

A WEEKEND OF TEA PARTIES WITH A DOGGIE THEME

My 3 year old son, Robert, who accompanies me on many adventures and who has become quite an “old hand” on various doggy themed outings attended the Beaters Shoot on Saturday followed by a tea party and then on Sunday the Southern Flatcoated Retriever Club (proposed) informal get together and tea party. Robert loves cakes and always has done. When I was judging in Norway and Robert was just 2 years old, we (being my family, plus 3 co judges) walked the city of Kristiansand looking for a cake shop that was open. The show secretary was determined that Robert should have a good time, even if it was at the detriment of the other judges!

The Southern Flatcoated Retriever Club (proposed) had their informal get together and tea party at Godstone in Surrey, which was a thank you to the Founder members and a social event for all those interested. Ann Youens (the chair person) welcomed everyone making a special point of mentioning all the hopeful junior members present, which went down well with them, especially as they were all given a present later as well! The ethos of the club is to promote the health and well being of flatcoats and for the humans to enjoy whatever events they choose to participate in. Ann outlined the proposed events and there is certainly going to be something for everyone from a “groom in” to a match, and a BBQ to junior handling, with some gundog training and dancing with dogs. If Sunday was anything to go by, whatever the event I am sure all participants will be met with warmth and encouragement.

Brian Jones gave a talk on the work of the Flatcoated Retriever Rehousing and went through a few case studies. I have to apologize as I had not realised that there was going to be a major speech and my son became restless and found 4 bags of sweets in my handbag (that were there for emergencies, flatcoat rehousing became one!) and he rattled wrappers and did some rather loud sucking throughout!! Sorry Brian! This was followed by an auction in aid of the new club and rehousing, there was a beautiful painting by Ann Kilminster, which was politically correct with a black and a liver flatcoat, and a very nice looking cake complete with a flatcoat on it, yes this was racist as I could only see a black dog and no liver!! There was an amazing raffle. I felt rather guilty as I donated one prize, but came away with two bottles, but Robert did draw the tickets, perhaps I should not broadcast that!! I am not sure of the exact money raised, but it must have been well into three figures, all going to add to the already healthy financial footing the club has, thanks to some novel fund raising of car boot sales, tea towels with affixes and a picnic and walk.

Then followed a quiz. I think Ann Youens decided she was Ann Robinson in disguise as we had a page of weakest link style questions, followed by half a page of flatcoat questions. It was rather like my school exams and I had to say “I ran out of time”! The truth was I spent too much time talking and eating the delicious tea. Gemma Knight obviously is good at multi tasking as she seemed to be chatting, eating and with her team won both the quizzes! How did she do it!!

My drive home was horrendous. I hate driving in icy conditions, let alone blizzards with motorways closed. However, four hours later with Robert eating his way through our survival rations (a substantial doggy bag of cakes) we arrived home!

Two very different tea parties, one in a barn and one in a village hall, but linked by my love of flatcoats, both afternoons were great fun. Robert did have to “work” for the first tea party in the beating line with Beate (the dog that was born on the day he was due). I think Robert thought that the catering on the Sunday was superior to Mummies cakes on the Saturday!

Sarah Whittaker

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