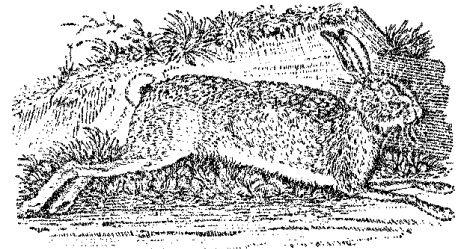


# The NORFOLK BEAGLER



APRIL 2009

FOR FOLLOWERS OF BEAGLING IN NORFOLK

*The Hoar Frost Was Fantastic . . . . .*

## And The Hunting Wasn't Bad Either

**Brighton & Storrington and  
Surrey & North Sussex Beagles  
Godwick Hall, 11 January**

It was freezing, literally, as one of the largest fields to be seen for some years defied the weather to gather by invitation of John and Sarah Garner on the first engagement of the new year. The frozen fog and hoar frost on the trees and bushes was spectacular when the sun shone.

It was very fitting that the meet, which was organised by Terry Lawton, included a tribute to the late L/Cpl Ben Whatley, aged 20, who was killed on Christmas Eve serving in Afghanistan. His family live at Godwick and in his memory, it was decided to donate the proceeds of the cap to the services' charity, Help for Heroes. A total of £350 was collected.

A prompt start was made after the traditional refreshments were consumed as the field tucked into Sarah Garner's hot sausage rolls and cake and a glass of port. The severity of the weather, which forced cancellation of the North Norfolk Harriers brought the welcome addition of the senior mas-

ter, Roger Bradbury, and many of their usual followers. With the West Norfolk meeting at Lexham Hall and on foot, a number of their field also joined the day.

As the temperature continued to fall, a total of 14 and a half couple set out on the rock-hard ground as the temperature reached -4.5C, seriously cold indeed. It had been decided to follow an artificial trail, which had been duly laid, and our host had also earlier been shooting ground game.

To the surprise of all, including the visiting whips, the hounds soon hit the trail and the field was able to keep warm by enjoying some vigorous exercise. Although the cold made the scent difficult to follow at times, and it was a bit erratic, hounds stuck to the task in hand. However, the frost, which left many sharp stones exposed soon damaged the pads of several beagles and after about 90 minutes, at least one couple had to be retired to the hound van.

Gamely, the field and hounds stuck to the task and fortunately ignored the attractions of the wood, which would have been

warmer. The trail setter had managed to cover a relatively small area, which enabled the field to stay more or less together. And for some who were able to lurk behind a hedge, it was noticeably warmer. But the temperature remained stubbornly well below freezing. A large number of hares added to the attraction and probably five brace were seen.

After about three hours, the huntsman decided to blow for home before more hounds became footsore. And then the field headed for Tittleshall's fine village hall for tea. As Jacinth and her team prepared to welcome a total of 25, actually 41 descended. Fortunately there were plenty of cups in the exceptionally well-equipped hall. Our chairman, who was recovering from a lengthy spell of enforced bedroom leave, sensibly decided to stay at home to save his strength for Monday's engagement. *Cropwalker* 

**Brighton & Storrington, Surrey  
& North Sussex  
Estuary Farm, 12 January**

There was a very good field for a Monday with a bad weather forecast – wind and rain/showers which, for once was right – and although the temperature was 8 or 9C, it felt nearly as cold as it had on Saturday when the temperature was below freezing all day. It was

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a day when a waterproof note pad was essential.

There was a strong smell of onions in the farmyard which was dominated by a mighty Case Quadra-Trac tractor, complete with an eight-furrow plough on the back, which didn't like the look of the weather and never moved.


Sixteen couple of hounds were matched one-for-one by the hare population in some of the very large and open fields. A trip of hares? A somewhat sheepish trail-layer was seen making his move from the meet before the Field moved off. Two trails were then hunted to a successful conclusion. The first hour or two was spent beating the bounds and exploring the furthest boundaries of our country. The Sandringham estate the other side of the Babingley and a shoot at Castle Rising were two good reasons to make sure that we did not leave our country. The last "hunt" of the day was going well until the pack were distracted and led astray. As the weather wasn't getting any better and the light was starting to go it was decided to bring the day's proceedings to an end.

Keeping his beagles on the task of following one line was a new experience and challenge for the Hunt's young huntsman Ashley Doherty in the face of so many distractions. But once the hare population had been dispersed and he had taken his pack back to the meet, his life was made easier as the beagles were able to start to settle and concentrate on hunting a line.

As the Field made its way back to the meet we were surprised to see two policemen checking an Anti-Social Behaviour sign on a farm gate. Was the sign for our edification or to discourage ravers? The

police did not seem at all concerned at our presence.

A barn owl seen during the day and only one large skein of Pink Foot geese in the distance towards Sandringham.

Tea was taken at the chairman's recently restored and remodelled house in nearby Wolferton was a very enjoyable and fitting end to another good day in spite of the rain. Our thanks go to Michael and Fiona Petch. 


### **The Sandhurst and Aldershot Ravingham, 17 January**

The day began overcast with light rain and this provoked memories of last year's meet here when driving rain and sleet with gale force winds for the whole day tested beaglers close to the limit. However the cloud cleared by midday and a cold south west breeze with sunny spells set in.

The Sandhurst and Aldershot with Mark Jackson their huntsman, around a dozen supporters and 14 couple came from North Hampshire for the day, and hunted here by kind permission of Sir Nicholas Bacon. The use of the conservation barn with its facilities was much appreciated and some 30 beaglers reinforced by a glass of port and sausage roll set of northwards down the track known as the yellow brick road towards the gravel pits.

The country was bounded in the north by the river Chet between Loddon and Reedham and Hardly Flood with the steaming stack at Cantley an easy landmark. The hounds followed the trail with vigour, and the undulating topography enabled beaglers to witness some excellent views of the hounds at work supported by an energetic huntsman who was never far behind. Eagle-eyed bea-

glers noted several of the hounds had a bluey roan colouring. These we were told were Berkeley Blues, and had come from a line of Dummer hounds. Several woodcock were seen during the afternoon brought in by the cold weather no doubt, and a quartering barn owl. The pack split on one occasion and a hound was retrieved from the meet two miles away.

At 16.30 Mark blew for home with doffed caps, a performance of orchestral standard, so after 4 and a half hours of beagling and evidence of the increasing day length, beaglers returned to the barn. Many thanks to those who provided a welcome tea to end a fine day's beagling. 

### **Palmer Marlborough Heydon Hall, 24 January**

The historic and magnificent Heydon Hall dates back to 1584 and the days of the armada and was a wonderful back-drop for the meet. It was the Bulwer-Longs' seventh meet of the season as they had entertained both the West Norfolk Foxhounds and the North Norfolk Harriers in whose Country the fine hall and estate are to be found.


Max Rumney told the Field that Marlborough College still supports beagling and both boys and girls follow the pack during the week. He thanked our hosts for allowing us to hunt – particularly as they had entertained two other packs - and then explained that we would be hunting an artificial trail.

He moved-off to seek the drag in the park to the south of the hall It was a great sight to see the beagles hunting across the park and an unusual pleasure for the followers who were able to spend almost the entire day on grass. No

plough! No sugar beet! There was great hound music as the pack flew past and through the various woods and coverts.

One hare was even seen sitting by the wrought iron gates at the front of the Hall before disappearing across the lawns and through the gardens and round the back of the Hall. There had been good scent early in the day which then started to get a bit patchy. Our line layer ran some real circles through the park and adjoining fields and around the Hall, gardens and various stable and out-buildings.

Max blew for home at about four o'clock and the tired but content beaglers made their way back to the meet across the park, illuminated by the rays of the setting sun. At least four woodcock were seen and there were also barn owls on the wing.

Then everyone moved off to Elmerdale Farm House where Jacinth Rogers, with help from fellow club members, had produced a fitting end to a very enjoyable day. Max was heard to say that it was one of his best-ever days in Norfolk. 


### **Palmer Marlborough, School Farm, Beeston, 26 January**

There was a screaming scent all day and hounds never stopped running. Michael Rogers reckoned it was one of the best scenting days that he had experienced in a long beagling career. With more hares than ever seen before at Beeston, it made for hard work for Max and his whippers-in to keep the pack together.

At end of day three hounds were missing and as Max was making his way back to the meet, blowing for the missing hounds, a hare got up at his feet and the pack was off. He eventually arrived back at

the meet still three hounds light. Tom Scott was very helpful and worked hard to help find the hounds. One turned-up in his barn overnight, and another was found locally, having spent the night in a kitchen and returned to Tom's the next morning. Sadly Wodehouse will hunt no more.

Andrew Dickens carried a whip all day which was a great help and his effort were much appreciated.

Tea was taken in the Scotts' barn with help from Jill Scott and others. Our thanks go to everyone for their contributions.. 

### **Holme Valley, Home Farm, Hemsby, 14 February**

Mr and Mrs Simon Daniels welcomed the Holme Valley, who are in partnership with the Ecclesfield Beagles, to Home Farm with Port and sausage rolls. It was a welcome return to Hemsby after a long absence. The Meet was notable for the number of representatives from other packs including the Wick and District, Pipewell and Ilminster.


It was a sunny and windless day and supporters of "green" electricity would have been dismayed to see that the wind turbines were stationary all day.

The day was to be spent looking for wounded hares and training beagles to the horn. The day started well but hares, both wounded and fully-fit, were found in abundance. With hares and beagles going in every direction, the huntsman Adrian Barlow, supported by his wife Ellie, was able to give the bemused beagles plenty of opportunities to hear and respond to his horn.

When the hares had been dispersed, Adrian was able to hunt very patiently, drawing the fields

thoroughly and eventually finding a hare that he could hunt within the law. By about half past three, with the pack all-on, Adrian blew for home. Those followers who know the Holme Valley were disappointed not to see the huntsman's traditional red coat. The Hunt had taken the decision to hunt in mufti as it makes them less noticeable to those who are not supporters of beagling.

We had all had a very good day and returned to Home Farm for a very good tea in the Daniels' kitchen.

On the Sunday evening 55 people enjoyed a lively hunt supper and singing at The King's Head, North Elmham. 

### **Holme Valley, Lexham Hall, 16 February**

The second Norfolk meet for the Holme Valley was by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Neil Foster on the terrace in front of the east front of Lexham Hall. While we were all enjoying port and sausage rolls, the chairman of the Holme Valley, and family, were enjoying a slow passage across the Fens having got stuck in heavy traffic in Sleaford.

We moved-off across the park, accompanied by the mounted contingent - the Fosters's daughter and two friends - over the river Nar to the first draw on cultivated land to the south of the hall.

"Something" took the beagles on a merry jaunt almost to Newtonby-Castle Acre. Recovering the pack involved crossing some heavy and sticky land and one of the whippers-in lost the sole of one of his boots.

Once we were back on the Fosters's estate, we were able to get on with the proper business of

the day. The day went well apart from the unwelcome intrusion of a roe deer late in the day and also an appearance by Charlie Fox.

To sum things up, we had an enjoyable and interesting day on an extremely well-managed and attractive estate. The day was brought to an end at 1545 when we returned to Lexham Hall to enjoy a jolly good tea in the Fosters's tea room - a series of converted garages. It is, in fact, a jolly good "facility" with a kitchen, wood burner and plenty of room for everyone. 🍷

### **Pevensy Marsh Beagles, Heacham Bottom Farm, 28 February**

We were welcomed to Heacham Bottom Farm on a mild, still day by John and Gill Austen who both handed round glasses of port and slabs of carrot cake. The Pevensy Marsh Beagles had their smallest pack of the season - 16 couple of beagles, no less. There were some interesting blue mottle hounds which had French basset blood.

We moved down to the marshes to search for any wounded hares that might have been left after a hare shoot. To begin with there were a surprising number of hares about and hares and beagles could be seen in every direction for the first hour or so. Then two hares were put up and the beagles were able to settle on the right one.

Hunting moved off the marshes back onto cultivated land between the old railway line and extensive woods. There can be few better sounds than listening to a pack of beagles in full cry in a wood or hunting along the edge. Quite wonderful! At about 1400 hours we were back on the marshes again and then we were back in

and around the woods again.

The keen and enthusiastic pack stuck to the task with alacrity as we moved between the marshes and higher ground. At one stage a hare actually hit Nick Moore as it crossed the disused railway line.

As there were at least three barn owls hunting most of the day, it was, in relative terms, a barn owl day rather than a goose day. We saw tens of geese rather than the thousands often seen earlier in the season. But it is still exciting to hear the beagles in full cry as a skein of geese fly overhead cackling and honking away.

We covered a lot of ground during the day and ended up visiting the Heacham sewage works before the long walk back to the Meet, pass the cultivated snowdrops, and a jolly good tea in the Austen kitchen. As always a very good end to an interesting and enjoyable day. 🍷

### **Pevensy Marsh Beagles, Somerleyton Hall, 2 March**

It was a lovely sunny day on Monday when the Pevensy Marsh Beagles met at Somerleyton Hall, the home of the Hon and Mrs Hugh Crossley. Carolyn and Mike Greer Walker kindly provided port and delicious sausages. In the absence of our Chairman in Bahrain, the welcome was made by our secretary's husband Michael Rogers, who succinctly listed the activities that would be taking place during the day under the terms of the Hunting act.

A trail had been laid from the rhododendrons surrounding the tennis court next to the Hall and the hounds hunted across the Hall drive and out of the Park in the direction of Park Farm. The recent removal of the wire on

both sides of the Hall drive had made life much easier for hounds and followers alike. The Pevensy Marsh Beagles have very few deer in their country and an encounter with deer in the wood led to a certain amount of chaos until order was restored!

Hounds then hunted round by the South Lodge crossing back across the Hall drive and just north of St Mary's Church, where a few weeks earlier Hugh Crossley and his wife Lara were married, before entering Church wood. The cry of the hounds in the wood was magnificent. After a time the hounds continued their trail out to the north of the park before swinging back, behind the sawmill wood, in a full circle to enter the park once more.

As the day progressed the warm weather and the drying breeze meant that the scent deteriorated and the hounds found it harder to follow the trail. Although they puzzled out the line with great patience and perseverance it was eventually decided to call it a day. It had been a memorable one; a beautiful warm spring like day spent almost exclusively on the lovely grass of the Park against the magnificent background of the Victorian extravaganza, which is Somerleyton Hall.

Our thanks go to Edward Knowles who took on responsibility for organising the day.

We then repaired to Waveney Grange Farm where the Greer-Walkers provided a first rate tea in their lovely house. As far as your reporter is concerned there is nothing to beat a hot dog to start a Beagle tea! 🍷

### **Blean Beagles, Gateley Hall 14 March**

As one of the largest fields gathered for the last meet of the sea-

son, the treasurer Bram van der Have was kept busy collecting the cap from 27 and a half brace of supporters. On a blowy and increasingly windy day, his first task was to sprint after his plastic boot bag before it was blown to the far corners of the park.

It was a privilege to meet on the lawn outside this splendid house, which has the towering Dutch gables atop a classical Georgian house. Apparently, the house was virtually destroyed by fire in 1720 and rebuilt by 1726. As a result, the Countess Cathcart said all the windows had to be individually made and when they acquired the property 20 years ago, there was only one room in the house with a ceiling intact and the sheep were grazing underneath the windows.

Our host, Charles, Earl Cathcart, handed out generous servings of port and such was the support that he ran out of glasses. He is enjoying his role as one of the 92-strong hereditary rump in the House of Lords. Much better than wrangling on Breckland Council, he admitted.

After a brief welcome by our chairman, who explained that the visiting pack would be hunting within the law, the huntsman, Stuart Sillars, moved off with 11 couple of hounds. In the surprisingly warm conditions, the pack worked extremely effectively and after about 20 minutes, there was plenty of lively action as hounds rapidly left the huntsman behind. For members of the field, who were spread across a large part of the country, it was an excellent demonstration of good work.

Fortunately, as the number of hares were cleared from the country and there were plenty to be seen, it didn't really spoil the day's activities. In the intermittent scenting conditions, this fast-moving pack worked well and

responded well to the huntsman.

It was noticeable too that many of the field stayed long into the afternoon and members were delighted to welcome joint masters of the North Norfolk Harriers including Roger Bradbury and Chris Carman and the secretary to the West Norfolk Foxhounds, Bridget Wood.

On the flora and fauna front, our chairman Michael Petch was pleased to see several groups of primroses and dog's mercury as well a view of snipe across open country. And another welcome supporter, Andrew Egerton-Smith announced that during the whole season, he had not managed to get his feet wet.

Back to the hunting field. On another circuit of the wood after long and patient close work across four very large fields of stubble and some grass, the field was able to see another lively demonstration. However, when the pack headed into a large wood, the inevitable happened. Famous, a veteran beagle and definitely one of the alpha hounds, almost disgraced the touring side by tearing after a muntjac. He was caught by a whipper-in and returned.

Fortunately, with the pack all on (despite one badly limping hound), Stuart wisely decided to blow for home when three roe deer was spotted on the other side of the stream. It was a glorious day to mark the end of the season, which was very much appreciated.

Then it was time for tea and about 40 headed for Thornhill Farm. Nick Moore, who had left the field early after carrying his whip, put the kettles on and provided generous hospitality with lashings of hot, strong tea and plenty of cake. Although there were no Marmite sandwiches because

your reporter forgot, the lively chatter and warm welcome was a splendid end to the season.

*(Worthy of two hunting horns. Editor)*

**Cropwalker**

## **Summer Picnic and Walk**

There will be a Summer Walk and Picnic on Saturday 13 June. Full details will be available soon.

## **Peterborough**

The Peterborough Harrier and Beagle Show, the Festival of Hunting 2009, takes place on 22 July. Members who have not attended may remember reading Mike Greer-Walker's report in the October 2008 *Norfolk Beagler* and might like to find out for themselves what an enjoyable day it is.

This year the whole show will be under cover - in the past only the foxhounds have had that privilege - so the possibility of getting wet will be a thing of the past. Tickets are £10 each and available from the AMHB at Langley House, Winchcombe, Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL54 5AB.

On the subject of the Association of Masters of Harriers and Beagles all of our members are invited to join. Newsletters are published, ties, scarves and badges are available and you will be supporting the association which covers our sport. A new website will be launched on 1 May (the start of the new hunting season) at [www.amhb.org.uk](http://www.amhb.org.uk) which will have a large section open to the general public containing information about hare hunting, hare conservation and will give a beginner's guide to beagling. There will also be a members' area which will be accessed by using a password.