



60 Years in the Making

In 1961, five people, namely Ron and Darly Grimmer, George and Mary Trumpeess and Geoffrey Robbins decided to leave 'The Lowestoft Dog Training Club' and form a club for Alsatians only. The Happy Paws Dog Training Society, as it's now known, was born. Zoom forward to 2021 and 60 years after that momentous decision was made, all those years ago, we are still here and we are still going strong.

Eva Carter, a Trainer for nearly 50 years with the club, and in recent years, was the Club President, was able to give me some information about the club and it's roots before she sadly passed away and so as this year is a special celebration, I wanted to share some of her memories with you all regarding the history of the club.

Training classes back in 1961 were held at the rear of 'The Great Eastern' Hotel located at 78 Denmark Road (corner of Flensburgh Street), Lowestoft. It is now known as the Great Eastern Warehouse and is occupied by a storage firm. Training classes, back then, included obedience and working trials, working indoors on Monday nights and outside on Sunday mornings. Eva recalls "We used to go into the pub for a drink whilst the dogs did their 'stays'!" (Perhaps this is something we can bring back now purely for nostalgia reasons of course!)



The first name for the newly created club was the 'Lowestoft Friendly Alsatian Club'.

This is one of the original badges that were made and worn back in the day. Unfortunately, the money spent on the badges was a bit of a waste as this name was soon rejected by The Kennel Club. (It's thought that this is perhaps because then it would suggest there were unfriendly Alsatians which was possibly deemed inappropriate). So the name was changed to the 'Lowestoft Alsatian Training Club' soon after.

In the early 1960's, demonstrations were given at local fetes and were mostly based on police dog type work as well as jumps. There was often a competition between the dogs, in these demos, with some getting up a wall of eight feet or more. There was a landing platform on the other side to prevent injury. The seeds of what became our very own 'The Lowestoft Dog Agility Display Team' were being sown even back then. Eva said that she joined the club about this time and joined in with the demonstrations with her Alsatian 'Carlton Tim'.



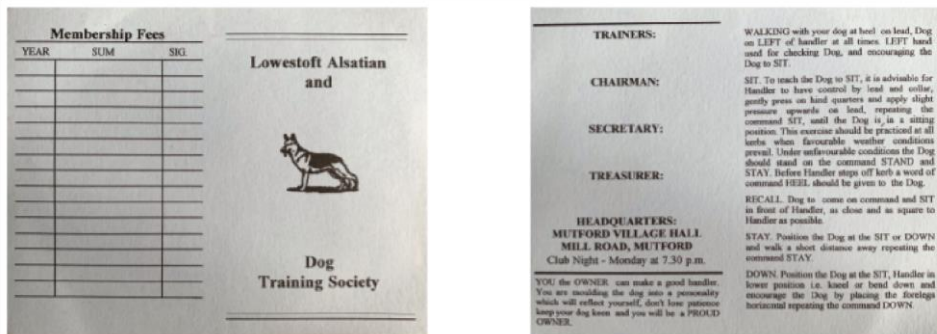
When the original trainers and helpers left in the 1970's, it was Eva and Darly who took over with Eva being the only Trainer and Darly doing all the other tasks! Eva recalled "there was only 7/6 (37 and a half pence) in the bank so we had a stall at Lowestoft's Market Place to help raise funds. When people saw it was for the dog club they brought quite a lot of things for us to sell. We raised enough money to help rescue the club."

At this time 'The Great Eastern' closed and so the club then moved to various training venues around the town and Oulton village. Sidney Howell then joined the club as a Trainer, for a while, and later so did Mick Royal.



In the late 1970's/early 1980's, the name was changed again this time to 'The Lowestoft Alsatian and Dog Training Society' to allow the club to train other breeds of dog. Here is the new badge from those times. No money wasted here as this was the name of the club for many years. Eva said "we also wanted the name 'all breeds' to be included but The Kennel Club wouldn't allow this."

It was then that Eva managed to acquire use of the Mutford Village Hall for training where the club enjoyed many happy years. Again Eva recalls that "some felt it was too far out in the countryside and so we wouldn't succeed but as it turned out, this was a great move and we didn't look back." Back then, members would be given small cards which gave information about who the committee was and some information on basic commands and as you paid your annual membership fees, these would be recorded on the back.



As well as having training classes, in the 1980's, the club held a couple of exemption shows (known as companion shows these days) raising money for charity. Later Janice and Frank Waddell joined and the club

held several 'open obedience' shows which included beginners, novice, A, B & C. These shows were very popular but Eva recalls "they became too much for our small group to maintain".



Through the 1990's the club continued to flourish and then in 2001, the club commemorated its 40th anniversary by bringing out a limited edition tankard.

More recently, of course, as we entered the 2010's, the number of members kept growing and with Mutford Village Hall being so small, and thus very noisy with lots of dogs, (especially in Winter!), the decision was taken to move to larger premises and to the Broads Equestrian Centre where we are now. Eva also earned a well earned retirement from training in 2011.

With the breed name 'Alsatian' no longer being recognised as an official breed name (reverting back to the previously known German Shepherd breed name), it was also decided to change the name of the club to something more appropriate and 'of the time' and the name Happy Paws was created.

The names, the venues and the personnel may have changed down the years but our core values have always remained the same and we have always been affiliated to The Kennel Club, as a registered society, as we are today.

Covid-19 put paid to any birthday celebrations this year but I'm sure the club will celebrate appropriately once it's safe to do so. Meantime, let's raise a glass to 60 years of glorious history, to everyone who has volunteered, helped, trained or been trained and here's to another 60 years and beyond.

- Mark

(Down the years, Committee Member, Club Secretary, Club Chair, Agility Team Co-ordinator, Agility Team Commentator and general 'dogs body')