

Greyhound Kennels – Old Rectory Garden Shillingstone

27th May 2009

In November 2008 I put an advert in the local paper for odd jobs. I received a telephone call from a Mrs Eve Blanchard who said she needed help with cleaning out kennels and walking dogs. I had no idea at this time that the work was with greyhounds, so when I went to see what the job entailed I was quite excited that I would be working with racing dogs. I had never been involved with the industry, and did not know anything about it, although my wife & I had always had dogs and worked with animals.

On arriving for work my first morning, I was not quite sure whether to call the RSPCA or get on and clean the dogs out. I decided as Eve Blanchard was an elderly lady, she needed help rather than trouble so, I proceeded to clean the kennels. She had 34 dogs there at the time. I removed 67 black sacks of dog mess & wet bedding from the 34 kennels. This took me a week to complete. At last the dogs were clean.

Susan my wife came over to the kennels and soon became involved with their care. We as a couple could see that Eve needed help with these animals on a more regular basis than she was paying me for. We seemed to be spending more & more time at the kennels and enjoyed watching the dogs improve, get fitter & happier. Susan soon learnt to feed the dogs and took over their feeding and nutritional needs. While I cleaned and exercised the dogs. It soon became apparent that Eve could not physically deal with the dogs herself. When I started work for Eve she had 3 dogs running at Poole track. Within 2 months of us being there she had 8 dogs running at Poole.

In January a video of Eves Kennels was posted on you tube. It showed the lack of welfare for her dogs. This video had been taken in May 2008 by an undercover journalist. Both Susan and myself were quite upset by this, as things had improved at the kennels. We gave Eve a lot of support, and defended her as best we could.

We suggested to Eve that she should maybe cut down her number of dogs to a more manageable number, because over half the dogs were retired. Susan offered to find good homes for the retired dogs. We believed that this would relieve some of the financial burden for her and leave her to enjoy her racing dogs, and improve their welfare.

Eve would not rehome any of her dogs and became quite abusive if it was spoken about. She said she was going to have 12 dogs put to sleep because she did not want anyone else to have her dogs. At this time we began to realise Eve was not the sweet lady we thought she was, but we kept going realising the dogs needed us. Eve was offered a lot of help by people within the industry over the internet, but would not take any of it. She became very abusive about anybody that tried to help. I even tried talking to a very close friend of Eves at Poole Stadium, who is also a trainer. I asked for help regarding trying to talk Eve into rehoming some of her retired dogs. He suggested I "just give them sleeping tablets, 2 should do the job" Then bury them in her garden with the other 17 he buried there. It was at this time I knew I was in the wrong job!

After this we decided not to go to the race track again. Our interest was in the welfare of the dogs.

Shortly after this Eve told me one morning I was not to exercise the dogs anymore, just to let them out when I was cleaning them. In her words, "You are here to pick up dog sh-t not to train my dogs". I presume her change towards us had come because her friend told her we had spoken to him.

We were very concerned about the dogs not being exercised, as they were being raced off their beds. This is a disaster waiting to happen. In fact it was not long before it did.

2 deaths and several injuries proved what we were trying to tell Eve. Eve blamed everybody bar herself for these disasters, from the race manager to other trainers running badly schooled dogs.

Next came a real blow when Eve told me she did not want me to work Sundays and Mondays. And I was only allowed to work from 9am to 1pm the other 5 days. This was not for financial reasons as she only paid me for 5 days 9am to 1pm anyway. In 2 days I worked 24 hours for 8 hours pay, but I never minded, I was there for the dogs. Eve also stopped Susan helping, and again no financial reason, because Susan never got paid. I asked Eve who was going to do the dogs on a weekend, because I knew from her own admission she could not clean them or exercise them. She said they would be fine until Tuesday morning. Eve did manage to feed the dogs most of the time, but if she was tired would throw biscuits over the door to them.

I realised that if I was only working from 9am to 1pm that gave me 8 and a half minutes per dog, to clean & exercise! On a Tuesday I would go in to total filth. The dogs had not been cleaned at all, not been exercised and not given clean water. All Eve did was throw a bit of bedding, if she had any on top of dirty wet bedding. These poor animals were a mess!

I telephoned the GBGB steward Colin Betteridge to bring his attention to the welfare of these animals. I asked him to meet me at Eve Blanchards on Tuesday morning 9am to see for himself the state of these dogs. He decided to arrive at 1pm, knowing the hours I work, and knowing the dogs would be clean by then. He arrived with Noel Thompson from the GBGB. They did nothing to help, only criticise me for the way I swept the water down the yard! I mentioned to Colin Betteridge, that in the rules the dogs have to be kept clean. He said "they only need to be cleaned when deemed necessary" So maybe he does not deem it necessary for the dogs to be cleaned for best part of 3 days. They told Eve she had to get rid of her hundreds of bags of dog waste that are stacked behind the kennels. She then for the next week got somebody in the afternoons to fill her van up and take this hazardous waste to a farm somewhere to mix in with manure?? There are still a good

150-200 bags at the kennels. The movement of them came to an abrupt halt. Since then Eve had only allowed me to use a handful of clean bedding per dog, to save on waste, and to only pick poo off the floor and leave the wet beds. I refused to do this, and just carried on as normal. She then refused to buy any bedding for the dogs.

Eve was making life more and more difficult for these dogs by almost deliberately going against all the welfare standards. I decided to get in touch with the RSPCA, I told them what was going on, and to this date I have not heard anything from them, nor have they been anywhere near Eve Blanchards kennels! Eve said she was taking 12 dogs to a vet at Swindon to be destroyed. These are dogs that could be easily rehomed into warm, clean surroundings, and enjoy the rest of their lives. Some of these dogs are only 3-5 years old. How can this industry self legislate when the GBGB are willing to ignore welfare issues like these poor dogs at Eve Blanchards kennels? This has been going on for years with this woman. 30 years she has been in the industry. Most of her kennels are under size. They have been like that for years. Why have these issues not been dealt with? The Kennels were in a dreadful state in May 2008. Where was the steward? Again November 2008 when I took over. Where was the GBGB? And Where are they now???

I no longer work for Eve Blanchard. I was not allowed to look after the welfare of these hard working dogs anymore. I cannot be a part of the total cruelty that is taking place at these kennels. Someone needs to stand up and shout for these voiceless creatures, and my wife and I have decided to be their voice.

During our short time in the industry we have met some trainers and kennel hands that really care for and love their dogs. You all need to stand united against this despicable treatment of these beautiful creatures. The GBGB are killing your sport by ignoring this terrible abuse. **BE THE VOICE FOR YOUR GREYHOUNDS!!**

Neil Haine

Kennel Hand - License No. 130787