



# GREAT SWISS MOUNTAIN DOG CLUB

## NEWSLETTER December 2012

Welcome to our last newsletter of 2012, hope you have all enjoyed them.

### A few words from The Chairman

Yet another year has flown by with our usual activities, a carting session in May which was held at Roade specifically for our breed who despite the weather carried on to some nice successes thanks to Cynthia & Sheila's organisation and Tom & Wendy's tuition. Sue & Steve organised one of their walks near to Bournemouth which was well attended, then at the end of October our Club's usual get together for some activities in the form of character testing and fun and games saw an enthusiastic gathering at Overseal including the infamous Dalmatian Maisey and under the radar Teal a Kooikerhondje together with a splendid number of Swissies all vying for some fun. There has been some credible wins in the show ring by the various showing fraternity and next year we should have a good turnout for the Import classes at Crufts on Working day Sunday March 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 so do come and cheer us all on as it will be a historical day. Do remember if you have any ideas for events do let one of the committee know so that it can be discussed. A photo competition was also carried out for GSMD and the main results can be obtained via a calendar for 2013 so stocking filler sorted. In September a group of three took off to see the Swiss Club's Jubilee show with 100 entrants and what a super time they had reports are in this news letter. Two also went out on a separate occasion to watch the character testing and again a report is in this newsletter. We thank Tracy for putting the newsletter together.

On behalf of the Officers and Committee I wish everyone and their Swissies a merry Christmas and all the very best for 2013.

**Peter Swinburn [Chairman]**

### A VERY SPECIAL TRIP

Where did it all begin? A long story but to say that after being the proud owner of some GSM dogs for a few years I had developed a yen to visit their 'homeland'.

So having conned Lynne Russell into accompanying me we duly set off driving from home via France over a few days meeting other GSMD owners then having arranged to meet Eva Meyer at her home in Switzerland which was about one hour drive from the French border near where we had met up with another owner. Arriving at Eva's house we were made welcome and met with some more Swissies brought in for us to see. Believe it or not we spent about half an hour there as Eva had another appointment then loaded ourselves into the car for the dash up to catch the Ferry to the UK from Dunkirk the next day. Plans don't always work and having a puncher on the French motorway didn't help so late in the night and having missed our planned hotel we made do with what could only be described as a bed for the night. The next day saw me drive 600 miles from near Metz in France through Luxembourg to the ferry at Dunkirk to get home to Staffordshire. Not to be put off I was determined to return and found out that the

following year would be a 'special', one for the Grosse Schweizer Sennen Hunde Club with a character & type assessment as well as a Jubilee show two weeks after that. The planning began and dates were booked so were flights and accommodation for the two visits. [it was just too long to be away to stay from the first event to their show date despite the gap being just 14 days]

Lynne & I flew out to Switzerland for the Character/type assessment day, arriving at Zurich airport and taking a train, all a new experience for us, to Langenthal. Then the next day we were picked up early by Eva and taken to the designated area for the event. To say it was interesting would be an understatement as we were most absorbed by what was going on, three parts to the assessments and for each section four assessors.



On arrival it was super to see approximately 20 dogs plus some puppies about 12 week old mingling between everyone all off the lead by the side of the woods with owners just stood about chatting. Despite the persistent rain and brollies everywhere no one was deterred and for one aspect I was invited to join in, which in itself was great. All was very thorough and took a few hours, we also watched by following them through the woods on that aspect and then the assessors gathered over a

coffee for a couple of hours to agree on their marks for each dog and no dog in Switzerland can be bred from without their certificate with a pass grade. Back to the hotel a nice meal, sleep and train & plane home again early the next morning. We were unable to take many pictures in the rain whilst trying to hold umbrellas up so our recording of that wasn't brilliant.

Once home we couldn't wait for the return visit 11 days later but all went well and we arrived back in Zurich like seasoned travellers picked up the hire car and set off again for Langenthal, it was a little hairy finding our hotel as the latter roads were very narrow and the light was fading fast. At last we made it and settled down for the night, up and out the next day to pick up Sue Parkin-Russell from the local railway station in that she had come to join us. Having off loaded her luggage we went on a jaunt about the area to get the feel of the country and my goodness what some sights, mountains, fields, buzzards swirling high all over the place and cows with bells so beautiful a sound in the clear air and some fantastic houses with colourful and bright flowers adorning their balconies and what shapes to the houses with their large overhanging roofs. Their wooden shapes were just magnificent. We also did a rekey for the venue for the next days show so were all prepared. That evening there was a 'special', dinner organised by the Swiss Club so we washed and brushed ourselves up and went to the hotel where the event was being held. We were made most welcome and quite a few spoke English so conversation was easy, even some dogs were present yes in the restaurant and so well behaved. The food was very enjoyable and more so trying to put items to the words on the menu which of course we hadn't a clue about, a great evening to set us off.

The next day being the show saw all three of us up early and eager to get going so into the car and off, where on arrival we were met with loads of Swissies going in all directions what a sight we were in heaven. Into the hall where three large rings had been set up and a Club stall with some scrumptious goodies for sale all three of us made a bee line to it. Then it was settle down to watch the judging which was very interesting especially with 100 dogs to see through the various classes, the only down side was that the three rings ran concurrently so we were

changing about trying to see as much as possible, one of the judges was in National costume so looked super. Many folk showing obviously had not shown before or that much, others



looked very professional and Swissies had travelled from Slovakia, Russia, Germany, Poland, Romania, and Italy as well as from all over Switzerland and we talk about some shows being too far!

Cameras were going from us three and as usual there was far too much going on to take it all in but after the show judging the judges gathered to choose the best dog and the best bitch. I had a most interesting talk to one of the judges who spoke English about the breed and different issues that related to what I had noticed all very

constructive in building up one's understanding of what degree certain things are and aren't acceptable according to their breed standard.

A break for something to drink and eat after which the display team gathered, wow it was worth going just to watch 16 GSM dogs strutting their stuff in time to music, outstanding is all I can say and I think my mouth is still open from seeing it. Stand by all of you we three have some great ideas for training you all for our display!!!!!!!

Straight after that there was a display of carting over a very precise course including a water feature which proved quite fun in the interim as owners tried with their dogs just on leads to get them into the water, I must say most Swissies tried their hardest to drink the pool dry rather than set paw in it in fact their owners got the wettest trying to encourage them in and it was only about 2 inches deep, all very entertaining.



Then it was the turn of the youngsters with their dogs and what fun that was, firstly into a sack and hop along a marked out track with dog in tow, try it some day holding up the sack which I hasten to add wasn't that large so feet were held fairly close together so balance was an issue as well as trying to steer a Swissie and oneself hopping round the track, then out of the sack and over what could only be described as a crunchy bed, through a curtain and other obstacles to the end where the dog got a whole German sausage bouncing on elastic, but obviously had to catch it first, all most entertaining and great fun. The dogs took it all in their stride in typical Swissie manner.

The whole day was a real treat and the dogs themselves were as we all know them great big soft Teddy bears who loved their owners born out by one owner who had travelled four to the show and had slept in the van with the dogs my question is I wonder who snored the loudest?

I tell you what after such a day us three girls nattered for ages and certainly slept that night.

The next couple of days we became typical tourists and went sightseeing through the magnificent Swiss countryside, round lakes and I for one have fallen in love with the cows and

their different sized bells also being September it was pumpkin time with stalls selling all shapes and sizes on the corner of farms in glorious array. We sat having a drink by lakes with water just lapping against the shore surrounded by austere mountains covered in snow, watched Parra



gliders come down from great heights to land so easily some in tandem as well.

Went on a road tourists train round Interlaken's sights and ogled all the chocolate in a Swiss chocolate shop. Another day we drove through the magnificent city of Bern then through some beautiful villages/towns. Despite doing all that we have left lots still to see so hopefully can return.

Finally I must say that seeing the Country it is certainly the place for Great Swiss Mountain dogs.

**By Julia Swinburn.**

## **Assessment day**

At the end of August Julia and I travelled to Switzerland to observe how the Swiss assess the character and temperament of the GSMD at one of their organised assessment days.

We left a warm, sunny Birmingham, slightly delayed, and landed in a very wet, cold Zurich airport about an hour and a half later. After negotiating the airport, two railway stations and a taxi ride we arrived at our hotel just as it was getting dusk and after a nice meal and early night we were ready for the main event of our trip.

We were collected from the hotel by our host, Eva Meyer, at 8.30am and taken the short ride to the venue; we think it was an equestrian centre, which had a small forest adjacent to it. I must say at this stage that, as we speak no German or French, we thought it may be a little difficult to follow everything but the people were so friendly and helpful and with some of them speaking a bit of English we managed to follow everything, and as Eva had also explained what the day would consist of, before she rushed off to be one of the four judges, we were able to enjoy the whole process. It did rain for the whole of our stay though, but this did not affect the day at all!

We arrived to find 20 to 25 Swissies, of all ages from 3 or 4 months upwards, excitedly rushing around amongst families and friends, on the road leading into the forest. No leads or collars in sight and all just enjoying themselves. What a treat for us to see so many dogs together and all getting on so well!



Despite the rain the program went ahead as planned, with each dog being assessed individually for temperament, construction and movement.

The first test was to assess their reactions to various situations. The owners and handlers formed two lines, about a metre apart, and the dog and handler, with dog off the lead, walked through the crowd. The two lines of people then moved closer, only just wide enough to pass now, and the pair again walked through. The people then formed a circle and the dog and handler stood in the centre. A command was given and the circle moved slowly forward to crowd the dog, staying there for about two minutes. This was repeated on command, but this time the circle rushed forward towards the dog and stayed as a crowd around the dog. Some did 'escape' at this stage but if they could be persuaded to go back into the circle they were not marked down so heavily. Julia actually joined in this part of the proceedings and said it was great fun.

All the events that the dogs participated in were marked by four judges and they all give their own assessment for the dog's performance and a joint result is then given



## **Forest test**

Each dog was taken through the forest obstacles and assessed on its reactions to each of them by the same four judges.

There were eleven such tests as follows:

- 1 Dog starts on a lead and walks past a series of suspended tunnels which were shaken by a man hiding behind them just as the dog passed.
- 2 A metal bowl was banged with a metal pole to create as much sudden noise as possible
- 3 String of metal cans was dragged along the forest floor
- 4 As the dog approached a man, standing at the side of path, he put up an umbrella.
- 5 With the dog off the lead and no given commands the dog must walk past foil strips hanging either side of the path.
- 6 The judge held the dog while the handler passed through a screen of plastic and chains and then released the dog to follow through the screen.
- 7 The dog had to walk over a tarpaulin laid across the path and also corrugated metal sheets placed there and follow the handler.
- 8 A rigid white screen was positioned on one side of the path and the dog had to continue to walk past the screen.
- 9 The dog is taken by a helper to an area further into the forest and restrained without the owner for 3 minutes. The handler then retrieves the dog and walks back with dog on the lead.
- 10 While walking back down the path a man jumps out and feigns an attack on the pair by shouting waving a stick aggressively at them.
- 11 The man then walked away, threw down the stick and squatted down, level with the dog in a friendly pose. The dog was then released and both dog and handler went towards the now friendly man.

## **Quality Assessment**

There were again four judges who assessed each dog independently and then all four results were combined to arrive at the final decision. There is no a pass or fail as such but each dog is scored on the various elements and given points for each of them.

Each dog is first checked for size, a measure being used to ensure they are within the standard height.

A lot of attention is given to the dog's markings, there should not be too much white around the neck, and the tan colour should be of a rich tone and in all the correct areas.

A thorough check is made of the dog's mouth and the dentition is very important, the dog must have the correct number of teeth and a good clean bite.

Finally the dog must be moved for the judges, much as it would be in the show ring, up and down in a straight line with each of the judges watching from all angles to confirm that the dog is sound.

When each dog has been assessed in all these areas the judges retired to discuss each of the individual results and every owner is finally given an overall assessment of their dog. The results are not made public, each owner will only know of their own results. The markings range from excellent to a possible fail.

## **Breeding**

We were also given a quick instruction on some of the main points the Swiss club follow for breeding purposes.

A central register is kept by a vet and stud dogs are only allowed from this list. In order to be included on the register the stud dog must have passed all the testing criteria first.

The vet will provide the names of three dogs to the bitch owner who is then allowed to choose their preferred dog.

Each stud dog can only be used on three separate occasions and only once for each bitch. Repeat matings are not allowed.

Any progeny of the matings must be fifteen months old and have been tested for epilepsy and OCD before the dog can be used for a subsequent time.

All judges must have taken and passed the required assessment before being allowed to judge.

Julia and I were only in Switzerland for three days, during which time it didn't stop raining, but we were made so welcome by the Swiss club and we learnt such a lot about our wonderful breed. We had a brilliant time and saw so many Swissies altogether, a real treat, and we can't wait to visit again. In fact we are due to return in two weeks so that will be another tale to tell.

## **By Lynne Russell**

One of the events held at the Swiss Jubilee celebrations was titled:

### **Plauschparcours fur Kids**

Which loosely translates to: Time for the kids to have fun with their Swissies or how I wished I'd kept up with my German lessons!!!

The young people, with their Swissies on leads had an obstacle course to tackle.

This was not a course made easy for the Swissies or the juniors and consisted of 7 obstacles that had to be encountered.

The first obstacle involved the junior getting into a sack (as per a sack race) and whilst leading their dog having to navigate a dog legged path, without knocking the boundary poles of their perches.

The second obstacle involved the junior and their Swissie walking over a duvet cover. Seems simple but the cover had been filled with items that were very crinkly and made lots of noise as they were walked over.

The third obstacle consisted of black bin liners being hung from a pole, they had then been shredded and had balloons attached to them. The Swissie and junior then walked through these.

The next obstacle was simple or so it seemed but a few had problems with getting their dog to walk up and over a ramp which had a very slight incline other side.

The fifth obstacle was a weave in and out through cones with tennis balls on top of them.

Most tried to do a tight weave in and out and of course this meant many tennis balls were knocked off their perches. The best way was to take a long walk through each of the cones and then turn the dog well away from them!

The next obstacle made so many of us laugh. The Swissie was supposed to walk through a water obstacle, it was too deep and the water was not cold but so many stopped to take a drink and then walk in the other direction as they were not going to get their feet wet!! But there were many who were more than happy just to walk through it without blinking an eye.

The seventh and last obstacle to be encountered took me a while to work out what was going on, then the penny or should that be the sausage dropped!!

The Swissie had to sit and wait whilst a sausage was dangled on a piece of elastic in front of it.

It was just so funny to watch. There were those that instantly jumped at the sausage and those that sat with their heads going up and down following the sausage as it bounced up and down in front of them!

However good, or not so good, the Swissie was, they always got their sausage in the end!

Please do not try this at home! There were two adults running this particular obstacle who were very quick to react if the Swissie grabbed the sausage before there was any chance of the elastic disappearing!

**By Sue Parkin - Russell**

## **Crufts**

There will be a good turnout at Crufts in 2013 and our date is Sunday March 10<sup>th</sup> venue - NEC Birmingham

## **Springhaze Trophy Competition.**

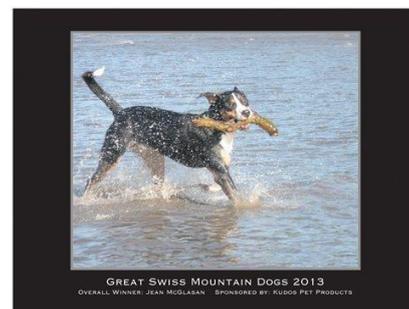
Don't forget to enter for the **Springhaze Challenge Cup**. Entry forms can be downloaded from the 'members area'.of the website. Entries close end of January 2013 and the winner will be presented with the trophy at the AGM in March 2013

## **Subscriptions**

All subscriptions are due 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013

## **The GSMD 2013 Calendar**

The calendar is now on sale from committee members at £5.00 plus £1.50 pp



## **Fun day & Character Assessment day**

The club held its first Character Assessment on 28th October at Overseal in Derbyshire.

Seven GSMD's were assessed by Jude Brendon who followed the format laid out for the club by Sheila Tickle and Cynthia Bailey. The test, which is based on the Swedish GSMD test, assessed 10 different aspects of the breeds characteristics. Each section is awarded a mark but no overall mark is given. There is no pass or fail, instead the marks will be used by the club to build up an oversight of the characteristics of the breed. Each participant was given a copy of the assessment for their own records. It is hoped that as many Swissies as possible will undertake the assessment to enable the club to build a profile of the breed.

We hope to organise another test next year so if you would like to book a place please contact Steve Brailey at [smbrailey@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:smbrailey@tiscali.co.uk) The committee and participants would like to extend their thanks to Jude Brendon for her knowledge and experience at assessing the breed and to Sue Parkin-Russell for her work as a companion assessor. Thanks also to all the many helpers on the day whose assistance is invaluable and without whom the day would not be possible.

The Character Assessment was held in conjunction with our annual Halloween Fun Day. A record 18 Swissies were present on the day and we would like to say thank you to all who attended. The prizewinners in the agility were - Gold - Jura and Jean. Silver - Roxi and Mark. Bronze - Bree and Sue. The sausage race, which is always popular with the dogs, was won by Jura and Jean. The Musical chairs was won by Roxi and Sam. Later in the day Jean was presented with a £60 voucher, sponsored by Kudos Pet Products, for the overall winning photograph in our recent calendar competition.

Once again Sheila and Cynthia organised a very successful day. To show our thanks for all they do, club chairman, Peter Swinburn, awarded them with a small token of our appreciation.





## **AGM 2013**

The AGM will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013, at Overseal Village Hall.

Tea, coffee, biscuits and registration from 11am, Start time will be 11:30am.

To be followed by a Swissie event.

## **Message from Editor**

Hi all hope you have enjoyed the newsletters this year, if you would like anything added into future newsletters please contact me at the e-mail address below, have a very Merry Xmas & a Healthy New Year

Tracy Thornett

***Any items you would like to put in future Newsletters, no matter how small; then please contact the Editor, [tracythornett5@msn.com](mailto:tracythornett5@msn.com)***