

# MARYLAND'S 360<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FOXHUNTING

STORY BY ROSS PEDDICORD

Marylanders have yet another historic milestone to mark this year—the 360th anniversary of the introduction of foxhunting, one of the state’s oldest and proudest sporting traditions.

It started in 1650, when a prosperous and well-connected Englishman, Robert Brooke, sailed up the Patuxent River and laid claim to 2,000 acres given to him by his friend Cecil Calvert, the Second Lord Baltimore.

Imagine the hustle and bustle on board Brooke’s ship when he disembarked with his wife, 10 children, 28 servants, and a pack of foxhounds. There are also reports he brought along horses and farm implements, and eventually imported 24 red foxes from England. The indigenous New World grey foxes preferred running shorter routes and scampering up trees, whereas the red fox preferred an open, livelier chase.

These were also the first hounds and red foxes brought into North America, so chalk up another first for the state of Maryland.

Brooke promptly named his Calvert County settlement De La Brooke Manor; to this day, the De La Brooke Hounds, now consisting of a club with 78 southern Maryland members, hunt the same land with descendants of the same hounds Brooke brought here more than three-and-a-half centuries ago! What’s more, Brooke’s human descendants are exhibiting their ancestor’s staying power and are still running foxhunts all over Maryland, from Upper Marlboro to Monkton.

Foxhunting eventually spread from the flatter land of southern Maryland to the lush valleys in Baltimore and Harford counties, over to the Eastern Shore, and from Virginia up to as far north as Long Island. Our nation’s first president, George Washington, was quite a foxhunter, and dutifully recorded long and adventurous fox chases as a youth.

The Civil War squelched foxhunting for a while, but in 1878, the Elkridge Fox Hunting Club



BOB KELLER



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at Elkridge Landing, Howard County, was formed, signaling a rebirth.

The club held meets at such diverse fixtures as historic Doughoregan Manor, the ancestral home of the Carroll family near Ellicott City, to the base of the Washington Monument in Baltimore City. When, in 1892, the Green Spring Valley Hounds was organized in Reisterstown, it marked the full recovery of the sport as we know it today.

As endangered as the Maryland landscape is with beltways, inter-connector highways, sprawling developments, and malls, there is still enough farmland and open space to support nine foxhunting clubs. These clubs are recognized as organized foxhunting entities by the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America, the sport’s national governing body. In addition, there are also numerous unrecognized packs, ranging from clubs with mounted riders, to followers in pickup trucks, to people who just keep a few hounds in their back yard.

“There is the misconception that foxhunting is just for wealthy people,” says Jane Rhoades, a mother and former schoolteacher, who hunts the hounds at the Wicomico Hunt on the Eastern Shore.

“Of course, there are wealthy people who participate, but most foxhunters come from all walks

of life. These are people who are environmentalists and love the outdoors.”

Most Marylanders know that the state is divided into 23 counties; 21 of them, excluding mountainous Garrett and Allegany counties, are officially listed with the masters association as recorded hunting territory. The MFHA is quick to point out that, unlike in England, where foxes are frequently killed (which has contributed to a political uproar in that country), they are merely chased in this country.

The majority of our counties contribute to a foxhunting culture that many people might find hard to believe still exists. But as Skip Crawford, a Montgomery Countian who is Maryland’s district representative to the MFHA, points out, “The sport is alive and thriving and attracts devotees all over the state, including many people who don’t even ride.”

Here is a rundown of each Maryland hunt:

## EASTERN SHORE

### WICOMICO HUNT

*Kennels in Denton, Caroline County, with recorded country also in Somerset, Talbot, Worcester, Wicomico, Dorchester, Queen Anne’s, and Kent counties.*

Because of its location in the soybean-harvesting area, Wicomico cannot normally start hunting until Thanksgiving Day. The land can only be hunted and ridden over after the crops have been harvested. The club consists of about 60 members and hunts territory as far north as Galena and Chestertown and as far south as Berlin and parts of Delaware.

This is the home hunt of hotelier John Fager, who owns Fager’s Island in Ocean City, where many Marylanders congregate dockside to watch a Free State sunset.

Joint Masters are Cindy Wood, James Griffin, and Jane Rhoades.

## SOUTHERN MARYLAND

### MARLBOROUGH HUNT

*Kennels in Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County. Parts of Anne Arundel, Calvert, and Charles counties are also hunted.*

Marlborough is the only hunt in Maryland with three women joint masters at the helm—Katherine Cawood Kelly, Christine Claggett, and Patricia Sasscer. Each year, Marlborough hosts the “Marlborough Bowl,” a competitive event for foxhunting clubs, and the Marlborough Hunt Races at Roedown, near Davidsonville.

The hunt has a pack of American-bred hounds called Penn-Marydels (because they were first bred on the Maryland-Delaware-Pennsylvania peninsula).

### DE LA BROOKE FOXHOUNDS W

*Kennels at Mt. Victoria, Charles County; also, parts of St. Mary's and Calvert counties are hunted.*

One of the former joint masters, Eleanor Slater, was a direct descendant of Robert Brooke, and the hunt is named after his colonial estate. The “W” at the end of the name refers to the Wicomico River. Current joint masters include a retired commercial airline pilot, John McFadden, Solomons marina owner Skip Zahniser, and Sarah Hrada.

Hunt members are justly proud that their territory is “the first country hunted for pleasure in the New World.” De La Brooke Manor is now owned by Englishman Leander McCormick-Goodhart, who lives there, but who also spends part of the year in London.

## WESTERN SHORE

(Piedmont Section)

### ELKRIDGE-HARFORD HUNT

*Kennels in Taylor, Harford County, with hunt territory in both Baltimore and Harford counties and York County, Pennsylvania.*

Members of the Elkridge-Harford and its adjoining hunt, Green Spring Valley, have been particularly active in conserving large tracts of preserved farmland, including some of the most spectacular countryside on the East Coast. In addition to hunting on the famed My Lady's Manor portion of the state (a 10,000-acre gift from Charles Calvert, the Third Lord Baltimore, to his wife, Margaret), the hunt is the location for a lot of equine activity in Harford County, including polo (the Maryland Polo Club has two fields adjacent Ladew Gardens), Pony Clubs, and steeplechasing.

The My Lady's Manor races are celebrating their founding 100 years ago this spring, and the club also hosts the Elkridge-Harford Point-to-Point at Tom and Mimi Voss' Atlanta Hall Farm.

Joint Masters are Elizabeth McKnight, Thomas H. Voss, and Robert Kinsley.

## GREEN SPRING VALLEY HOUNDS

*Kennels in Glyndon, Baltimore County, with hunt territory in Baltimore and Carroll counties.*

Green Spring is synonymous in the hunting world with excellence, and its territory is unparalleled anywhere in the U.S. This is the home of world-renowned jumping rider Charlie Fenwick, winner of five Maryland Hunt Cups and the English Grand National.

The hunt hosts the Grand National Steeplechase at Butler and the Maryland Hunt Cup after the hunting season is over, as well as numerous point-to-points. The Hunt Cup, started in 1894, is the oldest organized steeplechase still being run in the United States, and it gave rise to Maryland's particular brand of steeplechasing, run over solid post-and-rail timber fences.

Several GSVHC members formed a cooperative venture to purchase and operate nearby Shawan Downs, home each fall to the Legacy Chase. There is also an active Pony Club and the running of the Maryland Junior Hunt Cup. Joint Masters are J.W.Y. Martin Jr., Edward Halle, Sheila Jackson Brown, George Mahoney Jr., and Franklin Foster.

### HOWARD COUNTY-IRON BRIDGE HOUNDS

*Kennels in Long Corner, Howard County, with hunt territory in Howard, as well as portions of Frederick and Carroll counties.*

Joint master Roger Scullin is one of the longest-serving masters of foxhounds in Maryland. He has headed the club for 30 years. He was joined at the helm four years ago by Don Reuwer, who owns many of Howard County's most historic properties, including Burleigh Manor, site of the club's original kennels.

In 1985, an adjoining club, the Iron Bridge Hunt in Laurel, merged with Howard County after most of its territory was developed.

Howard County still hunts portions of Doughoregan Manor and hosts the annual Howard County-Iron Bridge Hunt Races, held at Reuwer's Pleasant Prospect Farm in the western part of the county.

### GOSHEN HUNT

*Kennels in Sunshine, Montgomery County, with hunt territory in Montgomery and part of southern Frederick County.*

Goshen originally started as a farmer's pack and adjoins Howard County-Iron Bridge Hounds, Potomac Hunt, and the New Market-Middletown Valley Hounds. Its huntsman, Robert Taylor, has the unique distinction of not only hunting the hounds for Goshen, but also the New Market-Middletown Valley pack.

The Goshen Hounds are regularly paraded at the Columbia Grand Prix horse-jumping event at Howard Community College and at Maryland Million Day at Laurel Park. Joint masters are Holly Hamilton, Tom Pardoe, Robert Taylor and Mark Challberg

## POTOMAC HUNT

*Kennels in Boyds, Montgomery County, with hunting country located in the northwestern Montgomery County agricultural preserve bordering the Potomac River.*

The Potomac Hunt is most closely associated with all horse activity in the Washington, DC, suburban area and was founded 100 years ago. Former hunting territory includes parts of Chevy Chase; at one time, sporting enthusiasts in the area hunted land near the nation's capital.

Originally based in Potomac near River Road, the hunt has moved further west to the Dickerson/Boyd's area, as the land closer to DC has been developed.

Each spring, the club hosts the Potomac Hunt Races on the farm of magazine publisher Austin Kiplinger, and there are also several Pony Clubs located in the area. Joint masters are Irvin “Skip” Crawford and his wife, Victoria, Peter Hitchen, and Mrs. Rainier Bosselman.

### NEW MARKET-MIDDLETOWN VALLEY HOUNDS

*Kennels in Middletown, Frederick County, with hunting country located in Frederick and Washington counties.*

New Market-Middletown Valley is Maryland's westernmost hunt. It is the merging of the former New Market Hounds and the Middletown Valley Hounds.

The longest run ever by a fox in Maryland is said to have occurred in the 1800s, when the fox broke cover in Annapolis and ran some 80 miles into Frederick County. Mounted followers kept up for several hours but, losing the hounds, gave up the chase. However, hounds kept in pursuit of the fox until they were rounded up above Frederick by a Col. Johnston. Current NM-MV joint masters are Jennifer Sponseller Webster, Katharine Byron, and Kevin Curran.



In addition to the nine recognized hunts, there are several organized clubs and packs of hounds located throughout the state. Foremost among these are the Mt. Carmel Hounds in northern Baltimore County (Carl Shaffer, master); the Carrollton Hounds near Westminster (Dulany Noble, master); the Flint Hill Hounds near Chestertown (Ed Fry, master), which also hunts part of the Fair Hill Natural Resources Center in Cecil County; and the Eastern Shore Hounds (led by Tom Ireland), which is comprised of several hound owners banding their hounds together in a pack and following them in their pickup trucks. ■