



Harry Coppard
c1935

www.workingbeardies.co.uk

 WBCS - Working Bearded Collie Society

Issue 45

Winter 2022



COMMITTEE ELECTED AFTER LANGDALE AGM 2022

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As Janice, above.

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The contributed items printed within may contain personal opinions of the writers, which are not necessarily the opinions of the Editor or WBCS.

Langdale 2022 was a great success again with many of our members attending and bringing along prospective new ones.

Our Raffle funds of £84 were donated to 'Darwin Dogs', a new charity who train assistance dogs for people.

The date for next year's Annual Meet are

Saturday and Sunday the 16th & 17th September 2023

As usual, 10-4 pm both days.

WATCH OUT, WE MAY BE AT A NEW FIELD FURTHER ALONG THE VALLEY. Sadly the National Trust have 'paid off' our farmer of 60+ years to 're-wild' the farm, leaving him to relocate and find somewhere else to live in his retirement. Friends of Eric have come to the rescue and offered us their place. Details in the next newsletter.

Sadly our members Sue Mellor and Lou Jones lost their beloved MEGAN recently. She is the Beardie featured on our pens, key-rings and poo bag holders.



There is more to this than meets the eye

As "owners" of our beautiful and intelligent dogs, we know that whilst their individual psychologies are so important, the role of instincts also occupies a big influence in shaping their personalities. Instincts involve those automatic responses in dogs, which, as a species, makes them behave uniquely as dogs, though, of course individual dogs breeds can have their own distinctive types of behaviour. Thus, our herding bearded collies show behaviours that other dog breeds do not exhibit. There are several pieces of behaviour that all our beardies demonstrate which are so interesting. And I want to talk about just one aspect, namely circling behaviour, which shows itself in several areas – going to sleep, toileting and in play.

At night times, or when getting ready for a prolonged sleep, my own three dogs circle in their beds, sometimes pulling out the bedding until they eventually feel satisfied and flop down to sleep. In looking up various explanations for this, the wolf from which our collies are close descendants, seems to provide the best explanations, especially as wolves exhibit this behaviour too.

Wolves often bed down in long grass, so they tread it down to make a comfortable bed as well as checking for insects and snakes. It is also suggested that wolves try to maintain a 360 degree view around themselves avoiding potential blind spots by which a potential predator can move in closely, unobserved. Circling around allows the animal to develop "a feel" for the place from all angles, - a kind of orientation prior to resting and sleeping, when it is at its most vulnerable.

The advantage of being in a pack of 20 or so, rather than being an individual wolf on its own, clearly comes into play here, as all angles are easily covered by the pack. Wolf experts also think that the direction of the wind is also a factor in this circling behaviour as the wolf positions itself in the best direction to make maximum use of scents carried on the wind. Correct positioning will allow the wolf to pick up the scent of a potential predator long before visual contact is made.

It is fascinating to consider that when your beardie is taking a long time to settle, at some deep, and instinctual level, it is taking all these different aspects into account. Transferring this survival behaviour into the security of your own home, in a similar vein, I do not think that collies ever sleep that soundly, but rather in a series of naps, easily awoken, ready for action.

Likewise any wolf that sleeps too deeply, unless supported by the watchfulness of the rest of the pack, is particularly vulnerable.

In terms of toileting, it is clear that our dogs often choose their site very carefully. The other night, in the dark and pouring rain, my beardedie Diamond spent about 5 minutes before she found just the right place to relieve herself – going round in circles in the process. The explanations offered by experts are perhaps quite straightforward, namely to do with scent. In effect leaving one's mark.

Once again, our understanding of wolves sheds light on this behaviour. Experts believe that wolves were able to determine a vast amount of information about other wolves from the scents left behind by their urine and poo. Information that can be "read" in this way, can include the health, size and sex of the passing wolf, whether in season, perhaps even the mood of the wolf – whether contented, stressed or ill. The "reading" wolf can also assess how long the other wolf passed by, and whether there is any potential threat – close or distant.

The information attaching to each individual wolf's "waste" is thought to be as individual as a human fingerprint – no two are alike. Similarly, our dogs leave behind their "traces" to be "read" by other passing dogs and to mark out their range or territory in the process. Seen in this way, your dog's walk, sniffing about is her, or his, equivalent of our human "Eastenders" or "Emmerdale" – catching up with the local "goings on" in the area!

When throwing sticks for the three beardedies, Diamond, our female, often runs in large circles round me and then moves in towards me in a straight line, lying down a few feet away from me. As we know, this tendency to circle has made the breed, along with the Border Collie, such good working dogs for shepherds over many generations. This circling again comes straight from the wolf, and their ability to hunt so successfully in packs. Individual wolves circle their potential quarry – such as a herd of bison, to keep them moving so that the bison can be closely observed within that movement to pick out the young, injured, or infirm. All movement here is communication to the wolves.

However, bison are especially powerful animals, and even in a pack the wolves are especially careful to avoid injury or death by getting too close too quickly. The wolves then make short runs into the herd to try and split it up so that the targeted bison can be separated off, and once isolated quickly killed.

Now, in terms of the beardies, whilst I throw sticks for them, and occupy the centre of that decreasing circle, I do wonder whether there are two different aspects being shown here. On the one hand there is "submission" to pack leader [me], by being responsive to me, my voice, commands, and the sticks that I throw – going to fetch them. However, within that context there is the circling behaviour, breaking the circle, and moving in for the kill, which is the behaviour towards a prey animal.

Our dogs therefore represent a blend of the deep down instinctual automatic behaviour and learned behaviour from involvement with humans. As Diamond fixes me with a determined, steady eye, whilst creating decreasing circles around me, I can almost imagine a lone, injured bison on the prairie, and a pack of circling wolves! Perhaps I need to stand a little straighter when throwing sticks, so that Diamond does not get the wrong idea!

If you have any thoughts in relation to my comments, or any further views about the behaviour of your beardies, it would be good to hear about them. And the next time you think of someone as "a wolf in sheep's clothing", just cast a glance downwards to the dog basket and remember that a wolf's close relation, covered in a long shaggy coat, now lies curled up so peacefully in the corner of your room".

Neville Barlow

Don't forget – postage stamps without the new style barcodes have to be used up by 31st January 2023, or swapped for the new type before the end of January next year. Go to your post office or visit:

royalmail.com/barcodedstamps

Used postage stamps are used by charities for fundraising. If you would like to send yours to us, please send to Janice Jackson (address inside front cover). At the moment they are being donated to 'Canine Epilepsy Support Group'

Please remember if the envelope is thicker than a card, it needs a Large Letter stamp. Or bring them along to Langdale.

Thank you

Attila Takes A Hand

We drive through the gateway,
Get out of the car
And see to our horror
The door is ajar

"My God! We've been burgled!
It's happened again!
Perhaps they're still in there?
Bad boys? Or tough men?

"But where is Attila?
Where is that beast?
We thought the beardie
Would scare them at least

"Oh, here is the hero!
And wagging his tail!
Why didn't you give them
Our dinner as well?

"Get back to the kitchen!
Guard dog indeed!
No-one so cowardly
Should wear collar and lead!"

Attila slinks out
But then, strangely, lingers
And sniffs by his forepaw
Two fresh human fingers!

Poem adapted to read "beardie" instead of "Alsatian"
– Neville Barlow

*Acknowledgments to Susan Mangyn, from 'Ten Poems about Dog'
compiled by Dame Genni Murray.*

Toby Tails – Part 4

by Donna Moxon

This is the final part of a series of stories I wrote about my first Beardie, Toby. He started my love affair with the breed and 35 years later I am currently "mum" to Barney and Twizzle, registered with the WBCS. I hope these stories have raised a bit of a smile as we could all do with a laugh occasionally. Enjoy...

Hello again fellow Beardie owners, it's time again for another nail-biting instalment of that famous shaggy monster, Toby!

I must first start off this little chapter by apologising for not putting pen to paper sooner about my favourite "hound", but you know how it is, time goes on, we moved house, Toby had a quiet patch and it was the quiet before the storm! Anyway, I thought I'd better do something about it, so here goes...



This particular tale is dedicated to a lady I met in the "Ladies" at the Pinvin Fun Day. We arrived at the village hall and playing fields one sunny afternoon in April. Betty Foster, Toby's breeder and our close friend had booked the hall and grounds for all beardies and their owners to have fun. As the weather was glorious that day most people started shedding jackets, coats and jumpers and putting them over the backs of their chairs out on the playing field.

After Toby had partaken in a particularly hectic game of racing up to, then trying to eat a dangling sausage (his favourite "human" snack), had wandered back to me with my husband, his tongue lolling. My husband Vaughan (whose tongue was also lolling), handed Toby to me while he went in search of a cup of tea. As Toby was also gasping for a drink he plunged his head into the nearest bowl of cold, refreshing water for a large drink.

Nothing unusual about that I hear you say, quite true, but while Toby was lapping happily at the water a lady came up and started chatting about what a lovely day it had turned out, when all of a sudden, "Oh dear!" She exclaimed. I looked down in horror to see Toby relieving himself of a drink he'd had earlier, all over Betty's jacket which was over the back of her chair!! I pulled him off in horror, grabbed the coat, and with Toby in tow shot into the toilets of the village hall.

In the ladies I managed to tie "His Lordship" to a washbasin while I frantically soaped and washed the jacket and I was up to my elbows in suds when a lady walked in to find out our guilty secret. "Oh dear, had a little accident?" She enquired with a smile. "Just a bit." I said sheepishly, "Toby always gets excited when he's been running around." I tried to explain. You certainly know when you've said the wrong thing, don't you? "Toby? *TOBY! THE* Toby that was in Chinwag last month?" She beamed. "Oh well, I shall look forward to reading about this little episode in a future issue." She said. Well, all I can say dear lady is that you got your wish, and as a post script I might add that I admitted our guilty secret to Betty when we got back outside with a very clean, if very wet jacket. She thought it was hilarious too thank goodness!

Since we acquired our Beardie, (he was now nearly five years old now), there seem to have been numerous occasions when for one reason or another Toby made me look certifiable! One occasion was just after we moved into our brand new house...

As you probably know, new houses usually have the front lawn laid by the builders, but the back garden normally resembles a cross between a quarry and a scrap yard, so Vaughan and I set about landscaping our back garden. Once the turf was laid it was a question of cutting out flower beds as and when I could afford to buy some shrubs for them. Then I hit on the idea of having a tiered rockery in the bottom right hand corner of the garden. We duly went out and bought log roll, rocks and various alpine plants and set about creating a little bit of nature in the corner of our garden.

The end result was really quite pleasing even if the plants were a bit on the small side, but they would grow in time so long as they were left alone... Some hope! During the first week after the rockery was finished Toby paid scant attention to it, then all of a sudden it seemed to have a fascination all of its own because every time I looked out of the dining room window, there was Toby perched on top of it like Monarch of the Glen! No matter how many times

I hammered on the window or shot out of the back door ready to give him a serious talking to, he either took no notice and turned his back on me or managed to hare into his kennel faster than I could get out of the back door! Clearly something had to give, and it wasn't going to be my rockery.

There was nothing else for it, so I rang Betty to ask her advice. "Prevention is better than cure." I was told, so what I really needed to do was stop him going on the rockery even before the idea entered his head. Sounds complicated doesn't it? Well not really, it just meant giving the problem a little thought, deciding what would deter him and putting the plan into action.

As it happens, Toby had always had a hate of wellington boots and empty plastic pop bottles (the flying variety), so on the Monday lunchtime of the following week when I always came home to let Toby out for his constitutional, I spent the entire lunch hour sat crouched, like an oversized gnome on the rockery armed with a pair of wellingtons and a couple of empty pop bottles. Every time Toby ventured too near the rockery with the intention of climbing on it I duly lobbed a welly or bottle at him with a stern "NO!"

The only problem with this scheme was that at the same time the builders were busy building a large house behind ours, and during my little visits on the rockery there were several men on scaffolding shouting things like "What you doing there darlin'" or "Won't they let you in the house?!" All very embarrassing I'm sure you'll agree. And while all this was going on, Toby decided to sit at the top of the garden by the house watching me. The expression he gave the workmen was one of "Don't worry mate, they're coming to take her away next week!" At least my efforts paid off, and our rockery became a 'Toby Free Zone'

Another funny thing that happened connected with the rockery was during the same winter we had a heavy fall of snow and when I put Toby out one morning he went "On Guard". This means he pads very slowly towards something he's not sure about, with his tail pointing straight up. Also, because he had a large yellow streak running down his back, he always made sure that his escape route back to his kennel was clear. Anyway, he refused to go up the garden any further, shot back to the kitchen door and started hammering on it to come in. When I went outside to investigate, I found he was absolutely terrified of a bush on the rockery which was now totally

unrecognisable due to the fact it was covered in snow! It took me nearly ten minutes to coax him up the garden, shake the snow off the bush, make a snowball with it and then he was happy to hare down the garden after it.

During the last really heavy bout of snow we had about two years previously, we decided to spend the Sunday morning in the local park with some friends sledging. We set out, four adults and two dogs (one spaniel and of course Toby).

When we arrived at the park there was the usual crowd of children and parents having a wonderful time sliding down a huge hill towards the frozen-over lake, then once at the bottom starting the long climb back to the top again, and repeating the procedure.

We took up position at the top of the slope, Vaughan placed the newly purchased plastic sledge on the ground and climbed aboard. I followed suit and managed to sit between his legs, we were going to leave Toby with our friends and take it in turns looking after each other's dogs when Toby had other ideas. He leapt onto the sledge and managed to squeeze onto my lap, and that's where he stayed. He spent the entire morning sliding down the hill then trudging back up with us to have another go. He must have looked a sight because as we sped down the hill his ears were flapping about in the wind and he was grinning at everyone, having a wonderful time! I might add that he was eagerly awaiting the first fall of snow each year after that.

My final little tale is about a hobby dear to Toby's heart... He loved plane spotting! As we lived in Solihull we were not that far from Birmingham Airport and as a result some planes flew over our house on their way in to land. They always flew from the front of the house over the back and away to the west, with Toby in hot pursuit, it's a good job we had a 6ft fence to stop him. It's not just that he was dedicated to chasing them, if he was asleep in his kennel and a plane flew over, he was instantly awake on all fours and bouncing up the garden like Pepe le Pew, barking his head off at a passing 747!

The really strange thing is we have some friends who lived in Marston Green, right next to the airport and when we went to visit them Toby knew that the planes took off and landed over one particular road. At night he scanned the sky for a sign of a light flashing on the under carriage of a plane,

and the minute he spotted it he barked until it was out of sight of the car. He never ever confused street lights or car lights for that of a plane! As we've often said in our house if ever a burglar arrived flying a Jumbo jet and armed with a Ewbank vacuum cleaner, (another pet hate) Toby would kill him on sight!

The only time I can honestly say I'd wished Toby had short fur was when we took him to the airport to see Concorde. We parked our car at our friend's house and walked down the lane to the fields at the end of the runway. As it was all fenced off Toby was quite safe to be off his lead, and as the land once belonged to the old golf course it was very nice for letting your dog run free.

Once off his lead Toby had a great time running round and having a great sniff at everything. When Concorde arrived, Toby came and stood at the fence with everyone else to watch it land and taxi, but once it was down, he decided to slope off to have a paddle in the river. The only problem was once he was in the clear water it rapidly turned very murky indeed and turned out to contain seepage from the airport.

Unfortunately, by the time we discovered the state of Toby he'd already attracted quite a crowd who had suddenly lost interest in Concorde and were standing on the footbridge over the river pondering on who the lucky owners were! Toby, needless to say was revelling in all the attention.

When I finally managed to persuade Toby to come out of the water, he was totally black, dripping and smelly with a capital 'S'. The crowd all went 'yuk' at the same time and as Toby staggered up the bank everybody parted to keep well clear of him. It was then he shook himself. I think everyone had a bit. I had been rather silly and worn white trousers, they ended up looking like they belonged to a Dalmatian!

He then decided to have a roll in the long grass and I must say that it did help a bit, enough at least for Vaughan to approach him safely and get his lead on. We then marched him back up the lane to our friend's house. He was far too filthy to take into the house, then David hit on the bright idea of using his 'turbo wash' which he normally used on the car. I must say it was a great improvement, after half an hour of being 'turboed' we decided he was

clean enough to put in the car, but he still needed a car blanket wrapped round him. When I say he was clean, it was only a relative term used when comparing a clean dog to a coal mine!

Once in the car we had to travel home with all the windows open as the smell was unbearable, and poor Vaughan had to have Toby on his lap to ensure he kept the blanket on. When we arrived home, much to his disgust, Toby was taken straight up to the bathroom and showered for another 45 minutes, believe me it took that long to get him clean as the dirt was dropping off him in chunks!

It's Toby's 5th birthday in February and he's put on his list he's hoping for some marrow bone biscuits and some smacko's. I'm sure he'll get what he wants, he usually does!

The End

PS:

I hope you have enjoyed the exploits of our first unforgettable Beardie. We had so much fun with him and so much love from him. When he was fourteen Betty Foster suggested I had another Beardie. I was unsure at first, but Jack (Bredon) came into our life and he adored Toby and respected him. Toby in turn taught Jack everything he knew! Toby finally went to sleep in April 2001 aged sixteen and two months. Our handsome, kind, funny, wonderful boy.

By Donna Moxon

The Wonder Years

I wonder where I put my glasses.
I wonder where I parked my car.
I wonder why boys call me ma'am.
I wonder if I paid that bill.
I wonder when that appointment is.
I wonder why I bought Bok Choy.
I wonder why everything hurts.
I wonder why it's so hot in here.
I wonder why it's so cold in here.
I wonder why I said that.
I wonder what the speed limit is.
I wonder what that policeman wants.
I wonder why I should buy that.
I wonder if I should eat another piece of cake.

(Julia)

We are also needing articles for future newsletter, and photos for our calendars. The calendars are prepared in May, (so the flyer can go out with the Summer Newsletter) so it's not calendar season when we get it ready.

Email anything to 'info@workingbeardies.co.uk' and the articles/photos will be forwarded.

Have you ever wondered why the same dogs keep appearing on the calendar and in the newsletters? The reason is that the same people keep sending in the photos!!

Another of our 'oldies' went to Rainbow Bridge in September, at the grand old age of 17. Millie, featured regularly in our newsletter and will be missed by Barbie Short





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