

Fifty years on Timber Wood catches up with Bob Ling



Timber Woods writes:

I decided that I must try and get to see Bob Ling as I have had a document for ages that I wanted him to sign.



Former Surrey Chief Constable, Sir Peter Matthews, with Mountbrowne Doron

On the 21st September 1963, (fifty years ago), I competed for the first time in Kennel Club Dog Trials with my young 15 month old police dog, Mountbrowne Doron in the CD, (Companion Dog), and UD, (Utility Dog) stakes. Bob was judging the CD stake and an old friend of Bob's, a Sergeant from Essex called Dan Hare, was judging the UD stake.

Having qualified in both competitions at the prize giving I was awarded my certificates, Dan had signed his certificate for me but for some reason Bob forgot to sign his certificate for me. I came 4th in CD but because Bob had forgotten to sign the certificate I thought it might 'tickle' him to sign it 50 years late!

Now 86 years young, Bob joined the RAF at seventeen and a half and had just completed his training in Bomber Command when the war ended so never flew 'in anger' unlike Sir Peter Matthews who did see action in Bomber Command during World War Two.

Bob has been poorly but I managed to get over to see him on the 9th May and found him in good spirits. Almost 50 years late I produced the documents for him to sign. The following is a photo of the event.



Bob Ling with Stan Wood overseeing the signing of the historic certificates



Bob Ling – 1950's with his Doberman bitch, Mountbrowne Karin; she was the first ever Doberman Bitch to be made a Working Trials Champion.

Stan Wood remembers - Bob Ling 1959 to 1966

On Harry Darbyshire's retirement in 1959, Bob Ling was promoted to Sergeant in charge of the Dog Section. Among the handlers at the time were Bill Redwood, Fred Booker, George Wraight, Len Truss, Geoff Bloomfield, Peter Morley, Bob Twentyman and Jock Duff. There was also an Alan Osment, who at sometime in the early 60's was promoted to sergeant, for normal section duties at Buckland but kept his police dog. Alan retired in the middle 60's, a keen Labrador man he went to live in Four Marks and to my knowledge nothing more was heard of him.

Elementary and Advanced courses continued to be the only courses on offer and these were run by Bob Ling and his assistant George Wraight.

The Dog Section in 1962 had the following handlers:

- P. S. Bob Ling (Section and Training)
- P. S. Alan Osment (Buckland Section Sgt and dog handler)
- P. C. George Wraight (HQ and Assistant Trainer)
- P. C. Bill Redwood Farnham.
- P. C. Fred Booker Godalming

P. C. Peter Morley Guildford
P. C's Chris Proctor and Geoff Bloomfield Woking
P. Cs Roy Cartwright and Jock Duff Weybridge
P. C. Len Truss Reigate
P. C. Ken Curnow Dorking

In 1965 Bob Ling undertook a secondment for one year to the then named British Guiana. George Wraight took over training as Acting Sergeant. This continued up to August 1966 when George transferred to Thames Valley. This was a huge loss to the section as George Wraight was a top class instructor.

In the meantime Bob Ling had returned to the UK but did not return to Surrey as he had resigned and went into private dog breeding and training. This was another great loss as now two instructors who had trained under Harry Darbyshire had left the Force.

From Fred Booker's memoirs –

Following Darby's departure Sgt. Ling took charge of all training and he became our first member to take his place on the Training Sub Committee of the Home Office Standing Advisory Committee on Police Dogs when it was formed. He sat with similar chief training officers from other police forces that had training schools and methods used began to standardise and improve. One of the many subjects that came up during his time on the committee was hard surface tracking. The Metropolitan Police representative had said that their dogs could do it but others had replied that it was only occasionally possible. Sgt. Ling's suggestion was, "show us". They did and the dog failed to convince the spectators. I was told that the track was laid on a street scene and the dog seemed to be following wind born scent that was bouncing between buildings. His nose was not down.

Soon afterwards, one training day, we had a go. We needed a wide area of concrete or tarmac, away from grass: the tracklayer was to scuff with his feet a little and the dog was set to work almost immediately. Once the dog realised that there was something to follow and it led to a prize we began to succeed. The handler who perfected it in Surrey was Sgt. Yeourt. His dog worked slowly and methodically. The distance that he could follow the trail with the concentration necessary before his nose lost it was the only problem; about 50 yards. Weather conditions could change everything and we concentrated on short distances up to 30 minutes old at that time. In this way we began to improve our training and methods.