

CFBA behaviourist of the year 2014 Competition



If there were two things I was destined to do,
one of them is teach and the other one is to help people.

When I met my partner Charles in 1994, our mutual love of dogs led us to co found A1K9 Behaviour and Training Academy that is based just outside Swansea in South Wales; there we trained dogs to the highest standards, establishing an international reputation for excellence that led us to provide trained dogs for clients worldwide.

Working with dogs of different aptitudes, different energy and different social skills led to people ask me for help with difficult dogs and dogs that have critical behavioural problems, problems such as dog on dog aggression and dog on people aggression; it did not take long for there to be dogs coming from all over the country. I love the process of getting the feel for the dogs and finding out what would help this dog, what would it take to make this dog better at life

Over the years I have seen a huge rise in the popularity of dog training and behaviourism, brought about, I think by the increased coverage by the media. This led to many more training classes and so called behaviourists, so called as there is no legislation for trainers or behaviourists to have any form of education or experience and I have even met a behaviourist who gained a qualification on line and had no experience with dogs in any way!

This led me to think that I needed to have my work verified in some way, otherwise a client looking for a behaviourist, could think that the person that had never worked with dogs but had gained certification through the internet would be a more suitable choice.

I had known of the Canine and Feline Behavioural Association for many years and had met Colin Tennant and Ross McCarthy and had worked with Sue and Derrick Williams.

When I met them again after I had been accepted by the CFBA, I saw how far they had come in their career and I was impressed, but it was a conversation with Colin Tennant this year that made me realise that this could be a life changing step for me. He told me that after all these years of experience working with dogs with behavioural problems; I am a behaviourist that does dog training not a dog trainer that does behaviourism.

*This caused me to rethink not only the way I view myself
but also the way that I portray myself and what I do.*

I rewrote my web site and my business face book and the work came in, including my first vet referral cases.

One of the cases that stand out this year is Becky Lepoule from Bristol. These clients demonstrated such dedication and love to their beloved pet and I was impressed that they were prepared to travel such a long distance and put all their trust in me to help them. The result has been amazing.

Becky Lepule and her partner Richard's perspective on Rottweiler Kaiser.

As a puppy we took Kaiser to socialisation classes that were held in a scout hut. All socialising was done on lead and often it would get very full and the atmosphere could get very chaotic.

From there we moved on to a six week Bronze obedience course and after two courses tried the bronze test. The day of the test the scout hut was hectic and disorganised and Kaiser seemed to pick up on this and although he passed his bronze test his behaviour in between each section was awful as he pulled and lunged at other dogs.

His training seemed to go backward from this point and his behaviour became more challenging and stressful I to cope with.

A change in my partners shift pattern caused us to research dog walkers, we found one that had numerous qualifications in training and behaviour therapy and took a more holistic approach to dog training. After the first group walk she said that because of his bullying behaviour he could not go on group walks and advised a one to one session. She came to our house and drew a graph that showed how Kaiser's stress levels would rise at certain times she told us that dogs do not have pack leaders and like humans it was the parents that look after the young rather than the pack leader taking charge.

While she was there Kaiser started obsessing over her, she ignored him, we put him on a lead and told him not to do it, and she said not to give him the attention. Kaiser started bite and fight the lead, eventually we let him off lead and tried to distract him but he just started pestering her again so she left but advised us to walk him on a long line to give him more freedom to do more doggy things.

Kaiser enjoyed walking on the 30ft line, however as the days progressed he started pulling more and more, then jumping up and biting the lead working his way up closer to our hands. We put him back on a shorter lead, but the same happened and he was becoming aggressive. When we asked her

advice she recommended shorter walks, we tried tying him to a bench and waiting for him to calm down, but as soon as we untied him to walk he would start again.

At Christmas time we were visiting my family and we took Kaiser for a walk, he attacked me so badly that I was covered in mud, and ended up in tears. We videoed the behaviour and sent it to the trainer and she texted me to say that she would need to send the footage to her teacher/ professor to get advice.

[View video of Kaisers behavioural problem.](#)

After this we decided that her methods had in fact made Kaiser much worse and it was time to look for an alternative. Richards's brother from Northampton suggested that we should come and see Gaynor at A1K9, as he had been to her with his Rottweiler and she had worked wonders.

The Consultation

Kaiser's story is typical of how dog owners are given bad advice that continues as the dog goes through the different stages of life. Starting with the overcrowded, chaotic atmosphere with no off lead socialisation in puppy classes through to when the dog had become a bolshie out of control adolescent. At no point had anyone showed or told Becky how to gain the dogs respect and get him under control. The common mantra had been, ignore the bad behaviour

When Becky and Richard came to me they were highly stressed by Kaiser's behaviour and they told me all about their previous training methods and the nightmare they were currently facing

As I spoke to them I could see the relief on their faces as I explained that at 13 months Kaiser was an adolescent, that needed guidelines and rules and this was a good age to be teaching him as he would be eager to learn new things and be influenced by them. After our two hour consultation I could see that Richard had understood and learned the techniques but I did have doubts about Becky's capabilities, I asked them to work as a team and help each other and to keep in touch, particularly if they were struggling to keep to the behaviour rehabilitation programme

Things didn't go to plan and Kaiser became more dominant and tried to control them both and was acting aggressively toward other dogs and pulling toward children. By now Kaisers behaviour was affecting their relationship they argued about his behaviour and his training, they wanted to start a family but they knew that they could not have a dog with his behaviour around children. They got him neutered and he was still the same. They were close to giving up on him but the chances of rehoming him were slim and they could not bear the thought of putting him down.



They asked me if Kaiser could come into our 4 week residential obedience training course but I explained that this may resolve the issues in a controlled environment but when they took him home he could revert if they did not learn to control him and have the confidence to be his owners.

They came to see me again and this time I concentrated on Becky and changed a few

techniques, once I felt that she had mastered them I took them to the local town shopping centre where we walked around all sorts of distractions. I had arranged for two of the A1K9 team to be there with dogs to test Becks handling skills and she did really well and posed for a photo with the staff and their dogs.

Once home they continued on with Kaisers behaviour rehabilitation programme and they rang and told me that the transformation has been life changing for them all.

“Kaiser is more content and so much more obedient; he is a pleasure to have as our dog. Our relationship has improved one hundred percent, and we are looking forward to having children with Kaiser as our family dog.”



Becky and Richard now travel from Bristol to work with me every Sunday to attend the behaviour rehabilitation course, where Kaiser gets the opportunity to play with other dogs under my supervision, they have passed their Bronze with flying colours and are doing brilliantly in the Silver course.



It is a pleasure to see Kaiser race back to Becky, sit and look straight in her eyes.

This is what makes my work so enjoyable
seeing such a positive result.

Abigale Francis and her husband Roger with their German Shepherd Sable travelled from Devon for a behavioural consultation and to work through a rehabilitation programme.

Sable's Story

Sable was dumped at a shelter in Transylvania, Romania, by a janitor who said "she was useless" and he didn't want her any more. She had recently had puppies and was severely underweight. The shelter vet estimated her age at 6 or 7 years old.

This shelter tries to get the dogs out of Romania before they are killed so they got in touch with Jane Shenstone from German Shepherd Recue in Britain but unfortunately there was no spare space for them to take Sable.

When no one came forward to help, Roger and Abi decided to pay for Sable's medical costs and transport to the UK and offered a foster space with them.

This allowed TORA the rescue shelter in Romania to get her released to them for the month it would take to prepare her for transport to the UK.

The idea was she would only be with them for a short while for assessment and they would find a good home for her as they have done in the past with other dogs from the same shelter.

Sadly they turned down several home offers as not being suitable.

After a few months Roger decided Sable had to stay with them as he had fallen for her and they were prepared to start putting in the time to work on her issues that were mainly dog aggression related .

When Abi contacted me through E mail, she was quite clear in her requirements.

"Dear Gaynor,

I look forward to meeting you on Tuesday 3rd of June at 2pm with a follow up meet at 12noon on Wednesday 4th June 2014

As I said on the phone, I am consulting you as specialists who are top of their game because I don't know of anyone local who has the same credentials as you, or access to dogs that can be used for her assessment with the calibre of yours.

Hopes for our visit:-

To ascertain if she can be helped to become a dog-friendly social dog.

To teach me the best possible methods to control Sable while walking her and meeting other dogs.

To discuss ideas on introducing her to Max and Neuf our other dogs for a positive outcome.

To get an idea of her potential and/or limitations for the future. "

Abi and her husband Roger are both delightful and knowledgeable people who were a pleasure to work with, they were open minded and willing to try as many different methods that it would take to enable them to rehabilitate Sable and make her a better dog. They have travelled up from Devon twice and spent a total of eight hours with me.



From the outset of the consultation Sable was extremely dog aggressive and any dog that came into sight was greeted by a full on display off aggression, barking, growling showing teeth and lunging. Abigale was apprehensive and nervous and hung on tight to Sable who was wearing a harness.

On the first visit all the work we did was on lead was getting Sable to accept being around other dogs and behaving in an acceptable manner, at the end of the 4 hours that was split into two days Sable was well behaved and obedient the on lead and in good control around other dogs.

During the second visit we worked on Sables off lead behaviour around other dogs, she made very good progress during her time with me, provided she was supervised, she could be let off lead and she would not show any aggression or bullying behaviour.



Email from Abigale Francis.

“Sable and I have gained so much from our behavioural consultation with Gaynor at A1K9 Behaviour and Training Academy.

The combined expertise of Gaynor the A1K9 trainers with their dogs is amazing. The calibre of assessment along with the quality training and rehabilitation programme, has made such a difference to Sable. She is a stubborn and single minded little madam (rescued GSD). Getting her back into condition, gaining her trust and assessing her character was our first priority, followed by seeking expert help when we discovered she wasn't 'dog friendly'

Working with the lovely (and patient) Gaynor was a joy and the huge added bonus was having A1K9 handlers and their wonderful dogs working with us too, it really helped Sable being close to well-balanced dogs in a controlled environment

Lots of work now to build upon the strong foundations that are in place to help Sable be the best she can be. Already she walks beautifully to heel, and a small correction limits her reaction to other dogs and joggers long before she reaches the stage where she becomes a problem.

We stayed overnight at the local Travel Lodge (J47 M4) it has a forest behind that is ideal for walking dogs which was great. We will be returning later in the summer for a refresher as it was defiantly worth the long journey and anyone thinking about booking a consultation with Gaynor, should 'go for it'

Thank you Gaynor and everyone at A1K9 for making us feel so at home and comfortable. I am happy, happy, happy.

Abigale Francis.”

Testimonials

Monica Baglolo The difference in Otto after one hour with Gaynor Probert was amazing. She taught 'US' as owners to understand the problem and therefore help Otto to enjoy walkies without the stress and anxiety. It is now pleasurable to walk him. Also after 30 minutes socialising class with Gaynor Otto was running and playing with all breeds of dogs. He has achieved the personality of a Cavalier and it's all thanks to Gaynor.



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After trying many other dog trainers that I found ineffective, I still had terrible problems walking my dog, mainly because I could not stop her barking at other dogs.

I took my 10 month old German shepherd dog called Star to have a behavioural consultation with Gaynor Probert at A1K9 Behaviour and Training Academy, I am very pleased to say, that I am delighted with the outcome, no more barking whilst out walking.

Thanks to Gaynor I now have a dog that is a pleasure to walk.

I am looking forward to starting a silver class with Star as the facilities at A1K9 are great and the advice I was given was easy to follow and well explained.

I would highly recommend a visit to Gaynor.

With many thanks Helen



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Dear Gaynor,

After our behaviour consultation with you and our dog Merlin on Friday every meal time has been a joy and we haven't had any growling or feeling like we might lose a finger in the process! An absolute milestone for our 9 month old dog. We have been able to take his food away mid munch without even a little growl. We've been trying for ages to get to grips with this and after a session with you we have some piece in our house at meal times.

Thank you for giving us the tools to make Merlin a happy chappy, knowing where he sits in the pack. Keeping us all happy!

Fran, Mike and Merlin



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Interview at Radio Tircoed.

It was a 20 minute interview about me and my canine behaviour work here at A1K9 Behaviour and Training Academy.

We spoke about the dangerous dog act and how it is just not working plus, how I thought that micro-chipping all dogs is definitely a step in the right direction, this way at least we know who the dog belongs to, making those owners responsible for what their dog does and how it acts could make owners rethink how they bring their dog up.

Educating people how to understand their dogs and how to train and condition them to live in a family is key to getting better behaved well balanced dogs.



Gaynor Probert on S4C - A very serious face for a serious subject.

After a tragic dog related death of a baby in Pontyberam I was asked for my opinion on why these horrific incidents occur.

How the relationship between dog and owner can go wrong and how getting help from a professional behaviourist can prevent these serious problems from occurring and give owners a better understanding of their dogs.



