HOWL

Summer 1989 ■ No42 ■ 30p

Direct Action Against All Bloodsports



Magazine of the Hunt Saboteurs Association

HOWL 42 EDITORIAL

WELL the end of yet another winter hunting season has finished, now only the minkhounds will be in full cry for the next few weeks until the start of cubhunting. The summer is always a difficult time for our local groups because for many there is little to keep them together from early April through to September. Often by the time the winter hunting season arrives many groups consist almost entirely of new members. Keeping your group together is one reason for making every effort possible to track down your local minkhunt, the other is of course that mink have as much right to life as any other animal.

If anyone reading this hears details of a minkhunt meet please ring the office, any information will be treated in the strictest confidence and passed on to those who need it.

Summer (well 16 June) is also when the course fishing season officially begins. Saturday 17 June will have seen the joint HSA and C.A.A. second annual "National Anti-Angling Day". This year's theme is the danger animals and birds face as a result of anglers carelessly discarding tackle, nylon line, hooks etc. on the river bank. A variety of events should have taken place, not all of them involving direct action.

On 29 July the HSA has its Annual General Meeting in London followed closely by the "Inglorious Twelfth" of August (the start of the grouse shooting season). Last year's actions against grouse shooting were highly successful, planning events for the coming season began in February so hopefully we will improve on last year's efforts.

Also during August cubhunting begins and we're in full swing again just as we were in 1964! The years roll by but little changes, is there anything that can change the mould?

There has to be, if only we could find the right formula to mobilise the huge and latent support for the defeat of hunting that exists in the country we could spark off such a roar of disapproval as to bring that crumbling old bloodsports edifice down in one fell swoop. But what is that formula?

This HOWL comes to you as usual packed full of news and views. Members will also receive with their magazine a copy of this year's AGM and Committee Elections Guide.

An apology is owed to all those who had pictures published in Howl 41. Acting Editors Cook, Weeks and Bishop forgot to credit them. Apologies in particular to regular photo contributor Simon Wild whose excellent photograph accompanied the article on the National Trust on page 8.

We hope you enjoy this Howl and look forward to receiving your comments, letters, news etc. in time for Howl 43.

COPYDATE FOR HOWL 43 is 31 August

Opinions expressed in HOWL do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors or of the HSA.

HOWL 42 is Edited by Ralph Cook, Dave Weeks & Chris Bishop.

Designed and Produced by Jeanette Kerr.



HUNT SABOTEURS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 87
Exeter
EX4 3TX
Office tel: (0392) 430521

Adorable Animals

Dear HOWL,

For once a sad story that has a happy ending.

While out sabbing with the Mid-Essex HSA on Saturday 4 March. To the west of Roxwell, near Chelmsford, the hunt managed to put up a fox from a hedgerow bordering a stream, which they then chased into an adjacent field. Observation of the fox at this point by myself and others agreed that it was probably a vixen.

Sadly after running to ground in its earth (excavated in the bank of the stream) the vixen itself was finally dug out and shot. It was, however, the thought that this might possibly have been a lactating female that prompted us to return about an hour later to examine the earth.

Our worries were well-founded, for after digging down into the bank for some forty minutes we were rewarded by pulling out nine small fox cubs aged between 4–5 days old. Their eyes were shut and they still had part of their umbilical cord attached. I shall never forget that moment when I first knelt down, reached into darkness and pulled out the most adorable animals I have ever seen, to realise even more so then how worthwhile our work and cause is.

So many times death is the final outcome of the day's "sport" and even though the vixen was killed, nine small lives were that day preserved. At this present time they are all doing well and are being reared in a Kent animal sanctuary. I enclose some photographs of the event hoping that the story may interest readers of HOWL.

Keep up the good work,

D S Callaghan
Hornchurch, Essex

Banking On Support

Dear HOWL,

I have recently learned that Lloyds Bank, Haverford West Branch, has a long tradition of providing hospitality for its clients on Boxing Day. As most of these clients would be in the town centre solely for the purpose of watching and supporting the assembly of the annual Boxing Day meet of the Pembrokeshire Foxhunt, one can only assume that the hospitality is there for the members and supporters of the hunt.

As other have done, I have complained to the Head Office and reply seems to indicate that the matter will be reviewed, presumably if enough objections are received. I quote "it would be a pity to break with a tradition which many of our customers and friends have enjoyed for such a long time, I confirm that I shall, nevertheless, be reviewing the way in which we hold the function if it is repeated in future."

To this end, I ask that HSA supporters who are customers or would-be customers of Lloyds Bank, indicate their displeasure of this time honoured "tradition" and blatent support for the hunt.

Leters should be addressed to:
Mr H M Davies,
Regional Director & General Manager,
Lloyds Bank,
South Wales Regional Head Office,
5, Cathedral Road, Cardiff.
CF1 9RH

Yours sincerely,

Mrs A Sheppard
Llandysul, West Wales

Bulldog Bloodlust?

Dear HOWL,

I would like to draw your attention to a new argument put forward by a local landowner and supporter of the Meon Valley Beagles (Hampshire hare hunt) in January 1989.

Hunting provides "a way for the British to rid themselves of their bloodlust. The reason we don't go around putting bombs on planes is because we've got bloodsports. How would you like to be blown up above Locherbie?!"

What can I say?

Selwyn Potts
Reading, Berks.

Missed Opportunity

Dear HOWL,

I attended the HSA EGM in April; the proposed Memoranda and Articles of Association were ably introduced by John Beggs, HSA Legal Officer. The somewhat chaotic start to the meeting was itself sufficient proof of the faults inherent in the present Constitution. It is clear to me that but for the rhetoric and scare-mongering of a few individuals the Articles would have been accepted by the meeting and indeed the final vote was very close.

Whilst listening to some of those who sought to finish the proposals off I was reminded of a line from Ralph Cook's HSA history article in HOWL 42 in which he makes it clear that he believes the HSA has been served badly by the "right-on rhetoric" of a few and that the blame for the lack of progress in the HSA largely lies with these people.

It was obvious to me that the HSA has two conflicting groups at its core: one is trying to move forward but is hampered by a small but vociferous group, including a few Committee Members, who clearly care nothing about the HSA and hold a deep seated distrust or hatred for most of the Committee (our democratically elected and

generally hard-working representatives). I even saw one member attempt a physical attack against HSA Secretary Ralph Cook, one of the HSA's hardest working and most knowledgeable members.

How can the HSA improve with people of this type involved? Is this how they behave in the field? If so they should be thrown out.

Deborah Clarke
Witham, Essex

Golden Opportunity

Dear HOWL,

I was at the EGM on April 8th and I saw a golden opportunity for real progress get taken away.

I am deeply saddened that the proposed new Constitution was out-voted at the meeting. I believe it signalled a new positive line of thinking from the HSA. But let me please explain why I am sad.

An end to bloodsports can never be achieved by sabbing alone. Hunt sabotage is a dynamic way of saving lives and furthering our cause. However, I believe that we will never see sabbing on a scale necessary to end bloodsports. We must all be prepared to support other forms of campaigning, be it leafleting, letter writing or whatever. These forms of protest are, on the whole, boring but they do work. It is obvious that other organisations are incapable of doing the job so it was important that the HSA took these other paths of protest on board. Sadly it didn't happen.

My impression was of too many hunt saboteurs who were happy with the scene: a good escapade on the Saturday and that's it, we'er changing the world. But we are not changing the world as we are! To do just that we must broaden our horizons and loose our tunnel vision.

Someone at the meeting said that we don't need to be a company to go sabbing. I agree, but I for one don't want to go sabbing for ever. I want an end to bloodsports. And I want a powerful and influential organisation behind me, supporting me. I want an HSA that supports me as a hunt sab, and helps our wildlife as a real force to be reckoned with.

At the moment I haven't got that. I wonder now if, in the HSA, I ever will?

Yours sincerely
Joe Hashman
Oxford

Government Legislation

Dear HOWL,

Has it never occured to some people that hunting will only be banned by government legislation. Individual MPs can help a little bit, but in the long run it is the government who makes the laws. The Tories have always said they will not consider banning bloodsports, how can they, when it is their paymasters who take the most pleasure out of murdering our wildlife.

In a way, I agree with T Brennan (HOWL 41) when he says the Green Party is our best bet to support. Unfortunately these worthy people will never taste power at Westminster. No it is still the Labour Party who have constantly supported us. There may well be certain Labour people who like to hunt but they are certainly in the minority, the exact opposite of the Tories.

Certainly we must welcome support of anybody, whatever their political persusasions, but remember, there is only one major political party out there who are on our side — the Labour Party.

Chris Pegman
Guildford, Surrey

HSA Come Of Age?

Dear HOWL,

To me the articles in the current issue of "HOWL" (no. 41) demonstrate that the HSA has really "come of age".

For good reasons. Firstly a) the agenda for the EGM b) your really excellent article on the National Trust and what has to be done to win the day and c) the anti-sectarianism running through other items.

The absolute curse of progressive and caring organisations for years on end is the latter. And all that don't agree with the same route to ascend the mountain "are enemies!"

Writing as a Life Member I hope that the HSA will join in with the RSPCA, LACS and others to beat the hunting lobby at the National Trust AGM and what a major victory for wildlife that would be!

Good Luck to you,
Harold Bearston
Middlesex

Artists For Animals

Dear HOWL,

In the last issue of HOWL the Committee page ran an article on its dispute with "Artists for Animals". Whether intentional or not, I wouldn't like to say, but the article clearly inferred that AFA had kept all the profits from the "Mindless Slaughter" benefit LP. At least, all those people I've spoken to (more than a dozen) read it this way.

The truth of the situation, however, is that many local groups have received financial benefit from the album: the Vale and Valleys Hunt Saboteurs had £300 to name only one. A further £900 (dropping to £700 after some unexpected studio expenses) was to be given to the HSA. However, when they had to wait awhile they began to scream "lawyers". So now AFA have decided to divide the remaining money between the Southern Anti-Bloodsports Society and their Northern Counterparts. Thus anyone who has or intends to buy "Mindless Slaughter" is supporting hunt sabotage — directly.

Finally, then I trust that the HSA Committee will be gracious enough to offer AFA space in HOWL to detail the issues more accurately than has so far been done.

Phil Hotston
Cardiff, South Wales

ED: For reply from the HSA Committee see Committee page.

Gentle Admonition

Dear HOWL,

We were absolutely thrilled to bits to see the '60's pics of our hero and father figure, Dave "Bendy" Wetton in HOWL 41.

He hasn't changed much has he? OK so he's become a bit on the podgy side and his famous bumfluff has taken on a distinct grey/white hue. But he's still the mischievous little troublemaker we know and love.

It's just a shame he continues to do his Saturday morning shopping in Sainsburys and not at the organic food stall run by his dear and trusted comrades outside Animal Aid in Tonbridge.

Trusting this public humiliation produces a favourable response.

Fraternal greetings
Dave Wetton Fan Club (R. Farhall, A. Rofe, S. Reddy, E. Maytum, S. Russell, C. Turner). c/o Animal Aid, Tonbridge, Kent

Noble Art

Dear HOWL,

As a comparative newcomer to the noble art of sabbing I have been suitably impressed by the dedication and determination of the regular sabs, who turn out week after week, in all weathers and who suffer beatings and other physical abuse and harassment by the police in a vain attempt to persuade them to give up and go home.

However, my involvement with several different groups has given me a grass roots view of sabbing, which may perhaps be overlooked by more experienced sabs and which I feel may be of help to some of the organisers.

The first point I would like to make is perhaps the most obvious — be punctual. There is nothing more disheartening to the newcomer, and those of us who may have been dashing around since dawn, to arrive at the meeting place to find that the main party have not arrived. Such behaviour can and often does set off a whole chain of events leading to arriving late at the meet, and having to spend valuable time (and money) vainly searching for the hunt. And when hunt supporters are milling around chatting about a "beautiful kill" it is no wonder many of us feel frustrated and upset!

Secondly I feel it is very important that every member of the team is acquainted with the day's activities and given a specific job to do. It is no use saying "Follow me and you'll learn by watching". To the uninitiated it is all so confusing that at the end of the day we may well be left wondering whether we really achieved anything by all that effort.

Thirdly do make sure a days sabbing doesn't turn into a pleasant social event, with groups spending more time dawdling around country pubs than carrying out the job they set out to do.

A small group of well-trained, well-informed and well-equipped sabs can operate with deadly efficiency and do a great deal to save our precious wildlife, whereas a large group of disorganised, confused sabs running wild are likely to be singularly ineffective. They can and do create a completely wrong impression, and may in the long run do more harm than good.

Yours sincerely
Helen Nelson
Gosport, Hampshire

Fox Cubs



PO BOX 87
EXETER
EX4 3TX

Fox Cubs is a branch of the Hunt Saboteurs Association for children aged 7 - 14 who would like to join but are too young to go out sabbing.

SABS SAVE FOXCUBS



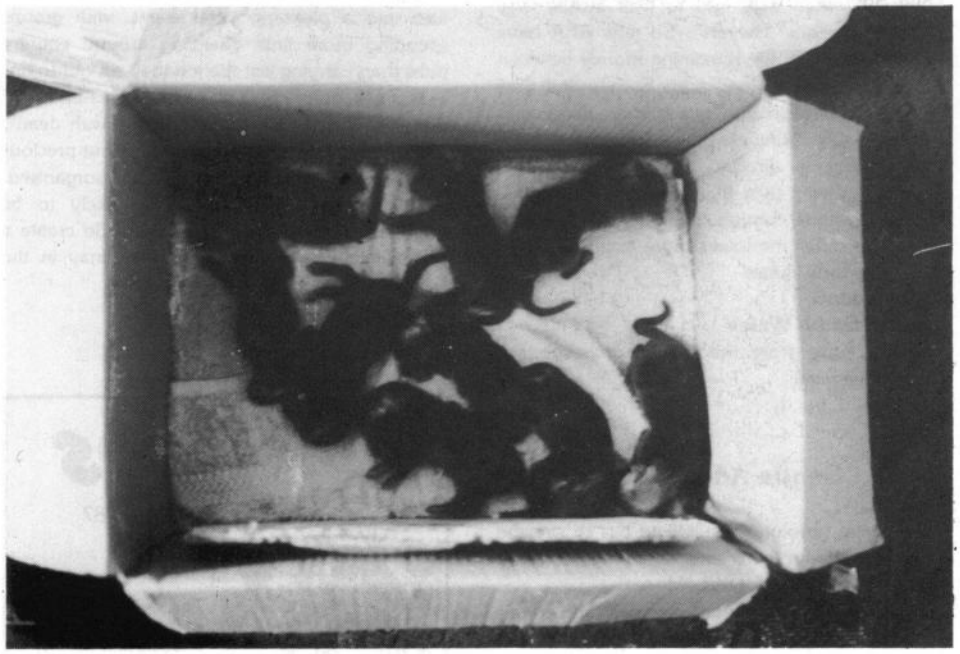
The hunted vixen, hounds close to her tail, makes her futile dash for freedom. Pic: D. S. Callaghan

ON 4 March, hunt saboteurs from the Mid-Essex group were attempting to prevent the killing of foxes by the Essex Foxhunt. Unfortunately despite their efforts the hunt's hounds were able to drive a vixen to ground in a small earth in a wood. The vixen's vain attempt to get away was captured on film and is illustrated here.

The hunt's terriermen, arriving at the earth before the sabs quickly dug her out and killed her. They left, apparently unaware that the vixen was lactating and, therefore, obviously had given birth to young. Presumably this was because the vixen was killed just inside the earth where she had stood up to and fought the hunt terriers to protect her young. Her courageous efforts succeeded although she had to sacrifice her life for them.

The sabs arrived and heard faint mewling sounds from amongst the wreakage of the earth. They started digging and were rewarded with the sight of nine, newly born and still blind cubs no more than five days old. Their chances of survival without their mother was minimal unless they could be placed with a foster home so the sabs drove them to an animal sanctuary south of London – hours away from their own homes – where all nine are now doing well on puppy food.

The animal sanctuary plans to release them into the wild in late summer.



Nine foxcubs sleep after being rescued by sabs. Pic: D. S. Callaghan

LIES, DAMN LIES

MOST HSA members will have placed little credence in the recent allegations carried widely by the media that hunt saboteurs in South Wales poisoned a number of hounds belonging to the Pentyrch Foxhunt with furniture polish. Unfortunately this accusation which was not offset by any quotes from the HSA was believed by much of the general populace.

The HSA and its members are quite familiar with slanderous and untrue news stories ranging from saboteurs being described as violent thugs bent solely on breaking up society through to specific allegations of attacks on horses and hounds. We know the truth is very different.

On Several occasions hunt saboteurs have demonstrated their concern for **all** animals by rescuing hounds from certain death on roads and railway lines. Two good examples are the time in 1984 when Exeter saboteurs called an abandoned foxhound off the Bristol-Exeter railway just in front of a 125 Intercity train travelling at 70mph. and more recently when sabs from London managed to save the majority of hounds belonging to the Aldershot Beagles (a Hampshire harehunt) which had chased a hare onto the busy M4 motorway in 1987. There are plenty of other less dramatic examples.

Unfortunately the British Field Sports Society and its friends have spotted an Achillies Heel in the HSA's popular representation as "animal lovers" and have sought to exploit it whenever the opportunity arises. Hunt animals, especially hounds, are frequently exposed to danger during the course of a day's hunting. Many are killed on roads, fall to their deaths over cliffs, drown in rivers etc. each year. If sabs have been present during the day it is an easy matter for the hunt to state that it was the hunt saboteurs who placed the hounds in danger.

Oddly hunters also state when we claim success in preventing the killing of a hunted animal that we have no effect on their day at all!

In this particular case the saboteurs present used normal HSA tactics and were not carrying furniture polish but harmless anti-mate sprays. One sab present reported to us that she had seen one hound – presumably "Dancer" the hound reported to have died after eight days of suffering – which looked unwell and was walking unsteadily but that it could not be caught.

The most likely source of the poison – if such was involved – is poison-bait. Poison is frequently though illegally injected into the carcases of lambs which have died of natural causes. The laced carcase is then left for scavenging foxes and other carnivorous animals. Over 100 cases of such poisoning are reported to the RSPB each year but the true figure must be much higher. The area most affected by this cruel and unselective method of killing foxes is Wales.

Wandering dogs fall prey to poison-bait quite regularly and we assume that the affected hounds had found and eaten or licked a portion of one. The hunt did not conduct a postmortem to establish the true cause of death so the claim that furniture polish was involved should be treated with contempt.

Unfortunately the day the story broke in the papers the HSA Secretary was on holiday and for some reason the HSA Press Officer was not approached for comment. Thus the media swallowed the hunt's venom whole.

Mad Dogs Kill Cat



Hounds worry the litte that remains of one of Mrs Gibbon's cats. Pic: Simon Wild

TOWARDS the end of another season of hunt havoc with the usual crop of cats, deer, dogs, chickens, private land, motorists, trains etc. falling victim to one or another of the 400 or so hunts in Britain one incident secured useful publicity at the expense of an innocent life.

Mrs. Gibbons, from Hadleigh, Suffolk is planning to take legal action against the Essex and Suffolk Hunt – whose dogs she says killed two of her cats in one day. "It is absolutely outrageous – I can hardly believe thay can get away with things like this" she said after the incident.

The hunt claims that its hounds only killed one of her twelve cats and has offered compensation for one cat and damage to a car which got caught up in the melee.

Mrs. Gibbons was in her house when she heard a terrible noise she went outside and saw one of her cats being *"literally torn apart by hounds . . . they were going mad – some of them were so mad they even damaged my car door"*. She says that the second of her cats was killed on land she owns near her house.

She now intends to take legal action and has said *"I am not going to let the matter rest. There is no way these people should be allowed to get away with things like this"*.

For the hunt Mrs. M. Bye, a Joint Master, insisted that only one cat was killed on land where the hunt has permission to use. In a statement she said, *"The hounds found the cat in a pit belonging to the farmer. . . . It was very unfortunate. I have been to see the owner of the cat and personally apologised to her and offered her compensation in respect of the cat and a small amount of damage to a car."*

THE NATIONAL TRUST

FOR THE National Trust the issue of hunting on its land is becoming something of a headache. In January Mrs. Pat Wheeldon from Minehead, an summertime employee of the Trust wrote a letter to the West Somerset Free Press in which she argues that John Hopkinson of the BFSS had mislead the newspaper's readership in a letter he wrote and published in the paper the previous month.

She pointed out that less than 3% of the Trust's membership voted against banning hunting on Trust owned land and that *"it was apparent to me that the majority of members were not aware of the impending vote"*. She also added that she was all well aware that her future with the Trust was *"on the line, as staff and volunteers were instructed (by letters) to stick very closely to the (pro-hunt) press statement and the council's (pro-hunt) response printed in the agenda"* of their AGM.

In February, after being sent a copy of her letter, the Trust's south-west regional information officer, Tom Burr wrote to Mrs. Wheeldon to tell her that she had lost her job. He wrote that *"Of course you are entitled to write privately to the local paper but as you refer to your employment with the National Trust... we shall not be asking you to help.... in the coming season."*

During the course of all this it was revealed that among the many hunters who joined the National Trust in order to participate in the vote were the Joint Masters of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, Maurice and Diana Scott who were also seen at the AGM. As a member of the Devon and Somerset Residents Association from Deer Proectection, Mrs. Wheeldon knows of these people well.

A report presented in March to the council also suggested an end of the digging out of foxes when they go to ground to reduce the disturbance of badgers and the banning of milk hunting due to the threat of disturbance to otters on all of the Trust's 600,000 acres of land.

After studying the report the Trust's national council decided to set up a working party to draw up a code of practice aimed at reducing the harm cause to the countryside by horses and hunt supporters' vehicles. They claim to be particularly concerned by damage being done to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and heather moorland by the increased use of four-wheel drive and off-road vehicles which are used often hundreds of yards off roads, especially by stag-hunt followers on Exmoor and the Quantock Hills, to gain good views of the chase.

We cannot expect too much from this code, however, because the Trust's pro-hunting council will not accept anything that in anyway seriously hinders what it considers to be a traditional part of countrylife.

Tally Ho Brigade Come A Cropper

FOXES killed – nil; hounds killed – two, that was the score after men of the Highland Foxhunt Association (an unregistered hunt) were hunting rough country between Culloden Moor and Daviot. And to completely rub their noses in failure they spotted a poacher out with a gun and went into full cry after him. BUT HE ESCAPED!!!

Hound number one fell victim to a car as it crossed the A9 Inverness to Perth road;

Hound number two was shot by a farmer who thought it was a sheep worrier.

The Association was started 4 years ago by farmer Terry Furness from Strathnairn, near Inverness he is now reported to be the subject of much gaelic gossip in the Culloden Moor Inn where the down hearted huntsmen went to have their spirits lifted with a few drams.

Meat Man Dies After Hunt Meet

MAJOR Stuart Bunker-Smith, a keen blood-sporting man, Master of the Northamptonshire Minkhounds for three years and a leading figure in the meat industry died in March.

Bunker-Smith (49) (who looked much as you would expect from someone with a name like that) from Hemingford Abbots was, appropriately taken ill after following foxhounds on foot and died later in hospital at Peterborough.

LEAGUE AWARDS HUNT SABOTEUR

THE League Against Cruel Sports has awarded Mrs. R. Walter with one of its prized silver medals only 12 of which have been handed out in the League's 64 year history for sabotaging a hunt! She will be presented with the medal at the League's AGM in May.

Mrs. Walter gained widespread and congratulatory coverage in many newspapers when she sat on the entrance to a hole in which a fox had gone to ground and refused to budge. Earlier she had heard the huntsman's horn near her garden in Upper Colwall, near Malvern, Worcestershire and then saw the fox dive into its hiding place. Despite being afraid of dogs (she was bitten by one as a child), Mrs Walter sat in the middle of the pack and refused to move for 15 to 20 minutes until the North Ledbury Foxhunt Joint-Master, Mr. Christopher Tolley, agreed to leave the fox alone.

Strangely, despite her actions Mr. Tolley said that there had been no unpleasantness between his hunt and their new adversary and that he respected her views. We wonder if he'll remain such a gentleman should she decided to repeat her exploit at some later date.

This whole incident is odd when you think for 25 year literally thousands of hunt saboteurs from all walks of life have taken similar action on behalf of hunted animals but have generally been castigated by the media (and until recently by the League), and sometimes seriously assaulted by hunters including people hunting with the North Ledbury Foxhunt.

The last word should go the John Bryant, Wildlife Officer of the League:

"We felt that Mrs Walters should be rewarded for her courageous efforts. She was very brave to dive down a hole and face the wrath of the huntsmen. It must have taken great courage".

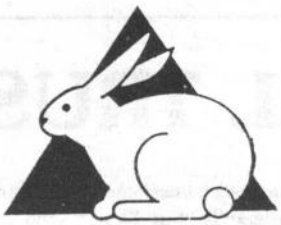
It does John, it does.

"Not Tested On Animals" Logo

COSMETICS, toiletries and household products which have not been tested on animals will be displaying a new product logo on labels from today. The white rabbit "Not Tested on Animals" symbol has been produced by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) as part of their "Choose Cruelty-Free" campaign.

Body Shop International, Beauty Without Cruelty and Nectar Beauty Shops are already backing the scheme it is expected that others will be joining them in the next few months. The initiative comes in response to a dramatic increase in concern from people anxious to buy cosmetics which have not been cruelly tested on animals.

To qualify for use of the logo, companies must be registered with the BUAV and comply with their criteria which ensures that companies and their suppliers have not undertaken or commissioned animal tests on either finished products or ingredients within the last five years. Companies should also have a clear policy against the use of such tests.



HUNT MASTER GUILTY OF CRUELTY

ON Friday 19th May 1989 at the end of the four day trail before Port Talbot Magistrates, ex-MFH (Banwen Miners) and ex-MBH (South Wales Basset Hounds), Clive Rees was convicted of causing unneccessary sufferring to four basset hound bitches.

Joint defendant, Stephen Cashmore was also convicted of the same charge.

The Magistrates had heard that Solicitor Rees had arranged for the bassets to be exported to the USA as a gift to his friend Mr James Sharnberg, Master of the Pennsylvannia based Androssan Beagles. Part of the arrangement for export was that the defendant Cashmore was to deliver the hounds to a boarding kennels close to Gatwick Airport prior to their trans-atlantic journey. However, on arrival at the kennels, a kennel-maid and the kennel owner were shocked to see the conditions of the hounds. The RSPCA were immediately informed on the request of the local vet.

"Total Neglect"

In court the vet, Mr Hilbury said that the hounds conditions was one of "total neglect" and further added that this was the worse case of neglect that he had witnesses in 26 years of practise. Answering a statement from a defence solicitor as to his bloodsports bias, Mr Hilbury said that for many years he had been the vet to the Hampshire Hunt and now works for the Eton College Beagles.

The hounds, Lotto, Spot, Bell and Bramble were all described as "totally emaciated". They were covered in layers of faeces and sores. The act of walking was very painful for them as their feet were raw as a result of prolonged contact with urine soaked bedding. The ribs, pelvis and shoulder bones were all clearly visible. One bitch sufferred from an infected and fetid vagina whilst another had pus exuding from an ear infection. In summing up the vet said that hounds were "clinically starved".

Questioned by Cashmore's solicitor, Michael Clode, Rees denied that he was using his position and education to seek to blame Cashmore; "to say that I would concoct something about Mr Cashmore to avoid embarrassment is simply not true" he said.

Rees defense had hinged on the fact that he had made arrangements with his mother's lodger, Cashmore to look after the hounds. However, Cashmore denied that any arrangement had been made.

Stupid

Fortunately, Rees (35) of Llansamlet and Cashmore (26) of Neath were both found guilty and fined £750 and £500 respectively. Rees was further ordered to pay £1050 towards prosecution costs, whilst Cashmore was ordered to pay £100.

The prosecution also applied for an order disqualifying both men from keeping dogs in future. The Magistrates declined to make such an order.

What now needs to be answered is, will Clive Rees once again become a hunt Master. Additionally, will his BFSS and MBHA membership be returned. What is remarkable about this case is not the conviction but the fact that Rees was stupid enough to be caught. The Magistrates could have have any number of Welsh hunt Masters before them, as these conditions of neglect are common within a hunt kennel.

Hunt Master May Appeal

A Master of the Hampshire Hunt who is also a former magistrate has been cleared of charges of assault against a hunt saboteur but found guilty of using threatening behaviour against the sab.

John Gray (68) is reportd to be considering an appeal against his conviction "to clear his name". Gray appeared at Peterfield magistrates court charged with offences arising from an incident which took place on the Rotherfield Estate, Colemore, Hampshire which is owned by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Sir James Scott.

The court heard a police officer state that he saw Gray urging his horse towards the sab and told him to stop or he would be arrested.

Gray, in is defence, told the court that he had struck the sab after he had grabbed his horse's reins and refused to leave the land on which he was a trespasser. His horse, he claimed, became agitated and reared. Later he saw the same sab, who comes from Basingstoke, trying to get among the hounds and shouting to distract them. He refused to leave the land and at this point the police officer intervened.

Gray of course claims that he was simply trying to keep the sab away from the hunt hounds. Nevertheless, magistrates, although not satisfied that an assault took place??? did find him guilty of the lesser charge, gave him a conditional discharge for twelve months and, for some reason made no order to pay costs.

Had the situation been reversed we can expect to have seen somewhat harsher penalties.

Section 5: An Idiots Guide

AS READERS of HOWL may know, a Hexham magistrates court recently convicted 24 hunt saboteurs under Section 5(1)(a) of the Public Order Act 1986. This article will first of all examine that verdict, and then suggest how to avoid duplicating it yourself. This is not intended to be a full guide to the 1986 Act, or of Section 5. Obviously anyone with queries should consult the HSA Legal Officer; this is a view from the field (well – actually my bedroom window).

Our trial lasted four and a half days, almost all of which consisted of evidence presented for the prosecution: hunters and police officers. This was mostly positive. The five hunt supporters and three policemen contradicted each other on several important issues. These contradictions were so glaring that they clearly could not have been lapses of memory. As the magistrate said: *"Mr Weir, Mr Ingle and Mr Gibson let their point of view dominate their perception."* A polite way of saying that they were telling porkies.

The police also displayed surprising ineptitude. Their evidence didn't tally even on apparently simple matters like whether or not Inspector Clements gathered the 29 sabs into a group and addressed them before taking them to Hexham Police Station, and said that he thought this "address" had not taken place.

Nevertheless, we were convicted. Here it is necessary to go into the legal niceties of the charge. A person is guilty of an offence contrary to Section 5(1)(a) if he, or she, uses "threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm, or distress thereby."

Now, the verdict. The magistrate explained his verdict in great detail, which I don't have the space to report in full. However, some of the points he made were important, and these I shall list.

Firstly he explained that motive and intent are not the same. He accepted that our motive was to save lives, but (he said), we know that this would cause displeasure, and this knowledge constitutes intent. He went on to say:

"Some defendents must have used insulting, threatening, or abusive words, but it was not required by the joint enterprise, so all 24 are not contaminated by it. Similarly, insulting or abusive behaviour must have been used by some, but again all are not contaminated.

"Threatening behaviour I understand as causing the belief that something very undesirable might happen. This was clearly the case. The appearance of saboteurs in large numbers, carrying such items as sticks, whips and horns, in a place where they were not wanted, must have caused this belief. However, I am prepared to say that I am not sure that each defendent intended his or her behaviour to be threatening. They are not guilty on this count.

"Conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace is disorderly conduct. Interfering with the work of the huntsman and the enjoyment of the others was conduct likely to harass Mr. Standing (huntsman and senior Master of the Bolebrook Beagles which were participating on the day in question in the Northumberland Beagling Festival) and indeed in his evidence he stated that he felt 'extreme frustration and anger' which I take to mean 'very harassed'.

"In law there are two relevant defences open to you. One is that you were unaware that your conduct was disorderly. But it is clear that you were all aware that interfering with the huntsman could lead to conflict. This constitutes awareness that your behaviour was disorderly.

"Secondly, you can argue that your behaviour was reasonable. However, hunting is not unlawful; it took place on private land; no-one offended by it need have been present. If they had been chasing a domestic pet, or if they had been trespassing (that is, if the hunt had been unlawful) your behaviour would have been reasonable. As it was, it was not. I therefore find you guilty."

It would be nice to suggest that the magistrate was in some way biased, and, therefore, we shouldn't worry too much about the verdict. But I think he was straight in his judgement; he said he was *"sceptical"* of the police evidence and that he had *"approached the evidence of the beaglers with caution"*. Furthermore, I have just read in Howl 41 that this same magistrate (James Barry, from Doncaster) recently convicted 16 men of dogfighting, sending them all to prison or detention. I don't think he can be described as a bloodsports enthusiast. So, how do we avoid a repetition of this verdict?

Firstly, don't get caught. If you go onto a field and police call you back, ignore them. If they come after you, run for it – they may catch **you** but by running away you may enable others to escape and continue sabbing. Don't resist arrest as this may result in a good kicking and probably charges as well.

Secondly, after arrest, say absolutely nothing. This is a point which has been re-iterated countless times, but it is always worth saying it again. If several sabs have been arrested you may contradict each other, for instance. Or you may admit to something which sounds harmless to you, e.g. "disrupting a hunt", but which looks bad under Section 5. When the police question you, they are not trying to determine whether you are innocent; they are collecting more evidence with which to prosecute you. If you remain silent, you may deny them crucial evidence – perhaps to the extent that they don't bother to charge you.

Thirdly, for those of you unfortunate enough to face charges, it is extremely important that you get in touch with the Legal Officer and get a good firm of solicitors to represent you. From our case in Hexham and one involving sabs from Petersfield and West London, I would draw the following conclusions:

Sabs should not be found guilty of using insulting or abusive words or behaviour. Horn calls are not abusive or insulting (See **Cross v. Chief Constable, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary** (1985) and **Brutus v. Cozens** (1972). The Legal Officer should be able to help you here.) Nor should hunt sabotage in itself be abusive or insulting behaviour, though it may be annoying.

Likewise, sabs should not be found guilty of using threatening words or behaviour, unless the court feels that your numbers alone constituted a threat – as in our case. This problem is best solved by sabbing in smallish groups, though clearly you must balance the threat of arrest with the dangers of violence from hunt supporters.

Finally, disorderly conduct. This is the most difficult part of the Section (mainly because it is so wideranging). The best argument against this accusation (to my mind) is that you have been sabbing for however many years, and the hunt have been subject to it for up to 26 years; it takes place in an orderly and predictable fashion, and should not cause anyone harassment, alarm or distress.

Jamie

Case Dismissed by Magistrates

IAN DYER came before Droxford magistrates in February and successfully challenged a claim by the police that he should be bound over to keep the peace. The police alleged that he was found in circumstances that required he should be bound over to be of good behaviour outside the kennels of the Hursley Hambledon Foxhunt in October.

Mr. Douglas Hunt, a hunt servant spotted Ian outside the kennels whilst he was waiting to follow the hunt vehicles to a cub-hunting meet. He recognised him as a saboteur who had blown a hunting horn on a previous occasion (big crime!) and pointed him out to police officers who were in attendance. On being searched Ian was found to be in possession of a spray can and a hunting horn (evidence that he intended to commit the big crime again perhaps), and was arrested.

In his defence Ian stated that he hadn't done anything wrong and that he did not intend to use the horn except where it was safe to do so, ie. where there was no risk of hounds being called onto a road. He added that he did not intend to *"spray any animal in the face with a noxious substance"* and that he did *"not go on a hunt for violence, or to intimidate anyone, I go in a peaceful manner"*.

Chairperson of the bench, Mrs Lindsay Fox (who's degree of sympathy for her namesake is unknown) found insufficient evidence against him and dismissed the case.

EDINBURGH group has continued to grow in strength, numbers swelled by an influx of students from the University.

The *Linlithgow and Stirlingshire* Hunt's problems continue, with this harassed pack often having to travel some distance to find landowners willing to accommodate meets, and also switching meets.

At a January meet, quick thinking saboteurs ran across a field and formed a human barrier between hounds and a sinking fox. After hunt followers attacked saboteurs, police arrived and arrested two injured saboteurs on suspicion of assault.

At the police station, one assaulted saboteur with head injuries requested a doctor. The doctor who appeared was a member of the hunt, who at a previous seasons' meet had attempted a citizen's arrest on the same saboteur.

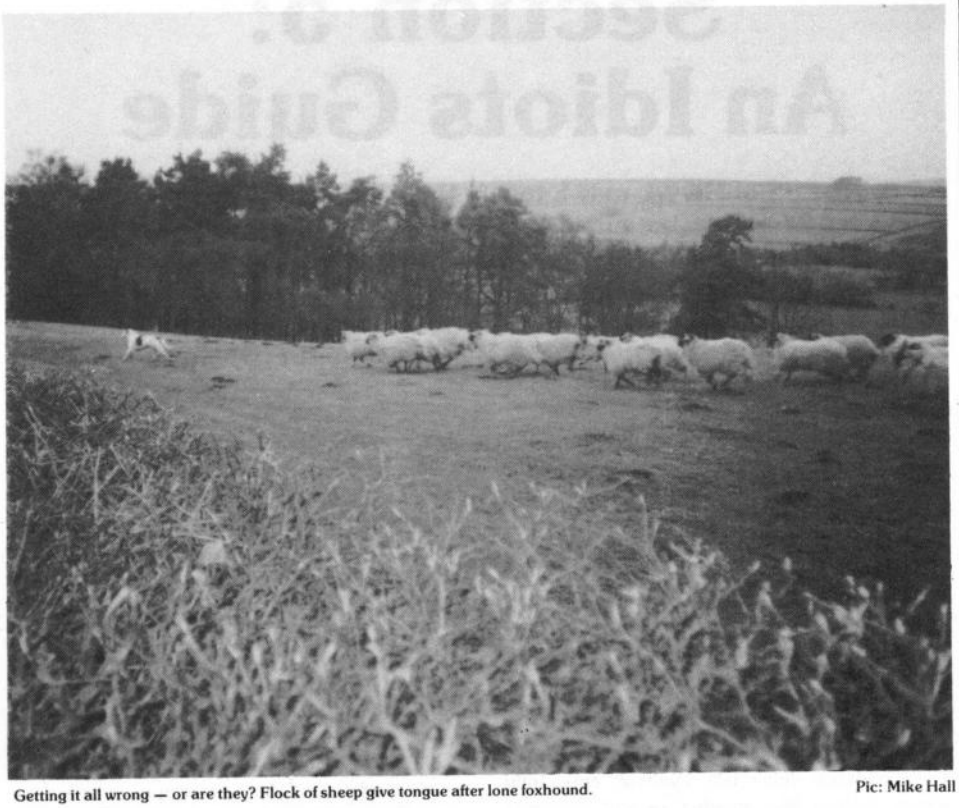
After repeated requests for another doctor were refused, the hunting doctor was allowed with reluctance to examine the assaulted saboteur. Despite the fact the saboteur complained of head injuries which were clearly visible, the doctor made repeated requests for him to remove his trousers.

After last Summer's successful run of prosecutions against the more violent elements within the hunt, they appeared to have learnt their lesson for most of the season.

The pack also appear in dire financial straits, taking on three new Joint Masters to replace the Marquess of Linlithgow who decided to blow for home after being charged when hounds killed a pet cat.

THIS season has also seen an upsurge in activity around Tayside with the *Fife Hunt* being hit through the season by saboteurs from **Tayside and Fife.**

Despite difficulties with terrain and weather, the group's hit reports chronicle a successful season, and a pair of hunt terriermen who appear to have similar problems to the L & S's hunting doctor. Perhaps they should consult him to discover a cure for fictional digout syndrome, and also have a sight test to enable them to distinguish badger setts from fox earths.



Getting it all wrong — or are they? Flock of sheep give tongue after lone foxhound. Pic: Mike Hall

SHEFFIELD HSA have enjoyed one of their most active and successful seasons for a number of years. A good rapport with local police, who are on first name terms with most of the regular faces in the van, has led to a good working relationship.

Local pack the *Badsworth* are hit at least once weekly, usually with a single vehicle, and once police had demonstrated their willingness to step in and arrest violent elements within the hunt, the season was almost completely trouble-free.

LEEDS AND YORK groups report an active season, during which several of the North Yorks packs — *Farndale, Bilsdale, Derwent, Derwent Valley Beagles, Stokesly Farmers' Beagles* — met active opposition for the first time in years in some cases, and in others for the first time ever.

A Joint Meet of the *Farndale and Goathland* in March was attended by 6 riders and twenty saboteurs from Leeds, York and Bradford. With snow falling, saboteurs followed on foot and quickly split the pack. After the hunt strayed through a field of ewes in lamb, a farmer remarked 'I don't give a f..k about the foxes, it's your hounds I'm worried about . . .!'

The Beagle Packs hardly seemed worth the petrol money, most deciding to call it a day and box up as soon as saboteurs appeared on the scene, with the exception of the Derwent valley who persevered outnumbered 4 – 3 by saboteurs at one mid-week meet.

Also hit were the *Caterick Beagles* (packed up on arrival), *Holderness*, and *Middleton*. Success of visiting these new packs more than made up for some of the usual problems nearer home with the *Bramham Moor* — poor access, stroppy police.

All in all, the Yorks packs seemed to suffer reduced support and the same difficulties with poor scenting which cut down tallies elsewhere in the country.



Hounds queing for a dose of poison biscuit from Essex sabs. Pic: Paul Becker

NOTTINGHAM group were most frequently sighted at the *Cottesmore FH*, often along with saboteurs from **Leicester** and **Peterborough.**

After several effective days, saboteurs were attacked at a February meet, cases still proceeding. The following week, a huge police operation was mounted as with obvious advance warning police set out successfully to obstruct the other groups who'd come down. Despite a fairly lousy day all round, hounds were called away from a fox at the end of the day and the huntsman left it, which shows you only have to be in the right place at the right time for a few minutes to do the job.

The *Quorn Hunt* spent most of their Belton Meet in early March running away from the 60 or so saboteurs from **Bradford, Stampford, W. Mids and Northants** who came down to join local groups. Nothing found all day.

BASINGSTOKE group have hit the *Vine and Craven* on all but four of their Saturday meets, and a source within the hunt confirmed that this renowned pack's tally for the season was at most fifteen.

The group have experienced no problems whatever from local police, but found it difficult to come to terms with the friendliness shown by the hunt. Memorable moments include terriermen and supporters helping saboteurs call hounds off a bolted vixen — the hunt avoids killing pregnant vixens near the close of the season due to a fox shortage — and meeting Major Ronald Fergusson (Fergie's Dad).

PETERSFIELD group have hit the *Aldershot Beagles* every Saturday and most Wednesday meets, assisted by saboteurs from **Farnham** and other visiting groups.



Ampleforth College Beagles are brought to a complete standstill. Pic: Mike Hall

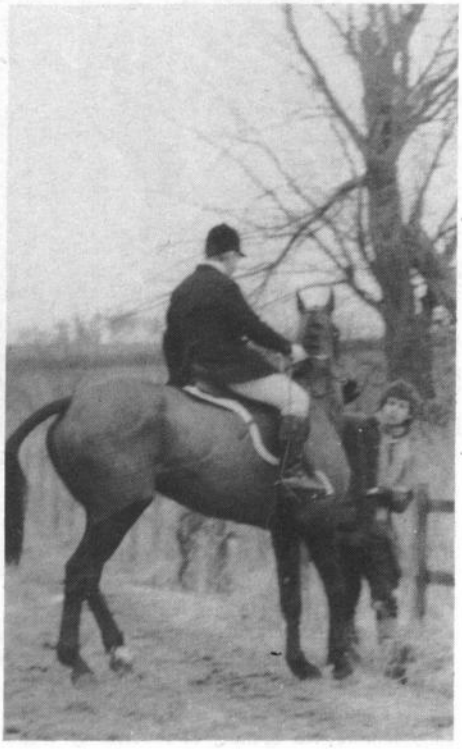
Only one kill was seen, this after a mounted whipper-in headed the hare back into the pack.

Simon Till, 22 year old Joint Huntsman joined the hare at the end of January following a brain haemorrhage. Hunting continued as usual, and all 'Tilly' got as a mark of respect was a short prayer and two minutes' silence before hunting resumed. silence before hunting resumed.

P.C. Cutts added to his formidable tally of arrests whenever saboteurs turned up, arresting people for all manner of anit-social behaviour, including clapping hands and turning up.



Michael Poland, Joint-Master of the Isle of Wight F.H. tries to hide the mask (head) of a fox behind his back. Pic: Simon Wild



Trojan Horse, hunter prevents a sab from proceeding towards the hunt.

WEST LONDON group got out on fifty occasions, visiting 21 different packs within a 150 mile radius of London.

The season ended Easter weekend, with saboteurs completely overwhelming the *Marhamchurch Beagles* who had travelled all the way from Cornwall for two invitation meets.

Despite a dozen arrests and one 6 day case for Section Five, no convictions or binding overs were received.

Highlight of the season was undoubtably the *Pimpernel Beagles*, who when surrounded by ten saboteurs sat motionless in a ploughed field for two hours before packing up and going home.

Sabs Visit Isle of Wight



The Isle of Wight Foxhounds being called by a sab whilst a hunt supporter tries to stop them. Pic: Simon Wild

IN APRIL 1988 members of the Southern Anti-Bloodsports Society held a stall and street collection in Ryde. There was a good response and from this and contacts anti-hunt campaigner Amelia Windsor had made with a mainland members, the decision to set up a S.A.B.S. group on the island was reached. In October 1988 three sabs ventured to a meet of the Isle of Wight foxhunt which had hardly ever seen hunt saboteurs before. Sabs called hounds onto a beach at Brightstone and claim that they were then attacked by the huntsman and forced to flee under a hail of pebbles thrown by hunt supporters. We went for maximum publicity on this and our presence has certainly been noted!

Since October we have tried to get a group to visit the island every week and sometimes mid-week as well, and have on many occasions been given hospitality by Amelia Windsor and Ted Townsend who shares a house with her.

Backlash

Our first hint of trouble came when all the tyres on a Southampton sab's landrover, parked outside Ted and Amelia's home, were punctured. Following this, when Ted left his car overnight at Newport while hiring a van for the Bournemouth S.A.B.S. group he found paint-stripper had been poured over the car and in the petrol tank and that his tyres had been slashed. In late December a disused hotel in Ventnor adjoining Ted and Amelia's home and from which they had just moved was gutted in an arson attack. No-one claimed responsibility but the suspicion that it was an "anti-anti" was reinforced when a little over a week later a caller rang Amelia and said: *"Go and look at your other property — you're dead."* When they visited their old home they found it vandalised. Ted was looking after the hotel and their former home for the new owners and at one time sabs had been put up in the hotel: it would appear someone thought they had a financial interest in both properties.

Badger

In December 1987 Amelia had invited a man and a woman, who wanted to see a blind, invalid fox she looked after, to her house. During conversation the man said he was interested in badgers so Amelia showed them where a large number of badgers lived. *"As they were leaving they looked back at the badger setts, gripped hands and chuckled"*, said Amelia. *"There was a terrible feeling in the pit of my stomach that I should never let these people see where the badgers lived."* A few days later, at Christmas all but one of the badgers, who were quite tame, had been lured — presumably with food, trapped and taken away, almost certainly for badger baiting.

Amelia, distraught, suffered a nervous breakdown, the police and press were informed and the surviving badger cared for but nothing more could be done. It was, therefore, particularly sickening when in February 1989 a badger was deliberately killed and dumped outside Amelia's home in the middle of the night where it was found the next morning by Amelia's thirteen year old daughter, Rosy.

Police Catch Three Men

A few days after this Ted heard glass break whilst walking his dog, a policeman pulled up and told Ted that his headlights had been smashed. The police gave chase after the only car in the area at the time and eventually caught and

questioned three men. Insufficient evidence prevented the police from charging the men but it is believed that the police have inferred that at least one of the men has a connection with foxhunting. When Ted got home he found that there had also been an attempt to break into his house at the rear. By now both he and Amelia had begun to feel like prisoners in their own home.



Steven Clifton, Huntsman of I.O.W. Foxhounds charges sab on the beach on their fisit visit to the Island. Note whip handle being held as an offensive weapon.
Pic: Simon Wild.

Foxskins

If, as seems likely, the three men had something to do with the incidents, it was felt that despite not being charged their arrests would at least have a deterrent effect. For some days the absence of threatening phone calls (a mixture of heavy breathing and death threats should sabs return to the island) which had plagued Ted and Amelia suggested this was the case but no more than a week later a telephone caller said: *"Look outside — you're next."* Outside, in the same place as the badger had been dumped, they found two bloodstained fox skins.

Publicity

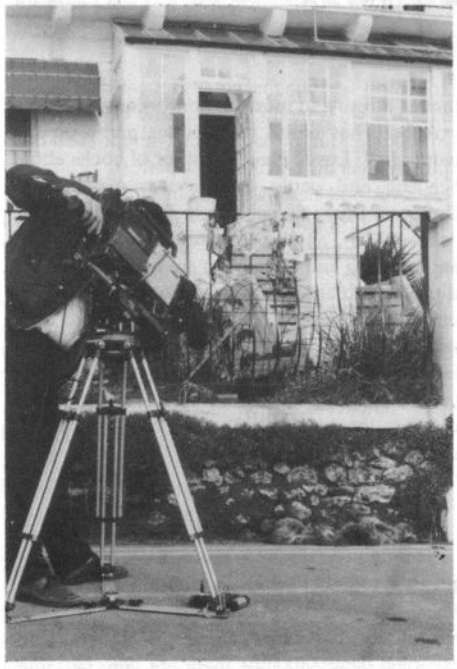
Local press had covered these events quite extensively and small pieces have appeared in the Nationals. These further developments enabled us to get television involved and three separate film crews came to the island including ITV's Out of Order programme (which has a 12 million audience). They gave a run down on the events and filmed sabs running off with hounds which elicited the following encouraging remark from the hunt Chairman: *"It spoils our day, which is obviously what they want."* Mrs Poland, the hunt's field Master and wife of Mr Michael Poland the hunt Master and BFSS notable was recorded and screened requesting *"Can we cut there"* after she got in a muddle trying to find how to explain away the fact that foxes were introduced to the island for hunting!



Michael Poland, Master of the I.O.W. Foxhounds pretends he has been pushed over. Funny man isn't he? Pic: Simon Wild

Arrests

As time has gone the hunt has attracted increased numbers of supporters, some clearly looking for trouble. One Island sab was threatened at the hunt and later attacked one evening, he sustained a cracked rib. Police numbers have increased and now average nine at each hunt.



T.V.S. Camerman filming foxskins outside the home of Ted and Amelia.
Pic: Simon Wild.

This has resulted in three arrests under Section 5 of the Public Order Act. Two sabs have been fined £150 each including costs and another is awaiting trial. On the other side of the coin papers have been sent to the Crown Prosecution Service and a huntsman may be appearing in court on a charge of riding down and injuring a 17 year old Island sab on her first day out!

Conclusions

Ironically, thanks to the sick behaviour of some pro-hunt people on the Island we have achieved more than we hoped for. We have made hunting a real issue on the Island and have more local people involved as a result — there can be few Islanders who do not now know what a terrierman is and what he does. We do not expect miracles to occur overnight but feel sure that the seeds we have sown will be growing as we sleep!

Tyrant's Foe

Appeal: Our campaign costs have been high due to ferry costs, criminal damage and the need to assist sabs with legal costs. Anybody sending money payable to Southern Anti-Bloodsports Society with a covering note marked Isle of Wight Campaign, will be kept up to date with events and help ensure the contunuation of our campaign.

Donations to: **S.A.B.S. c/o 4, Onslow Road, Bevois Valley, Southampton.**

HUNTING ON – A CRITIQUE

RALPH COOK, a longstanding critic of "hunting-on" tactics, is dismayed by the articles recently serialised in HOWL, advocating them and dissects the theories behind them before proposing a radical change in the way the HSA developes its tactics.



The Mid-Devon hounds with their new masters. Sabs demonstrate the success that an experienced group have with a combined tactical strategy of whips, horns and sprays. Pic: Dave Weeks

DURING THE last few years virtually every aspect of the HSA has undergone close examination, entailing constructive criticism and debate followed by rapid development. One area of the HSA's work – tactics – has, however, avoided this process and has in the meantime become dominated by one rather limited outlook. Aubrey Thomas' article in HOWL 41 summarised what would consider a very controversial and fallacious analysis of hunting and methods of hunting and methods of sabotaging it. Ten years age this article would have provoked immediate response – critical and supportive – neither have arrived. There is danger here; if debate about tactics ceases we will ultimately betray or threaten the hunted animals we purport to work for.

This silence might be interpreted as meaning that everyone out there is happily putting "hunting-on" tactics into practice with devastating effect? – but I doubt this. At least one report has been received of a fox being killed as a result of the use (misuse as Aubrey might have it), of "hunting-on" tactics.

My main criticism of Aubrey's tactics is that the theory behind them is fundamentaly flawed and that as a result so must his conclusions.

Aubrey has based his theories partly on the work of W. Lovell Hewitt, author of books about beagling and partly on his own experiences. Unfortunately you will rarely find two hunting "experts" who agree on any one aspect of hunting and beagling and foxhunting are only superficially similar which brings into question the applicability of anything learned from Hewitt's work to hunt sabotage. I do not claim to know all the answers (unlike Aubrey!!) but I have experiences from my years as a hunt saboteur which tell me that much of the theoretical basis of "hunting-on" is incorrect.

Rules

"Hunting-on" assumes the existence of "rules" governing the behaviour of the hunt and its prey which may be used to our advantage. Whilst it is helpful to explain some aspects of hunting with sweeping generalisations there are very few true "rules" involved.

Reliance to "average killing times" is in my view possibly the most dangerous part of the "hunting-on" theory, implying that every hunted animal has a predetermined time before it is killed. Nothing is further from the truth.

Simple arithmatic can establish the average time taken by a hunt to kill but the result, interesting though it may be to a statistician, is meaningless. "Killing times" range from a few seconds to many hours. The message, therefore, is that you must act whenever you can to disrupt the smooth running of the hunt. Mucking about waiting for hounds to check because the animal has been hunted for "only ten minutes" when you could intercede immediately is risking the animal's life.

V-Shape

"Hunting-on" places a great deal of emphasis on the shape of the pack as it hunts a line. It is claimed that the pack conforms to a narrow V-shape at the beginning when scent is strongest and widens as scent weakens. From the shape of the pack (and the positioning of the older hounds in the pack), we are expected to deduce how long the quarry has been hunted and how long it has left!

Perhaps, under perfect conditions, this might be possible, in practice, however, it is not. Climate influences, scent strength and physical obstructions (wire fencing, gateways, holes in hedges etc.) cause the pack to spread out or draw together as the case may be far more than the condition of the hunted animal. Most packs I have seen during hunting display no particular shape but are strung out (much like the competitors in a cross-country run) more or less in a diamond shape with the majority in the middle and decreasing numbers at the front and back.

In deer hunting hounds hunt in single file following scent left in the soil by the deer's feet (the deer's body scent being above the hound's noses); fell hounds on open rocky ground hunt similarly as they are hunting scent from the fox's pads, its body scent, having no vegetation to attach itself to, is quickly dissipated. This occurs in other environments too — on road surfaces, dry ploughlands, on poor to moderate scenting days etc. When body scent is less important hounds have to follow the foot prints, hence the single file.

In my experience the hounds at the front of the pack, at all times are generally the oldest, most experienced members of the pack, these stay forward until the end. In deer hunting the most experienced hounds (called the "tufters"), are always at the front and regular mention is made of a good old hound which lead the pack all the way in reports from all hunts. When hunting is difficult, due to adverse scenting conditions caused by climate or the poverty of the scent holding ability of a particular piece of ground only the experienced hounds, or hounds with a specific penchant for scenting on roads etc. are at the front of the pack.

Deductions

If we were on a fellside, armed only with "hunting-on" tactics, and saw a pack of hounds running in single file down a scree slope devoid of vegetation with the oldest hounds at the front what would we deduce? That the hunted animal was near to being killed (because old hounds were at the front) or fresh! (because the V-shape was undeveloped).

Aubrey describes animals as "Runners" and Sitters". The runner is naturally inclined to run off at the first sign of trouble whereas the sitter tends to sit it out, getting up and sprinting off at the last moment. It is asserted that each animal conforms to its type throughout the chase — absolute nonsense! Animals use the sitting tight or sneaking off method of avoiding detection to their own individual prescription and mix these ruses with other devices to confuse their scent: a sitter at one moment is a runner the next depending on its own preferences. I have seen evidence of this many times whilst following hunts.

All this prepares us for Aubrey's central teaching: how to hunt hounds on. The idea is that when hounds lose the scent, the sab encourages the pack to rally to a hound which falsely give cry and hunt them on a non-existent scent or a heel line or, possibly, to encourage them to hunt a fresh animal or a member of a different species ie deer.

It is possible to encourage hounds to hunt a "heel line" (to hunt the scent left by the quarry in a backwards direction) and it is certainly possible, though inadvisable to cause hounds to change quarry and hunt another. I find it difficult to believe, however, that much success will be gained from attempts to hunt hounds on a non-existent scent. Hounds have exceptional scenting abilities and follow a scent almost by instinct: Aubrey is asking us to believe that he can overcome the inheritance of generations of selective breeding, natural instinct and training with a simple horn call.

Hounds are said to hunt only as fast as their noses can pick up scent (incidentally this further demolishes the "average killing time" notion). Thus on a good scenting day hounds are running well and will over-run considerably at a check; on moderate to poor scenting days over-running may not take place at all. On such days it should be remembered that hounds may simply have lost a portion of the line due to the poverty of the scent, hunting them on in such cases may serve only (and I have witnessed this several times), to connect the hounds' noses with the line again.

It should also be bourne in mind, irrespective of whether hounds will hunt a non-existent line, that foxes and hares behave quite differently when being hunted and that checks in their scents are often a result of this behaviour.

Jinks

Hunted foxes will often suddenly alter their chosen route, leaving a jink in their scent line which hounds may not notice until they have overrun, they then continue on their new course. Hares, however, tend to deliberately confuse their line or deviate from it and may be present in the vicinity when the hounds check. It is clear then that checks are not as simple as described: in foxhunting the fox can easily be ahead of the check but running off at a tangent; in harehunting the quarry may be nearby. Hares, may, however, behave like foxes on occasions complicating the equation still further – you should never even attempt to hunt hounds on if you are uncertain of the whereabouts of the hunted animal.

When the quarry is running short at the end of a hunt it will not be far away at any check. In its final moments an animal in desperation creates many checks and may be anywhere in the vicinity, hunting hounds on at such a time is fatal, it is far better to take hounds away from the area using traditional tactics.

Hunting hounds on to a young hound giving voice incorrectly is great if you can do it. But I doubt if anyone including Aubrey can recognise a young, inexperienced hound at the back of the pack in field conditions and be certain that it is babbling for the hell of it often enough to justify the preeminence currently given to "hunting-on" by the HSA. How do you know that this hound has not actually refound the line?

Aubrey makes the quite incorrect assertion that it is almost impossible for hounds to hunt successfully when the quarry is tired, is giving out little scent and is "running short" near the end of a hunt without the assistence of the huntsman. At one of his tactics talks, in Wales, last year he went further, saying that it was virtually impossible for hounds to kill at this point without the help of the huntsman. This is quite simply wrong. Hounds are quite capable of hunting and killing by themselves, indeed in the fells and other areas with difficult terrain (like much of Wales!) they do so simply because the huntsman cannot keep up with them.

Aubrey has also said that an animal which has not been hunted for more then fifteen minutes is perfectly capable of escape. Again this is nonsense – indeed if it were true hounds would never hunt for more than fifteen minutes and would never kill!!!

Wind

That hunted animals run downwind in front of hounds is generally true but cannot be considered a rule. I have many times seen animals run into the wind and across it for varying distances. Equally many of the hunts I have sabotaged or simply followed out of interest have entered covert and drawn in the direction they have always taken regardless of wind direction.

These important errors would of course be very very dangerous if most sabs who attended tactics talks or read tactics articles had put "hunting-on" into practice. The truth of the matter, however, is that few have really understood Aubrey's theory and even fewer have had the opportunity or the the skill neccesary to test it in the field. Experienced sabs who know what they are doing are appalled by "hunting-on" but are not prepared to battle it out with Aubrey.

Success in sabbing for most groups has not been a result of tactical expertise but merely the unnerving and disruptive effect that their presence has on the huntsman and on the pattern of the hunting during the course of the day.

Attending a hunt armed with a horn and a basic knowledge of "hunting-on" tactics (which is all anyone can assimilate from a single tactics talk), is unlikely to result in the saving of lives and it is simplistic in the extreme for anyone especially a new recruit in the sabbing scene to claim that their sabbing has significantly improved as a result of such a talk.

Confusion

On a recent BBC Television programme ("Out Of Order") which filmed sabbing on the Isle of Wight, a young sab announced to the cameras (and the British public!) that her group intended to "hunt hounds on". They did not, indeed the group performed a classic, totally traditional tactic – they called hounds out of a wood and stood with them in the middle of a field. Two years of "hunting-on" tactics and all we have is total confusion about the whole thing.

– they called hounds out of a wood and stood with them in the middle of a field. Two years of "hunting-on" tactics and all we have is total confusion about the whole thing.

Unfortunately in his attempts to find tactics simple enough for even the newest HSA recruit to understand and which requires only one reasonably proficient sab to put into effect Aubrey has simplified hunting and hunt sabotage out of all touch with reality. He has reduced one of the most complex of "sporting" activities to a series of time limits, rules and probabilities which have little bearing on the problems sabs come up against throughout the hunting season. A few sabs have argued with Aubrey at great length but he has never conceded a point and dismisses his opponant as too inexperienced or stupid to understand his ideas.

The flaws and faults in Aubrey's tactics were seen at least ten years ago and it was for this reason that successive HSA Committees refused to allow Aubrey to take up the post of Tactics Officer. In the 1987-88 Committee year, however, a now discredited faction of the Committee of the time allowed Aubrey to gain possession of the post. Even then he was given strict instructions to promote only those tactics promulgated in the HSA's official Tactics Book and not his own, he has ignored these instructions.

Solution

We will agree that we must raise the level of tactical expertise amongst HSA groups but the way to do this is not to complicate our tactical output with unproven "new tactics" of doubtful theoretical standing or practicability. We should seek to raise every sab's tactical ability to a level at least one step up from the "mob-rule" "tactics" employed by so many HSA groups today. The best way forward is to teach the HSA's tried and tested "Stop Tactics" which require every member of a group to co-operate as equals.

This will not be achieved, however, whilst Aubrey remains in charge of Tactics or indeed whilst a single person is left to devise and advise all things tactical. The obvious solution is to abolish the single post and replace it with a standing tactics sub-Committee. This is what I shall be proposing to next year's HSA Committee.



PROGRESS OR STAGNATION

FEW OF us who have been HSA members for more than three years would deny that today's HSA is a vast improvement on the 1985 model. The HSA now has four times the membership, an office, a wide and expanding range of salesgoods, a better public image and a generally more committed and deeper thinking Committee.

HSA members often regard the whole Committee as the architects of these improvements. This is a mistake. The truth is far different and the HSA membership is entitled to know it.

The improvements are due largely to the efforts of a small section of the Committee and often inspite of the intransigence of some Committee members who hold entrenched conservative attitudes and resist almost all change. This conservative element has struggled against change because they are unable to work within a truely democratic structure and have done very well whilst chaos has ruled the day.

Unfortunately change is accepted very slowly in most organisations, yet despite their supposedly radical character, some well-known HSA members seem even less keen to accept it. Such members are past masters at populist rhetoric which they use to whip up suspicion among the main body of the activist membership who are quite content in general to see the HSA adapt to meet modern challenges.

We believe that the reason the Memoranda and Articles of Association failed to get majority support at the April EGM is because most (not all) of those who spoke against them are unable to fully appreciate the need for their adoption, or, if they understood the need, because they were just simply too stupid or bloody minded to accept the idea of an HSA with a part to play in the real world.

A good example of the backward thinking prevailing in a section of the Committee was the objections raised to the idea of renting offices. The progressives saw the urgent need to move the HSA out of "bedsit-land" into offices at least as far back as 1985. The conservatives regarded the idea as heresy. Even when an office had been found two Committee members voted against granting the money necessary to repair a broken window because in their view the HSA should not have rented an office in the first place!

Another example is the refusal of some Committee members to be bound by majority Committee decisions. The Tactics Officer was mandated two years ago not to propound his own tactics which many Committee members considered dangerous and unworkable. Nevertheless he has done so at every opportunity and has thus acted in an undemocratic manner.

The EGM in April was hoped by the progressive section of the Committee to be a milestone in the HSA's history. Had the Articles been passed the constant threat of a return to the chaos of 1985 could have been brought to an end. unfortunately by a slim majority of just three the conservatives defeated the move and only then by slandering the progressives who put it forward at Committee level. The opportunity to put the HSA on a sound legal footing and a firm administrative foundation was lost, beaten in the main by populist rhetoric and unfounded allegations of abuse of power (as if an HSA Committee member has any of that).

Nevertheless, the progressives, heartened by the closeness of the vote and believing that the HSA does have some forward looking and open-minded members have formed a slate for the Committee elections. Our intention is to build on our success to date and to speed up the rate of improvement.

Our objectives are simple and achievable and are encompassed by the following five key points:

1. To reaffirm HSA committment to direct-action against bloodsports by prioritising the provision of adequate backup necessary for success in the field including:

a) long-term planning with direct-action becoming the focal point of properly targetted, broader based campaigns with which the public can identify;

b) the provsion of adequate legal advice through the holding of regional legal seminars and the administation of a list of sound legal contacts. The tasks to be conducted by John Beggs (the HSA legal officer) and funded by central HSA;

c) the organising of media co-ordination to increase public acceptance of the need and value of direct-action in the face of a Government hostile to pro-animal legislation and keen to restrict the rights of those who take action on the behalf of animals;

d) the provision of adequate intelligence and research resources to help combat bloodsports and to increase the effectiveness of local groups;

e) promoting greater knowledge and organisation skills amongst local groups by offering an HSA "roadshow" in each region the format of which would consist of talks and workshops on tactics, group organisation, response to the law, research and so on along the lines of the prototype Contacts Seminar held last season;

f) a review of the present HSA tactics advice and the dissemination of the results through an updated and improved Tactics Booklet.

2. To raise public awareness of the HSA and its objectives with the aim of increasing membership, establishing a direct mailing list and encouraging the formation of new local active groups. And to prioritise the dissemination of the information owned by the HSA through a series of HSA publications designed to increase public and member understanding of the complexity of the anti-bloodsports issue.

3. To utilise to the full the enthusiasm and capabilities of our supporting members and to direct their energies towards realistic and achievable goals.

4. To broaden the HSA's financial base and to place the organisation on a viable economic footing.

5. To broaden the HSA's opposition to bloodsports by encouraging action against bloodsports neglected by the HSA to date, prioritising HSA activities within its realistic capabilities.

So who are these progressives: firstly we are people who have promoted the most change in the HSA and at the same time many of us are people who have been on the HSA Committee for substantial periods of time and have through this experience been able to isolate and eliminate the major faults in the HSA in the past and have also identified those faults that remain and formulated the changes necessary to eliminate them. We have between us a range of important skills and expertise without which the HSA would undoubtedly be the poorer.

If you agree with most of the above then you to are a progressive and should want to join us for the HSA's benefit. If you disagree with all of it you are history, we don't need you and the HSA certainly doesn't.

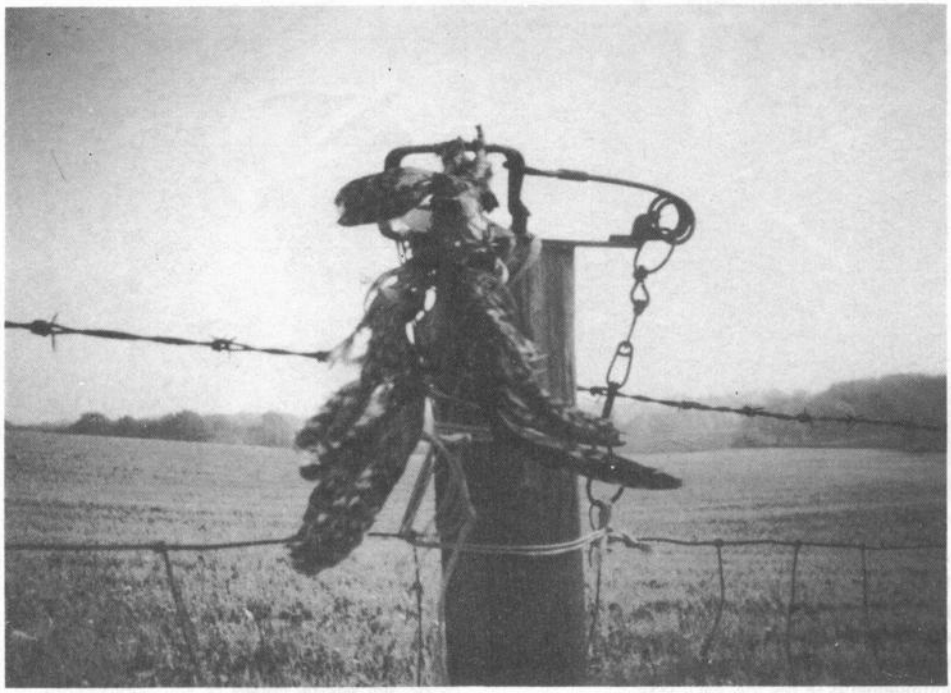
Dave Weeks, HSA Chairperson for an on behalf of the slate for "Progress in the HSA"; other members are:

Ralph Cook HSA Secretary
John Hale HSA Treasurer
Chris Bishop HSA Contacts Liaison Officer
Angi Majennik HSA Public Relations Officer
Maria Lester Office Assistant
Dave White
Mark Dent



Friendly as ever, an Enfield Chase Foxhunt terrierman offers sab a chance to enjoy some spadework. Pic by a Cambridge sab

Silent Death



Little owl, badly decomposed hangs from an illegal "pole trap".

THE reproduction in HOWL 41 of a photograph showing a fox trapped in a snare has prompted three readers to send in photographs depicting the cruelty inflicted on thousands of wild animals each year. Gamekeepers wage an incessant war against real or imagined gamebird predators but tend to step up their efforts in spring to "protect eggs" and in autumn to ensure the survival of young birds at least until the start of the shooting season.

The keeper's armoury includes traps, snares and poison. All three maintain a deadly presence around the clock leaving the keeper free to go about his other business. The keeper's principle target species are the predatory animals; foxes, stoats, weasels and mink and the badger and wildcat if he is prepared to break the law. All birds of prey are protected by law but many are killed each year using traps and poison. Corvids (crow, magpie, jay, rook and jackdaw) are common victims and may be seen strung up on a gibbet alongside other "unwelcome" "predators of game".

Traps

A number of traps are used by gamekeepers, most are fired by a spring mechanism and the use of all, except those developed for small mammals and placed in tunnels, is illegal. Of the illegal traps the best known is the gin trap the leading edges of which have teeth. These are strategically set along known fox trails or on tree-stumps, stone walls or fence posts if birds are being targeted and are fired by an animal or bird placing its foot on the plate. The jaws of the trap close with such force that they may break or crush the leg bones, the teeth prevent the hapless creature from pulling its limb free. The trap itself does not usually kill although the shock may. Many trapped foxes in the frantic effort to escape will simply chew through the trapped leg leaving the paw behind.

Gin traps were banned in Britain in 1973 but are unfortunately still used by some gamekeepers and shepherds, usually in more remote parts of the country. Gin traps are also used widely throughout the world and come in different sizes to take animals as large as tigers. Many are still manufactured in Britain despite the ban on their use in this country.

The photograph shows a gin trap set on a pole with the remains of a long dead little owl hanging from its jaws. The reader tells me that there were seven such traps placed on posts along the fence, two had caught owls whilst the other five remained waiting for a victim. The traps were removed and unfortunately thrown away by our reader and their presence reported to the RSPB. It is clear from the condition of the owl that no-one had bothered to check the traps.

Cagetraps

Live cage traps constructed of wire mesh are occasionally used, quite legally, to catch foxes. These are baited with interesting morsels, pheasant, chicken and lamb etc. The fox enters at the open end, takes hold of the bait and this releases a pin causing a door to fall behind it barring exit. The fox remains trapped and undamaged until the keeper arrives. The live cage trap is popular with pelt hunters although it is known that many foxes are reluctant to enter them. They are also used by many district councils who fear the alleged health risks of a high urban fox population.

Snares

Snares are the most often used fox traps. Made of wire they are fastened to a heavy object, fence post or tree root on a known fox trail often at the edge of a wood or in a gap in a hedge or field wall. A loop in the wire just larger than the circumference of the foxes head is then supported over the trail on small sticks at fox head height. An animal using the trail is captured around its neck and once it realises its predicament it struggles and the loop, or noose, tightens around it.

Two types of snare are used. The self-locking snare which is illegal in Britain tightens further each time the animal struggles and does not relax its grip if the animal ceases to struggle as they invariably do when exhausted by their efforts to escape or when they try to gasp for air. The other type does not have the self locking device and may release its grip slightly when the animal ceases its struggles. Strangely the illegal snare, banned in 1981 may be the more humane.

Snares are undoubtedly cruel and frequently the wire cuts into the flesh before it finally kills. Foxes can survive for several days in a snare and many have been found with supporating sores on their bodies running around, slowly dying, after they have managed to wrest the snare from its



HSA member and the badger he discovered trapped by two snares. Note the torn up grass.

anchor. Snares should be checked at least once every 24 hours but of course this is widely ignored.

Snares are also totally unselective; pet cats, dogs and wild badgers as the photographs show are frequent victims. Snares also do not necessarily become fastened around the neck. If improperly laid, or accidentally disturbed the wire loop may slip open admitting the victim's head and forelegs before catching the animal around its abdomen causing horrendous internal and external injury and leading to a lingering death. Snares have also been known to have become entangled around the legs of farm animals, cattle, sheep and horses and wild deer.

The photograph taken by our second reader shows a sow badger caught in snares, one around her waist the other around a rear leg. When discovered she was in such bad condition that she had to be humanely killed, she had been suffering for many days and had clawed up an area of about six feet around her. Our reader, who always carries wirecutters for the purpose of dealing with snares, has over the past two years found six foxes alive in snares but only one was fit to be released, the others had to be killed. In addition he has removed dead cats and dogs (including his own which he fortunately saved) from these wicked devices.



A closer view of the badger and snare. Wire cutters.

Pic: Simon Wild

Poison

The use of poison to kill is with few exceptions illegal (i.e. it can be legally used under certain conditions to kill rodents). Poison is administered to foxes and birds of prey via a meat bait, lamb, chicken etc. It is a totally unselective means of killing predators posing as much of a threat to birds of prey (all of which are protected by law) and other protected or domestic animals as to the target species. Nevertheless, the illegal use of poison is widespread on upland sheep walks and estates where game is reared. The R.S.P.B. for instance receives reports of at least 100 infringements of the law each year.

Various poisons are used including mevinphos, a powerful poison which even in tiny doses can kill a man, and strychnine among others. They kill immediately and if a dead fox or other predator is discovered close to an animal carcase poison should be suspected.

The HSA is of course opposed to all these methods of killing animals and advises its members to be on the lookout when out in the countryside. If you come across any illegal devices photograph them, note carefully their position and report your find to the authorities (and the HSA), get several copies of any photographs. If you find an injured animal get help. In the case of legal snares it is in most cases illegal to damage or remove them although the chances of ending up in court for doing so are slim and would at any rate gain good and sympathetic publicity.

Ralph Cook

Too Many Huntsmen Not Enough Sabs

AS AN organisation which has existed for a quarter of a century we have a clearly established aim – to prevent as many hunting organisations from killing their respective quarry as possible. In that case, what is our main objective? Could it be to lose every hunt in the land so much support that it is rendered practically useless? That in itself would be a worthwhile objective and an achievable one, if the success of the West Wiltshire group against the Beaufort Hunt is anything to go by.

It can probably be safely said that bloodsports are unlikely to be banned by law. The feudal nature of our society will ensure that the 5% who hold power will prevent such legislation from ever reaching the statute books. These include the Royal family, the House of Lords, not to mention the intricate "old boy network" of high ranking army and police officers, politicians, judges, barristers and so on. In addition even if the hunting of live quarry was replaced by drag-hunting, there would still be the possibility of animals being killed secretly by hunts. Traditions as old as hunting do not die out overnight.

Thus the end to bloodsports lies inevitably in the hands of the HSA. After 25 years of gradual growth it is time we formulated a long-term strategy, that will enable us to achieve that all important objective and prepare us for every possible catastrophe.

I can only speak in terms of our group — East Midland HSA, an amalgamation of groups from Nottingham and Leicester. Initially, Nottingham sabbed the Grove and Rufford Hunt continuously throughout the 1986/87 season, until sinister police intervention prevented us even from reaching the meet. So frustrating was it that we had to switch hunts and, to avoid a repeat of the previous season, sabbed a different hunt each week in the 1987/88 season. We remained elusive and totally unpredictable and enjoyed the luxury of sabbing without the presence of the police. But we failed to put the pressure on any one hunt. Even if we managed to save one or two foxes at a particular hunt one week it was free to kill the next.

In 1988/89 season the group returned as an experienced one with a dozen or so established members and joined forces with the Leicester group to hound the Cottesmore Hunt with great success. We have seen the first signs of weakness: sudden bouts of violence from the hunters and more police in attendance, experienced the length and breadth of Britain, but I feel we can now overcome this. I wonder what next season will bring — as yet we have not decided where to go next.

Instinct tells us to keep chipping away at the Cottesmore having seen evidence of the hunt's failure to cope, and thus further reduce their killing power. This we know is what we should be aiming for with all our local packs. Yet with another eleven equally formidable foxhunts and five harehunts in the Midlands it appears not to be possible. If we are successful with the Cottesmore next season it represents merely a drop in the ocean of bloodsports and once we turn our attention to other hunts the Cottesmore will simply bounce back and our efforts will have been wasted.

I do not believe that our problems are unique and other sabs groups must have similarly daunting prospects.

The crux of the problem is strength — without a vast increase in the number of active sabs, we will never be wholly effective. To tie in with this the other major setback is the lack of money — we are all aware of how costly sabbing is. There is a limit to how much fundraising a group can carry out each season which brings us back to the numbers game. The more active people we can recruit, the more money we may be able to raise: the two dictating how many hunts we can sab next season. This must apply to all groups and to the movement as a whole.

Encouraging more people to come out sabbing

however, may be a problem in itself. How many people care enough about the brutality of hunting to risk getting beaten up or arrested as we do. How can we persuade them that it is a worthwhile operation? Obviously, improved advertising and public relations is called for to overcome this anxiety.

On the other side of the coin, there are still many sabs who are filled with prejudice and will turn potential sabs away with their attitudes. In a world that is rife with animal abuse, the whole idea of accepting, for example, a meat-eater into the group, appears unthinkable to some sabs. Yet has it occured to these sabs that people can change?

Sabbing opens peoples' eyes to the whole spectrum of animal abuse — something they may previously not have been aware of. They may reject meat altogether as their attitudes change constituting another recruit for animal rights. If rejected at the outset, we have lost not only a sab but denied that person a chance to be educated.

Time will be the judge of whether they come to accept our values and if they do'nt they will probably leave the group anyway. We have lost nothing by giving them a chance. If we adopt this attitude (being aware of the risk of infiltration), our numbers could double.

As I have attempted to explain in this article, the death blow to bloodsports is really down to the HSA as a ban cannot be relied upon. We must decide upon a firm objective and strive to achieve it. Right now, if the East Midlands situation is applicable elsewhere, the major problem is that there are too few sabs to put the required degree of pressure on enough hunts to have the desired effect.

Our first stage must be to increase our numbers and we must learn to accept people who do not fit in with all our ethics. When I first joined the Nottingham group two existing members were ex-service men and one was an ex-foxhunter! All three are brilliant sabs as well as vegans. Thus we need not and cannot afford to be choosy about who we accept. There are still too many huntsmen and not enough sabs.

Moonlight Fox.



No smoke without fire. A sab lights up an East Essex Foxhunter's cigarette — motive uncertain! Pic: Clive Smith

HSA Health Warning Grouse Shooting Can Damage Your Health

FOLLOWING my article "Cheque Book Conservation" in HOWL 40 which discussed grouse shooting and its contribution to conservation an HSA member sent me some interesting material about water quality in moorland areas.

The moors of northern and south-western England, Scotland and Wales are often part of the catchment areas for reservoirs supplying water to hundreds of thousands of households.

Water flowing off moorlands and feeding these reservoirs is often highly discoloured with natural acids from the peat which forms the bulk of moorland soil. To remove discolouration from water prior to distribution to the domestic supply, all water authorities (not just those with moorland catchment areas) carry out a very expensive treatment process involving the use of aluminium sulphate, a coagulant which removes undesirable suspended contaminants and potentially harmful bacteria from the water. Yorkshire Water Authority is reported to be spending millions of pounds a year to combat this discolouration – the cost of which is met by the consumer.

The more colour in the water, the more aluminium sulphate required to remove it, hence more sulphate coming through the taps and being drunk by the consumer. The water authorities which make most use of aluminium are: Northumbrian, North West, Severn Trent, South West and Yorkshire; all take a considerable precentage of their water from moorland.

It is known that in some areas at certain times of the year the aluminium content of treated water exceeds the E.E.C. Directive on Drinking Water Quality by at least five times!

It is thought, though the evidence is not yet conclusive, that aluminium sulphate consumption through drinking water (tea, coffee, softdrinks etc.) is a factor in the development of Alzheimers's Disease. This is a serious, debilitating and ultimately fatal affliction causing premature senility mainly in aged people. Mr Monica, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, pointed out in answer to a Parliamentary question in June 1988 that the EEC directive aluminium standard was set in relation to the appearance of water rather than on health grounds which indicated that he at least does not regard aluminium sulphate in drinking water as a health risk.

So what, I hear you ask. Well is appears that the degree of discolouration in the water increases when the pace of erosion of the peat soil increases. Hence the changing levels of aluminium sulphate in tap water (generally the amount of aluminium used is greater after heavy or prolonged rainfall, i.e. in winter or after heather burning which exposes the soil to erosive forces).

Clearly the heather management practices I described in HOWL 41, which are often regarded as essential for good grouse management (heather burning and moorland drainage), must lead to an increase in colouration of water feeding our reservoirs.

Certainly moorland fires are acknowledged by the Yorkshire Water Authority as a factor causing discolouration in water in certain Pennine water catchment areas.

Obviously aluminium sulphate is used by water authorities to remove water discolouration in parts of Britain where grouse shooting does not take place, for instance in Devon and Cornwall because "natural" discolouration occurs elsewhere, especially on heather moors irrespective of whether they are used for grouse shooting. Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and Exmoor are all water catchment areas producing discoloured water. Equally moors burnt for the benefit of the heather alone, or for sheep, produce water discoloured as badly as that from well-managed grouse moors. But grouse moor management is an additional cause of the problem which in some cases leads to serious discolouration.

Ewden Treatment Works, whose water is drawn from a catchment area including the prestigious grouse shooting grounds of Midhope and Broomhead moors, was for much of 1986 unusable because its aluminium sulphate content after treatment regularly exceeded EEC recommended maximum levels by as much as five times!!

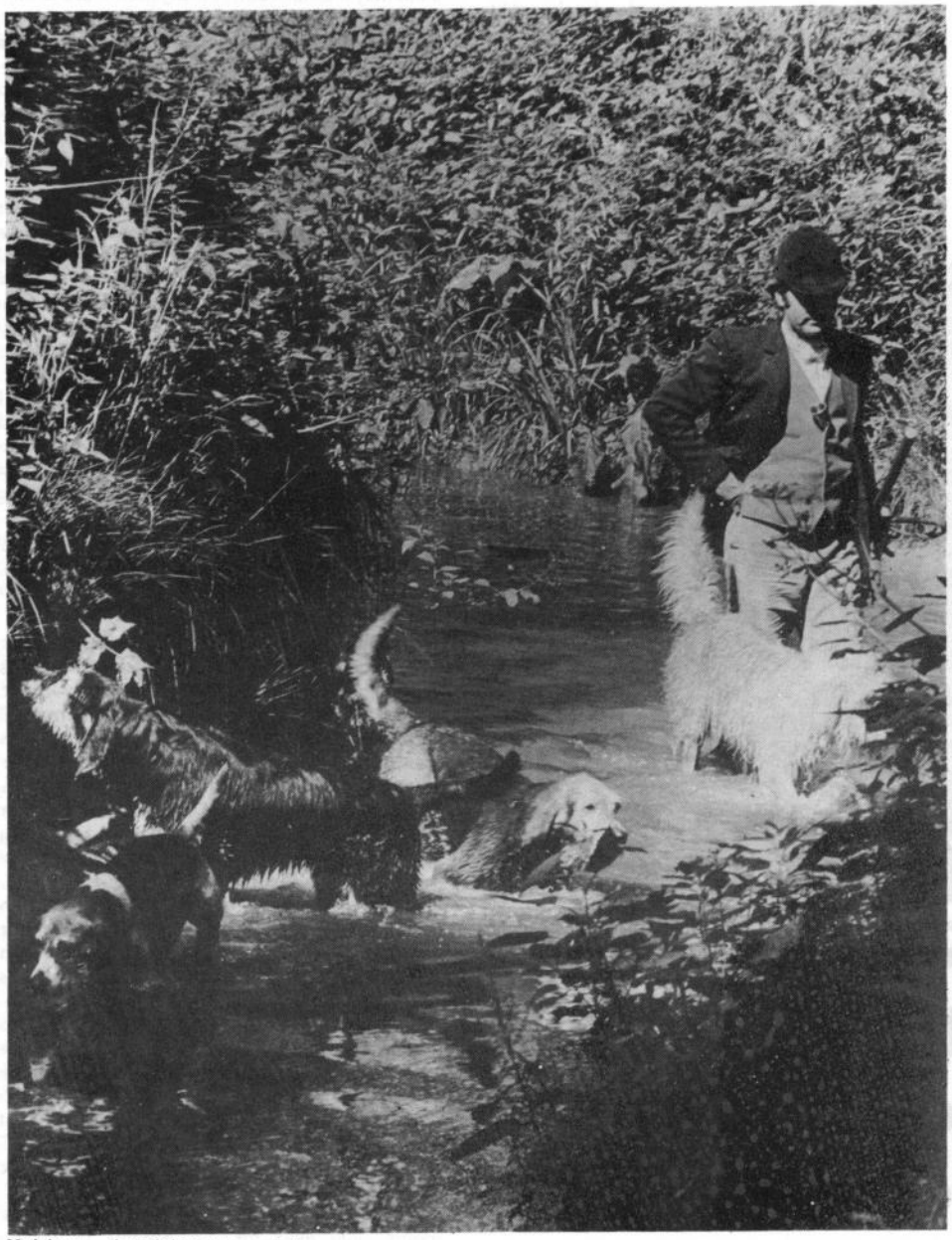
Of course, as stated in HOWL 41, most of these moors only exist for the benefits of grouse shooting and sheep rearing, and are in any case a result of wholesale deforestation by human beings several centuries ago. Meanwhile in Scotland, natural moorland is being destroyed to grow trees for profit when better trees and greater profit could be harvested from much of the moorland of northern England. Planting these moors with trees would also gradually reduce erosion and soil acidity thus improving water quality "naturally".

But then commonsense of this sort is just pie-in-the-sky to those who govern us and it is doubtful that any curbs will be placed on heather burning or moorland draining – after all most grouse shooters do not live in Sheffield, Barnsley, Manchester, Leeds.

Ralph Cook

POETIC JUSTICE?

OTTERHUNTING came to an abrupt end in 1978 when the otter, then considered near to extinction, was added to Schedule 1 of the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act (1975). Protection was given to the otter despite strenuous opposition from the pro-hunting lobby. In 1979 a new "fieldsport" emerged, similar in almost every respect to otterhunting, only the quarry was different. The North American mink, a cousin of our native otter, seemed a viable alternative to the otter, living as it does in virtually the same habitat. Minkhunting had arrived and ten years later looks set to stay. HSA Research Officer, Ralph Cook, takes a look at the impact of mink-hunting on the otter's chances of recovery.



Mink hunts — hounded by otters and sabs.

Hunting alone posed little threat to the otter as a species and cannot be accused of causing the disastrous decline in its numbers from the late 1950's. This distinction lies firmly with the widespread use by farmers of organochlorine pesticides such as D.D.T. and dieldrin, chemicals which are also implicated in the near extinction of various bird of prey species during the same period. The use of these chemicals has now been banned by law but pollution of waterways by agricultural and industrial waste, human disturbance by anglers, tourists and others, habitat destruction by Water Authorities, angling clubs and farmers continue to put the otter under pressure in the wild.

The additional element of a minkhunt, complete with a pack of hounds, between 50 and 100 followers, and the consequent noise, disturbance and damage caused to the narrow waterside habitats may decrease the desirability of an otherwise perfect otter habitat and thus reduce the rate of population expansion and the number of breeding sites available to otters.

At first mink-hunting was dismissed by many in the anti-bloodsports movement as merely a case of "gesture politics" an example of hunting people's refusal to admit defeat which would soon disappear. It seemed for a time that this view would be proved correct. Many of the nine otterhunts operating in 1978 simply stopped hunting and only those which had in previous seasons begun hunting mink in the absence of otters took their new "sport" seriously. A few new hunts came on the scene, several of which quickly disappeared without trace. By 1982 there were only 18 minkhunts operating in the country.

The hunting itself was something of a let down. Mink are only too willing to climb trees or dive into any available sanctuary when being pursued by hounds. They did not give the "glorious" five hour runs nostalgically remembered by former otterhunters. In the bloodsports press several writers dismissed minkhunting as "glorified rat hunting" hardly deserving consideration as a fieldsport.

Alone among the anti-hunting movement the HSA recognised the threat posed by minkhunting, not just as a new form of hunting which would plague the country for many years to come but also to the otter wildlife of our waterways and in particular to the now rare otter. It was known, for instance, that minkhunters were hunting the same stretches of river along which otters had been hunted and that otters were very shy of hunts and disliked disturbance they caused to the point where they would simply leave an otherwise suitable habitat for many months after a hunt had passed through. This is why the HSA carried out as many operations as possible against any minkhunt which was foolish enough to advertise its meets. It was hoped minkhunting could be strangled at birth and deposited in the dustbin of historical anachronisms.

Unfortunately many of the hunts hardest hit were former otterhunts targetted by hunt saboteurs since the mid-1960's and resilient enough to continue despite our efforts. Other newer packs (for example the Tandridge, Pynes and South East Wales minkhunts) collapsed under the pressure. Most packs, however, refused to advertise their meets and thereby denied the HSA the one vital piece of information it needed to maintain the pressure. As a result minkhunting now appears to be flourishing and today there are reports that as many as 35 minkhunts are operating in one form or another.

One area where minkhunting appears to be thriving is the South-West of England; three hunts, the Devon and Cornwall, the Culmstock and Ytene (all former otterhunts) operate throughout spring, summer and autumn of each year killing an estimated total of 120 mink. The area covered by these hunts also supports England's largest otter populations. Within the country hunted by the Devon and Cornwall Minkhunt for instance otters are most numerous in North Devon and Cornwall though somewhat less so in South Devon. The rivers Camel, Tamar, Okement, Taw and Torridge all of which are regularly hunted by the D&CMH are known to support relatively large otter populations. Other rivers hunted by the D&CMH such as the Culm, Dart, Yealm and Teign support small populations, occasional residents or because they are close to well populated areas can be expected to host otters if the general population continues to increase.

Unfortunately an endangered species very often retreats into the most isolated part of its range away from human disturbance. This is why, in the late 1970's, attitudes to the continuation of otterhunting changed and it became generally agreed that the continuation of otter hunting could become a serious threat to the species. The theory

was that before the decline hunts operated across the whole of their countries thus minimising the disturbance of the otters in any single area but as the decline set in the hunts concentrated their efforts in areas where they could expect to find an otter to hunt thus increasing disturbance.

In England these final retreats are small, few and far between, most cannot support large numbers of otters and being isolated the chances of otters from different areas meeting in order to mate and thereby avoiding inbreeding are not good. Minkhunts operating along rivers where otters are resident or regularly visit simply add to the disturbance in an area and drive the otters into yet smaller areas causing a consequent contraction of the population and a reduction of the chances of good breeding success.

In his book "*The Otter in Britain*" Peter Neville Havin wrote:

The otter was pushed "into retreat from some of its best areas of natural habitat. To some extent it would seem that the hunts, inadvertently perhaps, actually abetted that retreat, simply because the activities of any hunt naturally constituted the most dangerous form of habitat disturbance. Even if an otter was not found, or if one was found and subsequently escaped that stretch of water over which the hounds had been active was virtually to be avoided as "otter country" for at least a year . . . the activities of the hunts almost certainly only assisted in dispersing the otter populations still further. . .

. . . as mink occupy virtually the same habitat as the otter, the minkhunts are likely to cause them just as much, if not more disturbance as the otter-hunts did in the past."

Most minkhunters are very touchy about the whole subject of their effect on otters, no doubt they remember how unpopular they became in the late 1970's when everyone except those involved in bloodsports was demanding the abolition of otter hunting. The otter's attractive appearance and its portrayal in "Tarka the Otter" no doubt helped it win the popularity stakes (the same cannot be said of mink which have been falsely portrayed as an ugly, alien and dangerous pest).

Otter conservationists, such as The Vincent Wildlife Trust, are well aware of the threat to otter population recovery by minkhunts. The Vincent Wildlife Trust, for instance, has an arrangement with the Masters of Mink Hounds Association, whereby minkhunts should not hunt on rivers where there are otters. Most Otter Haven projects also do not allow minkhunts to hunt their stretches of river.

It is clear at least in some parts of the country, that the otter may well be slowly recovering and expanding their range. At first improvement will be slow and as new waterways are colonised it will be very important to keep disturbance down to a minimum. Clearly something will have to give. Either minkhunting will have to continually retreat from waterway after waterway as otters move in or the agreements (if indeed they are respected which I doubt very much) with conservationists will have to be broken or relaxed.

Either way we could see minkhunters in some parts of the country coming under great pressure from their old adversary the otter as it struggles to recapture old ground — a case of poetic justice indeed!

Ralph Cook

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

We are now approaching the end of the Committee year, a year that at times has been exciting and challenging and at times proving to be exceptionally difficult.

This time of year our thoughts turn to the previous twelve months, as we attempt to sum up all that has been achieved and all that could have been achieved. Primarily, this out-going Committee had two objectives. Firstly, was the task of continuing the role of managing the Association's affairs on a day to day basis. This one task has resulted in the expenditure of tens of thousands of pounds not to mention the expenditure of as many man/woman hours. The co-ordination of our local group network, the staging of regional events such as the grouse shoots, legal seminars, Contacts weekends, publicity work and financial management have all resulted in a more effective organisation than would have been thought possible a few years ago. This management has been the basis on which all previous Committees have looked after the affairs of the HSA.

However, certain sections of the Committee have been driven further. Whilst ensuring that all the above functions were carried out to the best that our resources would allow, we have endeavoured to stand back from the myopic mood that such a heavy work load can induce, and have analysed the foundations upon which the HSA is based.

A direct result of this was the calling of the HSA's first ever EGM. The resolution which was unfortunately thrown out, called for the institution of a long overdue new Constitution as well as the seeking of Limited Company status. However, this resolution will be brought before this years AGM where it will hopefully be adopted. This failure, rather than demoralise the Committee, has had the opposite effect in as much as it has hardened our resolve to move with the times and push for a more professional and efficient HSA.

On the other hand, this years undoubted success was the establishment of the Exeter based Offices, a step which nobody can deny can only be for the betterment of our supporters, you the membership and those animals which we seek to protect.

Lastly, the Committee has finally set-up a Finance Sub-Committee. This crucial decision, will I believe, result in a stronger HSA and a better financial future.

It is with these ideas and objectives that the next Committee will hopefully rally around, and make the 1989/1990 Committee year yet another milestone in the journey to a bigger and better HSA.

I therefore ask each and every member of our organisation to participate in this years voting. Read the AGM booklet accopaning this HOWL, pay particular attention to the CVs and then spend 15 minutes thinking of the direction in which the HSA must move. Then and only then, cast your vote.

Vote for a progressive Committee which will, given time deliver a progressive HSA, an association which we can all be proud to be a part of.

David Weeks (Chairperson)

HSA COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

THIS year's HSA elections are the most hotly contested for many years with a total of 16 candidates standing for the twelve committee posts. This reflects perhaps the divergencies of opinion that the challenge of incorporation, professionalisation and the establishment of offices has aroused within the Association.

The main issues (in so far as it is possible to determine such from many of th C.V.s published in the HSA AGM and Elections Guide is – just how much and what sort of help can be given to local groups and what the HSA actually is or should be!

For the first time in HSA history this year's C.V.s reveal the formation of a slate – eight candidates unashamedly standing for Committee as a group with common aims rather than as individuals with the usual "I'm a vegan, active for 100 years, I believe...." They have a clearly stated list of five points on which they promise they will act, almost a "manifesto" outlined in the Forum article of this issue.

The group have even introduced two previously unheard of labels to describe themselves and those who they believe are "holding back the HSA". They call themselves "The Progressives" and their opponants are described as "conservatives" (note the small "C" Mrs. Thatcher would not welcome either "side" in the Tory party).

Watch this space for the first ever HSA party political broadcast!!!

The result of the election and thus the complection of next year's Committee is of course for you to determine. To vote simply mark – in ink – Up to twelve crosses in the boxes next to the names of the candidates for whom you wish to vote. Then send the completed voting form in the addressed enveopes provided to The Electoral Reform Society to arrive not later than Monday 24 July 1989.

Please note that forms received after this date, sent to the HSA, carrying more than 12 crosses or not posted in the enclosed envelopes will be invalid and will not be counted.

HSA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AS YOU will see from the enclosed HSA AGM guide this year's Annual General Meeting is to be held on Saturday 29 July at the London School of Economics. It should prove to be an interesting meeting with a number of constitutional and policy resolutions to be discussed including an amended version of the Memoranda and Articles of Association presented to the EGM.

The results of the Committee elections will also be announced at this meeting. If you can make it please make every effort to attend.

EGM RESULT

THE EGM held on 8 April in London to discuss the adoption of the proposed Memoranda and Articles of Association was nothing if not full of suspense and drama. An early attempt to get amendments accepted from the floor (in contravention of our present constitution) raised

some hackles before John Beggs, the HSA Legal Officers was allowed to introduce and explain his proposal as originally agendered. The question and answer session that followed produced a few interesting points on how the proposals, if adopted, would affect the HSA legally and internally.

The afternoon session was taken up with debate and voting starting first with the amendments (entered in time for viewing by the whole membership). Both amendments were in the event passed and the focus moved to the main Resolution that the HSA adopt the new Articles of Association and seek incorporation as a Limited Company.

The ensuing debate was marred by some populist rhetoric and allegations of mishandling by the HSA Committee but generally most speakers were in favour of the proposal but wanted certain safeguards added and Committee powers deleted or altered. The vote was unexpectedly close with those against having a majority of just 1! (31 for and 32 against with 8 abstentions).

The excitment increased when it was noticed that one or two people ineligible to vote had somehow been able to procure a voting card (naughty!!) and a ballot was called for. The organising of this unforseen ballot took long enough to allow both sides – but mostly the "againsts" – to persuade a few abstainers to use their votes. Further one member's membership card could not be found, another had not been correctly dated which denied the member, a vote (sorry) and another put her card in the wrong ballot box!

The final vote was 32 for the resolution, 35 against with 2 abstainers.

Your Committee

SLIGHT reorganisation within the Committee structure has resulted in the Contacts Liaison work being carried on by Chris Bishop via the Office.

Please also note that until further notice all press enquiries must be directed via the Office.

Attending Committee Meetings

If you wish to see a Committee meeting in action or think that you need to discuss an important matter, then please apply in the following manner.

Write to the Chairperson giving as much notice as possible and noting any relevant points you wish to discuss. Please note, if you wish to discuss any matte however insignificant, then a detailed note will be required so that the matter can be properly agendered. You will then be notified of the date and venue of the meeting. There may be restrictions upon numbers who can attend; so please be flexible with numbers. It should also be noted that delicate matters will be discusses "in camera" and as a result you may be excluded from the meeting at certain times.

Artists for animals: a final statement

I don't think Phil has been fair in his assessment of the AFA affair and certainly he has been inaccurate with regards to some of his points.

Firstly, the article in HOWL 41 did not infer that the AFA had kept all the profits from the album sales. The article states the fact that the HSA DID NOT receive any money whatosever.

AFA first promised money to the HSA, and then after a 14 month period said that they had never promised money to the HSA!! However, they were to change their minds once again by saying that the money coming to the HSA had been re-invested in a second project. The simple truth of the matter is that the HSA had to wait for 14 months before taking any action. In that period any communications had taken place between the AFA and ourselves. An AFA representative was invited to attend 2 Committee meetings but declined both invitations at the last moment.

It is on this basis that the HSA has regretfully decided to withdraw support from the AFA.

HSA PRIZE DRAW

MEMBERS cannot fail to have noticed the heavy thump on the floor as this and the last issue of Howl were shoved through your letter boxes. Yes its the HSA annual draw tickets arriving again. No doubt a few of you could not restrain the groan that most people emit when raffle tickets arrive although a few of you seem not to be able to get enough of the dreaded things.

For the HSA, however, the annual draw is the most important fund-raising exercise of the year and indeed we rely on the revenue it brings in during the summer to shore up our flaggin finances which as you will appreciate have dwindled to alarmingly low levels by the end of the hunting season.

Unlike other animal organisations the HSA cannot rely on large donations or legacies to keep it going because we do not get them so we must depend upon membership subscriptions, salesgoods profits and the annual draw to keep the wheels turning.

It is, therefore, very important that we sell as many of them as possible and as widely as possible. If you are one of those who seems to be able to sell raffle tickets like hote cakes please do not hesitate to ask for more. The closing date for the return of draw tickets is 31 July, the draw itself will take place on 5 August and the result announced in the next Howl.

So please remember to send them in and good luck to all who buy them.

Every year a few members complain about raffle tickets and ask us not to send them. Unfortunately we cannot do this simply because it is not practical to sift through thousands of envelopes to find half a dozen members who do not want raffle tickets – SORRY.

AUCTION

Some time ago, comedy playwright Carla Lane, generously donated her original manuscript for the popular T.V. series "Bread" to the HSA. It has been lurking about ever since while we have tried to decide how best to get lotsa of money for it". Having come up with no suitable conclusion, we thought we'd try you, our membership, first. The script is handwritten on 53 sheets of A4 paper, and comes complete with a letter of authenticity from Ms Lane herself. Offers are invited for this obviously valuable item, and should arrive at the P.O. Box by the end of August. Highest offer (minimum bid £50) secures it.

SALES GOODS

No new sales items appear in this HOWL, the ideas are there but they've had to be put "on ice" simply because we have spent so much on new items over the last eight months that we cannot really afford to expand further until more of the current stock has sold – so, to get exciting new lines you all have to buy more of the present range!

Ideas being looked into at the moment include a bright and baggy summer (well it'll have to be autumn now!!) T-shirt, enamel badges, posters and a calender – however, as usual we are lacking in original design artwork and photography, so please get your drawing pens and cameras out! Eventually, when we feel the range is of a sufficiently high quality to warrant the expense, we are aiming to produce our merchandise catalogue in colour, any ideas on how to do this without expending vast amounts of money would be greatly appreciated.

We are fully stocked and preparing for the summer events with stalls at Glastonbury Festival and Leamington Peace Festival. Due to prohibitive transport costs the stall will not be present at local events, however, details of any events sent to the P.O. Box will be forwarded to the HSA Contact nearest the event, so that they can organise something if they wish.

Finally, the sales dept would be delighted to hear from anyone who has a spare word processor knocking around. A good home is available for it free of charge...!



Happy customer. 4 yr old Heather with two sab friends, fox and badger glove puppets, c/o HSA merchandise.
Pic: Simon Wild.