

# **NORTHERN ENGLAND FLATCOATED RETRIEVER ASSOCIATION**

## **MINUTES 26<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

### **HELD ONLINE VIA ZOOM**

**SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021 at 11:00 am**

Meeting opened at 11:00am

**PRESENT:** Mrs K Joyce (Chairman), Mrs P Goulette (Hon. Show Secretary), Mrs K Trevor (Vice Chairman), Mr B Allen (President), Miss H Walker (Hon. Secretary) Mrs C Hewison (Hon. Working Secretary), Mr D Taylor (Treasurer) and 10 members of the committee, along with 9 members of the Association.

#### **1. PRESIDENTS OPENING REMARKS**

Madam Chair, Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you know my report is always a short one to start the meeting, but this year it's going to be even shorter.

Many thanks to all those who have organised and been involved in the formulation and production of events, the like of which we have never seen before, and will hopefully never see again.

Also, to the members and none members who entered their dogs in the virtual shows.

We have no idea when we'll be able to get back into the show, Obedience/Working Arenas, but we'll all be glad to meet up again and enjoy our favourite pastimes.

I would like to end with a special thank you to Chris Hewison, for the amazing work he's done on the production of the 25 year Anniversary book.

Please all take care and look after yourselves and families. Stay safe and keep well.

#### **2. CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT**

Good morning Mr President, ladies and gentlemen of the Committee & members of the Association. In these strange circumstances, I welcome you to our 26th Annual AGM, thank-you for supporting us with your virtual attendance today.

As many of you are aware we sadly lost Rob Ashcroft a long serving member of our committee a few weeks ago and more recently Angela Miller a long time member and supporter of NEFRA. Please join me in a minutes silence as we remember Rob and Angela, their families and their contributions to the Association.

#### **A Minutes Silence Was Held For Rob Ashcroft & Angela Miller**

2020 was a very strange year and despite the best efforts of the Corona Virus NEFRA soldiered on all be it in a limited capacity. This was down to the determination of the committee so firstly I would like to thank them for their hard work and commitment to the Association, something that should never be taken for granted, they have given freely of their time and energy throughout the year to ensure the smooth running of the limited events we were able to stage and because of this they have run like clockwork. I would also like to thank members for their positive feedback on these events; a pat on the back is always nice particularly at this time!

Although last years' AGM at Fenton Manor had to be cancelled, through the power of the internet and an online questionnaire, we were able to vote on all the business from that agenda and approve the 2019 accounts for the Association, we also welcomed Ros Tierling and Dominic Salt as new committee members.

Sadly our May Open Show was cancelled but we did organise 1 virtual show in November to replace our Championship show, particular thanks must go to Charlotte Smith for taking the lead and organising this so efficiently and to Jane Jones and Mandy Romeo-Dieste for taking on the role of virtual judges.

The working arm of NEFRA was also busy squeezing in a 'proper' working K.C. event in February before lockdown struck, followed by some socially distanced training and thanks to the hard work and imagination of our working secretary Caroline a virtual working test was held in the autumn. I'm sure Caroline's report will fill in all the details.

This year we returned to hosting our photo competition, an activity we decided could not be cancelled by the pandemic! Congratulations to the winners, thanks to everyone for entering, to Anne Brook for judging and to Dominic Salt for collating the entries.

During the last year we have held committee meetings by zoom to enable the day to day running of the association to continue which everyone attended, I would however particularly like to thank David, Hayley & Paula who, in their roles as Treasurer, General & Show Secretaries have still had to bear the brunt of the admin and paperwork for the association which is one thing that hasn't been put on hold by Covid they continue to do this with great efficiency.

Melanie continued in her role of editor for Wagging Tails this year and despite a lack of events still managed to produce a bumper edition, which was received very positively, well done! I would like to encourage the membership to support her with articles in the future so that there is less reliance on the committee for pieces and then these larger magazines will again become the norm.

Val and Den Orme stepped down from our committee last March and we sadly were unable to say a proper goodbye, but on behalf of the NEFRA family we did present them with gifts in recognition of their many years of dedication and hard work. Val received a silver Flatcoat necklace and handbag mirror, Den received a personalised dummy bag with a Flatcoat head and their Elmstock affix embroidered on it.

As you know we have decided to delay our 25th Anniversary celebration weekend until May 2022 to ensure it will be able to take place, we may officially be 26 by then but I'm sure the extra years wait will make it an even more special event so pencil the corresponding weekend into your 2022 diary.

However to ensure our 25th year does not go totally unnoticed we have decided to hold a virtual show and virtual working test over the same weekend (8th & 9th May 2021) watch our website for details. At present we still hope to hold our 25th Anniversary Championship show in November at the new venue of Biddulph Leisure Centre, it's not a million miles from Fenton Manor but it may take a little longer to get there until you are familiar with the route. We hope that will be something to look forward to.

Something else to look forward to is the book for all members to commemorate our 25 years, a combination of the history of NEFRA, the activities that unite us in the love of our breed and details of some dogs and kennels that wanted to help us mark our celebration. Chris Hewison has been responsible for collating this literary masterpiece, a huge commitment in time, patience and energy for which the association thanks him. I am sure you will enjoy the read.

Finally I would like to thank the members, for their ongoing support during these challenging times. I hope that we can count on that continuing in 2021 as things become more 'Normal' and until we can see you again by the ringside, on the shooting field, or simply enjoying the company of your flatcoat, stay safe!

### **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Ms A Kiddell & Mrs M Hammersley.

### **4. MINUTES OF LAST AGM**

Proposed by: Mrs K Jubb                      Seconded by: Mrs K Trevor

10 Abstentions as not involved or present                      0 Against                      16 In Favour

Minutes agreed.

### **5. HON. SECRETARY'S REPORT**

As has already been said, thank you for attending our AGM in a different format given the current circumstances. A Special mention to Karen Joyce, Paula Goulette and Chris Hewison for their support and help through the year given my increased workload within the NHS this past year, it has been a challenge.

There has been no change to our constitution or Code of Ethics since the last AGM. The annual returns have been sent. The judging lists have been updated as the applications have been received and approved, however, it has to be noted that it is not up-to-date in respect to judges movement up the lists as very few inform me of these changes or send update applications. Address changes/updates or retirement from judging acknowledgements are rare. This can be quite frustrating for canine clubs and societies who request or rely on these lists. A request has gone out onto the NEFRA website but with little response unfortunately.

We were asked for NEFRAs' opinions by the Kennel Club on the suitability of two judges to judge championship shows, both it was felt should have our approval, relevant forms and increasingly email versions were returned.

Membership numbers had remained fairly static until the latter quarter of the year and a number of new members were approved; this had previously been every quarter at each of our committee meetings, however given the circumstances, email approval has been sought and increased the regularity of approvals last year.

To mention Chris Hewison who has spent endless hours transferring and updating the members list into a digital cloud in time for the release of NEFRAs' 25th Anniversary book to which he has also spent many hours producing, I thank you immensely. This should be arriving in the post over the following few weeks to all NEFRA members.

As our show and working secretaries will elaborate, our shows and the majority of the working events in 2020 were cancelled due to the pandemic, which is a great shame for both the participants and the organisers.

Many of the committee, with special thanks to Kath Trevor, had been working hard sourcing and organising an array of activities and amenities for our 25th anniversary celebration weekend that was due to be held in May 2021, however, it was agreed at our last committee meeting to postpone until 2022 given the ongoing pandemic and likely restrictions impacting on the number of attendees and

likely the restriction of many of the activities that were had planned limiting enjoyment and memorability for all.

We have increased our subscription fees for 2021; the last time this had been increased was in 2007.

A challenging year to say the least for all concerned; I hope this year will be different, thank you.

## **6. HON. SHOW SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Good morning Mr President, Madam Chairman, committee, ladies and gentleman. Welcome to the AGM.

Well, what a very strange year this has been with lockdown and tiers meaning disappointment for the dog show world. We ourselves had to cancel both our Open show and our Championship show. Luckily our judges are still available to judge for us in the future.

We did, however, hold our first virtual online show in November which proved to be very successful and a lot of fun to watch the videos of the entries. Many thanks go to Charlotte for the great organisation, I could never have sorted out anything so technical. Thanks to the judges Mandy Romeo-Dieste and Jane Jones.

Hopefully we will go on to hold our shows in 2021 albeit the open show being another online show rather than the exciting Anniversary weekend we were planning. I look forward to November and anticipate us being able to hold our Championship show when our judges will be Mr P Goodman and Mrs S Goodman. The referee now being Mrs S Bunting who has been approved by the Kennel Club.

My thanks go to the NEFRA committee members for their continued support and help over the past year.

## **7. HON. TREASURER'S REPORT**

The last twelve months have been unprecedented with a lack of normality which we could never have foreseen.

I would like to thank personally all the NEFRA members for bearing with us throughout what has been a difficult year and for the NEFRA committee for their continuing dedication and hard work.

This has had a great effect on our daily lives and here in the dog world this can be seen in all aspects in the showing, training and working sides of the association.

The enforced cancellation of NEFRA events has impacted on our income received with the loss of the May Anniversary weekend event and November show, plus the early curtailment of working and training events.

Expenditure was down with marked reductions due committee meetings been held on Zoom and therefore no travel expenses or hire of a meeting room.

There has also been a reduction in sundry expenses.

Looking forward to a better year ahead when we can all meet up again and enjoy activities with our Flatcoats.

## **8. ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS**

No questions raised.

Proposed: Miss C Smith

Seconded: Mr G Richards

All in Favour

## **9. HONORARIA**

The committee proposed that there should be no increases in Honoraria for 2022, the last increase was 2007. Proposed by: Mr D Taylor      Seconded by: Mrs P Goulette      All in Favour.

## **10. SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The committee proposed that there be no increase in subscriptions, the last increase was January 2021. Proposed by: Mr D Taylor      Seconded by: Mrs K Joyce      All in Favour.

## **11. NOMINATED CHARITY**

Last year our charity was Hounds for Heroes.      No changes suggested.

Proposed: Mrs K Trevor      Seconded: Mr S Jubb      All in favour.

## **12. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR**

Bennett Brooks continues to be auditor to NEFRA

Proposed by: Mr C Hewison      Seconded by: Mrs M Melrose      All in Favour.

## **13. HON. WORKING SECRETARY'S REPORT**

2020...The year that wasn't. I hope everyone has managed to stay safe and well through such a troubling time for so many of us. We look forward to a better 2021, or at least a manageable 'new normal' in the future.

We had a lot of events planned for last year, sadly the majority of them fell by the wayside. We had to cancel both our spring working tests at Wetherby and our autumn working test at Welbeck, along with many other training days and other working events. I must still say a big thank you to those hosts, judges and helpers for the events that we did hold, and also to all those who waited patiently while we hung on as long as we could before making final decisions about whether to go ahead.

Before the pandemic took hold we held a Kennel Club Working Gundog Certificate day in February at The Lake House, Wigan by very kind permission of Sarah Marflow. This was open to all retrieving breeds and was assessed by Philip Smithies (B Panel) and Caroline Hewison on the day. We had four different breeds taking part and I'm very pleased to say that all four of the participating flatcoats passed.

These were Charlotte Smith with Castlerock First Glance at Whirleymere, Anne Haley with Castlerock Return to Sender at Skybrook, Garry Ellison with Ollersett Black Knight and Sue Sinnott with Millola Handsome Man. Well done everyone! Lisa Mappin with her cocker spaniel Casblaidd Abysinnian also passed, along with Dave Compton and his Chesapeake Bay retriever Franeo Fowlers Lone Ranger. Sarah and Lisa provided wonderful hospitality on the day and a big thank you to our helpers on the day for dummy throwing.

At the end of August, when things looked a little brighter, we held a training day for small groups at Hesketh Bank. Garry Ellison took a puppy class in the morning and a novice class in the afternoon whilst Chris Hewison took a class for the beginner dogs in the morning. To ensure Covid compliance we had five trainees in a group, staggered start times for the classes and maintained social distancing at all times. Sadly this meant we couldn't provide our usual level of hospitality, but I think everyone enjoyed the day nonetheless. Thank you to everyone for following all the Covid guidelines on the day.

Sadly our autumn test in September was cancelled, but we did hold an online virtual working test instead! Chris and Caroline designed some exercises for the puppies, novice dog/novice handlers and

the novices. We had a good number of entries in each class. Each entrant had four exercises to do. The puppy and ND/NH tests involved heelwork, steadiness, marks and obedience. The novices had a double mark, a jump, and a handling exercise. All entrants also had a water retrieve. The exercises were carried out in their own time, on any ground that they could find suitable, videoed, sent in and then sent to our judges Andy Sweeney and Sue Rodgers, who could judge from the comfort of their sofa!

A learning curve for everyone involved but all good fun!

### **The results were:**

#### **Puppy**

1st Vivienne Gatter and Pebbles

2nd Jo Hewison and Yoda

3rd Lynette Irwin and Rhuma

4th Paul Egginton and Cove

COM Liz Beeney and Minty

#### **Novice Dog/Novice Handler**

1st Vicky Davis and Briar

2nd Suzi Tagg and Madison

3rd Aimee Gardiner and Ted

4th Lesley Kay and Ebony

#### **Novice**

1st Jo Hewison and Yoda

2nd Heike Eggersglüß and Summer Sensation's Boy like Daddy

3rd Eyleen Besser and Summer Sensation's Blue May

4th Jo Hewison and Fennel

COM Paul Egginton and Angel

**Best Junior Handler:** Molly Davis and Bear

**Best Outtake** (judged by Chris Hewison): The Davis family, Molly, Sam and Bear for a hilarious video!

What for 2021? Sadly we had to cancel the KC WGC day on game planned for January. We also very sadly had to say goodbye to Malcolm Pickard at the start of the year. He was the keeper at the Wood Hall Hotel and a long-time friend of NEFRA. With his support we held many events in the grounds of the hotel, he will be missed by many of us.

As yet it is very difficult to make plans with the current lockdown in place and the next few months are still uncertain, but as Government restrictions are eased, I am hopeful that we will be able to organise and hold some events.



## **21. REPORT FROM FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY RESCUE**

This has been a year like no other. I was very concerned that flatcoat owners may get the coronavirus and need help to look after them. I put a request on the society Facebook page for people who would be happy to foster any dog in need to get in touch. I had over 50 offers of help from people all over the country. I am so proud of our flatcoat family. I have had no need to use anyone, so delighted that our dogs are safe and cared for and glad their owners are well.

Talking about fostering I did have a request for help to foster a young boy for six months, from a lady who was having a difficult time. She did not want to rehome him but needed some space to get her life back in order after the birth of her baby. A friend of rescue took him into his home for him to live with his flatcoats who accepted him right away. At the end of the period he was returned to his owner. Her life was now in control and he was pleased to see her and she to see him too.

I have to say that most of the dogs needing help have been young males who are too strong and their owners are concerned that they may be hurt by their constant pulling. One lady had already been in hospital twice and he was rehomed with a new owner whose job was outdoors, he now spends his time running around in the forests .

I did have a young boy who was 12 months old and was looking for his fourth home. The last home lasted only a month. He now lives with experienced flatcoats owners, two others to play with and a lily pond to enjoy in a three acre home. Loved by everyone, humans and the other dogs as well.

On some occasions I have had to ask Shirley Oxford for help for the owners with a naughty dog. She has spent long times tutoring, advising and keeping in touch with them, with great results.

Nobody knows what will happen if we ever get control over the corona virus and the world gets back to normal. I can only say that I had a long waiting list , but I hope our beloved breed will all be safe and secure.

I have re-homed quite a few dogs successfully, each one a bit different. Every day I receive three or four requests for a flatcoat and it has been known to receive seven phone calls.

## **22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS APPERTAINING TO THE AGM**

No business had been received prior to the deadline of Friday 12th 2021. Thanks were given to Miss H Walker for her service to the NHS during the pandemic.

Meeting closed at 11:25.

## **23. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF THE NEXT AGM**

11 am Sunday 20th March 2022 , Gallery Suite Fenton Manor. Stoke on Trent.