



Photo gallery: Prince Harry among fans of Holt's four legged pin up star whose calendar raises thousands for veterans charities

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With his strong jaw, muscular body and proud stance it is easy to see why he has become a popular calendar pin up.



Benson meets Hedges! As well as the calendar Benson makes charity cash by being put to stud. Hedges is one of puppies he's sired. Picture: submitted

But this particular almanac star is unlike the posturing pop singers, baby faced boy bands and strapping sports stars that adorn walls throughout the year - because he's a dog.

Benson the five year old Labrador has been appearing on the pages of his own personal charity calendar for six years, and his model-like poses have won him a legion of fans throughout Norfolk, the UK and abroad.

And his publication has even received a royal seal of approval after last year's copy made it into a barracks in Afghanistan, where it caught the eye of Prince Harry.

The popular pet belongs to Colin Scoles, who helps run the shooting club and Combined Cadet Force at Gresham's school in Holt.



Benson the calendar star with students on an exercise. Picture: submitted

Mr Scoles said the Benson calendar started as a "tongue in cheek" enterprise to sit alongside the annual shooting club publication.

But after Benson's glossy coat, inquisitive face and wagging tail made it into print, pupils called for his calendar to become a regular feature.

The shooting club title was dropped, with dates of group fixtures added to Benson's title, and the canine calendar is now an annual sell out, and has raised thousands for veterans charities Help For Heroes and Walking with the Wounded.

Mr Scoles, who served in the Army for 30 years before coming to Gresham's, said: "I thought if we're going to produce one and sell it let's raise money for a worthwhile cause.

"Initially it was all Help For Heroes but two years ago Harriet Parker, wife of Ed Parker who founded Walking with the Wounded, popped into the office. She said she got the calendar every year and do you think we could raise money for Walking with the Wounded.

"There's a school connection with the Parkers as their children go to Gresham's and indeed we have had pupils who have joined the services and sadly lost their lives or limbs."

In each of his pictures Benson proudly wears his Help For Heroes collar and his charity cause has been given a helping paw by Glenn Carr from Jetprint in Erpingham, who throws in an extra 50 copies of the calendar for free during its print run.

Mr Scoles admitted it was becoming difficult to think up 12 different poses for Benson each year but as he accompanied pupils on so many school activities, there was always scope to come up with an original frame.

"He comes to work with me every day. He meets people in reception, goes to the school woods and goes on all the adventure training trips we do," Mr Scoles added. "And when we go to Bisley (in Surrey) with the shooting team, Benson goes too."

Over the years the four legged friend has raised around £7,500 for charity but his canine companionship does not just extend to fundraising.

Mr Scoles said: "He's a very good icebreaker with the young people. The youngsters who come here grow up with him if you like, he's sort of the school mascot."

■ Copies of Benson's 2014 calender are available from reception at Gresham's senior and prep school. Copies can also be posted by calling reception on 01263 714500.