



The Tale of a True Gentle dog, Mr Noel

"Hello, I'm over here. Please, please don't walk past, I'm here, see..."

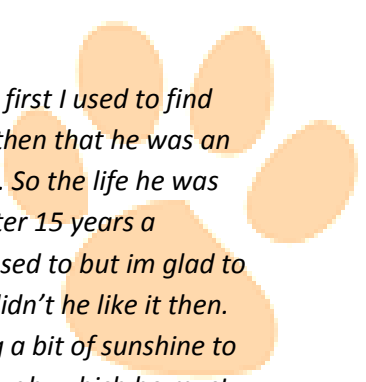
If someone had mentioned about me getting another dog, I would have laughed and told them not to be daft. I mean, I already have two rescue dogs, a five year old collie called Jenni and a three year old lurcher called Petal, whom I got as a pup from NCAR. I occasionally look after a Staffordshire bull Terrier called Marley and I also look after my parents Heinz 57 a lot as well, so I really didn't need another dog. Or so I thought....

In January this year, 2011, I was reading our local newspaper. An article caught my eye immediately. A fifteen year old collie desperately needed a foster home. He had been found in thick snow in an isolated part of the north Wales countryside month earlier. He had severe arthritis and a heart murmur. He had been taken to NCAR in December and looked after at the rescue home since then. He had been taken to a few of the carers homes to recuperate at night then brought to the rescue centre during the day as kennel life was no good for an elderly, sick dog. That to me proved, yet again, how dedicated, caring and just down-right wonderful the NCAR staff are. They will ALWAYS go the extra mile.

Immediately, I picked up the phone to enquire about him. I didn't even think about it. I didn't even talk to my husband first. I was dreading the fact that he would have already found a home. But no, Noel, as he had been called, was still there, waiting. He was to be fostered because of his age and the fact that he would be on medication for the rest of his life. NCAR would support me with any problems that arose and if I needed medication, all they ask for is a donation. Luckily, I and my lifestyle were perfect for him, thank goodness and as he was a desperate case I went to see him the next day. He was being kept in the office where it was cosier. He was a bit deaf, understandable for a dog so old, but he knew his new name already, and as he hobbled around the desk on terribly bowed legs because of the arthritis I silently promised him my whole heart, all my dedication but more than anything, my love. I spent about an hour at the rescue and in that short time Noels wonderful personality shone through. He loved people, wasn't fazed by anyone or anything and loved a fuss. He couldn't walk far at all; I discovered which meant we were perfect together as I have spinal problems causing difficulty walking too far myself.

A few days later I went to pick him up from the rescue. A film crew were there from the 'Wedi 7' programme shown on the welsh television channel S4C. They were there to film the rescue centre, highlight the good work they do and to highlight the plight of the older dog, which more often than not gets overlooked by potential owners. I am so please to say Noel behaved impeccably. I was proud watching the programme later on that day. So proud that Noel WAS MINE, that I was his proud owner, that I was the person who had the honour of looking after him for the rest of his life.

Leaving the rescue centre on that day, 11th January 2011, neither Noel or I knew what to expect from each other or what we were facing. It was a new adventure, a new journey, a new beginning for the pair of us. None of my family had seen Noel before I brought him home. When my two children, Lilian eight and Emily Ten, did see him they fell in love with him and were not fazed by his rather rickety appearance.



Noel had brought a nice soft bed with him, (and a few treats I must add), but at first I used to find him lying in the small utility room we have at the back of the garage. I realised then that he was an outside dog, a working sheepdog from a farm judging from where he was found. So the life he was having with us was completely new and strange to him. You would think that after 15 years a completely new environment and way of life would be very hard for him to get used to but im glad to say that he settled immediately and he soon realised what his bed was for and didn't he like it then. For the first few weeks he just slept really and pottered about the garden finding a bit of sunshine to lie in. He couldn't manage stairs so he stayed downstairs. After the long rest though, which he must have surely needed, he was like a new dog. He had a nice bath then too as he was filthy and rather pongy... and didn't he look handsome afterwards!

He loved coming with me in the car, he used to lie in the foot well on the front passenger seat side, to collect the children from school with me, much to all the children delight. They adored him and he they. He loved a fuss and he certainly got it from them. While Noel was with us, my back deteriorated rapidly so, as a family, we would take the three dogs out for a walk. Noel and I, as neither of us could walk far, used to sit on a bench while the other went off. As I had no plans to acquire another dog all I can think is that fate must have known about my back and that is was going to deteriorate and so thought that Noel and I would be good company for each other. Because at home was the same. I never went far so we were together all the time, companions, company for each other, 'chatting' to each other all the time.

Noels favourite spot was in our conservatory by the double doors, so he was warm and could watch the world go by. If I popped out the first thing I would do when I got back was come out the back door, which he could see clearly from his position, you see after a month or so Noels hearing and eye sight deteriorated so we never used to approach him from behind so as to not startle him. I would be greeted by his welcoming grin, his pink tongue which I don't think ever stayed in his mouth and his wagging tail. The look of recognition and love on his face when he saw me is something I will never forget.

Something else I will never forget is this. During April we decided to get two baby bunnies, one for each of my daughters. From that day Noel would be out in a garden, relentlessly watching over them, keeping them safe just as he would have done his sheep and lambs. They would all sniff noses and lie downside by side, neither one phased by the other and Noel would even nip them on the bum to move them along when I was trying to get them back in.

In July I, my husband, my two children, my mum and dad, their dog Kipper, Petal, Jenni and Noel went on a week's holiday. We went to stay in a log cabin in Wales and didn't we have fun! The weather was superb; the log cabin was on its own in wonderful countryside. Noel was on tablets by now because he had water on his lungs but even with this, his murmur and his arthritis he was in good shape. He came on the beaches with us all, the sand and the seawater didn't bother him at all, in fact he loved chasing around with the other dogs and paddling. As it was so hot, we had a beach tent up and he sheltered in that. When the rest of the group and the other dogs went on walks and to explore the area, Noel and I would tag along too but we would find a lovely scenic bit where we could sit down and watch the world go by from whilst they went off. Having said this, he did do very well walking as long as it was a little walk followed by a sit down.

A couple of times while we were away Noel had his tea then was sick but as he was still lively and alert I didn't worry too much. When we came back home he was fine but then he started being sick again, then he stopped eating. He went thinner but he still pottered about at home, was still attentive and alert. I honestly thought he would be alright but obviously I was wrong because less than two weeks after the holiday my Noely had gone. I have never known a dog go down as quickly as he did. It was as if he had suddenly become incredibly tired and just wanted to sleep and sleep... one minute he was there watching the world go by and the next he wasn't. He died on the 12th August, 7 months and one day after I had taken him home.

The day that I collected Noel from NCAR I didn't see that he was old, that we wouldn't be together for long, I mean how does anyone know long anybody is going to live; my mum had a puppy once that only lived until he was one and a half years old. Why is it that some people think, "Oh, let's have a puppy or a young dog as we will have more time together" when there are no guarantees to this philosophy. There are no guarantees in life. You have to make the most of every precious minute and everybody and every animal deserves to do this. Just because you are old doesn't mean you don't deserve to enjoy to life, and it certainly doesn't mean that because you are old you have nothing to give.

Personally, I think a person or an animal that is older gives more because they are more experienced and because they have a better understanding that life is so precious. A dog's whole life is dedicated to their owner with such strength and devotion it is enviable. They still have that even when their body is failing. That's why having an older dog is so special. Surely it's the quality of time not the quantity that is so important when you have a dog. A few precious months of love devotion and companionship are so much more important than not sharing that time together at all.

Certainly after having Noel I strongly believe this. I have never taken on an old dog before and I certainly will never ever regret what I did only relish my experience and treasure the precious time we had together. And I will certainly do it again. There will, sadly, never be another Noely for me but, hopefully, he will be watching from above and give any other dog I have a gentle nip on the bum to make sure they do as they are told in true sheepdog, in true Noely, style...



