

BACKGROUND ON THE SURREY UNION HUNT AND A GENTLE REMINDER OF HUNTING ETIQUETTE



The Senior Master is Miss Alice Dunsdon
The Joint Masters are, Mr Andrew Hazeltine, Danny Murphy and Andrew Byatt

The Pack is a mixed pack – i.e. both dogs and bitches

Kennel Huntsman

First Whipper-In

Second Whipper-In & Groom

Field Master is always confirmed on the day

The Hunt is operational from Pirbright in the North West via Farnham and Guildford to Dorking, including the North Downs, then to Reigate in the North East, and south to the outskirts of Crawley, then West to Horsham and south west towards Hindhead via Hascombe and north to Farnham.

TURNOUT

Both you and your horse should be turned out as well as possible. If you haven't hunted before, it is fine to wear a hacking (tweed) rather than a black jacket but jodhpurs should be in cream or beige. Your numnah should also be a neutral colour. An approved cap must be worn and body protectors may be worn.

An arcane piece of Hunt etiquette requires that only Masters, Hunt Servants and farmers may have the ribbons of their hats down. All others should either tuck or sew them up.

A red ribbon around a horse's tail indicates that the horse kicks. **A green ribbon** means a young horse that might kick – please make sure if there is any chance your horse might kick, it wears the appropriate ribbon. Even a horse that does not normally kick may feel threatened if barged from behind. If the rider feels their horse is getting annoyed or stressed, you may warn the person behind by putting your hand behind your back, palm outwards. This means take heed and back off.

Please take care to avoid getting too close to a horse with a ribbon - if it kicks you, the rider will not be at fault. If you horse is getting stressed then please position yourself at the back of the Field until it settles.

Regardless of the bit you normally use on your horse – **think of upgrading to a stronger bit when going hunting.** You may not need it but most horses 'grow' a hand or two when hunting. It is better to have 'extra' brakes on hand then find you are out of control.

Meets are usually held on someone's property (called a Lawn Meet when hospitality by way of food and drink is offered) and, out of politeness, your horse **should be plaited** (unless, of course, it is hogged!) as a courtesy to your host.

WHO DOES WHAT OUT HUNTING

The **Hunt Secretary** collects the subscriptions and the '**Cap**' at a hunt (the money you pay to join the hunt for the day). It is your job to find her and offer your cap rather than make her seek you out.

If you are not a Hunt Subscriber you will be asked to pay your cap to the Secretary. Please ensure you have the right amount of money on you when you arrive at the meet as finding change puts added pressure on the poor Secretary. It is quite easy to find the Hunt Secretary because she will be the person with the harassed expression and the money bag!

There usually is also a collection for Hunting in general – please ensure you allow a minimum of £5.00 for this too.

The Master is responsible for the day's hunting (as well as working with the Hunt Committee to ensure the smooth running of the kennels, the breeding of the hounds, the Hunt horses and, basically, everything to do with running the Hunt).

There is also a **Field Master** who may be either a Master or an experienced Member of the Hunt who knows the country well and where we may or may not go. It is his/her job to look after the Field (that is the name for those riding with the Hunt). Generally the Field Master will be pointed out when the Master gives a few words of thanks to the host of the meet before moving off with the hounds. **Please remember, the Field Master's word is law – what he/she says, goes.**

The Huntsman is responsible for the hounds and he and the **Whipper-in** ride up with the hounds, taking them to coverts, and encouraging them to 'find' a scent. Often, when the hounds go away on a scent, some are left behind. It is the Whipper-in's job to make sure they follow on. To do this he may have to bring straggling hounds past the mounted Field and it is imperative that you make room for him and hounds to pass safely and quickly.

HUNT ETIQUETE

HUNTING IS ALL ABOUT GOOD MANNERS

When you arrive, if you see the Master or Huntsman, say good morning

When you leave the Field, if possible, say 'Good Night' (the phrase used at any time of day) and thank them for allowing you to hunt with them. A good Master will have a rough idea of how many were in the Field when it started out – and if you don't say 'Good Night' – they might think you are lost, hurt or in trouble – and spend time looking for you when you are actually on your way home!

One of the cardinal rules of hunting is you must not over-ride the hounds. You must stay behind the pack at all times. Occasionally, a hound slips behind the others or gets lost, then comes up behind the hunt. If you see a hound coming up behind you, turn your horse's head towards it so it does not kick out and hold your stick out low between horse and hound to ensure it does not get between your horse's feet. Warn others in front by shouting "hound on the left" (or right – depending where it is coming from) so they know what to do.

Equally, if the Master/Field Master, or any of the Hunt staff (Huntsman, Whipper-in) come up through the Field, shout out 'Master/Field Master/Huntsman/Whip on left or right' so the field can move to one side and let the person through.

It is the Field's job to follow the Field Master. The Master will have liaised with the local farmers and given the Field Master appropriate instructions and the Field Master will know what route to take on the day.

If you come to a field and he goes through the middle of it, you should follow him as this will be a route that the Master has agreed with the farmer.

If you come to a crop field – ride round the edges (and don't cut the corners). You will hear the words "Headland please!" indicating you should keep to the sides.

If you come to a field of sheep/cattle – ride round them – not through the middle. Go slowly through a field of stock and avoid making them run.

If you come to an open gate – **slow down and go through at a walk – and thank the person holding the gate open (he may be the landowner).**

You will often hear 'Gate Please', passed back through the Field. **This means the gate MUST be shut.** Make absolutely sure the person behind you has heard. If you cannot get a response – shut it yourself. Gates left open during hunting are the single most common reason for farmers withdrawing their co-operation.

If you are the last person through the gate – **you must close the gate.** If you are last but one, you should stay behind to support the person closing the gate. It is impolite to leave someone on their own to do this.

If you arrive at a gate which is open and there is no other person around SHUT the gate as less harm can be done by shutting rather than leaving an open gate.

Never cut or remove any **wire** unless in an emergency i.e. if a horse is tangled up; if a hound is caught in the wire tell a hunt official immediately or as soon as you are able – do NOT approach a hound tangled in wire as it will be frightened and likely to bite you!

Wooden bridges present a particular hazard as they are often slippery. Once across, never gallop off as this might excite and endanger the horse behind – move off at a walk having waited for the horse behind you.

If you are jumping and your horse refuses, please go to the back of the Field and wait till last to go over. Again, it is bad form to block a jump so that the Field cannot get over. If you cannot get over – retrace your steps until you come to a road. Don't just take the nearest route as this might take you through fields that a farmer has specifically asked us not to cross.

If you break a fence – please report it to the Field Master or someone with a yellow collar. If there is stock in the field immediate repairs may have to be made.

Parking – When parking for a meet, do NOT park in gateways, driveways or on grass verges; always ensure there is sufficient room to allow the free flow of traffic at all times.

If the Field Master shouts at you – please don't take offence. All of us have been shouted at some time. Sometimes the Field Master needs an immediate response to ensure the safety of all concerned so don't take it personally – the Field Master certainly won't!