

HAPPY NEW YEAR! I hope your New Year's Eve was uneventful on the dog v fireworks front. Although I had anticipated an evening of dogs petrified from fireworks, in my wildest dreams I had not bargained for 9hrs of it. The last firework went off at 2.40am, by which time I was so tired from trying to console distraught dogs that all I wanted to do was crash out and sleep. Is it too much to ask for introduction of a law reducing decibels and restricting the times when fireworks can be let off. I am beginning to think there is a lot to be said for living in a rural area away from social miscreants who have money to burn. But, here we are in a new year, a new decade!

Not unnaturally, as we enter 2020, thoughts go back twenty years to the turn of the century. At that time, it was early days in allowing the breed to be shown either on the ground or table. Nowadays I can think of maybe only two judges who adhere the "old school" of wanting to go over dogs on the ground which is frowned on by exhibitors whose PBGVs are not used to being loomed over from a height.

In 2000, the first PBGV champion of the millennium was Vivien Phillips' home-bred Debucher Mioche and, affiliated with the other Basset breeds, we embarked on the first Joint Basset Breeds Open Show which was held at Ryton-on-Dunsmore. There were a staggering 51 trophies on offer for BGVs and, with Stella Blackmore judging the Grands, Linda Millar Mackenzie, our Crufts 2020 judge, had an entry of 69 PBGVs, less absentees. BD and BOB went to Lewis' Garwedd du Greffier du Roi at Tangaer, RBD Phillips' Debucher N'importe Quoi, BB Phillips' Debucher Mange Tout, RBB Skerritt's Jamars Saffi of Monkams. BP was Robertson & Gadsby's Willowbrae Amazing Grace with Afterglow who also went BPIS. This joint venture lasted for six years with a move of venue during that time to Bretby Conference Centre, near Burton on Trent. Much thought has been given even recently to resurrecting what was certainly an enjoyable feature of the Basset breeds show year, with suggestions for venue and date. However, unless finances allow and the Basset breeds' stars align, at the moment it seems unlikely that this event will take place again.



At March's Crufts, Valerie Link and I held a book-signing session on the Our Dogs breed stand for our "Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen – A Definitive Study", which had just been published. All copies sold out some years back though I still hold a couple or it can still be found ranging in price from £1.49 for a used copy to around £70 new. One person whose copy must be worth a mint is Ann Stringer from Ohio. A one-time regular visitor to the UK shows, Ann used to carry her PBGV book around with her and collect signatures of those mentioned. It was fascinating to see the book filling up with signatures against the names that now form part of our history of the breed.

Two years' planning went into the ambitious project of holding the first ever World Congress, which took place in October at Newark & Notts Showground in conjunction with the club's championship show. There DCC went to Garwedd du Greffier du Roi, giving him his title. RDCC went to the only overseas exhibit Jolanda Huisman's Propriete Prive des Rocs du Plessis. BCC & BIS went to Willowbrae Amazing Grace with Afterglow, RCC was Pam Aldous' Ch Dehra Jasmine with Sweetdean, BP Gadsby & Robertson's Afterglow Woody Woodpecker.



On the health front problems with epilepsy, eyes, some signs of aggression and irresponsible breeding were on new chairman Evan Roberts' agenda. At the AGM, outgoing chairman, Sandy Mackenzie, was elected as Vice President. In those days it was usual to see both President and Vice Presidents attend committee meetings, bringing their wealth of experience to any meeting albeit without a vote. A KC Working Party had decreed that organising judges' seminars and assessments should become a very important part of any canine society's agenda. Twenty years down the line and we await the Judges Competency Framework Review findings to see exactly how our future judges' training will pan out. Let's hope one failing in the new system will be resolve, that of lack of a strong and open link between the Breed Education Co-ordinator and officers of the breed club.

Looking back over 2019, with limited showing Crufts RBIS winner Sara Robertson & Wendy Doherty's Ch Soletrader Magic Mike comes in as #2 Top Hound and Gemma McCartney's Ch Soletrader Freddie Mercury Top PBGV Puppy. Other results are awaited.

During the year several valued former committee members passed away – Audrey Herring, Diana Sadler and Sylvia Probert.

With POAG now under control thanks to the introduction in 2015 of the DNA test for detecting the mutant gene, attention is now turning to Epilepsy. It is hard to believe but it is now 23 years ago since the club agreed with the Animal Health Trust to participate in the scheme for DNA testing for Epilepsy. Under the revised and updated World Health Committee structure, whose collaboration will be welcome, it is hoped that finally some progress can be made.

Don't forget entries for Crufts close shortly – if you can afford it! Good luck and good health to all and to your PBGVs in 2020.