

Morven Park Mansion Renovation: A Delicate Touch

Museums are all about preservation. For the past few years that has applied not only to the MHHNA's mission to preserve the art and artifacts of mounted hunting but to the collection's physical home as well. As our members are no doubt aware, the Mansion at Morven Park, home of the MHHNA, is undergoing an extensive, multi-year renovation project designed to preserve this historic structure. What you may not know is that a portion of the work has a foxhunting connection.

S. Scot Litke serves as executive director of Texas-based ADSC, the International Association of Foundation Drilling. He also functions as editor of the association's magazine. When not engaged in his association duties, Scot is an avid foxhunter and retired jump race rider (with, as Scot says, all the creaking body parts to prove it). He is a member with colors of Cloudline Hounds and Hickory Creek Hunt. And, of course, he is a member of the Museum of Hounds & Hunting North America.

Mr. Litke attended the Closing Ceremonies for the MFHA's Centennial Celebration at Morven Park in May of 2007. While there he took note of the detailed foundation work underway at the Mansion. Given the need for highly expert craftsmen to handle a job of such delicate nature, he felt certain ADSC members must be involved. His hunch proved correct and the result is a cover story in the December/January 2008 issue of *Foundation Drilling* magazine.

The professionals assembled for this project boast an impressive reputation for their work on other historic structures. Either individually or in other teaming arrangements members of the contracting group have worked on the Washington Monument, Mount Vernon, Lincoln Memorial, Eisenhower Office Building, Octagon House (which served as the temporary home of President James and Dolley Madison when the British burned the White House during the War of 1812), and Kenmore (home of George Washington's sister, Betty Washington Lewis). One even has a personal link to US history: Structural engineer James Madison Cutts IV is a great-great grandnephew of Dolley Madison.

Tidewater Preservation Co., Inc. of Fredericksburg, Virginia, serves as the gen-



Photo courtesy of Morven Park

eral contractor and Washington, DC-based ADSC member Steele Foundations, headed by J. Andrew Steele, is handling the sheeting and underpinning work.

The entire project requires a careful touch. As Scot Litke notes in his article, "The work done was more like dental work with an emphasis on maintaining the somewhat fragile nature of the facade." After Mr. Litke, accompanied by Andy Steele, toured the project in October 2007, he observed that "all that remained intact was the building's magnificent exterior. This is not uncommon for many of the projects undertaken by Steele Foundations and is part of the challenge they face every day. These kinds of historical structures are somewhat 'delicate' and require very thoughtful restorative handling...When renovating a structure listed on the Historical Register it is absolutely required that every possible original detail be preserved."

Steele Foundations' assignment was to "design and construct an earth retention system for a new basement and a vault to house the modern mechanical systems to be installed later." Under routine conditions, this would be a fairly straightforward task. But the conditions presented by the 250 year old building were far from routine. As Scot Litke describes the situation, "The foundations for [the original] structure and subsequent additions...were stacked flagstone devoid of any kind of mortar. One of the main

problems...is that over the centuries water passing under and through the foundation had caused major damage and compromised a good deal of the overall structure." Litke further explains, "Particularly difficult for Steele's crew was maintaining in place the existing stone masonry foundation during underpinning operations [as] no functioning mortar existed in the existing stone masonry walls."

The dental work metaphor is apt, if you can imagine trying to shore up the foundation of a 14,000 square foot, three story, 250 year old tooth with a hollow interior and a decaying base. According to the ADSC article, Steele solved the problem using a method of "repointing and temporary support of all walls to be underpinned...Many techniques were utilized in addition to repointing to maintain individual stones, including large-diameter steel rebar, wood shims and steel beams. Access was also difficult for concrete operations...Most concrete was transferred to the underpinning piers via wheelbarrow and chute."

Preservation work on historic sites such as the Morven Park Mansion requires technical skill, an understanding of how structures were built in the past, an awareness of how time and the forces of nature can degrade foundations, and a creative approach to overcoming the difficult challenges these projects pose. Furthermore, using modern techniques and materials, the long term viability of the structure will be greatly improved.



One of the Mansion lions overlooks a section of the intricate shoring and bracing system, including cutouts for utilities, required to support the new geo-thermal HVAC system.

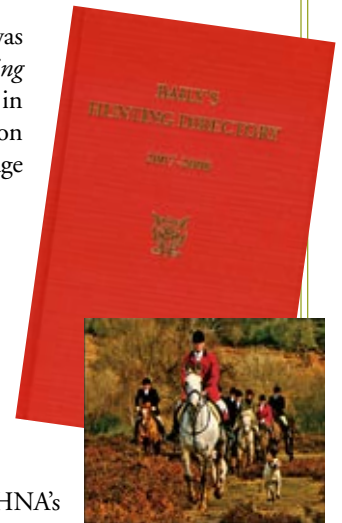
MHHNA Featured in *Baily's Hunting Directory*

The Museum of Hounds & Hunting North America was honored to be included in the 2007-2008 edition of *Baily's Hunting Directory*. Based in Cambridge, England, and first published in 1897, *Baily's* is widely regarded as the premier source of information about hunts around the world. The directory's introduction page includes an apt description of the publication:

Containing details of Hunts, including their countries, histories, and Former Masters, of Foxhounds, Harriers, Beagles, Basset Hounds, Mink Hounds, Staghounds, Draghounds, and Bloodhounds, in Great Britain, the Channel Islands, and Ireland; Hunts of America, Europe, the Commonwealth, India and Africa; Obituaries, Presentations, Hirelings and the results of Hound Shows.

Our Museum was asked to submit a piece about the MHHNA's history and the role it plays in preserving the rich heritage of hunting with hounds in North America. The article serves as a companion piece to one by noted author Michael Clayton, "Why the Hunting Museum at Melton Mowbray is Worth Your Interest – and Your Support." Mr. Clayton is the former editor of *Horse & Hound*, author of *The Glorious Chase*, and now serves as Chairman of the UK's Museum of Hunting Trust.

We were pleased to participate in *Baily's Hunting Directory* for the 2007-08 season and are delighted to have the opportunity for this extensive exposure among the worldwide hunting community.



It's interesting to note how similar the skills set and overall objectives for a project such as this are to the conservation of works of art (see "Art Conservation Calls for Multiple Talents" on page 1). Learning about the difficult, delicate work required to save and preserve the Mansion also provides a better understanding of why this project has such a long time horizon. It's certainly posed challenges to the Museum of Hounds & Hunting North America to be without our physical home during this process. But we're encouraged that the completion of the work is drawing near and we're pleased to know the project is in such capable hands.

Thanks to Scot Litke-ADSC Executive Director, foxhunter, and Museum member—for providing his expert insights into this important project.

If you'd like a copy of *Foundation Drilling Magazine* in which the Morven Park article appears, the ADSC will be happy to provide a copy to members of the MHHNA at no charge. Just send an email to sesking@adsc-iafd.com, identify yourself as a MHHNA member, and request a copy.

The MHHNA Receives A Scholarly Work: A Timeline of Foxhunting in the United States

History quiz: Who was the first European to bring hunting dogs to an area of the New World that would become part of the United States? If you said Robert Brooke in the 1650s, you're obviously a scholar of venery. You'd also be incorrect. According to a newly developed timeline created by Rita Mae Brown and Jeanne Pitsenberger, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto arrived in what is now Florida accompanied by Mastiffs and Irish Greyhounds as far back as 1539.

Dr. Brown, a member of the Museum's Advisory Board, and Ms. Pitsenberger have spent the past two years researching references to hunting with hounds, or other canine breeds, during Colonial times, through the early decades of US history, up to the present day. The final entry in the current version of the timeline cites 2004's founding of Saxonburg Hunt in Pennsylvania. The timeline is accompanied by a narrative report, *Notes on the History of Foxhunting in the United States*.

Between the first and final entries, the timeline provides a fascinating synopsis of key developments in what was to become foxhunting as we know it today in the United

States. For example, the bounty placed on foxes in New Jersey in 1714, followed by a similar action in New York in 1723, offered a financial incentive to what was then a form of pest control. Not long after, the need to protect livestock from the predation of foxes merged with the desire to enjoy good sport and socializing while also sharing the expenses associated with maintaining a pack of hounds. According to the *Notes*, the first club organized for this purpose in the Colonies was the Gloucester Foxhunting Club established near Philadelphia in 1766. Today's Rose Tree Foxhunting Club claims to be a direct descendant. In 1768 John Evers began hunting his own pack of hounds near Hempstead, Long Island. Hounds descended from this pack were used to form the Meadow Brook Hounds in the nineteenth century.

It's remarkable to think that organized foxhunting began in Brooklyn, NY, in 1781 and that the Belvidere Hunt Club started in New York City in 1812. Details like these attest to the role mounted hunting has played in the development of the United States during both Colonial times and following the Revolution.

The purpose of this effort is to serve as a starting point from which even more detailed historical studies can be built. The timeline provides a listing of key dates set in a horizontal framework. Future studies can begin with any given point on the timeline and delve into the depth of that topic. For example, the founding date of every foxhunting club currently listed with the Masters of Foxhounds Association is shown in the timeline. Someone wishing to provide the full history of one such club can begin at the founding point noted on the timeline and expand the historical record to encompass as much detail as can be gathered about that club. Many hunts have already put together their histories and we would encourage them to allow the Museum to add this information to our repository. Others may consider using this timeline as a catalyst to start such a project.

The Museum of Hounds & Hunting North America is privileged to benefit from the work of Dr. Brown and Ms. Pitsenberger. We look forward to many more submissions to assure that this important historical record is preserved and expanded.