

kites and picnicking with gliders overhead, but then of course I had to get him back into the trailer. This was a repeat of the pantomime watched on the outward journey, just a different audience. Diplomatic became a more than competent trailing hound but unfortunately never competed at trials. We contented ourselves by hunting family and friends; it was just too much trouble getting to trials.

Keith Long

TRAINING BLOODHOUNDS THE OTHER WAY

My friend, Bri Cappello, trains her bloodhounds with the Swiss National Bloodhound Association for Mantrailing. She suggested that we make an expedition together to a high-powered tracking seminar in Italy arranged by the Italian Search and Rescue Group. (I think mainly because the accommodation had been arranged in a 5-star hotel on the beautiful Lake Maggiore, rather than the usual Army Barracks!)

It was most interesting as their tracking was different from the way we expect our hounds to do in Britain. For instance Vivienne, Bri's young hound, approximately 2½ years old was tracking 15 hours cold on cobbled streets in the middle of the town!



Three trainers from the States, one from England and some Continental ones were instructing, and about 30 hounds from Search and Rescue, the Police and the Fire Service from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and France were taking part divided into two main groups going to different venues each morning and afternoon either town, country, village or lake.

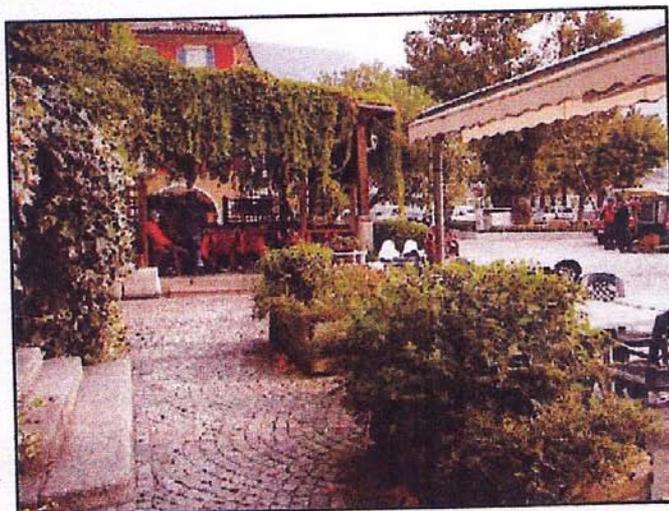
Although we had several experienced hounds in our group, I concentrated on following the

progress of the three 5-7 month old puppies who had all been imported from the States. Interestingly enough, neither the Search and Rescue nor the Police will buy from Britain as we don't do all the health checks.

At the start of the week all three puppies were very raw and had only tracked short lines with a large smeller laid on the ground and watching the runner walk away just out of sight. By the end of the week, they were all tracking approximately one-mile lines on grass and footpaths with 90 degree turns and 1½ hours cold, or 200 yds, up narrow streets without seeing the runner start and using the regulation plastic bag with the scent article inside.

The ritual of the harness and identification was very important. The runners, all volunteers from the local search and rescue teams, left up to 5 scent articles sealed in individual bags before setting off to walk their

lines. The first hound would be brought up to the bag lying on the ground, harness put on and the bag would be opened and put right over the hound's nose for a few seconds. The hound was then laid on and never seemed to be allowed to cast around but just set off straight ahead quite fast. The trainer, Bri, the interpreter, me and anyone else who wanted to would follow very closely to the working hound. In the town, each doorway and alley was inspected and when the hound found the runner we all said 'Bravo' and clapped when the



A civilised place for identifications

hound identified the correct person by jumping up (like we do) whereupon it was given a reward of a squeeze from a tube of pâté. Once, the runner finished his line sitting in a cafe, and another time we all trooped into a church where the runner was hiding in the confessional behind the altar!

When we were in the woods, you occasionally heard great shouts of 'bravo' or even 'bravissimo' or the equivalent in other languages coming from behind distant trees.

The strange thing to my mind was when the first hound finished his line, leaving the runner behind, we all trooped back *down the line* to the start where the second hound started in the same place - same runner but a new smeller. Then the third and so on until the last hound was having to track the original runner through multiple other tracks. They were still expected to identify the right person.

Normal identification training was practised as well as 'blind' identification where the hound was given a smeller (the ritual again of the harness, smeller, etc.) taken to a group of people but the owner of the smeller was not there. Woe betide an handler whose hound identified the wrong person. They were mercilessly teased. Other exercises were done, three runners walking together and splitting up half-way down the line with the hound finding the right runner.



One lovely morning was spent by the lake - again the ritual of the harness and smeller was adhered to -and the hounds had to jump into the lake and swim out to identify a scary diver emerging from the deep. The handlers had to go into the water too; Some hounds enjoyed this, some didn't. Again when the hound identified the diver it got a squeeze of pâté reward.

The participants believed in the good life during training. There was an espresso machine in the back of one of the vans and each morning someone brought biscuits, grappa, wine, schnapps with cheese, pancetta and bread, and we all had 'elevenses' sitting in the sun; to say nothing of a three-course lunch and dinner back at the hotel.

The last afternoon we were there we stopped early waiting for *Il Presidente* who was coming to inspect us. He was a very important person being the President of all the Search and Rescue Groups in the whole of Italy. He was late, so one of our handlers had to race off in his car to find him as he had got lost!

All in all it was a most enjoyable week, and although I didn't walk any lines, I was allowed to be a 'diversion', either sitting or standing near the runner and the hounds had to ignore me. All the hounds present passed their Mantrailing Tests on the last day, with the exception of the 3 youngsters who were not advanced enough.

Strangely, the one English Trainer, David Claridge, was a retired London Police Dog Handler for 30 years but had been training bloodhounds for a number of years. He was very interested in our breed and bitterly regretted not getting his hands on Marksbury Logical after the Hampshire Police had parted with him. He also told me that in 2001 the London Police were all set to be equipped with Bloodhounds, but 9/11 occurred and they were issued with bomb dogs instead, in case of a similar terrorist attack.

Elin Richards