the picture yet!!!) Molly had another great day with a 3rd in the Agility Club Starter's agility, a 3rd in jumping and a distracted E. Flo great day today no E's just a problem with the weaves again and waiting for me to catch up so got a refusal so ended the day with 2x5 and a 10 very happy with her though. Great evening entertainment and the team quiz and I'm sure if they gave a prize to the most shocking team we would of won hands down!!



Day 5 Last day

Tia, oh wait you guessed it 3 runs 3 E's!!!! Molly, this is the day I can say agility broke me, I felt more exhausted today than I did after a week in Ibiza, we had 2 runs both with 5 faults. Flo had an E and then a 5 today, but finally we got a clear round and nailed the weaves. It was a cracking round and ended up with 4th place, so I have decided that she needs week long competition so she can settle down!!

Tia and Molly did the pairs. We watched the large and mediums run their course and we both agreed we could do this. Our small course came round to walking and it harder than any course we had run before – we had to send Tia in the wrong end of the tunnel and send Molly over a long jump and back on herself through the weaves on her not-so-good side. Well, we ran the course and we did those bits perfectly! Tia ran straight down and Caroline handled her amazingly into the tunnel, Molly flew her long jump, found the entry and weaved like a pro. It was a run we are both very proud of, even if Tia added an extra jump and Molly decided we needed one less! We did amazingly and had so much fun we are already planning our next pairs so watch out for the future pairs champions!!!

We spent the evening listening and dancing the night away to the band – they were brilliant.

Well what can we add, we all had an absolute amazing time at DINAS. Great courses that were set at appropriate beginner level, great company with lifetime friends. Grace was an absolute angel all week and absolutely loved her first DINAS experience watching/listening to the dogs, laying around on the grass in the sunshine, making lots of friends and learning to roll over.



So for us roll on August 2016 and for anyone else thinking of going next year go for it!!! Oh unfortunately we can only add a picture of Molly with all her trophies but there is always next year for Tia and Flo!!! Molly did us all proud xx

Caroline Howes, Leigh Wilkinson and Debbie Chapman

Merlin passes away after enjoying a three year retirement

It's with sadness that I have to report that WDTC regular from 2000 to 2012, Merlin has passed away. Many of the Club's old timers will remember Merlin - the little black pointy-eared barking speed demon and his handler Karen. Merlin enjoyed a full three years of retirement, after giving up training. Over the years with WDTC he attended countless agility demos, trying a little flyball and achieving his Bronze, Silver and Gold Good Citizen's awards under Jacky and Ian's watchful eye.

It was Easter 2000 when I chose the dog formerly known as 'Rocky' at the RSPCA Blackberry Farm Animal Centre near Aylesbury. They knew little of Rocky/Merlin's early life, he'd been mistreated and they thought was a 3 or 4 years old collie-cross. The WDTC consensus was that he was 1 or 2 years old and if you stood him next to a whippet it looked a more likely hereditary.



As the only dog not barking on the kennel block I thought this quiet, content and calm little fellow would be ideal for me and my cat. First impressions proved inaccurate; his favourite pastime was chasing the cat, in fact any cat. A stair gate was hastily installed to keep the two apart and the cat managed to hang on a further 5 years with constant harassment.

I was looking forward to dog walking, but the summer of 2000 was wet and cold. More successful was obedience training, where Merlin proved himself an expert at performing tricks for clicker and treats – maintaining that behaviour and harnessing his enthusiasm was more challenging. Constant barking, jumping up and general hyperactivity at agility made him a challenge for a first time handler - whatever happened to that quiet dog in the kennel. On the occasions we could pull things together he was lightening quick and rarely had a fence down. However, the frustration of every first round being a car crash of an event, and being time-short, convinced me that I did not want to run competitively.

Like most dogs, Merlin has experienced tragedy, illness, triumphs and traumas. An auto-immune response laid him low for 6 weeks when he was young and a couple of dog bites made him wary for a few years. But, perhaps his biggest challenge was the arrival twin boys, Luke and Jamie, in 2007.



Never a fan of small children they proved tolerable up until the point they started crawling. Behind the re-utilised stair gate Merlin whined grumpily; until they were old enough to steer clear and he was able regain his hold on the sofa. Amazingly, when the boys reached 3.5 years he was willing to run agility with them (if they had treats). Luke often said what a good choice of dog Merlin was and they both miss him, as do I.

Loving and loyal, Merlin liked to curl up on laps and could sleep for hours (the ideal office dog) yet was still ready, at the drop of a hat, for any activity. He loved walks in the country, but happily adjusted to walking with kids push chairs, bikes and scooters around town.

A back injury, sustained whilst jumping out of the bath (his idea, not mine), decided his retirement from agility. Eight weeks or so on and he was picking up a dragging rear leg and running across the park again. He never fully recovered his mobility, but it wasn't until about a year ago that walks became increasingly slow, but we kept them up until the day before his last, as he still enjoyed them.



So, a little stiff at the back, a little grey and on the deaf side, Merlin remained an active, content little dog to the last. Even when he found in the early summer of 2015 that if he stood still too long his back end would sag - he just wasn't prepared to give up. And that's how it remained right up until his last day, after a hearty breakfast on holiday in Devon he attempted to chase the farm cats before going out for a ride in the car. Later in the evening a sudden stroke took him from us and a trip to vets followed to carry out the 'kind thing to do'. And what of his last walk - on the preceding day - it was on Dartmoor - he really, truly, lived life to the full. What a dog!

A big thank you to WDTC members for all your help, support and friendships.

Karen Leahy

The FMBB BSD Agility World Championships 2015

Well, I think I rather over-achieved last year's agility objectives... I'd been a member of the British Belgian Shepherd Dog (BSD) squad three times, with Charcoal in 2004 (Spain) and Gimli in 2008 (Slovakia) and 2009 (Czech Republic), and was working up to getting Mischief in; so as she had only just started competing last year I was aiming (rather highly ☺) for a top ten placing in both agility and jumping in order to qualify to try out for the squad. She scraped in with a 4th and a 5th in jumping and a 10th in agility in August last year - just made it in time!

So, off to the tryouts in October with the aim of seeing how she coped with the much bigger and trickier FCI courses. 2 jumping and 2 agility rounds to gain points in, against the other more experienced, higher graded dogs. She coped brilliantly, baby mistakes (she was only just 2½), and blow me she ended up 5th!!! As the top 4 make up the team and the next 4 go as individuals, we were off to the Czech Republic - and she'd be only just 3 - how would she cope??

The British team is funded by the 2 national BSD clubs who each run an agility show to raise the money to send them - we have found that the best way is to hire a coach, taking half the

seats out and replacing them with 8 cages, and getting someone else to do the driving – it's a long way.

So we set off from Southam at 3.45am on Tuesday 5th May, having transferred all our gear into the coach in the dark, picked up the last 2 squad members from Maidstone services, and on to get the Eurotunnel. We arrived at our German overnight stop at about 6pm, found rooms, walked and settled dogs and went down to the restaurant for much needed drinks and dinner.



Up early the next morning, stopping every 2-3 hours to let the dogs stretch their legs, and we arrived at Pisek, Czech Republic about mid afternoon on Wednesday. We had booked a hotel actually in Pisek, only for the team manager to receive an email on Good Friday telling her that the hotel was closed and our booking therefore cancelled – thank goodness for mobile internet as she managed to find another hotel (with 9 rooms free and that took dogs!!), unfortunately it was another 45 minutes south of the venue. That wasn't the only problem – then they changed the day of the opening ceremony from Thursday to Wednesday... well we'd got everything booked and there was no way we could get there a day earlier! As it turned out, neither could a lot of teams, including the home team!

So we stopped in Pisek to scout out the venue for the next day, claim our spot and put up our tents, then continued to find our hotel.

The coach driver negotiated very narrow streets and got us to the hotel –we were only allowed to stop the coach in the square for 15 minutes to offload before they had to go off and park elsewhere. Dinner in the hotel – good food, good booze and cheap 😊.



Thursday morning – off to the venue for vet checks, including swabs to check whether bitches were in season, and practice session. Whoops, where have our tents gone? Confusion over

where they can be pitched – not on the pitches said the groundsman! Well we were not about to leave our dogs in tents in the other stadium, so we set up camp on the stands (below).



More confusion – we're in alphabetical order for practice, but as GB? Or UK? Turns out they'd moved our practice time from afternoon to morning and we'd missed it, so they slotted us in at the end. We had a good practice session, none of the dogs being fazed by the chain tyre, the unpegged weaves or the flimsy-seeming jumps and contacts. Then a long wait for the first competition, separate from the main championships but we'd all entered for the practice.

We have our running orders, and then are split into groups of about 30 to walk the course at a time – we have 7 minutes then are all herded out ready for the next lot. The continentals all speed about running the course, best not to get in the way.

It's all very organized, the tannoy saying who is on the start line, and who the next 2 in line are – no running out of order here! I forgot about the tannoy, set Mischief up and it announced us, making her jump and break her wait... so we got an E, but after that she didn't put a paw wrong ☺. Lesson learnt for next courses, don't leave her until the tannoy has finished...

Friday, and WCs proper start. We are issued with passes to the venue, and bibs with our running number on – we keep this number, and have to wear the (very fetching, bright orange) bibs when running – first course starts at number 1, second at number 40, third at 170 etc. Nerves set in now... I don't normally care what my running order is, but then I only turn up at the ring when I'm going to run; it's very different watching everyone go and waiting for your turn, I'd much rather run early and get it over with.

The courses seem to get longer and longer! Finishing up with the last agility run on Saturday being 195m... last three obstacles are dog walk, not the jump straight ahead but the far end of the tunnel on the right just before the jump...I'm running out of puff as we streak along the dog walk and I just have enough to get a ketchker off the end of the dog walk into the tunnel and over the finish.



Out of our 4 runs we had 2 E's, a 5R and a CR – over the moon with Mischief, the E's were silly baby mistakes where I wasn't in the right place as I hadn't reckoned on her speed, and she wasn't experienced enough to help.

Sunday, and we wouldn't be coming back to the hotel so packed everything up and checked out – again, the coach could only stay 15 minutes in the square so

everything had to be out ready to load – and we got a police escort out!! Due, I think, to the fact that the only way the coach could get out of the square was up a one-way street the wrong way, and even that was a very tight squeeze.



Finals day, I could relax as I hadn't made the finals 😊. The heavens opened right in the middle of our guys walking the finals course, so they stopped the course walking; then decided that because the grass was now so slippery the course wouldn't do, so they changed it a bit and the course walking began all over again...

Then began a loooong wait for the closing ceremony – time for a team photograph:



Eventually (only two hours after the stated time...) we all paraded into the main stadium and took up our place for the closing ceremony:



Unfortunately the ceremony went on far too long and we had to leave before it had finished (we weren't the only ones, nor the first). And then we didn't get to our overnight stop until 11pm, due to not being able to find it... Tempers were beginning to get a bit frayed...

Monday, and on to the Eurotunnel... Delays on the roads, we didn't stop as often as we had on the way down in order to make the booked train. We just made it in time for the booked train – but there's a problem in the tunnel and there's going to be a delay... our drivers did a bit of bargaining, something along the lines of "we've got the British Team on board, with eight dogs, and they've been on board all day" and we got on the train leaving NOW so we all rushed back out of the terminal and back into the coach – if we hadn't got on that one goodness knows how long we'd have been waiting.

Dropped off two people at Maidstone services again, then back to Southam – arriving in the dark again! Then everything out of the coach, including our cages, and off home – to arrive about midnight.

Would I do it again? Oh yes ☺ and next year the venue is France (about 45 minutes south of Paris) – the qualification for trying out is harder this year, need top 5 places in agility and jumping – but Mischief has managed that ☺ and the tryouts are November 28th.

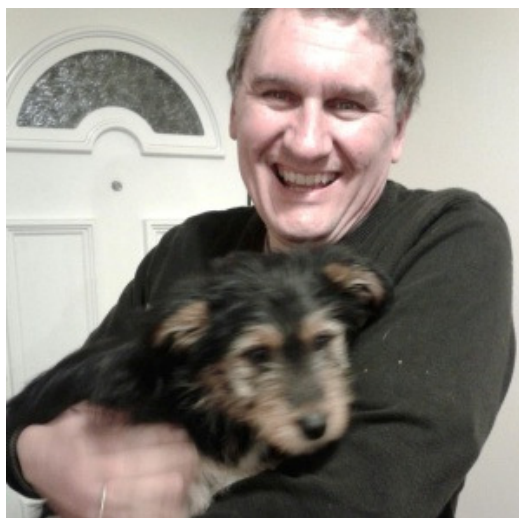
Sue Cuddon

Does Size Matter?

After 25 years of training and competing with large dogs, along came Fig. Alison has been nagging me about what is different with a medium since we started training, so I decided to write this. However all my large dogs have been collies, and Fig isn't so it may be more about the difference with an ABC.

Fig was a re-home puppy and from her description we expected her to grow into a large dog. When we saw her we realised there was a distinct possibility of this not being the case as she looked like a terrier cross. Over the next few months a normal-sized body developed, but with short legs! Official measuring confirmed my latest agility dog was a Medium.

Training was different from my previous dogs, all collies, as the attention span and stamina were and still are a lot shorter than I was used to. Training was adapted to numerous short sessions, of up to only 10 minutes, while other dogs in the same group could train for half an hour. By September 2014 Fig knew all the agility basics and she joined the beginners at club, but it was still a bigger shock than any large dog I've taken to club before. Fig is lower to the ground, harder to motivate and gets tired quicker, but we stuck to it and gradually improved.



Weaves were a separate entity and after Alison had taught Herbie in 5 weeks she took on Fig as a challenge. It took about 3 times as long due to the same issues as normal training – short attention span and the small detail I never taught her to retrieve. It then took a few more

weeks for Fig to transfer the weaving to me – I'm glad Alison stuck to it! Fig was two years old by this time, and still nowhere near ready for competing.

A week in May at a training camp with Toni Dawkins with Fig running entirely over small height led to an improvement in the partnership, but again all her training was in short blasts. The introduction of a Velcro food ball was a breakthrough. All my previous dogs have been toy motivated. After camp, with our confidence in each other improving along with Fig's understanding of the obstacles, I decided to enter standard classes, starting with just jumping. Due to my previous experience her contacts are reliable so agility classes soon followed.

Course walking is a different proposition with a medium dog. As classes tend to be smaller you often only have about 10 minutes to walk a course and it is odd to be able to walk without meeting a huge knot of handlers gathered at the difficult bits. With a class being anything from 6 to 30 dogs it goes through quick and you have to be queuing as soon as you've finished walking to be sure of not missing your run. Being used to classes of 50 up to 200 this all took a bit of getting used to and I had an accidental habit of running last in the class for a few shows.



Fig needs more interaction in a queue than any of my large collies have – wind her up too soon and she's bored by the time we run, leave it too late and she's busy socialising or sniffing. We are starting to get the timing right but still make mistakes.

It took a few shows to get round a course due to distractions – sniffing, other dogs being too

distracting, invisible weaves, leaving the ring to look for her toy. Her first clear round was in Aileen's ring at Thames in June, and she has been better in agility classes leading to progression in short time from Grade 3 to Grade 5.

The future in Grade 5 is going to be interesting and a challenge with courses getting more intricate, but the winter break from shows gives us a chance to practice before next season. After that, do I want to get to Grade 6 and 7? It would be good to do so, but if we don't then as long as we continue to enjoy competing at Grade 5 that is the most important thing.

Now back to my original question "does size matter?" the answer is Yes and No!

Yes – in my opinion it is so much easier to progress up the grades in Medium and Small as my winning runs would not have been fast enough in a Large dog class but due to lower entry numbers she won both G3 and G4 agility with held contacts.

No – it doesn't matter what size a dog is so long as everyone enjoys themselves, whatever the outcome that is the most important thing. This has been harder with Fig than my collies but she definitely now enjoys herself.

Kevin Pearce

*Don't forget to send items for the next issue
This is YOUR newsletter, let's hear from YOU!*