

Tails to Tell



Ziggy came to this Branch's attention having had the above photo entered into our recent "Precious Pets" Photo Competition. Ziggy's owner Dave who lives in Ash Vale, wanted to let us know a little bit about his background and life now, as he had been rescued by the RSPCA.

Ziggy's first owner when he was a small puppy was a lady who had a much older and larger dog that did not like Ziggy from the start and was often aggressive towards him. The owner didn't seem to care and left unchecked, it one day led to Ziggy, at the age of only 6 months, being attacked by this other dog who tried to kill him; by savaging his throat badly.

The vet who treated Ziggy and learned what had happened contacted the RSPCA who got involved; the upshot being the owner was forced to sign him over to the RSPCA. Poor Ziggy was left with a "Y"-shaped scar and teeth puncture marks on his throat, which 5 years later are still visible. After such an ordeal for a 6 month old puppy, the trauma of the experience affected him badly and he was left with not just physical scars but psychological ones too. It was six months that he spent in the care of the RSPCA Maidenhead & East Berks Branch, waiting to be adopted, which is a long time in a young puppy's life, stuck permanently in a kennel with little human contact and none of the normalities of home life, so some of the kind kennel staff would take him home at the weekends.

Then one day Dave and his family, who had been looking at adopting a young Staffie, came across Ziggy on the RSPCA's website and went to visit him. Learning about his difficulties, fears and lack of confidence, Dave, as an experienced dog owner, knew Ziggy wasn't going to be an easy dog to deal with but decided to adopt

him anyway. He explained; "We had problems with him from the start trying to train him not to bark and growl at everyone and everything; not to chase cats and trying to build his confidence. He'd attack other dogs given half a chance and he even chased a canoe once, jumping into the water to go after it! If he was left alone he'd chew things around the home, and sometimes have a 'toilet accident' from the apprehension of a situation".

With the input of a lot of time, consistency in the way he was trained, which involved the whole family being united in how they handled him, showing him a lot of love and affection, he gradually learned new ways to behave. Dave says, "He has never been smacked, but punishment is being sent to his bed for 10 minutes with nobody looking at him. He can't stand that and so he learns quickly when he has been naughty (eg. chasing cats), which he's not done for 3 years now".

"He is a gentle, clever soul who loves to play and loves to please. He's happy, confident and loves everyone! I know I seem to be bragging but I am so proud of my little fella."

One example of his now gentle nature is a story Dave told of when Ziggy found a fledging that had fallen out of its nest. During his time in kennels, as an over-enthusiastic pup, the staff had taught him the word "Gently" and if it's said to him now he goes into a 'slow motion' mode and will be gentle in whatever he's doing. So having found the little bird and been told "gently" he picked it up in his mouth very carefully and took it to Dave who was able to return it, unharmed to its nest. Bearing in mind Staffies are naturally strong muscular dogs he was gentle enough to not hurt the little bird and clever enough to know what he needed to do.

Dave continues enthusiastically saying, "He's very intelligent and has a wide vocabulary of words he knows. So the word "bath" sends him off like a shot to hide under the table, or the word "treat" and he'll rush into the kitchen and look up at the cupboard where they're kept. Obviously the word "walk" causes much excitement but more than that Ziggy can sense the time of day! He always has a walk at 2.30pm and if I'm late taking him he'll not take his eyes off me, following me everywhere, even to the toilet, until I take him. And then once he knows we're going he skips off down the hallway to wait at the front door".

"Once out, he walks off the lead, sits at the kerb waiting for me to catch up and tell him it's okay to cross. Since he's stopped chasing cats there are some that

have grown up in recent years that have never been chased by him, so they sometimes accompany us on our walks!"

"He has loads of character, is fully socialised and wants to make friends with everyone he meets. He usually walks with a half inflated football in his mouth and makes everyone who sees him smile. He is famous in the Ash Vale area where we live which means it can take me an hour to get back home because of all the people who want to say hello! Other dog walkers are amazed at the turnaround of this dog."

Then there are his friends that he likes to visit when they go out for a walk! There are a number of people who he likes to call on and this involves going up to their front window and putting his front paws up on the window sill – ball in his mouth still – and looking in to see them. Dave says it's not long before you'll hear a load of laughter coming from inside and then a few moments later the front door will open and Ziggy gets a big fuss made of him! In addition, his understanding of words extends to peoples' names, so if Dave says "Go and see John", he'll trot off to John's house or equally mention their next door neighbour's name and off he'll pop but always to her back door. She doesn't have a dog herself but keeps treats just for Ziggy when he calls. Dave commented at one point saying; "Ziggy has a better social life than me!"

In Dave's finishing comments he said; "I entered Ziggy into the "Precious Pets" Photo Competition in the hope that he can melt a few hearts and convince people to adopt a Staffie. You do have to know what you're doing and what you are taking on. You've really got to be devoted and that means putting in the hours initially to train him/her and having the time to do so. Also it doesn't end there as the secret to a happy Staffie is 4 walks a day and lots of time, attention and affection, and in return, you will be rewarded with love, affection and loyalty."



Ziggy with his 'tell-tale' half inflated football.

‘Victims not Villains’

Did you know that the RSPCA as a whole, across 15 Animal Rescue Centres have **215 Staffies or Staffie-crosses** waiting to be rehomed right now? This is far, far more than any other bull breed. Why is this?

It is simply down to the fact that, what are actually ideal family dogs have got such a bad reputation nowadays. Other animal charities like Battersea and the Dog's Trust face the same issues.

One of our Society's senior vets so eloquently put it; "Staffies have had a terrible press, but this is not of their own making—in fact they're wonderful dogs. If people think that Staffies have problems, they're looking at the wrong end of the dog lead! When well cared for and properly trained they can make brilliant companions. Our experience suggests that problems occur when bad owners exploit the Staffie's desire to please by training them to show aggression."

It is this group of irresponsible owners who brandish these dogs on the end of a chain with a desire that the dog fits their macho image that has led to some of the Staffies' bad reputation.

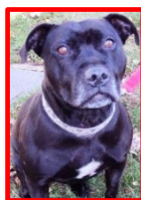
The Staffordshire Bull Terrier (SBT), an English bred dog, has a long and noble history as a devoted, loyal and loving family pet. SBTs have been specified in their breed standard and other reliable sources as; "good with children, affectionate, friendly, enthusiastic, highly intelligent and totally reliable, making them an ideal family pet".



Staffie pups are also easy to house-train as they are eager to please and quick to learn.

There is an excellent short 5 min. video on the RSPCA's National Website (*link at end of this paragraph*) about the history of the Staffie since the 1920's and it is recommended viewing as it really hits home a point about these much misjudged dogs. You can also find it on YouTube by searching on "**RSPCA video - Britain, Love Your Staffy!**" or search on this link: www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/puppy/staffordshirebullterrier

If you are thinking of adopting a dog, please consider a Staffie. Our local Millbrook Animal Centre Chobham, currently has 14 Staffies in their care, all waiting for new homes; with 7 yr old Skye shown here, just one of them. Millbrook staff, as with any reputable rescue centre, will know each dog well enough to help match the right Staffie for you and your family.



‘Precious Pets’ Photo Competition

Following our last very successful photo competition a couple of years ago which just featured cat photos, we decided this year to make it open to all pets – small or large; short hair, long hair, no hair at all! There were four different categories available to enter; all sponsored and judged by local businesses who are keen supporters of our Branch. Categories & Sponsors were "Cats & Kittens"- Companion Care, Farnham; "Dogs & Puppies"- Kay9 Dog Training & Behavioural Services; "Small Furrries & Others"- Nose T Tail (Hook); "Pet Pals"- Kynoch Vets, Frimley Green. We received 204 photos in total – so many of them really excellent photos; each one an adored pet. We had entries from all over the country including as far north as Fife in Scotland and even one from Italy! We were lucky enough to be able to show off a wide variety of pets, beyond the norm, including tortoises, chickens, a bearded dragon, a tree frog and some snakes. Our Sponsors task to choose just three winners from each category was not an easy one. From our Branch's side we decided to add our own three accolades that we judged choosing just one overall winner – for each of the following; "Best Feline Photo", "Best Canine Photo" and "Most Unusual Pet".



Every winner received a rosette and a gift bag containing prizes for both owner and pet/s. Our Album of all the entries to the Competition is available to view on our website's Events page, along with all the winning photos. It's worth taking a look to see so many wonderful photos of so many gorgeous and much-adored pets. Lastly to all our entrants, a massive thank you for taking part and supporting us in this worthwhile fundraiser.



However, this is not where it ends..... With so many wonderful photos to choose from we decided to produce our own photo calendars for 2015. The end result is three different calendars – two Wall Calendars and one Desk Calendar selling at £6.50 and £3.50 each respectively.

Anyone whose pet features in the calendars have had the chance to place orders



before they're released for general sale and we sold out so quickly we've had to place a second order! These calendars go on sale in our three charity shops during the first week in December. If you would like to support us and buy a calendar or two, ideal Christmas gifts for friends or family, you can either pop into one of our shops or ring in advance to reserve what you want. (See website for shop addresses & phone nos.). To avoid disappointment, don't delay as they are likely to sell fast. Remember, these calendars are totally unique and not available anywhere else, meaning you know a gift like this will be a one-off special!

Christmas a time of giving and goodwill



December to January is always the most pressured time of the year for the RSPCA with pets being abandoned and resources stretched to their limits. If you are a supporter of this Branch then there are ways you can help us to raise the funds needed, especially for this time of the year

Why not donate your unwanted possessions to one of our shops? Before or after Christmas is a good time to have a clear out and your donations will be gratefully received. Even items that you think we can't sell, we recycle and get paid for.

Why not come to do some of your Christmas shopping in our shops? We have some excellent unused or as-new gifts and Christmas party-wear that we sell at bargain prices. We have our own Branch Christmas cards, reasonably priced; our Branch calendars and also for the first time, we are selling a selection of bought-in brand new, and bargain priced, Christmas goods; such as gift wrap and tags, large gift bags, wine bottle boxes, novelty Christmas stockings, Cat & Dog treat-filled Christmas stockings; and more. Our shops' addresses and opening times can be found on our website.

From everyone at this Branch we'd like to wish all our supporters a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and thank you for your continued support.

