

For the love a Beardie – Rory's Story by Ann Mackenzie

"Free to good home" the advert said in our local newspaper here on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles of Scotland. We had been thinking of finding a companion for our Border Collie called 'Dougie', but I never thought I would choose a Working Bearded Collie.

However, many pleas of "Can we have this dog" and "I have always wanted a dog like that" came from the family, so I relented and made the phone call. When I asked why the dog was being re-homed the reply was that the dog would not work and could not be kept on as a pet. The dog was a male named 'Rocky' and we arranged to go and see him. Of we set in the car, Dougie as well, full of anticipation.

When we arrived we were greeted with a lot of barking coming from a very unkempt Beardie and I thought to myself "What am I letting myself in for?" Rocky was dirty, smelly, matted and his coat had been roughly chopped but through all that I could see a nice dog. So home we came with our new Beardie.

Over the weekend after a bath and some serious grooming we introduced Rocky to home life and decided this 'would be' handsome fellow did not suite the name 'Rocky', so we renamed him 'Rory'. He was alarmed by many 'new noises' including the phone ringing, the washing machine and other 'sudden noises'. Everything had to be done gently. Gradually over the weekend Rory began to settle and trust and reward us with a great deal of affection.

We had noticed how thin Rory was under his long shaggy coat and his ribs were easily felt, so I decided I would have to take him to the vet for a check-up.

Unfortunately Rory took ill before our appointment and had to be taken for an emergency appointment. The vet was not sure of the cause of his problem but his abdomen was very swollen. She gave him injections and we had to return daily to the surgery for the rest of the week. Bloods were taken, yet the results gave no indication as to where the infection was.

Four weeks later Rory came off the antibiotics and appeared to be improving.

Another few weeks passed and Rory took ill again. This time he was a lot worse. We were on the point of taking Rory to a Veterinary Hospital on the mainland, which our local vet had arranged. Due to his weak condition and the prospect of the journey to the mainland the vet was apprehensive about moving him and feared she could do no more for him here.

Rory however was fighter with a brave heart and he turned the corner overnight and the mainland trip was postponed.

What a determined character this Beardie was! At times he was so weak he would collapse, yet still he would attempt to follow us.

Many times Rory had to be hand fed, as he could not reach his bowl. I spent many nights and hours nursing and comforting him. Improvement came and all the time, money and effort was worth it. It was great to see Rory well. We had 4 good months with Rory, going for walks and having loads of fun before he died suddenly one night in his sleep.

We were absolutely devastated as was Berta our vet. She did a post mortem. Rory had died of an embolism, which she believed broke away from an abscess on his spine.

We no longer had our 'Beardie' and how sad we all were. The house seemed so empty after losing this character who filled it with so much fun.

Rory was just 2 year old and we had him for 10 months. He had been in 3 other homes before ours and who knows what he went through. I believe he was happy with us and he certainly had a lot of love and attention from my husband, 3 teenagers and myself doting on him.

Dougie missed Rory and did not eat for 2 days.

I quickly realized that I would like to have another working bearded collie. (This coming from one that would have chosen a Beardie!) The family agreed, and so I began my – **'My Beardie Quest'**.

Little did I realize how difficult this was going to be. I spent hours on the computer, phoning rescue societies, re-homing centers and scouring newspapers. I had all my friends and some relatives inquiring for me.

'Show Beardies' were easier to find, but what I had was a 'Working Beardie' and that is what I wanted again. At times we were really disheartened. Promises had been made and broken and really I began to despair if I would ever find another Beardie.

Then someone gave me a contact number of a man in Wales. This was John Pickett and what a great contact this proved to be! John gave me support and encouragement, but most of all he gave me HOPE.

Whilst waiting for one of John's dogs to have pups, my mum spotted an advert for working beardies in a North of Scotland newspaper.

Although I really wanted one of John's dogs, I decided that I would inquire about these puppies as it would save so much traveling. I made the phone call and booked a male puppy. It really was a small world! It turned out that the pup's mother came from John Pickett!

My auntie, who lives near to where the puppies were went to see them on my behalf and picked one for me.

When the pup was old enough I traveled by ferry and bus across the Minch to the Scottish Mainland making my way to my aunt's house, where the owner of the puppies was going to meet me.

The owner arrived with my lovely new boy and also brought the pup's mother along with her for me to see. What a lovely dog she is! This was the first beardie I had seen since losing Rory.

I had to travel back home on the late ferry that night and I had to leave within an hour of receiving the puppy. Into his carrier he went and we travelled by bus to Ullapool only to be told that due to the stormy weather the ferry would not be sailing until the weather eased.

There I was stranded in Ullapool with a new puppy and having to spend our first night together sleeping on the ferry. I can hardly believe how well behaved this little fellow was. Of course he had plenty of attention from other travellers, he is rather cute!

The ferry sailed at 11.00 am the following morning and 3 hours later we arrived home to much excitement from the waiting family and of course, Dougie. At long last we had our Beardie and we decided to call him 'Dochas' pronounced 'dawchas' (the 'ch' as in loch) which is the Gaelic word for HOPE.

Dochas has been and is a pleasure. He is full of mischief and wants to be in on everything. There is never a dull moment with him. Dochas has been nicknamed 'The Designer' by my husband, as he has rearranged both the house and the garden!

Working Beardies make wonderful pets and give a great deal of love and affection. New owners must realize what they are taking on. They are first and foremost working dogs with a lot of intelligence and energy. They require a lot of exercise, and stimulation to keep them active and happy.

My family and I would find life and our home very strange now without a Beardie. This breed has made a big impact on all of us. I remember reading the following whilst on my Beardie Quest, and I can echo the sentiment – 'Once you have owned a Beardie, you will always have a Beardie'.



"Dougie"



"Rory"



"Dochas"