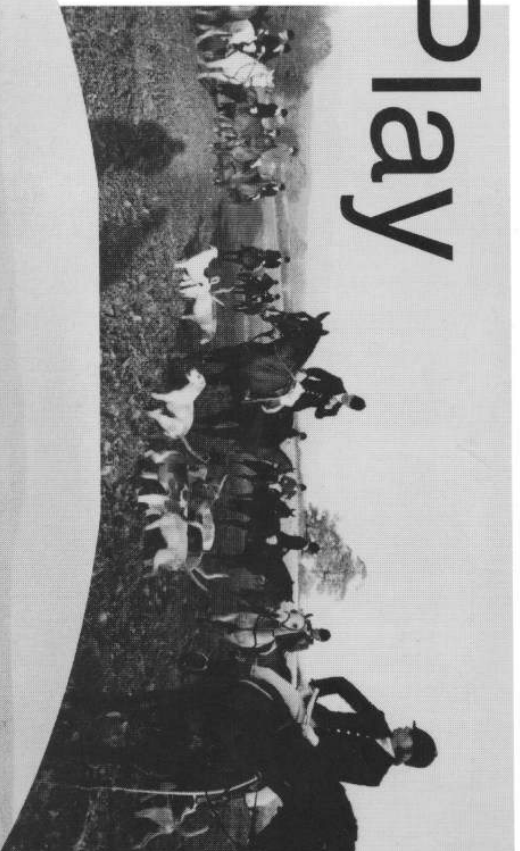


The Rich at Play



**Foxhunting,
land ownership
and the
'Countryside'
Alliance'**

'THE RICH AT PLAY' — the history of foxhunting and land ownership in Britain' including 'the politics and people behind The Countryside Alliance'

RPM number 9

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This pamphlet also appears on the www.red-star-research.org.uk site, where you will find pictures of members of the Countryside Alliance, their offices and their activities. It is intended to update the work on a monthly basis.

'THE RICH AT PLAY' – the history of foxhunting and land ownership in Britain' including 'the politics and people behind The Countryside Alliance'

RPM number 9

Welcome to issue 9 of RPM. I think you, the reader, will find the works contained within RPM 9 of great interest and, don't be surprised if you find yourself informed, entertained, amazed and angry; perhaps even all of them at the same time. If not, and you feel that you've wasted your money, then send this issue back to the BM Box and your money will be refunded.

Contributors to this issue are Angus Macmillan of 'Roots of Blood', Pippa Gallop of 'Corporate Watch', Trevor Bark and Mark Metcalf. Thank you to all of them.

The last two issues of RPM have sold well, especially issue 8 by Brian Higgins, '*Rank and File or Broad Left – a short history of the Building Worker Group*', and there is every reason to expect that this issue will sell at least as many and probably a lot more. Not enough to become rich, but then that's not why booklets such as these get printed.

Thanks once again to all those who have taken out a subscription to RPM, and an extra special thanks to those who've taken out standing orders – details of both appear at the back. The next issue of RPM will be on '*The Persistence of Religious Ideas in the 21st century*'. If you have a piece of work you would like to be considered for publishing then please make contact.

Mark Metcalf

Introduction

Behind those campaigning to keep foxhunting with dogs are the major landowners and the aristocracy. Foxhunting is important to them as it represents 'their right' to use land they stole from past generations, in any way they see fit to choose.

The right to go foxhunting with hounds is now in danger. On February 13th 2002 the Scottish Parliament voted to outlaw foxhunting with dogs under the Protection of Wild Mammals [Scotland] Act. This received Royal Assent on March 15th 2002.

Days later, on Monday March 18th 2002, MPs at the House of Commons voted by 386 to 175 in an 'indicative vote' for a ban. The following evening, March 19th 2002, members of the House of Lords rejected an outright ban on hunting, voting instead to back the proposal to allow foxhunting under a series of new regulations.

Over the next couple of days Labour backbenchers, fully aware that numerous opinion polls have shown a clear majority in favour of banning foxhunting with dogs, urged the Blair Government to translate their votes into effective legislation. Ministers were urged to use the Parliament Act to force a bill past opposition from the House of Lords. Foxhunting with dogs would be banned. This does not, on the face, of it seem a very difficult thing to do. It isn't, in fact.

Yet on Thursday March 21st 2002 Alun Michael, the rural affairs minister, announced he was abandoning the previous Hunting Bill, with its three options of an outright ban, 'the middle way', and keeping things as they already are. Instead there was to be a 6-month consultation period on a proposed new Bill centred on the principles of cruelty and utility. This would avoid banning specific activities.

This has left those opposed to foxhunting confused as to whether Blair, who voted for a ban but who is thought to favour a compromise, is prepared to take on the House of Lords. To do so he will also have to defeat, 'The Countryside Alliance'. This organisation was able to mobilise nearly a quarter of a million people in March 1998 and is predicting it will attract up to 500,000 on a demo this summer. The Countryside Alliance has also promised to mount

a legal challenge to the Scottish legislation, claiming it breaches the European Convention of Human Rights.

Largely absent from the debate, to date, has been why foxhunting originated and why it has been able to survive. This booklet attempts to provide answers to these questions, and by doing so presents the case not only for foxhunting with dogs to be banned, but also for the land on which it takes place to be returned to the descendants of those it was stolen from.

This booklet provides the most extensive examination undertaken, so far, into the people and the politics of 'The Countryside Alliance'. Up till now they have largely escaped the glare of publicity. By bringing them into the open and examining what lies behind their politics, we can see whom our opponents are and defeat them.

Those opposed to foxhunting are free to use the contents of this booklet as they see fit. Journalists and supporters of foxhunting should contact RPM for permission to re-produce any of its contents.

RPM Publications – April 6th 2002



'Going Nowhere'

Thanks to West Sussex Wildlife Protection for this and other photographs in this booklet. WSWP, 1 Sutton Close, Felpham, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO 22 8EY

AGAINST FOX HUNTING WITH HOUNDS

Fox-hunting with hounds is both cruel and unnecessary. It has little effect on reducing fox numbers. In the main, it is practised by well-heeled snobs who are in it for the social stature of mixing with who they see as the "right" people. At the hint of being portrayed as such, they trot out some hapless individual to pour out a sob story about how his livelihood will be devastated and rural life destroyed if the "sport" is banned. This is scare-mongering nonsense. Only a tiny minority of horses are involved in hunts. In Lothian, Central Scotland, where the local hunt was discontinued ten years ago, the number of horses has increased substantially because of leisure activities thus requiring more stables with associated facilities and services, than at any time previously.

Foxes die a horrible death when caught by hounds. They are caught from behind by the leading hounds and ripped to pieces whilst still alive. The lie put forth by hunters that foxes are killed instantly by a quick bite to the back of the neck was exposed by post mortems at Bristol University for evidence presented to the Burns Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs. These examinations revealed profound trauma by repeated dog bite, little tissue damage in the head, neck and shoulder region but pronounced damage to the ribcage and the thoracic organs, with damage to the abdomen, hindquarters or chest probably being the cause of death. Foxes that attempt to run to ground often find their lair has been intentionally blocked and those that manage to escape underground are frequently dug out and beaten to death with a spade, before their "brush" is cut off in a traditional form of weird ceremony.

But foxes are not the only victims of this barbaric activity. Hounds that reach middle age and those that are disinclined to follow the scent are destroyed and there are numerous incidents where horses and hounds are injured and killed during the chase. It has also been known for hounds to mount a frenzied attack on domestic pets.

A graphic insight into the barbarism and brutality of hunting with dogs is shown in the **League Against Cruel Sports video** entitled "Chaos In the Countryside" which is available by contacting them on **020 7403 6155**.

The video is free but a donation to cover production costs, and postage and packing is appreciated.

Farmers do not suffer greatly from fox attack and many of them oppose hunting with dogs. A 1996 MAFF publication stated that only 0.4 % of lambs die from accidents, dog attacks and all other animal predation. This extremely small number includes those killed by foxes. Indeed, it has been said on many occasions that shepherds will blame the fox for killing a lamb when what has actually happened is that the fox has scavenged from one that was already dead. **Also, with regard to the favourite accusation of foxes killing chickens — whoever heard of a fox having a key to open a secure poultry pen?**

The fox is a friend to the farmer as a predator of rats and rabbits and assists in cleaning up fields by eating the afterbirth during lambing. He is also a predator of deer fawns that begs the question of why there is a need to kill foxes when it is thought by some that deer populations are too high. But that's another story.

Hunting with dogs is neither an efficient or necessary method of controlling foxes. In fact in some areas there is such a dearth of foxes it is thought that some hunts are surreptitiously breeding their own and feeding wild cubs. In June 2000 secret filming by the International Fund for Animal Welfare showed an employee of the Beaufort Hunt actually feeding fox cubs.

Various polls have shown that an overwhelming majority of the British electorate are firmly behind banning fox hunting and two thirds of our MPs have already voted for a ban. But probably the most interesting revelation of all was the 1997 Gallop poll for the Daily Telegraph which showed that whilst 84% of urban dwellers disapproved of fox hunting, 77% of rural people also disapproved. So this is not a town versus country issue, as the Countryside Alliance would have us believe; it is a nationwide revulsion against those who seek their pleasure from animal cruelty.

On February 13th 2002, the Scottish Parliament voted by a massive majority to ban hunting with dogs. Tireless campaigners such as Advocates for Animals; RSPCA; The League Against Cruel Sports; Animal Aid; IFAW; the National Anti-Hunt Campaign have all played a vital role in bringing about this legislation by creating public awareness of the obscenity of fox hunting.

The Scottish success will surely spur on these campaigners to maintain the momentum towards a total ban throughout the UK. Nothing succeeds like success!

But small little-known groups of hunt saboteurs and campaigners are also doing their bit to rid us of fox hunting. An example of one of these is the Surrey Anti-hunt Campaign that managed to reduce the number of local inns

that hosted hunt meets from nineteen to four. This amazing success was achieved by peaceful demonstration and by encouraging people to write non-abusive letters to the landlords. Recently, a large traditional hunt ball had to be cancelled because a suitable venue could not be found. More power to their elbow!



The Independent 22/03/02

The present UK government has committed itself to banning hunting with hounds, so it is up to those of us who oppose fox hunting to lobby our national and local government representatives to make sure they keep their word.

Ironically, it's the hunters who are now on the run!

Let's keep up the pressure and go for the kill.

Angus Macmillan. [Roots-of-Blood Campaign]

Angus Macmillan is the author of the 'Roots-of-Blood' Campaign website which can be viewed at <http://www.roots-of-blood.org.uk>

Contrary to its own Wildlife Policy, THE WOODLAND TRUST allows access for traditional foxhunters with horses and hounds, admits to the stalking of roe deer, and uses weed-killers that can reduce the numbers of beneficial insects, birds and small mammals. The Trust's directors have refused to give a public commitment that no wildlife will be intentionally harmed on Woodland Trust owned or leased properties. All these actions are in direct contradiction of its objectives, as set out in the trust deed and included in its Memorandum of Association.

The Woodland Trust is taking Angus to Court, in Edinburgh on June 18th/19th, to try to prevent his use of plain English to describe their treatment of wildlife. Angus is also the author of the websites <http://www.killhunting.org.uk>, an anti-hunting site, and the forthcoming <http://www.con-servation.org.uk> website which exposes the "con" in the conservation industry and questions the industry's environmental value.

Angus Macmillan would like to make it clear that whilst he has been more than willing to contribute this article to this issue of RPM this in no way means he agrees with all of its content or conclusions.



THE LAND QUESTION: Hunting, The Game Laws, and the Oppression of The People

*Poacher come with his poachers gun, Out in the woods to shoot someone
'My Lord your time has come', right between the eyes
Fell his master not by chance, Away with pomp and circumstance
Come and join our merry dance, To the rhythm of Goodbye
Farewell the jewel crown, Farewell the velvet gown
Watch it all come tumbling down
Goodbye to the crown, Goodbye to the crown
Chumbawamba — "Farewell to the Crown"
on the "Tubthumping" hit single*

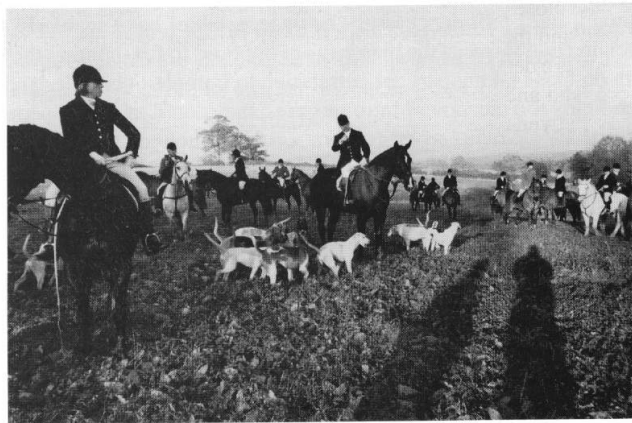
The hunting of foxes using horses and hounds takes place over vast tracts of land. As opinion polls [e.g. Guardian 18.12.01 by Mori, 83% think Hunting is either cruel, outdated, unnecessary or unacceptable] have regularly shown that even in country areas the majority are opposed to fox-hunting then 'how on earth do those taking part get permission to trample over miles and miles of green fields and meadows? In some cases, they don't, and most people will have heard TV or radio reports where a pack of hounds has descended on some poor person's garden to rip apart the fox in front of the children's eyes or slaughter the family pet. Many examples of this can be found, but some of the best and most recent can be found in the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) submission to the Burns inquiry in early 2,000 (they can be found on the Burns inquiry website and obtained directly from the LACS) Also since hunting resumed in December 2001, *they just can't help themselves...*

"December 18th, the first day of hunting, the South & West Wilts Fox Hunt trespassed through the grounds of Port Regis School... late December, three hunt supporters from the Crawley and Horsham Fox Hunt were arrested on suspicion of assault and criminal damage following an incident in which a [LACS] hunt monitor's camera was smashed... January 7th [2002] Prince William was reported as deliberately riding into a photographer while hunting with the Duke of Beaufort Fox Hunt... January 8th, a hunt monitor was attacked with an iron bar and another thrown into

a ditch by stewards at the Chiddingfold, Leconfield and Cowdray Hunt..." *Wildlife Guardian, January 2002, LACS.*

Clearly it is not acceptable to do what you want, even on land you own, everyone can expect some restrictions — the argument is that foxhunting is unacceptable to the majority of people and as such should be banned. If this were the case, penalties would be imposed on those who refused to abide by the laws consequently adopted.

This is clearly something some supporters of fox hunting find difficult to understand. Hardly surprising really as it means that **the two main principles of land management in Britain, established originally by William the Conqueror** after the French [i.e. Norman] invasion of 1066, would be broken. These principles are a direct result of his emphasis on hunting, namely, **that facilitating the private pleasure of the privileged few was a legitimate basis for determining the allocation of land in Britain. Secondly that the landowner possessed the right to do whatever he liked** (& until relatively recently it was a he) **with his land irrespective of the impact of his land-use decisions on other members of the community.**



"The basis of wealth, status and power in nineteenth century England was fundamentally land, as it had been for centuries. And the overriding concern of the great landed families who dominated English life was to maintain their

influence and affluence down through the years by transmitting their enormous landed estates intact, generation after generation, to their descendants... which meant that all the land in each generation was left to the eldest son instead of its being divided among all the children... sufficient restrictions were put on what could be done to the estate by that eldest son to ensure that when he died his eldest son in turn would inherit the estate intact..."

In this section we take a look at how these principles became enshrined in practice and why they must be challenged and defeated. So, it's back to 1066 and William the Conqueror who after defeating Harold at the Battle of Hastings went on to impose his rule over much of what we now term 'England'. **William's passion for hunting meant he set aside huge tracts of his new kingdom as his private playground for the pursuit of deer and boar**, in which there were massive restrictions on food production by anyone and everyone else.

Defined in law as Royal Forest these lands extended far beyond the lands that the King owned personally and included territory he had handed out to Freeholders. Some of those owning land even today are descendants of these gifts, almost 1,000 years later. For example, Le Gros Veneur was William the Conqueror's closest companion and his chief huntsman. He was given estates in Cheshire and the Earldom of Chester. The Duke of Westminster, Britain's richest man, is a descendant as are the Grosvenor family with their vast fortune. Both own land and property. For the linguists out there you should note the similarity between Le Gros veneur', and the similarity to it of the word 'Grosvenor'.

"The Grosvenor family is one of the oldest in the kingdom. It traces its ancestry back to Hugh Lupus, who was nephew to William the Conqueror and also his chief huntsman — a role which gave the family its name, Le Gros Veneur." [Sutherland P. 78]

Of course, the poor mostly did not know how to read and did not have the time or resources to record their history. Most of Essex, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, large stretches of the north and west and parts of Scotland and Wales were declared Royal Forest. William arranged "his own hunts in the elegant Norman tradition, insisting that the hunters wear elaborate costumes similar to those worn by soldiers going into battle. The Conqueror brought to the hunt in England all the pomp, the pageantry, the discipline, respect for horsemanship, courage and expertise that it still has today. He also introduced the horn." (P. 46. *Blackwood, 1987*)

Lack of records at the time mean it is not possible to establish the exact size of the Royal Forests during William's reign but it is clear that almost a quarter of England was royal forest during the reign of Henry II in the mid-Twelfth century; and that by the thirteenth century, after a period of decline, they still covered about one-fifth of the land surface of England.

"Royal Forest" did not imply only wooded land: it embraced villages and cultivated fields as well as common, rough pasture, field and wood. The term 'royal forest' meant an area in which a special kind of law — the forest law — applied. Rather like the special laws that govern the use of the Royal Parks today e.g. Hyde Park; enforced by special police, the Royal Parks Police.

The laws and regulation of the royal forest, enforced by a host of forest officials, forbade any activities that might impair the use of the land for the hunting, of deer and boar. Nobody, not even the baronial owner of the land, could plough up pasture used by deer in order to grow crops, nor could trees be cut down; permission was required to lop branches... Anybody who broke any of the forest regulations could be fined heavily and might have his property confiscated. The poaching of venison was the most serious offence, and for this a man could be castrated and blinded.... All this to protect stag hunting for the Royals and the rich.

Outside the royal forests, the land-owning classes took their cue from the king, and applied the principles of the royal forest to their own lands. Living as warriors at the expense of the cultivators of the soil, they had time on their hands. Hunting provided something to do, which was not only entertaining but also useful, in that it provided 'peacetime training for war'. As the knights and barons took up the royal habit of hunting so they followed the king in creating private hunting domains of their own.

To establish a private hunting forest or 'chase', a landowner needed only the permission of the king. Once he had secured this, he could forbid everybody else to take animal food within it. The vast private chases of medieval England, of which there were at least 26 at various times in the Middle Ages, owned by both lay and ecclesiastical lords, included Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, Lancashire's Forest of Brownland, Arundel in Sussex, Enfield Chase in Middlesex and Dorset's Cranborne Chase.

Because of the size of the royal forests and the private chases it was not practical to fence them and ordinary people were permitted to traverse them in order to go about their everyday business. However, in the third category of medieval

game preserve — the smaller deer parks — no access of any sort seems to have been permitted.

Deer parks were essentially status symbols in which their owners hunted deer. Securely enclosed with a high earth bank topped by a fence of oak stakes, all maintained by serf labour, the deer park was usually situated close to the Lord's house and might well occupy potentially productive agricultural land. There is definite evidence for the existence of 1900 parks in England at various times during the Middle Ages, and they must have been a common feature of the landscape. Hundreds of deer parks could have seen their owners only very occasionally since many of the great landowners and wealthy bishops had large numbers of parks: The Bishop of Winchester, for instance, owned 23, The Dukes of Cornwall 29 and the Earls of Lancaster 45. Today (2002) Sir Richard Benyon owns 12,000 acres of Hampshire and Berkshire, with 2 deer parks, not one is accessible by the public. Berkshire as a whole has 39 Parks and you can get in only 5, 7 out of 59 in Hampshire, and in Cheshire it's little better with 18 parks open out of 48.

Clearly the development of the habit of hunting had a decisive impact on the allocation of land in medieval England... **(Better population statistics exist for deer in medieval England than for human beings.)** Many are the instances in which the allocation of a stretch of land for private bloodsports (regal or baronial) in medieval times has survived the intervening centuries. For example, the countryside around Alnwick in Northumberland was established as royal forest; foxhunting and pheasant shooting are two of the main uses of the enclosed and essentially private headquarters of the present Duke of Northumberland's northern lands, the 3,000 acre Hulne Park at Alnwick. Similarly, Cornbury and Wychwood in Oxfordshire was a favourite hunting ground of the medieval kings; today, two of the main uses to which its owner, Lord Rotherwick devotes Cornbury Park and Wychwood forest [at 2,150 acres] are pheasant and deer shooting.

While some of the vast deer preserves of the Norman Landowners were in areas of relatively poor and infertile soils, like the New Forest and Dartmoor, others occupied land that could have grown crops for the poor. Farming was further impaired by deer that strayed from the coverts and woodland pastures on to growing crops in existing fields. The restrictions on grazing in the royal forest, private chases and deer parks meant that serfs and the few free peasants had to seek pasture for their livestock somewhere else, perhaps some distance away. But this inconvenience and hardship had to be tolerated in the interests of the private pleasure of the rich.

The arrival of feudalism in Britain then, constituted a graphic case of the seizure of power by the strong over the weak. The manorial system had existed in embryo under the Saxon kings, who were themselves fond of hunting. But it was the Normans who cemented the inequalities emerging under the Saxon regime into a fixed and enduring system.

However Henry II's successors during medieval and Tudor times proved less anxious to preserve the royal forest. The sheer size of the forests made it extremely difficult to police as an increasing population sought to use the forest's resources.

Just as importantly the Crown began to realise it could make money in other ways and Henry III began to permit the felling of royal forest timber, the killing of game and the enclosure of tracts of forest. By about 1330, the area of the royal forests in England as a whole had shrunk to about two-thirds of what it had been in 1250. At the same time, there was a reduction in the stringency of the laws application, so that more and more areas became 'forest' in name only. The penalties for forest offences were reduced.

There were fewer convictions involving imprisonment and castration and more fines. The grazing rights that the Crown had reserved for itself in the forests came to be less vigorously enforced. As a result of all this, the poor began to take by stealth much of what the law denied to them. They began to drive their cattle into the deer reserves and to take timber freely from the forest. People began to squat in the forests, make clearings for agriculture and exploit all the resources the forest had to offer. **The poor reminded themselves that Genesis said the animals were made for man, and poached with passionate determination and courage. For they poached because they were hungry and there were many food shortages.**

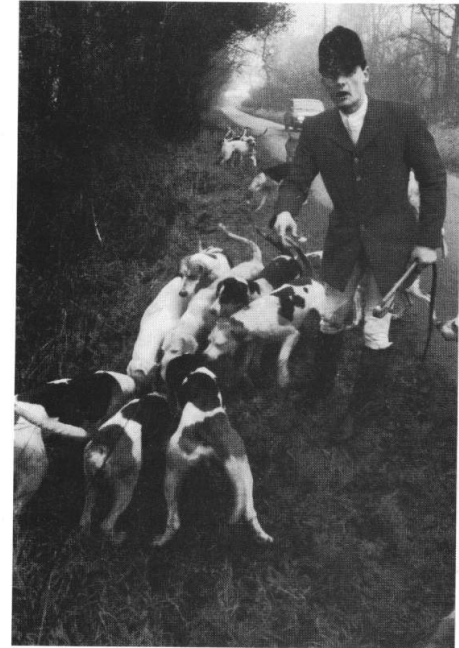
By an act of 1670 a man had to be Lord of the Manor, or have substantial income from landed property, even to kill a hare on his own land. The basic game qualification was an income of £100 yearly from a freehold estate, which in 1750 was between five and ten times the annual income of a labourer. There is a myth that unlike France where the ruling class literally lost it's head, the English ruling class always knew when discretion was the better part, and the time to retreat had come. We may question this given their ferocious insistence on maintaining at vast cost, decade after decade, a system of game-preservation not only guaranteed to arouse continual resentment, but also to focus political attention on the most vulnerable point in their defences – the concentration of land ownership, and with it parliamentary

and juridical power in so few hands. However, **perhaps the aristocracy use foxhunting as a political barometer for testing whether its ideological dominance is slipping? If they can defend foxhunting they can defend other examples of their excess as well.**

Historically the aristocracy and the Royals owned the majority of the land, but with the onset of the industrial revolution the people were further displaced from the land they had left. This was done via enclosures and criminalising people. (not without a bitter fight — see "The London Hanged", Peter Linebaugh, Penguin, 1991) A new elite group came to buy *some* of the land. "Among whom bankers, brewers and lawyers figured prominently. These groups wanted to own land largely to enhance their social status. So when they arrived in the countryside, the last thing they wanted to do was to adopt attitudes which would be at odds with those of the existing land-owning

aristocracy. To gain social acceptance they were more than happy to ape the habits of their betters: they were even prepared to lay on lavish hunt breakfasts, to subscribe munificently to the local foxhounds and to cram their coverts full of pheasants. This process was, of course, but one aspect of the much vaunted readiness of the British elite to absorb the cream of lower classes that presented a potential challenge." [p.73 Shoard]

The actual numbers of men who amassed fortunes from the Industrial Revolution and then went on to become major British landowners is, however, small. Only about 6 per cent of all the country seats in Northamptonshire, Herefordshire and Northumberland between 1540 and 1880, for instance, were



occupied by people who had bought their way in from business. But many more leading lights of industrial Britain were introduced to the rituals of upper class landowners than actually became landowners themselves. For you did not have to become a landowner to indulge in the landowners, Royal and aristocrats' most glamorous pursuit — *bloodsports*.

It was shooting - of pheasants, grouse and deer - that enabled many of the rich men of late nineteenth century Britain to absorb and therefore identify with rural land-owning culture. Rented shooting rights enabled even those who were not in a position to become landowners to see themselves as country gents in spirit, if only on a spare time basis.

The landowners did not deliberately set out to consolidate their positions by forging stronger links with the rest of the Establishment. This development, useful though it was to be to them, occurred largely as an unforeseen product of their efforts to consolidate their position in purely financial terms.

The idea of letting sporting rights to outsiders surfaced early in the nineteenth century. At first the lets were modest: huge areas of Scottish deer forest could be secured for tiny rents because the sport was uncertain and the forests had no facilities like hunting lodges. But it quickly emerged that immense demand existed. By the 1870s, landowners were finding they could rent out deer forests at considerable profits. They needed the money. For by the 1870s, the repeal of the Corn Laws and the influx of cheaper food from abroad had cut back the profitability of many types of agriculture.

The game act of 1831 had removed an ancient restriction limiting most forms of hunting and shooting to the owners of land or their eldest sons; from henceforth anybody with the necessary certificate could kill game either on his land or on that of any other person with his permission. So landowners were handed an ideal opportunity to make up the income they were losing from agriculture.

Scottish landowners were particularly quick to exploit the sporting potential of their land. Sheep farming, of which landowners had enjoyed such high hopes when clearing crofters out to make way for sheep-runs, suffered badly in the face of new competition from the refrigerated lamb of New Zealand and Australia. Between the 1860s and 1880s, the rents of Scottish sheep farms were halved. At the same time deer stalking was becoming more and more fashionable. To own stalking was to own the greatest of status symbols — all the more so after Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

bought the Balmoral Estate in 1848 and started to retreat there every August and September. By the 1920s, businessmen were paying £44 in rent payments alone for the privilege of killing one stag, quite apart from the cost incurred in travel and equipment. In many places, sheep were cleared from estates to make way for deer and new hunting lodges were built. By the end of the century a quarter of the entire area of Scotland had been turned over to deer forest. Yet over this vast area, deer stalking employed only 800 men full-time and another 1,000 part-time.

If deer stalking was the most exclusive sport, grouse shooting, pheasant shooting and salmon fishing were also attracting larger and larger numbers of rich non-land-owning devotees. The number of shooters that could be accommodated in any one area was greatly increased by a change in the way the grouse or pheasants were shot. Instead of one or two men pursuing birds on foot and shooting any that their dogs might frighten up into the air, the shooters were lined up and hundreds or even thousands of birds were driven over their heads by beaters.

The profitability of Scottish salmon fishing was transformed when the sport became a craze among rich Englishmen in the 1850s and '60s. "Before these years, rivers like the Tweed in the Border Country south of Edinburgh had been fished only by the country folk and a few shoemakers and other artisans. These were all quickly driven out as annual migration of Englishmen pushed rents higher and higher. By 1868, visitors were paying £1 a day for the privilege of fishing (but not taking away any fish they caught). Salmon fishing too had become the exclusive preserve of the rich." [p. 75, *Shoard*]

Deer hunting then, was the main focus of royal and aristocratic pursuit. Although not exclusively so as the late 19th century royal purchase of the Sandringham estate in Norfolk showed — it has extensive grounds especially cultivated for shooting.

There were several reasons why foxhunting gradually eclipsed deer hunting as the predominant form of hunting.

David C. Itzkowitz ("*Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of English Foxhunting*". Harvester Press, 1977) cites the following:

1. The diminishing number of wild deer except in the most desolate parts of Britain.
2. Until relatively recently [i.e. in the last 200 years] hounds were not able to chase foxes, they had to be specially bred until suitable.



3. A wealthy country gentleman called Hugo Meynell started to develop the hounds and he popularised the 'sport'. He is generally regarded as being the 'father of foxhunting' in its modern form. He started the Quorn hunt, out of Quorndon Hall in North Leicestershire. The old aristocratic hunts remain the most prestigious today as well, Prince Charles has ridden with the Quorn regularly, but not as much as with the most aristocratic hunt of them all — the Beaufort hunt. Prince Charles, Harry and William, the Duke and Duchess of Kent, as well as Camilla Parker Bowles are just a few of the names that ride to hounds in the Gloucestershire region.

4. It also became fashionable — previously foxes had been regarded as vermin — and not protected in any way. One Elizabethan law required the churchwarden to pay a bounty for the head of a fox, which would have encouraged the poor to catch and despatch them by any means necessary... From about the 1780s onwards it was generally recognised that foxhunting attracted the respectable and fashionable, no longer "looked upon simply [as] the sport of ignorant backwoods squires". The Prince of Wales gave it his patronage in 1793, giving up hunting stags in Hampshire.

"By 1797 the "Sporting Magazine" could refer to 'the competition for superiority in taste and neatness, at the commencement of the season' amongst followers of the different fashionable or would-be fashionable packs. From this time on, foxhunting was to have a fashionable and social cachet it was never to lose." (p.12)

5. The 2 great transitions were "for the country gentlemen, was therefore from the hare to the fox, the conversion of harriers into foxhounds. For the aristocrat, it was the desertion of the stag. The Duke of Beaufort, short of deer, found that the fox provided an enjoyable chase for his staghounds". (Carr, P. 25)

The areas of land that foxhunting took place on were enormous "Lord Berkeley's hunt stretched from Bristol to Kensington Gardens, Sir Richard Puleston's from Flintshire to Leicestershire, and Lord Darlington's hunt from Durham to Doncaster. The Dukes of Grafton had a hunting empire covering Surrey, Norfolk and Northamptonshire." (Blackwood, P.50. 1987)

However, whilst there may have been a change in the animal being hunted there was no change in the principles which lay behind it, that firstly the private pleasure of the privileged few was a legitimate basis for determining the allocation of land in Britain and secondly that the landowner possessed the right to do whatever he liked with his land irrespective of the impact of his land-use decisions on other members of the community.

It would, of course, have been suicidal for those involved with foxhunting to try and defend such rights as they go against most of what most people would call 'legitimate'. So those involved sought to create a mythology [see later for a look at some of the myths] around foxhunting. In doing so they hoped, and it must be said they have largely succeeded, to restrict the debate on foxhunting to issues, which whilst important, are subsidiary to the main ones. Namely, that the rich are using massive areas of land that were stolen from the ordinary people of Britain to pursue their own personal pleasure. Well, we now want that land back — it once belonged to the people of these lands and it should belong to them today so that they can collectively decide what to do with it as they feel free. And it won't be for foxhunting led by the Duke of Beaufort that's for sure...

F.M.L. Thompson says at this point

"A sport eminently suited to the mounted and leisured aristocracy and gentry, foxhunting... the fashionable hunts attracted the entire world of high society. In the nineteenth century, moreover, it was an increasingly organised activity, with a growing body of conventions and etiquette, which gave the hunting community a mystique and cohesion of its own. An expensive activity, the major part of the expense was frequently carried by a member of the aristocracy, whose enthusiasm for the chase was in this way the means of cementing his leadership of all branches of country society". [page 144]

Just briefly, before closing let's take a look at some of those foxhunting myths, which include:-

1. **Foxhunting unites all classes?** – clearly not true in a society such as Britain with such massive differentials in income and wealth, lifestyles & opportunity.
2. **It is perfect training for war?** – possibly at one time, but today it has extremely limited use even in areas suitable for horses.
3. **That all those opposed to foxhunting are extremists?** – so the 60/80% of those opposed are extremists. Minority rule here...
4. **That foxhunting is necessary to control the numbers of foxes** in an area and that without it such an area would be over-run by the fox – clearly rubbish as the numbers they kill by foxhunting with horse and hounds isn't that great. Also the majority of foxes are now living around towns and cities where there is access to food and where there is no foxhunting and there are much easier methods of locating and killing foxes rather than foxhunting them. By poison for example (this is not saying that the author supports poisoning)
5. **That because a majority live in towns and cities they are not aware of** what happens in the Countryside and cannot therefore be involved in decisions which affect it. In essence this is like a call for Home Rule for the rich and powerful in such areas.
6. **Fox Hunters deny they enjoy killing foxes.** But why are they exempt from the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act? Fox Hunters can kill foxes and then kill their own hounds [which they do at a rate of 6,000 a year] on their OWN land, with the usual excuse being they came to the end of their working life. Yards down the lane it would be a criminal offence and subject to arrest and imprisonment – like all the bear baiters, cock fighters and badger killers are. But as we have seen elsewhere, they were too working class and 'deserved' to be criminalized in the early nineteenth century.
7. **Urban people attribute human feelings onto wild animals – the mysterious case of the 'fluffy fox' syndrome.** Apparently because there is a large sentimental movement that cares about the future of the planet and it's creatures. 'We' want to save the fox [if only we wanted to do that alone] because the children's books are soppy and make out that animals can talk [*"Fox-hunting" by the Duke of Beaufort, Page 182*] This is rather clumsily contradicted by the Duke himself a mere 1 page later in his book,

when in defence of foxhunting he projects human rationality into the fox's mind, witness "The basic truth, I think, is that a fox is an *eternal optimist*, and therefore *always thinks he is going to escape* right up to the moment he is bowled over by the leading hound and nipped in the neck by the next one" (Page 183)

8. **Nipped in the back of the neck?** Foxhunters always claim that actually the fox is killed quickly and cleanly, apart from plenty of evidence to the contrary (see LACS) recently there has been even more "December 29th 2001 The Cheshire Fox Hunt found a fox which was later post mortemed by a vet and found to have died from asphyxiation [strangulation] rather than a nip to the back of the neck." *Wildlife Guardian, January 2002, LACS.*
9. **That because Farmers and hunters are innocent and respectable, they deserve draconian public order and other criminal legislation aimed at environmental campaigners.** In reality this is playing on traditional prejudices held by the Police. The HSA has collected a special report on 10 years of violence by Fox-Hunters against saboteurs [*"Thugs, Wreckers and Bullies: The Truth about Hunt Violence"*, Hunt Saboteurs Association/HSA, 1998, also *"Public Order, Private Armies: The Use of hunt security - a report"* HSA, 1998] and there are other examples of their criminality [see other articles in this collection]. Whether it is Toxic Chemical dumping by the Master of the Beaufort Hunt, or breaches of 1992 Environmental legislation where the dead deer on the Duke of Beauforts' **Badminton estate** [near Bristol] were taken and left outside artificial Fox earth's (nests) so they could feed. Corpses are meant to be disposed of straight away e.g. by burial. { "*The duke, the royals and the fox bait*", David Hencke and Rob Evans, Wednesday January 16, 2002, *The Guardian* } This also demolishes the myth that **Hunters are trying to control Fox numbers and that they are somehow 'conserving the countryside for us all', when really they are poisoning it.** See also "*Hunters 'breeding foxes' to provide for the kill: concrete chambers used as 'artificial earths' to ensure supply of animals for blood sport*", Paul Harris, *Observer*, 17.2.02.
10. **Say one thing in Public, do the other in practice.** Foxhunters are particularly good about distorting the truth. Luckily another chief foxhunter died recently and his obituary in the Telegraph (9.2.02.) showed that 60 years ago "By enlisting the support of local farmers and landowners, he [Ronnie Wallace] saw to it that only those sympathetic to hunting found it easy to buy land in his country... he did much to drive up the price of land in the Cotswolds". **So here we have the powerful combining to prevent**

a free market, and again working against the interests of poorer farmers.

11. **Foxhunting is freedom and symbolises freedom?** Politically the Countryside Alliance at their top level has recognised that preaching for freedom is the winning ticket. We should be aware that fascists historically have **diverted the attention** of working class people from the real source of their problems by scapegoating certain sections of the population. This is going on today in all the countryside magazines.

In the Countryside Alliance journal — “*The Countrymans Weekly*” (on sale in several WH Smiths and several newsagents in countryside areas e.g. Retford, Durham) there are deliberate bourgeois lies propagated. Basically a little Englander mentality is being spread around (the success of the United Kingdom Independence Party should be the warning). The countryside is encouraged to see itself as politically isolated, beef eating, heterosexual, family centred, white, patriotic, and so on. At the same time they are spreading lies like “The fight is now for the same basic freedom that the Jarrow Marchers and Tolpuddle Martyrs sought”. 3.12.99 *Countrymans Weekly*. Quite how the Jarrow fight for jobs and food is the same as the fight for the freedom to foxhunt I don’t know. **The fight for working class freedom is qualitatively different from the right of the middle class (or whoever) to spend £1,000s going foxhunting.** Likewise the Tolpuddle Martyrs fight for unionism and working class solidarity is qualitatively different from the ‘right to go foxhunting’. Even if the Foxhunters have a relative of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to rally with them (Bournemouth, September 1999) Their hypocrisy is never far behind, whether it’s rich landowners selling land to get even richer (for housing) and then pleading about how the ‘Countryside is being destroyed’, or the Countryside Alliance hostility to Right to Roam legislation. It’s apparently alright for Foxhunts to roam all over the place chasing the fox, or trample through our town centres, but not for ramblers to go on their land. They’ve even set up their own union “The Union of Country Sports Workers” to campaign for jobs in the foxhunting industry. There already was a Rural Workers section of the TGWU around but this branch is hostile to the bourgeoisie - they send Class War their press releases.

12. **Fox-Hunting is sport?** Sport normally implies two sides/opponents competing to rules that each agree is necessary for the game to continue where either side has a chance of winning. Phrases like ‘sportsman’ implies that you don’t mind losing, and you do it in good spirit. However, the Fox



at best can escape and cannot fight back [it would be good to see a pack of Foxes closing in on the Duke Of Beaufort), and even some of it’s hiding places are dug into and terriers sent down to flush it out. There is no possible way that scores can be seen to be even here, and Foxhunting remains a chase excused and glorified by death of one of the participants. The only comparison that comes to mind is the Gladiator combat of ancient Rome, but even there the result was unknown in advance.

13. **Fox-hunting has a working class following?** That there are people employed by the Lords who largely live in isolation from experiences of minorities possible in the Metropolis may be economically working class, but they often only do the terrier work, look after the animals (gamekeepers), drive or do the ‘stewarding’ [a euphemism for getting at the Hunt saboteurs].

In the main however, people who ride to hounds are those who are relatively well off small business people. In the countryside these have often been Conservative supporters of the Thatcher generation. Of course we don't wish to underestimate the amount of Aristocracy, QC's, Professors, solicitors or others who ride to hounds either.

The Royal inheritors of William the Conquerors' attitudes are still involved in hunting, whether it is on Horseback (Prince Harry, Charles and William) or shooting like Edward, The Duke of Edinburgh (strange title for a Greek) and the Queen who delights in death like earlier generations of kings and Queens. The present Queen has only been captured on film twice wringing pheasant's necks. Back in 1845 the Times reported on "Her Majesty [Queen Victoria – editor] at Stowe".

As fifty beaters advanced, so many that their sticks clashed "a regular running fire was immediately commenced upon the devoted hares... the ground in front of the shooters became strewn with dead and dying; within a semi-circle of about 60 yards from his Royal Highness, the havoc was evidently greatest. The gun was no sooner to his shoulder than the animal was dead."

So much dead animal meat that they were never going to eat or sell, rather like the vast majority of shooting today. Other 'achievements' were at Sandringham, where by 1900 the pheasant bag had reached 12,000. 10 years later it was 40,000, King George V who succeeded in 1910 was a 'famous shot', and bags of 4,000 partridges a day were common, with the King accounting for 1,000.

Princess Anne deliberately went towards the Countryside Alliance stall at the Country landowners Game Fair after the first Countryside Rally (1997) and got her maid to take some things for her. According to Blackwood (1987) the League Against Cruel Sports has found that Charles has hunted with 42 different hunts (P. 32) as often as 4 times a week. Charles also attended the summer 2001 Country Landowners Gamefair...

The Royals also give patronage to various 'countryside' events and magazines. Princess Anne and Captain Mark Philips attended the 100th anniversary dinner given by Horse and Hound. H & H (April 6th, 1984, p. 7) "Princess Anne Honours Our Centenary Celebrations". "Princess Anne paid a warm tribute to Horse and Hound's 100 years' service to the racing, hunting and equestrian world when she spoke at the dinner held in the City of London on Thursday

last week... she spoke at length of the monarchy's connections with racing, hunting and equestrianism".

"I am very pleased to extend warm congratulations to Horse and Hound on the completion of their first hundred years of publication... I send you, the staff and readers of Horse and Hound my warm good wishes on this historic anniversary".

Elizabeth R. H & H (p.13)

"best wishes to Horse and Hound for this its Centenary year".

H & H, P 14. Prince Philip

"May Horse and hound continue to flourish in the years ahead".

H & H (P. 15) Elizabeth R Queen Mother.

Just as Prince Philip could comment in his usual sensitive manner that urban people are ignorant. Commenting on the 'countryside' march in London in 1998 he wrote that it was "a dramatic expression of the anxiety of country people about the growing influence of the perceptions and attitudes of townspeople on popular opinion... in many cases there are deeply held beliefs, but I suspect that in most cases it is due to ignorance." [Journal of the British Association of Shooting and Conservation, 90th anniversary number] How the patron of the World Wildlife Fund can then hunt and blast these animals (tigers, birds, foxes, and deer) in the name of conservation is the hardest contradiction for them to convince people of.

"The general public knows little or nothing about polo, and Horse and hound is the only publication in Britain that reports it regularly and fully. It is therefore read by all polo players." H & H (P. 15) Lt.-Col. A.F. Harper, Honorary Secretary, the Hurlingham Polo Club.

Don't get us started **on Polo**... that is perhaps for a future campaign... Of historical note to observers of the Labour movement, for every 100 readers who have heard of Peterloo, in which 6 people were killed at a single mass meeting in Manchester... probably not more than 1 has heard of Captain Swing, although half the countryside blazed, 2000 were condemned to death and 500 transported to the Antipodes.

Like the Royals, the aristocracy are good at forwarding the image of benevolence, make a show of giving gifts, Christmas dinners to loyal staff and so on, but the fatal flaw was the Game laws which totally lacked the consent of the governed. The image they liked to portray was benevolence, but the reality was malevolence sustaining a blighting and widening mistrust.

Few magistrates ever seemed to be worried about the sentences they passed down, and time and time again there is evidence of wilful cruelty and vengeance. One Swing letter complained that the rulers "hearts is so hard as the hearts of Pharo", Lord Melbourne in Parliament after the Swing disturbances said that the desperate & half starved labourers acted "from the most pure and unmixed and diabolical feeling of senseless malignity". The class divide was a blatant and living affair in the lives of the people, as Lord Melbourne then brought forward a bill to bring back Spring guns (hidden guns to kill trespassers, wood collectors, & poachers) He said "More good was to be anticipated from the general terror... the passing of the Bill... than from the actual setting of the spring guns themselves".

Many years later little has changed and the Transport and General Workers contribution to the Burns Inquiry immediately pointed out the bias involved by inviting the fake new 'Union of Country Sports Workers' set up by field sport supporters to contribute, rather than the largest representative of agricultural workers, the T & G. This bias has been seen before in previous government inquiries, notably the Scott-Henderson report in 1949 whose committee members were overwhelmingly biased in favour of the Hunting set, 5 of the 7 committee members were either directly involved with bloodsports or were part of its' periphery. The Burns Inquiry wasn't quite as biased in the first instance although there were demonstrable links, but it was obvious to groups like the National Anti-Hunt campaign that it wasn't worth their while giving it the gloss of respectability and refused to participate.

On the Game laws and hunting the charges against the ruling class are that they were based on a low and vile hypocrisy, sustained by heartlessness, callousness and the inability to feel for their fellow man. As early as 1833 Edward Bulwer Lytton in his book "England and the English" said that if there was a ruling class which possessed the means to 'remedy the evils existing among the poorer population' it was the English landed order of the 19th century with its' great wealth and authority... Bulwer concluded, like William Cobbett twenty years before him and Gladstone fifty years after him, that with a few exceptions 'they didn't want to know'. Both **Peel**, who introduced the Police, and **Disraeli** (men from other worlds yet attached to the aristocratic idea) made great attempts to lead them away from their narrow self-absorption, but largely failed. Indeed Lady Shelley points out that they sometimes took 'great offence' at Peels patient efforts. Their astonishing obdurate resistance, decade after decade, to almost every attempt to ameliorate the suffering and hardship

that arose from the Game Laws since it might threaten their Game Privilege of hunting, was not exceptional, **it was symptomatic and pathological.**

An example of this hunting arrogance today is that of Lord Kimball [who has been in charge of all the Countryside Alliances campaigns in the Houses of Parliament] and his wife who unfairly sacked a worker from their country mansion. The sacked worker (Mrs Fletcher) said "Lady Kimball would antagonise me for weeks by being sarcastic and rude and changing her mind at the last minute about jobs that had previously been agreed.. she would even belittle her husband in front of staff and dinner guests... she was a woman who was used to getting her own way. She was always pleased with herself when she spoke to people in a derogatory fashion". { "*Peers sacked houselady claims she was bullied: Haughty Lady treated me like a servant*" by Martin Stote, *Daily Express*, 1.12.01, page 26 }

Also "**Working for Britain's richest man was hell... we were even told how to fold his loo paper**" by Alan Rimmer, *Sunday Mirror*, 24.2.02, page 11, where it says:

"the sacked housekeeper of Britain's richest man has lifted the lid on the bizarre 'Upstairs Downstairs' lifestyle at his lavish country home. Francis Hewson, who is suing the Duke of Westminster for unfair dismissal, likened life at 11,000 acre Eaton Hall near Chester to the Middle Ages."



The Duke of Westminster

Our suggested programme is:

1. A right to roam and repossession of the land.
2. Stop foxhunting with hounds, either with concerted political action or direct intervention on a local basis, normally with other local hunt saboteurs.
3. The right to hunt the rich.

Though not in every case today, certainly poaching was part of the means of survival and resistance to money and landed power that made the laws into the 20th century. Howard Newby calls this

"for the agricultural worker poaching often took on the countenance of an undercover guerrilla class warfare". (Page 46, 1979)

The parting shot is the popular song that rattled around the country prior to the 1911 Parliament act which finally killed off the Lords inherent right to make laws in the first instance, also known as the Poachers Anthem.

*"the Land! The Land! T'was God that made the land
the Land! The Land! The ground on which we stand
Why should we be beggars with ballots in our hands?
God gave the Land to the people!"*

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For those of you who want the best introduction to the history and meaning of hunting, the Game laws, and poaching for the poor are directed to the last two books in the list. The Long affray' and 'Albions Fatal Tree' are totally absorbing and brilliant reads, though there is also a wealth of good material in Marion Shoard. Apart from the range of pro-hunting authors mentioned, Roger Scruton should be shot on sight...

TO KEEP THE CHICKENS CHEEPING ISN'T CHEAP

As might be expected going foxhunting is not cheap. There are membership fees, which vary from hunt to hunt. Prospective members are asked to contact the Honorary Hunt Secretary who can obviously be expected to check on the background of an applicant and decide whether s/he is worthy of joining.

This is very much an exclusive club, which not just anyone can join. If you are permitted to join then in addition to the membership fee there is a day fee for every ride; this probably averages about £50. You do not, in fact, pay to go riding; you pay for a cap, which entitles you to go riding.

It is the cost of getting fitted out with a horse, transport and costume which considerably adds to the cost.

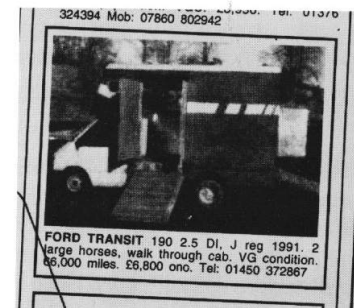
HUNTER

Homebred 17 hands gelding, eye
catching dark brown.
No white markings. 7 years old.
A pleasure to do.
Has great presence. Showjumped,
cross country and Hunted.
Goes first or last. Will carry 14 stone.
Easy to catch, shoe, load and clip.
For sale as owner moving abroad.
£6,000.
Tel: 01460 30098 (Somerset)

Horse prices vary but the advert on the left, from *Horse and Hound* of 28/02/02, gives some indication of the costs involved - £6,000.

In the same issue a horse – box costs £6,800 for a J Reg Ford Transit suitable to transport 2 horses

[*Horse and Hound* 28/02/02]



A few phone calls to Livery stables during the week beginning March 4th 2002 revealed that stabling and grazing can be relatively cheap. For example, Hall Farm Livery Yard at Consett in County Durham quoted a weekly price of just £12. The average of the others contacted was approximately £30 a week or £1,560 a year.

Each hunt has a slightly different dress code, which includes the need for a coat in which to ride and one for evening dress.

Country Supplies on 01422 395300 have an extensive web-site. The cost of purchasing some of the cheapest items include a decent jumper at £49.95, Charles Owen Chester Gloves at £25.00, a Musto Snug Rider coat at £139.95 and a more formal riding coat at £150, Stubben Gents Spurs at £22.95, a cheap Charles Owen Rider 2000 Riding Hat at £58.00, the Hunter Stablemate riding boot at £24.99 and the most expensive item, the working hunter saddle at £520 to come to £1,015.75.

Throw in the need to 'splash the cash' at such events at say £50 a time, then someone who goes out 20 times a year will spend another £1,000.

A grand total to kit yourself out with a decent horse, well looked after, transport, membership and daily fees, suitable clothing and spending money and at the end of the year it's £16,360 or over £300 a week. Note these figures do not include vets fees, accident insurance, petrol/diesel to or from meets, road tax and insurance and a whole host of other extra's.

Of course, for the larger landowners that hunt, the cost must be enormous, as many of them have their own stables, a large number of well-bred horses and a large staff to look after them. Still, even without these additional expenses, it is a lot of money.

It seems an incredibly expensive way of keeping the fox population down and 'our' chicken's safe and cheeping away!

'NO ORDINARY THEFT'

Land ownership in Britain

In the middle of 2000, when the idea of this pamphlet was first discussed, it was recognised that it would be extremely difficult to obtain accurate, up-to-date information on land ownership in Britain. We reckoned that those involved in organising fox hunting with horses and hounds owned substantial tracts of 'this green and pleasant land', thus allowing the hunts to go on, but we had no idea exactly how much. Neither, except those who owned it, did anyone else as quite simply there are no accurate Public records, for reasons that are to do with the enormous power that landowners had and still have. Landowners don't want us to know just how much they've got, as we may then start discussing how they got it and whether they should be allowed to keep it.

Collecting information and reliable data on who owns the land should be fairly easy as most people own nothing and there are records for land bought and sold since 1925. There are also Land Registries covering Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Wales and England. However if you were to write asking them how much land was owned by, for example, the largest landowners they couldn't tell you. It has also been estimated that even obtaining all the information they've got on their records would cost £150 million, as it costs £7.20 for each land search, some of which may cover only a few metres of land. Yet this is a publicly funded service costing £200 million a year.

There was a period when it was possible to know who owned the land, but it was over 125 years ago in Victorian Britain – well before the advent of computers and computerised records. 'The Return of Owners of Land, in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales' was commissioned in 1872 by Parliament and published in 4 volumes between 1874 and 1876. The results have largely been ignored ever since.

The fact that it took only two years to collect a full inventory on land ownership was because at the time each parish kept a record of land transactions stretching back hundreds of years. Since then, whilst the parishes have not been abolished their land-owning records have been. In the meantime, all formal tax on land has also been abolished, and the specific taxes which have been substituted

have placed the larger burden of taxes on the smallest landowners, namely private and public householders.

The figures, released in the 1870's, were used by 'The Spectator' in 1875 to calculate that 710 persons possessed over 5,000 acres each in England and Wales, this was a quarter of the land.

No. Of Owners	Class	Extent in acres	% acres	Average holding (acres)	% of pop
400	Peers & peeresses	5,728,979	16.5%	14,322	0.002
1,288	Great landowners	8,497,699	24.6%	6,597	0.006
2,529	Squires	4,319,271	12.5%	1,797	0.012
9,585	Greater Yeomen	4,782,627	13.8%	499	0.049
24,412	Lesser Yeomen	4,144,272	12.0%	169	0.125
217,049	Small Proprietors	3,931,806	11.3%	18	1.1
703,289	Cottagers	151,148	0.4%	0.2	3.6
958,552	Total				4.9
18,499,457	Remainder of Pop	Nil	nil		95.1
14,459	The Crown, barracks, prisons, lighthouses, etc.	165,427			
	Religious, education philanthropic	947,655			
	Commercial & Misc.	330,436			
	Waste (& Commons)	1,524,624			
		34,523,974			

Taken from 'Who Owns Britain' by Kevin Cahill on page 45

You do not have to be a genius to work out why the landowners buried the report, revealing as it did such massive inequalities, so large in fact that they knew they could not possibly defend themselves against charges of exploitation. The same is true today. The landowners were able to remove 'The Return of Owners of Land' from public record and discussion as, at the time, they controlled not only the House of Lords but also the House of Commons. This is no longer the case.

The vast majority of British people who were to fight and, in millions of cases, die in the two World Wars did so without owning even an inch of 'their' country's soil. Little has changed since then.

The Labour Party's manifesto, on which it won the 1945 General Election [1], claimed that 'Labour believes in land nationalisation and will work towards it'. And 'as a first step the State and the local authorities must have wider and speedier powers to acquire land for public purposes wherever the public interest so requires'. Whilst Labour took that 'first step', future Governments have been unwilling to take a second, and much larger, one.

Since 1925 Legislation has required that all land transfers be registered at the

Land Registry. However if no transfers have taken place then there is no compulsion by landowners to register their land. As might be expected those families who owned massive amounts of land in 1872, and continue to do so today, have not registered their modern landed estates.

It has thus been left to the magnificent work of a tiny bunch of academics and researchers to uncover 'who does own Britain'. Whilst undertaking the work on this pamphlet Canongate Books of Edinburgh published Kevin Cahill's 'Who Owns Britain: the hidden facts behind land ownership in the UK and Ireland', which apart from saving the author of this particular piece an incredible amount of time is worth £25 of anybody's money. It should be required reading for anyone who genuinely cares about the future of themselves, their children and their grandchildren. It is an absolute masterpiece. So too is 'Who Owns Scotland' by Andy Wightman, who has been undertaking research on land issues for over 10 years and continues to do so.

We, by which I mean all of us who live in England, Scotland, Wales and all of Ireland owe the likes of Cahill and Wightman a great debt of honour for the work they have put in to revealing 'Who Owns Britain and Ireland'. It is now up to all of us to make the necessary changes, so that those who stole it from the great mass of our ancestors have it taken back from them and used collectively for the greater good.

Cahill has estimated that in England and Wales between 30% and 50% of the acreage of the two countries is unregistered.

However painstaking research has made it possible to uncover that approximately 189,000 people own 88% of the land in Britain.

Throughout England and Wales 25,918,370 acres of land is occupied by 157,367 individuals or families. This is 0.28% of the population, who own 64% of the land.

These landowners are the beneficiaries of massive subsidies



through the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU. That's right, those who often complain and whinge most about the European Union are amongst its biggest beneficiaries, although the exact amounts each landowner gets is hidden from the public as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food [MAFF], now DEFRA, doesn't release figures on who gets what.

But it is known that subsidies to the **189,000 families** totals £4 billion or £12,169 each per year. The same families contribute just £103 million each year in council tax, which isn't bad for **control of over 40 million acres. Compare this to the other 59,000,000 people who live on just 4.4 million acres**, who pay on average £550 council tax per household, totalling £10.4 billion. The wealthy gentry are literally stealing bread from people's mouths.

Of course, whilst this is not the focus of this particular piece of work, it would be remiss not to highlight that if things aren't bad enough even the actual bread and other agricultural products being grown or developed are of dubious quality. This is a result of intensive farming practices that include extensive use of pesticides, battery farming and a whole host of unnatural practices such as GM production. At the same time, of course the EU's support for CAP, along with its protective labelling laws, prevent producers from the developing world gaining entry into the European Market for their products with inevitable consequences.

Amongst the **top 100 landowners** are some of the following:-

At number one is The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, who owns 270,700 acres with an estimated land value of over £282 million.

The Duke of Westminster with 129,300 acres, including highly valuable parts of the richest land of real estate in the World, namely Belgravia and Mayfair in central London, owns land worth over £11.5 billion. He is the wealthiest individual in Britain.

The second wealthiest is the Queen, who with 73,000 acres owns land worth £3 billion. Prince Charles has 141,000 acres worth over one and a quarter billion pounds.

It is worth noting that there is some doubt as to whether the Queen and Charles actually own the lands they claim. They certainly enjoy tax-free privileges from them at present, but a decision on ownership may have to wait until a future Government decides to take back the land when the question of compensation will undoubtedly be raised in the Courts. With this in mind the

Royal Family would have been heartened by the success of the European Landowners Association in securing an Article in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights to protect ownership rights such that "this now requires those who deprive people of their property in the public interest to pay fair compensation within a reasonable period". [2]

Charles is continuing to acquire land, spending £50 million on October 30th 1999 for 11,000 acres from the Prudential financial group.

The Duke of Northumberland has 132,200 acres worth in excess of £800 million.

At number 100 is Messrs Elliot of Sutherland who with 23,700 acres is only worth £7 million or so.

Meanwhile, Paul Raymond, the Soho porn king, has managed to acquire 200 acres with a value of, at least, £2 billion pounds.

The Queen and her immediate family of just eight people have for their use, in one way or another, the same amount of land as 11,000,000 people who live in England.

It is these landowners which allow foxhunting with horses and hounds to continue. For example, the Percy Hunt in Northumberland, has as its Masters Lady Victoria Cuthbert and her brother The 12th Duke of Northumberland of Alnwick Castle, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 1NG who, as we know from above, has 132,300 acres to play on. The Duke of Buccleuch's Hunt is, unsurprisingly, not short of a bit of space to run around in, with in excess of a quarter of a million acres of Scottish countryside owned by him. Numerous examples of other major landowners using their lands for foxhunting can be produced.

The Duke of Buccleuch has promised that the March 25th 2002 hunt is 'certainly not the last hunt for ever more' [3] despite the Scottish Parliament's Protection of Wild Mammals [Scotland] bill having gained Royal Assent just 10 days earlier, thus banning fox-hunting with dogs. This was a legal hunt, the next one would not be. Of course there were already a lot less foxhunts in Scotland than England or Wales even before March 25th.

Of course, a good number of the major landowners, especially in Scotland are more than willing to exploit animals other than foxes for 'sport' with some estates presenting opportunities to shoot deer, grouse, pheasants and a whole

Rebellion in the air at last fox hunt

By Paul Kimmage
Scotland Correspondent

LIPPING HORN in his sign to rally the hounds, Trevor Adams, joint master of the Duke of Buccleuch's hunt, signalled the end to 178 years of tradition yesterday.

Only two weeks after the Bill to ban fox hunting with hounds received Royal assent, countryside campaigners from all over Britain gathered yesterday to mark the last legal hunt north of the border.

Defiant in their blue and red coats, more than 200 riders charged across the tree-lined hills which surround the Duke's Selkirkshire estate at Bowhill in pursuit of the much-hunted hounds.

Although there was little scent of a fox to be had among the undergrowth, the whiff of rebellion was everywhere as the Duke of Buccleuch, one of Britain's biggest landowners, urged the pro-hunt lobby to use "every legal way" to challenge the ban in Scotland.

"This is Killick Forrest, where people have hunted for 100 years," the Duke told the assembled hunters. "This



Horses and riders setting off from Bowhill in the Scottish Borders yesterday for the traditional end-of-season meet of the Buccleuch Hunt

may be the end of season hunt but the real battle will be in the law courts and is yet to begin.

"The Duke of many people will be shattered in areas with

few alternative jobs. The legislation must be challenged by everyone in every legal way.

"This is the last meet of the season but certainly not the last

hunt for ever more". For the countryside campaigners yesterday was the day the hunters became the hunted.

Representatives from as far

as Devon and Dorset look to the field to show their support for a way of life they believe to be under threat.

Many believe their lives

hounds, and the lives of their hounds, are at risk unless the pro-hunt lobby can win the legal battle to overturn the Bill passed by the Scottish Parli-

host of wild-life. It costs to do so; for example, on the Balnagown estate in Sutherland [4] prices for the 1999 season were 'Red Deer' - £275, Roe - £60 to £120 plus £50 outing fee, Pheasant - £19 per bird, Grouse - £95 Per Gun per day, Wild Geese and Duck - £80 Per Gun per day.

The estate proudly boasts that; 'Few experiences can rival the thrill sheer exhilaration of stalking the redoubtable Red Deer stags across the rugged Ben More Assynt. Alternatively, guests can stalk the elusive Sika or Roe Deer through the woodlands and forest of the lower Glens'. I don't suppose it pays to be honest and say 'get your chance to blast the shit out of a beautiful Red Deer who has never done you any harm'. Of course, they'd no doubt tell you that they were animal lovers.

Major blows

The likes of the Duke of Northumberland and Buccleuch have, in recent times, suffered something of a blow with the Labour Government's decision to reform The House of Lords. By excluding the hereditary peers from it, Blair disconnected the 785 wealthiest families in the UK, who owned perhaps a 1/3rd of the land, from the inner levers of power. **Of the top 500 landowners in the UK in 2001, 187 had had seats in the House of Lords until two years earlier. This act is perhaps the Blair Government's single greatest 'revolutionary' act.**

The other major blow has come about over the last 10 to 20 years and is a direct result of global capitalisation. This is where hereditary aristocrats were

once Directors on the boards of many of Britain's key financial institutions, such as banks, insurance companies and stockbrokerage firms. They have found that their services are no longer required. They were, of course, well paid for occupying such positions.

The effects of these changes are to leave many major landowners far removed from 'the corridors of power'. These feelings are intensified by what appears the increasing likelihood of the British people never voting the Conservatives back to [Parliamentary] power as well as the increased support for Labour from some sections of big business, especially those who have become so in more recent times.

The landowners are not exactly isolated. However for a group used to being in charge, (and it should not be forgotten that the landowners controlled the Conservative Party, who similarly were the Government on most occasions, until up to the mid to late 1970's) then not getting what you want must be a strange feeling. If their 'rights' to go foxhunting are removed then what next, their land? God forbid!

End this obscenity

Of course, it is obscene that so few people own so much of the land in Britain. The same was, of course, once true in Ireland but since the 1800s land redistribution has been going on. Today, there are no major landowners and parts of agricultural Ireland are booming in spite of the fact that subsidies to landowners are much smaller than in Britain.

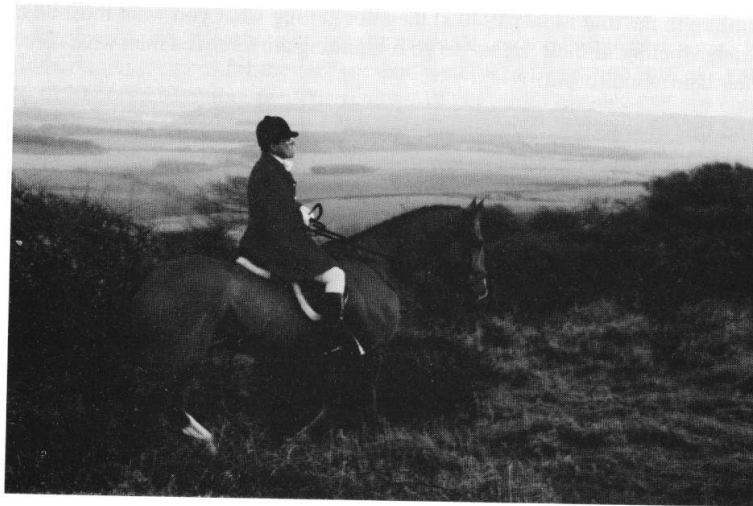
This reversed the process in Ireland started by the conquest of the country by Oliver Cromwell in 1649, which saw the start of increased land ownership abroad by British landowners, a process that continued and reached its peak at the end of the 19th century with the British Empire. As detailed elsewhere in this booklet, in Britain itself most of the land had already been parcelled out long before then with William the Conqueror dividing the land between himself, the Church and the Barons. In France, William was known as 'William the bastard', possibly a man has never been so appropriately named.

Five hundred or so years later Henry VIII persuaded the country to give up Catholicism by dissolving the monasteries and distributing the 10 million acres of land to just 1,500 families. The final 'capture' was to come with the Industrial Revolution and the various 'Acts of Enclosure' in which wastes and common lands, on which animals could be grazed, were enclosed. The resultant poverty and starvation removed the peasantry from the land and

either forced them in to the factories, abroad or in to an early grave.

Fox hunting with horses and hounds continues to take place throughout Britain because of the massive inequalities that exist in land ownership. These are so indefensible that when official figures were collected 125 years ago the results were immediately buried by the landowners, fearful of a debate on why they had so much land and how they acquired it – namely, by force.

To date no system has been put in place to collect reliable data, despite the fact that The Land Registry Office costs £200 million a year. This has not, however, prevented an 'unofficial' record being compiled, revealing a situation where less than 200,000 families own 2/3rds of the land in Britain, forcing many of the rest to live in increasingly crowded cities and spaces.



For those who own such massive tracts of land then 'their right' to go fox hunting is more than anything connected with 'their right' to continue to hold on land that their ancestors stole from the ordinary people of these islands. Turning the tables so it is not the fox that is being chased but the foxhunter must be our aim.

[1] www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/ukman/lab45.htm

[2] Anthony Bosanquet – President of Country Landowners Association in 2001 Annual Report

[3] Rebellion in the air at last fox hunt in Scotland – Paul Keele in 'The Independent' 26/03/2002

[4] www.balnagown-estate.demon.co.uk/accommodation.htm

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Plus 'Horse and Hound' and 'The Countryman's Weekly'