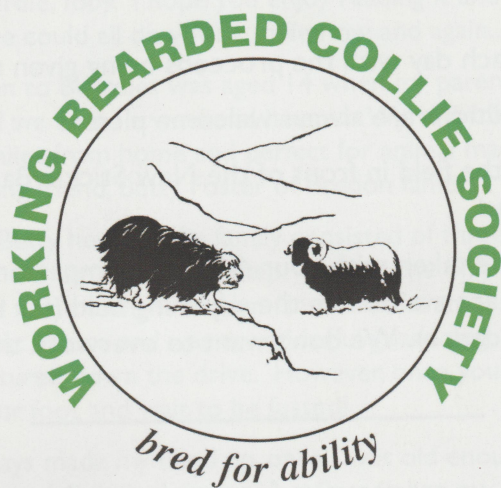


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"Pet Lamb"
c1908

Issue 42

Summer 2021

Toby Tails – Part I

by Donna Moxon

The following article was originally written by me, charting the first few years of owning my first Beardie, Toby. I hope you enjoy reading it and it raises a smile in this world where we could all do with a smile now and again...

My first introduction to Beardies was aged 14 when my parents purchased a touring caravan and we found a weekend haunt at Wyre Piddle, Worcestershire, approximately 23 miles from home and perfect for animal mad me! The owner turned into a life-long friend, Betty Foster of Bredon fame.

When I first knew Betty her Beardie family consisted of three bitches – Floss, Mouse and Dora and their “husband” Shep. He was the only one not bred by Betty, his registered name being Grovelyn Gandalf. She always said he was stupid, but he had the nicest nature and was a wonderful guard dog, barking at anything or anyone that ventured down the drive. However, once you were close enough, he would sit on your foot and wait to be fussed!

These wonderful days made my mind up, once I was old enough to have my own house and dog, it was definitely going to be a Beardie!

This neatly brings me on to my first Beardie Toby, or Bredon Tobe to give him his official title.

Toby was born in one of harshest winters we had had for quite a few years on 20 February 1985. My husband Vaughan and I first laid eyes on him at two weeks old, then again at four weeks. By Easter 1985 he was ready to come to his new home and it was a very special time for us, we remembered it clearly as a time when the peace in our home, was shattered!



On the scene arrived a tiny little bundle aged 7 weeks old, who we had decided to christen "Toby" - our first Bearded Collie. I would just like to say that Vaughan, my first husband, sadly passed away when he was very young, but Toby was his pride and joy. I had been familiar with the breed for some ten years, my husband for only four years, but we had a good idea of what we were letting ourselves in for, or so we thought!

To start with life carried on at a fairly ordered pace and routine, dear little Toby spent most of the day asleep, and as we were both off work on holiday for a week my husband and I were able to deal with any little accidents which might appear on the floor from time to time!

It wasn't long however, before we discovered we had got ourselves a real bundle of trouble with a capital 'T'. Toby, who appeared to all to be a quiet little puppy soon proved he wasn't!

We started off with the usual little messes on the floor, which any puppy can't avoid, but before long he had graduated into having a nibble at a choice piece of skirting board.

Having seen he had a taste for chewing we rushed out and purchased several strong rubber toys for him to chew. One of these toys was a dear little orange coloured dog with a squeaker inside it and eyes that wobbled. He loved it. So much so that on the second day he'd had it I came home to find just a sorry pair of black and orange rubber eyes staring up at me from the kitchen floor, the rest of the little dog was in minute pieces.

Over the years he got through so many toys I lost count. Most of the toys ended up being chewed to bits, not a problem, better that than the furniture! Apart from Toby my other love was my garden and having a dog, in one way, helped. All his little "doggy-do's" got put into the compost and after a couple of years found their way back onto the soil. However, the first time it happened I had quite a turn - I'll explain. I was on my knees doing a bit of digging and planting when all of a sudden I found I had two beady eyes looking at me from the soil! Clearly, one of Toby's toys, or to be more precise, the eyes, had been through the full cycle - chewed, swallowed, pooped, picked up, composted, returned to the soil! It was quite a shock I can tell you, to see these wobbly eyes staring back at me. This was the first time of many occasions to follow!

Of course, being Easter time when we had him all the beautiful spring flowers were in full bloom. During the previous year I had lovingly planted an assortment of tulips and daffodils (my husband liking the tulips while I was the daffodil fanatic). However, a few weeks after Toby's arrival it became obvious that Vaughan had upset him in some way as he decapitated every single tulip in the garden! Needless to say, he didn't once touch the daffodils so we ended up with a beautiful display of yellow daffodils and green stalks!

He was approximately 9 weeks old when, after dinner one evening I gave him a bit of rice pudding in a bowl to eat in the garden while I finished washing up. Being quite warm and summery by now we had got into the habit of leaving the back door open so he could wander in and out.

After a few minutes the front door bell rang so I went to answer it, it was my next-door neighbour. "Hello Danny, what can I do for you?" I asked. "Well I've just been doing a bit of gardening, and as I bent down to pick a weed out a little paw shot under the fence and slapped my hand!" "What?" I cried. "Yes" said Danny, "And it was followed by the front half of Toby, he's half way through and stuck!"

I left Danny standing on the step while Vaughan and I dashed through the house into the back garden just in time to see a fat little backside and tail sticking out from under the fence, the front half was already in next-door! "TOBY!" I shouted, but it was no good, he'd got semi-stuck, he could go forward but he couldn't get back, so we had to half dig him out - bath time again, he was filthy!

We discovered as time went on that he had other endearing traits too, he was very fond of a nice juicy roll of cling film or kitchen foil, whichever took his fancy. I found shredded rolls on a regular basis when I came home at lunch time to take him out, and all Toby did was look sheepish! Well, he was a sheepdog!!

Vaughan was busy fitting a large mirror into our bathroom once and whilst he was putting the brackets up, the mirror was stood in our bedroom against the wall. Toby came padding upstairs when all of a sudden "WOOF!" went Toby. He then proceeded to do what I describe as his 'sheepdog' walk into the bedroom and padded up to this 'other' Beardie that had invaded his house. "WOOF" Went Toby again, "Woof" went the Beardie in the mirror. "YELP!" Went Toby and ran as fast as his little legs would carry him from this dreadful 'other' dog. I still don't think he realised he was looking at himself!

I remember when he was quite young, we very nearly had several accidents on the carpets. On one occasion I happened to be making the bed when I saw him looking round for somewhere to do the necessary. I didn't have time to rush him downstairs and into the garden, so it was a question of putting him where he could do least damage. I put him in the bath! Well he must have liked it because a few weeks later he went missing. I searched the garden and downstairs in a complete flap, then for some reason I went upstairs, and there was Toby fast asleep in the bath.

Toby was always a dog who seemed to love mechanical things. Right from the day we had him we decided he must get used to riding in the car, so at every available opportunity, even if we were only popping to the shops, Toby came too. He developed the habit of sitting between the front seats of our Cortina with his backside on the back seat while his front end was wedged between the seats so he could see where he was going. Actually, this system worked very well apart from on the odd occasion

We were out shopping one Saturday when Vaughan stopped at a Zebra Crossing. People started crossing from both sides of the road when a man nodded his thanks to our car for stopping. First, he saw me, then he saw this big furry black and white face, then my husband. Toby was busy smiling back at the man (he liked people) so the poor gentleman didn't see where he was going as his attention was on Toby, and he banged straight into a lady crossing from the other side of the road. I think he was a bit stunned!

As I have said Toby liked cars. I had a Fiesta which he didn't travel in very often and on my way home from work one evening my radio finally gave up the ghost and stopped working. I told Vaughan, who said he'd have a look at it over the weekend. When Saturday arrived, we both went out to see if we could get it working. "I can't understand it," said Vaughan. "There's power there yet it won't work. It's almost as if someone has cut through the aerial cable." He wasn't far wrong, Toby had chewed through it!

A few months later Vaughan's father called to see us at Sunday lunch time. I was preparing dinner at the time. Outside I had a rotary washing line full of washing (mainly Chef's aprons as my husband was a chef), when all of a sudden, the line started whizzing round. I dashed out to see what was going on, Toby had got his head stuck through the neck band on one of the aprons that had been hung upside-down and was running in circles trying to free himself of it. I shouted, but it was too late, 'ping, ping, ping' went the pegs as they popped off the line and Toby went haring round the garden with the apron billowing behind him like a cape. He resembled a bleached version of Batman! You could see by his face he was thinking, "This is great fun, Mom has even come to play with me." Well I wasn't in the playing mood. I turned to Vaughan and my father-in-law for help, it was all they could do to stay standing as they were laughing that much. Toby eventually managed to lose the apron and I hastily put it back in the washing machine as it had a large part of my garden stuck to it!

Talking of washing machines Toby's next 'trick' was not quite so funny, at least I didn't think so. I came home one Friday, got a pile of washing down, turned my machine on, then the telephone rang.

It was my Mum, so half an hour later when I'd finished talking to her, I went into the kitchen to find what resembled a mini version of the Atlantic. Toby had chewed through the main water pipe to the washing machine and water was pouring everywhere. I was not pleased and Toby did at least have the decency to look sorry for himself!

By now it was Christmas 1985 and he'd done it again! Vaughan had come home from work to discover Toby had managed to 'escape' from the kitchen into the lounge. He was happily sitting under the Christmas tree with what remained of a packet and a half of dog chocolate buttons which he'd been given for Christmas. Vaughan said he looked so pleased with himself he hadn't got the heart to shout at him, after all they were his Christmas present.

I hope no one will be put off by the antics of our Beardie because he gave us so much pleasure and love in the first 8 short months that we had him.

To be continued...



It's great to go for a spin again, after the car has been standing empty for months...

BEWARE OF FOXTAILS



Mrs Gateley, Braybrooke

Tweed

by Barbara Ashton

One bitterly cold February day three years ago I drove from Shropshire up to Lanarkshire with my lurcher Jo in the back of the car. I went up there to meet Tweed, a working beardie. I had been looking for a beardie for a while to replace Stac and Tess my other beardies and I knew Tweed was related to them. He was a failed working dog having had three owners before being passed onto the folk I bought him from. Because of this I wasn't surprised when I met him in a farm shed that he ignored me but, importantly, Jo and Tweed got on all right. After about twenty minutes I took a big chance and decided to buy him and we set off on the long drive south.

Here was a dog who had spent all his life in a farm shed with other collies and the only people he knew were his former owners. To be taken away from the only things he knew must have been totally disorienting and frightening and yet he settled in to a different life with few signs of stress and few behavioural problems. He house trained in a few days and soon settled into the household routine. He and Jo got on well together and as both responded to the whistle. I let Tweed run free on walks within two or three weeks. He was nervous of people coming to the house and who he met out on walks for some months but is now friendly with adults but is still nervous of children and groups of people terrify him. He has bonded very closely with me, possibly because he never had the chance to bond with an owner before. He is fascinated by sheep and stops and watches them out on walks. When some sheep got into a lane we were walking along he stopped and looked at them but came away as soon as I called "Leave."

Sadly Joe was killed on the road when a caller left the door open and Joe got out. So at present Tweed is an only dog, however as he is always very friendly with other dogs I am sure he will be fine when I do get another lurcher. It shows how adaptable many dogs are that he has adjusted to a totally new lifestyle and home. I really am so pleased that I took a chance that cold February day and bought him on sight.

Shivva

by Shivva Topliss

Well, believe it or not I have reached my second birthday which was in March. I know I am clever and also beloved by all who know me. I am a very fast worker and extremely quick to learn. Things have been a bit topsy turvey lately as my human Dad had a stroke and has been in hospital several years, although my Mum says about 2 months.

Janice& Roly have been over to help Mum a lot and so I have taken time to show off some of my tricks. Woody, my brother, is a handsome chap, also fast, keen and a splendid guard, who puts his all into everything that he does. I think he is going to go a long way in obedience and trials. Like me, Woody jumps like a stag and really enjoys it. I am a very obedient dog; when Mum calls the other dogs I can be twice as far away and still beat them to her.

I live life to the full and play or work as much as I can. I miss Dad but I know I will be able to look after him when he comes back by fetching and carrying things for him. When Mum is on the mobile to him I 'yip' to let him know that I am taking care of Mum when he talks to me!



Shivva & Linda



Working Trials Clearjump

Why a Beardie?

by Mike Reed

My obsession with the Beardie began when I was a young lad, and my Grandparents had this scruffy, smelly, hairy dog to help them on their smallholding. It was love at first sight and we became inseparable, even to the extent of me bunking off school to spend time with Jake, and badgering my parents into buying me a bike so I could get there quicker! I have such happy memories of our time spent running around the fields, playing catch, hide and seek etc. Many happy days of skinned knees and getting into trouble when Grandad needed help to round up the chickens and geese, only to find that there was no sign of Jake! I also vividly recall the terrible day when I cycled down the track to the house, full of joy and looking forward to another lovely day with my best mate, only to be confronted by two very glum, red-eyed faces. Jake had passed away in the night! To a 12 year old boy, this was devastating, my Jake gone! The bottom had fallen out of my world!

That very day I vowed to myself that, one day, I would have my very own scruffy, smelly, hairy dog. I say this because, at that time, I had absolutely no idea what sort of dog Jake was, it was not until sometime later, when my Grandparents had come to terms with their loss, that I was able to talk to them about him. "He were a Bearded Collie," said Grandad "the best lad to ever walk this earth"

So, that was it then. I would have a Bearded Collie!

Many years passed and I spent my time researching the breed, buying all the books and reading all the articles that I could find. The Internet came along, and that became a great source of information. Indeed, when I met Christine (later to become my wife) one of the first things I told her was that, one day, I was going to have my own Beardie (what a great chat-up line!!!)

Time passed and I came to realise that the Beardie was not a dog that could be left for long periods whilst I was out at work, and so I had to accept that my desire was out of reach, until such a time that I could ease up on my workload. I joined several Facebook Beardie sites and contented myself with reading of others exploits and looking longingly at the pictures of their wonderful dogs

Then, one day, somebody posted an advertisement that they had seen on Gumtree, it was a Beardie, and he was only 12 miles away. I had come across this on my way home from work and, on entering the house, my wife knew something was up. I showed her the post and said that it was such a shame as the dog was only just down the road, she just looked at me with (I'm not

ashamed to say) tears in my eyes, and simply said "go and get him". She agreed to change her shifts so that he would not be on his own for long each day (although he would always have the 4 cats for company).

And so, we went over, fell in love with him, and brought him home with us.

I don't advocate the use of Gumtree for animals. I have heard too many horror stories of what happens to some of the animals advertised on there, and I was determined that was not going to be his possible fate.

And so, I am proud to say that we finally have a Beardie to share our lives with. It has not been all plain sailing (more of that later maybe) but we love him to bits.

This story has been 46 years in the making, but had been more than worth it. 2 years on and life couldn't get much better.

All good things come to he who waits.



Jethro

Millie

by Barbie Short

It's August. The sun is shining and it's Millie, the weird Beardie's birthday. She's 15!

Off we go down to the beach, because swimming is her favourite thing... after balls. And toys. And sardines. But definitely not baths.

So in I go, with Millie who loves it. Mike stands on beach as he does not think it's sunny enough. And we swim about. Then I take her back to the beach and go further out for a proper swim. I look round and there she is with all legs going and a 'so you thought you'd go without me look on her face'. Anyway we swam bit more and then home for sardines.



That Life could be so simple and happy for all of us.

We then set off in the beginning of November, just in time to escape our Level 4 lockdown, to a chalet in Aviemore. My son and his husband and Labrador had a nearby one. Walks were the idea and we set off on one of these bright sunny cold days to do the Ryvoan pass. Up the hill, along the dale, rough walking, but good when we fetched up at the most gorgeous turquoise loch. The Labrador went straight in with Millie when the idiot who passes for a son in law, threw a stick. Millie's eyesight is no longer what it was, but we are a collie and we are NOT coming out without our stick. So we keep swimming, by this time half way across and reaching a nasty fast flowing current. We are also deaf, and double deaf with our mind on stick.

By this time my son was taking his jacket off and I am saying, 'No-one is getting in that loch. We are miles from anywhere and hypothermia will ensue.'

With consulate skill, born of years of practice and sheer desperation, I got another stick and threw it almost exactly in front of her nose, whereupon she swam back to the bank and I collapsed with relief. Dogs eh!

We all walked 8 miles that day. The shower in our basic cabin was good, and Millie got in every day and had her feet and tummy washed. The mud was phenomenal.

Eyesight and hearing are poor, legs not too good on stairs but as full of life and walking as ever. These mornings are dark. Very dark. Millie spends from at least 7.30am on going, 'Putting your shoes on now? Ready for out now? What not... what are you doing...?'

Such a companion, such love, such character. The best working Beardie anywhere - sorry that is non-negotiable!

Man Trailing

by Pat Spray

What to do with my dogs during "Lockdown" as there was no agility? A friend, who has dogs which do agility, had recently taken up "Man trailing" and become qualified to teach this activity. Once out of strict lockdown, she was setting up training sessions, so off we went to join her. It is small groups of 3 or 4 handlers with their dogs (one at a time!) so both my dogs could take part even though Keavi is turned 13. Could we teach an old dog new tricks? He was keen to have a go. It is all about getting your dog to follow someone's scent and to find that person who is holding the reward

The dogs work one at a time and the handlers take turns at working their own dog, being the trail layer or, staying behind to watch the vehicles as you are mostly out of sight of them and often in places where there are other people about. You also get the chance to follow someone else working their dog so you can see any problems or any brilliant bits of handling. The dog works in harness and with a long line (8 or 10 metres usually). The trail layer needs 2 small plastic pots with some of your dog's favourite treat food in and some small item that will be the scent article (often a glove, hat, scarf, an old specs case or almost anything you want to use).

When it is your turn, you take the dog to the starting point on their normal short lead and put their harness and long lead on there. The dog will always have a different starting point each time they trail and a different trail. The trail layer stands about 3 paces in front of you and faces you, while the trainer is off to the side at a similar distance. You then walk the dog round in a circle, past everyone, letting them get used to the area and return to the start (1). The trail layer shows the dog the box of treats and lets them sniff it, steps back, and then drops the scent article on the ground and runs off, calling the dog's name as they go. At first, the trail isn't too long but it does go out of sight. As you progress, it gets longer! After a few minutes (to let the trail layer get hidden), you tell the dog to "Sniff" the scent article (2) and then tell them to "track" and, hopefully, the dog sets off scenting the trail. The idea is that the dog will follow that scent wherever it has gone but some dogs need more assistance than others. (3 & 4). When they successfully find the trail layer, they are rewarded with the pot of treats and a lot of fuss/praise (5). Most dogs get that idea quickly. The trail layer then runs off for a short distance, to hide again and the dog is then told to "track" and goes to find them so they get a second reward quickly. This short, quick trail is called an "intensity trail" and is a reinforcement of their clever tracking.

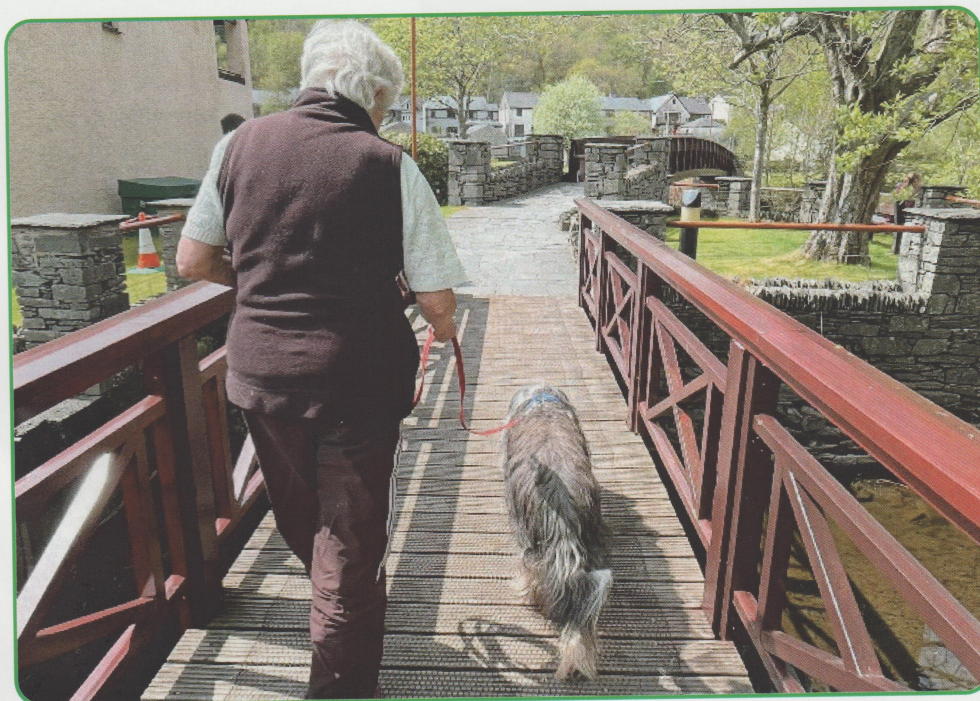
Over time, the trails get longer and more difficult. The starts can be “delayed” so the scent will be more difficult to track. The handler might not know where the trail goes. The trail layer might have gone in any direction before you even get to the venue. All this is still in the future for us but it is good fun, working with your dog in a different way... and most dogs love sniffing around at the best of times!!!



1. Being shown the treat pot



2. Sniffing the scent article



3. Keavi crossing a bridge



4. Vetta tracking.
Trail layer was hiding
behind the tree.



5. Getting the reward

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