

Growing Up in Rough Collies by Carole Smedley

My life at Antoc has been, and still is very happy. My first ever recollection was being in a large black pram and throwing out slices of bread for our dog to collect! I cannot say that Mother was well pleased as in those days, to purchase a “sliced loaf” was somewhat more expensive compared to a standard loaf

As a toddler my faithful companion was Robbie, he was a deep rich mahogany coloured overgrown Shetland Sheepdog and everywhere I went, he came too.

As I grew up, I earned my pocket money by walking the dogs in the nearby park which, as I got older was a great excuse to get out of the house and watch the boys playing football or tennis, our dogs were walked very frequently during the good weather, not so when it was raining!

I can recall having a small red note book, into which I entered all my duties and accrued my pocket money but this was soon replaced when I was old enough to come to the shows with Mum although I never seemed to get paid for helping out at shows, only when at home!

However, going to shows in London was great fun. We used to catch a red double Decker bus to the local train station, but before we were allowed on the bus, we had to ask the conductor if we could bring the dog with us! Often, we had to shout as he was upstairs collecting fares and I recall one day, having asked permission, we sent the dog, a large male, up the stairs (Dogs were only allowed to travel on the top of the bus) and in a loud cockney voice we heard “That’s no dog, it’s a bloody lion” to which both mother and I collapsed in laughter and, we got a free ride to the train station.

Travelling by train and on the underground was fun as it often involved us carrying the dog either up or down the escalator if we could not find the stairs or use the lift! Only those of you who have used the underground will appreciate the problems

When we arrived at the show, often held in old drill halls or even at a Public Bath, where the pool had been drained and planking and a tarpaulin made the very uneven floor covering, I was deposited on the bench, or on a chair, told to stay there whilst the important part of showing took place! Then, to my enjoyment, I was allowed into the ring, with the dog to take part in the Junior Handling classes. I spent many a show pestering Mum for a collie of my own and I was eventually given a sable bitch, Antoc Tawny Lyric who won me more Junior Handling classes than I can recall as she was a born showgirl and not for my handling skills

Also competing in these classes were “Boys”, often a son of one of the exhibitors, one of which I had a real crush on and was most upset to hear that he had been sent to boarding school – probably out of my way. Many years later we got back in touch due to his parents’ death and still to this day we laugh about going to the shows in the “old days”

As times went on, Mum purchased a car! I recall it well; it was a tiny little Standard 8 in black. Not a great colour for dogs but it did mean we could travel further for shows; of course, I came with her and my skills at map reading improved. However, as there

were NO motorways, to make any decent journey involved knowing where: a) the loo's where, b) petrol stations c) the telephone boxes were as in those days we did not have or had even heard of mobile phones. If you had a great day and won prize money, you could buy fish and chips on the way home!

I do recall having been "Caught Short" and needing to stop, so we pulled into a lay-by (or so we thought) rushed off behind the bushes and continued our journey. Imagine our embarrassment when in daylight, coming back down the same road, we realised that it was a driveway and the trees and bushes were in a very posh house and garden!

As we progressed through our showing, we had some great days and I recall that our Ch Antoc Midnight Cowboy won, on the final day, a round of the Pedigree Chum Veteran Stakes. In fact, he was the only collie to do so for 3 consecutive years. That year the finals were held at Richmond Dog Show, held on the Ascot racecourse, (long before they went to the Metropole at Birmingham, and that is another story). Having won through, we were invited to the dinner. We accepted but had nothing suitable to wear. Mother and I left the show ground and ventured out into Ascot High Street. Anyone who has been, or even lives in the area will tell you that in-expensive clothing shops are non-existent. So, finding a small designer dress shop, using our new Access MasterCard, mother and I kitted ourselves out for the evening and what an expensive day that turned out to be too.

I had started to breed my own strain of Antoc's under the very watchful eye of Mother and fell in love with a particular blue merle dog. When I had a tricolour bitch, I asked Mother to help me find a suitable sire for my first litter of "Blues". This was not received warmly as I had hoped but the comment was made that we are not having any of that colour here at Antoc as there are no suitable dogs to use, so go and find a good sable dog for your litter!

Not disheartened, I waited and went with Mother when she judged a Ch show and awarded a CC to a Blue Merle dog.....when my bitch came into season, I announced I would be mating it to this dog, after all, if it was good enough to win the CC from Mother, it was good enough to mate my bitch to and the Antoc Blues all come from this mating

When Mother decided to bring in a Cardigan Corgi, we all laughed and thought it would be a seven-day wonder. We were proved wrong, as usual, and a lovely typical strain of corgis emerged. One night before a Crufts show, at dinner, we were all joking as to how we would be doing in the breeds the following day. Studying the schedule, it fell open on an advert for a "Special Winners Crufts Offer" of two bottles of champers and 2 wine flutes. Jokingly I said to Mum, if you win the CC with that junior bitch, I will treat you. I really wish I had not said that as Mum won the BCC from Junior and my bank balance suffered for some long time. I could not go back on that promise!

Another great memory involved one of my first blue merles. Convinced I would win well under this judge, I entered her, and Mum asked me if I was taking my sable bitch. To which I replied that I could not afford the entry fee for 2 dogs. So, Mum paid for her entry and off we went to the show, Mum in charge of the sable and I had the

blue bitch. I went in the class and out again without a card. Most upset, I refused to take the sable bitch in. Whilst we were waiting for her class, I overheard a very well-known exhibitor ask her for her thoughts on who would take the CC. I nearly fell over when Mum replied, "Not sure but I think I will" and she did and took the CC much to the disgust of the well-known exhibitor

Winning the CC at Crufts with my own homebred blue merle Champion bitch was a thrill and a great memory. We, as usual were in Hall 1 and Mother was with the Cardigans which are in Hall 4. If you have ever tried to get from Hall 1 to Hall 4 with good news, it took forever for me to reach the Hall, only to find she was actually in the ring at the time and had been told by the "bush telegraph" that not only had I won the CC but got BOB as well.

We waited for the group and made our way over to Hall 5, and then, suddenly, without any reason whatsoever, my bitch decided that there was no way she could possibly walk across the flooring to the collecting ring. She dug all four feet in and stopped, just as some very good friends were coming towards us to congratulate us on our win. Have you ever tried to make a dog move on a slippery floor without having to pick it up? Well, I moved inch by inch closer to the collecting ring, reached the carpet and all was fine, but my heart was in my mouth for 10-15 minutes as I was wondering what she would do next. Needless to say, she never let the breed down in the first ever Pastoral Group and was short-listed by the late Terry Thorn.

To have Mother with me the first time I judged Crufts was a great boost and a calming influence until the first class when a dog appeared with so much coloured chalk on its head and ears and coat, I could not believe it and looked across for guidance. None was forthcoming. So, speaking to my stewards and counting the entries up, I decided that I could not place it (even if I had wanted to) and left it out. I later discovered it had come in from abroad and was multi-titled. I have been fortunate to have judged at Crufts 4 times, Roughs, both dogs and bitches, Smooth Collies and Cardigan Welsh Corgis at this show, but you will never ever forget the thrill of receiving that large envelope from the KC/Crufts with that invitation in.

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