

Basset Griffon Vendéen (Petit)

9 / 3 / 2018

CRUFTS IS OVER for us for another year. From the entry of 75 for judge Per Knudsen, with very few absentees, from Junior Dog he found his DCC in Soletrader Bully Holly, in the ownership of Erin & Oliver Robertson and Lizzie Greenslade. RDCC went to Irina Antipova's Aldia Billi Bom from the Russian Federation. BCC, her 5th, was Gavin Robertson's, Wendy Doherty & Lizzie Greenslade's Ch Soletrader Rita Ora and RBCC Gavin, Oliver & Erin Robertson's Around Zlightly Different with Soletrader with his choice for BOB going to Buddy Holly. BP was Ceri McEwan's Marunnel Madame Cholet and, the two Veteran winners were Jane Brown's Ch Soletrader Louis Vuitton and Paul Osbourne's Ch Debucher Jezebel at Braego ShCM, with BV going to the bitch. Having said for years it was inexplicable why no BV was awarded as at other championship shows, it seems the KC have finally taken note of exhibitors' views. There were entries from several overseas counties - Russia, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Italy, Croatia, Poland and Slovakia, with many others having travelled just to watch especially from Scandinavia. Buddy Holly was short-listed in the group judged by Albert Wight.

The Discover Dogs booths were as popular as ever, with a steady stream of visitors. Paul Stallard has done a great job of decorating them early Thursday morning, though I did spot that the leaflet rack was upside down! Thanks to all those who are helping the club by representing our breeds. Glenna Clark with our pup Beaujons Vgabond did a stint on the PBGV booth with Pat Gregory early Friday morning. Watching the TV programme late Friday evening, we were amazed to see Bond on the screen.

After a nervous week when much of England was gripped in snow, the BGV Club handbook finally went to print early this week. Although the printers had posted me a copy first class on 27 February, with Royal Mail grinding to a halt, it didn't arrive until 5 March. The printers hadn't been able to get into work either, so we were on tenterhooks whether or not the book would be out in time for Crufts. The printers were excellent though and, promising our job was a priority, ran off another copy for our Treasurer, Colin Makey, to go and see early Monday. By this time my copy had also arrived. Having picked up on a couple of points, we gave the go-ahead to print and Colin collected the books two days later. Nothing like cutting it fine but we knew several visitors from overseas were keen to get their copy at Crufts and Colin Makey did a sterling job of handing out those pre-ordered and selling even more. If anyone has yet to order one, go to <http://www.bgvclub.co.uk/club-publications> or contact Colin Makey on 01469 540260 or gairside@btinternet.com. Price to those who advertised is £6, to others £12. Postage extra.

You will have seen that Roger Bannister died this week just before his 89th birthday. He will always be remembered as the man who was the first 4-minute miler, having achieved this feat on 6 May 1954 at Iffley Road track in Oxford. In 1998 Jenna and I met Roger's cousin, Ethne Bannister, while I was researching for the PBGV book which Valerie Link and I produced. Mabel Tottie, one of the many Basset breeders of the late 19th century was attracted to rough-coated Bassets and brought some to her large estate at Coniston Hall, near Skipton, West Yorkshire. She soon became recognised at the main breeder of rough-coats. Ethne and he family had bought the 1,800-acre estate in 1969 from the Tottie family and she invited us to visit.



We learned that the Bannisters first decision was a heartbreaking one as the old hall, an early Victorian pile with a frontage almost 100 yards long, had to be completely knocked down. It was riddled with dry rot. It took several years to demolish the old building and for the family to build a brand new house using much of the original stone. It was much smaller but far more elegant, overlooking the lake. Roger Bannister was a frequent visitor.

My dreams were answered as it transpired Mrs Bannister was a keen local historian and her records of the Tottie family were a treasure trove. Remains of the old kennels were near the main house and, as Jenna and I walked our PBGVs in the surrounding woodland, it was a somewhat sobering thought to realise that ours were probably the first "rough-coats" to be on the estate since Mabel Tottie lived there nearly 100 years ago.

Since we visited, Ethne has kept in touch and Coniston Hall has now been home to the Bannister family for nigh on five decades. Changes have taken place and where what originally started life as a farm shop selling produce from the estate, the now 1,400 acres boast one of North Yorkshire's premium landmark destination hotels offering a wide range of outdoor activities. I doubt if any of those that stay appreciate the history of the location but, if you are tempted to visit, go to www.theconistonhall.com.

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