



*Nelle (was Elle) in the forest with DogMa*

### **ELLE'S STORY**

The boot of the car was opened only for a sad and scared face looking back at me. It was the eyes that did it. "I'll foster this one". I said. "It's not just about saving the puppies and really sweet looking ones".

Elle came to live with me for the next few months. I knew she was a special dog, but I didn't know quite how special. I didn't know anything about her past, her present or her future. I didn't even know what breed she was, it was thought she was a cross breed. I had to start somewhere, so I started to do some research.

Oh my god - A BELGIAN MALINOIS!

Over the next few weeks I worked really hard on Elle. She displayed several behavioural problems which I could only guess at what to do and with the limping I didn't really know if her leg had been damaged or whether it was a cause of the pacing. The vet looked at it and said nothing seemed wrong however, it was definitely an issue. She had obviously been kept shut up in a small room and not walked for a while. The result: - not only being overweight, but also the lack of mental stimulation and walks had led her to pace excessively in circles and thus resulted in her limping. It was a vicious circle, yet somewhere in her short life, she was only about 16 months old, someone had done some basic training with her.

She thoroughly enjoyed her walks and as time went by the weight came off and her pacing decreased to some extent, but had it now become a habit? She relaxed more and enjoyed the company of other foster dogs which came and went. So I decided to put her on the rescue dog pages forum to advertise her to see if anyone was interested in giving her a forever home. For three weeks there was not one single comment. I was so disappointed for her. I had been honest enough to mention about her problems and had also attached a web link about Malinois knowing that the intended person needed to know exactly what they were dealing with. However, instead of giving them a lead into what a wonderful dog she was, I felt I may have just put about everyone off even enquiring about her. Until one day I got a message out of the blue that was to be life changing for not only Elle but also myself.

A dog behaviourist and reputable Rottweiler breeder was interested!

The conversations that followed with Karen Harvey made me so excited. I couldn't believe it was happening. I kept throwing very negative phrases about Elle at her, which just didn't put her off. We would finish off a conversation and I would wonder if I hadn't emphasised enough quite the problems Elle had and I would phone Karen back. She was just so positive that she never doubted anything about Elle that made me realise dreams really can come true. I never dare have dreamt a first class dog behaviourist would ever want to take on a dog in Elle's shape, especially a rescue dog.

During the conversations I had with Karen, she would explain the way Elle would think and react and what I could do to help her. It all made sense and the understanding behind it gave me such an insight into what was going on in Elle's mind.

The day came for Karen to pick Elle up. She travelled up with two of her Rottweilers Luna and Floyd. I knew it was meant to be. I had absolutely no doubt what so ever that Karen was exactly the right person for Elle. I knew she would take her to the next level which was far beyond anything I could do or the average loving home we all give our dogs. She would embrace everything at Elle's pace which was just so important for me to know and she would give Elle the stability and stimulation which Elle so deserved.

Although I was extremely upset to see Elle drive off into the distance, it was tears of joy for her that she had found such a wonderful home that rolled down my cheeks, not so much tears of sadness. For Karen had reassured me that Elle would still be part of my life forever and that I could visit her whenever I liked and for the following weeks she had phoned me up everyday to let me know how Elle was and what she had done. I have received wonderful photos and video clips of Elle playing and I know I shall have a friend in Karen for life.

As for Elle, she really was that special dog and ONE IN A MILLION. |

Jackie Kitchener

Elle's Fosterer for Enfield Dog Rescue

## NELLE'S JOURNEY CONTINUES WITH DOGMA by Karen Harvey MoGDT (MT)



I have always loved working dogs, no matter what type. There is nothing better than to see a dog doing a job it enjoys. I used to have a beautiful GSD, who sadly passed away in his sleep at a very young age, and it wasn't until 6 years later I decided that I had time and the desire for another to join my pack at DogMa. As there are so many dogs which

need homes in rescue I decided that this would be a place to start. I made my mind up that I would look for a young, adolescent female who I could train and work alongside my Rottweilers and so my search began.....

I first saw Nelle, then known as Elle on a rescue forum and immediately saw something in her eyes which drew me in, something which is hard to explain but nevertheless was there for me. I had already thought to myself "*she will be lucky to find a home*", as the Malinois breed tend to have extreme working drives and an inbuilt desire to work, and someone would have to be prepared to fulfil these desires or she would never find true happiness and possibly find herself constantly returned to rescue. By that time I had already arranged to collect a GSD from a family in Nottinghamshire, so I sadly moved on but Nelle was never far from my thoughts.

Two days before driving up to Nottinghamshire I called the family with the GSD - who then told me that they had decided to give the dog to a family member. And so my search began anew.

I went onto the online forum where I had previously found Nelle - and she was still available! I emailed Jackie Kitchener, who was caring for her, for more information on how I should go about adopting Nelle. I knew from experience that Nelle would need lots of stimulation for her to be content but was keen to get "*under her skin*" and share her journey. I, as Jackie, was very excited about collecting Nelle and the home check couldn't come quickly enough.

I arrived at Jackie's house in the morning and the moment I saw Nelle I knew it was meant to be. Although she had several behavioural problems, it wasn't something I was greatly worried about as I knew I could help her a lot and offer her a great working life, with many long interesting walks, and training sessions covering

different aspects such as obedience, agility, tracking and protection work in abundance. To me, it was as if Nelle had forgotten how to be a Malinois and she showed behaviours which reflected her confusion and lack of complete trust in anyone. I knew that they were a “one person” breed and that as a herding breed, circling was a fairly natural behaviour for them when excited, but Nelle had taken this one step further. Anytime she felt unsure about what she should do, she would circle constantly in a clockwise motion, in varying size circles and speeds which in effect gave her RSI on her front left wrist causing her on occasion to limp. She also would try to avoid or shut down when someone she wasn’t familiar with would try to touch her in anyway and this included my partner David.

From the minute I saw Nelle at Jackie’s home my work in gaining her trust and giving her confidence began. On entering, I was greeted by Ruby, Jackie’s own dog and a lovely little cross breed called Pippin that Jackie was fostering.

In the background I could hear an unsure bark and once Jackie and I had exchanged greetings, Jackie moved aside and there, curled up in a bed which fit cosily under that stairs, was Nelle. On seeing her I smiled..... and fell deeper under Nelle’s spell.

Everything about her at that moment gave me a clear picture about her state of mind and told me that the best action right now was to walk past and ignore her, and that inviting her into my personal space would not result in what I wanted. So Jackie and I went to have a chin wag and a cuppa in the conservatory accompanied by the other two dogs Pippin and Ruby. After about half an hour Nelle had still not found enough confidence to leave her bed and join the pack in the conservatory and so I decided I would show her that I was someone she could trust.

I went back into the front room and while ignoring Nelle I went and sat right next to her bed with my back to her. As Pippin came and sat in my lap, Jackie immediately called her and I said, *“no no, this is fine, exactly what I want”*. Pippin, who was confident, would show Nelle that I was to be trusted. I continued to ignore Nelle and in a moment she began to investigate me using her nose. What would this tell her? Nelle moved closer to me and then completely relaxed and gave me a lick. From that moment on, we became inseparable.



Jackie and Enfield Dog Rescue had lovingly provided Nelle with a caring home and given her that rare commodity – a second chance to find balance and happiness within a suitable home. David and I consider ourselves the lucky ones, in being given the opportunity to now provide her with a happy, balanced pack life that offers Nelle mental and physical fulfilment.

It was important for us to decide that whatever had happened to Nelle in her past must be left in the past. Feeling saddened or sorry for what may or may not have happened to her then would only

keep her trapped in turmoil, and she would never move forward and meet her full potential.

I work with her daily and she has improved immensely. I block her when she circles excessively and show her what is expected of her at that time, and the circling has slowly decreased. She is enjoying her training and is slowly learning to trust David, my partner. She accompanies me on many of my client classes, as do other members of my pack, and shows them what can be achieved when you communicate with a dog in a language they understand: canine!

Nelle has become a very much-loved and valued member of the DogMa pack and we could not imagine our lives without her.

She, in turn, will teach us much.



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