

## **GOLDEN MOMENTS ISSUE 18**

*Newsletter of*

### **SOUTHERN GOLDEN RETRIEVER RESCUE**

Registered Charity Number 1098769  
PO Box 112 Cranbrook Kent TN17 4RB



At their AGM held at Wrotham in July the Southern Golden Retriever Society members held a sponsored “Down Stay” where dogs were asked to lie down for a given length of time and were sponsored in order to raise funds for Charities chosen by their owners. As a result this Charity benefitted to the tune of £345.00 for which we are most grateful.

#### **Missi**



Our congratulations and grateful thanks also go to Susan Aslett whose photographs of her delightful Missi won a competition run by a well-known manufacturer of carpet sweepers. Susan very kindly donated her prize money of £500 to our Charity.

Contrary to our expectations 2011 was a quieter one for Rescue, with 64 dogs being signed over to us. We suspect that many people are now selling their dogs instead of letting us re-home them, and this is quite a concern. We just hope they are being careful about the sort of homes the dogs are going to.

We have all seen the stories about how so many people are now vastly overweight, and the problems this causes with their health, notably heart and joint problems and diabetes. Of course exactly the same problems occur with obese dogs, and sadly their lives are being shortened because of it. It is so easy for the weight to creep on without our realising it, but please try to ensure it doesn't happen to your dog!

With the advent of Spring, and then Summer, it is important to check our dogs over when grooming them. Fleas and ticks can cause quite a problem, especially now that dogs are able to travel overseas with Pet Passports. It's also important to check for the presence of grass seeds later in the year. Particular places for these to lodge are feet and ears, and they can then migrate further into the body, so do keep a look-out for them.

Having said all that, we hope you and your dogs have an enjoyable and trouble-free summer.

### **Fun Days**

The dates for this year's Fun Days are Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June for the Kent day and Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September for the one in Hampshire. To mark the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee we shall have special Jubilee rosettes.

### **Sammy**

Having wanted for years to have a dog in our family, last Christmas we finally decided to procrastinate no further and I made contact with several members of the Southern Golden Retriever Rescue group. One of my contacts was Pat Marchant, who after much helpful discussion asked me to call back every couple of weeks to confirm I still wanted to be on the list.

My first call back was in mid-December, coincidentally on the day that Sammy came onto Pat's books again. Sammy was a 4 year old dog, whose first owner had sadly died of cancer. He had been rehomed with a family, but tragically there had been an incident involving biting one of the teenage children, the details of which were not fully clear as the child had learning difficulties. As a childless couple willing to take intervention where needed, would we like to take on Sammy?

We travelled to the South Coast in our Land Rover in the snow and met Sammy's owner and Sammy. We walked for about 45 minutes, but to be honest in that time it was very hard to assess Sammy's personality and character. We discussed the biting incident and my wife and I both felt it was a case of a very difficult situation which was not necessarily in the character

of the dog; my own view is that any dog may bite given the wrong set of circumstances. After a serious discussion in the car we set off back to Surrey with Sammy happily curled up in the boot!

Our first three weeks with Sammy were actually quite challenging. Firstly, he weighed in at 50KG and was clearly obese; he struggled to get up off the floor after laying down. He had apparently had weight problems in the past, but we were not sure whether he was inadvertently over-fed, under-exercised or both. So he went on a Royal Canin obesity diet and a strict regime of exercise totalling 1.5-2 hours' walking per day.



His second vice was a tendency to assume he was in charge of walks. Sammy would frequently get out of the house and then sit down firmly on the floor and refuse to go any further, or sometimes lie down. However, we fairly quickly established that I was stronger than him, and after many frustrating episodes over 3 weeks we overcame this habit.

I had read the Dog Listener book and was keen to establish from the outset that we were in charge, and Sammy was a member of the pack, not the top dog. Useful techniques included ignoring him for 5 minutes after entering the room or the house (after a few weeks of this, it was no longer necessary, and we greet him enthusiastically now); pretending to eat from his bowl before giving him his dinner at our leisure; and generally not yielding to his strong will! As a school teacher I'm used to battles of wills and expect to come out on top, but it took a while to conquer this wholly!

Leaving for one memorable walk in the snow, Sammy sat down and refused to budge, just around the corner from the house. I asked myself the by now familiar question, "What would Alpha Dog do?" So, to Sammy's surprise, I flipped him on to his back on the ground, with my arm across his neck and my face above his, and growled and barked at him. His face was a picture. I appreciate I was taking a risk putting my face near his, but it was a carefully calculated risk and it paid off. Sammy was gradually getting used to not being top dog, and it was interesting to see how much happier and relaxed he became once he realised this was the case. (*We feel this was taking a great risk. Ed*)

After this three weeks of frustration and hard work, things were very much back on an even keel. Sammy's one remaining vice is that he does get possessive about bones, particularly large ones; at first he would sometimes yelp if he thought his bone was under threat, but

once the Alpha Dog (i.e. me) was established, I can now take food off him at will and without him reacting badly, although from his body language you can still tell he wishes he could keep the bone, though he knows it's not his decision.

Somewhere in his past Sammy has been very well trained. We can leave food around the house and he will never steal it (apart from once when Abby lost part of her dinner – but Sammy was so remorseful about this it has never recurred!) He absolutely loves his toys, and is never without a soft toy in his mouth, but he knows exactly what's his and what isn't, with the one exception of the oven gloves, which we sometimes find in his bed; we "have words" when this happens and after looking very uncomfortable for a few minutes we are back on good terms pretty quickly.

With a combination of losing lots of weight and getting lots of exercise, by the beginning of summer, Sammy was a new dog. When we first got him he would lumber along behind us and trudge bored through the woods; now he delights in chasing squirrels and balls, and forages like a dog should. He uses his nose far more than before and has been showing early promise in a treat-finding doggy IQ puzzle we have.

However, it seems his early life took its toll, as he has had problems with very soft pads, but worse, osteoarthritis. During the summer we were concerned about a persistent limp, so our vet referred us to Fitzpatrick Referrals (the "Bionic Vet"). Noel Fitzpatrick himself assessed Sammy, scanned him using the latest technology, and operated on his front knees that night. The following day we picked up a very dejected Sammy with a shaven front end and pop socks. To his despair he was consigned to a crate in the sitting room with minimal walks.

He is slowly convalescing through this and is back up to 3 twenty-minute walks a day to build up his muscle strength. From a low of 37KG (just at the top end of his target weight) his weight started to rise again, so he's back on the Obesity diet, which is very effective. We won't know for some time whether the osteoarthritis will continue to affect him or whether the surgery will have done the trick, along with losing a quarter of his initial body weight. However, one thing I have learned is that our £22-a-month insurance policy was well worth getting, as in his first year with us it's paid out about £4,800 in treatment costs!

Sammy is a pure delight to have around and is as good-natured a dog as you could imagine; many people comment on how well-behaved he is. He is also outstanding at understanding our communication. Although it wasn't part of the plan when we first got Sammy, we had a baby this year, and Sammy is absolutely wonderful with Selena and doesn't even steal her soft toys, although he adores his own! Having him has considerably enhanced my own work-life balance, and has improved my fitness no end, although after the long hiatus in walks we both need to get back on track! I'd like to give a big "thank you" to Peter and Pat Marchant, who have always been so supportive and happy to discuss advice. Pat made it very clear that if Sammy ever showed the slightest problem with our daughter she could intervene immediately, but I'm delighted to say we're a very happy one-child, one-dog family.

David French

## AMBER

She came to us so full of fun  
Her life, as we know it, had just begun.  
Sorely neglected by her previous folk  
Her beautiful spirit they never broke.

No bed, no bowl, no lead, no toy,  
She'd never known the simple joy  
Of being cherished and adored,  
Just tolerated and ignored.

She enriched our lives in so many ways  
For 7 short years to the end of her days.  
We feel bereft, we miss her so  
This ache in our hearts, will it ever go?

O'er Rainbow Bridge she has made her way  
Gone is the pain that marred her last day.  
Thru' the mist she would see our two other girls  
Waiting for her as the clouds unfurl.

Abby and Sherry will guide her along  
To the place where doggies can do no wrong.  
They'll romp and they'll play and they'll keep her safe  
'Till finally we'll join them in that heavenly place.



Spare a thought for Elsa, who's left behind,  
Her life-long mate she cannot find.  
She's quiet, forlorn, confused and sad,  
Missing the companionship she has always had.

We have our memories and 'photos galore,  
But our beautiful Goldie we'll see no more.  
Look carefully up to the sky tonight  
And you'll see Amber's star shining oh so bright.

Wendy Naylor

### Danger in the Garden – (a re-cap)

With the warmer weather upon us our dogs will no doubt be “helping” us in the garden, so here are a few things to watch.

**Cocoa Mulch** contains an ingredient called Theobromine which can be lethal to dogs and cats, and because it smells of chocolate is very attractive to them.

**Nettles** – their new growth can cause problems, causing a nasty allergic reaction in feet, mouths, ears etc. A Piriton tablet will alleviate the symptoms, and bathing with cold water laced with a drop of lavender oil or applying Aloe Vera Jelly will also help. A complete list of common garden plants which are poisonous to dogs can be obtained from **Dogs Trust**, 17 Wakley Street, London, EC1V 7RQ, or [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)

## Pebbles

It is almost six months since Pebbles joined the family, so I thought I would give you a quick update on how things are going.

Pebbles is a delight. Every single day we say "how were we so lucky?". When we first started to let her off the lead she just ran and ran. She didn't try to run away, but seemed to be so full of unused energy that she just had to belt everywhere. She would come back, but it sometimes took a little bit of yelling and whistling and was rather nerve-wracking! Now, she knows she will get loads of lovely walks. She is always busy - bustling about, hunting, sniffing, digging. However, she always has one eye on us and if we call her or whistle, she belts back, beaming from ear to ear. She didn't know what a rabbit hole was at the start, but now she and Timber check every hole, sometimes both heads down the same one. She digs her own holes and comes back with an entirely black face! She absolutely adores her walks, but loves coming home too.



Pebbles has loads of friends, human and canine. Like Timber, she loves people and dogs, but she is very loyal and always returns to 'Mum and Dad'. She enjoys visitors to the house and captures their hearts within minutes. Mind you, she is a good house dog too and barks if she hears noises in the night.

It would be hard to find a more affectionate girl. She loves - needs - lots of affection and cuddles. I can assure you that she gets loads! She allows me to clean her ears and eyes and check her feet, in fact positively enjoys any kind

of attention. She and Timber are the very best of friends. They play mad games, they hunt together and when they have a sleep they are either side by side in their baskets or stretched out on the floor close together, usually touching. Timber has benefited hugely from her presence. He is happier, livelier and clearly enjoying life so much more. He was such a lonely lad when we lost Benji.

We couldn't be happier with Pebbles, and I can promise you that she is a very happy and loved girl. Thank you so much from all four of us!

Warm regards,

Debbie

## **Ella**

We first met Ella at Wendy's house. We already had a "GR" so we took them to a park to make sure they got on OK. Of course they did. Ella jumped in our car as if she had been with us all her life. She was just 6 years old.



She settled in very well, loved everybody – nearly as much as food. Ella loved her holidays. She would start to shake with excitement when we were getting the caravan ready. When she was about 10½ years old she started to limp. She had arthritis in the rear left leg. Her medication worked very well for a couple of years, then she started limping on the rear right leg, much worse than the left. She flicked her foot forward as she walked, wearing the nails down to the quicks. What now, we thought? She was not ready to go yet – she made that quite clear. A boot was very cumbersome to her, so I got her false nails and they worked a treat. She was ready for anything again.

Ella never had a nasty bone in her body – she just wanted to please you all the time. I did obedience training with her and she was so clever she passed her tests without any problem.

We had just had three week's holiday, which was enjoyed by all. It was as if Ella was going to have her last holiday in the caravan, as a couple of days later we knew that awful decision had to be made. We all

hope it will never come. We went to the Vet and said our last goodbye. She was put to rest as we talked to her. She was 13½ years old and a pleasure to own, after she had "got us where she wanted us". She is missed so much. She is now at rest next to her friend Shelley and the other Golden Retrievers in our garden.

Thank you Southern Golden Retriever Rescue.

Sandra and Alan Want



**Watson – our rescue Golden Retriever**

Watson adopted us when he was not quite 2 years old – he is now 13½ years old. He could be slightly aggressive to other dogs but with patience this behaviour became less of a problem and he settled down beautifully.



He is still quite mobile, probably down to going to a heated swimming pool on a regular basis. If the sea/weather is warm enough he will swim in the sea but the waves must be no higher than 1 inch – he does not like rough weather!! Like most dogs he enjoys romping in the snow. His selective deafness is becoming more pronounced as he ages! A polite request/command is usually likely to be met with bland indifference but open a packet of biscuits – that can be heard from the bottom of the garden! He is also the possessor of a very thick coat which causes him discomfort in hot weather no matter how much I try to

thin it. My Vet calls him a big teddy bear of a dog!

Watson has brought great pleasure into not only our lives, but also several in the neighbourhood, and like most people owned by a Golden I dread his demise!!

Wendy Favell

**News from Toby**

*(Toby was rehomed in 2009 when his owner had an accident and could no longer cope. He is now 11 years old)*



Just a few lines to let you know that Toby is getting along fine. He no longer wants to attack the livestock in the farms and is also becoming more tolerant with other dogs.

His behaviour in the house cannot be faulted. Also, his coat has now grown back so he now looks like a Golden.

All the very best, Geoff Mattingly

**"A Surprise" from one of our coordinators**

Towards the end of October 2011 I took a call late on a Sunday afternoon from a lady in east Kent who asked me to take on a small Golden Retriever pup. Her own Golden Retriever had very



recently died and she was about to be given this pup, by a chap who had bought it for his wife as a "surprise" gift....and the surprise turned out to be that she did not really like dogs! So the pup had to go; he did not want to take it back to the room in an unused flat where he had bought it from. He knew this lady had had a Golden Retriever before, but she felt that she just could not take on such a young dog but knew of someone who could help. (I had briefly discussed rehome dogs with this lady in the past). She called me and asked if I would collect the dog that evening so I set off to the east coast.

When I first saw Reggie running around I really was shocked at just how small and thin this chap was. He was as bright as a button, weeing everywhere and generally doing what pups do best so I popped him in a crate in my car and brought him home. I am very grateful to the kind lady who acted as the middle man on this occasion; Reggie needed a lot of care and veterinary attention and

our charity is just the right place to provide all of that.

When I managed to weigh Reggie the next day he could only muster 2.7kilos and we were told that he was 10 weeks old. A male



dog of that age should weigh nearer 8 or 10 kilos. With terrific guidance from Meopham Veterinary Practice we embarked on a course of tests and treatment for him including establishing if he had perhaps got a liver shunt which would have explained his emaciated state. Thankfully that proved not to be the case so we just had to try and eliminate his very severe worm infestation and provide the correct quality and quantity of food.

I loved having him to stay but there was indeed another "white knight" out there who was very willing to take him on, worms and all. I hope that one day soon Joan will tell us her story which has been a long hard struggle, but for now I shall close and just say that Reggie, now called Benji, has fallen on his feet and is doing really well in his permanent home. Look out for him in the Rescue parade in June.

How could someone ever consider buying a pup as a "surprise"?!