

My Friend

BUSTER

A dog that changed my life

By Jean Sharp-Bale



There's no denying that Windsor is a big show. It is perhaps the biggest of the general championship shows outside Crufts and in 1981 something was stirring in the Keeshond Breed. It was a time when I needed a soul-mate and a time when dog shows, unless they were close, were definitely off limits to me. My best friend and I had made the final line-up and as always we stood in perfect harmony while the judge was busy making his decision. Buster loved the big occasions and his two trusting eyes were transfixed on me while I held my breath. My mind was racing. I remembered that I nearly did not enter this show because I thought my chances so slim and I remembered too the almost unbelievable circumstances that led to me owning this wonderful dog. We were really up against top-class competition and I knew that it would not be easy. I was poised to make a bit of history. Suddenly the waiting was over and the judge went to his table to pick up the Dog Challenge Certificate, walked to us and extended his hand. Buster and I had done it. 25 CCs and the record of Ch Ledwell Dutchman had been equalled. I was on top of the world and still reeling from an encounter seven years before that had led me to this moment. Why had I been chosen, and how did I find myself here today?

It was at the Keeshond Club Ch Show 1974 at Seymore Hall in London, that I first heard the talk of the possible mating of Ledwell Dutchman and Ledwell Heidi. Gina Marsh (formerly Weedon), was very excited of the chance of having a pup from the planned alliance. Never a thought crossed my mind of what was to happen. Myself and my daughter Kim, were showing my foundation bitch Davean Cover Girl. She was just a young bitch and at that time I remember, very out of coat. I thoroughly enjoyed my day and I believe, won a reserve which was good because in those days we regularly had classes in the 18 to 20's. What happened next was to change my life completely in more ways than one. Mrs Scroggs (as I then knew her) came over to me and asked me if I would be interested in having pick of dogs from 'The Litter'. Fancy me being asked that question by one of the people I was very much in awe of at that time. I can tell you I was I quite overcome but quickly pulled myself together and thought, "Dog? I've got bitches but I had never considered introducing a male into the kennel". "No problem", said Mrs Scroggs, but she did advise me to think about it before making up my mind. The months went by and nothing more was said about it, with the exception of my then husband Brian who was absolutely against it. In the interest of matrimonial harmony I decided that it was best left. It was not the end of it however and on the 20 October 1974, a letter arrived from Mrs S. It was a simple note, "Buster Sharp was born on 14 October and gave poor Holly a bad time" (she had apparently made rather a noise; he was 12 or 14 ounces and Holly was a very feminine and small bitch, poor thing). So the great and the good in Keeshonds were serious. Sylvia Scroggs really did want me to have this puppy. There still remained the obstacle with Brian, despite me telling him that I was the chosen one. It did not seem to do any good however, and we hardly spoke to each other for the next few weeks.

On the morning of the Richmond dog show (in those days it used to be held much later in the year) Brian asked me what I intended to do about "that puppy"? Was he thawing slightly I wondered?. I had already decided to tell Sylvia that I would like to see the litter and then make my decision after I had seen him. At seven weeks, we both went to see the new puppies. Ledwell was full. I remember seeing Gina, Betty Francis, Len & Celia Howie, Shirley Hill. I believe that Doris Purdon was there too. The litter was brought in and I saw Buster for the first

time. It was something that I will never forget because he was gorgeous. I could not refuse him. A deposit was paid and Sylvia very kindly said that she would keep him until we returned from our holiday in Sweden. It was one week after Boxing Day, when Buster was 11½ weeks old, that we eventually took him home. He was a stunner right from the start. I still remember what he looked like at 12 weeks and to this day I always prefer to see the pups at that age. If they look remotely like Buster did then, I know then that I'm on to a winner.



Buster Sharp at 11 weeks

His first show was W.E.L.K.S. and he did nothing. Second was Birmingham National where he repeated his W.E.L.K.S. performance before trotting off to Bath, under Bill Siggers. Were we going to score the hat trick? Not so, because Bill gave him a fourth. Then on to Scotland with a feeling that we could be moving in the right direction and the chance to be seen by a genuine judge. His honour Judge John Hopkin saw, in Buster, a dog that he really liked and from the relative modest results prior to the SKC show, he placed him first in all the three classes in which he was entered. That was not all however, because he took the Reserve CC as well - I could not believe it!

Over the next few months he won BPIS at the North of England Keeshond Club Founders Show and BOB at Ashbourne Open. He also snapped up BPIS and RBIS at Taunton Open on the same day that his mother Ledwell Heidi won the CC under Jere Collins at E of E. We travelled back to Scotland in August 1975 to visit Cathy Sutton, who was judging. At ten months Buster was getting used to the showing and we wondered if we could possibly get a better result than we achieved on the first visit. The first CC I ever held in my hand was awarded to Buster on that day putting me on top of the world. Ledwell Lysander was on his way.



*Buster, Zelda & Becky
Keeshond Club 50th Anniversary
Sherbourne Castle 1975*

His second CC came at Bournemouth under George Leatt and that special, third arrived at B.U.B.A., courtesy of Bill Foster. When the BOBs paraded for the B.U.B.A. BIS competition, Cathy Sutton got her chance to see Buster again. She must have remembered her favourite boy from Scotland because she gave him BIS - the first BIS at a championship show that I ever won. It was the start of many connections with Cathy throughout Buster's career. At the tender age of fourteen months Buster had become a champion and I was overwhelmed and phoned Sylvia on the way home to tell her. She was pleased but just a shocked as I. 1975 was a year of firsts for me and the beginning of whirlwind of delight as together we took up the challenge to beat the very best in Keeshonds

At home, Buster really did not look that special but completely changed when he set foot into the ring. In all his showing career he never once let me down. His best year was 1978 when he won 9 CCs (all with BOB) and was that year's top Keeshond. He won at many shows but, at Crufts, although he bagged 3 RCCs he never won a CC. Having said that Buster had a liking for the big occasion and had pencilled in 1981 as his most memorable.

Ken Bullock has always had an eye for a good Keeshond. In 1981, at SCCA, he gave a new young dog called Gavimir Nighthawk, the group. This is why, when Ken turned up a few weeks later to judge the breed at Windsor, I figured that the smart money must have been on the boy from Sussex. After the excitement however, standing there watching the judge sign Buster's 25th CC my troubles were far away. I had to plan for Buster's retirement because it had always been my intention not to take away Dutchman's record; such was my admiration for Chips. This was no secret and word soon flashed around the ring that Buster would now be retired. This same message must have gone round the show too and the talk was of nothing else. We still had the group to attend and Buster looked ready for anything. Was it really possible for Ch

Ledwell Lysander to do what his famous father had done six years previous and take the group? Would history repeat itself, here in the grounds of Windsor Castle? I did not have long to wait as the judge's finger ushered as to the front of the group. I was already planning the celebration but I knew from the look that Buster gave me that he had one more trick up his sleeve. I had seen that look before and knew, in my heart, that this was really going to be his day. So there, at the end of a memorable show, my boy Buster beat all opposition to take Best in Show under Owen Grindey. What a way to go out! How could we top this? After the delayed celebrations, I set off home with the best dog in the world curled up in the back of the car I knew what I was going to do next but I did not know what he was thinking; had I done so I would not have believed it.



*Ch Ledwell Lysander
BIS at Windsor 1981
A big day at a big show*

Like I had promised, Buster retired from open competition and spent the next four years watching from the sidelines as the great Ch Gavimir Nighthawk started seriously gathering CCs. From his consistent performance, I was certain that we were looking at a star of the future and that he would be the next breed record holder.

In 1985, I decided to polish up Buster for a trip to the Keeshond Club Championship Show. Ken Bullock was judging but I thought that Veteran would be a nice day out for him. Nighthawk was also under our judge for the second time. Buster showed that he had lost none of his touch because he won the Veteran class and then took the challenge for best Veteran (in those days you could challenge before BIS) where he sparred with the bitch - Ch Gavimir Vervet who was a little tiger. All this excitement seemed to lift Buster to a special high as we set foot in the ring for the DCC Challenge. Nighthawk was there too, having won Open and you could have heard a pin drop. Buster pulled out all the stops and was handed the ticket. The applause was deafening and I know it was sincere. The only person not in tears was dear old Buster himself. At 10½ years old he had unwittingly broken the record his father had held and I will never forget the feeling I had that day. I must confess I was still dazed when we were handed BIS. I showed Buster a few more times after that, but always in Veteran. The very last show he did was the N of E Ch Show in 1987. He was 13 years old and he won his class again.



Ch Ledwell Lysander was special, never to be replaced. On 21 Jan 1990, Buster left me; I still cry now when I think about it. I loved him very much and I know that he loved me. To this day I think myself so lucky to be chosen to have him by Sylvia. He changed my life completely.



Pedigree of Ch Ledwell Lysander

Champion Ledwell Lysander

14 October 1974 ~ 21 January 1990

Owned by Jean Sharp-Bale

Bred by Sylvia Scroggs



26 Challenge Certificates

S.K.C. (Aug.)	1975	Mrs. C Sutton
Bournemouth	1975	Mr. G Leatt
B.U.B A.(BIS)	1975	Mr. W Foster
Richmond	1975	Mrs. D Pardon
Manchester	1976	Mr. P Whittaker
WEL.K.S.	1976	Mrs. C Muschamp
S.K.C. (May)	1976	Mr. W Bradshaw
East of England	1976	Mrs. G Broadley
Manchester	1977	Mr. A. Shaw
WE.L.K.S.	1977	Mr J Cartledge
Windsor	1977	Mrs. H Warner-Hill
NoEKC	1977	Mr. O Grindey
Manchester	1978	Mr. B Thomas
W.E.L.K.S.	1978	Mrs. M Smyth
Bath	1978	Mrs. 1 Parsons
Birmingham (Nat)	1978	Mrs. M Emerson
S.C.C.A.	1978	Judge John Hopkin
S.K.C. (May)	1978	Mrs. K Hill
Windsor	1978	Mr. A Westlake
East of England	1978	Mr. R James
Leicester	1978	Mrs. M Howard
S.K.C. (May)	1979	Mr. R Parkes
Leeds	1980	Mr. W Appleton
Leicester	1980	Mr. H Glover
Windsor (BIS)	1981	Mr. K Bullock
Keeshond Club	1985	Mr. K Bullock