

# WELSH HOUNDS

By Norm and Randee Perkins

photos courtesy of the author



We have a vested interest in this breed. Our Gleeson is a Welsh Hound who hunted for four years in Conway Valley, Wales. His days are now numbered; he is 15 years of age. As he nears the end of his path, we feel a tremendous loss in our hearts, since he is our last connection to our life spent abroad. Gleeson made a difficult transition to life as a pet from his previous life in the hunt pack. We feel he has had the best life, hunting early in his life with 80 other pack dogs and then becoming a family member with us. How many dogs really get to work at what they are bred for and cuddle in bed for the last 11 years of their lives? We are very honored to have had the chance to be part of his life. I hang on to every moment I can spend with him now. We are blessed to have had so many great years with him.

The Welsh Hound is a distinguished, rare breed which is commonly overlooked and rarely seen outside the hunting packs. Native to Wales and known to many as the Welsh Foxhound, they are not AKC or KC registered. High strung and overly independent, the Welsh Hound is used in fox and mink hunting packs, each requiring a different methodology. With a firm hand in discipline, the Welsh Hound is responsive, intelligent, loyal, and happy by nature. The heritage of this ancient breed traces back to the Celtic Hound.

The Welsh Hound has been in existence in Wales since well before William the Conqueror arrived and is certainly their oldest existing native breed. All other hounds arrived with William or gradually moved east through Asia and Europe, finally to arrive in England. It was from some of these newcomers that the present day English Foxhound, Harrier, and Beagle have

evolved over the centuries. Throughout this time the Welsh Hound has remained virtually unchanged. They are the right hound for a tough job in a tough place. Mink hunting is a hard and difficult occupation for a hound with water deep and turbulent and river banks harsh and densely covered, but the Welsh invariably come out on top.

The Welsh Hound is broken or rough coated, of medium size, having longer ears than the English Foxhound, and built of a slightly narrower line. Noted for their strong scenting ability and loose tongue, the Welsh Hound will actually speak before the English Foxhound, who waits, making certain that he is on the correct line. Welsh Hounds have good temperaments and get along well within the pack. They have a terrific jump and are more suited to open country. A hunt is made up of Welsh, Fox or Fell, and Otterhounds, each type performing differently. The fastest and most generous with his voice is the Welsh, known as the screamer, who will notify the huntsmen they are on a scent. The huntsmen wait to listen for the Foxhound to confirm it is the correct line. However, the scenting ability of the Welsh Hound and Foxhound are no match for the Otterhound, who directly leads the huntsmen to their prey. The huntsmen then direct the hounds away and the feisty Jack Russell is sent to corner the prey.

## *Evolution of the Welsh Hound*

Four breeds whose histories are linked over hundreds of years are the Otterhound, the Welsh Hound, the Griffon Vendéen, and the Fauve de Bretagne. The Griffon Vendéen evolved with the help of the Breton Hound (the Breton race colonized Brittany from Wales

*Continued on page 68*



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