

LEAD N

Magazine of Seeing Dogs

A working name of The Seeing Dogs Alliance

***Training Dogs to Guide Blind and
Partially Sighted People***

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Editor: Jane Anderson

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A charitable incorporated organisation**

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	Page(s)
Editorial	4
<u>New Seeing Dog Puppies</u>	
<i>Dora by Emma Mann</i>	5
<i>Paddy by Ian + Kristine Bjarnum-Green</i>	5
<i>Jensen By Leasyl Kavanagh</i>	6
<u>Other Seeing Dog Puppies</u>	
<i>Bella by Jane Anderson</i>	7
<i>Glen by Sue and John Ferguson</i>	7
<i>Harry by Brenda and John Fox</i>	8
<u>Trainee Seeing Dogs</u>	
<i>Sadie by John Grave</i>	9
<i>Proctor by John Grave</i>	10
<i>Brunny by Nigel Garry</i>	10
<i>Robson by Kirsten Roberts</i>	11
<i>Quell by Mel Robson</i>	12
Testimonial of a New Seeing Dog Owner by Sharon Smith	13
Fund Raising and Donations	14
Text to Donate	14
Give as you live	14
Pets at Home reward scheme	
Promoting the Seeing Dogs	15
Subscriptions and Donations	15
Danger to Dogs at Christmas	17

Editorial

By Jane Anderson

As we near the year end, we all tend to look back on what has happened in the last 12 months.

Here at Seeing Dogs we are able to see that we have continued to produce fantastic Seeing Dogs for our Clients, which inevitably has increased their confidence and independence.

As you will see from this edition, we have a total of 11 dogs presently in our training system, from puppies to those in the final stages of their training, with their prospective new owners. This is a wonderful position to be in.

As we look forward to the new beginnings of 2026 and beyond, let's make sure that these figures can be replicated, maintained and even increased on. As we play out our traditions at Christmas and New Year, why not start a new one of promoting and fund raising for The Seeing Dogs Alliance, so our qualified dog numbers can increase? I have seen firsthand, as the parent of a recipient of a Seeing Dog, the difference these dogs make to people's lives. In this edition, we also have in print, words from new recipients, detailing the empowerment having a Seeing Dog has given them.

As a Puppy Raiser myself, I have also seen the hard work and dedication that comes with being a Puppy Raiser and a Trainer which The Charity is very grateful for.

May you and your family have a Wonderful Christmas and all Best Wishes for 2026.

Happy reading!

**Jane Anderson
Editor**

New Seeing Dog Puppies

Dora

By Emma Mann



Figure 1. Dora on her bed.

Dora has settled in perfectly and is the most adorable pup. She loves having a cuddle and playing with her house mates, Beau a 4-year-old Briard and Saffron a 2-year-old Cockapoo.

Dora is very chilled and takes all new experiences in her stride. When we welcomed Dora, bonfire night was imminent and so we started firework training and when the fireworks started, she didn't bat an eyelid! Dora is a very inquisitive little girl and we are looking forward to taking her, out once she has had her second lot of inoculations.

Paddy

By Ian + Kristine Bjarnum-Green

Paddy moved in 7 weeks ago. He is now 15 weeks old and has grown a lot. He is a typical labrador pup, full of energy, very playful and wants a lot of attention. He has a big love for shoelaces and other things that can be investigated (read: tasted). We have found his happy place and he now settles all night, and we have a good spend routine.

He has only just had his last injection, so socialising has been very limited, but he is good on the lead, and settles well in car. He has been to various shops, hairdressers and other places and always behaves, so much so that he is being welcomed back. He has had a play with children his own height and he gets so happy when they giggle!

He did get past our defences once, got upstairs, but then couldn't work out how to get down and needed to be carried down again. He has (for now), decided that was a bad idea, and should not be tried again!



Figure 2. Paddy on his bed

Jensen

By Leasyl Kavanagh



Figure 3. Jensen

Jensen is our sixth puppy but first for 'The Seeing Dogs Alliance'.

He didn't waste any time settling in and adjusting to our home. Jensen is a sweet natured black puppy, who loves to play with and lay on his toys while he sleeps - often snoring louder than the TV. He has been very quick to settle overnight and has been clean and dry from day one. His favourite game at the moment is tug - any toy will do.

When people meet him, they comment on how calm he is for such a young puppy, but most haven't been around for his pre-sleep 'zoomies'!

Other Seeing Dog Puppies

Bella

By Jane Anderson

Bella is now 6 months old. She is progressing well in all aspects, however, she has very long back legs and sometimes finds stairs difficult, especially down. At times, she looks like she is about to tip over! A bit more growing into her body will undoubtedly correct this.



Figure 4. Bella at the Horses Trust.

(Photo by JPC Photography)

She has been initially nervous of horses but after several visits to The Horses Trust and a RDA stables she is now more comfortable with them. I was especially pleased with our trip up to London, on the underground, to a Christmas Market. Even standing still in crowds didn't phase her. We have received several comments on her good behaviour.

Glen

By John and Sue Ferguson

'12 weeks to 6 Months'

Fox Red puppy Glen continues to grow into a young dog. Glen is good at his basic commands and his recall remains excellent in off lead scenarios which, increasingly, have moved from garden and enclosed spaces to outside parks and wider open spaces.

Glen has had the assistance of a Halti headcollar to help him focus on his lead walking in streets and in public places and this has improved his lead walking considerably.



Figure 5. Glen at the beach

Training continues at Puppy Classes and Glen is nearing completion of his Kennel Club Puppy Foundation level. Glen is quite a popular visitor to local stores and supermarkets and is welcomed warmly by the staff in many local establishments. Glen is a lively labrador who can be full of enthusiasm for work but does get bored quickly in non-activity scenarios when not resting. Glen has a nice personality, though like many puppies, still retains a mischievous streak.

Harry

By John and Brenda Fox

Harry was 1 year old on 3rd December. He continues to mature and develop (in some ways) whilst areas of stubborn challenge remain. However, overall, he presents as a lively dog, with a lovely temperament and who is often very affectionate.

Harry still loves to learn (he is a quick learner) and positively adapts to the various environments/situations presented to him. In the home, he is generally calm and was not fazed by the recent fireworks going off - in fact he went out on the decking to watch them in the gardens in the distance.

We've had a couple of holidays recently and he's been fine with the car journeys and quickly adapting to the new accommodation and routines. He particularly loved the beach and the freedom it offered him.

He won his bronze kennel club certificate at the end of August and had done most of the silver training, weeks before we took another holiday. That meant he missed the assessment itself. Harry will be leaving us soon, to commence his formal training - good luck Harry. Do your best. We will miss you.

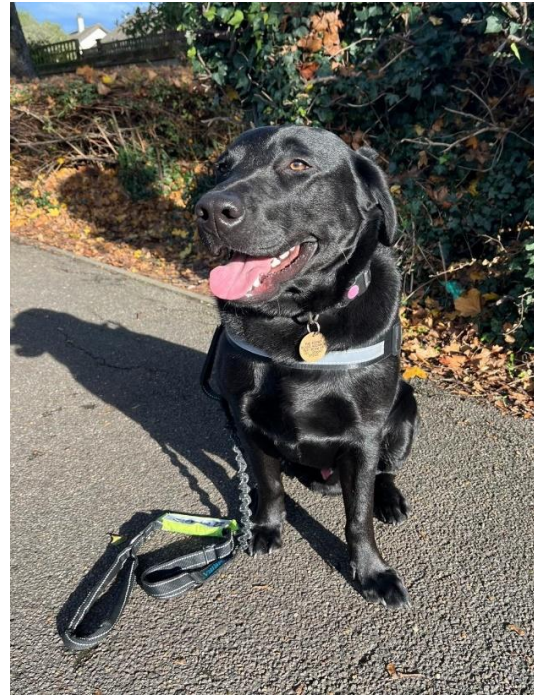


Figure 6. Harry

Trainee Seeing Dogs

Sadie

By John Grave



Figure 7. Sadie

Sadie is progressing through training nicely. She enjoys her work and produces a pleasing level of performance. She has covered all her guiding aspects and has recently carried out a blindfold walk taking responsibility for her work really well. I hope she will be matched with a client in January.

Proctor

By John Grave

Proctor is coming up to client training straight after Christmas. He is a considerate dog that tries his best to please the handler. He has covered all aspects of training and performs them well, although he is not too keen on steps going up. Once settled with his new owner I'm sure this will improve.



Figure 8. Proctor

Brunny

By Nigel Garry

Having sadly lost my sight at the tender age of 19, back in Aug 1977, my life was certainly turned upside down. For the next 3 years I went through a spell of depression before getting my first dog in 1980, from an alternative organisation.

Sadly, on the 18th December 2019 I was extremely distraught to learn that my beautiful German Shephard dog, Jack, had to be euthanized, due to a tumour which had ruptured on his spleen. He was my 5th dog.

I turned to the wonderful and amazing Seeing Dogs Alliance Charity and applied to them for a Seeing dog. After what I consider a relatively short period of time on their waiting list, I was absolutely amazed when I received a phone call from Wendy Biss-Cooper, Seeing Dog instructor, saying that she thought they had found a possible match in 'Brunny', a black labrador. 'Brunny', was kindly sponsored by the customers and staff at The Brunswick real ale public house in Derby.



Figure 9. Brunny with Nigel

The next step was when Wendy brought ‘Brunny’ and introduced him to me. We then undertook a possible matching walk. I was absolutely amazed to find that Brunny's central walking, speed, obstacle avoidance and kerb approaches were such that he was just the dog to suit my needs. After 6 years of no freedom, mobility or the finest thing under the sun to a blind person, ‘independence’, my life and world opened up once again. To be able to put on that Seeing dog harness in the knowledge that I will be able to have that independence back and visit friends, family and shops, plus many other destinations, on my own, is wonderful.

Words cannot express my sincere gratitude to John Grave and all at The Seeing Dogs Alliance, for coming to my rescue. My Wife, Karen, who is one in a million, has kept me not only sane but kept my fitness levels up, by being my guide and walking me between 5 & 8 miles a day. She can now give her feet a rest and leave it all to ‘Brunny’.

Please rest assured that, whenever we can, we will try our best to raise funds and awareness of this wonderful charity

Recently Qualified Seeing Dogs

Robson

By Kirsten Roberts

I've had Robson for 5 weeks now. He is my first from ‘Seeing Dogs’ and my first male. He's a very gentle and loveable dog! I think I fell in love with him on the matching visit and love him more every day!

He loves nothing more than a good stroke and a run after a ball.

He's only just 18 months old. It's a big thing for him to have all the responsibility of guiding me, when so young, but I can feel him getting better each day. He's quite sensitive and needs gentle encouragement. I just make sure he gets lots of reassurance (and some biscuits).

He's very clever and I am looking forward to the years to come with him.

Thanks, Seeing Dogs!

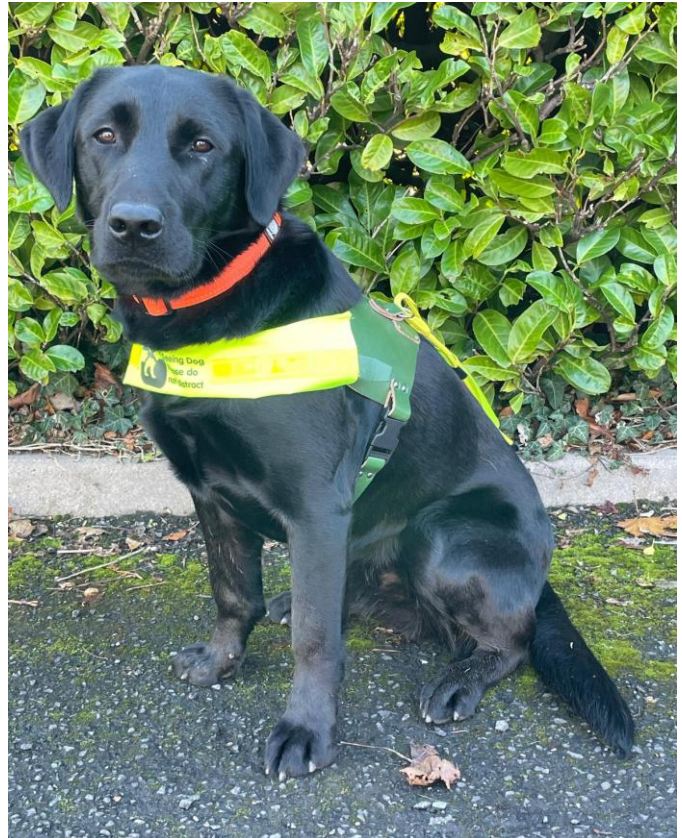


Figure 10. Robson

Quell

By Mel Robson

Quell has been settling back in well, since his return from big school with Wendy, to take up the harness as a proper working Seeing Dog.

At only 20 months old he's still got some maturing to do, but he's a good little worker with plenty of potential. It's now my job to bring that out as his handler.

Class was fun. We had, I think, pretty much every weather condition going between the rain and needed rescuing by google maps, a couple times, after going on a bit of an adventure.



Figure 11. Mel with Quell

Class was intense, but I enjoyed it, though maybe not being drenched in a tidal wave from a car going through a massive puddle! None of us were impressed with that and I have never been so thankful for waterproofs.

Of course, unlike most, I knew Quell before we started class. After Wendy did the important house training and basic socialisation, I puppy walked Quell from 17 weeks. That meant that there was a history before he came back here to work. So, as well as rebuilding that relationship, we're having to redefine it. It's no longer just on me to take responsibility for everything, whilst showing him how the world works. Quell now has to step up and take his place in the team and shoulder some of that responsibility now too.

The smooth collie is an interesting breed. I have heard them described somewhere as 'herding breed light', which I do think is an accurate description, less intense than a border collie and not as challenging as many German Shepherds. Physically they're around lab height but lighter build, so a nice size. It's a breed I would have again.

The following is a Testimonial from Sharon Smith who recently received Sybil (Seeing Dog) and epitomises why we do what we do.

'Since receiving SYBIL, I have totally regained my confidence and my independence. I'm happy and confident to go anywhere with her now, buses, trains et cetera. We go for nice walks together and she has helped my mental health and my physical health unbelievably. She's not just a dog to me; she's my best friend. I hope we have many happy years together.'

Sybil was raised by Chris and Margaret Atkins.



Figure 12. Sharon and Sybil

Fund Raising and Donations

It costs around £20,000 to fully train a Seeing Dog. With generous donations we can continue to provide visually impaired people with independence and mobility, that can be taken for granted. 100% of your donation goes to training Seeing Dogs.



Figure 13. Number to text to give £5

You can now donate £5 through your phone by texting SEEINGDOGS to 70085.

What difference does your £5 donation make?

- **£5 will pay for a puppy's food, vet care, toys and treats for a day.**
- **£10 will pay for a collar and bells a Seeing Dog has to wear when it is out and about. The bells mean the dog's partner knows where the dog is!**
- **£15 will pay for a grooming kit, keeping our Seeing Dogs smart and presentable. It is essential to groom our dogs to keep them healthy and looking the part.**

GIVE AS YOU LIVE

Another way of raising funds for The Seeing Dogs Alliance is through 'Give as you Live'.

'Give as you live' allows anyone to raise funds for their favourite charity when they shop online, at no extra cost to yourself. 'Give as you live' is partnered with 6,000 stores, as well as dozens of providers across insurance, energy and broadband. As a 'thank you' for shopping with these stores, a certain % of your spend is given to the charity of your choice. Each retailer will specify their % 'thank you'.

There is NO EXTRA cost to yourself. All you have to do is register with 'Give as you live' www.giveasyoulive.com and specify your charity (The Seeing Dogs Alliance).

The thing to remember is that to get the % thank you, you MUST access the website of the store you wish to buy from, THROUGH the 'Give as

you live' website www.giveasyoulive.com . New stores are joining 'Give as you live' daily.

PLEASE join up if you can.

Pets at Home

The Seeing Dogs Alliance can now be nominated as your named Charity to receive your reward points from your Pets at Home Card.

Every 500 rewards a person earns on their 'Pets Card', will give the 'Charity' one Life Line point i.e. £1. Vouchers for the Life Line points will be issued 4 times a year, to The Seeing Dogs for them to use.



Figure 14. Pets at Home Logo

Promoting The Seeing Dogs Alliance

The Seeing Dogs Alliance has a website – <https://seeingdogs.org.uk> Facebook and an Instagram account.

Please share, follow and like all three social media outlets to spread the word. We are expanding our presence across social media, to support our drive for direct to consumer giving.

People need to know we're here, who we are, what we do, and why they should care about us. If someone wants to donate money, or time as a volunteer, then why us?

The Seeing Dogs Alliance has a Just Giving Page <https://www.justgiving.com/seeingdogs> for donations.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & DONATIONS

To give a donation, or to pay your subscription for one or more years by cheque, please use the enclosed Subscription and Donation Form.

If you wish to give a donation and/or pay your subscription automatically each year, please complete the enclosed Bankers' Order and return it to us, as we need to keep a record of who pays their subscription or donates

by this method. We will send it to your bank. Payments can be made monthly, quarterly, or annually by this method. If you want to combine a regular donation with your subscription using this method, £5 of your first payment for the financial year will be considered to be your subscription. The Subscription and Donation Form and the Bankers' Order will also be enclosed with the braille and tape copies, and they will be sent as an attachment to the email copies.

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 or on www.mydonatebt.com. Remember that you can also sponsor a puppy or a dog via our website.

You can donate, or pay subscriptions, by a direct bank transfer, although, if you wish us to claim Gift Aid, you will have to complete a Gift Aid Declaration. Please use your name as the reference, so that we can recognise your payment. Our bank details are sort code 40 52 40, account number 00010645. These details are also on the Bankers' Order.

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.

DANGER TO DOGS AT CHRISTMAS

At Christmas we all like to tuck into our fancy food. We must remember however, that certain things are POISONOUS OR DANGEROUS to dogs.

- **ONIONS AND GARLIC are poisonous to dogs**
- **AVACADOS the stones can cause a choking**
- **CHOCOLATE can cause seizures, coma and heart failure**
- **SULTANAS, GRAPES, RAISINS AND CURRANTS are TOXIC to dogs and can cause kidney failure. These ingredients are found in mince pies, Christmas cake and fruit cake.**
- **STUFFING contains ONIONS AND GARLIC. Can cause life threatening anaemia**
- **TURKEY AND CHICKEN SKIN can cause stomach upset and pancreatitis**
- **BONES can get stuck in the throat or can pierce the dogs intestinal tract.**
- **GRAVY whilst tasty is too salty and fatty for a dog.**
- **NUTMEG can cause an elevated heart rate, hallucinations and skin flushing**



Figure 15. Beautifully decorated Christmas Tree

Compliments of the Season to Everyone

Would you like us to feature YOUR stories and news?
**If so, please email your photos and personal stories, by
1st February 2026, to: info@seeingdogs.org.uk**

