

SPRING/SUMMER 2013

Erin News

www.erinhounds.co.uk



Welcome to the 5th edition of Erin News - find out what has been going on behind the scenes as we head towards homing our 250th hound.

They live and you learn

Why do I foster? I ask myself that question every time a new fosterling arrives and every time I attempt to type "k" - thanks to said key being dislodged by a former foster who launched herself from one sofa to the other where I had foolishly left the laptop open! I had to laugh though, when I discovered that several fosterers on the other side of the Irish Sea have similar IT modifications- I wonder which word the malfunctioning letters would make up?

I own my own adored rescued greyhound and feel that I owe it to him to help others. I know there is a limit to how many dogs one person can sensibly adopt so I decided to foster both as a way of getting my "hound fix" and of helping smooth the passage for rescue dogs on their way to becoming pets. Serial fosterers are a winning formula for Erin Hounds and central to our success in getting "the right dog in the right home". The fosterer gets to know their foster dog well and helps them adjust to life in the real world so that the dog can be matched to an appropriate home. Fostering frees up kennel spaces and saves funds so Erin Hounds can help a greater proportion of the never

ending stream of discarded dogs. I was once a first time greyhound owner but with support and guidance from the "old hands" and a good dose of common sense, I have learnt a lot- the main thing being that hounds are quick learners and adjust well. People always ask "How can you let them go?" but knowing how many needy dogs there are waiting for foster care, I answer "How can I not?". Just between us though, my own greyhound was my first failing as a fosterer since I decided to adopt him not long after I had started fostering him. I then resolved not to "fail" again and that resolution has afforded me the most wonderful extended family, both hound and human. Once my foster hounds "fledge", I keep in touch with their progress and often see them at events or pop in to say hello which is lovely. It is not plain sailing and one has to accept a certain amount of house training, chewing, sleepless nights and even a dose of mild panic now and again. People voluntarily buy puppies who do this for an awful lot longer so if the worse I have is well nibbled table corners and a dodgy laptop key after a decade of fostering, I am more than happy. It is empowering to make a small but tangible difference to a problem

that can sometimes seem too big to tackle. I can't take the credit myself though as my own steady accepting hound teaches the newbies that there is nothing to be scared of and accepts the newcomers and leavers phlegmatically, making my job a lot easier.

Logically, the range of foster home circumstances needs to match the range of home offers we receive, so that we can make a match. Whether you have cats, work, have no dogs, have your own dog, have children or have no garden, as long as you are willing to make a commitment and listen to advice, we would love to hear from you and arrange a home visit regarding fostering. People sometimes ask "How long do you keep a foster dog for?" and the answer is "As long as it takes to find the right home". You should be prepared to let the dog move on whether you have fostered for weeks, months or even years and not "fail" like I once did! (A member of Erin Hounds fostering team) Thank you very much to our newer fosterers Susanna, Helen, Val and Jackie for offering their caring hands to help our dogs on their way into the right home.

No accounting for taste

Rosalea was rescued as a stray, taken into Galway SPCA's kennels then Erin Hounds' kennels. Despite being adopted and having the choice of several comfortable beds and a lawn, Rosalea seems to still quite like concrete bedding!



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Team M G... How a puppy called Magee took one step forward, two wobbly steps back and a final stride into a happy home due to Olympian team work, coordinated by Erin Hounds.

Lurcher Magee was surrendered to the North West SPCA in Ballina, County Mayo as a puppy. Erin Hounds took him as two weeks earlier his mother, Callie had also come to us (Callie is happily homed now too. Ed). Magee was thin and full of worms but a bubbly little lad. After a week or so of good food in kennels, he had a growth spurt causing his legs to bow like rickets. He had to have very restricted exercise with no play so that they didn't worsen through his main growing period which was very challenging for both Magee and his carers!

He was moved to K9 interaction in the UK where this situation had been managed before with another lurcher rescued by the Galway SPCA. There, Magee had minimal exercise but was mentally stimulated as much as possible. He was fed 8 tiny meals a day for interest and stimulation and carried to the training lessons taking place elsewhere on site, where he met calm, trained dogs to learn his social skills and would often spend the lesson in the teacher's arms or bag! He would socialise and have very controlled play with carefully selected dogs. Everything was about filling his mind without putting any strain on his body. He was kept extremely lean with a high quality diet that would nourish him with as little in the way of fillers as possible to avoid growth spurts or weight gain. In the early days, he grew completely erratically, sometimes being inches higher at one end of his body than the other, then a week later it would be the other way round. As he reached 8 - 9 months of age, his growth started to level out and he grew at a more steady and balanced rate.



He was then fostered in Sheffield to confirm he was as safe with cats as he appeared to be and was able to go for walks. We had an enquiry from a family looking to get Reuben, their current Erin hound, a friend and the rest is history.

A word from Magee's new mum:

Magee has been very good, only a little chew on the odd thing! We are learning quickly. He is walking very well on the lead too. Magee has been sleeping with the cat and loves all the visitors! He is a little charmer! He's teaching Reuben how to be a dog again which is lovely to see. It's really good to see them together! Reuben even jumped up on me tonight when I got their leads out for a walk! He has never done that!! He's a fantastic character who has licked the ear of every visitor! I can't wait to see them both running at the beach when he's all tip-top and ready to run.

Thank you to Animal Friends Pet Insurance for supporting Erin Hounds through their Charity of The Month initiative www.animalfriends.org.uk

Alumni news

In the last newsletter, saluki lurcher Willow, having achieved her Gold Kennel Club Good Citizen Award threw down the gauntlet to lurcher Paddy who had just achieved Silver. Paddy stepped up to the mark and is now a member of the elite group of Erin dogs who have achieved Gold. Well done to you all. We would love to hear from you if your Erin hound is an especially good citizen.



Separation anxiety

TLC in this context stands for Time, Leadership and Consistency- these are key requirements when dealing with a dog exhibiting any degree of separation anxiety.

What is separation anxiety (SA)?

SA is a manifestation of insecurity & differs from boredom since the dog engages in the unwanted behaviour within minutes of being left alone. It typically peaks within five to thirty minutes of being left and then gradually declines, in contrast to the signs of boredom which generally start after a few hours. It can occur in any age, sex or breed of dog and even settled dogs can become anxious if you move house or change your work patterns.

A dog suffering from SA may soil, chew, bark, whine, salivate excessively, scratch doors, break out of a crate, lose his appetite or become injured during escape attempts.

What causes it?

Some dogs can be confused as to where you have gone or unsure if you will return safely, especially if they have been neglected or abandoned before. Some dogs lack confidence when alone, especially if they come from a situation where there were other dogs and a structured routine eg racing kennels. Some dogs suffer if they have been overly fussed with a lack of clear leadership and expectation. Some dogs feel obligated to be in control and become anxious when they have no input into your arrival and departure.

Key principles in helping your dog overcome SA:

Do not use punishment: If the dog is punished when the owner returns, the dog will anticipate this and exhibit fearful submissive behaviour which the owner interprets as guilt. Absolutely nothing is gained since the situation is amplified now fear is added to anxiety.

It is up to you not the dog: Understandably, you want to spend as much time as possible with your new dog but one of the commonest mistakes people make is to 'over fuss' the new dog in the early days then wonder why the dog falls apart when they go out or won't settle downstairs at night. Give moderate fuss and attention on your terms not the dog's. The dog needs to learn from day one that he will experience "time out" periods so don't encourage him to follow you around the house all the time.

Gradually acclimatise the dog to being alone by establishing a routine and teach the dog that he is not required to be "on the go" all day with you:

From the very first day with your new hound, make sure you go out of the room, upstairs or leave the house initially just for a few minutes and then repeatedly that day and over the next few weeks, gradually building up the time you wait before returning.

When leaving the room or the house you must leave WITHOUT fuss, words or ceremony and only when the dog is quiet and relaxed.

Wait, then come back in again WITHOUT fuss, words or ceremony. The next stage is to get yourself ready to go out eg, putting your coat on, getting your bag or keys while ignoring the dog if he is around you.

From day one you need to teach the dog that "down time" is not only expected but is also pleasant and relaxing.

To do this the dog needs to learn the command "On your bed". Make sure everyone uses the same phrase, clearly and consistently and his bed is in the same place.

Call the dog to you whilst you are close to his bed. Say "On your bed" clearly with gentle guidance, if required. When he gets on his bed, say "Good boy" and give a small treat but don't over do it then go and sit down yourself and ignore him. If he leaves the bed, repeat once or twice there and then. When the dog is quiet, without any fuss, get up and leave. You will need to repeat this till he learns but time invested at the beginning will pay dividends in the long run.

Gradually build up to "On your bed" meaning and getting just that response. Use this command when you go out but also use it randomly through the day so the dog learns that "time out" is fine and he does not have to be your shadow.

Summary of Essentials:

Since you will be leaving the dog for a number of hours each day eg whilst at work or shopping you must start this routine from day one otherwise you will set him up to fail by giving him the wrong expectation of his new life's pattern.

Make many short separations from the dog with the separation initially lasting less time than it takes the dog to demonstrate an anxiety response, varying the time and duration and building it up gradually.

Do not say goodbye or make gestures when you are leaving- just leave. When you return, greet your dog calmly if he is not showing anxiety and reinforce this behaviour with a food treat BUT if he appears anxious, do not go to him until he relaxes (eg stretches or lies down).

Once the dog can be left alone happily for an hour, he can usually be left for several hours. Be aware that someone visiting later on in the day, can re-trigger the anxious behaviour and so their leaving must be managed identically.

An appropriately sized and comfortable crate may reduce anxiety since it provides a secure, safe den where the dog feels relaxed in its "down time" BUT some hounds, especially salukis, find that the confinement of a crate adds to the anxiety and causes panic.

With hounds that can't be crated, property can still be protected by restricting access to certain rooms using baby gates. Your Erin Hounds' contact will be able to advise whether your hound is crate trained and can provide further advice and our leaflet on crate training, if it would be suitable for that particular Erin hound.

Additional tips:

Tiring a dog out with a long walk, run or play goes a long way in reducing stress BUT don't then bring him home full of adrenaline and go straight out. Instead exercise him well, allow him to relax +/- give him a meal if appropriate and only leave when he is settled on his bed as outlined above.

Provide distraction with a Kong (a durable rubber toy stuffed with treats which take time and effort for the dog to extract).

Put the radio or TV on in a room you frequent but not in the same room as the dog and close the door. The dog

will hear the human voices from another room and will not feel so alone.

Since separation anxiety preferentially affects lone dogs, adopting a second, well adjusted dog can help. We will work with you to find an appropriate match. Two content dogs are less work than one stressed one.

Dog appeasing pheromone (DAP) plug-in diffusers or collars provide reassurance by replicating the calming hormones a bitch gives off when she has whelped. See www.doglistener.co.uk. Some times anti-anxiety medication can be of help whilst taking the dog through the above processes eg Dr Bach's Rescue remedy

Time, Leadership, Consistency displayed by all those dealing with the dog and avoidance of over-bonding are key. Contact us promptly for advice if you experience difficulties leaving your Erin hound for acceptable periods. It is far easier for us to help you alter a dog's behaviour early on, than to undo entrenched behaviour.

Keeping up the good work

Let's take a moment to thank the unsung volunteer team members who work so hard (I won't say "tirelessly" as it is tiring, Ed!) motivated by their abhorrence of sighthound neglect in Ireland. They take phone calls at unsociable hours, meet dogs coming over from Ireland while most people are still abed, deal with cruel and unpleasant individuals to save dogs, brave the pounds, drive miles to get dogs into good homes and generously use their IT, graphic design, dog training and craft skills to give the dogs the best chance they can by making Erin Hounds, a thriving and respected charity.

One adopter who has become a very valued fosterer has excelled herself this year by not only fundraising, doing vet runs, transporting dogs to new homes and giving support to dogs in new homes but even ensured that her own mother adopted an Erin hound! All this whilst working full time with a family and dogs of her own - she is too modest to be named but we are very grateful to her and those like her, whom we are privileged to have on Erin Hounds' team. We couldn't do it without you.

Paying it forward

We are very grateful to those who have not only adopted hounds such as Skeeter, Opal, Senna,, Ardal, Willis, Penny, Paddy, Bowie, Libby and Marco but have made donations helping other hounds, not yet so fortunate. A couple who decided not to go ahead and adopt, still saw the value of making a donation which was very much appreciated too. We are very grateful for the support of The Grooming Table, Hazel Grove, Lynn's Bespoke coats and Little Satsuma. Generous donations from the Brunner Mond Employees Charitable Fund and Marple Carnival helped us keep the wheels in motion this year too. Thank you to Animal Friends Pet Insurance for supporting Erin Hounds through their Charity of The Month initiative www.animalfriends.org.uk - more to follow in the next issue.

Fun fundraising:

If you are planning to do a sponsored event or wish friends to donate to Erin Hounds instead of buying you birthday or wedding gifts etc, please email us so we can set up an online widget to facilitate donations and help promote your event.

Forthcoming events

Meet and Greet. Trentham Gardens near Stoke - Saturday 27 April
Alderley Edge May Fair - Saturday 18th May
Didsbury Festival - Saturday 8th June



Seaside Special

What does a trip to the beach with your dog mean? Sadly, the answer can depend upon which side of the Irish Sea you live. Penny Pinza, raced 66 times for his owner. He last raced in January 2012 and then at 6 yrs old, ended up being taken to the notorious Ballinasloe Horse Fair where he was tied to a tree with a piece of rope to be sold for €60. His seller had been given instructions to "Stop at a beach on the way home" if there were no takers. Luckily, a guardian angel in the form of a Galway SPCA inspector came to his rescue that day who ensured he made it to safety with Erin Hounds. Please spare more than a thought for all the other dogs who do not have a guardian angel looking out for them. Thousands of Irish racing greyhounds and lurchers are unaccounted for every year. How many greyhound bones lie on the sea bed?

Erin Hounds fostered then rehomed Pinza in England. He now enjoys pleasurable trips to Southport beach without fear for his life.



Here is what his new mum has to say:

Pinza has settled in so well. He goes to bed each night without a fuss and greets us when we come downstairs with the waggiest tail. He tried to get on the sofa once but we said 'no' and he hasn't tried again. Pinza is a real character, he loves cuddles and fuss and will tap you with his paw to get attention. In the morning he does what we call the 'daft dance' which involves running around the garden or lounge crouched down low with his tail wagging. We wonder what we did without him.

He loves to bring us things like shoes, hats, socks and even the draught excluder from the front door. He is very sociable and has made friends with lots of dogs out and about including a few greyhounds. He has also had a visit from Ruby, another rescue hound. He has won over my parents who can't wait to show him off in Scotland. My friend's little girl was charmed by him too. He's so keen to get in the car that if the boot is left open he jumps in! We have to tempt him out with a dog biscuit if he's not going

anywhere! He's been on outings to Beacon Fell and the beach to Southport. It was a very cold day but he enjoyed his walk though wasn't tempted to take a dip. He had a lovely Christmas and managed to sniff out his presents in gift bags which our friends had given us- I sometimes wonder if we have a greyhound or a bloodhound. Scott, our 11 year old son has spoken to his class and a few of the teaching staff about Pinza and Erin Hounds and is very responsible with him (Much more so than his adult racing owner ever was! Ed)



Another hound enjoying a trip to an English beach thanks to Erin Hounds is Josie, a bitch who after being used for breeding for racing was successfully treated for a breast tumour and rehomed near York.

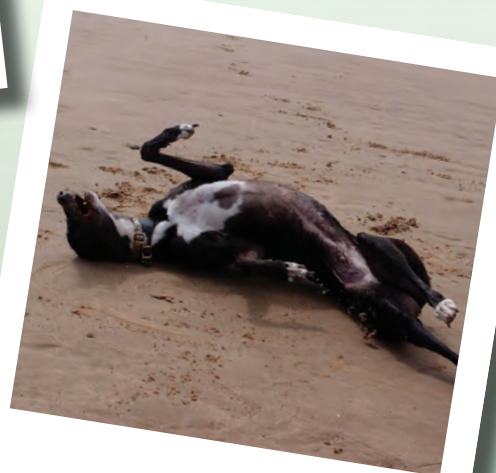
Some lurchers picked up by the public can subsequently require rescue from cruelty and neglect since the "rescuer" may be a known animal hoarder who does not care for their animals

appropriately.

Only a very small number

of lurchers are surrendered to a reputable rescue by their owners. Erin Hounds took in one due to change of the owner's circumstances and received a small donation towards transport and vaccination and one other where the owner had died and the executor surrendered the dog without a donation.

* Halfway There Hounds also founded by Victoria Lyon, enables us to keep dogs safe until Erin Hounds can take them on and get them on the road to a loving home.



News from Victoria on the front line in Ireland

It is about this time of year that I avoid opening emails from The Ed since I know I am expected to put pen to paper but the mind is weak and inclined to wander to dogs playing outside, vets runs or a trip to one of the kennels here sadly, it tends to wander too to blacker zones, like 3 stray lurchers recently running on the Irish M6 at Athlone on a Saturday afternoon at dusk. They were right at the bottom of a slip road so stopping and trying to help ran the risk of sending them into fast traffic. They were opposite a halting site (traveller's encampment) probably after being taken 'hunting' so any efforts to intervene would have resulted in abuse. Apart from trawling the road from junction to junction a few times and calling the Gardai (police) there wasn't much else I could do. If they got picked up by the authorities they would go to a pound where they would be killed. It was a settled halting site rather than a temporary one so there was no chance that the dogs would move on with the travellers to an area where they might end up in a pound that does not put to sleep. Not much hope for them sadly.

I left that scene to head down to one of the supportive kennels who look after some of the dogs whilst they wait for a chance for rehoming in the UK. A mother and son greyhound pair had come in a couple of

days earlier, so I was looking forward to meeting them. The mum was supposed to be 6 yrs old and the son, 21/2 years old. More heartbreak... when we checked the mum's ear tattoos out on the greyhound racing database we found she was actually 9 years old - she had the statutory fleas, a nasty bleeding lump on one teat, all manner of sores on her legs from poor living conditions, an infected foot and she was so stiff and sore from a miserable life and looking so sorry for herself, it made me really angry. Her son was yellow and brown instead of white - from living in his own mess. The kennels are heated and Alison, the kennel owner, described how when she went to them the first morning after they arrived, they were stretched out - the stretching of dogs experiencing warmth and comfy bedding for the first time. I later enquired from a wonderful volunteer couple who do a lot of running dogs about for me whether they had they seen the conditions the dogs were rescued from. They were living in an old metal container, surrounded by excrement. Sadly this sort of thing is a very common occurrence. As I write this, there are 3 Salukis in one vet's with broken legs (one didn't survive a road traffic collision), a whippet - cross in foster with a broken leg and another lurcher in foster after surgery for a broken pelvis and so it goes on, week in, week out. This is why for me it is such a tonic to see all the lovely good news emails, videos and updates on our Facebook page about dogs we have homed. One of my colleagues here, Emma, has watched a video of a particular Erin hound playing in the snow, at least 20 times, it reminds us why we do what we do and gives us strength to carry on (and why Erin Hounds are so grateful when people adopt a previously injured or older dog- Ed).

Sixty years of hurt- has anything really changed?

Judith, a volunteer knitter of dog coats, recalls how a beautiful brindle greyhound came into her life over 50 years ago:

"In the early 1950s my parents adopted a greyhound which had been sent from Wales to a Dandie Dinmont breeding kennels in Barnet as a foster mother. Attached to her was a label reading 'Destroy when you have finished with her'. At the time, my older sister was a kennel maid at this establishment and was so distraught at this, that she telephoned my parents saying 'She is only a little whippet!' - so terrified that the thought of a larger sized dog would make them refuse to have her since, as a family, we always had Staffordshire Bull Terriers. Naturally, they agreed to have this lovely greyhound. She did not have a name, but we called her Wendy and she would accompany me as I collected for the PDSA. I have loved greyhounds and lurchers ever since."



Judith with Wendy
and Promise, the family's
staffie, taken 1956.



Two's company

When we talk to people about adopting a sighthound, being a responsible organisation, we warn adopters that they are addictive. Let's have a quick peek and see who has managed to get themselves hooked shall we?!

Marley has now been joined by Brody.

Lily has now been joined by Billy.

Bowie has now been joined by Dita.



Dita & Bowie



Marley & Brody



Billy & Lily

Here is the experience of Jane, when she and her husband Colin adopted Erin greyhound, Billy to go with Lily, their existing Erin greyhound:

They get on so well together as you can see. No problems at all. We really enjoy having two of them. Lily was a bit of handful when we first got her but she calmed down very quickly once Billy arrived. She used to have accidents at the front door if we left her alone and would buck and try to chase other dogs when out for walks on the lead. All this stopped with Billy's arrival. She is much more settled and relaxed (if that is possible!) and does not seem to fret at all any more if we go out without them. She has also become much more affectionate. Billy is a very

affectionate chap and loves being tickled and having his ears and neck rubbed. Lily now wants more attention too and comes up for tickles and neck rubs, when she used to be a bit standoffish. If one is being tickled, then the other one quickly appears to join in. I think it is easier to have two greyhounds than one, in terms of looking after them. They really do keep each other company and play together, sleep together and follow each other around. It is as easy to feed and walk two, as it is one. I was a bit apprehensive at first about having two greyhounds and walking them by myself but I find that no problem really - because Lily has calmed down, they are no trouble. In fact, they are quite comical walking together and doing everything in unison, whether sniffing the same bushes or reacting to the same noises or movements. It is quite charming to see them together. Of course, even more people stop to admire them and ask about them which is great. We have only had Billy for 4 months but he has made a big difference to Lily and to us. He is lovely and they have become great friend and it means

Colin and I get to walk a greyhound each when we go for walks together! Of course it costs more in food - and buying an extra bed, collar and coat. Plus if you have a car and transport them around, you need to make sure your car is big enough for both of them as there are eight long legs to fit in the boot!

Can you resist another? If not, rest assured that with our knowledge of your current Erin hound, we can find your perfect complementary second fix! (And to all those who check out the Erin Hounds website more than twice a week-don't feel smug, you are on a slippery slope! Ed.)



Billy & Lily

As ever, the hounds have the final say...

"Betting on animals never ends well for the animal. Help Erin Hounds turn statistics into pets and lobby politicians to ensure welfare legislation is enforced."



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