

three years. It was a case of waiting until Sunday evening's best in show competition. With a second appearance in the Crufts main ring, Gavin says he felt much more relaxed this time around, his main concern being that Jilly got her tail up on the move.

She did and Geoff Corish could find nothing to lower her colours and she was crowned Crufts best in show and retired from the show ring after winning 28 CCs (equalling the breed record with her dam), 24 groups, five RBIS and eight all-breed BIS in the UK plus her Amsterdam victory.

Gavin, Sara and Wendy were then whisked off for the Kennel Club after show party and then continued over at the Metropole Hotel, finally getting into bed at 4am. Gavin was up two hours later to be interviewed for Radio 5 Live.

They received numerous requests for media appearances, among them *The Alan Titchmarsh Show* and *Comic Relief* where Oliver and Erin could be seen alongside the formidable Keddell Memorial Trophy. It certainly was a 'good' media story for the press – young family with crowd-pleasing dog wins world's largest dog show.

Press calls were turned down from sources which might not be intent on portraying the sport in a negative light.

It was during the *Comic Relief* appearance alongside Miranda Hart and Clare Balding that Gavin spoke to Clare about what was at this point a modest fundraising exercise. "During all the interviews I did, I thought it would be a good idea to turn Jilly's win into something positive for pedigree dogs," he says. Clare was supportive and this ignited what was to be known as 'Jilly's Jolly Jaunt'.

A sponsored walk from Birmingham to London seemed logical, from the scene of Jilly's victory down to the Kennel Club's headquarters. They spoke to Tibetan Spaniel exhibitors and near neighbours Liz Scoates and Heather Simper who suggested the Grand Union Canal as the route and with meticulous planning over no more than six weeks from conception to the start line the 140-mile journey began over five days.

There was no shortage of volunteers to take part and raise money on the jaunt. As well as a fundraiser it was a public relations exercise. All the high profile and vulnerable breeds were represented at some point, the other Crufts group winners who competed alongside Jilly, and 18 owners of previous Crufts BIS winners. KC chairman Steve Dean did a stint, as did Clare Balding and her Tibetan Terrier and Stuart Baillie, Simon Parsons and myself from DOG WORLD, everyone completing four or five four-mile segments, some opting to walk further.

Amelia Siddle who had won the Young Kennel Club stakes with her Pointer **Sh Ch Wilchrimane Ice Maiden** accompanied Gavin with 'Flo' and Paul Sparks who co-owns some of the Soletreader PBGVs acted as driver and co-ordinated the various segments of the walk.

The total money raised was £49,000 from sponsor money and donations from individuals and companies involved in dog showing which was split between Great Ormond Street Hospital (£29,400), DogLost (£17,150) and the KC Charitable Trust (£2,450). The 'idea' had snowballed!

As Gavin says, "it brought the dog world together for a week." By the end of the week, it was estimated, 248,348 steps had been taken, 584 miles were walked by the dogs, 17,917 calories burnt, 11 blisters treated and six dogs found themselves in the Grand Union Canal!

Talking to DOG WORLD just after the jaunt he said: "Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined how big and successful Jilly's Jaunt would become. I'm the proudest person in dogs today, and so should everyone else be who contributed in some way."

Not wanting the momentum to wane and on the back of the success of the jaunt, it was decided to form the Peek A Boo Trust which will have a remit of organising future fundraising ventures involving future Crufts best in show winners in some way or other high profile dogs to raise money for canine and children's charities. Gavin is keen to emphasise that there is no pressure for future winners to attempt activities on a scale as large as the jaunt if they don't wish to.

The trust's official launch coincides with the Pawscars on the evening before Crufts, March 5. This event, as the name suggests, is the canine world's equivalent of the Oscars – an awards ceremony to honour those deserving of recognition throughout the sport. Gavin hopes it will "aim to raise the bar" in all nominated 'of the year' categories – judge, championship show, open show, training class, exhibitor, steward, breed note writer, journalist, trade stand, photographer, junior handler and breeder, with an unsung hero and outstanding achievement award also presented.

With over 400 people attending this black tie affair it looks set to become an annual celebration of all that is good in the world of pedigree dogs.

But back to the dog whose name the trust bears. Following the jaunt Jilly was mated to two different dogs not long after the KC allowed puppies to be registered from dual matings without the need for advance permission. She was mated to an unshown dog the Robertsons have, **Gaelmarque Bon Ventura with Soletreader**, and the well-known **Ch Soletreader Dunc N Disorderly** who was runner-up top stud dog overall one year.

'Duncan' has not proven a dominant sire and the Robertsons hoped he would 'cement' Jilly's many attributes and 'Ace' has also fathered numerous champions.

There is an amusing story that accompanies Duncan. The Robertsons were looking to rehome him locally but still to be able to use him at stud. They received a phone enquiry about him and invited the lady to visit the kennels and meet Duncan. When the arranged meeting time came a group of nuns in their habits turned up asking to see Duncan!



Two influential PBGVs – Mike Gadsby and Ch/Am Ch Afterglow Woody Woodpecker and Gavin with Ch Willowbrae Amazing Grace with Afterglow (Jilly's granddam), seen doing the double at Blackpool 2001.

Gavin was nervous of approaching the subject of stud work with the Sisters who are very forward thinking (Duncan actually has his own Twitter feed @BroDuncanPBGV). Even they joke that he is the only one in their house who has sex!

Jilly produced a dog and a bitch and DNA tests have shown that Duncan is the father of both puppies.

It was a quick turnaround to get Jilly back in condition after motherhood to compete at the Eukanuba World Challenge where the Crufts winner gets an automatic qualification. The event is held alongside the American Kennel Club/Eukanuba National Challenge where Jilly won BOB and hound group 3 under Frank Sabella, as well as a breed specialty BIS.

In the World Challenge she was drawn in Peter Green's group for judging. He had given her a BIS in the UK to add to her tally and chose her as one of his three to go forward to the final. Also going through from another group was Jilly's grandfather **Ch/Am/Can/Dutch Ch Soletreader Bjorn Borg** with Gwen Huikeshoven representing the Netherlands. Quite an achievement for two dogs bred in the same kennel to make the final 12.

Looking to the future, 2014 will see some new young stock coming out, including Jilly's daughter. Sara concentrates on the Basset Fauve de Bretagne, in which Soletreader has made a mark. Indeed the Crufts BOB last year was co-owned by Sara so they had two BOB winners in the group ring.

An imported Miniature Schnauzer bitch is arriving from Argentina and a promising Beagle puppy has seen Gavin return to his original breed.

So as the Jilly daughter **Soletreader Annie Mac** makes her way in the world she has a lot to live up to. Returning full circle, she is named after Anne Macdonald who, as well as awarding one of Jilly's BIS victories, went to school with Jill Peak, aka 'Peek A Boo'!

Sara winning BIS at Blackpool 2001 with Ch Jesena Chantilly Chick.



This painting was Jilly's prize for taking best in show at the Amsterdam Winner Show in 2011, also under Paolo Dondina.



Gavin, Jilly and Sara with children Erin and Oliver at a photo shoot before their Crufts victory.



Sara Robertson won the international junior handling final at Crufts 1991 handling former Crufts BIS winner, the English Setter Sh Ch Starlite Express of Valsett. They are seen with the previous year's winner, Sweden's Pernilla Wistad.

photo Dalton



There may have been more hair back then, but at least the dogs have improved somewhat! Gavin won best junior handler at the Hound Association of Scotland under Marjory McGregor, who today is show manager at Border Union. President Elsie Montgomerie, whose daughter Anne Macdonald is today's HAS chairman, presented the trophy.

photo Lindsay



Pictured handing over the cheque at Great Ormond Street Hospital – Sara, Gavin, Amelia Siddle and Stuart Baillie of DOG WORLD.



Gavin has a 'lucky lead' which has seen many of the kennel's dogs achieve success, including Jilly's Crufts best in show. At Three Counties 2011 this famous lead broke but fortunately Sharon McKenna of Essenjay Leather Supplies, seen with Gavin, Jilly and son Oliver, came to the rescue and repaired it.

photo Johnson



At the start of Jilly's Jolly Jaunt outside the NEC, Birmingham. Amelia Siddle and Gavin Robertson with Dianna Spavin, DOG WORLD's Adrian Marett, Melanie and Marion Spavin and Paul Sparks.

photo Kyprianou



Far left: Gavin and Jilly on the final leg of the jaunt, stopping by the Kennel Club in London and seen with the Keddell Memorial Trophy for Crufts best in show. Left: Gavin and Sara's children Oliver and Erin pose with the famous trophy just after their win.



Fellow walkers Tom Isherwood, Lee Cox, Phil Freer, Marita Rodgers and Frances Krall are pictured along the canal with Gavin and Amelia.

photo Kyprianou