



The Pet Column

By Abbas Hussain of Principal Pets

Guide Dogs

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association was set up in 1931 by two women, Muriel Croke and Rosamund Bond. The two women decided that they wanted to help the victims of World War One who suffered sight loss, so they trained the first-ever guide dogs in a garage in Wallasey, Wirral. Now, 87 years later, the charity is the world's largest breeder and trainer of working dogs. They currently support over 5,000 working guide dogs within the UK.

The roles guide dogs play for people who have sight loss

The main role of the guide dog is to work with someone who has sight loss so they are able to get around freely and independently. This includes negotiating obstacles and hazards while they are out, such as roadworks, kerbs, roads and bins, etc. This also includes higher obstacles which might not affect the dogs themselves, but could affect the owner. The dogs also provide companionship and give people with sight loss a sense of confidence.

The training the dogs undertake

All of the training is positive and reward based. It starts from seven weeks of age when the puppies are placed with volunteers called 'puppy walkers'. The puppies live with the puppy walkers until they are about 14 months old. During this time the puppy learns basic commands that most dogs would use, while being introduced to different environments they may encounter as a guide dog. The puppy walker will take them into different shops and restaurants and on different modes of transport.

At 14 months old the puppy is taken to the local training centre to learn to walk in a straight line in a harness and avoid basic obstacles. As training advances they learn to avoid advanced obstacles and also operate buttons on traffic lights and lifts. They are taught to put their noses on the button at crossings so the person who can't see will be able to feel where the button is to press.

On completing the training at just under two years old, the dogs are matched with their new owners and then train with their new owners. They will work together until the dogs are nine or ten.

Guide dogs are discouraged from jumping up as this can be dangerous for their owners and is not good social behaviour. All guide dogs have playtime so they can be a 'normal' dog, but are not allowed to play with balls. This way, if they encounter ball games when walking in harness, they do not try to join in. The training treats they are given are usually from their normal food as they are on a controlled diet, although sometimes high reward treats are used for more complex training.

How are guide dogs for the blind funded?

Guide dogs for the blind rely on public and corporate donations to keep their life-changing work going. In 2016, for example, less than one per cent of the money received by the charity was from government funding. Every one of their guide dogs, from birth to retirement, costs over £56,000 and they have over 5,000 working dogs in the UK alone.

Want to know more?

To find more information about Guide Dogs and how to become a puppy walker, or even name a guide dog puppy, please visit www.guidedogs.org.uk



184 Telegraph Road, Heswall CH60 0AJ • Tel: 0151 342 9635
Email: info@principalpets.co.uk • Web: www.principalpets.co.uk



FREE BEER
1/3 pint of any Real Ale with this voucher.
Sunday - Thursday (Expires Oct 2018)

Introducing Heswall's first Micropub

We specialise in an everchanging selection of Real and Cask Beers on tap together with carefully selected canned and bottled beers.

THE BEER LAB

53 Telegraph Road, Heswall CH60 0AD

Email: thebeerlab01@gmail.com

Closed Monday • Tue, Wed, Thur 4pm-10pm • Friday 4pm-11pm
Sat 2pm - 11pm • Sunday 2pm - 8pm

The Beer Lab

Heswall's first micropub – The Beer Lab – is now open on Telegraph Road. Serving real and craft beers, which change weekly, this is a little treasure trove of good things to drink.

Housed in a former bike shop, owner Ryan has created a friendly pub where you can come and enjoy a pint or two of your favourite beers, or maybe find a new one to share with your friends.

A micropub, according to the Micropub Association, is defined as follows: "A micropub is a small free house which listens to its customers, mainly serves cask ales, promotes conversation, shuns all forms of electronic entertainment and dabbles in traditional pub snacks." This definitely describes The Beer Lab. It's a place to meet, relax, chat, and most importantly, try some really good beer!

The Beer Lab has an ever-changing selection of real ales – both traditional and radically new – sourced from around the country, Do you just always go for your favourite bewy? Try a one-third sized glass of something new to see if you like it. There's also a stock of 20 carefully selected bottled and canned beers, together with a selection of ciders, spirits, soft drinks, whiskies and wines. To accompany your drink, indulge in a delicious pork pie, lovingly baked right here on the Wirral or stick with peanuts – whatever you prefer.

Ryan's always on the lookout for new and interesting beers from around the globe to add to the taps and fridges. Check out the 'beer board' where you'll see what's on tap with a brief description to whet your appetite – or just ask Ryan to suggest something you might like.

Drop in to see what's on offer at The Beer Lab, 53 Telegraph Road, and see them on Facebook www.facebook.com/thebeerlabheswall