

THE WOODLAND PYTCHLEY HUNT KENNELS **Established 1873**

In Plantagenet days, foxes and wolves were hunted in Rockingham Forest by the North Pytchley Hunt as it was then known. The Woodland Pytchley was established in 1873 by Mr G.L. Watson who erected kennels at Brigstock and hunted the country for three years until 1876. The Huntsman was F. Percival, the kennel/huntsman was Tom Goddard, and William Morgan was whipper-in. Although the pack remained the property of the Pytchley Hunt, up to 1931 the Pytchley paid something towards the expenses of the Woodland Pytchley and maintained the right to appoint the Master. In that year a new arrangement was made and the country was formally separated on terms whereby the Woodland Pytchley country was lent to the committee of the hunt subject to one year's notice on either side. The Pytchley then gave up the right to hunt the Woodland country and had no further say in the appointments of the Masters. They were self-governing while the kennels were leased to the Woodland Pytchley Committee at a nominal rent. The only contract remaining with the Pytchley was the fact that the names of all persons nominated to wear 'The White Collar', scarlet coat and the hunt buttons had to be approved by the Pytchley Hunt Committee.

John Paytz, Fifth Earl Spencer, followed Mr Watson for four seasons. William Goodall was huntsman and W. Hawtin was whipper-in. He was then succeeded by Capt. Pennell Elmhurst for one season 1880-1881 who hunted the pack himself and R. Yeo was whipper-in for him. Capt. Elmhurst, known as 'Brooksby of the Field', was an accomplished writer and horseman who broke nearly every bone in his body in pursuit of the chase. He was succeeded by Lord Lonsdale who brought one of the finest packs of hounds of the day from the Blankney Country. He hunted the hounds himself for four seasons, 1881-1885. R. Yeo was joined by Ben Copell as whippers-in. When Lord Lonsdale retired, Austin Mackenzie J.P. came to the fore from 1885-1899 and this mastership had a bright period in hunting history for he brought with him his own hounds from the old Berkeley Country. Kane Croft hunted hounds three or four days a week in the first season. Mackenzie seemed unable to keep a whipper-in as he had eleven different ones in fourteen seasons. During his seasons he killed 345 brace of foxes, 30 brace in one season, 1896-97. Mackenzie lived in the Manor House at Brigstock. In 1899 he sold his hound pack for 3,000 guineas and his bitch pack for 3,000 pounds. Lord Southampton, the new master, started to hunt the country in 1899 and continued to do so until 1901 with the help of Tom Ashley and Charles Deans as whippers-in.

Mr Walter de Cazenove was at head of affairs until 1903. In the first season Ned Judd was huntsman and whippers-in were Jim Dawson and Charles Deans and in the second season, 1902-1903, Jim Dawson was huntsman and George Sharpe and Charles Deans were whips. In 1903 Mr Wroughton, who had previously bought the bitch pack from Mackenzie, resumed office. Jim Dawson was still huntsman and first and second whips were Macbride and Charles Deans. This mastership lasted until 1908 when the Duke of Beaufort bought the dog hounds which were a great success in the Badminton Country. Mr Charles Mills then became master for one season, hunting hounds himself. H. White was appointed kennel/huntsman. Mills was followed by Mr E.A.V. Stanley who came from the Devon and Somerset

staghounds. He brought with him Bill Chudley as kennelman. Mr Stanley resigned in 1913.

Major Henry Wallis-Wright mastered and hunted with T. Pitman as kennel/huntsman a pack of black and tans which he brought with him from the Four Burrow. This mastership lasted until Capt. G. E. Belville re-established an orthodox pack in the country in 1920. Capt. Belville hunted hounds himself with Alf Rosser as kennel/huntsman and Tom Davis as whip. In 1923-4 Bill Chudley joined the staff as whipper-in and remained so until 1926. After six years Capt. Belville was joined in dual control by Mr G.F. Lucas until 1930. These two masters hunted hounds alternate days, Mr Lucas hunting the bitch pack. Mr Lucas retired from the mastership but still remained the secretary. Capt. Belville was in sole command for another two seasons until 1932. In 1936 Bill Chudley retired from the hunt to become landlord of the Green Dragon. During his time as landlord he was sometimes called upon to whip-in to Jim Welch during the war period. Mr Chudley's two sons, Jack and Keith, are well-known gundog trainers at Harper's Brook Kennels in Brigstock.

The American sportsman, Victor Emmanuel, succeeded Capt. Belville as master for one season, 1932-33. Mr Emmanuel lived in Rockingham Castle and owned some very useful racehorses including Totaig and Statesman. He purchased the pack and presented it to the country (the hounds being owned by the country and not an individual). Mr Emmanuel resigned to take up joint mastership of the Pytchley. The kennel/huntsman for those two seasons was D. Thatcher; W. Welch was first whip and T. Mair was second whip.

The 1933-34 season saw a joint mastership of Capt. J.A. Hornesby and Mr R.W. Kaye, and in 1935 they were joined by Mr Gordon Pain of Corby House. Capt Hornesby hunted hounds and first whip was Dick Thatcher; second whip was J. Wills. In 1935-37 Sir Julian Cahn (Bart), who had previously mastered the Burton, took over control of the country for two seasons. The first season saw Dick Thatcher as huntsman and F. Phillpotts as first whip, and the second season P. Durne was huntsman. Upon being elected master of the Fernie Sir Julian Cahn resigned in 1937. The mastership was taken over by the Misses V. and M. Wilson of Brooke Priory, Oakham who brought with them that well-known huntsman Jim Welch. These carried on through the difficult war years until 1945. The Misses Wilson always hunted until May in order to catch, as they called it, 'a May fox.'

The huntsman, Jim Welch, was the father of the international show jumper Freddie Welch who also lived at Brigstock and was groom for Mr Jim Steward. He also had another son who died at the age of fourteen and is buried in the village cemetery.

1945-46 the committee ran the country without a master, most of the work falling to Capt. Belville. However, in 1946 Major Michael F. Berry and his sister Mrs A. Long became joint masters. They remained until 1950. Major Berry hunted hounds himself whenever possible but, if unable to be present, the kennel/huntsman, James Stanley, carried on.

The war created housing difficulties and, in 1946, it became necessary to build two new cottages to accommodate the hunt staff. After friendly negotiations between the two hunts, the Pytchley gave the kennels to the Woodland Pytchley and the

latter had two up-to-date cottages built by Braybrooke Bros. The old cottage where the present day huntsman lives was originally a cobbler's shop. It was built with a thatched roof and was destroyed by fire, but when this happened I do not know. At the end of the cottage facing the road you can still see the place where a small window was built from where people could collect their shoes.

1946-47 saw another change in whips. Cecil Gooch took over from James Stanley, with Ted Vickers as second horseman and J. Wills as kennelman. Bush Will as he was known became landlord of the Golden Lion pub on Hall Hill, now a private house. 1947-48 brought another change. George Goodwin came as first whip, Phil Barker as second horseman, and Ted Hill as kennelman. The only change in 1948-49 was that Jack Deenes became kennelman. 1949-50 saw a complete change of staff. Jim Stanley took the position of first whip. Second horseman was Frank Bishop, and Rex Millborn was kennelman. This was closely followed by a change of mastership in 1950-52 when Squadron Leader Barnes became master, with Mr Onions as first whip.

In 1952-55 a joint mastership was taken on by Capt. A. Goddard and Mr C. Busby. The new huntsman for the period was Joe Wright who came from the Vale of White Horse Hunt in Gloucestershire. He stayed with the Woodland Pytchley for sixteen years until his retirement in 1968. For the first three seasons Tom Pearson carried the whip. 1955-58 the joint masters were Major Berry, Capt. Jackson and Mrs Long. During the last season Jim Steward supplied horses to the hunt.

A new joint mastership in 1958 lasted 10 years – that of Major Berry and John Burgess from East Carlton. Phil Dodwell came in 1958 as first whip from the Badsworth Hunt and stayed for eleven years. He now lives in the village in Horsebrook Cottage.

From 1966-68 the whipper-in was Peter Jones. 1967 was a bad season for hunting as there were only fourteen cub-hunting meets and ten hunting meets. This was because of the bad outbreak that year of foot and mouth disease.

1968 saw another change in mastership when Mr Escombe took office. He was master for two seasons and hunted hounds himself with Geoff Harrison as kennel/huntsman the first season, and Cooper Atkinson the second. In 1970 Major E. Commerford of Pipewell took on the mastership and Cooper Atkinson was appointed huntsman and Roberts Streather was whipper-in. This partnership lasted for two seasons. Also, in this year, a committee was formed to run the hunt. Mr Thursfield, acting as joint master with Major Commerford, suffered a fatal heart attack on horseback while hunting at Dingley at the beginning of the 1971-72 season. John Paynter and Mrs M. Seed replaced Mr Thursfield as joint masters with Major Commerford. The new huntsman was Tom Teanby who stayed for six seasons, and the new whipper-in was Mervyn Homewood. After four years the place of whipper-in was taken by Miss Jill More, only the second female whipper-in on record for this hunt. 1976 saw a further change in mastership with Mr Dick Lunn assisting Major Commerford, and this is the mastership to date. In 1978 Tom Teanby left the Woodland Pytchley to hunt Fitzwilliam pack and he was succeeded by Bryan Welsh from the Enfield Chase. Mr Welsh is still with us.

RECORD HUNT

I had the pleasure of reading a letter of a record hunt written by Joe Wright and presented to the master. It was about a draw in Springwood, between Brigstock and Benefield, where a brace of foxes were found. One escaped over by Yoke Hill Farm; the other was seen by Phil Dodwell, the whipper-in, so the hounds were hollowed onto the scent. The fox was hunted through Blackthorns, Harry's Park Wood, Stanion Pits, then over to Geddington Chase, into Brigstock Parks between Twelve Trees Lodge and Bullimore's Lodge, and past Brakehill Farm. The fox was then seen by a farm worker and the chase continued through Grafton Park and over the fields to Twywell Pits. The fox was then sighted by a farmer, Mr Childs, and it then swam a small stream near Woodford House before the hounds finally caught up with and killed the fox.

The hunt was about thirty miles point-to-point and the only people to finish with the hunt were the huntsman, the whipper-in (whose horse, I have been told, was never any use for hunting again) and Mr V. Whittaker, a farmer from Slipton, with Mr John Loveday from Brigstock. These two were travelling in a Landrover.

WOODLAND PYTCHLEY HUNTING COUNTRY

The Woodland Pytchley hunting country is some twenty miles in length from North to South and eighteen miles in breadth. It is bounded on the North by the Cottesmore and Fernie, on the East by the Fitzwilliam, and on the West by the Pytchley and Oakley hunts. The borderline on the South is the River Nene. On the Southern borders of the Woodland Pytchley country are woodlands and coverts from Biggin Estates. There is also Oundle Wood, Bearshanks, then through the woods of Lilford, Little and Great Wadenhoe right down to the Southern-most point of the county which is Finedon Poplars and Craddocks Thorns.

The Western border of the country is the main railway line, along which are Cranford Wood, Charfields, Rectory Thorns and Stubbs. There are then three small coverts which almost guarantee a fox, before going through Weekley Hall Wood, Gauntly, Brampton Wood and the Hermitage to reach the North Western point which is Dingley Warren.

From Dingley, the Woodland Pytchley country is open field through the Welland Valley up to Rockingham where the River Welland is the borderline. Small coverts such as Waterloo Gorse, Galborough and Burgess' Gorse are along here. A central link between these woods is Pipewell woods. Between here and Eastern boundary are Carlton Forest, Swinhawe, King's Wood and Oakley Pirlieus. The Eastern part of the country continues from Laxton and Bulwick Woods to Glapthorne Cowpastures and Short Wood near Southwick.

Near the kennels we have Fermyn Woods, Harry's Park, Springwood, and Banshaw, and from the village are Laudimer Wood, Weldon Rough Park to Geddington Chase and Old Head Wood which divides the grassland known as Brigstock Parks. The last part of our country is through Grafton Park, Snapes, Titchmarsh Wood, Oxen Wood, Lady Wood, Cherry Lap, Stephen's Oak, Tresham and Royal Coppices and Catshead \wood. The three small coverts behind the kennels are Mauntley Wood, Samby Sykes and Stubby Stiles.

PRINCIPAL MEETING PLACES

Aldwinkle	Deene	Glaphorn	Rockingham
Ashley	Dingley	Harringworth	Slipton
Brigstock	Dobhall	Little Oakley	Stoke Doyle
Bulwick	Deenethorpe	Laxton	Sudborough
Brampton Ash	East Carlton	Lowick	Twywell
Benefield	Fermyn Woods	Middleton	Weldon
Barton Seagrave	Finedon	Oakley Hall	Warkton
Cottingham	Grafton	Pipewell	Weekley
Drayton House	Gretton	Rushton	Stoke Albany
Cranford			

POINT-TO-POINT RACE COURSES

The hunting season mostly ends at the end of March. In April the Woodland Pytchley holds a point-to-point race meeting. The first racecourse was built in fields called Bridgemeanows, about three-quarters of a mile from Brigstock on the Thrapston Road where the first bridge spans Harper's Brook.

About 1920 the course was moved to Bullimore's Lodge which is on the right of Grafton Road in Brigstock Parks. It is about two miles from the village. After about five years the course was moved to the Dusthill Road (Map 1 illustrates the fields and route of the course).

I have a record of two local farmers, Mr F. Steward who won his race on a horse called St Alnow, and Mr T. Ellis who won his race on a horse called Shady Lady. In the 1930s the course was moved to its present site at Dingley. This is one of the finest race courses for miles and the full course can be viewed from the starting flag to the finishing post. (Map 2 illustrates the course).

On the 12th April 1934 the Woodland Pytchley Hunt race cup was given. The result was:

1 st	Galazi owned by Mr F.J. Steward ridden by owner	Betting 12 to 7
2 nd	Palmy Days owned by Mr H.S. Watts ridden by L.Ewell	Betting 12 to 7
3 rd	Balfstomn owned by Mr R.W. Urquart ridden by owner	Betting 12 to 7

There are other well-known people mentioned in the poem but I do not know it all. I think it was written or made up about 1900.

J.E. Bailey 1980
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