

HISTORY OF THE BEAGLE

The origin of the Beagle, like that of most other hound breeds, cannot be positively traced; it appears buried in antiquity. In the second century AD, *Onomasticon*, a Greek dictionary in ten books by Iulius Pollux, mentions the dog being used by man for hunting purposes about 1300 BC. The ancient Greek author Xenophon made references in his writings of about 450 BC to small hounds used to hunt hare on foot. While no formal name was given to

these small hounds, they were undoubtedly the prognosticators of the dog we have come to know today as the Beagle.

Early man hunted animals for survival itself but, through the centuries, hunting evolved from a means to sustain life into a sport. The landed gentry and nobility of England, as early as the fourteenth century, participated in blood sports as a social activity. They used horses and large and small hounds, along with small terriers,



Alert, compact and lively, with exceptional scenting skills, the Beagle was a favored hunting companion of royalty and now is a familiar face to dog lovers everywhere.

Beagle

Evolutionists agree that all breeds of domestic dog have developed from the wolf.



CLUB OBJECTIVES

England's Beagle Club's objectives and aims were published in 1899 and they still remain unchanged: "It keeps wide open its doors and welcomes alike to the fold the Master of Beagles who wishes to maintain or form his Pack on ancient lines; the shooting man who keeps a few couples for driving out the rabbits, or putting up the pheasant; the drag hunter who gets an afternoon's healthy exercise with the pleasure of seeing hounds work and hearing hound music; the exhibitor who finds pleasure in breeding for perfection, so far as looks go, and performs most useful work by making the beauty of the breed more generally known; the lady who finds the Beagle the most intelligent and interesting of pets; last, but certainly not the least, the old sportsman whose sporting days are over, who has a keen remembrance of what has been and joins in, whilst his recollections and experiences are of inestimable value to a younger generation. All these are now united in the same effort."



in the pursuit of deer, fox, badger and hare.

Selection for desired physical characteristics and mental traits to suit a purpose is how the various purebred dog breeds came into being. In prehistoric times, the breeder was the caveman looking for a dog whose basic instincts were strong, and he used the best of these dogs to assist him in finding and catching food. Later, the breeder was the farmer, who found that keeping a hardy and energetic dog around helped keep meat on the family's table. The caveman and, much later, the farmer both followed the dogs on foot.

Later, when the Beagle was kept by the British aristocracy, stockmen were employed and it was their job to make the selection of stock. The aristocracy, having the wealth to do so, kept large numbers of hounds together in packs; the evenness of type in these packs was highly regarded. The terrain varied from county to county throughout England and so the desired type varied from pack to pack to serve the challenges of the local hunt. The groups of wealthy sportsmen usually followed the hounds on horseback.

By repeatedly selecting desirable characteristics and traits to suit the purpose at hand, the breeder, whether the caveman, the farmer, the stockman, etc., fixed

type within the dogs and these small hounds eventually were refined and bred with some consistency.

During the Middle Ages in England, there were two varieties of hound said to be quite numerous, known as Northern Hounds and Southern Hounds. There also were hounds of a larger type used for trailing deer, probably the Foxhound, and others of a smaller type used for trailing hare, thought to be



Harriers and Beagles.

Little has been written to describe the Northern Hound but William Youatt, in his book *The Dog*, published in 1846, mentions “the shallow-flawed, more contracted lip of the Northern dogs” and claimed that this type



The Foxhound, though much larger than the Beagle, seems to figure in the background of the Beagle. The American breed is lankier than the English.

was the swiftest. There is also mention of North-Country Beagles by seventeenth-century writers, including William Somerville (1675–1742), who refer to this dog as being fast and more slender than the Cotswold Beagle. Perhaps the Northern Hound and the North-Country Beagle are one and the same; it would seem so.

So what breeds of dog were put together to produce the Beagle? Some believe that the breed resulted from a crossing of the Harrier with the old South of England or Southern Hound. In some instances, they were referred to as “little Harriers.”

The Belvoir pack, with both Beagles and English Foxhounds, was one of the most important packs in England. It is seen in this historic photo, moving off after the Meet at Croxton Park, near Grantham. In the background is the noteworthy edifice known as the Olde Croxton Abbey.

TYPE AND STANDARD

“Type” refers to those characteristic qualities distinguishing a breed, the embodiment of a breed standard’s essentials. The standard is a written description of the ideal dog of each recognized breed, written to serve as a word pattern by which dogs are judged at shows.

Beagle

Foxhounds and Beagles are similar in many traits and abilities as well as looks, despite the large difference in size.



Most scholars seem to support the theory that the modern Beagle came down for the most part from the Harrier. Selection for the smaller dog, litter after litter, over and over again, fixed the size—what was once called a small Foxhound or a small Harrier is known today as the Beagle.

During the seventeenth century, Beagles were mentioned by many different but similar names: Northern Hounds and

Southern Hounds; Rough-Coated and Smooth-Coated Beagles. The Southern Hound was described by Gervase Markham as having “a longer nose, ears and flews more shallow, his general appearance slender and greyhound-like. They had good noses and were fast but in respect of mouth they were a little sharp, with no real depth of tone or music.” William Youatt, in his book *The Dog*, agreed with Stonehenge (J. H. Walsh, a noted dog authority of the Victorian era) and felt that the Harrier crossed with the old Southern Hound was the combination that produced the Beagle.

In *Cynographia Britannica*, published about 1800, there are descriptions of Southern Beagles and Northern Beagles. The small hounds were described as varieties generally distinguished by the parts of the country in which they were bred, which lends support to the quote credited to William Somerville at about the same time, “A different Hound for every different chase; select with judgement.”

Northern Beagles were commonly wire-haired, straight-limbed and better formed in their shoulders and haunches, and endured bad weather and lengthy exercise better than the Southern Beagle. William Somerville described the Cotswold Beagle, whom he credited as producing some of his best Harriers when

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The origin of the name Beagle is not certain, but there are a number of theories. *Squire of Low Degree*, first published in 1475, is the first mention of the Beagle (by name) in English literature. “With theyr beagles in that place and seven score raches at his rechase.” Some people believe the word to be derived from the Old English word *begle*. The French *beigh* and the Celtic *beag* are also possibilities—all mean “small.”



crossed with the old Southern Hound.

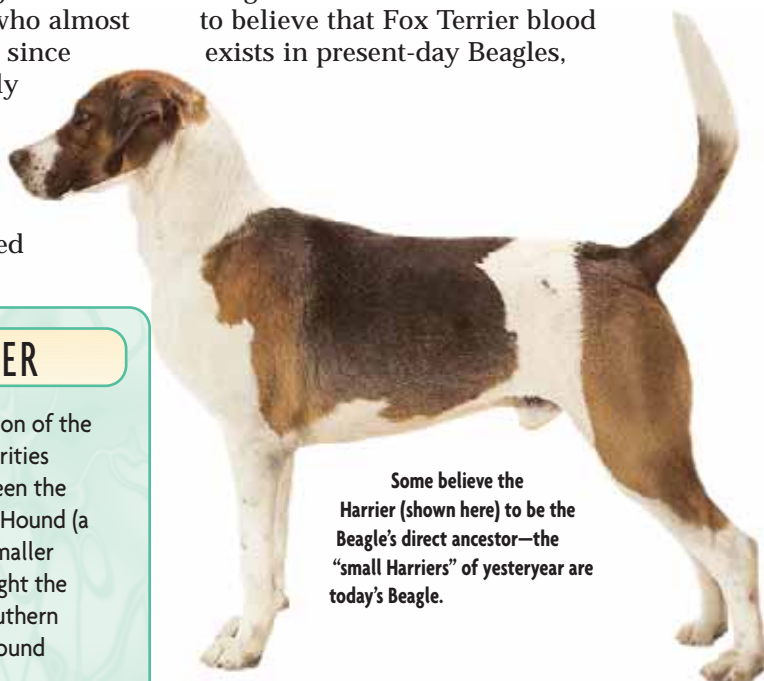
The author Beckford wrote in about 1750 of Fox-Beagles and described them as being exceptionally lively in temperament as well as fleet of foot. He

records that he crossed his Harriers with them to give more dash and drive. Also mentioned are Rough-Coated Beagles and Wire-Haired Beagles, who almost certainly are the same, since both were found mainly in Devon in the South of England and in nearby Wales. William Youatt claimed the Wire-Haired



This historic illustration was originally captioned: “Apparently the hare has passed through a wood and the scent has been lost, the Beagles not knowing which way to go.”

Beagle was the stronger, stouter and better variety. Those familiar with both Fox Terriers and Beagles realize that there is cause to believe that Fox Terrier blood exists in present-day Beagles,



Some believe the Harrier (shown here) to be the Beagle's direct ancestor—the “small Harriers” of yesteryear are today's Beagle.

THE HARRIER

The Harrier is a small edition of the Foxhound but some authorities believe he is a cross between the Beagle and the St. Hubert Hound (a Bloodhound-like dog of smaller stature.) Stonehenge thought the Harrier came from the Southern Hound with a little Greyhound thrown in.

This Dennis Moss photo from the early 1900s was captioned: "The Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester has one of the best packs of Beagles in England. The pack is here seen moving off after a Meet outside the College..."



WHAT A DRAG!

Since the modern-day enthusiast is neither likely to find a field nearby with hare lollygagging about nor to wish to see a hare killed just for sport, you can easily create a "drag" with an artificial scent as a substitute for a hare. Mix together half an ounce of oil of aniseed, a quarter of an ounce of essential oil of valerian and an ounce and a quarter of castor oil, and dip a cloth in the mixture. Tie a string to the soaked cloth and drag it through a field, occasionally redipping the cloth to keep the scent strong. Then turn your Beagle loose and watch the action!

perhaps the source of the Beagle's legendary stubbornness.

Kerry Beagles are also mentioned repeatedly by scholars and were quite different from the general idea of what a Beagle should look like: upstanding, rather lightly built, black-and-tan and in many ways resembling the Bloodhound. This breed was said to have existed in Southern Ireland for hundreds of years, and the Ryan family of Scarteen claims to have owned them since 1735. They were not seen in England until the early twentieth century. Some think the present-day Beagle gets his keen nose from the Kerry Beagle, who was in color and general appearance a

miniature Bloodhound.

Stonehenge, in his *Manual of British Sports* (1861), gave the varieties of Beagles as follows: “First, the medium Beagle, which may be either heavy and Southern-like or light and Northern-like; second, the dwarf or lap-dog Beagle; third the Fox Beagle, and fourth the rough or Terrier Beagle.”

Through the centuries, British royalty has favored the Beagle. During the reign of Henry VIII, Beagles are said to have been popular. There exists written evidence of Beagles during the reign of Henry’s daughter, Elizabeth I (1558–1603), as well as pictures that depicted members of her Court hunting with Beagles. There is also a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I with a Beagle at her side. Interestingly, the Beagles in Elizabethan times were very small. Described as dwarfs, Pygmy Beagles or Pocket Beagles, they ranged in height from 8 to 10 inches at the top of the shoulder and were small enough to be occasionally carried to the chase in a pair of panniers on the horse’s back.

Another royal who favored the Beagle is King James I (1566–1625), who enjoyed the sport of hunting the hare with his pack of Beagles. A century later, during the reign of King George IV (1762–1830), English Beagles were described as rough-coated or



smooth-coated, with King George preferring the smooth-coated Beagle. While Prince of Wales, he enjoyed hunting with his pack of dwarf Beagles. These very small

This famous painting by Maud Earl shows Miss Oughton’s pack of Beagles, about 1899, discovering the hare when least expecting to find it.

KERRY BEAGLES

Early in the twentieth century, a group of Irish emigrants took their Kerry Beagles to the United States, where they contributed to the development of several American varieties of hound. In Ireland, breeders have stirred a resurgence of interest in this active and friendly dog. The Kerry Beagle is still used for hare hunting, and the rising popularity of drag trials in Ireland has created a new activity for the breed. The modern Kerry Beagle comes in traditional hound colors, stands about 22–26 inches at the top of the shoulder and weighs 45–60 lbs.

Beagle

Beagles did not enjoy popularity much past this period.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, organized dog activities began. The aristocracy, long committed to the hunt, owned packs of Foxhounds, Harriers and Beagles. They hunted mostly on horseback, chasing fox with the larger Foxhounds and Harriers, and hare with the smaller Beagle. "Beagling" is described as the art of hunting the hare in its natural surroundings

with a pack of small hounds that rely solely on their noses to work out the intricate paths the hare has taken. Beagling became popular with the commoner, too, since the smaller Beagle could be followed on foot.

England's Kennel Club was formed in 1873 and dog shows were then held on a regular basis. The first recorded mention of Beagles being shown in England was at the Tunbridge Wells Dog Society Show on August 21 and

This Keystone photo (circa 1901) is entitled "Cubbing." The caption reads: "Before fox-hunting starts in all seriousness, early Meets are held at which the stock is thinned down and the foxes are dispersed. These early Meets go by the name of Cubbing, and the Fife Foxhound Pack is seen on its way to the first draw."



22, 1884, with eight or nine Beagles entered. There was a separate class for Beagles of any size, and the best hound under 14 inches in this class was presented with a silver cup and a hunting horn.

The Beagle Club of England was formed in 1890, held its first show in 1896 and published its first *Year Book* in 1897. World War I (1914–1918) stopped much of the Beagle activities, but interest increased again during the two successive decades. World War II (1939–1945) again interfered, and Viscount Chelmsford is credited with restarting the club.

The UK's Association of Masters of Harriers and Beagles was founded in 1891. The association's members were limited to those who were keeping, or had kept, registered packs that regularly hunt the hare. The object of both clubs was to further the interest of the Beagles. In the early 1950s, there was a great deal of renewed interest in the Beagle that carries through to this day. Since 1962, a number of regional Beagle clubs have formed around the British Isles.

Today, Beagles have classes at most of the Open Shows in the United Kingdom and at all of the General Championship Shows that come under the rules and regulations of The Kennel Club. Entries are large, often 100 or



more, and sometimes twice that number.

THE BEAGLE ON THE CONTINENT

In France, during the reign of the Bourbons (1589–1848), the lavishness of the chase was unparalleled. At Chantilly, where Prince Louis Henry de Bourbon resided, records of the sport have been preserved. The records from 1748

One of the attractions of owning a high-quality Beagle is that it can be shown in addition to being a family pet.

Beagle



The upper photo shows a disorganized pack of Beagles heading in every direction, trying to pick up a scent. The lower photo shows the dogs on the scent, with the Master keeping up with the pack.



to 1779 show that 77,750 hare were accounted for in the chase, as well as 3,364 stags and hinds.

The Foxhound is thought to have descended from four different types of French hounds. In George Turberville's *Art of Venerie*, written around the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the French hound types were described, "...the White, used principally for

stag hunting; the Fallow, used on all sorts of game, mainly the stag; the Dun, used more frequently than any other hound breed and good on any game and the Black or St. Hubert's, of many colors and no doubt the forebear of the Bloodhound and the Southern Hound." The Southern Hound, when crossed with the smaller Harrier (often called a small

edition of the Foxhound), is thought by many experts to be the forebear of the Beagle.

As in the breed's British homeland, fanciers of the Beagle on the Continent enjoyed the merry little hunting hound as the all-around dog, a devoted hunter on a variety of game as well as an attractive companion for the drawing room. In modern times, the Beagle's popularity has remained strong and the breed a major entry at dog exhibitions through Europe.

THE BEAGLE IN THE UNITED STATES

Beginning in Colonial times, Europeans emigrating to America brought dogs with them, some to serve as guards, some to pull carts and others to secure game for food. Some of these dogs were brought because of their innate ability to scent, to trail and to capture game.

The first recorded mention of the Beagle was in Joseph Barrow Felt's *History of Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton*, published in 1834. The book was based in part upon early town records and, in the records for the year 1642, the Beagle is mentioned as having helped local hunters to keep wolves from the town.

Prior to the Civil War (1861–1865), hunters in the Southern states used small hunting hounds, including



Beagles, to pursue fox and hare. During the war, almost all hunting ceased, but, after the war, interest again picked up. Wanting to improve the quality of their stock, some more affluent hunters imported Beagles from Europe.

In the early 1870s, General Richard Rowett from Illinois

Beagles were shipped to America as early as 1642. They have been a favorite breed ever since.

Beagle

Beagles are inquisitive dogs that enjoy tracking. They are, in reality, excellent scent-hounds; Beagle owners may wish to pursue competitive tracking with their dogs.



became highly interested in Beagles. He imported dogs from England and from them bred what fanciers during those times thought were very good representatives of the breed. The Rowett Beagles were known for their consistency of type, evenness of markings and ability in the field.

Another noted breeder of that period was Mr. Norman Elmore, who imported some influential dogs in the development of his Elmore line. Ringwood and Countess were two of these imports, with Ringwood being used at stud extensively and his offspring often taken to the Rowett strain. The two gentlemen, General Rowett and Mr. Elmore, worked together and the two strains produced what many thought were the best Beagles of the time.

About 1880, Mr. Arnold of Rhode Island imported a pack of

Beagles from the Royal Rock line in northern England. Approximately six years later, Mr. James L. Kernochan imported another pack from England, all of which had considerable influence on the quality of Beagles in America. From these times forward, the popularity of the Beagle rose steadily.

In 1885, a dog named Blunder was the first Beagle to be registered in the Stud Book of the American Kennel Club. The National Beagle Club was founded in 1888 and the club held the first field trial for the breed two years later in Hyannis, Massachusetts, with an entry of 18. It is believed that the first American standard for the breed was drawn up by General Rowett, Mr. Norman Elmore and a Dr. L. H. Twaddell.

On December 21, 1901, Ch. Windholme's Bangle, a five-year-old bitch owned by Mr. Harry T. Peters, became the breed's first all-breed Best in Show winner. By 1917, the popularity of the Beagle as a show dog was evidenced by an entry of 75 at America's premier show, the Westminster Kennel Club event, held in New York City. At this show, Beagles enjoyed great success, winning first in the Sporting Group (there was no Hound Group at that time), as well as Best Sporting Brace and Best Sporting Team in Show. It is interesting to note that it was

at this event that Beagles were first shown as two varieties based on size: one class for Beagles 13 inches and under, and the other for Beagles over 13 inches but under 15 inches. The breed has been shown in America in these two separate varieties ever since.

Interest and enthusiasm for this clever little hunter have never waned in America. Today, the Beagle is one of the most popular all-around breeds, as a companion, an enthusiastic hunter and trailer and a highly competitive member of the Hound Group.



American Beagles are categorized by size. The line of demarcation is 13 inches. Beagles below 13 inches and those above (but less than 15) are exhibited in two separate categories.