

Border Collie Club of Great Britain, Border Collie of the Year, Sunday 13th November 2011.

It was a pleasure to judge four classes of Veterans for the Border Collie Club of Great Britain's Veteran of the Year 2011, my thanks go to the club for inviting me.

A beautiful day at a venue which gave every opportunity for the dogs to move well on the surface - totally non-slip and very easy to run on - for both dogs and handlers. A lovely lunch too - thank you.

Some of these dogs are old friends - and didn't disappoint me in their ability to still move out and show some of the younger dogs a thing or two about movement. On the whole all were in good, 'match fit', condition - a few exceptions but for some of these age was not on their side.

My apologies to the handlers, some of whom I gather are still recovering! To me a Border Collie isn't a Border Collie if it can't move out with reach and drive, with the minimal lift of feet so necessary for long hard days on the hillside! Show dogs they may be but they are first and foremost a working breed - there is such a danger in the breed now that we are moving away from the true characteristics of the Border Collie into 'chocolate box' perfection - and in the process losing the true dog. It pleased me to see that many of these veterans, especially in the vintage classes, were true to type. And their handlers, in the main, knew how to get the best from their dogs - giving them the chance to go out and really move.

I'm glad to say that my four main class winners all proved that they had the stamina to do more than a lap of a breed ring! My winners from each class won on overall construction and movement - you don't get one without the other - and the final choice for VOTY was a very close one between all four dogs; another day it could have been different but for me on the day the best veteran I judged was **Ann Stacey's Madeley's Posh Spice**, one of the youngest contestants at just 7 but a veteran nevertheless. No stuffy show dog here - a happy alert little girl who seemed so eager to please. It was a pleasure to watch her moving effortlessly round that ring - and a great temptation to ask her to go yet again just so I could carry on watching her!

Her close runner up was **Elaine and Jo Ratcliffe's Sh Ch Grandver Celtic Quest** - still looking fabulous at 11 and a few months and certainly showing well. My other two winners were **Pat Hales' Sh Ch Wizaland Cool Nifty Fifty JW** (handled extremely well by Hannah Fawcett) and **Bob Tunncliff's Sh Ch Littlethorn Kia**, (half sister to the runner up) handled as ever by Alison. All four dogs showed themselves to be true fit

for function representatives of the breed; something we must continue to strive for before we lose our beloved breed to the pretty, fluffy types that are appearing in the rings now.

Thank you all for your entries, it was hard to look at some of these dear faces and not remember my own beloved veteran who would have loved that surface but sadly has to do his showing at the Rainbow Bridge. Your dogs are a credit to you.

Hilary Kerr