

Happiest of Endings for Story of 'Boots'



Remember him? Pictured in these columns is the rough-coated Lurcher / Deerhound cross found straying at Tesco, Tullamore on August 23rd 2009 last and featured the following week in an appeal made on his behalf by the OSPCA under the heading 'Happy Ending Sought for the Story of Boots'.

As things transpired it was to prove quite a long story, but the happy ending came at last on Friday 16th October. Here's how it unfolded.

'Boots', as he was re-christened by his foster-family, came to the notice of the OSPCA when a number of Tullamore people contacted them seeking help for the dog which had aroused their concern because he was looking so lost and emaciated. Among these callers was a lady who caught him and held on to him until an OSPCA volunteer arrived to collect him. He was checked then for micro-chip identification and it was found that he had indeed been 'chipped'. That should have resulted in a quick reunion with the owner but it transpired that the person to whom the dog had been registered had sold him about a year earlier.

Disappointingly, no information was forthcoming as to the new owner, so the trail went cold. Further efforts to find an owner were made at local level and by 'posting' a photograph on the ISPCA web site. These too drew blanks and the focus then switched to seeking a new home.

Meanwhile, 'Boots' had been getting on very well with his foster family winning many new friends with his gentle and quietly affectionate nature.

Although big dogs can be difficult to re-locate, 'Boots' seemed to be a special case and a suitable applicant was soon identified. Then a new problem arose: a change in circumstances meant that the potential adopter found herself unable to take the dog after all. It was back to the drawing board. A fresh appeal was issued.

And then came the big breakthrough. On Friday the OSPCA received a phone call from a gentleman in Co. Antrim who had just seen the dog on the ISPCA web-site. As always, the OSPCA's Dog Manager asked a number of questions to make quite sure that the applicant was indeed the owner. The answers given provided proof positive and it was suggested that the hand-over be made the next day. But no. 'I'll come straight away' said the delighted owner and within a matter of three hours his car had pulled up outside Boots' foster home.

Now came the big question. How will Boots re-act when he meets his owner? After all, man and dog have not seen each other for at least eight weeks! The owner was invited in to the kitchen. Boots was upstairs. 'I'll go up and get him', said the lady of the house. 'Hold on', said the owner, and standing up he called in a loud voice 'Luke, Luke'. The response was instant. There was a great commotion as the dog came thundering and flip-flopping down the stairs at risk of incurring mortal injury and the excitement of the re-union removed any possible doubts as to ownership. The only question that could not be answered was whether the man or the dog was the more delighted!!

So now, the story has been told, complete with the up-dating sequel. But what about the 'prequel'? How did 'Luke' / 'Boots' from Co. Antrim get to Tullamore? For the moment, at least, that question cannot be fully answered though some extra information has come to light. It appears that the owner, the dog's best friend, travels widely throughout Ireland and that he has been in the habit of taking 'Luke' along with him. In August, his itinerary took him to Birr and it was here that the dog went missing – or, to be more precise – was stolen. It has been reported that two youths in their mid to late teens were observed taking him away. How did 'Luke' get from Birr to Tullamore? That remains a mystery. The evidence provided by a piece of frayed rope around his neck when he was picked up at Tesco would suggest that he had used his sharp teeth to escape from his captors. Anyway, for 'Luke' and his friends on both sides of the border (especially his foster-carers in Tullamore) it was a case of all's well that ends well. Perhaps even the youths who tried to steal him should count themselves lucky too. So far at least, they have escaped the fine or jail sentence that they would seem to deserve!