

Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club

Minutes of Annual General Meeting
Held on Wednesday 24th April 2013 at 7pm
Bowburn Community Centre, Bowburn, Co. Durham DH6 5AT

Present: L. Heron, J. Keating, N. Barlow, W Wilson, K. Jenkins, C. Maddison, J. Dickson, K. Leith-Ross, L. Thompson, A. Beckley, F. Maclean, J. McDonald, C. Whitfield, G. Layfield, N. Fishburn, I. Davison, B. Kennedy, L. Lintern, J. Lawson, R. Keers, F. Smith, A. Gorman, B. Davison, B. Lambell, N. Pharoah, P. Burton, S. Willis, and R. Whitfield.

1. **Apologies:** J. Charlton, M. Johnson, G. Hood, A. Taylor, M. and B. Gardner, L. Hartis, D. Scott, T. and A. Broadburn, S. Shankar, L. Orchard, J. Woodruff, M. Gibson, J. Dobson.
2. **Minutes of previous AGM**
These Minutes were approved and adopted - **JD & KLR**
3. **Matters arising from previous minutes**
No matters arising
4. **Chairperson's Address:** Lynda Heron
Incorporating:
 - a) **Accounts anomalies**
 - b) **Labrador Rescue**

All Clubs evolve and as you will have seen from the Agenda we have some changes coming along. Judith our General Secretary for the last two years is grappling with her new but challenging job that means we have sadly lost her skills - for the time being at least! Judith has done a fantastic job using her knowledge to sharpen up the club's presentation and organisation and I am sure she will do the same in her new professional life. We all wish her well and I offer my own personal thanks, particularly for her input, work and drive in dealing with the accounts research and letter writing - which added to her workload.

This past year, as the one before, our Treasurer Wendy has been working alongside Jill. However this year Wendy is stepping down. As you know only too well the accounts have been a huge part of all the officers' roles but inevitably the buck stops with the Treasurer. I know at times Wendy has found this position very worrying and demanding and hope it helps to know you had the backing of the committee at all times and I offer our sincere thanks for all your hard work. I am happy that you plan on staying around and helping put the club assets in the same auditable format. I am delighted that if elected, Jill has offered to take up the reins as Treasurer and I am sure she will do a thorough job.

I will leave news of the Accounts to Wendy but would say that thanks to Wendy and Jill; the Club is now in a position to move on with a clear audit trail and a formula for the accounts that is exemplary.

a) Accounts Anomalies

At last year's AGM I alluded to accounting anomalies which had been highlighted by Paul Glaholm, the Club auditor and once we had the Memberships' mandate in the form of our re-election, the principal officers, Judith, Wendy and I, began to deal with the areas that had been thrown into the limelight via the auditor's comments.

We began by trying to sort out what exactly had happened with the auditing for the last few years. The committee wrote to the previous Treasurer, Mr Kenn Roberts about various matters and he confirmed in writing the last known names and addresses of previous auditors. Upon checking both of these addresses the houses were found to be empty and up for sale. We visited the address we were given for the most recent auditor. Neighbours who had lived there for many years confirmed what the Land Registry records had already shown, that the previous owner had been a lady called Patricia Chappell who had lived there for at least 24 years and that she had recently died and the house had been sold to a builder. **They confirmed verbally that a Mr N A Allen had never lived in the house.**

Via the Chartered Institute of Accounts we traced a Mr N. A. Allen FCA (this is exactly how our accounts had been signed off). The Chartered Institute told us that there was only one person on their register of that name qualified to use the initials FCA and gave us his business address. Wendy, Judith and I went to see this Mr N.A. Allen and he provided a signed letter stating that he had never audited the Club accounts. However, he commented that he knew Mr Kenn Roberts (the previous Treasurer), as he "did his wife's accounts".

When we subsequently informed The Kennel Club of this breach, not only of our Club rules but also of Kennel Club rules they advised that we, as a club, should deal with the matter. Subsequently, at the next General Committee Meeting, various areas of concern were discussed including:

1. No proof of audited Club accounts for 8 years.
2. Incorrect names and addresses supplied for Auditors.
3. Donations not forwarded to Labrador Welfare 2008 to 2010 inclusive.
4. Malt whisky listed in the accounts as gifts for auditors

It was noted that Mr and Mrs Roberts Membership had not been paid for at least three years and therefore he was no longer a member of the Club.

Proposals were then made by General Committee regarding Mr Roberts taking into consideration these serious misdemeanours then voted upon:

1. A lifetime ban from any Committee role within Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club. Unanimous
2. A five year ban on any dog registered in his name, (individually or jointly), from attending an event organised by Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club. Unanimous
3. Expulsion from further Membership of Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club for a period of ten years. Vote: 7 For – 2 Against

b) Labrador Welfare

Following on from the above NDLRC accounts discrepancies, donations of between £250 and £280 made via the Club to Labrador Welfare between 2008 and 2010 were not forwarded to Labrador Welfare and they have confirmed they did not receive this. It was proposed that this figure be rounded up to £300 and sent as soon as possible. Unanimous

Whilst the General Committee's decision regarding Mr Roberts did not need to be taken to members at the AGM; as Chair I wanted to give the Membership opportunity to show their support (or otherwise) for these decisions before asking the Secretary to convey them and their effective date of 4th September 2012 to Mr Roberts.

A comment was made during Chair's address as to why the past Treasurer was being 'persecuted'. The Committee, including Mrs Beckley, a previous Treasurer who had held the role prior to Mr Roberts, made it clear that whilst unfortunate, accounting procedures had been severely lacking and no reasons for poor practises had been received from Mr Roberts despite repeated asking (evidence was available to view).

*If the Club accounts had been subject to Kennel Club audit during the last tenure with no proof of an auditor being available; plus the evidence that the auditor named on the accounts had declared **in writing** that he had **never** audited the Club accounts, then the Club would have been in jeopardy of being censured due to poor accounting procedures.*

Mr Roberts subsequently informed the Committee that he was taking the matter to the Kennel Club which left NDLRC no alternative but to provide the Kennel Club with the details they had following their investigations. The Kennel Club wrote to NDLRC advising of their misgivings on these past practises and said that the Club should deal with the matter internally in line with its Rules and Regulations. It was believed by one member that the Kennel Club had refused to back the Club in its investigations, but this was incorrect. It was felt that it would be unethical to divulge the full letter to the meeting and/or individuals, but the Chair attempted to convey the Kennel Club letter's recommendations, being particularly mindful of not breaching any personal information and the Data Protection Act.

*****As a non member, according to NDLRC Rules and Regulations and the Kennel Club's confirmation of same, Mr Roberts was not due the privileges of membership but due to his past service to the Club, the Committee afforded Mr Roberts the opportunity of clarifying the anomalies and was invited to attend meetings to provide substantive evidence before proposals were put forward. Mr Roberts declined these invitations.***

Requesting members were willingly shown the letters and timeline of events which did not contain personal information surrounding the situation. Mr Gorman further asked why officers had visited Mr Allen's sister during the investigation as he had been told they had done so and she was not very happy about it. Mrs Heron, Mrs Keating and Mrs Wilson all confirmed they had never contacted or visited anyone other than Mr Allen at his business premises regarding the auditing of the Club accounts, and could only surmise Mr Gorman had been given wrong information.

The anomalies regarding Labrador Welfare were then addressed. An amount of between £250 and £280 had been received as donations to Labrador Welfare during a three year period (2008-2010) but it was apparent from cheque books and accounts that this had not been paid to Labrador Welfare and this was further confirmed by the Charity.

*The meeting was asked to vote on whether they gave permission for a rounded up sum of £300 to be paid to Labrador Welfare - **all agreed**. Jill advised the meeting that the only other alternative was to write to every donator where we could identify them, then ask whether they wanted their money returned.*

*The General Committee's decisions were put forward to the AGM as a courtesy rather than requirement. **The proposals were further carried at AGM.***

Despite the weight of evidence and the proof provided, a small minority of the members present did not accept what they were being told despite no proof to the contrary ever being produced.

The Committee were urged by the floor to move on to the next item as the subject was now history and at impasse.

*****Since the AGM we have again spoken to the Kennel Club who have reiterated their stance which is that it is not their policy to get involved unless the situation becomes a police investigation. This is a route we have constantly tried to avoid both for the sake of the Club and Mr. Roberts but this remains an option.***

The Chair continued her address.

On the Working side:

This last 12 months have been a time of yet further remodelling. We lost Gary Layfield as FT Secretary and Alf Gorman, who had for several years helped him enormously. However, we were very lucky that Colin Maddison and Fiona Maclean agreed to take control of the working events at such short notice and it was agreed that a job share was the way forward at least in the short term. Both Colin and Fiona had a busy first season and did tremendous jobs particularly as they were "thrown in at the deep end". Thank you both very much. Colin is happy to tackle the trials for another season and I know he is already way ahead of the game – well done and thank you both for all the hard work. Fiona is staying around, and of course as a Field Trial Committee member, she is more than happy to do her share!

The working side's administration is now mainly in the hands of Irene Davison who is doing sterling work behind the scenes and on the design side for the Club in general for which I am very grateful. I do feel we need to look more closely at the arrangements for Working Tests and intend to talk more about this at the next Field Trial meeting.

On the Show side:

Kay has settled into her role and even hinted recently that she was finding it "easier". Thanks so much Kay, you know it's appreciated.

Finally the many thank you's to the hard working committee members and the non committee members who add so much and without whom the club would really struggle.

As ever we are enormously grateful to our Field Trial and Working Test hosts who generously allow us access to their wonderful grounds. Thanks also to our sponsors Skinners who generously support all our working tests and trials and this support is truly appreciated by the members and the winners. Our club never takes its sponsors for granted.

I also offer thanks to our sponsors on the show side, Royal Canin and James Wellbeloved who have given so generously to our Championship Show and Open Show.

I look forward with confidence, knowing we have a strong team who all have my respect and admiration and who work tirelessly for our club. As usual I would like to ask that if anyone has any complaints, comments or helpful tips, they bring these to our attention through the appropriate channels. Finally, I would like to wish you all a good year with your dogs, enjoy them.

5. Hon. Secretary's Report: Judith Keating

We should be proud to be the second oldest Labrador club in the UK. To set the scene, 90 years ago in 1923 the Flying Scotsman went into service, Prince Albert (George VI) married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, Stanley Baldwin becomes Prime Minister and some very enterprising gundog enthusiasts of the day, formed the origins of Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club.

The Show Committee plans to celebrate our 90th year at our Championship Show in October and we hope the Field Trial Committee might like to do something to celebrate at a Field Trial event later in the year.

As Lynda has explained to you, so much time was spent on the previous accounting problems last year. However, we do now feel that we can now draw a line and move on positively by continuing to improve the structure of the Club.

We hosted many events during 2012 and I will leave the reporting of that to the individual secretaries.

Once again, our fully paid up membership numbers have increased 'year on year' and currently stand at 410. My thanks go to Fiona Maclean as Acting Membership Secretary for her sterling work. This is the second year in succession that we have accounted for approximately 100 additional members to our Club. So we hope with this endorsement, that we can reward their loyalty and support by providing activities for all of our members, whether Show, Working or pet owners.

Postage costs are now an issue for the Club as indeed it is for us all. With second class postage now costing 50p and first class 60p for up to 100g, the AGM mailing was emailed to Members for whom we had an email address and sent by post to those for whom we did not have an email address. This has saved the Club over £100 for just that one mailing, so please continue to forward your email address to us. And do please keep us updated if you change your current email address.

Notices and schedules for Shows are now online on our Website and regularly posted on our Facebook page, as are notices and entry forms for Working Tests and Field Trials. It is now possible to pay for Working Test entries and Membership subscriptions by PayPal.

This is very new for us but those who have used the 'click through buttons' on our website have been very positive about it. Quick and accountable, NO more lost cheques. Each transaction currently incurs a 50p administration fee - the same as a 2nd class postage stamp. We hope to be able to implement PayPal for entering Field Trials in the future so keep looking on the website to find this.

We must say thank you very much to two long standing committee members who have stepped down from their respective committee roles this year. John Lees and Geoff Hood have been very important to running of this club for too many years to mention and no doubt will be missed. Additionally, I would like to thank all of the Members of the various Committees for all their commitment and hard work. Going forward, I am delighted to see we have new people wishing to join these Committees and hopefully they will bring their enthusiasm, commitment and ideas with them. We look forward to welcoming them.

I am sad to say that because of my own work commitments, I am unable to continue in my role of Secretary. It has been a challenging but extremely interesting two years and I have enjoyed this very much. I will temporarily hold the fort until my replacement is found and will be available into the future to help my replacement through the secretarial role maze. But whoever that is I hope that I have set a clear pathway to enable them to take the Club forward and from strength to strength.

I wish you all a very good 2013 season.

6. Treasurer's Report: Wendy Wilson

As Lynda mentioned, Jill and I have put in many hours of work in the last 12 months to ensure that robust and auditable accounting systems are in place.

Apologies to everyone who has been asked for receipts (sometimes repetitively) for any expenditure they have incurred but this has ensured that we have a traceable audit trail which is essential for all concerned and sorry, but receipts are essential in the future before any expenditure can be reimbursed and cheques do need to be covered by an invoice or receipt. This is essential so that we can continue to be accountable to the Members of this Club by having a traceable audit trail.

The audited accounts for 2012 are available on the website and a number of paper copies are available tonight. You will see that each event we have held has its own section in the accounts with different types of payment categorised individually so that you can see the income and expenses and therefore the profit and loss of each event. This is a different but much improved way of accounting for the Club and in the ensuing years it will mean it will be easy to compare the cost of hosting events on a year on year basis, and similarly for other expenditure.

The Balance Sheet ending 31 December 2012 shows a healthy balance of £20,558.44. This is a deficit of £505.83 compared to the balance at 31 December 2011. Two Championship Shows were held in 2011 (an extra event that we are allowed to run once every twelve years) and consequently, showed an increase in income in the Show account of £1,008.75 for 2011.

Membership numbers increased from 250 in 2011 to 370 in 2012, resulting in an increase in Membership subscriptions of £806.50. I am happy to say that Mr Glaholm, the Club Auditor has said the recording of the Accounts for 2012 are as good as he has seen and is confident that they will stand up to robust scrutiny. If you have any questions regarding these accounts then please ask either myself or Jill.

Discussion took place on the lack of receipts available for past transactions and that in line with most organisations; it was now club policy to not reimburse without proof of spend, invoice or receipt. Gary Layfield queried the price of printing and stationery for tests/trials last year commenting that it was excessive.

It was agreed it was excessive but as the club did not have the luxury of time due to untimely resignations etc., to source nor be offered details of the more reasonable printing services Gary had used in the past, they had no alternative but to get the job done. Mistakes had been made but it was explained that hopefully this year the costs would be more realistic and members acknowledged the improvement in standards of printing being produced, were welcome. A new printer was hopefully to be purchased enabling some printing to be done by officers in future.

7. Field Trial and Working Test Secretary's Reports: Colin Maddison and Fiona Maclean

Colin reported that the trials had proved successful last year with many positive comments and that everything was in place for 2013.

Mr Gorman asked if the club had stopped sending out thank you letters to Field Trial hosts as he had been told that one host had not received a letter. Colin assured Mr Gorman that the letter was sent but that it had been posted slightly later than usual. Irene Davison further confirmed she had typed the letters to each host and had filed copy of the letters electronically on the club's new central system and could easily provide details of address etc. should it need clarification. The letters had been typed days after the event and that was now the normal procedure for tests and trials from 2011.

Colin advised he had spoken since, to the host who had not mentioned any problems to him. It was suggested that registered post be used in future but this was commented on as being too costly. Proof of postage was then discussed; however, POP does not guarantee receipt and therefore seems a pointless exercise. The matter would be further looked at.

Fiona reported that the Club had managed to hold one extra working test this year; more than most clubs and that NDLC were hosting the inter club event this year at Powburn. She commented that more assistance would be helpful on the day such as dummy throwers etc. and it was hoped members and those of the Field Trial committee would assist in this.

8. Show Secretary's Report: Kay Jenkins

Kay outlined the successful and popular shows that had taken place last year and into 2013 and it was acknowledged that the feedback had been excellent. Kay was settling into the role now and enjoying the challenge, for which she was thanked and all looked forward to the Championship Show in October.

9. Club Representatives' Annual Reports for 2012:

Breed Council and Breed Health: Lynda advised as representative for the two, of developments regarding testing and initiatives by the club which were welcomed and the Council's success in having matters passed by the Kennel Club.

FT Liaison Representative – Samantha Whyte (emailed report presented by Judith Keating in Samantha's absence)

There is one meeting per year and the first meeting of this new term is on the 7th May 2013. I am looking forward to this meeting and I'm delighted to represent your club and the Lincolnshire Gundog Society again.

Last year's Field Trial Liaison Council meeting highlighted some concerning issues. The Field Trial sub-committee was rejecting the vast majority of the proposals that the Field Trial Liaison Council put forward. The Field Trial Liaison Council wanted to know why this was happening when six people off the liaison council sit on the sub-committee.

The other controversial issue was the alteration of regulation J7.F which meant that club/societies were no longer able to cash competitors cheques if their place was filled even if a competitor withdrawn within seven days of a trial. The fact that the sub-committee proposed and voted in favour of this new rule without any feedback being asked from either club/society Field Trial secretaries or Field Trial Liaison Council representatives caused outrage at the meeting.

I am happy to report that since then the Kennel Club has asked secretaries for feedback on the J7.F and three options for the wording of this regulation have now become a proposal at the forthcoming liaison council meeting.

I am always happy to spoke with any of you about Field Trial Liaison Council matters and discuss putting forward proposals and or a subject that you would like the council to just discuss. So please feel free to call me or email me. This concludes my report.

Samantha Whyte.

samantha_jim21@yahoo.co.uk 07564624563

10. Education/Events Programme

Lynda advised that in 2011 the Show side of the Club had been allocated money to hold a **Judging Seminar**. In 2012 the **Labrador Larkabout** was arranged for Labrador pet owners (many of whom had since joined the club and were actively involved). Both events had been very successful and in 2013 it was hoped that the Field Trial Sub-Committee would put forward recommendations for a similar event to promote the working side of the club. Recommendations were asked for from the meeting but none were forthcoming, only to reiterate the requests Lynda had been given from members previously, that some form of training be offered to members.

Discussion took place on how the club had training sessions in years past but had not been done for many years. Fred Smith shared information of training sessions he and others were doing at very minimal cost in North Yorkshire and it was hoped that this could be looked at in greater depth and hopefully widened to encompass the northern part of the region.

11. Honoraria

There was much discussion on the way the club was being reorganised to cope with Websites, Facebook, and basically the 21st Century. The reorganisation is a work in progress and as with last year, Mr Bill Lambell proposed that the honoraria be increased by 5% per year. A further proposal was put forward by Joanne MacDonald that they remain the same and discussion ensued.

One member asked what were the honoraria and these were divulged and comment passed that they seemed rather low and possibly needed to be increased when the reorganisation review was being done. It was agreed that General Committee would meet in the near future to discuss in greater detail. Additional expenses of £150 ex gratia payment was agreed to help towards the Field Trial Secretary's fuel and telephone costs.

12 Annual Subscriptions

Membership had risen again. We now have 410 members, which is a year on year increase of 100 members for a second year running. The Field Trial Committee had recommended that the membership fees be increased to be in line with other clubs in the area and countrywide. This was discussed and accepted. This increase will come into effect for membership subscriptions from 2015 as follows:

Single Membership	£10
Joint Membership	£12
Single Membership non UK	£12
Joint Membership non UK	£15

13. New Committee Roles Requiring Ratification

In view of the increasing duties of roles as we strive to improve structure within the Club, it had been recommended that a Membership Secretary and Website Administrator be appointed. This was agreed. Alterations to other roles, such as Working Test Secretary were being examined.

Ratified

14. Election of Officers

Officers and roles were listed in the Agenda and proposals were accepted as follows:

Hon. Treasurer - Jill Dickson

All other Officers re-elected

15. Election of Committees

Nominations had been received for each committee and all were accepted as listed below.

General Committee - Fiona Maclean (also Membership Secretary)
- Wendy Wilson
- Steve Willis
- Louise Lintern
- William Kennedy

Show Sub Committee - Wendy Wilson
- Louise Lintern
- William Kennedy

Field Trial Sub Committee - Fiona Maclean
- Irene Davison

Three places remain on the FT committee which will hopefully be filled soon.

At this point some members left the meeting.

16. Election of Auditors

It was proposed, seconded and agreed that Paul Glaholm be retained as auditor for the year.

17. Rules and Regulations Proposed Changes

As per the addendum supplied, a proposal for an amendment to Section 8 Club Accounts and a proposal for an additional Regulation so that as new Codes are developed and approved they will be supported by this formal Regulation. Both proposals were voted on and agreed.

18. Proposals for AGM by members

None received

19. Any Other Business

Addendum

The Kennel Club originally advised that, as it was our Club, we needed to deal with the matter at Club level by imposing punishments agreed by the General Committee. This is exactly what we did.

Subsequently they have advised these decisions can only stand if they are upheld by future committees.

A lifetime ban from any Committee role within Northumberland Durham Labrador Retriever Club.

A five year ban on any dog registered in his name, (individually or jointly), from attending an event organised by Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club

Expulsion from further Membership of Northumberland and Durham Labrador Retriever Club for a period of ten years

The meeting closed at 8.47pm