



Axstane Agility Club

Members' Newsletter July 2010

www.axstane.co.uk

Flying kitchen!

What a fantastic show! Perhaps made more memorable by that flying kitchen, I witnessed it first hand! As Gina, Kerry, Bramble and myself were busy doing our thing behind the secretary's desk, we heard a considerable crash and bang from the tent acting as the kitchen galley. Kerry rushed over to investigate and whilst she looked round at Gina and me in horror, the tent suddenly took off in true twister style (yes I am a fan of Over a Rainbow) and flew over the marquee. Fortuitously it landed without any injury to human or dog and it turned out that all that was lost were some bread sticks.

I hope you enjoyed the show and I wish to pass on the thanks of the Committee to all of you that attended for your help and assistance without which the show cannot run. Thank you all!

Happy competing, Nicky

Club will be closed this year on:

12th August to 2nd September inclusive (for KC Festival, DINAS – summer break)
4th November (fireworks!)
23rd and 30th Dec (for Christmas).
The 16th Dec will be a fun competition night – free to all members

Must watch....Chris Evans doing a sporting agility challenge. See it at:

www.agilitynet.com



Well done to:

Richard with Dream for winning into Grade 5
and Roy with Star winning into Grade 3

Martine for her Reserve Agility Certificate with
Moby Dee AND for qualifying for the circular
knockout finals at Crufts 2011

I know many of you got placed at our show, so well done to you all: Keith with Bella, Suzy with Ollie, Roy with Star, Kim with Wallace, Melanie with Bonnie, Vanessa with Archie, Giselle and Freya (particularly for qualifying for the Connection finals at DIN), Kerry with Millie, Linda A with Gem (I hope I have included everyone, sorry if I have missed you).



Keith with Bella gained 9th place in 1-3 Agility at our show this year. This was her first placing. Well done, Keith – it shows that all the hard work has paid off!



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Who's Who: Linda Armour

Joined Club: I joined Axstane before its conception when it was a private Club called Touch Point run by Tony Warren. Tony decided that we should try and get KC Registration. After all the formalities Axstane Agility Club was born. The name was chosen by Vicki Adams: apparently the area where we train was known in ancient times as Axstane.

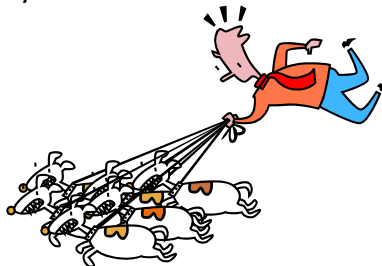
The Bug: I used to do obedience with my miniature schnauzer and wanted something a bit more fun. An obedience pal suggested agility and introduced me to Val Venables who had equipment at her Kennels - then the agility explosion happened! It increased to two dogs, then the camper van, then a caravan as my dog population grew. The bug had well and truly bitten me!! I have never gone over my four dog maximum limit though, I have had 3 collies at the same time, but as you all know my recent additions to the pack have been a little on the smaller size.

Agility Hopes: Sad to say I no longer have any big ones, well I do, but on a small scale. These days if my dog gets the weaves or stays on the contacts I am happy. After 22 years in agility (yes 22!!) I still see my agility as it used to be, a social hobby.

Let's face it, outside our agility bubble our families and work colleagues think we are mental. My work colleagues are horrified when I tell them the costs. Then add that I forgot to mention that if you come 1st-3rd you get a trophy as well as a piece of ribbon!!! To change that look of horror I explain the social side of our doggy hobby - the camping, the club and its members and how many great friends you have met at this great past time of ours over the years.

I have been to Crufts many times and made a lot of Agility Finals. I now throw away the rosettes and bin the horrible trophies. My one regret is that I only ever made the semis for Olympia never the final but then I think, sod it..... I would have only been a nervous wreck anyway.

What else is there to know: I came to London to work in 1979 from my native Belfast (just in case any of you mistook me for a cockney) :-) and ended up staying. I have worked for the majority of that time for Shell in their offices at Waterloo (hate the travelling) I have four dogs at the moment, 13 yr old Red, 7 yr old Bob, Gem 4 and Zep 7 months. The old ones work or have worked in agility for some time and hopefully my new puppy will show some aptitude for this as well. I also love Theatre, and the odd Gin and Tonic when socialising with my friends.

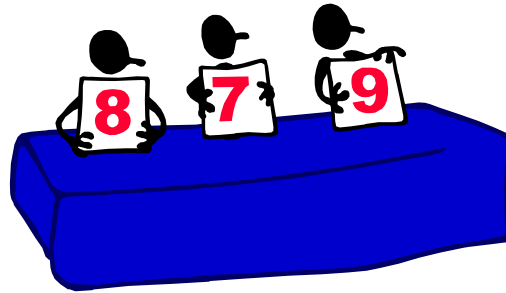




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The Judge: why be one?

Axstane has two members who currently judge, Martine and Melanie, and Vanessa has just passed her Judges' course. Why do they do it? The judge has to stand in the middle of the ring all day long and watch every single dog that competes. That could be as many as 450 dogs. The judge designs the course and is never liked by all the handlers who run the course. It will suit some and not others. It is never a good idea to stay by the ring while the course is being walked. You may hear comments you would rather not!

How do you get to become a judge? Today all new judges have to attend a KC Approved Agility Seminar on Judging and pass the assessment test. As soon as you have done this you can be let loose on the competitors. Judges are invited by the show organisers and may well have offered their services while at the preceding year's show. Once the judge has accepted the invitation, this is considered a binding contract. At that stage it is usually agreed the level and size of dogs you are prepared to judge, and whether you are happy with both jumping and agility courses. Your name is then included in the list of Judges on the schedule, and usually your classes are assigned to you. On occasions you may be asked to alter the class you are judging depending on the numbers of entries received and the organisers need to balance the numbers of dogs in each ring. Most judges start judging the size of dog that they feel comfortable with and the lower levels of class. Although, it has to be said, that the decisions you have to make when judging Grade 1 handlers are often quite challenging as you see some very individual behaviour!

So, you accepted your invitation and you are told what classes you are judging. You need to design your course. You want something that will challenge your handlers, but where there is a fair chance that they will achieve a clear round if they deserve it. You need to be able to see all the obstacles clearly and try not to have to walk too far to be able to do this. For an agility course you could walk as far as 40 yards for each dog. That is over 11 miles if you judge over 400 dogs. You need to be able to be seen by your scrimmer. Consider your ring party and don't make the pad stewards or the lead picker have to walk too far! If you can have the next dog waiting on the line that will certainly speed things up.

Continued.....



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Continued...The Judge: why be one?

The big day is getting closer and you need to send your ring plan to the show organisers so that your course can be laid out in advance for you. You don't put the numbers by the jumps, but it helps to say which jumps are the start and finish. (Trust me....having built a course for a judge the wrong way round once!) So, you arrive at the show. You feel very important...a camping space is saved for you near your ring. Then you check your course. If you are judging more than one class it helps to build all the courses and mark the obstacle positions with spray paint so that it is easier for your ring party to make the course changes. This is probably the first time you have seen your course for real to be able to assess the distances and angles. You may run your own dog over the course to check it out and work out the course time. Don't be afraid to ask for advice from a more experienced judge, or as in my case a handler of big dogs so that I can be sure they have enough room. Inevitably you may, however, get conflicting advice. So listen to everyone, then make your own informed decision.

The big day arrives. You check your course for the final time and put the numbers on show. It is ready for walking. You get dressed up to look smart (ring etiquette) and go to do your briefing. Then into the ring and the first dog is on the line. Hooray...it does a good round and the handler is pleased. You can relax and start to enjoy your day.

The class is over and your ring party write up the places. It is presentation time and it is wonderful to see how pleased most handlers are. What do you get for being a judge? You will get a gift, a free breakfast and probably a cooked lunch; you will usually get free camping and you may even have the entries for one of your own dogs paid for; you will be offered travelling expenses; you will get a headache and a bad back; you will end the day wondering where the time went and feel really tired. But in the end I feel really privileged to have watched so many lovely dogs having a good time with their handlers and enjoying their day at the agility show.

So give some thought to that person in the middle of the ring. They are doing it for fun and to give you fun. You never know, it might be you one day.

Melanie Fisher

Find out more about all the roles at an agility show at:

www.agilitynet.co.uk/shows/ringpartyjobs_agilitywhisperer.html





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Mr Philip Pirrip of Great Expectations.....Pip to his friends

In 1998 Pip, approximately aged one at the time, was found as a stray in London and taken to Battersea Dog's home. He was re-homed but was too difficult to handle and was returned to Battersea after 2 weeks, where he refused to eat, contracted kennel cough and was extremely fear aggressive. He was in the rehabilitation centre when I visited one Saturday and they asked if I would be prepared to see him since I had a country home and experience with dogs. This was going to be their last attempt to re-home "Silly Billy" as they called him, because they could do no more for him, and with so many other dogs needing attention, he was to be destroyed on the Monday.

Pip was exceedingly thin and I thought that he was a lurcher. He had a horrible look in his eye of complete fear and he curled his lip and nipped me when I touched his neck to put a collar on. By using a lead as a lasso we managed to get him outside where he bounced about with strange over enthusiasm. Seeing this, I fell in love and could not leave him there!

For 3 months, Pip cowered in the corner in the mornings whether he had soiled the floor or not, he has always been extremely dirty since we had him. We could not touch his neck and assumed that he had been held roughly by the neck in the past. He was terrified of other dogs, wanting to kill them and curled his lip at any people that strayed too close. Training began straight away which included obedience (achieving the Kennel Club Good Citizen Gold level) and going on to competition classes although I didn't compete him! Socialisation classes (they were dodgy....other owners were extremely patient and brave) and agility.

It has been a long haul getting Pip to the friendly, confident chap that he is today and you would not recognise him from the poor emaciated, wild eyed dog that I met 11 years ago. Pip has always enjoyed all of his training, especially agility, and has retained an element of madness throughout, as you are all aware! So it is with great sadness that I have decided to retire him from Axstane but it has been getting a bit too much for him. His mind is able but his body is getting tired and it is only fair to stop now before he hurts himself.

We will both miss you all very much, more than you will ever know, and I would especially like to thank the trainers, without whom Pip would never have achieved the standard that he has reached. I know that he has never competed but to see the happy and contented dog he is now is good enough for me.

Thank you all, Christine and Pip

