

EXMINSTER

FAMILY HISTORY

THE Westbank League of Friends' liaison with the Devon Family History Society has resulted in a family history day to be held at Exminster Community Centre on Friday, from 10am to 4pm. The cost is £10 for adults and £8 for pensioners and will include a buffet-style lunch.

SCILLY ISLES TALK

MIKE Perriam gave an illustrated talk on the Isles of Scilly at the March meeting of Exminster WI. His slides included island wildlife, gardens on Tresco and fields of daffodils. Photo of the month was won by Val Beer and flower of the month by Wendy Perham.

CANAL DREDGE

OVER the last two weeks the dredger Hannah, from Padstow, has been working on the Exeter Canal from the Turf Hotel to the M5 bridge and the sludge has been neatly ridged on the Topsham side of the canal.

WI SKITTLES EVENT

MEMBERS of the WIs from Cofton, Kenn, Kennford and Exminster enjoyed a skittles evening at the Seven Stars at Kennford. The overall winner was Ann Kevan, of Exminster.

AXMINSTER Contact Dennis Hoare on 01297 35726

# AND THIS LITTLE PIGGY BECAME A STAR

Not content with sorting out the behaviour of dogs, Sally Jones has moved on to training pigs and chickens. She spoke to ANITA SMITH



## Real lives

SALLY Jones claims it is possible to train any animal.

Using the same techniques she uses to train dogs, Sally has taught a chicken to get around an obstacle course and is now teaching tricks to a three-month-old spotted large white cross boar piglet called Jensen.

Jensen will be the star attraction at Crealy Adventure Park's *Animal Showtime*, and even Sally has been surprised by the results.

"He is more intelligent than any dog I've trained," said the 46-year-old animal trainer. "I didn't have

a clue what I could get him to do, so I've done some experimenting.

"I've got him to do silly things — walking towards a post and touching it and jumping over things — all for a reward of food.

"I love it. You can teach any animal to do something, as long as they're physically capable of doing it."

Sally's secret weapon is a 'clicker'. For many years she has been using it to transform dysfunctional dogs into perfect pets.

The qualified behaviour consultant from Payhembury explained: "A clicker is a small plastic box which makes a noise which signals a reward. It's important that the noise happens at the point where they're doing what you want them to. They learn that what they did made that click happen and that if they repeat it they will get food. You don't speak — it's off-putting — and you don't need to touch them."

Sally first tested the clicker on her own dogs, who have all, bar one, been a challenge. She had her first dog — a small, brown whippet cross called Florence — when she married in her 20s. Florence needed no training and Sally was able to enter her for agility competitions from 1989. When Florence started winning rosettes and trophies, Sally was hooked.

"I joined a beginners' course and Florence graduated top of the class," she recalled. "Then it was a downward, slippery slope. I sold my sports car and bought a van so I could get to



JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS: Animal trainer Sally Jones at Crealy Park with Jensen. OLIVER SANDERS XDD06753\_OS\_002

agility classes. I started wearing scruffy clothes and the nails went!"

Sally's next dog was a Staffordshire bull terrier/Doberman cross called Boogie, who had been cruelly treated.

His mouth had been bound up with elastic bands, he'd been burnt with cigarettes and he was very malnourished. With him having been rescued from a high-rise flat, Sally describes him as the last dog she would have chosen for agility training, but he proved to be a blessing in disguise.

"Boogie's probably the reason I'm doing the job I do today," admitted Sally. "He was an adolescent thug! I had an open-plan house with cream carpets. The day after we got Boogie we also got a carpet cleaner because he wasn't house-trained."

"Nearly everyday for the first few months I wanted to send him back, but I couldn't."

"At that time, a lot of people were using punishment methods and brute force to train dogs; even though I didn't know much about dog training, I knew I didn't want to do that."

"I got in touch with a personal trainer and it was the best money I've spent. I was given some common sense things to do and was told there was no substitute for hard work."

"You do things again and again,

and every time the dog gets it right you reward them, and when they do it wrong, you ignore them. And you interrupt the things you can't ignore. "The results were instant and he became the brightest big dog in the whole world. It was a great feeling."

Training and competing with dogs became a hobby that started taking over Sally's life. It never occurred to her that she could make a living from it because, ever since childhood, it had been drummed into her that she should pursue an academic career.

Sally was brought up in the Hertfordshire village of Croxley Green before moving with her family to Bath when she was 11. She admits her initial ambition was to be a florist, then a riding instructor.

Instead, she went to the University of Wales, where she studied English — and met her husband-to-be, Steve, in the first week. Sally became a trainee chartered accountant for Price Waterhouse, one of the world's most prestigious companies.

Much to her family's dismay, she gave up before she even qualified, something she describes as the "bravest decision" she has ever made. Instead, a career beckoned in IT, and she enjoyed success as a financial controller.

In 1992, Steve's job as a consulting engineer was relocated to Exeter. The couple set up home in Payhembury. Initially, Sally divided her time between working from Devon and commuting, but eventually became self-employed. All the while she continued to welcome more dogs into her home, including Mollie, a red tricolour collie. In one afternoon she had taught her to sit down and come when she was called. Mollie went on to compete at champion level.

When Sally's mother-in-law bought a dog as a companion, it again turned into another case for Sally to solve. After six weeks with the terrier, she admitted she couldn't cope. Sally stepped in, but none of her previously tried and tested methods worked.

It was then that Sally discovered the new method of 'clicker training' which was then taking off in America. Travelling to the States to discover all she could, it turned out to be a turning point in her career.

"After nine weeks the terrier went into an agility competition and came away with a rosette. It was one of the defining points of my life."

"Agility has rehabilitated so many dogs who were perhaps nervous,

BRIGHT AS A BUTTON:

Sally says that Jensen the piglet is more intelligent than any dog she has trained

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