

Kimblewick Hunt Annual General Meeting

27th April 2012

Address by Mr Alan Jackson, Chairman of the Hunt

Good evening and welcome to the second AGM of the Kimblewick Hunt, and the first to be held at Englefield House. My thanks to Richard Benyon and the Benyon family for allowing the Hunt to use the Long Room for a second time this month – the Southern farmers' dinner was held here a couple of weeks ago and it was great to see so many farmers and landowners there, as it is tremendous to see you here tonight to support your hunt.

First, and most importantly, I would like to thank on your behalf all the landowners and farmers over whose land we hunt and without whose support and help our hunting would not happen and the very many keepers who support us.

My thanks also go to all the subscriber volunteers, foot followers and the many unsung people who quietly make the hunt work, raise funds and give their time and energy to make it all happen. Very many thanks to all of you. Especially, as we are in the south tonight, to Helen Brooks for all the southern whisky raffles (I understand that someone was actually allowed to keep the bottle once this season), to Andy O'Regan and Mark Vincent for the wonderful sponsored ride at Stratfield Saye and the Hunt quiz, to Chris Austin for overseeing these events, not forgetting Marion Bowden for being so instrumental in getting the parking and gate for us at Henley Show – and again our thanks should go to Andy and her girls, Chris and Mark and to all those from all over the Hunt who helped at that great event and raised considerable funds for the Supporters' Club. Sarah Edmunds has put in a great deal of work as Treasurer of the KHSC. Of course these efforts are replicated all over our Hunt country and the Masters, Committee and indeed all of us thank each and every one of you – I have highlighted these people as we are here in the south tonight. The great tradition of hunting continues unabated here.

The Mastership was re-elected by your committee for this coming season and Guy Portwin will continue as senior joint master with Chris Austin, Jane Vowles, Rebecca Brown and Kess Skinner. Kess will move fully into the central area and his hugely successful rebirth of the northern area, the former Hertfordshire, will be built on by the new additional Master Will Dalton, whom we understand is also getting married this year!

Despite the weather we had 102 meets (three on foot) with in total some 3,500 out – with a further seven meets lost to weather. Gerald Sumner and Kate Robertson and their teams ensured hounds were in tip-top condition and the staff well mounted. Indeed the kennels and stables at Dodd's Charity are a credit to all concerned. Our secretarial team of Roger Edmunds, Di Wynn, Holly Birch and Lucy Holmes have collected over £23,700 in caps (nearly ten percent up on the previous season) which is a just small part of their roles. Our countryman David Berry has ensured lines are laid and the odd fence repaired, with the help of Mark Vincent who has helped enormously with the meets at this end. These are the people that ensure that everything runs smoothly... well-oiled one could say!! I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking Dave Cottam who has retired from the Committee for all his help and wise guidance and welcome him now as a Trustee.

My thanks as ever to the Trustees for their support; with them we are currently exploring the redevelopment of the kennels and stable area to bring a modern building for horses and hounds and set this Hunt on course for the next hundred years. Wycombe District Council are showing support for this scheme. This will be a very significant project that is planned to show a positive return to the Trustees and to give us a more efficient and cost effective set-up further away from the village. Will Dalton and Guy Portwin will oversee the development.

Ashley Brodin and his team have made the Supporters' Club contribute significantly to hunt funds with a great many activities. The portable bar has worked well and is a great source of income at point-to-points, sponsored rides etc. A very able bar team is led by Gerald Sumner, Will Dalton, Holly Birch and Kess Skinner, not to mention their very successful hog roasts! My thanks to the Mason family, to whom we owe a great debt as well as Kerry Sumner and the other volunteers. I am sure you will all join me in welcoming the appointment of Kate Mason to the Hunt committee, further strengthening farmer representation.

At this point I must again give thanks to our Huntsman, Gerald Sumner and to his team of Ed Shere, whipper-in, David Berry, countryman, and Will Parker, second whipper-in for their enthusiasm and the good sport they have shown us – and over and above all that the huge amount of time that they and their partners put into running the many events we hold. We are truly lucky at the Kimblewick that we have such a team and that Gerald never stops thinking about and working for ways to raise funds in order to make our hunting better. He is truly the leader of the pack!

It's not just the big events – the dances and talent shows, sponsored rides and country shows – but also the whisky raffles and cake stalls at the point-to-points that are so important. The races are part of our financial life-blood and again we have marvellous organisers who make it all seem so simple. Kimble was a centenary occasion this year and our thanks go to my predecessor Lord Gardiner of Kimble and to Fizz Robarts for allowing the use of their course. Your Hunt made a presentation to the family at a centenary celebration during the meeting which once again was very well attended.

The second point-to-point, the former Garth and South Berks meeting at Kingston Blount, Angie Murray's course, took place last Saturday and again our thanks to all involved: Rodney Mann, Helen Jackson and the team actually run four race meetings at Kingston Blount – and the course, so ably and lovingly looked after by Alan Hill, has been described as having the best going in the country. Our further thanks go to Guy Luck and Nolan Best for running the meeting.

So, very justified congratulations are due to Alan Hill and the Hill family, including jockey Joe Hill following in father's footsteps, for their winners at the meeting and their three at Kimble.

The South Midlands Point-to-Point team includes so many of our well known supporters, including Geoff and Heather Munn, who do all the behind-the-scenes work on the day. They are retiring at the end of this season and we must all thank them for keeping the shows on the road over these many years, not just for us but for all the Hunts in the South

Midlands area. However, I have a feeling that with some arm twisting we might just get them to help the Kimblewick for just a little longer – please?

Again this season Hunt teams will compete in several of the main inter-Hunt relay jumping competitions including Windsor Show, the festival of hunting at Peterborough and of course the Silver Fox at Hambleden. If you are interested in taking part please contact Jane Vowles. In addition to this we are making great efforts to strengthen our ties with the Young Farmers organisations, helped by the Kimble after-show party held with the Bucks YFC, and in no small way by Chris Austin being president of Berkshire Young Farmers.

As I said last year, our Hunt country and those of our neighbours are still threatened by HS2 – so to help the Hunt fight this please write to your MP. Creeping urbanization will remain a great threat to this Hunt and we must help the Masters keep existing country open and new country opened.

I am pleased to say that Dodd's Charity has once again set a young man on his career in hunting. Will Parker (of the famous Oliver family) has been with us for two seasons, did very well on the bursary course, achieved his NVQ and learnt a lot. With our full backing he applied for and got the job of whipper-in at the Suffolk Hunt where we know he will progress to his aim of hunting hounds. We wish him well and look forward to his return visits. He is replaced by a very keen young man from West Sussex, Chris Mardles, who will be put forward for the bursary and NVQ schemes – and so our long combined Hunt history goes on to another generation.

We have been joined 'behind the scenes' by Lynda Elliott (Lucy Holmes' mother) who has very kindly taken on the day to day book-keeping for the Hunt, reporting to the Treasurer and keeping the spending under a very watchful eye.

What is more, we have become a happy Hunt again where people can look forward to a good day out with people whose company they enjoy, going over some wonderful country that, without the Hunt, they would never be able to enjoy.

I would like to move on to subscriptions for the coming season. Numbers, both of subscribers and subscription income continue to increase. The rates of subscription were in most cases slightly reduced last season to encourage this. For the coming season the Hunt Committee has decided on a small increase to only cover inflation and return rates to around the 2010/11 season rates. Those who pay a full sub will be able to come out autumn hunting without further cap, and the Committee has decided that the autumn hunting only subscription is increased substantially to encourage the taking of whole season subscriptions. I hope that life members who still hunt will also pay a subscription.

However, many people have been paying late and the Committee has decided to increase rates for anyone paying after September 1st. Details will be in the Yellow Book which this year will be distributed in early May. If you would like further details please contact Lucy Holmes. Interestingly, looking at the rates charged by the Vale of Aylesbury Hunt in 1990 and increasing them by the rate of inflation our full subscription rate is still about ten percent lower – good value indeed!

The Committee has asked the Mastership to increase the number of meets for subscribers in the coming season. There will therefore be more meets this season. The Committee has agreed with the Mastership that they will go to five autumn days and three to four full season days per week so there will be lots of hunting for everyone in our very varied country.

There will also be some Friday and Saturday afternoon Supporters' Club meets during the autumn where a cap will be charged to include food and drink. I would at this point make a plea that we hunt by invitation of very generous landowners so please arrive on time, be attired correctly and smartly and respect crops and livestock – it is just good manners.

Some confusion has arisen this season over point-to-point subscriptions and your Committee has decided to produce a separate subscription form for this category as rates are set for our area by the MFHA and the point-to-point authorities; when they have set these rates for the coming season the secretaries will distribute them. All this information and much else (as usual) will of course be on our website – www.kimblewickhunt.co.uk – and our continuing thanks go to John Bell for developing and maintaining that site entirely at his own cost.

On a final note, and one which many of you may not be aware, through our combined efforts the various fundraising activities for the Hunt also raise considerable amount for charities including the Air Ambulance. In total, led by the Vale of Aylesbury Sponsored Ride and the other sponsored rides, you helped raise over £20,000 for very worthwhile charities and this is something we can all be justifiably proud of.