

My thanks to the committee of Border Collie Club of Great Britain for the invitation to judge the 2015 Border Collie Puppy Of The Year and the lovely gift; how did you know I love tea! I preferred the new format judging system from the old system that had been used previously and in the last Pup Of The Year that I entered which was 24 years ago!

Generally I thought the standard was very good especially the last two classes and I thought that any of the dogs/bitches 'pulled out' in the last two classes could have all gone on to win it. So unfortunately I had to 'nit pick' which I don't like to do. So now for a few grumbles: quite a few dogs were overweight and when I tried to feel for the top of the scapula and hip bone I struggled to find it. Many of the dogs were loose in the pastern or the hocks or both. I know that these were young dogs and in most cases it was a result of loose tendons but I would have thought that with the cost of shows nowadays exhibitors would spend a bit of time road walking their dogs to tighten them up. I found three excellent shoulders and the rest were either average or poor. Rear angulations were generally good although rounded croups were pretty prevalent. Yes I knocked heavy boned and dogs too low to the ground as most of you probably know by now that I want a more athletic build. I have witnessed these 'heavy' boned and short legged dogs struggling in the various dog sports that I have attended. Generally exhibitors were nice with their dogs although I saw one or two instances of heavy leash checking and pressure being put upon the dog to keep still. Heads on the whole were pretty good with only one or two with the untypical 'teddy bear' heads. I selected 4-6 dogs from each group and any of these could have won and the final placing often went on the result of the final run.

So Congratulations to the winner Josie Large & Wizaland Songs From The Wood, a dog that floated on air as he gaited around the hall and definitely no slack pasterns and rear hocks to be found here. He has excellent head proportions, good eye shape and excellent chiselling around his head. A brilliant height to length ratio, a most elegant outline leading to one of the best slope of croup with very good turns of stifle. He also had a lovely calm sensible way about him and with his handler's lovely relaxed attitude they made a very good team. A hot prospect for the future.

Runner up was Alison Tunnicliff & Littlethorn Shelby. Not an overly glamorous girly but perfectly balanced and very sound. She had one of the better front assemblies here today showing a good slope of pastern rather than the 'knuckling over' found on far too many of the exhibits. A pet hate of mine. Her outline was very elegant completing a very well balanced picture. I see many dogs from this kennel competing successfully in various dog sports and being of the correct make and shape most do very well, so well done to this kennel for maintaining and combining the work ability within the show world.

Laura Wiltshire & Caleykiz Thunderstruck, a very glamorous young blue boy with a very impressive side gait that easily won him the Minor Puppy Dog section. Very positive rear pasterns moving away and very positive front leg planting on his return. He has very good head properties with good eye colour. He illustrated very good body proportions and a particularly strong rear assembly when I asserted pressure on his rear.

Best Minor Puppy Bitch, Annette Walters' Goytre Maid To Tri In Blue. A very pretty blue tri-coloured bitch who I didn't think would be my winner after the first pick but on the final 'run around' she demanded this top spot. Her head piece was very well proportioned leading into a beautiful long neck, only three found here today. She has an excellent shoulder with the correct length and angle of upper arm. She was ultra sound fore and aft and this couldn't be denied gaining the top spot in this section today.

Heather Donnelly, Judge