

Airedale Agricultural Society

25th July 2015

Bingley Exemption Show

Last year (2014) when the Gwynedd show was sadly cancelled I looked at the show calendar to see if there were any other shows in July within travelling distance that still happened to be open and found one, the exemption show at Bingley. Now, I had always said I would never do this show as I didn't believe in cat shows in tents, but thought, well, Carol, if you've never tried it, you can't knock it. So I bit the bullet and entered. And had a fabulous time despite the pouring rain that lasted all day. So much so that I just had to go again. Once again I had a wonderful time and this year the weather was wonderful too! Just like last year the atmosphere was amazing and the freebies and prizes were outstanding, in fact the BIS prizes would not all fit on top of the pens! A HUGE thank you to Chris Bamford, Susan Thorpe, Elizabeth Evans and everyone else on the organisational side of things who made the day run so smoothly and who all did it with a smile. I do not regret for one minute forgoing some potentially decent judges for our lot (and a LONG trip) at another show to go to this one. And I'd do it again.

Thanks to the gorgeous weather I had plenty of time during judging to get to see far more of the main show than I did last year when the weather was awful, and it is brilliant that the cat show entry includes full access to the main show so plenty to do and see during judging – show jumping, cattle, poultry, cavies, rabbits, vintage cars, craft tents, dog show, sheep, goats etc etc. There is also plenty of free parking within a very short walk of the cat tent and I'd recommend anyone to give it a go. A lot of people (me included before I tried it), are concerned about the safety aspect and, yes, if a cat DID get loose and get out of the tent then obviously it is wide open out there and not enclosed as a leisure centre hall is BUT the safety of the cats is paramount and the tent flaps are securely closed during judging when NO ONE is allowed in or out, only the judges and officials remain in the tent. Everyone is extra vigilant and exhibitors are sensible and that is all that is needed, in fact one "Bingley virgin" did remark afterwards that they had been concerned initially, as we all were for our first time, but that at no time during the show did they feel their cat was at risk of escaping. The heat aspect is another concern I have heard expressed but in all honesty, despite the very warm day, the tent did not get unduly hot (in fact nowhere near as hot as one or two notable July/August show halls have often been) and the use of cool pads and fans kept things to a sensible level plus, later on, the tent sides were opened a bit to allow extra air in, again, obviously, everyone was very careful if they took their cat out of the pen, and there were no problems at all.

All the main winners were totally amazing so no one had any complaints there, everyone had a fabulous friendly and happy day with friends and strangers alike, came home with loads of freebies, lovely rosettes, trophies and prize money (for every class!), plus an enormous amount of prizes for the 5 BOV winners and the atmosphere was one of happy camaraderie and genuine congratulations for the winners, no one seemed upset if they didn't win a major prize, everyone was obviously there to have a great day out and they did, so what's not to like. The visiting public were numerous, asking all sorts of questions, our Selkirks especially seemed to generate a lot of interest, I think most people had never seen such unusual, to them, looking cats, and one person even asked what an Exemption show meant and listened intently (or should that be "in tent ly" lol) when I explained and was genuinely interested. So many people were keen to get photos of Joshy in particular that, as there was space at the end of the rows of pens, and as I had hand gel with me, and as Joshy, as we all know, will just sit on a table virtually in front of the tent opening and just lie or sit there and gaze out, I took him out to the end section at intervals and let people get

photos and stroke him - their faces were just reward. Again, this is not frowned on, and I am not the first to do it, it helps to generate even more interest and good feeling from the visitors, who are so happy to be able to stroke a cat, and of course no one would ever do it with a cat they felt would not be completely calm and placid.

A lovely touch at the beginning of the show was the presentation of a memorial keepsake to show manager Chris Bamford by president, Harvey Smith, on behalf of the Bingley show committee, in recognition of her long service to the cat section of the show, sadly Chris is now handing over the show management reins but I am sure her successor will continue in the tradition and that once again we will all feel that "Bingley Buzz" (thanks Heather Bradley for the phrase). I am already looking forward to next year, so anyone who has never been, why not consider it, who knows, you just might have a wonderful time amongst a host of friendly faces with no "must win this certificate pressure" !

Carol Walker