



# End of a Great Mastership

One of the great Masterships of the postwar years will conclude at the end of this season when Capt. Ian Farquhar retires from the Duke of Beaufort's after thirty-four years in office. He was previously Joint Master and huntsman of the Bicester and Warden Hill from 1973-85.

Taking the helm at the Beaufort a year after the death of the 10th Duke at Badminton was a huge responsibility. The Duke, always known as "Master", was the head of the foxhunting world and had set remarkable standards in hound breeding. He produced great sport with his family pack for sixty years, hunting hounds himself for all but the last thirteen seasons.

David Beaufort, the 11th Duke, who was himself an experienced hunting man, never regretted his decision to appoint Ian to the key role, always giving him staunch support. The Duke affirmed that "Ian fulfilled all my expectations: a great huntsman, a wonderful breeder of hounds, and, above all, a marvellous leader who has the knack of getting on with everyone in the country."

Leadership was especially important in the Beaufort because it was inevitably the focus of much public attention, and especially in the face of the iniquitous Hunting Act of 2004. Wearing the Beaufort huntsman's green livery, astride his horse at a meet, Ian Farquhar was seen on national television giving a rousing response to the act at a Beaufort meet. He pledged the flourishing survival of the hunt, and the best sport they could provide in the face of the new legislation.

Ian succeeded in both these aims, although he remains deeply disappointed that the Act was ever passed. At this year's Peterborough Royal Foxhound Show, he said to me "We lost, but we have done our best to keep things going. It's a remarkable fact that virtually all the packs have survived, and that so many are still able to produce hounds for a show of this standard. Perhaps one day the political climate will be right for repeal of the Act which is so justified. We can only press on...."

At the Beaufort's first meet after the Hunting Act became law, in February 2005, Ian and his kennel-huntsman and whipper-in, Tony Holdsworth, brought

hounds to Worcester Lodge at Badminton amid huge applause from a gathering of many foxhunters who included Masters and huntsmen from other packs. Overhead a Sky TV team was filming the occasion from a helicopter. Trails were laid, and a rousing day following hounds was achieved.. Afterwards Ian told a sombre gathering in Tony Holdsworth's kitchen: "I think I can see how we can make this work...." The mood changed, and a positive discussion followed on a way ahead.

Ian's background could hardly have been better for a future Master of Foxhounds. His father, the late Sir Peter Farquhar, was one of the leading hound breeders of the twentieth century, and a close friend of "Master", the 10th Duke of Beaufort.

Those of us fortunate to see sport under Sir Peter in the Portman's superb vale and hill country in North Dorset just after the war, know just how fortunate Ian was to have such a background. Sir Peter was one of the first Masters to recognise the value of using Welsh outcrosses to improve the traditional English Foxhound. He encouraged the 10th Duke

to make use of this source, and Ian was able to achieve further judicious outcrosses of Welsh blood to ensure the Beaufort pack maintained its type as an athletic hound with keen hunting abilities, whilst keeping the size and quality, which gained so many prizes “on the flags” at leading shows.

Ian had already proved his worth in the Bicester and Warden Hill country, despite increasing urban pressures which later led to its amalgamation with the Whaddon Chase, also much constrained by south east developments.

Ian has said he regards the times hunting hounds in the Bicester country in the 1970s, and in the Beaufort country in the next decade as the most enjoyable in his hunting career. As well as increasing the tempo of the ventry, Ian gave a tremendous lead across country. Those of us who were in the mounted field that day, will never forget a visit by the Bicester hounds to the Cottesmore country, when the visiting pack ran hard all day over the cream of the Tuesday country. Ian's wife Pammie- Jane was at the front of the field all day.

Among many happy memories of so many good runs in the Beaufort country, Ian can be persuaded, to recall a few in particular. He laughs when he recalls a morning after the Yeomanry Dinner when hounds met at Littleton Drew. Capt. Ronnie Wallace, legendary MFH who was notably competitive in the hunting field and on the flags, was staying at Badminton and followed by car with the 11th Duke.

“We found straightaway at Littleton Drew, ran to Alderton Grove, left- handed to Cape Farm, and ran on as hard as they could go, to catch their fox in Swangrove; a five mile point in forty-five minutes. Then we hacked to Centre Walk, found immediately, and ran hard to just short of Hyam, near Malmesbury, a just over a five mile point. Apparently Wallace decided to go home shortly afterwards!

“On another day I remember well, I was short of horses, and David Beaufort lent me his grey horse as he had just stopped riding himself. After a busy morning, we found at one o'clock at the top end of Badminton Park, and about an hour and forty-five minutes later we worked out that hounds had run for twenty-two miles all round Badminton, over to Horton and the Sodbury Vale, and back across to New Farm at Badminton, with two five mile points.

“By which time the Duke was not quite so pleased, and was saying with a twinkle: ‘It's high time you got off my horse’.”

A sixteen mile run from Chavenage, and a six mile point from Lady Violet's covert, and into the VWH country, were among the runs Ian especially recalls, but for every huntsman there are myriads of treasured private memories of when a newly entered hound hunts especially



well, or a run brings special pleasure over the land of a keen hunting farmer or landowner.

In the summer round of the hound shows, Ian receives an especially warm welcome at the Wales and Borders Counties Show at Builth Wells, where he has made many friends through his support and interest in Welsh breeding. He is accustomed to staying behind after the show to celebrate the day with local Masters and huntsmen and particularly enjoys the traditional singing lead by the Welsh.

At Builth this year, the Welsh packs presented Ian with a painting of Pembrokeshire Gerwin, sire of a Welsh bitch called Gwynneth that he had much valued. The Beaufort finished a happy day by winning the brood bitch class and the bitch championship with Rascal '15.

It could not be taken for granted, nor was it an easy task, that the Beaufort continued to retain its dominant position in the placings at Peterborough, foxhunting's pinnacle of hound shows.

Since 1984 the Duke of Beaufort's have scored nineteen Peterborough championships, thirteen doghounds, and six bitch championships. There have been many more reserve championships, including both of these prizes at Peterborough this year.

Foxhunting has survived in our countryside by an amazing process of adapting to different circumstances, and by appealing to the “eager young” in each new generation entering the hunting field.

Yet the retirement of Capt Farquhar from the Duke of Beaufort's will be a special milestone recognised by many who have enjoyed his contribution to the sport for so many years.

In recognition of this, friends in the Beaufort country, are organising a testimonial fund for Capt Ian Farquhar to be presented at the end of the season.

Those who wish to show their appreciation and contribute to the “Thank You to the Captain Fund” can either pay online or by cheque. Myra Chappell is organizing the banking and cheques made payable to the TCF Fund should be sent to her at the following address: The Cottage, Hawkesbury Common, Badminton, South Gloucestershire GL9 1BW

Alternatively, transfers can be made online to the following account:

A/C Name TCF Fund  
The A/C Number 07723839  
Sort Code 30-92-06

Overseas donations might need an IBAN number

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If contributing online, please ensure the reference includes your name and initials. So that your payment can be acknowledged please also confirm by email to myra.chappell@live.com If contributing by cheque please send an S.A.E. if an acknowledgement is required.

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