

**F**ourteenth-century engravers, 18th-century painters and yesterday's photographers all show us dogs as seen through their eyes. Their work is an enlightening way to follow the development of breeds and how they were seen...

# In the Eyes of the Artist...

## The Beagle – The World's Smallest Scent Hound

Text and illustrations by RIA HÖRTER

### Reduced Foxhound

The hunting of hares with small scent hounds is over 2,000 years old. Xenofon (ca. 430 BCE), a Greek writer and passionate hunter, used relatively small scent hounds "... that followed the smell of the game with their noses to the ground." Other writers described "the small hare hound" as a reduced Harrier, which would have been a reduced Foxhound.

In his unsurpassed work *Cynographia Britannica* (1800), Sydenham Edwards wrote not very positively about the Beagle: "Of the hound tribe the Beagle is the least, and is only used for the purpose of hare hunting. Their method of finding is very similar to the Harrier, but they are far inferior in point of swiftness."

About a century later, an unknown writer stated in the Swiss *Centralblatt für Jagd- und Hundeliebhaber* (*Manual for hunting and dog owners*) that in earlier times there was no difference between the Beagle and Harrier.

### Roman Province

When it comes to the arrival of the Beagle in England, we must work on assumptions. It has been taken for granted that the

Beagle's history started in Greece, and that they arrived in the British Isles – a Roman province from AD 43 to 410 – with Roman soldiers. Others think that small scent hounds came to Britain in the 11th century with the Normans.

If the last-mentioned theory is correct, the Beagle would be a reduced Southern Hound in which "Southern" is not southern England, but southern France, the country of origin of large scent hounds.

Another theory is that the Talbot Hound, brought to England in the 11th century by William the Conqueror, was an early forefather of the Beagle. Possibly, the white-colored Talbot was crossbred to the black-and-tan Irish Kerry Beagle.

The large Kerry Beagle, Northern and Southern Beagle, and the diminutive Pocket Beagle or Glove Beagle were all divergences from the breed and outside the scope of this article.

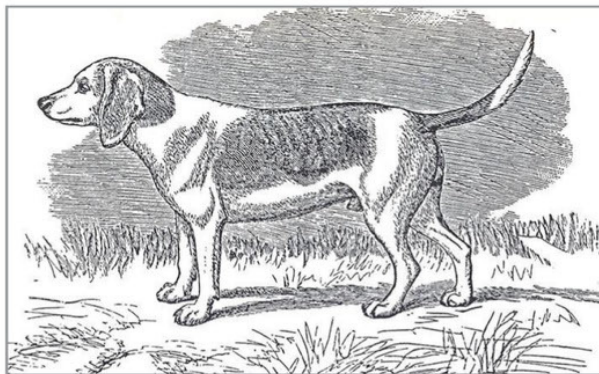
### Thin Bones

The name "Beagle" was used for the first time in 1475, in a late-medieval romance *The Squire of Low Degree: With their beagles in that place and seven score raches at his rechase*. ("Raches" is an old word for



Beagles can be easily recognized  
in Sydenham Edwards' *Cynographia Britannica* (1800)

*Edwards' depiction of Beagles "drawn from life" is more than two centuries old, but the breed is easy to recognize...*



*The Beagle Marksman from Hugh Dalziel's British Dogs (1879)*  
Note the snipy head and tight lips.

dogs that use their nose to follow the game.) Some authors stated that "Beagle" came from the Celtic word *beag* or from the old Celtic word *beigh*, both meaning "small." The old French word *beénguele*, meaning "open throat," or the French *briquet* (small scent hound) were named as well.

There is a depiction of Beagles in Sydenham Edwards' *Cynographia Britannica* (1800). About color, the AKC standard says "Any true hound color." In the current FCI standard, the Beagle's color is given as: "Tricolour (black, tan and white); blue, white and tan; badger pied; hare pied; lemon pied; lemon and white; red and white; tan and white; black and white; all white. With the exception of all white, all the above mentioned colours



*The Merry Beaglers*  
aquatint by H. Hall (1814-82), engraved by J. Harris.

can be found as mottle. No other colours are permissible. Tip of stern white."

Edwards' depiction of Beagles "drawn from life" is more than two centuries old, but the breed is easy to recognize; although, compared to the modern Beagle, they are less elegant, somewhat rustic in head and the bones are thin.

In 1856, 'Stonehenge' (pseudonym of John Henry Walsh) stated in the *Manual of British Rural Sports* that there were four varieties in Beagles: the "medium Beagle, dwarf or lapdog Beagle, fox

Beagle and rough-coated or terrier Beagle."

## That Animal

The Beagle was developed in England during the 19th century. Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), included a wood engraving of a Beagle in his *History of Quadrupeds* (1790), but was uncomplimentary about the breed: "Although far inferior in point of speed to that animal." "That animal" is a hare. Bewick's depiction shows a Beagle resembling a Harrier.

A 19th-century depiction shows us four Beagles with similar tail carriages, and heads with large ears. The Beagle Marksman is portrayed in Hugh Dalziel's *British Dogs* (1879). Marksman's body resembles that of a male of today, but his head is pointed and his lips tighter.

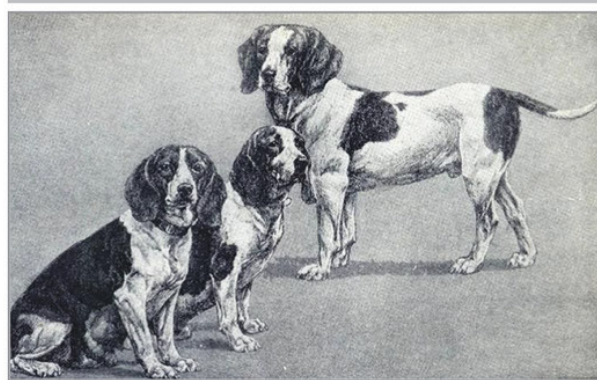
In 1927, Edward Ash published his book *Dogs: Their History and Development* with an illustration of three Beagles painted around 1880, showing a change to the length of leg, a body not too long, and a correct proportion between body and head. The pointed muzzle has disappeared and is sufficiently broad.

## Beagling, A Jolly Sport

According to chronicles, beagling – hunting with Beagles – was already known around 1400, practiced by the people who could afford dogs. Fourteenth- and 15th-century Kings Edward II (1284-1327) and Henry VII (1457-1509) owned packs with Glove Beagles. These dogs were so small they could fit on a glove. Other small Beagles were carried in saddlebags.

King Edward III (1312-77) owned a pack of "60 hare hounds" that accompanied him on his campaigns during the Hundred Years'

- **Land of origin:** Great Britain
- **Utilization:** scent hound, companion dog
- **First breed standard:** 1873 (England)
- **FCI breed standard:**  
[fci.be/Nomenclature/Standards/161g06-en.pdf](http://fci.be/Nomenclature/Standards/161g06-en.pdf)
- **AKC breed club:** The National Beagle Club of America, Inc.
- **Website:** [nationalbeagleclub.org](http://nationalbeagleclub.org)



Around 1880, breeders tried to eliminate the rough-coated "terrier type." The muzzle should be square (not snipy) and the body should be in better proportion to the head.

The Beagle in the middle shows a good example.  
From: Edward Ash, *Dogs: Their History and Development*, 1927



## More Info Needed?

- Catherine Sutton, *Beagles*. Littlehampton Book Services Ltd., 1972; ISBN: 0213164094
- Andrew H. Brace, *Beagles Today*. Macmillan, 1997; ISBN: 0876050860
- David Hancock, *Hounds: Hunting by Scent*. Crowood Press, 2014; ISBN: 1847976018
- [nationalbeagleclub.org](http://nationalbeagleclub.org)

War, the dynastic conflict between the kings of England and France during which English sovereigns traveled back and forth across the Channel with the royal household, soldiers, artisans and dogs in their wake. Different types of dogs and new breeds came into being at this time.

During the reign of Henry VIII (1491-1547), Beagles were part of the king's royal household; there was a payment in his bequest to a certain Robert Shere, "the Keeper of the Beagles."

## Elderly Gentlemen

It is known that Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was an enthusiastic beagler. She called her dogs "singing Beagles," because of their melodious baying. King James I (1566-1625) and French King Henri IV (1553-1610) swapped Beagles and French hounds. King Charles II (1630-85) and King George IV (1762-1830) hunted with packs of Beagles.

The English Association of Masters of Harriers and Beagles – founded in 1891 – states: "Beagling is an enjoyable outdoor sport open to all. It takes place in the winter, officially from mid-October to March and usually occurs on a Saturday afternoon and one afternoon in the week. It is ideally suited to anyone who enjoys being out in the British countryside, appreciates nature and is interested in working hounds. Beagling is an inexpensive sport and newcomers need no specific equipment other than warm and sturdy footwear and clothing. Whilst regular members are encouraged to contribute to the hunt by means of a regular subscription, visitors can enjoy a day's sport for a 'cap' or day ticket of around £5. If you are lucky, there may be a drink before hunting and a hearty tea to follow, but it is well to bring a little extra money if the meet is at a pub."

In 1803, the *Sportman's Cabinet* stated that beagling was "... a sport for

elderly gentlemen who were too old and too poor for another pastime." People spoke scornfully about "the poor person's fox hunting." Attitudes have definitely changed.

## White Dogs

The ca. 1830 pack of Parson Phillip Honeywood in Essex is considered the basis of modern working Beagles. It is assumed that North Country Beagles and Southern Hounds were strongly represented in his pack.

Between 1840 and 1860, Prince Consort Albert (1819-61), husband of Queen Victoria, owned a pack of almost-white Beagles.

In 1875, around 10 packs were still active; in 1887, 18; in 1902, 44; and in 1903, 55. From the beginning of the 20th century, the number of packs grew annually.

Today, the Beagle is employed around the world as a detection dog. It's an intelligent dog but single-minded. Due to its size it's a popular pet, good tempered and friendly with children.

The Beagle is an independent dog, quite self-willed and not easy to train (being left alone is sometimes a problem), but also merry, sporty and intelligent.



*Springhill Beagles*

by Henry Frederick Lucas-Lucas, Rugby 1914.

*Working type and show type differ, a fact in many breeds.*

*Working Beagles are entered in the studbook of the Association of Masters of Harriers and Beagles*

## The Breed in America

The first Beagles were imported to America between 1860 and 1870. The American-English Beagle Club was established in 1884, the same year as the founding of the American Kennel

Club. The breed was recognized by the AKC in 1885.

During the 1950s, British judge and breeder Thelma Gray imported Beagles from America. At that time, the quality of the breed in the States was excellent.

There are some differences between the English standard and the American standard. For example, the American standard reads, "a miniature Foxhound"; the English says, "a sturdy, compactly-built hound." No Foxhound mentioned. In the AKC standard, Beagles come in two sizes: "the 13-inch Beagle (no taller than 13 inches at the withers) and the 15-inch Beagle (between 13 and 15 inches at the withers)."

The Kennel Club standard reads: "Desirable minimum height at the withers 33 cms [13 inches]. Desirable maximum height at the withers 40 cm [16 inches]."

The National Beagle Club of America, Inc. has a marvelous website – [clubs.akc.org/NBC/about\\_club.html](http://clubs.akc.org/NBC/about_club.html) – with interesting information about the history of the breed in America, and links to regional breed clubs.



*Ch. Windholme's Robino II*

*a Beagle from one of the best American kennels*

*Painting by Gustave Muss-Arnolt, 1903*

*A male with heavy bone, compact build and typical tail carriage, Robino II was considered "the best stud Beagle in America."*