

A History of the Burton Hunt 1672 -2004

The Burton Hunt has met in Burton for almost 350 years. The Hunt is part of our heritage and the mellow landscape of open fields, low hedges with spinneys and copses was laid out to provide cover for foxes and a good day's hunting. In the 18th and 19th centuries, foxhunting was a major sport with over 100 hunts spread across the country. There were no league tables to compare the performance of the respective hunts, but today the Burton would be in the Premiere League. The Hunt Masters, like their modern day equivalents in football, were willing to spend a fortune to provide the best hounds and the best horses in pursuit of their sport.



Today, the Hunt is under threat. To many it is a cruel and outdated sport and this year may be the last time the Burton will meet in the village. To the supporters of hunting it is the rhythm and the way of life of the countryside; the glory days of fox-hunting are well past but it represents a colourful thread of history which should be preserved. The huntsman will argue with some justification that foxhunting conserves the fox which otherwise would be gassed, shot and poisoned by those who regard the fox as vermin. That is the downside which the opponents of fox-hunting do not see.

Whatever your persuasion, the history of the Hunt makes fascinating reading. I hope you will enjoy this potted history of the hunt which will appear in 2 parts with the first part in this edition of *The Journal*.

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The first record of the Burton Hunt is a map captioned "Parte of Lincolnshire showing the boundaries for hunting ye foxe with our hounds in the year of grace 1672" It is signed John Monson, Burton Magna, the grandfather of the first Lord Monson who was created a peer in 1728. The boundaries of the hunt extended northwards to Gainsborough, across to Louth and Horncastle, then South to Sleaford and Newark. Lincolnshire was considered a wild and uncivilised area of fens – the cliff was still open heathland with a few woods and virtually no hedges. The Trent valley was often flooded and the land was too heavy to plough. The early hunts were very slow affairs starting at dawn with the field consisting of the Monsons and their friends wrapped in thick coats and mounted on heavy horses. The party would follow the hounds but there was little competitive riding or jumping.

The hounds were heavy and slow but had good noses to follow a cold scent. By 1731, Lord Monson had established the hunt kennels in Burton with Robert Cave as the huntsman assisted by 2 whippers in.

The social life of the hunt extended beyond the hunting season and in 1741 a clubroom was built at the Green Man Inn at Blankney for the benefit of the hunt which included most of the titled and land-owning families of Lincolnshire. Club members met once a month and seldom departed sober. By 1769 the social importance of the Hunt was increasing and the second Lord Monson, who succeeded to the title in 1748, enlarged Burton Hall to accommodate the elaborate Hunt breakfasts which preceded the day's hunting. New stables and kennels were built in Burton accommodating up to 100 pairs of hounds. The kennels remained in use until 1848. The houses known as Kennel Cottage and Westside are all that remain of the buildings today.

The nature of hunting was also changing with the sport becoming faster and the hunt followers jumping fences and galloping to keep up with the hounds. With a wide open countryside, Lincolnshire was ideally suited to this new style of sport. It demanded fearless riding and a pack of disciplined hounds bred for fox-hunting, combining speed, stamina and temperament with a good nose. From 1778 the third Lord Monson concentrated much effort into hound breeding with the line improved with imports from the Quorn, Brocklesby and Cottesmore packs. When the fourth Lord Monson died suddenly in 1809 at the age of only 24, no local man was willing to take on the huge financial commitment as Master of the Hunt. The pack was sold to Squire Osbaldeston for £1000 and he became the Master, thus ending at least 150 years of continuous hunting by the Monson family.

George Osbaldeston was a brash Yorkshireman with a considerable fortune who excelled at every sport he touched. As the new Master of the Hunt he lived in princely style in the Bishop's residence in Lincoln. He quickly fell out with everyone except the foxes which he pursued with great energy, courage and determination. He was less successful with his advances to the young Lord Monson's widow whom he courted with equal vigour; she jilted him for the Earl of Warwick.



**Tom Sebright
Kennel Hand to Osbaldeston**

In 1813 Osbaldeston resigned, but during a career as varied and unpredictable as a modern day football manager, his expertise was in great demand. He became master of many hunts and as a renowned breeder of hounds, it earned him the title of Squire of England within the hunting fraternity.



**Mr Assheton Smith
1816 -1823**

Throughout the 19th century, the Burton Hunt prospered under the Mastership of the landed gentry. Assheton Smith succeeded Osbaldeston who was followed in turn by Sir Richard Sutton (1823-1842). He was a very rich aristocrat of the old school with a passion for fox hunting which he regarded as his vocation in life. He inherited £300,000 as a child and spent it all on hunting.

Lord Henry Bentinck, 4th son of the Duke of Portland and from one of the richest families in the land, was Master from 1842-1863. Bentinck was single-minded, eccentric and dedicated to his sport. On becoming master, for a number of years he commuted daily on horseback from the family seat at Welbeck Hall near Mansfield to Lincoln, using a relay of 3 galloping hacks.



Lord Henry Bentinck

The first horse would take him to Dunham Bridge, the second to Lincoln and a third to the meet. Hunting 6 days a week, he would make a round trip of 60 miles in addition to the distance he travelled when actually hunting! Later he took up residence at the Great Northern Hotel and at the White Hart in Lincoln. He remained a bachelor all his life and he gave instructions to the management of the Great Northern that no female was ever to cross his path. When he left his room it was reported that chambermaids scuttled away like rabbits!

In 1848, Lord Henry closed the kennels in Burton (it is recorded that Lady Monson loathed the smell of the dogs) and he built new kennels at Reepham for over 200 animals. His horses were the best that money could buy and the stables were models of their kind.

There was a covered area for exercise on wet days and a system of Turkish baths for horses returned from hunting. When he stood down as Master in 1863, the Burton Hunt was in its prime and hunt guests included the Prince of Wales who stayed with Henry Chaplin at Blankney Hall. The Chaplins had lived at Blankney for 150 years and owned 25,000 acres of land in Lincolnshire as well as estates in Yorkshire and Nottingham.

The pack was purchased for £3500 by Henry Chaplin but the financial commitment went far beyond the price of a pack of hounds. There was the cost of a stable of 100 horses, the kennels at Reepham, the salaries of the huntsman and his assistants, grooms, whippers-in, kennel maids, puppy walkers, blacksmiths and a huge entertainment bill for the many dinners and functions associated with the hunt season.



Henry Chaplin

Chaplin also ran a string of racehorses, one of which won the Derby of 1867. In addition to all these interests, he was MP for Lincoln and engaged to the beautiful Lady Florence Paget. A bright future beckoned but money does not buy everything and life was about to deal a cruel twist to the ambitions of Henry Chaplin!



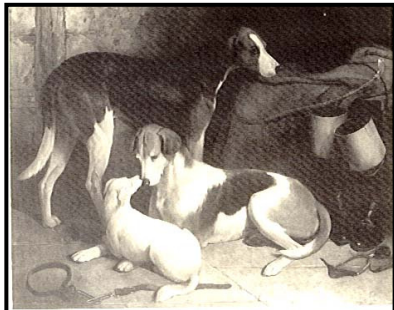
The Prince of Wales at a Meet of the Burton Hunt 1870

Bibliography:

- A Hunting Manual – Ann Fieldsend
- A short history of the Burton Hunt – Ralph Greaves
- The Burton Hunt – RB Fountain (1996)
- (Part II will appear in the March edition of the Journal)

A History of the Burton Hunt 1672 -2004 Part II

In 1863, “*The Burton*” was one of the premiere hunts in England. Under the mastership of Lord Henry Bentinck (1842 – 1863) everything was done that was conducive to the sport. The country was hunted six days a week, sometimes with two packs out on the same day.



Lord Henry Bentinck's Hounds
By William Barraud

“His hounds were scientifically bred, not for looks, but light, active and full of stamina. His pack was regarded by many as the best in England”

Although much of the county was now under the plough, it was still possible for the hunt to meet near Gainsborough and gallop across country to Wragby and back to Lincoln in pursuit of the fox. But the nature of hunting was changing. Tenant farmers now formed the majority of hunt members and there was a greater need to consult through the formation of a hunt committee. Diplomacy, not a strongpoint of Lord Bentinck, was now required to deal with conflicts of interests between the hunting and shooting lobbies.

When Lord Henry retired as Master in 1863, the hounds were purchased for £3500 by Henry Chaplin of Blankney Hall who planned to take over as Master. Chaplin, who was a member of the Prince of Wales set at Oxford, was engaged to Lady Florence Paget. Unfortunately she eloped with the degenerate Lord Hastings just days before their wedding was due. In an effort to forget the affair, Chaplin embarked on a Grand Tour of Europe (he was accompanied in Paris by the Prince) and in his absence, he invited the Irish Peer, Lord Doneraile, to be acting Master. He paid Doneraile £3000 per year and the pick of the horses in Lord Bentinck’s stables, an offer he could not refuse. Unfortunately the appointment was a disaster. He mismanaged the hounds which had been so carefully prepared by Lord Bentinck and he proved unpopular with the members. Bad luck also played its part with an outbreak of foot and mouth disease and bad weather restricting hunting for a large part of the season.

When Chaplin returned as Master in 1865 he spared no money to restore the Hunt’s reputation. Although now elected as the MP for Lincoln, he hunted with the Burton twice a week, and if working late in the Commons, he would engage a special train from King’s Cross to take him to a spot in Lincolnshire to be met by his groom with a hack to take him to the meet.

Unfortunately the scale of his extravagances placed a burden even on his substantial finances and in 1870, Chaplin proposed that the traditional boundaries of the Hunt be divided into the Northern half, The Burton, and the southern, The Blankney. The Hunt Committee begged him to continue, but in 1870 Chaplin became Master of the new Blankney Hunt and Mr Foljambe was appointed Master of the old Burton country.

The division of the country marked the end of a great period for the Burton. For half a century the Masters had been the most famous and dedicated of a golden era.

Henry Chaplin, later created Viscount Chaplin of Blankney, was the last of the squires of Blankney Hall before the extravagant expenses of his hunting and racing stables forced him to sell his 25,000 acre Lincolnshire estate.

He continued to hunt and at the age of 80 and weighing 18 stone, he still rode to hounds!



Henry Chaplin, 1913
Aged 80

The next 30 years to the turn of the century were difficult years for the Burton. The absence of a major sponsor placed financial burdens on the members who were only just able to find the £500 guarantee in subscriptions for the Master. Cheap imports of grain from North America reduced farm incomes by 50% and struggling farmers sought better compensation for damaged crops and a greater say in the administration of the hunt. Democracy is a wonderful thing but the lack of a titled patron to fight your corner may have also contributed to the difficulties! The loss of some of the best coverts on the boundaries of the Burton territory to hunts such as Lord Yarborough’s Brocklesby in the North, almost led to its demise.

It was a brave decision of the Hunt Committee to appoint a twenty-year-old Master in 1889, but over the next 23 years, Thomas Wilson reestablished the reputation of the Hunt through outstanding management, consideration for farmers and attention to hound breeding. His appointment was in contrast to the landed traditions of the day, for his wealth was founded on Trade, his fortune based upon the family-owned Westbrook Snuff Mill in Derbyshire. Under his stewardship the Hunt may have lacked the brilliance of past years, but was regarded as a more resilient, workmanlike farmers’ pack. Wilson endeavoured to look after farmers and gamekeepers who otherwise would shoot or poison foxes to preserve the valuable shooting rights on their land. In 1898 gamekeepers received an annual remuneration of £47.15s and poultry claims amounted to £111.9s.6d.

In 1906 at the invitation of Lord Monson, the Burton Hunt Steeplechase racing was re-established on Burton Cliff. The event proved extremely popular with the public and was accepted for racing under National Hunt Rules.

Point-to-Point racing continued on the course until 1967 when it was transferred to Carholme at the invitation of the Lincoln City Council. The remains of some of the hurdles can still be seen on the bridgeway to South Carlton.

The event was transferred to Market Rasen in 1991.



Burton Cliff Point to Point Meet 1960

Tom Wilson purchased Riseholme Hall in 1900 and moved his hounds from Reepham to newly built kennels at Riseholme. The hounds were well cared for – kennel lameness was cured by trips to the seaside at Gibraltar Point where hounds and horses were exercised on the sands. Wilson lived on his yacht which he moored in Wainfleet Creek. He retired as Master in 1912 and his hounds were purchased at auction by the Hunt and remain the property of the Hunt Committee to this day.

The First World War took its toll and the next 3 Masters, Sir Montague Cholmondley, his brother-in-law, Mr J St Vigor Fox and Captain Elwes of Elsham Hall were all killed in action. Captain Elwes' widow became the first and only lady master following the death of her husband, to be replaced in 1916 by William Barr Danby, a well known Lincoln solicitor.

Danby, who also founded the Lincoln golf club, had hunted with the Burton for 40 years so knew well the personalities involved both professionally and as a sportsman. It was no easy task to rebuild support for the Hunt decimated by the war. He was faced with many problems - financing the Hunt from a reduced number of subscriptions, the use of barbed wire for fencing, the activities of gamekeepers and the lack of foxes. A sound administrator, his tenure in office was unspectacular but vital for the continuity of the Hunt.

When Danby stood down at the age of 72 in 1926, the next Master was greeted almost as the Messiah. Sir Julien Cahn was indeed a great catch for the Burton, wealthy, flamboyant and blessed with rich friends and connections across the world. After the lean years following the Great War, members must have believed that the glory days of the Burton had returned. Indeed he did much to improve the image of the Hunt and was generous to the tenants that supported hunting.

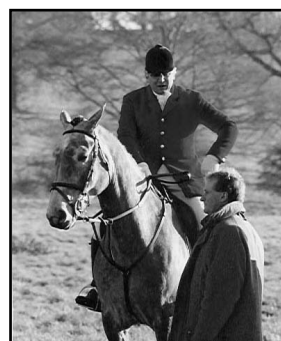
In his first year he donated £500 towards the Wire Fund to replace barbed wire with wooden fencing and prizes were awarded for the best kept hedges. But he hunted as he pleased. His party would arrive in a fleet of Rolls Royces and stop for a leisurely lunch. While he remained popular with many tenant farmers, he was accused of being out of touch with the country and losing its support. Sadly the Hunt Committee was split in its support and in 1935, Sir Julien and several prominent members of the committee, resigned in protest. Fortunately the future of the Hunt was saved by the intervention of Major Charles Wilson of Riseholme (son of Tom Wilson) who, with the committee, administered the Hunt from 1935 and took it through the difficult war years to 1945.

The Hunt survived the war although economies reduced the size of the pack and meetings were reduced to a token 1 day a week. It was the Hunt Committee supported by the Lockwood and Fieldsend families that revived the fortunes of the hunt post war, and 3 generations of the Lockwoods have now ensured the survival and continuity of the Burton through many difficult times.

Mr William Lockwood became joint Master in 1948, followed in 1961 by Mr Arthur Lockwood and John Lockwood in 1981. He is now the longest serving master since Lord Bentinck. The Hunt is well supported and continues to prosper despite the political climate.



Mr William Lockwood 1969



*Mr John Lockwood
Burton Hall Dec 2003*

In the United Kingdom there remain 175 mounted hunts ranging from the Albrighton in Shropshire to the Zetland on the Yorkshire/Northumbrian border. There are 110 Harrier packs such as the Cranwell Beagles where the field follow on foot. It is far from being a minority sport but is a major industry with a complex infrastructure, history and a passionate following. In 1998 the government calculated that the turnover from hunting was £248m and the sport provided employment for 13,500 people. Hunting is an emotive subject and for many it is seen as a cruel and unnecessary sport - but it is our heritage and part of the life cycle of the countryside. Whatever the final decision, there is a price to pay. The loser may be the fox.

Further information on hunting may be found on the Master of Foxhounds website www.mfha.co.uk
Bibliography: The Burton Hunt by RB Fountain published 1996