



Hark to the Line

<http://www.oakridgefoxhuntclub.com>
Huntline: 540.456.8787

The Newsletter for the Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club
January 2007

Master's Report

Huntsman

Dr. Rita Mae Brown, MFH

Joint Master

David Wheeler, MFH

Professional Whipper-In

Dana Flaherty

Hon. Whipper-In

Dr. Mary T. O'Brien

FEBRUARY

Fri. 2	Run-In Shed
Sun. 4	Oak Tree
Fri. 9	Snell Farm
Sat. 10	Foxden
Sun. 11	Great Meadow Ashland Bassets
Wed. 14	Chellowe
Fri. 16	St. Mary's Chapel
Sun. 18	Run-In Shed Jt. Meet Colonial
Fri. 23	Buffalo Station
Sun. 25	Cherry Hill

MARCH

Fri. 2	Old Wilson House
Sun. 4	Kennels
Fri. 9	Oak Tree
Sun. 11	Snell Farm
Wed. 14	Chellowe
Fri. 16	St. Mary's Chapel
Sat. 17	Joint Meet at Glenmore
Sun. 18	Closing Hunt Cherry Hill

Photos this issue courtesy of Diana Garland Photography.

www.garland.exposuremanager.com

Hunt Season Since Opening Hunt November 12

Cubbing presaged glorious days ahead. Even November, traditionally difficult, turned out better than we could have hoped.

Light frosts arrived on schedule, mid-October. They miraculously disappeared after Thanksgiving.

There were days in December when central Virginia was warmer than California. A few cold days dotted the month but the temperature mostly stayed warm. Wrecked scent. Our season mirrors most other hunts in Virginia. We're all wondering who's been fingering the North American Thermostat. (Al Gore would have an answer.)

Hounds have handled beautifully. Occasionally a young hound suffers vapor lock. The brain shuts down but that is to be expected.

A few hunts are worth mentioning in detail.

November 19 was notable enough to merit its own column: see "The Disgrace of Paris."

December 3. The fixture was the Old Wilson House. The field was another large one. My plan was to road hounds down to the remaining sentinels of bridge stone abutments. Then cast north along Rucker's Run because the occasional shelf of rock or higher ground cutting the wind, which was light. More importantly, it was warming fast and it's cool down there.

We turned to go around the metal gate blocking the road, steep in at the end down to the washed out bridge. At that exact moment an extremely healthy squirrel shot across Wilson Road from the pheasant field.

Willie, second year broke. For a moment it looked like the pack would hold.

Then another puppy scooted after Willie and then the whole pack.

"I've lost my pack to a squirrel in front of God and everybody."

As color rose in my cheeks, the pack opened like the bellows on an organ, all stops out.

For a second, I sat there like a doofus thinking, "Wow, what music for a squirrel." Then I noticed they flew through the woods, squirrels climb trees to escape. Our fox happened to be within a stone's throw of the squirrel.

Those of you who know the territory know we were stuck.

We ran flat out to catch up. Hounds already crossed Rucker's Run when we reached "The Middle Crossing."

After that, all we did was trail. Hounds wouldn't surrender the line but the fox had successfully used the fast running water to his advantage.

(Continued on page 2)

Class of 2006

Congratulations to our well-deserving members!

Colors

Sara Bateman
Gene Dixon
Diane Gibb
Lee Gilliam
Jan Green
Steve Green
Sarah Green
Maria Johnson
Sonia Johnson
Judy Pastore
Carol Robertson
Lucy Rolston
Amy Saulter

Buttons

Jane Andrews
Rebecca Duncan
Bill Johnson
Gib Stevenson
Emma Wade
Rachel Wade

When we finally returned it was to another incredible tailgate. December 8, a strange hunt, is worth a word or two. December 7 started out warm, then turned to bitter cold. When hounds bounded out of the party wagon parked by the Oak Tree the mercury struggled to cling to 26°F. The field consisted of Maria Johnson and Mary Arnold. Everyone else wimped out having become spoiled by the unusually warm December. Gretchen Robb, ready to go, climbed into her truck only to discover the battery was dead. With the field of two, Bill Johnson accompanied Maria but didn't ride. Well, he rode with John Morris in the truck, heater blasting. First cast, high at the Cistern, produced feathering but no one opened. Not until the high bluff across from the old shooting galley did hounds speak, some forty minutes later. The temperature not a jot warmer. The pack ran down the run between the millet field and the shooting galley. They shut up. By now, the two brave ladies rode up with me. We were a half-mile from the steep trail down to the run crossing. A rumble and a rustle, downwind, halted us. Hounds pushed a half grown bear from the fellow's cozy nap. Called them off, reversed field. During this hunt, Thompson a large tricolor older hound, a half-vibrato to his cry, kept pushing. A half hour later Thompson crossed the little creek feeding Rucker's Run. This creek runs in front of the pretty house below the Dairy Barns. Now feathering intensified. We climbed the hill. Thompson threw his tongue, all hounds behind him now, plunging into an odd sliver of covert by cleared "pumpkin" acres. Out bolted a young gray: crossed right in front of us. Thompson and the pack, full cry, followed not fifty yards behind. The chase proved brief. He slithered into a long slash woodpile, a den underneath. Hounds crawled all over that woodpile, Thompson joyously singing. I blew "Gone to ground." That young fox lived to learn he should have stuck tight in the

covert, or slipped out the back, reaching the stream to foil scent. But he was young, got rattled and bolted. He'll know better next time.

Dana Flaherty and Mary O'Brien have to ride regardless of weather. For Maria and Mary, their frozen early morning in the barn proved worth it. Seeing a fox is always good luck but the ladies were so close to their joy.

To our surprise when we returned to the Oak Tree there stood Gretchen Robb with hot coffee and food. What a beautiful sight!

The following Sunday, December 10, Rockbridge joined us for a joint meet and in the day between December 8 and 10, the mercury climbed up again.

We didn't do much but we sure had a good time at the breakfast in Headquarters. Judy Pastore cooked hot eggs and pasta at the stove.

The next Sunday Rockbridge hosted us at their kennels and their day was much like ours. Early on, they pushed out a fox or it sounded like it. He ducked back into a den and the pack worked in the unusual heat thereafter.

It's a pleasure to hunt with Rockbridge. The pack works well together and so does the staff. The membership is always welcoming and the territory sometimes makes your eyes pop.

Christmas Hunt overflowed with people. Ninety plus riders turned out in their best and the day was even hotter than the prior day's hunt down at Rockbridge.

Nonetheless, we covered a lot of territory searching for that elusive scent. Picked up a whiff here and there, but it was already over the hounds' noses. The temperature boomed up to the mid-seventies and each time we reached a creek, hounds flopped in it and drank.

Quite a few people provided entertainment at the jumps and bottles will be coming into the club bar.

The party was the best ever. Miss Henderson always throws fabulous parties but this was the "do" of the season. There had to be over two hundred people there at one time, and folks arriving and leaving non-stop. Every room was stand-

ing room only. The front lawn, the back lawn were packed. Simply unbelievable and the food disappeared as fast as Sister and Wally and their team put it on the table. Sidney never broke covert from behind the bar as he was inundated. Kept his good humor throughout.

A small musical group enlivened the living room with the tree. Outside the guinea hens sang their chorus and Mr. Poland told everyone who would listen how he faced down that dreadful Paris. (She did not hunt at Cherry Hill. More punishment for her. She did get her cookies later, though.) No one wanted to leave Cherry Hill. For all know, there are still revelers at this most hospitable of estates.



Photo courtesy of Diana Garland

The Disgrace of Paris

Are you thinking of France's ignominious surrender to the Germans in 1941 with nary a shot? Well, no, this is about our very own Paris, the smallish hound, good nose, good worker, who is beloved by all. She and Demo, another star, resemble one another but Paris has more black on her coat and is a bit chunkier.

Hounds met at Cherry Hill on Sunday, November 19, and the farm never looked better, not did Miss Anne Henderson, bundled up and riding her ATV.

The first cast was heading west up over the family graveyard. Then we plunged into the cutover woods where hounds promptly found. The fox, a healthy red, ran alongside the west fenceline, old wire, past the fallen shed toward Variety Mills Road. He turned heading straight back into the woods.

I heard "Tally Hos" all over the place and that gave me a minute's pause. The hounds know what "Tally Ho" means, so they lifted their heads and looked to me. Finally, I saw Dr. Mary O'Brian, cap held out in the direction in which the fox scampered and we hit the line again.

This time, he made a half loop in the woods, and again, a chorus of "Tally Ho's" rang out, but farther away. Then I heard Dana "Tally Ho." We pushed harder and roared back up over the pasture to the graveyard again. There John Morris and Ryan Schilling pointed in the direction our fellow had fled.

As Dana was in the cow field, I didn't think she would be in the middle of the covert, so I pushed the hounds up to the fence line where they began feathering. They'd never really lost the line, although the slight wind from time to time moved it, but they'd find it again and had been doing a great job of tracking when they weren't giving tongue.

I thought to jump the coop into the cow field and trawl along the fence line from the inside since things were looking bright when a terrible squawking diverted my attention. No Paris while the rest of the hounds kept to their business.

Vester and I flew around to Miss Henderson's door, where Paris, to her shame was worrying Mr. Poland, the exotic rooster Miss Henderson acquired to keep her hens company. The guinea fowl, outraged, ran about and one brave hen charged Paris, in her glory, the bad girl.

You all know how well Anne can move on the dance floor, well, sugars, you should have seen our very own Anne Fortune Henderson vault down her steps to go after Paris, who upon facing the wrath of our delightful landowner decided that Mr. Poland might not be the proper game. By now, the whole pack had come to me and to my pride, none bothered a chicken, house dog or Hope, the shiny black and white cat. Anne sprinted to the little wooden gate, opening it so I could get into the pasture and put Paris back to business.

I should add here that out of the corner of my eye, while Paris behaved so badly, I saw our handsome fox skip from cow patty to cow patty, foiling his scent. Naturally, when hounds entered the pasture, they picked up the line, lost it and so it went on for fifteen minutes, Chaser truly working his heart out since he knew the fox was close. Our fox is too, too smart.

Tried to get another one and picked up pieces of the line, but we called it a day which saw some very good hound work, Paris expected.

I chastised her and as is often the way with hounds, they have their sense of justice. Back in the kennels, the girls roughed her up, not enough to spoil her good looks but enough to let her know they didn't enjoy her interrupting the pace.

She has to sit in the kennel awhile which will vex her, for she lives to hunt. She can sit there and savor her disgrace when the hounds march out for another day's bracing run.

RMB

P.S. Mr. Poland is fine, though minus a few feathers.

PASS THE CHIPS

Retirement. Not for either of your masters. We'll be in the traces until Gabriel blows his trumpet for us to come to glory.

But we do have some very nice ladies and gentlemen who steadied our young entry and who have earned the right to sleep on your hearth.

It takes about ten days to housebreak a grown hound. At least that's your huntsman's experience. Also, if you live near the kennel, you have to put them up when hounds go out. So far, all have adjusted to other dogs and cats although the cats can be quite hateful for a time.

Let us know if you'd like someone to sit down and relive old hunts with you and perhaps give you a pointer or two.

Please help the horses and your hunt.

Call Dana 456-6156. Both Dana and your huntsman can tell you about these horses and you know, we tell it like it is. All are good citizens whether rideable or not.

PASS THE OATS

We also have some staff horses needing retirement. A few can be trail ridden, others need to be companions.

I know that many hunts, keeping a prudent eye on the budget, sell the old horses or young, injured horses to the knackers just as some hunts will put down a healthy but no longer useful hound. I truly understand but I cannot do it. I'll live in a tent before I do it and God knows, it may come to that.

But consider, dear member, what these creatures have given you so that you can enjoy a day's sport. Is it too much to just take an old pensioner, trim his feet every six weeks, give him his annual shots and float his teeth. Those are the expenses, that and good hay. But it's not that expensive and we could use your help so we can refresh our string. Your staff needs younger horses and we can't really spend the money until we successfully retire the older ones.

Pony Club Corner**THANKSGIVING HUNT WITH OAK RIDGE**

by Sarah Green

We arrived at the kennels like a normal hunting day, but this would not be just like any other day. I was so excited to ride with Dr. Mary on the Junior hunt I could not sleep. We were on and ready to go when Rita Mae, Dr. Mary, Dana and Emily arrived to give the blessing. I was honored twice on that day, first I received my colors, then I was able to ride with a whip for the day. After the blessing I headed off to begin my job.

Dr. Mary explained where the fox might go and how the hounds are working the line. I now realize how much experience it must take to understand where to be at the right time to help the huntsman and not get in the way. I love to ride, race and jump but now understand just how special foxhunters are. We ride in the hunt field for hours at a time and get to know our hunters quite well. What impressed me the most was the way Dr. Mary's horse Moonie watched and listened for the hounds. He would look out over the territory and seemed to know exactly where the field and hounds were. I would watch his ears when Rita Mae blew the horn. Our horses can make our day great or miserable. It would be my hope to have such a great whip horse one day. We learn so much from animals if we pay attention.

Virginia Hunt Week Oct. 30 Sunday

Rain drenched Nelson County Friday continuing through Saturday, replete with lightning. Then as though someone turned a dial, the rain stopped but the wind kicked in hard.

By time for the first cast 9AM. The wind died down to about 15-20 M.P.H., stiff but with better than those wild gusts throughout Saturday. The morning, in contrast to the two preceding days, was clear.

Fourteen and a half couple hounds trotted from the kennels. One couple were first year entry. Three couple were second year. They cast up the little creek that feeds into the North Branch of the Rockfish River, always good to settle them. No sooner did they draw eastward than they hit. A big red dogfox loped northeast then turned back.

Their bracing beginning lasted fifteen minutes in slick footing. As the fox turned back another fox shot out running for Mrs. Woods. The pack split. Dewey, older, led half to Mrs. Woods. The younger hounds stayed with me working the line of the big red. The wind became a factor as he ran to higher ground but those young ones would lose the line, pick it up again. Meanwhile Dewey & Co. could



Photo courtesy of Diana Garland

be heard screaming, as they ran on.

Down behind Jim and Joan Klemic's, the younger ones found the line heating up. Demo, always steady, opened and off they went but this fox knew his trade. He crossed the creek north of the Klemics' house then ran straight up to the old chimney ruins where we lost him.

By now, we'd been out two hours and fifteen minutes, conditions deteriorating. The temperature soared to the low sixties, the wind picked up once more.

The field was glad to come back and as we passed the kennels there was Dewey and his half behind them. They'd put their fox to ground. There are seven dens behind the kennels.

Obviously, we never got the pack together. Some days are like that.

The tailgate at the run-in shed, another fabulous breakfast, made do without the tents which had to be folded due to the wind. The last guest tottered home at 3:30 p.m.

Ashland Bassets at Cherry Hill, Nelson County

(courtesy of Mrs. Anne Fortune Henderson)

Joint Meet with Rita Mae Brown, MFH, Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club (Special Day for Juniors) Saturday, 2 p.m., December 9, 2006

Conditions: clear, sunny, light winds from northeast, temperatures in high 40's/ low 50's

Huntsmen: Mary Reed, MBH Dr. Rita Mae Brown, MFH

Hounds: 5 couple Ashland Bassets: Rascal, Jenny, Jewel, Rommel, Rochelle, Hobo, Hobbit, Limerick, Liberty, Loki. Couple and a half Tea Time Farm Bassets: Leah, Luciano, Robin

Whippers-in: Al Toews, MBH, Kathleen King, Aggie dela Garza, Frank Edrington, Dr. Miriam Anver, Nancy Palmer

Field: Field Master Diana Dutton

Attending from Ashland:

Chris Putz and guest, Chris Reed, Ann Lederer and guest, Andrew Lederer, Sally Webb, Anita Ramos and Reid Folsom, Star and Joe Milharam

Attending from Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club:

Guest: Sr. Andrea Yeager, Judy Pastore, Emily and Ryan Schilling and guests (asst' d juniors), David Wheeler

The coverts of Cherry Hill consist of intersecting ravines and fence lines with native vines, honey suckle, and evergreens. The coverts lie to the north and east of the big house and dependencies. The ravines can be steep with rocky bottoms and were fresh with recent rainfall.

Neighboring the ravines are two or three old tobacco sheds. Fields on the day of the meet also contained cattle.

While the fixture is regularly covered by Oak Ridge fox-hunting and there are resident house dogs, the rabbits have not been hunted. This was a first meet for Ashland Bassets at the fixture.

After deploying whippers-in to encircle the first fenceline and ravine, hounds were cast. The initial cast and draw down the fenceline was explosive as hounds worked off their exuberance from the two hour trip, new surroundings and reunion with former packmates. After a first hectic spurt, the hounds settled and reworked through the first covert and down small creek, Jewel pushed a rabbit out that ran up towards the house. Whips viewed line along upper fence but lost it as rabbit arced into field in front of house. Hounds worked the line and continued work out through the field to the right, back to the original fenceline, away from the house. Hounds lost the line in that fenceline near a coop.

Hounds then re-worked back down the fenceline. A rabbit came out of the lower fenceline, ran across field through a small draw and then up the hill towards the barns behind the main house.

The pack began a sight chase but soon switched to run the line. Jewel and Jenny worked along the barns, Hobbit opened going towards the house. Hobo opened in box-woods in front of the house. The hounds could not find the line on the other side of the house; the house dogs were out and may have spoiled the line. Huntsman decided to give up the line due to the proximity to the house.

Hounds recast into the draw back down towards the old tobacco shed. Jewel and Hobo spoke and worked along the ravine. Nothing viewed. Hounds worked fenceline south from the old tobacco sheds and then back while the field collected. Hounds worked down and around creek and fencelines area with no result for about a half hour. Jewel and Rascal showed great enthusiasm for a couple of old brush piles. The presumed inhabitant refused to emerge despite valiant efforts both by all hounds and huntsman. Hounds then worked back to the old tobacco sheds where it was suspected that at least one rabbit had been left. Hobo and Jewel spoke again in the ravine covert. Jenny opened in covert behind one tobacco shed, pushing out a rabbit which ran across the creek and straight up the hill to the field on top. Whips viewed the line up and toward the barn but lost view there as rabbit appeared to be turning right toward the house area. Hounds vigorously ran the line up the hill. However, Jenny and Jewel spoke going left down the hill away from the house. All hounds on this line but Leah, who later re-joined. Huntsman called to gather hounds.

Whippers-in reported views at the bottom of the draw and back along the original fenceline on the hill opposite the barns. Hounds worked the rabbit back up along creek bottom, up the hill towards the sheds, across the draw to barns and finally ran it to ground in one of the house dependencies. Luciano, Hobo, and Jewel did a great job speaking and trying to dig it out. Loki, a second year entry, spoke well in the area where the rabbit probably squatted before going to ground. All hounds worked well, with Luciano receiving credit for leading to the ground. Hounds were also congratulated for having hunted their lines around the house and dependencies through associated house dogs, chickens and guinea fowl with no adverse consequences.

Having run separate rabbits, one to an acknowledged loss as it left the country and one to ground, hounds were lifted and the meet was called after almost two hours. Oak Ridge Fox Hunt Club provided a lovely tailgate to all attendees, organized by the Schillings and Judy Pastore. Crumbs were left.

Goodbye to Dear Friends

After his phenomenal day Dec. 8, Thompson again led the pack, carrying the line on Dec. 10. A happy fellow returned to the kennel for his rations, treats and kisses. I don't know as I have ever seen the big guy so happy.

When John checked the kennels before leaving that Sunday, Thompson was curled up in his bed, sound asleep. On closer inspection, he had quietly slipped away to find our other friends in heaven.

A hound or human really couldn't ask for a more fitting end, but staff is disconsolate. His brimming personality, his rock steady performances, and, well, you felt like he was your favorite uncle.

Chatty in the kennels, he'd follow me around telling me tales. I will miss our conversations.

Two days later, I lost Roxanne who was another extraordinary hound. She was entered in 1994 and hunted until two years ago when she stayed in the kennels to help train the puppies. Roxanne's charges are doing well as she was a strict schoolmistress.

One day I saw her get rolled by a young, strong gyp. I immediately took her from the run and brought her up to the house. Well, she didn't want to stay in the house. The cur dogs offended her. She was above them.

So I put her out with Leah, Robin, Luciano and Outlaw, the bassets. She regarded them with bemused tolerance feeling they were sawed off foxhounds. She accompanied them on their daily walks and even on their hunts although she would never, ever stoop to run a rabbit. Still, she liked the horn music. She put on weight, her coat glistened like patent leather. Her hearing began to fail so I had to point to the coverts for her. She'd go right in.

Her last walk she picked up a fox line, where a red crossed at the water troughs. She kept on this while I walked the bassets and when I came back she was sitting in the pasture, waiting.

The next morning she didn't want to eat. We sat down together and we both knew it was time. Her passing was peaceful. She was loved and loved in return. Is there a more fitting epithet?

Other Losses

John Morris, our marvelous kennelman, lost his mother, Alice Gunter Morris, on October 20, 2006. The doctors said she'd be dead over a year ago and she fought back, living for another year to guide her family.

John and his son, John Morris, Jr. (Toot) have endured so many losses in these last twelve months. Our sympathies are with them.

We know that Mrs. Morris raised a strong son and once the grief passes, he'll continue to thrive.

Becky Wood's mother passed away December 24, 2006. We don't have any details. This must have come as a shock and we are all so very sorry.

A winning team

Our condolences to Mrs. Harriet Phillips, PhD., "Dee," on the passing of her mare, the elegant Sistergirl Dec. 27, 2006.

These two "fast ladies" were a great team, each understanding the other.

As most women will tell you, it's easier to find a good husband than the right horse. (Wonder what the men will say?)

In Sistergirl, Dee had found her equine sister.

We send our thoughts to Dee.



Photo courtesy of
Diana Garland