

Dexter's diary



ABOUT ANNA

Dog and cat lover Anna Webb is the co-presenter of BBC London's 'The Barking Hour'. She lives in London with Dexter, Miniature Bull Terrier, Prudence, and cat, Gremlin. Find out more at www.annawebb.co.uk

You can't hurry love

This month Anna Webb introduces Dexter, her very special English Toy Terrier.

I first saw an English Toy Terrier about 10 years ago when Molly — my late Mini Bull Terrier — and I visited Windsor Championship Dog Show.

I did a double take as a bevy of black and tan beauties caught my eye. Striding out and trotting like little ponies, the dogs cut an elegant, yet muscular, profile with sensational, pointy ears. There was something a bit Bull Terrier about them; almost a 'mini-me' version of the breed.

This is perhaps unsurprising, as I discovered that the ETT is distantly related to the Mini Bull. It seems they both descended from the great melting pot of terrier genes that shaped many breeds in the Victorian era. In those days the ETT was heralded as the 'king of ratters' and known as the Black and Tan Terrier.

How fashions change. The ETT

hasn't been on trend for many years; the breed is now considered to be rarer than the giant panda and is on the Kennel Club's vulnerable native breeds list.

When Molly started to go deaf, and show signs of being 12 years old, I decided to take the plunge and rehome two-year-old Dexter. I hoped that this young dog would inject life into Molly.

LACKING CONFIDENCE

From the beginning I knew Dexter was 'special'. To start with, he only has one hip, due to a degenerative condition called Legg-Calvé-Perthes disease. I'm sure Dexter's lack of confidence was related to the fact that he only has one hip. I think it made him feel a bit compromised, especially when meeting new dogs who persistently sniffed his left hip. This made Dexter



Meeting Tom Chaplin.

super-sensitive and timid about how the world and other dogs perceived him. I could tell he wanted to express himself, but it was like he was 'stuck'. I realised that, until he settled in, there was no point in trying to train Dexter; I didn't want to overwhelm him.

He was, however, extraordinarily intuitive and extremely bright in a telepathic kind of way. For example, I only had to think about taking him for a walk, and he was ready to go out. Conversely, if I changed my mind and decided to delay a walk, he would know, and scurry back to his bed, even though I had not said a word!

Dexter's diary was busy, as he joined Molly for acupuncture and physiotherapy sessions. He began to get to grips with weekly commitments like travelling on the train to London for 'The Barking Hour' on BBC Radio London.

He loved going out, but also seemed agoraphobic. People joked that he should be called Elvis because he had the shakes; others thought he was a girl, because he was so small.

TEAM SPIRIT

Trotting along weightlessly beside me, Dexter absorbed every remark, and observed every detail, like a little, wise man. He made no judgements and was too timid to express his own personality.

During Dexter's first six months I learned that the path of true love is never smooth. But then he suddenly found his vocation as 'bell-boy' to deaf Molly, and began to develop some team spirit — his journey had begun! Who knew that three years later, Dexter would meet pop star Tom Chaplin and star in his Christmas video for his song 'Midnight Mass'. As the saying goes: 'You can't hurry love!'

Dexter was a great companion for Molly.

