

## **Jake makes his Entrance**

We were looking for another dog and a Sister saw a picture of a dog online. His description read that he was, 'so laid back that he was almost horizontal'! The next morning we rang the advertisers. On asking them if they knew anything about his background we were somewhat surprised to hear that he came from Croatia. By now we were becoming more and more involved and were fast approaching the point of no return. He had been with a foster 'mum' for a few days. She agreed to bring him over one afternoon. One could call it the day that changed our lives!

On looking at the advertisement more closely we discovered the charity involved was Action Aid for Animals. They rescue dogs from Romania and Croatia where they are treated very badly, roam the streets and are collected by the municipal authorities, kept for a short time and destroyed. We guessed rightly that this dog had been rescued from death row. The charity has a vet who checks out the dogs and eventually a group are transported to the UK. An adopter is found in this country before they leave Croatia, in order for them to pass through the UK's border control.

We met Jake one sunny Wednesday afternoon. He was affectionate and, despite all he had suffered, was friendly with everyone. We rang Action Aid for Animals the next day. They were delighted he was coming to us. We also heard more about his past – it included, in addition to everything else, being thrown from a train. His adopter had withdrawn so he had faced death again, at our ferry port. A foster carer in Liverpool stepped in and he was allowed into the country.

The following Monday he arrived with his passport. Life, since his arrival, has been a steep learning curve for us! Jake not only had to learn to live in a home and be part of a family, but also unlearn his survival strategies. There was the added complication that we were a pack of ten. We all had to go in the same direction and act in the same way, or we would be adding to the dog's confusion. Also there was the cat!

He is a strong dog, two years old, but the first evening when our electrician arrived, carrying an enormous bag, Jake fled to the farthest corner of our sunlounge, a quivering mass. He certainly bonded with us that night, as we held him until he collapsed in an exhausted heap, his head on the knee of one Sister. The next days, life with Jake started in earnest. On Wednesday he escaped out of the side gate. Panic! We had been warned that these dogs are great escapists - that is how they survived. He had also lived by scavenging and that saved the day: he stopped at a wheelie bin and was caught. The pack met together for discussion. In future, we would exit and enter the premises via Redacre (Guest House). Despite this, he escaped again on the following Sunday.

His first week, he taught himself how to con us for treats. He is a bright dog! He twice scoffed the cat's food. Later, he discovered that at speed, he could nick a pear from the

tree. Then he discovered the plums. He is enjoying the puppyhood he never experienced. By now we were learning to accept a crisis a day, the problem was that we could not anticipate what it would be!

By the second week, we had a rota specifically for Jake, i.e. play times with three of us, feed times, toilet times, brushing, not to mention trying to bring the cat and him together. The third week, he taught himself how to open the outside door. He certainly is bright! Thankfully, he made his way to the Sisters working in Redacre. They spotted a big black head looking through the fly curtain into the kitchen. Our door lock was changed that afternoon. On a separate occasion he went to visit our neighbours through a hedge that we thought we had made dog-proof.



Every day, one way or another, we see an improvement. He is very lovable. We gave him a shower and the dirt of two years was washed away, revealing a beautiful, soft coat. When he falls into a deep sleep, we know that he could never have done that on the run. Now, he is at home.

There has been much prayer! Some of us are seriously behind with our other work because of time spent training Jake and our long discussions together. We have tumbled into bed, at night, exhausted. In some ways, it has been quite a test on our community life. Stress, whatever the cause, reveals who we really are underneath! Then the Lord is there with all his grace and we mature as Christians. So it is work in progress for Jake and us!

