

Six Happy Trackers

When the sheep were moved out of the fields I got around to wondering if Xmas would be a good time to run some 'Beginner' and L1 & L2 tracking tests.

So the first job was to find an assessor at this busy time of year and fortunately Maurice Millington came to the rescue saying that he could be available on 'New Years' day. I easily managed to round up 6 teams as it seems that dog folk like to be doing something with their dogs over the Xmas period other than visiting family!.



Maurice Millington

The next dilemma was the unusually large amount of extremely windy and rain that we have been getting and wondered if at the last moment that I would have to call the whole thing off. Fortunately the weather gods were on our side and after a light frost in the morning the forecast rain didn't descend on us until we had finished around 2 o'clock.

First up were Colin & the GSD 'Remus' who was to attempt his L1 track for the first time. Remus couldn't quite hold back his excitement and nearly dashed off to do the track without

Colin. This team went on to do a brilliant track especially in the most difficult, rabbit chewed field. A good start.

Next was Marianne & Merri, also doing the L1, who were very nervous after just missing out passing last time.



Marianne & Merri

This team held it together especially coming down the last leg where it had later become apparent that someone had walked across the field. Good team work saved the day so well done. This was then followed by our last L1 team Michelle and Mia who were initially going to do the 'Beginners' test' but after a bit of a push, were encouraged to take the L1 test. Michelle took everything in her stride and Mia was on good form and tracked like a professional and at no point ever looking in trouble, so well done.



Ali & Chase

Next was the first of the L2's Ali with her X-breed dog 'Chase'. In the past Chase has struggled with aged tracks and Ali has done a lot of work in this area so it was interesting to see if Chase could cope with the 2 hour old track today. Chase had a good start and worked hard sorting out all the 'game' tracks and Ali has finally convinced him that stopping on bits of carpet and hosepipes would be worth his while. So a good pass for this team. Next up was Ann & Lottie. Lottie hasn't been the easiest of dogs, being a rescue who just loved to go off hunting, kidding her owner that this was the way!. After a lot of Ann's hard work and training, Lottie didn't find the animal tracks as enticing as she had previously and went on to pass the L2 test.



Lastly we had the two 'Beginners' tests, Jennie & Mischief and the judge's own young Labrador dog, who I assessed. First up was Jennie and Mischief who started off really well down the 'downwind leg'. Mischief then was highly distracted by further tracks (earlier dog walkers we assumed) and it was Jennies steering and persuasion that Mischief went on

to find the piece of carpet much to Jennie's relief!

Maurice ran his young 8 month old Labrador 'Ash' on the other 'Beginner's track' for me to assess. Ash was awesome and especially for a youngster and I am sure this team will go far.

So, a big thanks again to Maurice Millington for coming over to assess my group which ended with a 100% pass rate resulting in 6 happy trackers.

2nd Scentwork UK Trial

The second 'Scentwork Uk' trial ran on Sunday 8th November with a record number of 20 entries, 8 Level 2 and 12 Level 1's.

Our judge this time was Rob Harris from Medical Detection Dogs and his calm and confident manner really helped to put the competitors at ease throughout the day.

Also thank you to Domini Allday, our scribe, being an extremely experienced obedience judge and competitor, quickly got to grips with the 'Scentwork UK' marking system. Also thanks to Liz Ormerod who was our 'runner' for the day being responsible sorting out the 'running order' draws and rounding everyone up when it was their turn.

We started the day with the L2 table/chairs and the perimeter search for the Level 2 and first up was Karen Kendall and her terrier 'Charlie'. This team didn't experience any problems, finding both scents, well within the time which always abit of a relief for the both the judge and the organiser.



After all the Level 2 competitors had run the test was changed for the Level 1 competitors. Unfortunately we had one false alert in this section which meant that the pressure was on for this competitor in the next three sections.

Everyone then went outside for the vehicle searches again starting with the Level 2's. The L2's had to find two scented

articles on 3 vehicles and the scent hidden behind the wheel hub, on the first car proved to be quite difficult for some teams and one team particularly putting in a sterling effort unfortunately didn't manage to pass this section. The L1, although having just one vehicle to search, didn't have it all their own way as the wind became swirly making locating the source quite difficult and unfortunately one team failed this section too.



As there was enough time we decided to do the container search for the Level 2 dog before lunch. Rob decided that one scent should be wrapped in newspaper before being enclosed into a cycle pannier and the other placed into a small 'biscuit box' before being placed into another larger box and left to cook for 30 minutes. All the competitors worked this section well but most comical was Pepper the black Labrador thinking that he should retrieve the box to prove to mum Katheryne that she should definitely call the 'alert' on this one. After lunch and much eating of cake, the Level 1's did their container search and everyone passed this section.

The last test was the 'Exterior test' which seemed to cause a few problems last time and also seemed to cause some different problems this time. Rob hid the one of the scented articles under a very heavy roofing tile which was a test to see if the dogs would work that far from the handler and if the handler believed their dog as it looked like it had just fallen off the roof! Well most of the Level 2 dog weren't fooled by this, and ran straight to the heavy tile and managed to paw the item vigorously exposing the scented article and bringing it back to the handler, which didn't really matter as we had plenty of other scented articles on stand by.

So back to the village hall for a cup of tea, adding up the scores and writing the certificates and the results were:

Level 1

- 1st – Nicki & Rags – 98
- 2nd – Kate & Paddy – 98
- 3rd – Marianne & Kai – 96
- 4th – Marianne & Merri – 96
- 5th – Rick & Max – 96 clean sweep
- 6th – Susan – Lyla – 94 clean sweep
- 7th – Colin & Remus – 94 clean sweep
- 8th – Lisa & Gibbs – 94 clean sweep
- 9th – Jennie & Tinker – 94 clean sweep
- 10th – Chris & Marley – 74
- 11th – Michelle & Myah – 74
- 12th – Ali – Maya – 73



Level 2

- 1st – Kathereyne – Pepper – 96
- 2nd – Ann & Maisie – 96
- 3rd – Val & Indi – 94
- 4th – Nigel & Breezer – 94
- 5th – Ali & Chase – 84
- 6th – Karen & Charlie – 71



Again thank you to all the helpers for making the day run so smoothly and also for Sally Marchant from 'Naturally Happy Dogs' <http://www.naturallyhappydogs.com/> who filmed the event for everyone to view on her brilliant 'on-line' magazine.

Autumn Tracking Tests

Well I hoped to run some L1 and L2 tracking tests this Autumn but owing to the sheep moving into my fields, just after the hay was cut I wondered if it was going to be possible. So after a lot of running around and asking folk if they knew of any fields available, Ali Brannen who was hoping to take her L1, said that there might be a field where she kept her horse. Fortunately the field wasn't too far from where I lived so I went along with Ali to meet the owner and view it. Very kindly the owner agreed to let us use it and said that she would 'hold off' from muck spreading until after the test. I can't thank Deb enough. The field was narrow but very long and I knew that it would accommodate a couple of L1 tracks and possibly a 'Beginners' track too.

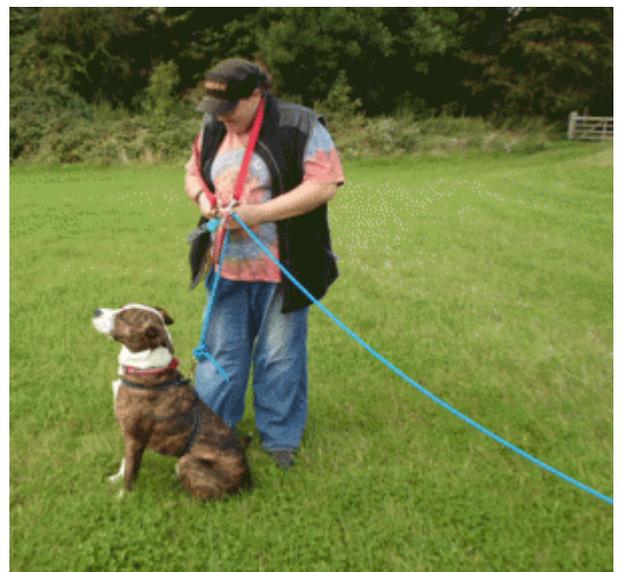
So now to pick a judge and it was after a chance meeting when I visited a gym whilst on holiday in Momouth, back in July, that I bumped into Maurice Millington as he happened to be the gym instructor! Well where else would you meet a potential judge! Maurice kindly agreed to judge for us so a date was fixed.

The morning dawned very foggy and I thought the tracking conditions would be perfect but unfortunately the sun came out and burned off the moisture making the conditions rather challenging. Nicola and Delphi her GSP, were first to track and successfully completed a box of 50 x 50 x 50 x 25 ending on one article. I run two beginner tracks, a 'pre-beginners' consisting of two legs and one article and a 'beginners', consisting of 4 legs, before going on to the L1. I feel that this gives the beginners a taste of competition and a chance to watch the L1's and see what they are aiming for. Anyway Nicola and Delphi did a good track, and never really looked in

trouble and found the last article so it won't be long before this team are ready for L1.

Next up was Marianne & Merrye. Merrye is very subtle with her indications and Marianne has to work really hard at both reading and handling her. This team started off well but unfortunately couldn't locate one of the corners which turned in an area that had numerous tractor tracks running through which made this corner really difficult. So unfortunately although it was a fail for this team this time, both will be back to have another try and it won't be too long before this team pass their L1.

Ali & her boxer cross 'Chase' have worked really hard at being a team and as 'Chase' is such a strong, independent tracking dog, Ali has to spend most of her time trying to keep upright on feet!. Chase, also thinks that articles are a waste of time and why should he be interested in 'bits of old carpet'. Ali has spend alot of time persuading Chase that if he



wants his ball he should acknowledge the article and has now taught Chase to lie down when he finds an article in exchange for the ball. Ali & Chase's track went straight from the pole with the dreaded article on this first leg, Chase was a good boy and spotted the piece of green hose pipe but was so delighted at getting his ball he decided to hang on to it whilst he continued to track. After this first leg, the track turned to the left and this first corner proved to be quite difficult and it was a result of excellent team that these two managed to find the way through. The rest of the track seems alot more straight forward and Chase, although looking tied towards the end, did a brilliant down on the last article.

Clever boy.

So it was back to the cars for coffee and the presentations and I think everyone really enjoyed a most enjoyable morning in the glorious Autumn sunshine. Once again a huge thanks to Maurice & Carole coming all the way over from Staffordshire, Ali for finding the land and Deb the land owner for not muck speading!

The Scentwork UK first level 1 trial

So I managed to persuade my Wednesday & Thursday scentwork groups to come along to the 'Scentwork UK' first trial and amazingly 11 people agreed to take part.

Our Judge was Sally Smith, ably assisted by Chris Gregory the steward, and Leslie Mack who kept the scores and organised everyone for when it was their turn.

The test comprised of 4 sections and 3 sections had to be passed to qualify. The content of the trial was to find one scent (Birch oil) in the 4 following areas:

- a) 4 tables and 8 chairs
- b) Boxes & Luggage (12-15 items)
- c) Vehicle search (the outside of one vehicle)
- d) Exterior Search (12-15 items)

Each section carried 25 marks with 20 points allocated for finding the swab and 5 marks for handling.

Handling marks were deducted for handler pulling the dog away from the swab, getting in the dogs way, dog spending too much time away out of the search area etc.

Each section was timed and the judge allocated between 3-5 minutes according to how complex she thought the search was.

There was a draw for each section to make it as fair as possible although before each section started a 'white dog' (an experienced dog) did the search so that the judge could tweak the test if necessary.

We started with '4 tables & 8 Chairs' and the swab was hidden underneath one of the chairs towards the back. Most dogs did this well although nerves seemed to get in the way of one team with the handler accidentally pushing the dog past the area where the swab was hidden, such a shame.

In the 'Boxes & Luggage' the scented swab was hidden in the side pocket of a gym bag. Milly the working cocker in her enthusiasm pushed the bag right up against the wall to convince her mum that the swab was definitely hidden in this bag. All teams past this section.

Next up was the vehicle search and as it was raining some of the dogs weren't all that keen to start having to tip toe around the puddles. Also the judge decided to place the swab within the wheel arch of the vehicle so that it wouldn't get wet which could possibly change the odour. Kathryn and her enthusiastic black Labrador Pepper knew where the swab was hidden even before the test started and rushed around the back of the vehicle doing the test in less than 20 seconds!

Lastly was the 'exterior search' which comprised of 15 items laid on a gravel area just outside the village hall. The recent rain seemed to have freshened up smells in the gravel area making it rather distracting for alot of the dogs and this was the sections that most teams struggled with. However 4 teams successfully found the swab hidden in one end of

bicycle handles.

So out of 11 entries 9 teams past and the results were as follows:



1st Katheryne & Pepper – 98 points

2nd Carolyn & Milly – 98 points

As there was a tie for 1st place the team that who completed all 4 sections in the fastest time was awarded the first place.

3rd Ann & Maisie – 97 $\frac{1}{2}$

4th Karen & Charlie – 96 points

Also certificates of merit were awarded to Val & Indy 95 points Ali & Chase – 73 $\frac{1}{2}$, Annika & Rena 73 $\frac{1}{2}$, Nigel & Beazer 73 points and Jenni & Mischief 71 points.

UKTDA – L1 (Novice) and ‘Beginners’ Tests.

Last week I ran a tracking test for my tracking newbies, ably assisted by our assessor Chris Gregory who travelled all the way down from Warwick. Thank you Chris.

We had 5 people and 6 dogs taking the test. Four teams did the

'Beginners' tracking test and two others did the UKTDA -L1 (Novice) test. The 'Beginners' tracking test comprised of a 'box' consisting of 4 legs of between 30-40 paces and ending on one article whilst the UKTDA pattern consisted of 6-8 legs of 50 – 150 paces.

The day started with Tracey & Sugsy doing one of the 'Beginner' tracks and all we could see was Sugsy's tail wagging above the long grass. Tracey's handling was up to her usual standard knowing when to let the line out and when to pull it back in with this team



passing with ease. Next up was Jennie with one of her Cairns 'Tinker'. Tinker in the past has put in some good work but had a spell going backwards after a nail bed infection which stopped all training for a while so I was so pleased to see this little chap back on form once again.



Anne & Lottie about to do their track

Then we were ready to do the 2 UKTDA L1 tests and after a toss

of a coin Marie and 'Checkoff' won and decided to go first. 'Checkoff' didn't seem to let the crowd and other dogs put him off and did a nice track finding both articles. Next to track were Ann & Lottie. Lottie hasn't been the easiest of dogs, being a rescue that was allowed to do her own thing and go off hunting. Unfortunately the first leg of track was a straight 150 yard leg and Lottie lost a bit of concentration just at the vital point on the first corner. Fortunately Ann's very good handling and patience enabled Lottie to get back on track and from then on Lottie flew round completing the track showing us how all of Ann's hard work had paid off.

Next up was Marianne & Merri who has really come on with her tracking training lately. Merri doesn't like thistles though, as we discovered recently, and tends to jump like a kangaroo when she finds one to avoid them!. So the brave little Merlie girl decided that today's thistles weren't quite so bad and bravely tracked through them to complete the track. Last up was Jennie with her second Cairn 'Mischief' who likes his tracking as long as there are treats to find. Unfortunately as this was a test there weren't any and this coupled with him standing on a thistle before he started was enough to put the poor little chap off. Better luck next time.

All in all, a most enjoyable afternoon and such a relief that the predicted storm didn't materialise.



May and the Month for Rain

Yes, I have had to cancel more tracking sessions during the month of May than I have to had all Winter; strange isn't it?

Last weekend I went with a friend to see Sketch & Bo's pups again and my, haven't they grown! Lou, the breeder has decided to keep the solid red bitch pup as she seems to have wriggled her way into the 'Pink' families hearts. Miss Ruby, seems to be the favourite of elder sister 'Luna' so it seems that she is the right choice all-round.

Below is a picture of 'Norman' looking like a sheepdog and the owners are going to have another puppy bitch from this litter and she is to be called 'Betty'. Just love the name by the way.



Norman

So Toffee's toe got better although I held her back from agility for 3 weeks which meant that her first championship jumping and agility classes at the 'Vine' show, went ahead without any practice for 3 weeks. I must say that I really enjoyed the whole championship experience and I thought both courses were really straightforward. I have decided to have fun in this class and not be bothered about people watching which was just as well as Toffee dived back through the tunnel unexpectedly tripping me up resulting in me falling over her and landing on my back! Well I suppose it's always good to get that out of the way!

The scentwork classes are going well and I along with a few friends, have set up a new facebook page called '[Scentwork UK](#)'. The page is for anyone to join who does scentwork and hopefully to help people with training problems as well as let people know about available training classes.

Today I had a 1-2-1 session with this Chris and his gorgeous American Bulldog who turned out to be an absolute fantastic search dog.



Chris & his American Bulldog