

Raft Up and Act!

Hunting Kind

Season's greetings to all good hunting folks wherever you might be. May your festive goose not be too closely trussed with red tape nor wrapped too tightly in high visibility foil to prevent any health and safety issues with this joyous blast of hot air erupting from the vent this Christmas.

“Hunting is our music, it is our poetry, it is our art, it is our pleasure. It is where many of our best friendships are made, it is our community. It is our whole way of life. And we will fight for these things with all the strength and dedication we possess because we love them...We cannot and will not stand by in silence and watch our countryside, our communities and our way of life destroyed forever by misguided urban political correctness. It is about freedom, the freedom of people to choose how they live their own lives”

Remember this from back in 1997?

So eloquently put by Baroness Mallalieu at the Countryside Rally in Hyde Park and never has it been more perfectly framed than that. We should never have allowed the 'salami slicing' process of our liberties to happen, one by one until there was nothing left of our wonderful, generational way of life. Let us all pledge now that we will never forget Ann Mallalieu's words and their meaning. We do not and will not accept bad law. We owe this to our forefathers and children, as well as ourselves.

It has been a while since I wrote my initial offering 'Fox Sake' all those months ago. Since then, what a lot has happened generally in the world of hunting and by that I mean all forms of natural hunting and their derivatives, whether it be with scent hounds, sight hounds, terriers, ferrets, falcons or gundogs. Hunting Kind www.huntingkind.com was launched earlier this year, following success in Northern Ireland in defeating John Blair's anti hunting (and trail hunting) bill at the second reading in December 2021. Hunting Kind then rafted up with the late James Barclay's This is Hunting UK (TiHUK), which has proved to be a mutually beneficial, effective and very happy alliance.

As an example, at last years Game Fair, nine of the main Shooting Organisations rafted up and acted to form 'Aim to Sustain'. Brilliant. Different shooting disciplines, different quarry species, different budgets but they all loosely grouped around the immutable fundamentals of shooting and now represent themselves with their own PR and lobby. This is the example of what we as hunting people need to aim for. Representing hunting from a hunting perspective. When the time comes and at the right

level, we will just go right ahead and 'raft up and act' with them, simple.

If ever one needed reminding that we all need to 'raft up and act', consign petty differences to the past and show a unified stance, it is now, as we watch the appallingly bad law of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill unfold, through its shoddy stages. Perfectly legitimate long dog and lurcher hunting folks across the UK will be criminalised further with recent sentencing legislation. It is all in an attempt to counter the acts of a few perpetrators of rural crime, for which there are existing laws which just need to be applied more effectively. Legitimate terrier work wilfully misunderstood and targeted due to the acts of a few irresponsible people. Rough shooting and gundog trialling severely compromised if not criminalised altogether. Packs of scent hunting hounds reduced to an ineffective two, to satisfy some party north of the Border that their wilfully ignorant viewpoint can scabble to gain a few more policy making 'tweets'.

As painfully witnessed in Scotland, from a political, judicial and legislative perspective, it is all the same issue. So to put your head below the parapet and hope that the salami slicer will cut away someone else's hunting activity, ahead of yours and thereby buy you more time is to entirely fail to register reality. Throwing another perfectly justifiable natural hunting activity 'under the bus', just because you do not take part in it, is not only seriously ignoble and not very kind or helpful to anyone but also incredibly stupid.

But there have been some good successes. Hunting has continued. Hounds are still in kennels and working. The rural economy is still benefitting. People are still enjoying getting out with dogs in our countryside and continuing our way of life which has been hardwired into our DNA through millennia of hunting with dogs...natural hunting meets wildlife management. Good people are beginning to rekindle hope that challenges to organisations such as the National Trust, Forestry and National Park authorities might bear fruit. The BHS has launched and has re-structured scent hound hunting and its governance, as well as its PR and messaging. Cornwall County Council rejected a bid to ban trail hunting, as did North Northamptonshire, Somerset, Cherwell and Essex. Projects have been conducted to assess the impact of the Hunting Act 2004 and Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002. Various politicians are beginning to make encouraging noises around Wildlife Management law and importantly, it is review, having been positively and successfully lobbied. This has been superbly



Terrier radiant at the Claro Beagles Dog Day in 1985



Rydal Show in 1987



*A former champion fell type
at The Great Yorkshire Show in 1986*



Judging terriers at the Great Yorkshire Show in 1984

supported by submissions to various Parliaments from the Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management and their five hundred and sixty veterinary surgeon members.

Hunting is now being represented from a Hunting perspective, finally, after a seventeen year brain freeze and we are getting somewhere with a fresh approach. Unconventional maybe but active and collaborative. More importantly and encouragingly, it is working.

There remain eighteen months until the next general election. There are two hundred rural seats (a Government changing figure) for grabs in Westminster. Coupled with the mess that is agricultural policy, subsidies, post Brexit trade issues, with a bit of Jeremy Clarkson and Jamie Blackett thrown into the mix, we could finally have found our line to have bad law reviewed and replaced with something justifiable, workable and enforceable. And whilst we're at it, please note that the word 'repeal' is not in my vocabulary nor ever has been.

Taking note of the enemy, the 'Wildlife and Countryside Link' is an example of how to 'raft up and act'. They are against our way of life at their core, for multiple and largely prejudiced reasons. They have loosely grouped (but claim to represent) 67 organisations and 8 million supporters. Brave as they might be, the South Berkshire Bantam Appreciation Society, led by the Vicar's wife, with a few canapes and Christmas cards for sale, just stands no chance

at the political level. They might be better advised to put their dented ego aside and 'raft up and act' with us for this journey.

Throwing the lurcher community 'under the bus', when it had supported wider hunting and countryside viewpoints back in the day, is not the way to go. Slyly stating that terrier work is the 'soft underbelly of hunting', when in fact it is the only legal activity on the (otherwise illegal, in a proper hunting context) hunting field because it is well organised and regulated by the National Working Terrier Federation, is both arrogant and ignorant in equal measure. More soft in the head than the underbelly!

So it is all to play for. Keep straining in the slips, tighten the girth and keep celebrating the good things in our hunting lives because the opportunity is there to once and for all get things back on an even keel. It is beginning to come together.

Is your hip flask half full or half empty?
Let's get together now, 'raft up and act'
Merry Christmas and Happy Hunting,

ED SWALES
Hunting Kind

*If we do not 'Raft Up and Act' -
all our hunting will never be history!*