

A Cracking season for veteran Bill and family

Contributed by John Walsh
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Veteran Bill Mellon won the HTA Puppy Championship – when initially it didn't look as though he would even be competing.

The popular 77-year-old Appleby trainer was going into action for 2020 with just a three-year-old Cracking Spirit and a two-year-old Cracking Last One.

The latter had been named Last One because she was going to be his last one after over 30 years in the sport.

Bill, a retired farm worker, tells the tale – ‘I just had the two when I saw a pup advertised by Joe Abram. I liked the look of it and bought it, so she became Cracking Last One Two.

‘We came out west and ran her in one or two of the practice trails at Kirkland Leaps and she did really well. In fact we backed her for the puppy championship, but that was scrubbed because of the Covid.

‘It was a shortened season, of course, which didn't get going until July but she won 13 trails – spread over Kirkland Leaps, Bridekirk, Dearham and Millstone Moor.

‘When we came to the last day at Millstone Moor we were one clear of Young Harry. Both him and Jenny's Quest had been in contention and both were in the final trail against us.

‘But she led on the finish and all the way to the line to give me the best feeling I've had in my years in the sport.’

Bill is quick to pay tribute to the kennel team of wife Pat, daughter Tina and son-in-law Robert ‘Wack’ Airey, who have all played their part in what has proved to be a momentous season for them all.

Bill's initiation into trailing actually came when he was a schoolboy living at Winder and he used to walk hounds for Joe Wren, although none of them became household names.

Farm work, and later marriage to Pat, saw no more hounds until he decided to have a dabble at the sport in the 1980's.

‘Soon after we started I began naming them Cracking because we were living near Crackenthorpe and it seemed a good one to use,’ he recounts.

Cracking Thore was a good one for him, winning 20 trails in all, and showing a lot of promise as a pup in 2006 -but wasn't able to do what Cracking Last One Two has managed this year.

She's out of Silver Charm by Endure, from the successful Abram kennel in Dearham and in winning the final trail at Millstone Moor to win the title, completed a double on the day for the Mellon camp.

Bill chuckles as he says: ‘You wouldn't believe it in the seniors. I've seen nothing like it. Cracking Last One came onto the finish and was barged into and knocked over by a sheep. She didn't know where she was but got up and still had time to sort herself out and be first over the line.

“That completed seven wins for the season while our other hound Cracking Spirit had won two open maidens, an open restricted and one senior trail. So all in all it’s been a good season for us – topped by the championship win.”

So will this tempt Bill to get himself a pup for 2021? “I dare not. I’m under strict orders,” he laughs.

We will see!