

Surrey Union Newsletter, August 2016



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"Going strong since 1798"

A new huntsman for the Surrey Union

As all of you will know, we sadly said goodbye to our huntsman Ian Shakespeare at the end of last season after sixteen years with the Surrey Union. Harry Beeby arrived in the spring to take up the reins however, and seems to be taking to his new life in Surrey with ease. Before starting with the SU, he was whipper-in at the Pytchley, having previously whipped-in at the Fitzwilliam, Thurlow, Old Surrey and Burstow, and Monmouthshire hunts. Although born in Fulham, Harry comes from a hunting family, and when his family moved to the family farm in Leicestershire when he was ten, he started hunting with the Quorn. (His first day's hunting, however, was in a basket saddle with the West Norfolk at six months.)

It's been a busy summer so far, with the biggest challenge being learning names. 'Everything is a new name—hounds, places, people', he says, 'So if I get anyone's wrong, I apologise and will get there eventually! Hounds' names were the most important ones to start with!'. The Ardingly weekend has been the most exciting event so far, 'I was very happy with the way hounds showed on the Thursday. Credit must go to Ian who bred those hounds, and it's a good place to build from in the future for me'.

Next up is the season proper, and he is looking forward to learning all of the country during the autumn and entering the young hounds before showing some good sport over the winter. 'I can't wait until the first



"I hope to show good sport and that you all enjoy the coming season"

morning and we can start doing what we are here for. I'm very excited!'

He has already been very happy with the hounds this summer—'from my first morning they have been brilliant'. The young hounds have, he says, fitted into the pack brilliantly and hound exercise has been going very well.

Of course, a huntsman's job is a busy one. 'Apart from the team at the kennels, I don't know if I'd survive too well without [my girlfriend] Sam,' he says.

'She organises all of the non-hunting things in my life, and probably quite a few of the hunting things too. And she manages to keep me in line as well!'

When not hunting, you'll most likely find him supporting the Leicester Tigers, or popping off to Twickenham to see England play. But of course, hunting comes first!

Harry's most important piece of advice to a newcomer? 'Don't be overwhelmed; if you're not sure, ask. Watch hounds as much as you can (it's fascinating), and read a book called Foxiana. It's very old, but all of the information still applies!'

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Out and about with the hounds

This summer has been a busy one for the SU hounds. As well as the annual hound parades at local shows, including the Surrey County Show and the Cranleigh Show, June saw the South of England Hound Show at Ardingly, where the bitches triumphed.

Fallow won 2nd in best entered bitch hound, Starlight and Stubble came 2nd in the best couple of un-entered bitch hounds. Fashion and Famous came 3rd in the best couple of entered bitch hounds, with



Galaxy also taking 3rd in the best brood bitch class.

We also had our ever-popular Puppy Show at the Kennels on 26 June, and the day before Stylish stole the show with a litter of 8 puppies (6 dogs and 2 bitches).

They are by North Cotswold Drummer, and will be going out to walk very soon. Harry adds that they will be a colourful addition to the SU pack, being mostly black with blue mottle.



Terriers galore

This year's family dog show and countryman's day, on 7 July, was a very successful day, and we had a fantastic turnout.

There were plenty of qualifying classes, with the terrier racing proving extremely popular, as always!



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Meet the Surrey Union – Senior Master, Alice Dunsdon

An international event rider, Alice Dunsdon has competed at all of the world's four-star events with her horse, Fernhill Present, and spends much of her time running her yard in Ewhurst and competing at various levels. On top of all this she also manages to find time to be the Surrey Union's Senior Master.

Her mother was an international show-jumper and her father Master of the Berkeley – so as she puts it, she could hardly escape being horsey. On top of that her uncle, the late Josh Gifford, trained Aldaniti to win the Grand National in 1981, her cousin Tina Cook went to Rio this year as travelling reserve, and her sister-in-law Natasha is the daughter of 11-times champion jockey, Pat Eddery. Horses, it's safe to say, are in her blood.

How and when did you first get involved with the SU?

To be honest I can't remember the first time I hunted with the Surrey Union. I must have been no older than 4 or 5. My family and I moved to Lukyns from West Sussex when I was 3 years old, and at that time my father was Master of the Kildare in Ireland. I remember him frequently catching the plane from Gatwick to Dublin in full hunting kit and returning late in the evenings still in his full hunting attire, Irish mud included. He later became Joint Master of the Berkeley in Gloucestershire. So hunting has been in my blood from a very early age.

If you couldn't hunt Surrey Union country, where would you most like to hunt?

If I couldn't hunt with the Surrey Union, I



would like to be fairly adventurous. I'd love to go out to America and hunt out there. See the different hunt country and compare the differences.

What do you enjoy most about the Surrey Union?

What I love most about the Surrey Union is our varied hunt country. From our more open Weald country with hedges and ditches, to our sandy heathy commons, there is something for everyone and you never get bored of the beautiful Surrey countryside.

Is there a specific day or meet that you most enjoy?

Probably one of my favourite days would have to be Boxing Day. A lot of you may think that odd, as there can be so many people out and yes, it is stressful! But I love the atmosphere all the crowds

bring. Everyone is in high spirits and it is the one day of the year we really get to see the general public's support for us. I wish there were more days like this, because I really think it lifts everyone's spirits and it's a brilliant day out for those who may not have grown up in a hunting family.

How does your eventing prowess translate onto the hunting field?

Hunting is a brilliant way to teach your horses and yourself to be quick-thinking. I really think it gives you that extra edge when you are out competing. Things don't always go to plan when you're riding, and if you're used to using your gut instinct and having to change the way you ride in an instant, this can be the difference between winning and losing – or indeed staying on or falling off!

What's the most challenging part of being Senior Master?

The most challenging part of being the Senior Master is trying to keep everyone happy. Within the Surrey Union and other hunts there are so many passionate members. You have to listen to everyone's thoughts and opinions with an open mind, and then try and do what is best for the hunt. Unfortunately you will not please everyone all the time, but you can only do what you think is best for the hunt now and moving forward into the future. Being a Master is a very selfless job. It's a job 365 days of the year, and all your spare time is dedicated to the hunt. Even if I'm away at a competition, or when I get the chance to take a rare

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holiday, my phone and emails will always be on and I will still be on full alert for anything going on with the hunt.

I say being a Master is a job – it's not though. It's a way of life. It's a part of my life. As soon as you realise that, you understand that some people will not be aware of literally the blood, sweat and tears that each Master around the country puts into their hunt.

I have had some of my lowest moments being a Master, but again I



have had some of my highest and you hope this outweighs the low points. For me, luckily, it does.

Each Master will tell you that you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders as you move off from the meet. You so desperately want the day to go to plan. There will be last-minute panic that there might be someone you forgot to inform that the hunt will be in the area – or have you made sure all gates are unlocked? Or, you told

the sweet old lady at the end of the lane that you will be passing through at around 2pm and actually it will be more like 1pm, and will she have brought her ponies in yet?

Throughout the day I will be constantly looking around the field making sure everyone is enjoying themselves. Hounds are my main priority at all times. Their safety and welfare is paramount and if all hounds finish the hunting day fit and well, that's all you can ask for.

Who do you rely on most to help you get the job done?

I would find being a MFH almost impossible with the support of my family. My mother, who is my rock, I go to for advice and guidance, and my partner Dave sees the stress before the day's hunting but also sees the euphoric feeling I have after a good day.

What are your top three tips for a good day's hunting?

1. Spray your horses legs and belly with mane and tail spray before you go hunting. This will help the mud come off more easily at the end of the day.
2. Have a hot drink waiting for you in the lorry when you get back from hunting. I promise you if you're wet and cold it will be the best drink you have ever tasted.
3. Always check your horse after a days hunting. Your horse will have gone a few hours without drinking on the hunting field and dehydration can set off colic or other serious symptoms. Also check your horses legs religiously for blackthorns. If a black-



thorn becomes embedded in one of your horse's joints this could be fatal for them, so take the risk out of it and thoroughly check your horse over.

What wouldn't you be without on a day's hunting?

I wouldn't be without my wire cutters. You never know when you might need them, and I have used mine on more than one occasion to cut horses and hounds out of wire. Luckily they have never been serious injuries, but this bit of kit is a must for me.

What are you most looking forward to this season?

We have a very exciting season ahead of us with our new huntsman Harry Beeby. We must all be united and show our support. There is nothing like enthusiasm on the hunting field. An enthusiastic heart finds opportunities everywhere.

Take care and happy hunting!!

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David Radcliffe – a very sad goodbye

Very sadly, after a long battle with cancer, David Radcliffe, a stalwart of the Surrey Union, died on 12 June. Our thoughts and sympathies are with his wife Tessa, and he will be much missed by us all. We thought it would be nice to reproduce this speech, written by Michael Loates-Taylor and read by Nigel Morland at David's funeral:

It's impossible to know the impact someone will have upon you when you first meet them and this is certainly true with David Radcliffe. I cannot remember the date David and I first met, somewhere in the early 1990s, but I can remember the circumstances.

I had just arrived at Coombelands in Pulborough to join a cross country schooling session. As I parked up in my tatty series 1 Land Rover towing a similarly tatty old Rice trailer, a very shiny 4-wheel drive with a new trailer pulled up behind me and out jumped this bloke in spotless riding gear and polished boots who barely acknowledged me, and set about getting his horse ready.

In my trailer I had a rather lovely thoroughbred ex-advanced eventer, and although getting on in years and requiring lots of maintenance, was a fabulous horse to ride and gave me huge confidence jumping fences. The shiny bloke produced a nice, almost black, thoroughbred type and after we had both mounted we walked off together to the schooling session. It was at this point that we finally introduced ourselves to each other. All was going well over the fences until we were obliged to tackle a hanging log set at an angle over a ditch. My horse

jumped the fence with ease but the same could not be said for the shiny bloke whose horse, Mull, decided that this particular fence was an ask too far.

I was requested to give the shiny bloke and his horse a lead over the fence, once, twice and at about the third attempt Mull almost left the ground, but put his feet firmly back down just as the shiny bloke had committed to the fence, and he jumped the fence all on his own. The shiny bloke was now quite dusty but he got up laughing and joking, and it was then that I reckoned we would get on. David never did jump that particular fence that day but by the end of the schooling session we had swapped contact details and arranged to meet for a drink at The Volunteer near Holmbury St Mary. A number of things in common emerged: we were both architects, interested in design, buildings and landscape – although he was maybe more 'Lutyens' than my more modern tastes – and of course horses, riding and having a good time.

In 1994 Nancy and I had decided to emigrate forever to the USA and had found new homes for the horses, sold the house and were preparing to depart in the Autumn. Seeing that I had some time on my hands, David asked if I would exercise his horse, Mull. I was of course delighted to do so and found Mull in his stable at Birketts Farm as instructed. The events of the next half hour or so made me aware of another of Mr Radcliffe's little quirks – it was about the information he did not always divulge to ensure willing participation. I found the stable, the horse, the tack, his brushes and so on and set about getting Mull

ready. What David had not told me was that Mull had a wicked sense of humour and the fastest, sneakiest set of gnashers of all time. He was an absolute demon and incredibly accurate.

David gave Nancy and I a fabulous send off from his house in Raikes Lane and I thought that would be end of the that. However, the move to the USA did not last forever, (ask Nancy why), and we moved back to the UK in 1995. It was not long before I found myself at David and Tessa's new property on Leith Hill and a little later agreeing to take his dental specialist horse on loan. All seemed innocent but a Radcliffe plan was in play, and I did wonder at his insistence to go out for fast hacks jumping anything remotely jumpable with him on his new horse, Harvey, and me following on with Jaws.

I also found myself roped into jumping sessions in the school, which all seemed to be going very well until history repeated itself and this time it was me departing from the back of Mull and greeting the ground with a crump. The broken shoulder (in 8 pieces) soon mended and David's well laid plan came to fulfilment when I found myself on Mull at an opening meet in Ockley toward the end of the 90s.

So began another strand of our friendship and I soon found that my time was not necessarily my own when autumn began and Mr Radcliffe started to help me organise my diary and we would plan which meets we would both go to.

I had, through unplanned circumstances, taken another horse on loan, Clare Hanson's Parker, who ended up living at Kingsfield with David and Tessa and their horses.

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David Radcliffe – a very sad goodbye

We travelled to meets together with both horses and I found myself in the early days referred to as 'David's friend'. This led to David and I naming ourselves the 'Odd Couple' after the film with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau. It amused us and some other members of the field and I sense others were not sure what to make of us...which was partly the whole point.

I had not appreciated just how much David loved hunting and how very involved he was with the Surrey Union, but his enthusiasm and energy was catching and we enjoyed many fabulous days and early mornings together and filled with experiences and great fun that I will always treasure. There were however other times when it was not so much fun. We had attended a meet in the Weald, I cannot remember where, and had to park down a narrow lane surrounded by thick ploughed clay fields. We had travelled separately and at the end of the day David suggested that we help each other to get our trailers out and horses loaded. So I helped David with his trailer and got Harvey loaded and he drove off down the lane and that was the last I saw of him. It took me over an hour to extricate my trailer which had sunk into the clay beyond the axles and to get my horse loaded.

On that day, thank goodness for Penny Wilson, without whose huge help I think I would still be stuck in that field. On returning to the yard David asked me what had taken me so long... he taught me the very valuable art of restraint.

There are so many stories and memories of my adventures with Radders, too many to recall now. However, I did ask a mutual friend about going hunting with David and Harvey. She recalled how nervous she had been but David gave reassurance that all would be fine and that he would look after her. The looking after bit lasted until the end of the meet and as soon as the field moved off, Harvey, so said David, decided that he wanted to be up with the field master and she didn't see him for the rest of the day.

I also remember how Harvey used to decide things for David. I think it was at Wintershall and David and I were side by side into one of the tiger trap fences except at the last moment, Harvey 'decided' that he would dive across in front of the fence right in front of me, and Parker brilliantly managed to jump not only the tiger trap but the exiting sideways rump of Harvey. I learnt that you either made sure to be in front of Harvey or ensure you had enough space to carry out rapid strategic manoeuvres.

David was one of those rare people you meet where with him you could be exactly who you are, no pretence, no defences, just ease and trust. He was my best 'aged friend', who I loved and who I considered to be more of an elder brother than just a friend.

We could talk endlessly about design and architecture, horses and hunting, putting the world to rights, politics, environment and just the stuff of life – or we could be in each other's company in comfortable silence with no expectations of each other.

I have gained so much from our friendship; he helped me to grow and see things differently, and was always there to support ideas and give advice, whether I wanted it or not. He had a mischievous sense of humour and between us there was a great deal of laughing and general silliness. David had a fabulous talent to capture moments and people in his drawings and I have a couple of his humorous witty drawings at home. His graphic and artistic abilities revealed themselves in the extraordinary book he created celebrating the SUH, full of sketches and images of the hunt and its people.

We used to sit together musing over the content of the book and I helped him with some of the illustrations and my use of italic handwriting. We reviewed each other's work and very much enjoyed talking about schemes and building projects whether it be for new housing somewhere, or his oak framed shelter for washing down the horses.

David's presence is everywhere at Kingsfield; he was always busy creating new spaces in the landscape or reorganising planting and we called him the 'lawn mower man' – again after the film – as you would often find him sitting on his mower making patterns in the grass....and looking a bit like a lunatic. I will miss him immensely.

— *Michael Loates-Taylor*

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Diary Dates for 2016

Children's Meet

Tuesday 30 August, Brookhurst Grange, Holmbury Road, Ewhurst, GU6 7SJ, 3pm

Surrey Union Early Season Party

Saturday 10 September, 7pm

Live music, food, bar and dancing

Boswells Farm, Ruckmans Lane, RH5 5NE

RSVP: Hannah Chapman, 07748 244621 / hannahchapman292@gmail.com

Pub of the Month

Thursday 15 September, The Volunteer, Sutton Abinger

Newcomers & Children's Meet

Saturday 17 September, Stockbridge Pond, Tilford, GU10 2DA, 2:30pm

Sponsored Ride

Sunday 9 October, Heath Farm, Munstead, GU7 1UN

In support of the RDA.

Newcomers & Children's Meet

Saturday 22 October, Gallops Field, Cotton Row, Holmbury St. Mary, RH5 6NB, 2:30pm

Opening Meet

Saturday 29 October, Gosterwood Manor, Forest Green, RH5 5RX, 11am

For more information, please see the website: www.surreyunion.com



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