

# LEAD ON

Magazine of  
**Seeing Dogs**

**A working name of The Seeing Dogs Alliance**

*Training Dogs to Guide Blind and  
Partially Sighted People*

**Issue No 45 – Winter 2016**

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# FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers

Hello again, and welcome to the winter 2016 issue of *Lead On*. I can't believe how fast this year has gone, can you?

I hope that and your dogs had a wonderful summer and are looking forward to the festive season which will be upon us all too soon. I hope the news and articles in this final issue of the year will help ease you nicely into the cooler weather and keep you toasty warm as the darker nights draw in.

Once more, we have some great news to share with you in this issue, including the exciting launch of a 100 Club, which will be headed up by Stephen Anderson, Trustee of the Seeing Dogs' Alliance. 100 Clubs are a brand new fundraising initiative and we'd love you to be involved! Read all about it on pages 8 and 9.

Once again, Chris will share the news about Milo, Zoe and Zoe and the puppies being reared, and our Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (GDMI), John Grave, will share the news about Marvin, Penny and Zena.

Finally, Neil Ewart, Chairman of The Seeing Dogs' Alliance, has written the second part of his wonderful feature about the history of guide dogs, this time looking at the developments that were made from the 1800s to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

So without further ado, please enjoy your winter issue of *Lead On*.

Esther Porta

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If you are a taxpayer and you haven't given us permission to claim Gift Aid on your donation, we would be grateful if you could complete the Gift Aid Declaration on whichever of the forms you use, to give us permission to claim Gift Aid. This now includes people who took out a Bankers' Order before January 2013, as we now have a different charity number.

We send the Subscription and Donation Form and Bankers' Order to everyone who receives *Lead On*, whether they are subscribing or donating or not, as it saves keeping several lists. If you want to set up a new

Bankers' Order, you will need to cancel any previous ones.

You can donate online via our website, [www.seeingdogs.org.uk](http://www.seeingdogs.org.uk), or on [www.mydonatebt.com](http://www.mydonatebt.com). Remember that you can also sponsor a puppy or a dog via our website.

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If you donate or pay your subscription online, or by direct bank transfer, please let us know.

Remember you can also donate anonymously if you wish, either by sending a cheque direct to Caf Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ, or via our website. However, we like to acknowledge donations, so we would rather you let us know who you are.

Thank you!

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Hi everyone, here's my winter 2016/17 report for *Lead On*.

The AGM went well, with four people who weren't trustees attending. The trustees who stayed for the whole weekend were Gill Sheppard, and Geoff and I.

Given the weather, the Flag Day on Saturday, 3 September, didn't go too badly at all! I'll report on this in *Fundraising News*.

As always, I'm appealing for trustees. If you feel you would like to be a trustee, please contact me at [info@seeingdogs.org.uk](mailto:info@seeingdogs.org.uk) and tell me about the skills you could offer us! We really need trustees with fundraising experience.

Finally, don't forget that subscriptions are due on 1 January 2017.

There's really nothing more to report at the moment on the Secretarial front; however, there's quite a bit to report in *Seeing Dog News*. I wish you a Happy Christmas, and will report again in spring 2017.

Chris Parker

## **FUNDRAISING NEWS**

We have had a little more money from the trusts which gave us money as a result of the No Win No Fee project into which we entered with Company Solutions in 2013.

However, our goal is to make the £100,000 a year we need in order to make significant progress. We have recently received a donation of £5,000 from the Ostacchini Family Charitable Trust, by far the largest of the recent donations. This is the third donation for that amount which we have received from that trust. We have been asked to mention it separately in our annual accounts.

Stephen Anderson has a plan for raising funds, which I understand some charities use, known as a 100 Club. He will explain how it works in this issue, and Neil, our Chairman, has suggested that we put it on the agenda for the Trustees' Meeting on 3 December.

Stephen was sent a £25 donation for the charity on his birthday by one of his friends, which was very generous of her! We also continue to receive donations from other members and supporters, as well as subscriptions from members. It is much appreciated!

We had an online request for help from someone recently offering to raise funds for us. The request was sent on our online form. They live very near us, so we visited them on 22 October. The gentleman works at the American College of Spots in Cobham, and his wife may apply for a Seeing Dog. At the moment, she has some sight, but is a type 1 diabetic and is gradually losing her sight. Apparently, ACS, where her husband works, funds lots of charities, and he said he would mention Seeing Dogs to them. Isn't that great!

At the September Trustees' Meeting, it was suggested that we should apply for membership of Assistance Dogs (UK). In fact, we were invited to a Board Meeting of Assistance Dogs (uk) being held on Wednesday, 23 November. Neil Ewart, our Chairman, and I attended. The last item on the agenda was to confirm our membership, as Membership is automatic for members of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) in the case of UK guide dog charities, and

members of Assistance Dogs International in the case of other UK assistance dog charities.

It would be helpful if other Seeing Dog owners, apart from Stephen Anderson, could raise funds for us. According to Lindsey Pannell, about 75% of Canine Partners' funds are raised by their clients. We assume you will all require more dogs in time. One client already has a second Seeing Dog.

Don't forget to leave us a bequest in your will! We have had one or two bequests, but we need bequests from all our members and supporters who make a will!

That's all the fundraising news I have, so I shall be in touch again in the spring.

Chris Parker

## **NEW FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE, 100 CLUB COMING SOON!**

As part of Seeing Dogs' plan to raise £100,000 every year until at least 2021, Seeing Dogs will soon be launching a 100 club. 100 clubs are designed to split total receipts in half, 50% going to the charity and 50% being given away in prizes. Players can enter for £1 for one chance at winning, a bit like a raffle. They can enter as many times as they wish, so it's all to play for!

Many other charities and groups organise draws similar to this, and it is a proven winner. It will help greatly with meeting our ambitious fundraising target of £100,000 a year. Winning while supporting a great cause - there's no better feeling!

The first draw will be held in early 2017, and can be played by bank transfer or cheque, whichever you prefer.

The first prize will be half of the takings. This is open to everyone, so please tell everyone you know who might be interested.

As a newly appointed Trustee, I am delighted to front and manage the new club. Please play generously! Your support is, as always, very much appreciated.

Stephen Anderson, Trustee

## **SEEING DOG NEWS**

Hi everyone, here is my Seeing Dog News report for winter 2016/17.

There will be quite a lot happening during the next few months. However, Roy Bee, of Bedford, qualified recently with Treacle, a black Labrador cross golden retriever bitch, which we bought from Guide Dogs as an adult at the end of June. The partnership was trained by Paul Harbord, who has been working for Seeing Eye Dogs Australia for the last 20 years or so, prior to which he worked for Guide Dogs. In addition to training Treacle, Paul has been doing work for Guide Dogs. I believe he has taken out dual nationality, so that he can spend time in the UK and Australia each year.

Unfortunately, the former owner of Marvin, one of the golden retriever cross yellow Labradors which were donated to us as puppies in 2012 by a breeder in Gloucestershire, died suddenly on 31 August. Therefore, Marvin, who is only four years old, has received some

further training from John Grave, and has now been trained with Loane Ferbac, who lives in North London.

In addition, John will also be training Grania Brennan, who lives in South Wales, with Penny, the chocolate Labrador we bought from Julia Craven in June 2015. Grania has been waiting for a dog for a long time, so we're pleased we have finally found one suitable for her.

Also Paige Lillywhite, a fairly recent applicant, will be trained with Zena, the Hungarian wire haired vizsla donated to us by her breeder, Caroline Busby, in 2015. Unfortunately, however, Zena has had part of her tail removed, as did Zoe, the last HWV to qualify as a Seeing Dog. She kept hitting it on furniture and walls when wagging it and injured it. Caroline's vet did the operation, and he also removed her dewclaws, for which he didn't charge us. Apparently, before tail docking became illegal, Hungarian wire haired vizslas used to have their tails docked as puppies. I thought there was an exemption from the no docking law if it could be proved that a long tail would be likely to be damaged, but apparently, this isn't so. As an adult dog, it's far more distressing for the dog to have part of its tail removed than it would be as a young puppy of a few days old. In general, I'm glad the no docking law was introduced, but I do think it should be waived in certain circumstances.

John also has to visit two prospective puppy rearers. One of them has walked eight puppies for Guide Dogs, so she won't actually need to be assessed.

As you can see, John will be very busy in the next few months. As things stand at present, after all these partnerships have been trained, there will only be one person on our waiting list, although there will be at least a couple of people due for training with another dog fairly soon. Mylo, who belongs to Paul Bailey, of Rotherham, has hip dysplasia, and we believe any cold or wet weather will have an effect on his condition. He is ten years old.

We also bought a yellow Labrador cross golden retriever puppy from Guide Dogs around the same time as we bought Treacle. The puppy was sold to us with the name Ice. However, it's being puppy reared by Carla Brown, John Grave's partner's daughter, and as one of her children couldn't pronounce his name, Ice was changed to Obi!

We have also bought a German shepherd puppy from Guide Dogs, as one of our clients wants a shepherd. We haven't been able to find anyone who we thought would be able to puppy rear a shepherd, but we found Gemma Watton, a mother of three, who lives in Birmingham, and although I don't believe she has ever had a dog before, she is puppy rearing Ivy, the German shepherd. Apparently, she is getting on fine with Ivy. I always thought German shepherds were dominant and excitable, but Neil says they aren't as excitable as Labradors. Ivy is growing rapidly.

Neil is supervising Gemma. He says the house is a real animal house. Gemma has a cat, a rabbit and mice. The cat lies on top of a mouse cage, and Ivy gets on with

the other animals. Apparently, Gemma is the kind of person who just gets on with life and doesn't let anything bother her. This is why she can handle Ivy so well, despite her lack of experience with dogs.

Then there is Zachary, another Hungarian wirehaired vizsla, a male, being puppy reared by Penny Stratton. Penny calls him Zach. He was kindly donated to us by Caroline Busby, his breeder.

Sally, my retired guide dog, was put to sleep on 7 November, at the age of 14 and a half. She had lost control of her bowels, and was defecating in the house fairly frequently. It was very sad, but we felt we really had no other option as the strain on Geoff, having to watch her for signs that she might want to go out, which weren't displayed very often, because she had lost the ability to sense when she wanted to go out, had become intolerable. I hope you will understand this difficult decision. She was a wonderful worker, my loyal companion and friend. We will miss her tremendously.

I think that's all the Seeing Dog news I have for you this time. I'm sure John will be putting in a contribution

Chris Parker

## **UPDATES FROM OUR GUIDE DOG MOBILITY INSTRUCTOR**

**John Grave**

Following the recent and sad loss of Trevor Groves, Marvin, his faithful companion has re-entered training and is currently on his course with his new owner Loane

in London. At the time of going to print, Loane and Marvin are just finishing their course together.

This is Loane's first dog and she has worked extremely hard to achieve a very pleasing standard.

Marvin has helped Loane, thanks to his experience and maturity, whilst Loane has helped Marvin move on from the sad loss of his owner. Both have a very positive future ahead of them!





## **Penny and Zena**

Penny continues to improve nicely in her training. She is a lot more settled and really enjoys her work. We have recently been working on off-kerb obstacles, ensuring she can guide her new owner around obstacles that block the pavement, such as cars, pavement works and bicycles.

We have also been doing more work with traffic. This has resulted in solid responses to traffic exiting and entering side roads. As Penny takes on more responsibility in her training, she is naturally maturing and turning into a wonderful Seeing Dog.

Special thanks to Puppy Rearers, Barbara and Derek, who have not only reared a lovely dog, but who have also helped develop Penny's recent training.

Penny is now set to train with her new owner in Wales in January.

Zena continues to show a very pleasing improvement in her work.

She has a very positive outlook to working, and is always keen to do her best. As we near the final stages of training, we have been learning off-kerb obstacles and traffic work. Throughout training, Zena has shown some concern about heavy lorries and buses, but traffic work has allowed her to be more confident around traffic as she has realised the positive effect this makes.

Sadly, an injury to her tail meant the removal of the tip. However, Zena's dedicated Puppy Rearer, Penny, has stepped in to aid her recuperation!

Zena has an indomitable spirit and has been matched to a young lady in Hampshire. Together, I hope they will grow into a strong, dynamic team gracing the streets of Southampton.

Until the next time!

John Grove, Mobility Instructor

## **PART TWO OF THE HISTORY OF GUIDE DOGS**

by

**Neil Ewart, Chairman of  
The Seeing Dogs Alliance**

In the summer issue, I wrote about the history of guide dogs in the 1800s. Let's now look at how things changed thereafter.

A key point was the exemption from the excise licence granted by Parliament in Great Britain to

shepherds' dogs and those kept by the blind as guides, which suggests the number of dogs accepted as being guides must have been quite high.

It must be assumed that these dogs would act as very simple guides and companions; whether most were actually trained in any way is open to conjecture.

However, there are records of a system of training guide dogs, which was published in Vienna around 1819. There is also another book from the same area, published a little earlier, in 1813, which refers to well-trained dogs being used prior to 1780 by blind persons of the Quinze-Vingst hospital in Paris. In fact, there was a painting hanging in the Louvre depicting these dogs.

There are also records of a blind Viennese man, named Joseph Reisinger, who, at the end of the 18th century, trained a spitz to guide him. It is reported that he made such a good job of it that many accused him of feigning his blindness. He then went on to train two more dogs, one of which was a poodle. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that any of his methods were ever developed.

Speculating how an individual might have trained his dog should take into account that there is a possibility the handler was partially blind, but who knows?

The Director of the Institute for the Blind in Vienna stated that the poodle and the shepherd dog made the best guides. He even went on to describe a method of using dogs in which a stick was attached to the dog's collar, and was then held in the left hand. This Director was named Klein, and he continues: 'The rigid stick must

run through a loose brace around the body of the dog, so that a side movement of the dog is fully felt in the hands of the blind person. The use of a guiding stick has the advantage that the blind person notices at once when the dog is standing still, which is not true when he is led by a strap’.

His next observations sound very familiar to us in the twenty-first century:

‘The training of a dog, at least in the beginning, must be done by a sighted person. One leads him, many times on the same road and drills him, particular attention being paid to places where through turning, through slow pace, through standing still, or through other movements which might be useful to the blind in situations such as the turning of the street and in the avoidance of obstacles that lie ahead -through all this the dog will be made alert to various kinds of dangerous situations. Then the blind person takes the dog in hand himself and goes with him, at first on the same road with which he is already acquainted, in order to become accustomed to the movements and signals of the animal. It is obvious that from now on the dog will be fed and cared for by the blind person himself, in order to arrive at a mutual understanding and to establish a true and faithful attachment with the leader dog.

It is worth reminding ourselves that this was written at the end of the 18th century and the principles are certainly still relevant today. We do not know how many times his observations were ever applied, if at all. However, they appear to be based on very sound theory.

However, things did not necessarily always go to plan! There is a 19th century French lithograph of the fat blind fiddler (no political correctness in those days!) by the artist, Charlet. This shows the unfortunate itinerant musician being led into a ditch by the dog, thus showing the (hopefully, occasional) failures by these dogs. At the same time, it shows that the sight of dogs leading the blind was common in France. Under the lithograph is a poem which translates:

“The blind man followed his trusted dog into deep waters

“Thus man is destroyed by the so-called friends whom he trusts.’

Unsurprisingly, not only are some of these dogs pictured as guides, but also as aids to begging, holding in their mouths a money dish. This probably would have required some training, although many would have taught themselves to pick up and carry their empty feeding pans.

In the very early twentieth century, an American vet, Leon Whitney, reported seeing three blind men who were led by American fox terriers at the end of a cane. He felt that the smaller dog on a cane was far more effective than a larger dog at the side. He continued that nobody tripped over the cane and everyone saw the little white dog. It does seem that many dogs used as guides up to this date were often quite small.

When the systematic training of guide dogs on a large scale commenced during World War One, bigger dogs were used. Probably the choice may have been

influenced as much by what breeds were available in sufficient numbers. Nowadays, it remains standard policy to use large breeds. Too small and the dog is difficult to follow, too large it can make access to various locations difficult. Also, speed and length of gait are both issues. Most guide dog owners will prefer a moderate or steady pace.

In 1916 the German Red Cross Ambulance Dogs Association, whose president was Dr Gerhard Stalling, started training some of the Association's ambulance dogs as guides for the blind. The first to be handed over to a soldier blinded in action, named Paul Freyen, was in October 1916.

Incredibly, a year later, the Association was able to claim that 100 guide dogs were in service, and, in 1919, that 539 war-blinded men had been provided with guides. By 1922, classes had been extended to include civilians.

Schools were opened throughout the world. Training methods have been developed and adapted, with different breeds tried and, in most cases, discounted.

However, it is undoubtedly possible to believe that the basics of training and, in a small way, selection, were laid down hundreds of years ago, and many of the pioneers' first observations still hold true today.

Want us to feature your story or news? Please email your photos and personal stories by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017, to:- [\*\*esther@3commpr.co.uk\*\*](mailto:esther@3commpr.co.uk)