

TESSA HELEN GAINES

**From Stephen Bardwell
Chairman The Griffon Bruxellois Breeders Association**

The world of dogs has lost one of its most enthusiastic supporters with the passing of Tessa Gaines. An expert breeder, exhibitor and judge of a number of breeds it will be, I think, the Griffon Bruxellois breed that will feel that loss the most. Not only has the breed lost an expert of many years standing but it has also lost an unparalleled detailed knowledge of the breed and its development.

Tessa always had a boundless energy as a supporter of Griffons and even in latter years through an extended period of poor health she continually worked for the good of the breed. Her most recent contribution at the joint Griffon clubs Health meeting in February was as informative and forward thinking as ever.

As a breeder Tessa was always looking to develop the breed whilst extremely mindful of her puppies' future homes. She was always happy to offer the benefit of her experience to pet owners and fellow breeders alike and always pleased to talk Griffons. Resolute in her views these may not have always won her friends nor indeed have served her own interests, but they were however always formed with the interests of the breed at their heart.

As an expert on the breed Tessa had an enviable eye for detail and an ability to break down individual features of the breed to see where improvements could be made. Gaystock were central to so many successful show kennels throughout the world both in terms of stock and in the help and advice that was provided.

As a successful breeder and exhibitor Tessa's exploits are recorded elsewhere but her contribution to the breed was far greater than just those achievements. A founder member of the Griffon Breeders Association, the original letter heading of which notes, *'To guide and encourage breeders of Griffon Bruxellois to produce litters of the quality and standard as laid down by the Kennel Club Breed Standard.'* This personified her philosophy. Always a contributor to the Association in many roles, her position to date as the Health co-ordinator for The Association and other breed clubs drew not only on her vast knowledge and her eye for detail but was fueled by her endless enthusiasm for the future of the breed. Indeed the Association has lost an irreplaceable component and I, along with many others have lost a valued friend.

From Carol Ritchie (Secretary GBBA)

Tessa passed away at her home on Thursday 21st March and although she had suffered various health problems over recent years, it came as a shock to her friends in the Griffon world. I had spoken to her the day before and she wasn't too well but I didn't expect to get the dreadful news on Friday morning when her good friend Ruth phoned me.

There are many Griffon owners and breeders here and worldwide who sought Tessa's advice given so freely for the interest in and love of the breed. She was always very helpful to newcomers in the breed, encouraging them if they wanted to start showing, especially if she saw signs of a future breeder! Tessa was always thinking of the breed and those who would be their guardians.

That is why when I got my first Griffon from Tessa I am still devoted to the breed 21 years later and remained great friends with Tessa throughout that time. I shall miss her so much.

Maureen Higgins (Jaydean)

It was with deep sadness that I heard of the passing of Tessa on the 21st March, Tessa rang me only three days earlier and although she was having great difficulty speaking because of a long standing throat condition, she found the strength to check if Brian was home from hospital. That was Tessa.

I first met Tessa and her mother Deborah in 1974 and was introduced to their world famous Gaystocks and from then on we formed a friendship which lasted 39 years and survived more than a few disagreements as Tessa was a very strong, feisty character and was outspoken regarding her firm beliefs, not least the well being of her beloved breed – Griffons. She worried about their future, in particular ensuring breeding stock were all health checked before mating and was in fact the breed's Health Co-ordinator representing the clubs on the Kennel Club's Health Schemes. She spent many hours above and beyond the call of duty researching all aspects of health. Tessa was involved most of her working life in animal husbandry, working closely with and visiting farmers. This gave her a good background knowledge to enable her to use this in her role as HC. Tessa and her mother before her, wrote the Griffon breed notes in DW for many years.

I would dearly love to write a full and detailed obituary for Tessa but at this time I am unable to do so. I know there will be many words written about her from home and abroad which will appear in the clubs' publications.

She, along with her late mother bred nine UK champions – some in the ownership of other exhibitors - and many overseas champions. Tessa's remaining three griffons are safe with her dear friend Ruth.

I will miss our lengthy calls Tessa and your constant enquiries about my family's health, often making light of your own problems.

Goodbye dear, loyal Tessa – Maureen.

From Alison Price (Marquant)

Mrs Deborah Gaines Tessa's mother purchased their first Griffon Bruxellois Joriemour Tina from Marjorie Clarke in 1957 to join the famous Gaystock kennel of show dogs. Subsequently, Tessa Gaines always had the a red rough or red smooth Griffon in her home; at the time of her death Tessa had her beloved three red roughs all home bred, with her.

Tessa devoted her life to the preservation, development and welfare of the breed. She had very strong opinions regarding the breed, embedded in what she referred to as the original or old-fashioned type of Griffon. She was not shy to express these opinions with conviction as she thought it was her duty to do so. Consequently, this approach on occasion caused disagreement with her peers, and I recall many a heated debate with her. Nevertheless she stood fast in her interpretation of the breed standard both when she judged and eloquently when she spoke or wrote passionately about her breed; for example in her 1991 article for the Griffon Bruxellois Breeders Association Progress, the 2012 article for the Kennel Club

‘Judges Choice’ and more recently her valued contribution to the joint clubs ‘Illustrated Griffon Bruxellois Standard’

Until recently being the breed correspondent for Dog World publications gave Tessa much pleasure and pride. Her notes were always eagerly looked forward to as a source of up to date information, which she received from her many friends worldwide; sometimes controversial but never boring.

Tessa was a very private person who some may have interpreted as aloof however, when she got to know you her genuine, caring, kind and witty personality would emerge. Recalling to you her life stories and experiences would certainly make you laugh; my lips are sealed. What was evident to all who had contact with her was that however busy she was Tessa would always make time to answer a query, advise you on rearing your litter of puppies and all matters pertaining to the Griffon and dogs in general; drawing from her extensive and varied back ground in animal husbandry resulted in her advice being much sought after.

Over the last few years her health failing, Tessa maintained her interest in the Griffon. She remained the joint Griffon clubs’ Heath Coordinator, was so looking forward to judging later this year, attended as many shows as she could and was last seen at Crufts this year where she had strategically positioned herself just behind the table where she could see the Griffons up close, and have a good view of them moving. Her intention was to purchase a red smooth Griffon, as she said to me “I feel I have one more litter left in me” I had no doubt she did.

During her last week I spoke to Tessa several times the last being the day before she passed away. She was obviously poorly and due to a long standing throat problem which had returned, her conversation was on times difficult to understand. Tessa never complained and kept her true position to herself, when I asked her how she really was feeling she replied as she always did, in an upbeat tone of voice “I am fine don’t worry” That is how I will remember Miss Tessa Gaines as a fine human being.

From Howard Ogden (Beauview)

The Griffon has lost its greatest Champion. But Tessa could be the most difficult, irascible, single minded and frustrating woman, so god help God!