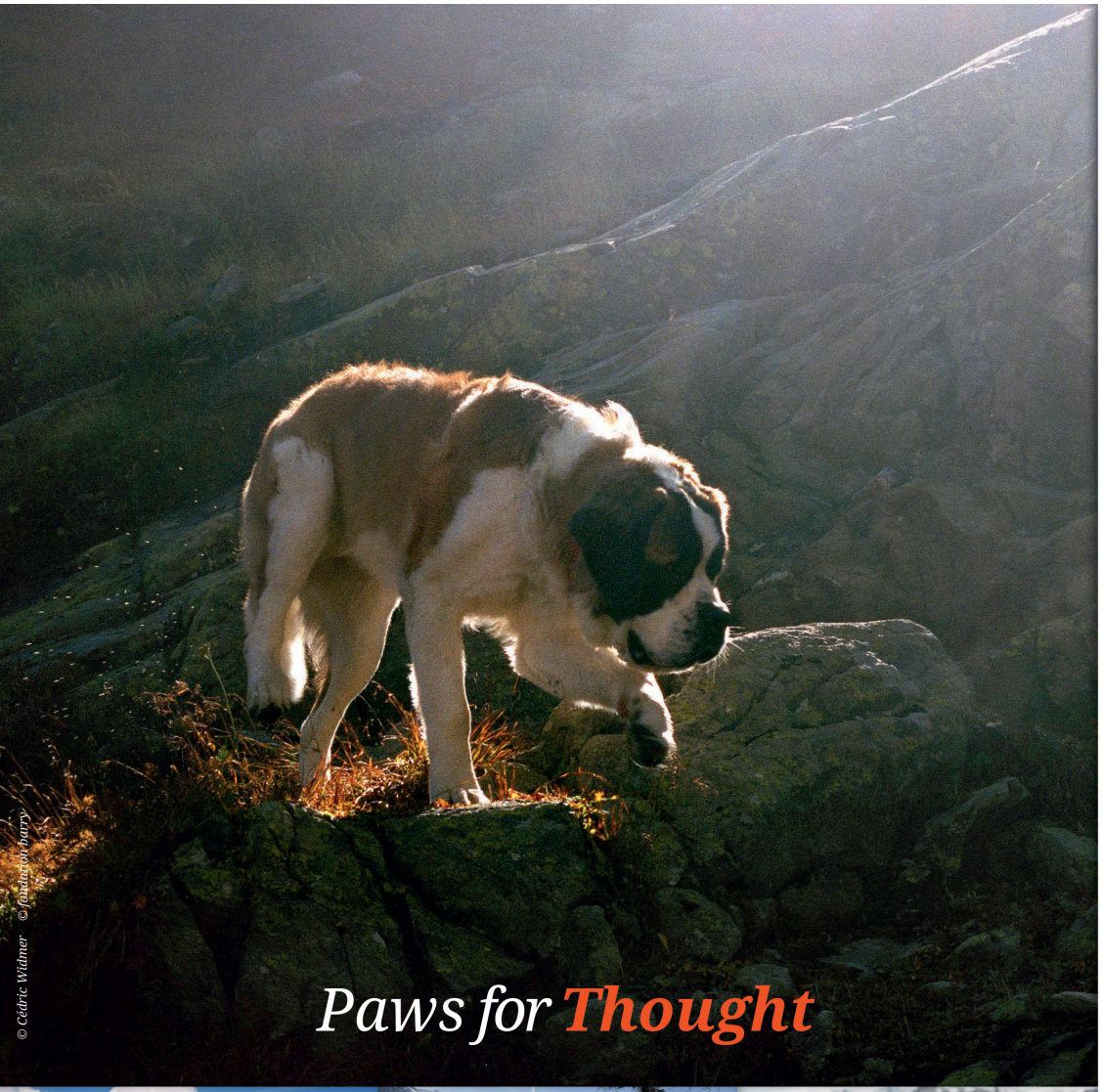


Paws for Thought



Looking for cute puppies to cuddle and tall tales of canine bravery? Welcome to Barryland – home to Switzerland's ***gentlest giants.***

by Katy Dartford

When WRS News Editor Katy Dartford heard the pitter-patter of tiny paws at the famous Grand St Bernard centre in Martigny, our dog-loving colleague was on the road in seconds. Of course her first question was why Barryland? Of all the impressive pedigree names, why is Barry leader of the pack? Well, St Bernard folklore tells us that it was a big, beautiful, brown-eyed hero called Barry who set out from the Holy Order of the Grand St Bernard Monastery one freezing, stormy night in 1805. Discovering a small boy lost among the snow drifts, Barry carried him home. This brave mountain rescue, and as many as 40 other similar feats, turned Barry into the poster boy for mountain dogs worldwide. In fact only dogs bred at Martigny from the same pedigree line as Barry are entitled to call themselves Grand St Bernards.

Here's the low-down from WRS newshound Katy...

> *Nine new puppies have arrived at Barryland – and are ready to meet the public. Their parents are long-haired female Hesta du Grand St. Bernard and the short-haired male Face des Joly Monts de Villiers.*

The media release landed on my desk – and I grabbed my car keys. Cuddly puppies and snow-capped mountains all wrapped up in one news feature? Why waste time asking questions? Definitely a good day at the coal-face of investigative journalism.

The St Bernard is known as a patient, gentle giant who sports a small barrel of brandy around his neck to save avalanche victims – although the monks of Grand St Bernard dispute that they ever offered alcohol as a life-saver. (No hair of the dog there then...) Setting up a refuge for travellers on the high Alpine pass in the 11 th century, they found that large mountain dogs made perfect companions, guides and protectors. The breed they nurtured became known as Grand St Bernards and hundreds of tales of their incredible bravery and fortitude have been handed down across the years. Barry himself lived to 14, which is an exceptional age for a giant breed – swapping the cold peaks for a warm retirement in Bern. In 2005, Fondation Barry took over the breeding kennels and created a centre with immaculate credentials in canine care and training. Today you can meet and play with the St Bernards, see them being groomed – and even join them on a walk.

With male St Bernards weighing in at 75kg, and females at 65kg, this is not a pet to be taken lightly. And with 33 dogs at Barryland the food bills are high. In centuries past the dogs were donated to the monastery by rich local families; today there's a carefully controlled breeding programme and the dogs enjoy VIP vet-monitored treatment. Can't wait to visit this kennel of cuteness? See a live puppy-cam, plus details of opening hours, walks and grooming at *www. foundation-barry.ch*

> *My personal highlight? Watching huge doggy teeth being cleaned with chicken-flavoured toothpaste*

A SAINTLY SOUL

It may be more than 200 years ago since brave Barry patrolled the snow-covered peaks of the Valais in search of lost travellers – but his legend lives on at the Barry Museum in Bern. Housed in a wing of the city's Natural History Museum, this permanent exhibition is dedicated to the life and times of Switzerland's most famous life-saving St Bernard, drawing dog-lovers from around the world to admire paintings, photos and even a 200 year old visitors' book! Taken from records kept at the Alpine refuge of Grand St Bernard, these are tales of bravery in the face of danger from terrible winter storms and dark, freezing nights. Did Barry really carry out all the acts of heroism attributed to him? No one is too sure but he did make 40 documented rescues – so was certainly an exceptional dog. And the Barry Museum perpetuates the magic!

Kids will love seeing the stuffed remains of Barry himself, plus there's a hard to resist Barry Me photo booth.

www.barry.museum.ch