

**THE  
ADVENTURES  
OF SAM**



**True Stories**

**by**

**PG Glynn**

**If you enjoy this e-book feel free to send it to anyone you think would enjoy it too!**

© Pamela Glynn (1997)

This book has full redistribution rights as long as it is not altered in any way. You may pass it on to friends or give it as a free download from your website or blog.

You are welcome to contact me via my website:

<http://www.my-aloe-vera.com>

(Special Aloe Vera products for dogs, cats, camels and other animals, including humans)

**For more books by this author, please go to <http://www.dustysjourney.com> and <http://www.pglynn.co.uk>**

## His Arrival

Sam, my special Beardie, started life rather more colourfully as Tangledown Mungojerrie, and he was from the first a headstrong boy. Coming at eight weeks from Devon to be part of our family, he quickly captivated everyone.

Part of his considerable charm was, I think, his free spirit, which kept landing him in hot (and cold!) water right from the very beginning. On the day after his arrival with us, he found our garden pond - by toppling in to it! There, among the startled goldfish, he learned to swim - a lesson that stood him in good stead from then on. Next morning, he returned to the pond and dived in. Subsequently he made such a habit of this, that for the poor goldfishes' sake as well as for his own, we had to fence the pond off from him, putting it out of bounds.

When Sam was nine weeks old, I carried him across the moors outside the house we lived in then to Three Cliffs. For the uninitiated, this is a Bay so beautiful as to defy belief. The tide was in. After waiting for it to recede slightly, I set Sam down in a small cove on damp, freshly washed sand. There were wet rocks for him to climb on, rock-pools to be explored - and there was the sea, just waiting for him! The waves presenting no problem, he plunged straight in - and seldom stopped plunging thereafter.

That same week, deciding that I must acclimatise him to being in the car without company, I left him asleep on the back seat of my VW Beetle in our front drive while I pottered about in the house. After a few minutes I went to check on him, only to find my car empty. Oh dear ... dog-nappers? My imagination went instantly into top gear as I frantically searched the seats and floor, though it was quite obvious that Sam simply wasn't there. I called him, and kept calling, my voice rising in a kind of hysteria, and the little furry bundle that he was then came racing round the house from the back garden where, the evidence suggested, he had been doing some digging. He gave my leg a lick, looking mighty pleased with himself.

It was at this early stage that we almost changed his name to Houdini, since to achieve his feat he must have climbed from the back seat to the front, then on to the steering wheel and out through the small triangular window that I had left slightly ajar and that he, with a well placed paw, must have pushed to its current state of openness. The drop from window to drive was frightening. That is, it frightened me. It didn't seem to have frightened, or damaged, him.

Not long after this, I was standing at my sink when something very big shot through the kitchen to the breakfast room. It shot through, behind me, Sam at its helm - and I wasted no time in investigating its identity. The item turned out to be a flower-pot filled with earth in which was growing some winter-flowering jasmine, attached to a four-foot bamboo cane! Sam had somehow transferred this from the garden, where it had awaited planting, to his bed without disturbing the jasmine, and without spilling more than a modicum of earth. I almost congratulated him, before transferring it back again.

Oh, his exploits were legion and could fill many a page! Another from his early days concerns a mammoth Black Forest Gateau that we were defrosting for a family celebration. Little realising how fast (and far) Sam was growing (we'd only ever had small dogs before), we had left the cake at the back of a kitchen worktop with its box propped up in front of it as a barrier.

Some barrier that box turned out to be! When I went to check on the defrosting situation, I found only half a cake. Sam had helped himself to 'his' half very neatly, leaving the rest for the family.

And after all the cherries, the cream and the chocolate, he showed no sign of feeling off-colour. But we had learned another lesson the hard way.

With Sam, especially once he made the twin discoveries of birds and sheep, there were new lessons almost every day!

How life-changing it is, to bring a Beardie into the family!

## Bird Dog

Sam's first sighting of a seagull brought with it an identity crisis that was never resolved. Was he a Beardie, or was he a bird? Hard to be certain - but Sam's uncertainty led him (and me!) in to many a predicament.

Perhaps the worst occurred one January, when the wind was whipping the sea in to such a frenzy that mountainous waves were assaulting the Gower coast and the tides at Three Cliffs and Pobbles Bays were singularly untrustworthy.

That Sunday morning, I had no thought of going down to the beach. Walking with Sam high on the cliffs, my priorities were to return to the warmth of home and have breakfast. But my bird-dog had other ideas!

As I paused in my walk, to talk to a fellow stroller, Sam took himself off. Next thing I knew, he was barking from way below me, on golden sands that were fast disappearing beneath the incoming sea. Happy as can be, he was virtually flying across the beach in pursuit of a whole flock of gulls that were adding to his fun by lifting off in different directions.

This way and that Sam went, oblivious to everything except trying to fly like his friends. He had not noticed that the sea was rapidly taking over his territory. I shouted to warn him, but my shouts wafted off on the wind. Not that he, engaged in his favourite activity, would necessarily have heeded my warning, had he heard it. Scared stiff, I hurtled down the nearest path - reaching Pobbles beach just as a gigantic wave crashed over rocks at the furthestmost point and curled across the shore, lifting Sam bodily and sweeping him out of his depth. With that one wave, the last of the beach had vanished and I had had to scramble on to a rock-formation jutting from the foot of the cliffs in order to avoid sharing Sam's compulsory swim.

Terrified for him, there in that churning cauldron, panic froze me for a few moments. In my frozen state, I saw Sam succeed in clambering on to a solitary rock that seemed to me, then, to be situated in mid-ocean. As he clung, with waves surging round him, I wondered how best to mount a rescue operation.

My bedraggled boy clearly had no intention of leaving his rock voluntarily - and if I went to him the chances were that we would both drown. But if I didn't, and a wave tossed him from his precarious perch, it could also hurl him against my range of rocks, stunning him, with perhaps tragic consequences.

Remembering that there was life-saving equipment near the path from Pobbles, I began a race against time, trying to reach it and Sam before the sea claimed him.

Luckily, there was a man walking his Corgi down the path - and he reacted speedily to my cries for help. A native of the area (while I was a relative

newcomer) he understood wintry tides better than I did. Waiting for a wave that receded farther and faster than its predecessors, this Good Samaritan plunged in to the sea waist-deep and waded out to Sam's rock. Surmounting this, he pushed the wingless bird into the water! Riding, literally, on the crest of a wave, Sam surged toward me and was deposited safely on the far side of a deep gully. Even without wings, this presented no problem to him and we were soon enjoying a soggy reunion.

But his rescuer was still stranded on the rock! Shouting my heartfelt thanks across, I heard the response: "I may yet need rescuing!"

Fresh panic set in. How fast could I alert the rescue services? I must save Sam's saviour if it was the last thing I did. His Corgi looked at me expectantly as I tried to look confident ... and competent.

Before there was need for me to demonstrate my rescuing ability, a giant wave surged and then receded sufficiently to permit a reprieve, after which thanks could be properly given.

Did Sam's life-threatening experience deter him from further gull and sea-related adventures? I wish I could report that it did. But if gulls were in the vicinity, Sam seemed to lose all doggy instinct. I even saw him surrounded by rabbits, on the moors, unaware of their existence because a gull was overhead. And I saw him 'round up' a solitary sheep on Rhossili beach, only to abandon it as the gulls again began teasing him. But that's another story...

## Sheepish Sam

It was at Rhossili that Sam first made acquaintance with sheep. A sheep, I should say, since the one in question had strayed from its flock and was enjoying a gentle stroll on the vast beach when Sam went into action. Lacking gulls at the time, Sam saw this woolly creature and instinct instantly took over. Clearly, the silly thing had no business on a beach, so it was up to him - a superior being - to direct it elsewhere.

Barking fit to burst Sam, aged one year, began to steer the sheep through the dunes toward greener pastures. He was half way to achieving his aim when a seagull swooped low overhead, challenging him noisily to a chase. Quite incapable of resisting such a challenge, Sam abandoned the sheep on a jutting ledge and took off seawards, virtually airborne, with never a backward glance. Fortunately, the sheep did not need directives from a bossy boy to complete its climb to the top, where I watched it rejoin its flock.

After this, I needed to be on my guard whenever sheep were around since Sam now seemed to consider it his inherent duty to boss them about, try though I might to convince him that this was not one of his roles in life. Though often (believe it or not) the star pupil at obedience classes, these were necessarily held indoors, far from the outdoor temptations that tended to send Sam's star straight in to the descendant. Lured by wind or sea, gulls or sheep, he conveniently forgot what obedience meant. So the risk of sheep quickly became synonymous with Sam on-lead.

When crossing new territory, his lead was an absolute necessity. But one never-to-be-forgotten afternoon, as we explored cliff-walks and woods with my friend Helen and her Beardies - Hector and Sam Senior (no relation) - this golden rule was broken ...

Leads, surely, were just a hardship for Beardies on that type of terrain. Helen and I walked with a false sense of security as our three boys romped and played. As we walked, we talked and, so engrossed were we in our conversation, it occurred to us only belatedly that the woods were unnaturally silent and that there wasn't a dog in sight. Where were they? When they didn't come in response to their names, Helen produced her whistle, blowing this authoritatively. We kept moving as she blew and, rounding a bend in the path, saw just why our trio were so preoccupied ...

They were trying to find a route through a wide bramble-filled ditch to the field on its far side. Why? The field, here in the seeming heart of the wood, was full of sheep. All that lay between the rather large flock and three very determined Beardies were a hedge and this ditch straight ahead. But for the extensive brambles, there could be little doubt that the degree of determination would have won (or lost) the day by now!

Uncharacteristically, Sam and his friends were too busy to bark. Characteristically, they feigned deafness until the whistle could no longer be ignored, at which stage they came to query what their humans could possibly want. Sam Senior and Hector came close enough for Helen to snap their

leads on. Not so my Sam who, an inch or two from my hand, ducked and drew back in one fluid movement before turning tail and racing sheep-wards. Throwing caution to the wind, he plunged headlong in to that brambly ditch, then somehow extricated himself. Trailing brambles from his fur like some weird camouflage and deaf to entreaties and threats, Sam tackled his next obstacle with relish. The hedge appeared to lack any Beardie-sized gaps so, if he couldn't go through, he would go over. Over it, in a leap that would have awed me had I not been so appalled, Sam went.

He now had a new problem: having reached the sheep, using all his skill and ingenuity, what should he do with them?

A bark soon had his charges sitting up and taking notice. Encouraged by this, Sam barked again ... and again, while back on the woodland path I was at my wits' end. Welsh farmers tend to shoot first and ask questions afterwards - and who can blame them, when irresponsible owners allowed their dogs to behave as mine was behaving?

At least it wasn't the lambing season. That was something. But all the same a shot could ring out at any second and my beloved boy's life could be over, thanks to my irresponsibility. How on earth could I prevent such a tragedy?

Leaving Helen far behind, I ran along the path seeking some way in to the field. Sam meanwhile was shepherding the sheep out of that field and in to a neighbouring one. He was doing this as to the manner born and I could only wish that he were doing it with the farmer's blessing, for even in my panic I couldn't fault his technique. But I had a strong feeling that he could not be heading in a worse direction.

This feeling was compounded as I finally reached a road and saw, to my mounting horror, exactly where Sam was for some reason headed.

He was bringing the sheep home - home to the farmhouse that I was currently passing at record speed! Yes, my boy was coming toward me, preceded by a fairly orderly bunch of sheep.

Reaching the farm-gate, I was temporarily seized by fresh panic as I faced a large Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted notice. So here we were, in full view of the farmhouse and whoever might be within - Sam with 'his' flock, keeping anything but a low profile, and me about to trespass through dire necessity.

Seeing me, suddenly, Sam saved me from having to climb the gate. As he saw me, it was as if he came with some surprise to his senses ... and his expression distinctly said 'Mum, quick, get me out of this mess'. His job done and the sheep safely home he came, tongue lolling, and flopped within reach.

Grabbing his collar, I almost throttled him as I yanked him through a gap created by a bent bar in the gate. Then, to my dizzying relief, his lead was on and we were making a mad dash back to Helen, who had remained with her exemplary Beardies within the shelter of the woods, whistling and calling the errant Sam in vain.

When I regained some breath and my heart had slowed down, I asked my friend whether she thought I should find the farmer and apologize to him, or alternatively volunteer Sam as a bona fide farm worker. Giving these ideas short shrift, Helen recommended a disappearing trick - a recommendation that we all swiftly acted upon.

Another valuable Beardie lesson learned ... another adventure over.

## Sam Goes Missing

It was a freezing January morning - one when the earth truly stood hard as iron, the water like a stone. Snow had not yet fallen though. It was possibly too cold.

As Sam and I set out at first light, the frost glistened and gave the moors a magical quality, while the rigid marram grass had the look of strange, alien vegetation. Not that Sam was unduly concerned with the changes that had taken place. True to form, his eyes were focused not on the ground, but on the sky.

Descending to the usually marshy valley, where reeds at the river's edge stood stiffly to attention, my boots scrunched on the sandy path's frozen crust, but Sam's eager paws scarcely connected with this as he spotted the gulls congregating on Three Cliffs Bay. Across our horizon, now at low tide, the sands stretched endlessly, white instead of buff-coloured and shimmering in the rising sun.

Sam made full, exuberant use of them as he launched himself among the gulls. Surrounded by wings, he put all his energy into growing some and becoming a bird. A bouncier Beardie than Sam that morning I'd never seen, as he covered vast tracts of sand in his dogged(!) attempts to be airborne. He kept disappearing in to the distance and then reappearing, chuffed with his clearance of the beach.

I can't be sure quite when he went missing. I was so stirred by the morning and so certain Sam would keep returning that my memory of his non-return is blurred. It was the silence that I noticed first. This, after all his barking in the background of my mind, and the gulls' excited cries, was eerie. There was, I suddenly saw, much to my fright, no sign, near or far, either of him or of them. Had he finally achieved his dream ... and had he flown with his friends to some shore distant from his doggy kingdom?

I was being fanciful again. It was that sort of morning. Where, seriously, was Sam?

I called him, my voice echoing against the cliffs. The echo sounded so hollow that there seemed no hope of Sam answering. Realistically, if I could not see him, the chances were that he could not hear me. He hadn't followed his beloved gulls out to sea, and drowned, had he?

Anxiety soon had me running haphazardly over the beach, calling him and whistling. This silence, except for the swish of the surf, was unnerving. Why, oh why, had I taken my eyes off him? Life without Sam did not bear considering.

But I began having to consider it as it became all too painfully apparent that the lad had vanished. After half-an-hour or so of no sounds and no sightings I had grown quite manic and had started running back up the river-valley.

Meeting a woman who told me there was a bitch on heat 'somewhere up near Shepherd's-the-Shop' I ran in that direction, despite the fact that Sam had invariably shown far more interest in birds than in bitches. Finding where she lived proved no problem but Sam, predictably, had not come visiting.

Now my only hope was that he had taken himself home. He had never done so before, but then he'd never gone missing before, either. I could take a shortcut from Shepherd's - and did, slithering on a steep hill, the mud on which had stiffened in to ruts and ridges. The air was still so cold that my breath was vaporising into little clouds of puff.

I emerged from shadows in to such blinding sunshine that I needed to shield my eyes. My house was straight ahead of me now, set on its hilltop above the undulations of the downs. But such was the dazzle of sun on the frost that - though I knew the house was there - I couldn't actually see it.

Then, after running some more, I saw - or thought I saw - a bedraggled grey and white chap with a big black nose sitting outside the gates that protect my garden from hungry wild ponies. Was I seeing Sam, or a hallucination - and, if it was Sam, who was with him?

As I approached, Sam and his black companion stood up. There was a road between us. Imagine me finding Sam, only to see him run over before I could reach him ...

"Stay!" I shouted, summoning all the authority I could muster, given that I had almost no breath left. "Stay!"

Sam stayed until I had crossed to him. He seemed subdued - woebegone, even. He didn't attempt any welcome - and the other dog, which I'd never seen before and haven't seen since, ambled off. Sam wasn't injured, was he? He had certainly been in the sea - and was watching me almost fearfully, as if to ask whether I was angry. When he saw that I was not, his tail gave a tentative wag and then his whole body began wagging with abandon. I couldn't see any injury. Soon, I was hugging him and being soundly licked and my errant Beardie was promising not to worry me ever again ... until the next time!

## Invitation to Tea

Sam and I had been invited out to tea. The elderly lady who had invited us had met him just once and on that occasion he had been on his best behaviour. So Violet thought him handsome and appealing and certainly didn't foresee any problem with her tea-invitation.

Odd as it may seem, I foresaw a few potential problems – but Sam was keen to accompany me (reassuring me, both with licks and a wholly innocent expression, that he wouldn't dream of putting a paw wrong) ... and, after all, Violet had also suggested a walk.

The walk was to take place in Singleton Park, Swansea. This was a park my boy and I had never walked in previously. We drove the eight miles from home to Violet's little flat in the city and Sam waited relatively patiently in the car while I rang her doorbell.

Violet, some years pre-war, was a Bond Street mannequin and looks to this day every inch the model. On that particular afternoon she answered her door wearing a white turban, white jumper and jacket, calf-length white skirt, white tights and spotless white shoes. Oh dear!

If this is an achievable feat, my heart both lifted and sank upon sight of her. She looked so beautiful ... and, where Sam was concerned, so very vulnerable.

But he had promised, hadn't he, to behave himself? So there was no need for me to worry.

Violet valiantly climbed in to my Shogun and off we drove to the park. In perfect summery weather we then started strolling beneath glorious trees and across immaculate lawns, always with a magnificent view of the sea ... and always with Sam securely on-lead.

That is, his lead was on until Violet pleaded with me to let him have his freedom. Every other dog in the vicinity, she rightly pointed out to me, was running free and it was not fair on Sam to have to walk sedately 'at an old lady's pace'.

Sam – sedate?

I had reservations. But Violet can be most persuasive and Sam was walking so well to heel that I actually began to believe he might have turned over a new leaf. Besides, there were no gulls currently here. So what soup could Sam get in to? Against my better judgment, I let myself be persuaded.

Freed at last, off he bounded, full of joie de vivre, to check out trees and sniffs and anything else of interest. He was a sight for sore eyes and Violet feasted hers on him, commenting that I was over-protective. Dogs needed their play and Sam needed his more than most. He could come to no harm, here in the park.

Lulled in to a false sense of security, I concentrated on Violet and for a few unwise moments forgot Sam. Remembering him again, I soon panicked, for he was nowhere to be seen. Where on earth was he?

Violet spotted him before I did. Beneath a big chestnut tree, he was wallowing neck-deep, in the blackest mud he had ever wallowed in. There had been no rain for days, so mud was something I hadn't envisaged. Appalled, I called Sam, running toward him. But he, ecstatic in his mud-bath, had no thought at all of responding to the call of a spoilsport. He wriggled further in, ensuring that there was no part of him untouched by mud. His thoroughness was quite awesome.

By the time that he emerged, closely resembling some spectre from a horror-film, Violet was positioned nearby and finding his antics highly entertaining.

It was all too obvious what would happen next – and, certain that Violet was Sam's selected target, I charged between them like some demented thing. My timing (born of long experience) was spot on. As Sam began shaking himself, I took the full force of the mud.

As I wasn't wearing white, no great harm was done – and Violet never wore white in Sam's company again. For some reason she didn't ask him in for tea ...

## A Lunch to Remember

Sam had been invited out to lunch. He was very excited – and included me in his arrangements, which was how we came to arrive at his hostess's home, known locally, and to Lewis-the-post, just as 'Beulah'.

This was not far from where we lived but belonged in another world. Small and wooden, it stood deep in its riotously colourful garden just beyond some sand dunes that we could see from our upstairs windows. Sam was in fine fettle at the prospect of some nosh laid on especially for him and hurried me there, his tail purposefully in the air.

We were the only guests – but oh my, given the size of the premises, there were a few too many residents! Seven or eight of these raced out to greet us as we reached the little wooden gate at the end of their garden path. Their various barks did not sound altogether hospitable and I saw Sam's enthusiasm falter for a bit. But the enticing smell coming from the kitchen soon had his nostrils quivering, so we both braved the reception party and ventured within.

The front door was open, as apparently was customary, and once we were through it other smells mingled with those of cooking. The air was heavy (and somewhat oppressive) with the distinctive odour that can come from animals far outnumbering humans. Just one human lived in this menagerie – and she appeared as we reached the end of the tiny hallway surrounded by leaping canines and watched by what seemed like a hundred cats lying or sitting on every available surface in the small living room. "So you found us?" Megan said, wiping floury hands on a heavily stained apron. "Sit down if you can find somewhere to sit and I'll bring us a drink."

It was a big 'if' – but Sam, who was not used to cats, helped in this. There was a fat tabby asleep on the easy chair Megan had indicated and Sam soon woke him up and sent him packing, straining on his lead as he tried to go in pursuit. It seemed wise, with temptation lurking for him in every nook and cranny (and there were a good few!) not to set Sam free. But it was no easy option either to keep him on his lead. Each time a cat streaked across the room Sam did his utmost to streak across it too. Whereas the dog-residents had settled down on their various chairs and blankets, many of them sharing this accommodation quite amicably with a cat, Sam was on red alert – never relaxing his guard for a moment.

Megan returned with two glasses, one of which she handed to me. Sam wagged his tail expectantly. "So you're thirsty too, are you?" she asked him. "Or is it hungry you are?"

"He's rather finicky," I told her.

"That's through being an only child," she explained to me pityingly. "He'll like my stew, though."

Hoping so, while Megan went to fetch some for him from the pan she said was always simmering in her kitchen, I tentatively sipped my drink. This had fur floating on its surface and tasted intriguingly like sherry diluted with cat-pee! Fortunately, a nearby plant looked thirsty ...

To my utter astonishment and relief, Sam pounced on his stew as if he hadn't eaten for a week and didn't stop guzzling until his bowl was empty. He then raised his head and looked at Megan, wistfully licking his lips. Uttering the magic words "It's more you want, is it?" she went on a second expedition to her kitchen.

When Sam had demolished his next helping it was our turn and Megan led the way through to her miniscule dining room, which overlooked the tangled back garden.

She was a woman who could never turn away a stray so this room, too, had its feline population. A cat slept on the dresser, next to an uncovered butter dish, and soon another one was stepping gracefully over a bowl filled with fruit salad. A third leapt onto the table and made its way across, sometimes between, sometimes over, the plates and dishes assembled there. Then Sam went to work, bouncing and barking until the table cat at least retreated, leaving a sprinkling of hair in my salad.

After examining my cutlery, when Megan's back was turned, I gave this a surreptitious wipe on my skirt. As to the haphazard grey 'pattern' round the rim of my mainly white plate – I discovered with a wetted finger that the greyness had not been put there by the manufacturer. Oh dear!

Closing my mind to any further discoveries and trying not to choke as I swallowed cat fur, I managed to dispatch most of my salad. I drew the line, however, at eating the green caterpillar that drew attention to itself just in time on a lettuce leaf.

It wasn't the most relaxed meal I've ever had but I couldn't fault Megan's well-meant generosity to Sam and me and she's certainly a generous hostess to *all* her guests. But when, just before we left, she invited us to come again I'm afraid I incurred my boy's displeasure by being a little vague as to when we'd next be free!

## Sam Discovers Red Mud

A freshly groomed Sam and I were staying with my cousin Barbara and her husband David in their lovely converted oast house and, to date, my boy had been amazingly well behaved. In fact, comment had been made about how – now that he was nine and by some reckonings middle-aged – he had become somewhat more sedate.

Barbara and David are not ‘doggy people’ and to the best of my knowledge have never owned a dog, but they are fond of Sam and have been very tolerant of his various high jinks on our occasional visits. He in turn loves travelling to Warwickshire to sniff the air and test the smells there, ever on the look out for fresh adventure.

When on our second morning Barbara suggested a shopping expedition in Ludlow both David and Sam turned pale, neither being keen on retail therapy. So we women set off, leaving our men to take their leisure – David with his newspaper, Sam (who had taken me for a long walk before breakfast) peacefully asleep at his feet.

Driving through picturesque scenery to Shropshire I reflected on the pleasure of being out and about with Barbara knowing that Sam and David were keeping each other company. I then threw myself into the enjoyment of shopping and of chatting over a leisurely coffee.

Barbara and I so enjoyed ourselves that it had gone two by the time we returned home, ravenous for some lunch. As she fished for her key I glanced through the glass panel to one side of the large wooden front door when a movement within caught my attention. Then I did more than glance – not quite believing the sight I was seeing, for it was like something from a horror film.

The sole bits that were familiar were the black nose and the bright eyes. As to the rest – well, the formerly free-flowing slate and white fur was quite unrecognisable beneath a thick layer of red mud which hung in strands and globs from all over Sam’s body. Almost impossible, even given past history, to equate this apparition with the fluffy fellow I had left behind me. How had he and David achieved such a feat? And, perhaps a more pressing point, given the fact that Sam was indoors, what was the fate of the honey-coloured plain carpet covering the floors throughout the house?

As Barbara opened the door she shared my dismay at Sam’s state but quickly pointed out to me that he was enclosed in the paved area between the kitchen and the dining room, which I had forgotten was uncarpeted – so this was one worry less. As to how Sam had turned from dog to monster: well, it being a sunny day, after reading his paper David had decided on a little stroll along the path to neighbouring fields. Sam had, of course, not objected to accompanying him, so off they had gone – David seeing no need for a lead as he lived in the heart of the country. *No need ... ?*

There had been absolutely no problem until the puddle was reached. Then, as David looked on in shock, Sam did a delighted belly flop and landed right in mid-mud, wallowing for a bit. Once his front had benefited satisfactorily from the experience he did a nifty flip to give his back a turn, rolling and wriggling and kicking his paws aloft for a full five minutes. This was his first unrestricted experience of gluey Warwickshire mud and he was obviously determined to make the most of it. No disputing that he had done a thorough job. As I gazed at him I could not see even a centimetre of fur in its original colour. Sam was well and truly muddied!

And this particular brand of red mud is stubborn. Ordinary hosing proved useless. Being an eternal optimist, I had not thought to bring any doggy shampoo on this quick visit so we resorted to using liquid soap from the kitchen – David aiming the hose while I rubbed and scrubbed ... and dreamed of lunch.

By the time Sam was recognisable as Sam it had gone three-thirty and we humans were feeling faint with hunger. He, though, was shivering from the prolonged onslaught of cold water under a cloudy sky and was still in no condition to be permitted indoors. So I ran round the large garden with him until he was warmer, by which time the sun was, mercifully, shining again and bringing its additional warmth. There was now nothing against my tying him to the leg of a patio bench so that he could dry off naturally in the sunshine while David and I joined Barbara inside for the lunch she'd been preparing for us.

As for the remainder of the afternoon: I spent this doing some very necessary grooming and making copious resolutions to brief potential Sam-handlers in future ...

## Sam Among The Ponies

Sam, my creative Beardie, became very agitated during that long hot summer and kept coming to tell me of his worry that the wild ponies on the moors opposite were thirsty. He also told me that if we rigged up the hosepipe so that it poked through our hedge, this would give the poor ponies a much-needed source of water. In case anyone is wondering, he did the telling by barking in the ponies' direction and then bringing me one end of the hose so that I'd get the message.

Unconvinced that the ponies would appreciate his efforts, I nevertheless responded to Sam's urgent pleas and then watched from my front drive as curiosity brought the first pony (a young foal) over. So I saw the concentration involved in working out how best to benefit from this hedge-fountain and had a clear view of teeth and tongue as the pony experimented with a variety of angles for the drinking process. Soon he was gulping the water down and pawing the now wet ground. Some of his elders, drawn by the baby's strange behaviour and by the sound of running water, then decided to follow his lead and venture over ... and I noticed how patient they were with each other as they waited their turn at the 'tap'.

Meanwhile, Sam was looking extremely pleased with himself and eying me as if to suggest that he had earned a biscuit or at least some praise. I gave him both, also finding some carrots and bread for the ponies, which were of course suffering from more than a shortage of water, the drought having turned the grass yellow and left them with insufficient grazing. How did they repay Sam for alerting me to their needs?

A few days later Sam and I were respectively whizzing and walking on Three Cliffs Bay. The sun shone from a clear blue sky and there seemed to be no hazards on our horizon. With neither sheep, nor any horse-riders (Sam objected vociferously to humans on horseback) in sight and with gulls preoccupying him as usual, I felt that we were set fair for a stress-free stroll. Will I *never* learn?

To my surprise, as we rounded the Three Cliffs, I saw that the ponies had come down to the river to drink. It was early for them to have descended into the valley, besides which they had crossed the pebbled area from marshland on to the actual sand. This was most unusual. In fact, it was the first time I had ever seen the whole herd gathered on the beach. Suddenly, without any apparent reason, they started stampeding. Sam - never one to miss out on anything - decided to join in.

Before I could stop him, he was haring across the beach ... and, heavens above, in among dozens of thumping hooves! There must have been thirty horses in the herd and Sam was now running with them, apparently not a bit bothered to be surrounded by galloping animals several times his size. Oh me, oh my! I closed my eyes.

What else was there to do when he was hardly likely to hear me calling him above the din of the hooves and when, if he *were* to hear me and – wonder of wonders – try to respond, he would most probably be trampled on? The thundering stopped. Was Sam lying on the sand, accidentally battered to death by the ponies? I finally found the courage to look and see. The ponies were again drinking from the river that spirals across the beach ... and Sam was panting in front of me.

Breathing a huge sigh of relief I snapped on his lead. I'd had enough excitement for one day and my hair was already a comprehensive grey. What happened next? Something, or someone, startled the ponies before I could take another breath and – manes and tails flowing – they were on the move again, cantering right past Sam and me. I hardly had time to give thanks that he was safely on his lead before this snapped as he strained to break free. Then he was running among his big friends again, oblivious to danger and to my fears.

Hard not to feel fearful ... and foolish: I was unfit to own such a spirited Beardie. He might survive such an adventure once, but could even Sam manage to survive it twice? Being the boy that he was, he did. Or were the ponies protective of him because he had fed and watered them?

## A Wintry Episode

It was mid-winter and Sam and I were out walking very early while my daughter Joanna (who was just visiting for the weekend) was still in bed asleep. My intention was to be home before she awoke so that we could have breakfast together and then a full day of enjoying ourselves. But of course I was reckoning without Sam's habit of changing my plans!

All was well as we crossed the moors and gave the ponies their daily bread and carrots. Descending from Pennard Castle to the beach was, however, a bad decision.

A gale was blowing and the sea was foaming spectacularly, with great waves roaring as they rolled on to the shore. I knew that the tide was going out so saw no danger for Sam as he indulged in his favourite activity of chasing gulls and barking at them. Well wrapped up against the wind I walked briskly at the water's edge, blissfully ignorant of the dramas ahead.

A gull flying in an east-west direction from Three Cliffs to Tor Point soon had Sam in hot pursuit and I saw that as he crossed the river dividing the bay he was swept off his paws and taken by the torrent toward the sea. This was unusual, to say the least, as mostly the river meanders gently across the beach, but fortunately Sam made it safely to the far side and continued his chase.

Unfortunately, once he had spent some of his energy and made up his mind to return to me, he bounded to his side of the river and then refused to risk a second crossing. With the wind blowing his fur all over the place, he stood looking at me as if to say: 'Do something, Mum, for goodness' sake!'

So there we were, the fast-flowing river between us, with no order nor entreaty from me making a jot of difference to Sam's decision to stay where he was.

Knowing his stubbornness of old, and beginning to feel quite peckish, I concluded that my best bet was to cross to him and then walk up the valley to where there was a little bridge. I was wearing Wellingtons so there should surely be no problem ...

Treading carefully, I was approaching mid-river when two things happened. First, the current tugged at my legs until I almost fell and then the water poured over the tops of my wellies. Too alarmed to notice, then, that my feet were frozen as well as soaking wet, I pressed on, trusting that I could keep upright and make it – relatively dry – to Sam's side. Willpower helped in this, and make it I did, feeling both shaken and soggy, to be greeted by my errant boy with a wag and a kiss.

Conscious of time's passage and of the fact that Joanna would by now be up and wondering what was taking so long, I slipped Sam's lead on and started up-valley where I soon discovered an odd phenomenon. The river was the

widest I had ever seen it – and by far the wildest – and was so wide, in fact, that at this juncture it had overflowed its bank making onward passage on flat ground impossible.

So Sam and I had no alternative but to climb the steep hill to our left, which on account of its steepness we had never attempted to climb before. Starting our ascent we (or, rather, I) clutched the branches of trees to avoid slipping back on wet leaves.

It seemed for a while that we would never reach the top, so I was relieved when we did until I saw that our sole way forward was over a barbed wire fence into a field filled with sheep!

With Sam all agog and the sheep eyeing us both with deepest suspicion, I had to lift him over the fence, dropping him on to the far side and clinging for dear life on to his lead at the same time. Then I had to climb over myself, avoiding the barbed bits as best I could but tearing my jeans in the process. I next needed to get my bearings, which was no easy matter with Sam hell-bent on reaching the sheep and rounding them up for the farmer.

We were able to exit eventually via the far gate, which was infinitely preferable to the way we'd entered, and Sam was miffed to be leaving without having done his Beardie duty. As for me, I was shivering so comprehensively that I saw pneumonia as an almost inevitable outcome.

Now my boy and I were descending through woods to a road that as the crow flew was about two miles from home. Crows, though, can go where dogs and humans can't necessarily and our route was long and fairly tortuous, across a ford and up another steep incline before the terrain became flatter and muddier.

With Sam black from the mud he had loved wallowing in and with my teeth chattering, we eventually reached our front door (three hours after leaving), only to be greeted by Joanna: "Where on earth have you been? I was getting frantic enough to send out a search party."

Sam wagged his tail, looking at her as if to say: 'There's never any need to worry about us when Mum has me to keep her safe!'

## Mountaineering

Sam asked me one fine morning whether we could take ourselves off to the mountains. Who could refuse a boy who so obviously knew how to pass a pleasurable few hours? Off we went, a rucksack on my back and a tail-wagging Sam.

We chose the Rhonnda for our excursion and it made sense to me to drive straight to the top of the mountain. That way, I reasoned, I'd cut out the climbing and save my energy for miles and miles of peak- and ridge-walking. I had not of course allowed for Sam's whims, which was foolish given his past history.

Soon after parking the car we met an elderly gentleman who had lived locally all his life and who assured me that no sheep had been seen in the vicinity for months. He walked his dog there daily and laughed at me for even considering putting Sam on a lead.

But long experience had taught me caution and I didn't set him free until after emerging from a wooded area and seeing for myself as I looked along 'my' mountain and across the valley to the range on the far side that, remarkably, the area was sheep-less, or seemed to be.

Sam was in his element and I in mine as we walked in the September sunshine through longish rough grass and bracken that was just beginning to turn, climbing over styles and marvelling at the spectacular scenery. He wasn't even too bothered about birds. With such multi-various new smells he had plenty with which to occupy himself. He ran hither and yon, fur rippling in the breeze, nose twitching with ecstasy. And every so often Sam remembered to look up at me as if to say "Isn't this splendid? Didn't I tell you it would be?"

At picnic-time we tucked in and he had fun sniffing out biscuits that I threw some distance to test his detection powers. All in all things could scarcely have been better and I felt so relaxed after my meal that it would have been very easy to stretch out in the sun and fall asleep. I resisted this temptation. If I hadn't I might well have mistaken the next events for a dream ... a nightmare, I mean!

We continued walking, the current length of grass (it was about knee-high) now slightly discouraging Sam, who stayed most uncharacteristically close to heel (but behind me rather than at my side, padding along on grass I'd semi-flattened for him). I grew so used to turning and seeing him there that for a bit I forgot to turn. Then, when I remembered, he had totally vanished.

In vain I called him ... vainly I looked for him. He had affected a complete disappearing trick.

This was a fine time for me to recall that his name-tag (through sea-induced rust) had fallen off and been lost the previous day – so, horror of horrors, my

boy was now somewhere in the Rhondda with no means of identification! He had been gone twenty minutes or more when I peered over the rim of the mountain and saw ... a sheep: just the one. About a third of the way down (and the mountain was steep!) stood a solitary sheep staring boldly up at me. He (she?) was leaner than my more local sheep, with scraggy skin and an almost aggressive expression. Had the sheep sent Sam packing?!

When after almost an hour there was still no sign (nor sound) of him I flipped. There was nothing for it but to conduct a house-to-house search down in the valley. The obvious route was straight down and in my anxiety I didn't stop to think that this side of the mountain was little short of a precipice. I was on an almost vertical slope, climbing on scrub and loose stones, and it was a long, long way to the village below. But when I finally decided to stop and look back up, that was a long way too. What was I to do?

Almost paralysed with fright (I've no head for heights) I sat down quite unable to move. My next decision was made for me by the fact that Sam was more likely to be below than above. So I slithered some more on my rear end - and saw, as I reached a ridge and peeped over it, that a quarry gaped beneath me, making any move dangerous.

There was nothing for it but to proceed sideways, crab-like, and this I did, edging bit by bit until I was finally beside the quarry, instead of above it.

I had visions of people in the village spotting this blot on their mountain and sending helicopters and such to rescue me. So determined was I not to have this happen that a kind of courage spurred me on. Then when I was two-thirds of the way down, gripping hold of a rock for dear life and wondering for the umpteenth time where Sam was, a sound made me look round.

There, scrutinising me curiously as if bemused by my eccentricity in sitting clutching a rock inanimately, was Sam – scrambling from *above* me and ignoring the sheep that had started me on my precarious journey!

Where had Sam been? He wasn't saying ... and of course once we'd reached village-level safely we had the slight problem of having left the car on the mountaintop!

## Sensitive Sam

Sam showed a brand new side to himself one day. Fact is, he displayed two traits I hadn't previously associated with him. I'd best explain.

We were returning from our morning walk in a thick mist when, on the moors opposite our home, we found ourselves approaching a herd of wild ponies just as a foal was about to be born. Never having witnessed such a birth before, I stopped in my tracks – as did Sam, who seemed immediately to sense that silence and stillness were required of him.

Sam silent ... Sam still?

Yes, we both stood silently as the grey mare lay down on the springy turf and the other ponies gathered round her. Sam and I were nudged by them in to the gathering and he was not the slightest bit bothered by this nudging, nor by successive ponies rubbing noses with him. He was part of it all, as I was, and soon – with Sam now sitting as if immobilised – we were totally boxed in. An extraordinary, almost eerie, calm settled over everything, with snuffles and such dulled by the mist. Sam held himself rigid, clearly conscious of something momentous occurring.

The 'bubble' beneath the grey mare's tail grew as she strained to deliver her baby. Every few minutes she stood and stomped about a bit before resuming her prostrate position.

Suddenly, two tiny hooves emerged within their protective fluid-filled bubble. Then, after a little interval, the foal's head also appeared.

Hooves and head protruding from her rear end, the mare stood again and stretched while I held my breath and hoped that her foal would survive this mid-birth exercise.

Now, once she had virtually thrown herself back on the ground, the stallion came to her and placed a tentative hoof on her heaving belly while also nuzzling her neck. I had the strong impression of a male feeling helpless at such a time and attempting to help by his presence, if nothing else.

Sam, meanwhile, had not moved a muscle. He was staring straight ahead as if riveted by events. Never before had I seen him so still or so awed. Sam did not even move when, seemingly recovered from her labours within half-an-hour of the start of it all, the mare stood up and nonchalantly started to graze. Sam's fascination continued as her baby vigorously kicked its way from the placenta and endeavoured to test its legs. How the filly tried to get upright! Again and again she tried, with Sam and me willing her to succeed – once landing abruptly in a heap as her hind legs crumpled beneath her. Then, at one hour old, all the persistence met with success: the herd's newest addition stood, on wobbly legs splayed out haphazardly, looking mighty pleased with herself.

Only now did Sam remove his attention from the newcomer and look up at me. The spell was over. It must surely be time to go home and eat!

We visited 'our' filly often and named her Bethan. Her herd seemed to treat Sam and me differently following her birth – coming over to greet us whenever we were in the vicinity. And Sam in turn was docile with them all rather than boisterous. Could it be that thanks to our shared experience we were subsequently seen as part of their extended family? More to the point, could it also be that my beloved Beardie had learned a lasting docility?

## Sam – The Soul of Discretion

Sam and I had decided to take a trip to Fishguard and he had packed his bags in next-to-no-time. He believed in travelling light, so his gear weighed somewhat less than mine. I saw that he had brought an old slipper and a large pig's ear.

Giving him baked pig's ears as treats went against my vegetarian beliefs, but the consumption of meat was one thing on which Sam and I disagreed and he had long since insisted on his daily diet of tripe and beef. I could hardly argue with his philosophy that we must each follow our own star. Sam's philosophies always seemed somehow to be beyond argument.

Because he gazed at me pleadingly I relaxed a rule and let him sit beside me in the Shogun. Sam had never taken to being treated like a dog and banished to the back, despite having more room there than at the front with me. It was a question of principle, I think ... along with the fact that he had always been partial to travelling with one paw on my knee!

Sitting in the front, with his seat-belt firmly fastened, Sam looked every inch a person – until passing pedestrians or motorists peered closer and discovered to their astonishment that they were in fact seeing a Samson.

It was a perfect morning for our drive to Pembrokeshire. Crossing first to north Gower, our route took us through leafy lanes beneath an azure sky. My heart felt light and Sam's paw on my knee felt protective as well as loving. What could be better than setting off with him on another adventure?

From Llanelli we went via Burry Port and Kidwelly to Carmarthen, after which it was the A40 to Haverfordwest and on to our destination.

With Sam acting as navigator upon arrival in Fishguard (his nose being more reliable than my map-reading) we soon found the farm where we were to stay. Built of stone and set in a sheltered hollow away from sea-winds, it was a traditional farmhouse with a warm welcome waiting. Mrs Gilbert ushered us in talking nineteen-to-the-dozen and we were soon meeting some of her residents, including several donkeys and a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig. Naturally Sam knew better than to mention to him the pig's ear he had eaten on our journey.

I too had eaten en route so after being shown to our cosy room there was no need to delay before setting off for pastures new. I had seen a signpost to Strumble Head and this very definitely beckoned, especially after Mrs G mentioned the seals and dolphins in residence, along with puffins, guillemots, razorbills, fulmars and many others. I had once read how the northern fulmar defended itself against intruders – by squirting stinking oil, produced from its stomach, over them! Perhaps if Sam were subjected to this treatment his fascination with birds would cease. Perhaps, on the other hand, it would increase!

We drove onto the Head, which was as wild and rugged as any headland we had visited. Parking near the lighthouse I opened the car door, only to have it almost blown off its hinges by the wind. It might be summer elsewhere but this coast was being well and truly buffeted. How rocky it was – how spectacular! And there were staggering views across Cardigan Bay and St George's Channel. There were also sea birds seemingly everywhere. Could I see an albatross in the far distance? No, but it was one of the few birds that I could *not* see!

For obvious reasons I kept Sam securely on-lead. How he longed to be free! But he made the best of things and, in between gazing skywards and wishing, found some simply delicious sniffs. We walked for miles along that incredible coastline and worked up hearty appetites that we satisfied later in an ancient inn. After such an extensive buffeting, and with so much good food inside me, once my head hit the pillow I knew nothing till morning.

Sam and I were awoken by a 'cock-a-doodle-do'. This was a sound I often heard at home, but not from so close. We also had peacocks in Pennard and it had taken me quite a while to establish the source of their rather raucous talk. The cockerel was telling Sam and me in no uncertain terms that it was time to get up and have breakfast.

But I had forgotten to mention that I was a vegetarian. I soon saw my error when Mrs G proudly put in front of me a plate containing two eggs, fried bread, grilled tomatoes, several sizzling bacon rashers, kidneys and sausages. Too late to tell her now! I couldn't bear to see that beaming smile fade from her face. So I'd have to think of some alternative, enlisting the help of someone sitting not too far from me – someone who might not be averse to a sausage or three.

Sam showed no aversion as I slid the kidneys under the table, quickly following these with rashers of bacon. In fact, there was considerable danger of our hostess hearing him gobbling and licking his lips. But she didn't, so once the sausages had cooled a little I gave these to him too in quickly digestible chunks. And from beneath the tablecloth I saw him gazing soulfully at me as if in love!

Bringing me toast and more tea and clearing my commendably empty plate away, Mrs G commented how she liked a hearty appetite, adding: "I haven't forgotten Sam, no indeed. I hope he's fond of sausages because I've saved him these three!"

*Paw note: I was too gentlemanly to tell on mum so I just had to have a second breakfast. And I didn't complain, even when I felt I might be getting tummy ache. How's that for devoted selflessness?*

© Pamela Glynn (1997)

For more books by this author please go to <http://www.dustysjourney.com> and <http://www.pglynn.co.uk>