



Pat on the Back

Ashleigh Butler shot to fame in 2012 when, at just 17 years old, she won *Britain's Got Talent* with her dog, Pudsey. Their dance routine on the show prompted Simon Cowell to declare, "This is what I've been waiting for all my life. You are one of my favourite ever acts."

Since winning the show, Ashleigh and Pudsey have danced the conga with Kim Kardashian, flown in a private jet to Hollywood with Simon Cowell, released an autobiography and performed for the Queen. They have also just starred in their own film – *Pudsey: the Movie*.

Pudsey is an eight-year-old mix of Chinese Crested Powder Puff, Border Collie and Bichon Frise.

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Who are the other dogs who share your life?

Pudsey's mum, Buffy, who is an 11-year-old Border Collie-Bichon Frise cross, and puppy Sullivan, who is nearly a year old. He is a mix of Chinese Crested Powder Puff, a Border Collie and a Miniature Poodle.

What is it about mixed breeds that you love so much?

I like to think that Pudsey has some of the best traits coming through from each of the breeds in his background. He has the drive and intelligence of a Border Collie, the fine athletic build and keenness to learn tricks from the Chinese Crested, and the playfulness and big fluffy head from the Bichon Frise.

What's the most expensive thing you've bought Pudsey?

During the summer of 2012 we were invited to perform in front of the Queen at the Derby races. I knew that we would be walking through the public areas and wanted to protect Pudsey from being overly stroked and cuddled by the thousands of people there, so I bought him a special dog buggy. It's like a dog crate on wheels and was just perfect.

What's the best piece of doggie advice you've been given and who gave it to you?

My mum helped me a lot when I first started training dogs at five years old. She said always to put 100 per cent effort into training sessions and always to leave training on a positive note.

What's the naughtiest thing Pudsey has done?

He was staying at a friend's house while I was away on holiday. She had cooked a pizza and left it on a table to cool down. When she went back, she found Pudsey looking sheepish and only a few crumbs of pizza left.

What's Pudsey's best trick?

When he is walking on his hind legs in a routine, he likes it so much that sometimes I find it hard to get him back down on all fours!

Which famous person would you say Pudsey most closely resembles and why?

Simon Cowell reminds me of Pudsey, as they have a similar haircut with a centre parting.

Do you have a favourite doggie product or gadget?

I would have to say a clicker, as I clicker train all my dogs. However, once they have learnt what a clicker is, I do progress to making the clicker noise with my mouth to mark the desired behaviour.

Do you have a favourite doggie day out?

It would have to be an agility show. I have been competing in agility since I was six years old. Pudsey absolutely loves agility too and is an agility Champion.

Have you had any memorable holidays together?

Pudsey and I qualified to represent GB in the European Open Agility Championships in the Czech Republic in 2010 and Austria in 2011. The whole team travelled together on a double-decker coach and they were great experiences.

After we won *Britain's Got Talent*, Pudsey and I went to America for five weeks, spending time in LA, New York and Atlantic City. We travelled out on Simon Cowell's private jet and returned on the Queen Mary 2.

If you and Pudsey were stranded on a desert island, what three luxury items would you want with you?

For me, it would have to be my mobile phone and a double bed for us both to snuggle up on, and Pudsey would have to have his favourite red tuggy toy. ●

More info:

Ashleigh Butler is a supporter of Battersea Dogs and Cats Home. Battersea is embarking on its most ambitious development, to replace its original kennels with brand new facilities. To support a Battersea dog, you can 'Pay for a Day' by donating at www.battersea.org.uk