

Breed Rescue – a labour of love . . .

Sometimes you come across a situation in life where the love and generosity towards our beautiful breed exceeds all expectations – this is a story about such a situation and such fabulous people.

In the 15 years that I've been involved in this wonderful breed I've have been involved in a number of rescues / rehomes. Unlike other breeds, we're very fortunate that we do not get many who come into rescue, but sometimes, circumstances change and owners can no longer take care of their dogs.

Our breed is very fortunate to have their very own Breed Rescue - Steph Bliss of Charney Kennels in Oxfordshire has been involved in the breed for more than 40 years; and not only is she a consistently top breeder; she also shares her life and her home with our wonderful breed and almost certainly understands them more than most.

We're also fortunate that we don't often get dogs into Breed Rescue, but when we do, it's vital we work to find the best possible match for the dog which is something that Steph excels at; in fact, she has that perfect mix of skills and knowledge needed when dealing with the careful matching of a rescue dog with its prospective new owner.

Back in 2015 I was contacted by the then NJSC Secretary, Mary Fallas, to ask for help in rehoming two JS girls. What I didn't know at the time is that these two girls belonged to someone I already knew very well, Katherine Crowe, who had also been in the breed for a long, long time. Kath was very well respected within the breed, had been a committee member of the NJSC breed club and was also a truly lovely person.



Jade - (Alaskaza Shiroi Hisui of Chodo)

Kath was one of the very first people I had met in the breed, she lived local to me and had opened her home to me and my husband to allow us to visit and to become acquainted with the breed before we made our final decision to buy a JS puppy. In fact, it was watching her three bitches exhibit a mixture of inquisitiveness, trepidation, excitement, and incredible manoeuvrability whilst darting through & around her coffee table set that finally sealed our determination to own one of these beautiful dogs.

Rather sadly what had brought about this request from Kath for a rehome was her deteriorating health. I was devastated not only to hear about this illness but to also discover she had to find a home for her two precious remaining girls (Jade and Lucy).

I felt a huge pressure to get this right.

Japanese *Snow Flakes* Spitz

In the previous year (2014) I had spoken to a lovely lady in Gloucestershire called Paula Drage who owned an elderly Schipperke and had been considering giving a home to a Japanese Spitz but decided that whilst she still had her Schipp' the time wasn't right.

Then, in early 2015, she saw my Facebook Post about Jade and Lucy and contacted me - she had lost her Schipperke and missed him so much that she felt that the time was now right to get a new dog / dog(s).

This really could be a match made in heaven; however, Kath had stipulated that her two girls had to be rehomed together - so after a number of conversations it was finally agreed that both Jade and Lucy were to find a new forever home in Gloucestershire.

Then came the logistics - the dogs were being cared for by Mary in Leeds (following a brief spell in Foster Care with Iris McNair, another long-time owner / breeder of Japanese Spitz and also a very close friend of Kath's).

However, they now needed to travel from Leeds to their new home in The Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire - so we came up with a plan.

It was decided that my husband Stuart would drive to Leeds to collect the girls; he'd then drive down the M1 to Castle Donnington Services to meet with Paula to transfer the dogs. In addition to the transport logistics there were lots of conversations about what was needed to help the girls settle into their new home.



Lucy - (Trimsteppa Kitanai of Chodo)

Although it was going to be tough for Kath to let her girls go, it was eased by the many conversations that took place between Kath and Paula to ensure a smooth transition for Jade and Lucy and that they both were happy with what was happening.

This made it so much more bearable for Kath.

The night before the girls were due to leave for their new home, I went to see both Kath and Iris, to collect toys; beds, crates, etc - basically everything needed to help Jade and Lucy settle, tears were shed from all of us and unusually in situations like this, we agreed that Kath would stay in touch with the new owner.

Those updates from Paula developed into a regular conversation between them and a lovely friendship was forged between the two ladies with Kath getting regular updates / pictures / phone calls and this dialogue continued until Kath sadly died in February 2016.

Paula Drage also kept in touch with me, updating me on the welfare of the girls and sharing with me her news, especially as the girls' got older and their health started to deteriorate. She finally lost Lucy in 2018 and then Jade in 2020. She had given them the best life in the best home for their final years and this wonderful owner didn't stop there either, she also rehomed two further Japanese Spitz, Tilly and Phoebe.



Very sadly in 2021 we got the news that Paula had died. She had been the most amazing ambassador for our breed; given a home to those who needed it most and it was an honour to have been part of her journey.

However, it still did not stop there; her kindness continued when in late 2022 contact was made by Paula's family advising that she had wanted to give something back to the Breed that she loved so much; and that she had bequeathed a substantial amount of money to the NJSC Breed Club.

We all love our dogs and in this fractious world of ours the news is often poor - so it is with tears of joy that I am able to relate a story filled with so much care and kindness of an activity that is often simply referred to as a 'rehome'.

Love from - Jade, Lucy, Tilly, Phoebe and Friends.

**NJSC = Northern Japanese Spitz Club.