



Off to the kennels

Having needed to go into hospital for surgery, Lez Graham has had to send the dogs off for boarding this month – but Sealpin Gundogs have ensured their training hasn't had to go on ice

This month blindsided us a bit it must be said. Not long before we went into lockdown for the second time, I saw a surgeon in relation to some arthritis in my left thumb. Out of the blue I was phoned by the orthopaedics department at my local hospital to say they had two dates, one in 10 days and one in 11 days and if I didn't take either then the wait will be another two or three years. That's those plans scuppered then!

To say I was thrown was an understatement. My plan for the early part of the summer was to help out at a couple of working tests, throwing dummies and whatever else was needed to help on the day, and then, towards the end of

the summer, enter a special puppy or novice test with Emrys.

I'd been warned by the surgeon previously that I was in for six weeks of intense pain due to the complexity of the operation, so I had to decide what to do with the dogs. Although I've used kennels when we've been away without the dogs, they've always been purely boarding kennels where the dogs are safe and then allowed a hoon around with each other in a secure field. In all the years that I've had dogs, no-one, not even my husband who occasionally walks the boys, have trained them.

In the end, we decided that the dogs should go

for a few weeks to get me through the worst of the post-op pain. Because it was going to be almost a month in kennels, I didn't want Emrys's training to go downhill as he was coming on so nicely. The thought of him not doing much of anything and not having mental stimulation didn't sit well with me, so I contacted Joe of Sealpin Gundogs who I've been stretching Emrys's training with (see last month's diary entry), to see if he was able to take the boys in for boarding and a bit of training despite the short notice.

Having only a week or so before handing over the boys really helped to focus the mind and made me observe the dogs to see what I wanted to focus on. I'm so happy with the way Emrys's training has been going that there was nothing in particular that I wanted to work on with him, so instead I enjoyed our pack walks and did a bit of steadiness around recall with them, leaving the dogs in a sit and recalling them one at a time – always a bit of a challenge, especially when the youngest is made to wait until last.

Nine days later and we headed across to the Scottish Borders with the three dogs in the car.

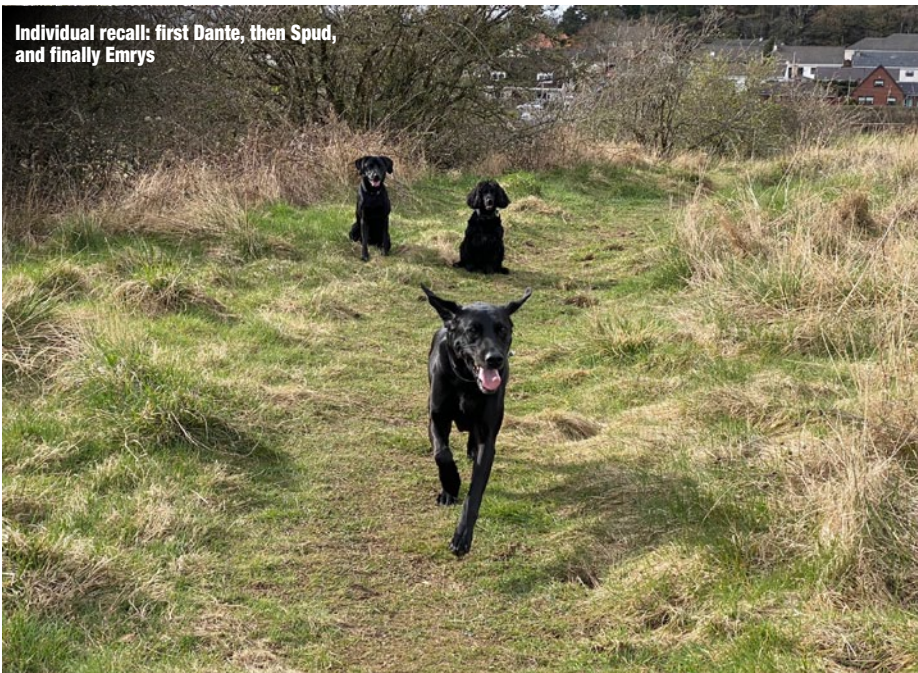


PICTURES: LEZ GRAHAM

LEZ'S TOP TIP

Regardless of whether you are sending your dog to a regular boarding kennel or away for training, always give a list of your commands with your dog – that way, their carers can provide consistency when handling them and not muddy the water.





Individual recall: first Dante, then Spud, and finally Emrys

We'd decided to keep Dante at home with us as he's so laid back, and arranged that Joe would have Spud and Emrys in for the duration with the emphasis on maintaining Emrys's training rather than starting anything new with him. I also thought it would be really good for the two to bond properly without Dante being around as Spud is quite possessive over Dante and at times it can cause conflict.

I have to admit being very nervous when I dropped them off at Sealpin, although Joe was very reassuring.

Three and half weeks felt like such a long time to hand the dogs over for, but we did a little bit of training with them before settling them in the kennel and heading home to a much quieter house.

A word or two from Joe

"It was a real pleasure to have Spud and Emrys in for a short spell of residential training for Lez," Joe says. "Usually dogs arrive for training with a list of bad habits to correct so it was lovely to have the

ABOUT LEZ GRAHAM

Lez Graham is author of The Pet Gundog series and a canine behaviourist and gundog trainer. Focused on training the next generation, she runs the Accredited Pet Gundog Instructor programme, which is now its sixth year.

Every book in The Pet Gundog series comes with one-year access to The Pet Gundog Online training app (£19.99, amazon.co.uk)

Contact her via lez@thepetgundog.co.uk or visit www.thepetgundog.co.uk



boys in without any such issues and meant that I could have lots of fun training them around the farm here at home.

"They enjoyed some swimming, retrieving exercises through the woods and Spud, in particular, loved quartering along the grass verges of the fields in search of a flush on a hare.

"They are a credit to Lez and it was particularly nice to work with dogs with such a nice presentation and delivery of their retrieves, which is usually an area that would require a lot of my time when training someone else's dogs." ■

Missed the start of Emrys's diary? Head to magsdirect.co.uk for previous issues of Sporting Shooter.

Joe putting Emrys through his paces

