

# FLAHERTY HISTORY

*Rich Garini, Historian*

---

Originally our field trial area now known by the above title was commonly known as “Pelton’s Pasture” after the name of its original owners, Baynard O. Pelton and his family.

Records reveal that the original field trial club to utilize the tract was the Associated Connecticut Club, as early as the 1930s. Commencing in 1942, the Fish and Game Department leased the area on an annual basis from these owners at a nominal fee. This relationship continued until 1947 when Baynard O. Pelton and the other family members transferred ownership of the tract to the State of Connecticut Fish and Game Department for the magnificent fee of “one dollar and other considerations”. Despite the low cost of the action itself, there were other contingent fees attached and field trial patrons led by the late John Tattersall and Dr. John Flaherty volunteered contributions which were used to defray these costs.

The New England Futurity, now one of the region’s premier attractions, staged its first renewal here on the occasion of its seventh running in the fall of 1942. With the exception of a two year hiatus in 1954 and 1955, it has been staged here, with ascending success and prestige, ever since and now calls the Flaherty Area - “Home”.

As an aftermath of the spring meeting in 1957, an informal session brought to light that the Department had some limited funds which might be available for the construction of a clubhouse on the area if plans could be coordinated speedily. Action on the part of the trialers was swift and positive. Within ten days, a committee headed by Truman Cowles with participation by Harry Townshend, L.F. Bissell and others, had a meeting of the minds. Size and construction details were agreed upon, plans and specifications were drawn and in the Department hands - within ten days! The Department committed itself to the purchase of the necessary materials and the field trial contingent agreed to supply the labor force. Excavations for the footings and foundation were started in late May. Stanley Bastura, Frank LaMonica, Bruno Longhi, Jack Tattersall and Fred Ertel were the prime members of the committee headed by Truman Cowles. The entire construction of the structure, except for the masonry workers who were hired on successive Saturdays, was performed by field trialers and the clubhouse was ready for occupancy for the fall schedule. Next, a meeting of all concerned was called in the late fall, and the first steps of a formal organization were made. The new organization was called the “Field Trial Management Committee”. Truman Cowles was elected chairman and Bob Conlin of the Associated Club was the first Secretary/Treasurer. A set of By-Laws and operating rules and regulations were drawn up as a basis for procedures. A formal agreement conferring official status on the Committee and delegating administration jurisdiction to it, was formulated.

The improved facilities at the area resulted in an influx of new clubs to use the tract, particularly clubs devoted to trials for individual breeds, mostly under the A.K.C. regime. In the next decade,

clubs representing every known pointing breed came under the “Flaherty umbrella”. Brittanys, Gordon Setters, Irish Setters, German Shorthairs, Weimaraners and Vizslas all came on the scene. For several years, the Shore Line Retriever Club also ran on these grounds. Today, member clubs of the Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Clubs Association Inc. host both National and Regional Championships in addition to 26 to 30 annual events on the Flaherty grounds.

In 1971 during the term of Governor Thomas Meskill, a reorganization of many State Departments was initiated and the Fish and Game Department was joined with other agencies under the banner of the Department of Environmental Protection. The Wildlife Unit became our new cooperating agency with support from Assistant Director Peter Bogue, Wildlife Supervisor Paul Rothbart and Mark Clavette as field trial liaison.

After twenty-four years as Chairman, Truman Cowles stepped down at the annual meeting in 1982 to be succeeded by Richard Garini.

In 1983 a new set of By-Laws were drafted and the name of the Dr. John E. Flaherty Field Trial Clubs Assoc. was adopted and incorporation at the State and Federal levels was accomplished.

In 1984 the acquisition of the 100 acre Dearborn tract was completed. Much effort has been devoted to this area in clearing and drainage improvements and they continue today.

In 1986 the first annual Flaherty booklet was produced under the direction of Bob Fleury with support from Truman Cowles and others.

In 1989, after serving since 1982 with the support of Pam Backman, Bob Fleury, Jim Moreau and Jack Tattersall, Rich Garini turned the reins over to Dr. James Moreau.

In 1993 another acquisition of 20 acres was added to the north-west corner and resulted in the removal of the existing tobacco shed which had once stood as a local land mark.

In 1995, after serving since 1990 with the help of Pam Backman, Bob Fleury, Nan Arnstein, Leslie Hunt and Eric Lissfelt, Dr. Moreau passed the baton to Bob Fleury.

In 1995-99 extensive habitat improvements were completed on the Dearborn tract to further improve usability during one hour events.

In 1996, after two years as President of the Association, Bob Fleury turned over the office to Rich Garini. Bob had been supported by Nan Arnstein, Erik Lissfelt, and Jim Moreau.

During 1997, improvements to the habitat and structures continued. The planning and approval process to bring electricity to the grounds was completed and targeted for early 1998. Rich Garini continued as President and was supported by Bob Fleury, Rich Murphy and Bill Johnson.

1998 proved to be a banner year for the Association. Largely due to the influence and coordination abilities exhibited by Pete Bogue, Assistant Director of the State of CT Wildlife Division. The wheels of progress turned in our direction and electric power was provided to the clubhouse. In addition to what has now become an annual habitat maintenance program, three days of effort, utilizing

a contracted brontosaurus machine, several acres of previously unmaintained area north of Namerick Brook were cleared. Additionally, we expanded our civic outreach by supporting the Connecticut Junior Hunting Day. At the annual meeting, Rich Garini turned over the reins to Rich Murphy. As President, Rich was supported by Rich Garini, Bill Johnson and Rich Loomis.

During 1999, in addition to his Presidential duties, Rich Murphy coordinated an extensive effort to modernize the interior structure and appliances of the clubhouse interior. A partnership with the U.S.

Dept. of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the State of Connecticut provided funding for 50 hours of brontosaurus work on our East and Northern courses which re-established old field habitat void of many maple tree clumps that previously existed.

The annual meeting in December 2000 elected a new slate of officers to lead the association into the new century. Tom Mercier headed the group as president with Keith Madden as vice president. Lucille Sawicki took the reins as treasurer and Rich Loomis continued on as secretary. A major cooperative effort between the association and the State of Connecticut Wildlife Division resulted in several major improvements to the area. Mainly, the clubhouse area was re-landscaped and seeded, a new post and rail fence was erected and a 24' by 48' pavilion was added to the area greatly improving not only the esthetics but the usability of the area. In addition, the old well was reestablished and now supplies water for dogs and horses. In early 2002, the State of Connecticut purchased the former Gersten property, adding 72 acres to our north-east corner.

Tom Mercier was re-elected President for 2003 with support from Rich Murphy as Vice-President, Donna Pageau as Secretary, and Lucille Sawicki as Treasurer. November saw the construction of a new stand-alone bird room. Materials for the building were financed by the Association and a major contribution from Bob Fleury. Labor for the project fell to Bill Aspinall, Bob Fleury, Rich Garini and John Jennings.

Rich Murphy was elected President for 2004 and was supported by John Jennings as Vice-President, Matt Murphy as Secretary and John Sala as Treasurer. Phase One of the building expansion project began during the summer months with an addition to the back of the existing building which will eventually accommodate bathrooms and storage area. Rewiring and re-roofing of the entire facility were included in this phase. Materials were financed by the Association and labor fell to Bill Aspinall, John Bunker, Bob Fleury and Rich Garini.

Rich Murphy was re-elected President for 2005 and was supported by John Jennings, Vice-President; Matt Murphy, Secretary and John Sala as Treasurer. The final phase of the building expansion/remodeling was completed during the summer and fall seasons. Bill Aspinall, Bob Fleury, Rich Garini and John Jennings were assisted by Henry Wierzbicki who coordinated a crew of volunteers and installed a new metal roof, and Russ Davidson who took responsibility for the plumbing tasks in the bathroom and

kitchen areas. Upon review of the efforts of the Association's members over the past two years, it should be noted that approximately \$50,000 in materials and labor has been expended in remodeling and expanding the facility. In support of the Association efforts; the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection invested a sizable amount of money in establishing a new state-of-the-art septic system. These cooperative efforts have existed for over 60 years and it seems likely that a decade from now, "Flaherty" will have retained its identity and traditions, and posterity will have yet another generation to thank for it.

Rich Murphy was re-elected President for 2006 and was supported by John Jennings and John Sala. DEP made a major contribution over and above the usual ground's maintenance program with the introduction of an herbicide program aimed at eradicating the invasive Autumn Olive shrub. Proven successful, this effort could result in a reduction in mowing time.

Rich Murphy continued as President in 2007 with Joe Marino as V.P., Tom Tazza as Secretary, and David Margolin as Treasurer. Once again, the State of Connecticut D.E.P. Wildlife Division with supervision from Paul Rothbart did an outstanding job with habitat management. Additionally, Paul managed to

secure the necessary funding needed to repave the entrance road. In a cooperative effort to increase parking space, the Association purchased fill and top- soil which the D.E.P. utilized to regrade much of the parking area. Lighting for the parking area was provided by Dave O'Brien. Rich Murphy presented plaques in recognition of the efforts put forth by Paul Rothbart, Mark Clavette, Bill Aspinall, Sue DeSilver, Dave Margolin, Rich Garini, and Bob Fleury. Additionally, Rich Garini was presented with the Bird Dog Foundation Life Patron Member- ship award.

Rich Murphy continued as president for 2008 with Patrick Cooke as V.P., Tom Tazza as Secretary and Dave Margolin as Treasurer. Under the supervision of Paul Rothbart, the State of CT D.E.P. Wildlife Division did an outstanding job with the annual habitat management in spite of very wet conditions on the grounds. In early Spring, the Association hosted the annual meeting of the Connecticut Falconry group. Lunch was provided to the falconers and guests from the State of CT D.E.P. Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions. Utilizing the clubhouse for their meeting, testing of new falconers, and exposure to several species of falcons, the day was an educational experience shared by all. Observing several falcons in the field was quite a thrill. Continuing our out-reach ef- forts; the Association supported the State of CT D.E.P. Law En- forcement Division as they sponsored a Hunting Accident Restoration/Investigation seminar and field program. As a national event, 48 "game wardens" representing 16 states attended the week long event. In late Fall, with the generosity of Herb Holden Con- struction and the support of the Wildlife Division and our Associa- tion; two 48" culverts were replaced on the major loop road to insure the safe travel of emergency vehicles. The highlight of the annual meeting was the presentation of the Bird Dog Foundation Life Patron Membership award to Bob Fleury.

In 2009, we were fortunate to have Rich Murphy continue as President, with Dave O'Brien as V.P., Kimberly Eaton as Secretary and Dave Margolin as Treasurer.

As a continuation of our annual outreach efforts, the Association donated a year's supply of Purina dog food to the Town of East Windsor canine unit. This unit is not taxpayer funded and relies on public donations for support.

The summer of 2009 saw the completion of the re-siding of the horse barn. The effort was directed by Dennis Harkcom with assistance from Rich Murphy, Bob Fleury and Rich Garini.

In 2010 the current board was re-elected, Rich Murphy Pres., Dave O'Brien VP, Kim Eaton Secretary and Dave Margolin Treas- urer. In 2010 we decided to renovate the clubhouse and make a few improvements. The few improvements turned into a full blown ren- ovation that was completed over a three month period. The tremen- dous efforts of Rich Garini, Bob Fleury, Rich Murphy and Russ Davidson will be enjoyed by many for years to come. The 2010 yearbook was dedicated to Susan DeSilver for all of her hard work on the yearbook and to the Association. Rich Garini working with Holden Construction fixed the big culvert problem once and for all. This new culvert has been named Garini's Gulch. The Association has joined the East Windsor Chamber of Commerce and has also retained the law offices of Updike, Kelly & Spellacy. Attorney Ed Pontacoloni will represent the Association in all legal matters and the EWCC. The Association continued to support the East Windsor K-9 unit with a year's supply of dog food and we also made a cash donation to the East Windsor Parks and Recreation department for the completion of the new dog park.

In 2011 Rich Murphy was elected President and is supported by Dave O'Brien V.P., Kim Eaton, Secretary and David Eaton, Treasurer. Thanks to Dave Margolin for serving as the Association Treasurer for the past four years. The problems with Coleman Farms continued into 2011 but with a lot of hard work by the State of Connecticut D.E.E.P. and the Association we were able to come to a compromise with the neighbors that has worked out nicely for everyone involved. I would like to thank Paul Rothbart

of the D.E.E.P. for his work providing the Association with an alternate parking area that has worked out better than anyone could have imagined. The weather in 2011 was horrible as new records were set for the most snow and rain in Connecticut's history. Then throw in a tornado a tropical storm and a nor'easter in October that snapped leaf covered trees and power lines and you get an idea of how bad it was. Most of the State including the Flaherty grounds sustained severe damage that took months to clean up. On behalf of the Association I would like to thank the State of Connecticut for all of their support keeping the grounds open so that we could run trials. The Association continues to be an active member of the East Windsor Chamber of Commerce and continues to support the East Windsor K-9 Unit with a year's supply of dog food and a cash donation of \$500.00.

The association members were fortunate to have the current officers volunteer to serve in 2012. Rich Murphy as president, Dave O'Brien v.p., Kim Eaton, secretary, and David Eaton treasurer.

The state of ct. Did an excellent job with the annual mowing under the leadership of Paul Rothbart. The association continued its out-reach program by supporting the East Windsor police dept. Canine unit At the 2013 annual meeting of the Association, members once again elected Rich Murphy, President; Dave O'Brien, VP; Kim Eaton, Secretary; and Dave Eaton as Treasurer for 2014.

An aggressive mowing schedule for 2014 was discussed and the Association continued its outreach program with support for the East Windsor Police Canine Unit.

In 2013 the Flaherty Association and the State of Connecticut D.E.E.P. was able to finalize a Memorandum of Agreement that strengthens our long-time working relationship with the D.E.E.P. for many years to come. This wasn't as easy as a meeting or two, but was a two-year journey that had its high and low points along the way. I would like to thank Attorney Ed Pontacoloni, Esq. for its hard work, persistence and more than a few lunch hours spent at D.E.E.P. headquarters in Hartford. I would also like to thank Paul Rothbart, Rick Jacobson, Mark Clavette of the Connecticut D.E.E.P. along with Mary Lou Kramer, Melinda Decker at the Office of the Commissioner and Gary D. LeBeau, State Senator, 3rd District for all their efforts at bringing this to fruition.

In preparation for 2015 activities, Rich Murphy was re-elected President of the Association, along with the competent staff of Dave O'Brien V.P., Kim Eaton as Secretary, and Dave Eaton as Treasurer.

Phase one to rebuild the wooden bridge to the shooting area (see web site) was completed in late spring. Many thanks to the efforts of the membership. Phase two will complete the project and is scheduled for early spring 2016.

Paul Rothbart directed the annual mowing effort and acquired the necessary funding to complete

regrading of the major loop road The Board of Directors remains in place for 2015. Rich Murphy President, Dave O'Brien V.P. Kim Eaton Secretary and Dave Eaton Treasurer. A few significant projects were completed in 2015. The D.E.E.P removed the old fence around the corral and re-placed it with a brand new fence. A horse wash stall was constructed behind the clubhouse and a new wood shed is under construction, which will be completed in the spring of 2016. The summer work party used 10 yards of topsoil to fill in the minefield of dog holes in the parking area. A new wood stove was installed and plans are being drawn up to remodel the back room of the clubhouse.

The Association participated in the State of Connecticut's Hunting and Fishing Appreciation Day by putting on pointing dog demonstrations for almost 1,000 spectators throughout the day. We also sponsored and participated in the Youth Hunt Day that was held on the Dearborn property October 10,

2015. The Association supplied well-trained dogs and handlers along with all the birds used for the event and also provided lunch for every young hunter and the entire staff of volunteers. It was a very well attended event and everyone involved had a great time.

After 32 years of service to the D.E.E.P., and to the Flaherty Association Paul Rothbart has retired. Paul has been with me for the past 14 years and has done a great deal for the Association. On behalf of the Flaherty Association, I would like to wish Paul Rothbart a very long, happy and healthy retirement.

In 2016 we welcomed District Wildlife Biologist Ann Kilpatrick to the Flaherty Management area. Ann is responsible for the management of Flaherty and will also act as liaison between the Department and the Association. We look forward to working with Ann and together we will continue to make Flaherty the premiere field trial grounds on the East Coast. Rich Murphy was once again elected President and will be supported in 2016 by V.P. Rich Garini, Secretary Janice Gregory and Treasurer Sarah Conyngham- Plans have been submitted to the D.E.E.P for their approval of a new utility storage building to be built next to the existing bird room, a decision is expected in early 2017. A new wood shed has been completed and plans are in the works to renovate the bath- room and back room of the clubhouse.

Officers for 2017 were Dick Frawley, Tom Mercier, Janice Gregory, and Sarah Conyngham. The Association continued to support both ST OF CT Hunting & Fishing Appreciation Day, as well as our annual donation to the Town of East Windsor Ambulance Service. Highlighting the years competitive Field Trials included: American Brittany Classic/Championship, The New England Brittany Championship, The Northeastern Championship, The New England Futurity, Reg. 1 GSP Championship, Amateur A.A. Championship, Reg. 1 Amateur A.A. Championship, and Shooting Dog Championship. The demand for these dates is based on the continued quality of the mowing efforts on the various sections. Officers for 2018 were Dick Frawley, Cory Roy, Janice Gregory, and Sarah Cunningham.

The association supported our annual donation to the Town of East Windsor Ambulance Service. Highlighting the years competitive Field Trials included: The New England Brittany Championship, The Northeastern Championship, The New England Futurity, Reg. 1 GSP Championship, Amateur A.A. Championship, 1 Amateur A.A. Championship, and Shooting Dog Championship. The demand for these dates is based on the continued quality of the mowing efforts on the various sections by the State mowing crews.

Eversource completed their work and left the grounds with a new parking area at Dearborn a improved road at the clubhouse and two new culverts on the grounds thanks to negotiations with Eversource and Dick Frawley. The State has requested that the Association help develop two junior hunter events for 2019 and the association recognizing the decrease in new hunters the association looks forward to partnering with the State to help develop the program.

Officers for 2022 were Dick Frawley, Cory Roy, Janice MJ Haeshe, and Sarah Conyngham

Ann Kilpatrick arranged for Tr Landworks to do the mowing this year. It was the driest year we have had in many years. Ted was able to mow areas that have not been accessible in years he also mowed fifteen foot swaths throughout the grounds. As covid winds down we were able to run most of the trials scheduled. Yankee Weimaraner joined the association this year and will be holding their first event in the spring of 2023. The floor in the clubhouse was painted and Bob Fleury added to the history board in the back room.

2023 was another productive year for the Association. Working with the State we were able to repair and improve the interior roads with the correct material. The State also supplied the material for the new walking bridge that goes into the bird field while the Association provided the labor. 300 feet of new fencing was erected between the factories and the cornfield on the back part of the property. Large cement blocks were placed in an effort to slow down the erosion from the rising water level of Nameric Brook. Similar blocks were also used in the parking area to hold the new topsoil in place. Rich Murphy was elected president for the third time. Rich is supported by Cory Roy, MJ Haesche and Sarah Conyngham.

Revised 2-27-24