

FROM CUSTOMER CARE TO CANINES

"Brilliant, 100% excellent", "A wonderful book, showing your endless research and devotion to the breed", "This should be in every owner's library", "A smash hit", "A superb piece of work", "Destined to become a reference work unlikely to be superseded in our lifetime" and "A truly wonderful addition to canine literature".

Not content with gaining a Plain English Campaign 'Inside Write' Award in 1997 for her guided learning package "Handling Complaints at London Airports", Complaints Co-ordinator Linda Skerritt, is now winning world-wide acclaim for her work "**Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen - A Definitive Study**". The book, published by Doral, Sun City, Arizona, is now available in the UK just in time for this month's Crufts Dog Show.

Linda, who is based at Heathrow, co-authored the work with American Valerie Link. Having owned PBGVs, as they are known, since the early '80s, the long-time friends are well known breeders, exhibitors and judges of this ancient French hound breed both in the United States and Great Britain.

The present-day Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen - the small, low-set, rough-coated hound of the Vendée, is a relatively new breed to British shores, having arrived in 1969. However, a rough-haired Basset, distinctly different from the present-day PBGV, did exist in England in the late 19th/early 20th century. While Valerie visited France and researched breed history with French huntsmen and hound experts, Linda became engrossed in its early origins in England. Both were especially fortunate in locating, and then being given access to, previously unexamined kennel records, archives and albums of photos dating back to the 19th century. A researcher's dream come true!

However, the research did have its ups and downs. Linda's elation at tracing and visiting the 1,500 acre estate in Yorkshire, home of the late 19th century owner of the first rough-coats to enter England, was tempered with the frustration of learning from a nearby photographic studios that many precious glass plates of dogs from that era had been used as hard-core for someone's drive-way! Set against this, Valerie fared better when large boxes containing precious French club archives arrived on her doorstep. Between them they have marvelled at what they were able to find out in the short space of just over a year and they are now pleased at being able to share these exciting discoveries with owners and prospective buyers worldwide.

Linda now looks back on 1998/99 with some horror wondering how she managed to combine her work of handling London Airports' complaints with the many thousands of hours devoted to researching and writing about her favourite breed. Were the endless long hours all worth it? Of course they were!