

# The Otterhound

Contributed by Admin  
Thursday, 24 November 2005

## THE OTTERHOUND

The Otterhound is a descendant of the old Southern Hound, and there is reason to believe that all hounds hunting their quarry by nose had a similar source. Why the breed was first called the Southern Hound, or when his use became practical in Great Britain, must be subjects of conjecture; but that there was a hound good enough to hold a line for many hours is accredited in history that goes very far back into past centuries. The hound required three centuries ago even was all the better esteemed for being slow and unswerving on a line of scent, and in many parts of the Kingdom, up to within half that period, the so-called Southern Hound had been especially employed. In Devonshire and Wales the last sign of him in his purity was perhaps when Captain Hopwood hunted a small pack of hounds very similar in character on the fitch or pole-cat; the *\_modus operandi\_* being to find the foraging grounds of the animal, and then on a line that might be two days old hunt him to his lair, often enough ten or twelve miles off.

When this sort of hunting disappeared, and improved ideas of fox-hunting came into vogue, there was nothing left for the Southern Hound to do but to hunt the otter. He may have done this before at various periods, but history rather tends to show that otter-hunting was originally associated with a mixed pack, and some of Sir Walter Scott's pages seem to indicate that the Dandie Dinmont and kindred Scottish terriers had a good deal to do with the sport. It is more than probable that the rough-coated terrier is identical with the now recognised Otterhound as an offshoot of the Southern Hound; but

be that as it may, there has been a special breed of Otterhound for the last eighty years, very carefully bred and gradually much improved in point of appearance. They are beautiful hounds to-day, with heads as typical as those of Bloodhounds, legs and feet that would do for Foxhounds, a unique coat of their own, and they are exactly suitable for hunting the otter, as everyone knows who has had the enjoyment of a day's sport on river or brook.

The greatest otter hunter of the last century may have been the Hon. Geoffrey Hill, a younger brother of the late Lord Hill. A powerful athlete of over six feet, Major Hill was an ideal sportsman in appearance, and he was noted for the long distances he would travel on foot with his hounds. They were mostly of the pure rough sort, not very big; the dogs he reckoned at about 23-1/2 inches, bitches 22: beautiful Bloodhound type of heads, coats of thick, hard hair, big in ribs and bones, and good legs and feet.

Major Hill seldom exhibited his hounds. They were seen now and then at Birmingham; but, hunting as hard as they did through Shropshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, and into Wales, where they got their best water, there was not much time for showing. Their famous Master has been dead now many years, but his pack is still going, and shows great sport as the Hawkstone under the Mastership of Mr. H. P. Wardell, the kennels being at Ludlow race-course, Bromfield.

The leading pack in the Kingdom for the last sixty years, at any rate, has been the Carlisle when in the hands of Mr. J. C. Carrick, who was famous both for the sport he showed and for his breed of Otterhound, so well represented at all the important shows. Such hounds as Lottery and Lucifer were very typical specimens; but of late years the entries of Otterhounds have not been very numerous at the great exhibitions, and this can well be explained by the fact that they are wanted in greater numbers for active service, there

being many more packs than formerly--in all, twenty-one for the United Kingdom.

The sport of otter-hunting is decidedly increasing, as there have been several hunts started within the last six years. There can well be many more, as, according to the opinion of that excellent authority, the late Rev. "Otter" Davies, as he was always called, there are otters on every river; but, owing to the nocturnal and mysterious habits of the animals, their whereabouts or existence is seldom known, or even suspected. Hunting them is a very beautiful sport, and the question arises as to whether the pure Otterhounds should not be more generally used than they are at present. It is often asserted that their continued exposure to water has caused a good deal of rheumatism in the breed, that they show age sooner than others, and that the puppies are difficult to rear. There are, however, many advantages in having a pure breed, and there is much to say for the perfect work of the Otterhound. The scent of the otter is possibly the sweetest of all trails left by animals. One cannot understand how it is that an animal swimming two or three feet from the bottom of a river-bed and the same from the surface should leave a clean line of burning scent that may remain for twelve or eighteen hours. The supposition must be that the scent from the animal at first descends and is then always rising. At any rate, the oldest Foxhound or Harrier that has never touched otter is at once in ravishing excitement on it, and all dogs will hunt it. The terrier is never keener than when he hits on such a line.

The Foxhound, so wonderful in his forward dash, may have too much of it for otter hunting. The otter is so wary. His holt can very well be passed, his delicious scent may be overrun; but the pure-bred Otterhound is equal to all occasions. He is terribly certain on the trail when he finds it. Nothing can throw him off it, and when his

deep note swells into a sort of savage howl, as he lifts his head towards the roots of some old pollard, there is a meaning in it--no mistake has been made. In every part of a run it is the same; the otter dodges up stream and down, lands for a moment, returns to his holt; but his adversaries are always with him, and as one sees their steady work the impression becomes stronger and stronger that for the real sport of otter-hunting there is nothing as good as the pure-bred Otterhound. There is something so dignified and noble about the hound of unsullied strain that if you once see a good one you will not soon forget him. He is a large hound, as he well needs to be, for the "varmint" who is his customary quarry is the wildest, most vicious, and, for its size, the most powerful of all British wild animals, the inveterate poacher of our salmon streams, and consequently to be mercilessly slaughtered, although always in sporting fashion. To be equal to such prey, the hound must have a Bulldog's courage, a Newfoundland's strength in water, a Pointer's nose, a Retriever's sagacity, the stamina of the Foxhound, the patience of a Beagle, the intelligence of a Collie.

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**THE PERFECT OTTERHOUND: HEAD--**The head, which has been described as something between that of a Bloodhound and that of a Foxhound, is more hard and rugged than either. With a narrow forehead, ascending to a moderate peak. **EARS--**The ears are long and sweeping, but not feathered down to the tips, set low and lying flat to the cheeks. **EYES--**The eyes are large, dark and deeply set, having a peculiarly thoughtful expression. They show a considerable amount of the haw. **NOSE--**The nose is large and well developed, the nostrils expanding. **MUZZLE--**The muzzle well protected from wiry hair. The jaw very powerful with deep flews. **NECK--**The neck is strong and muscular, but rather long. The dewlap is loose and folded. **CHEST--**The chest, deep and capacious, but not too wide. **BACK--**The back is strong, wide and

arched. **SHOULDERS**--The shoulders ought to be sloping, the arms and thighs substantial and muscular. **FEET**--The feet, fairly large and spreading, with firm pads and strong nails to resist sharp rocks. **STERN**--The stern when the hound is at work is carried gaily, like that of a rough Welsh Harrier. It is thick and well covered, to serve as a rudder. **COAT**--The coat is wiry, hard, long and close at the roots, impervious to water. **COLOUR**--Grey, or buff, or yellowish, or black, or rufus red, mixed with black or grey. **HEIGHT**--22 to 24 inches.