



Hunting Kind

Above: **John Nicholson huntsman of the Dulverton West**
Photograph by Janet Ladner

As Hunting Kind nears its second birthday, glimmers of hope and optimism for hunting are, in my view, beginning to appear. We are finally beginning to see hunting get represented from a hunting perspective and the dog very slowly beginning to wag the tail.

We have always known intrinsically that natural hunting is the most humane, naturally selective, environmentally and ecologically sensitive method of wildlife management and that also, it is a long-held belief, central to our cultural heritage and the identity of rural Britain.

The research and evidence, brought together through science, will eventually catch up and prove what we already know. Politicians will begin to (and are beginning to) gain conviction through understanding of rural matters. Not least because the two hundred rural seats up for grabs are a pretty good incentive. And then finally, with the right messaging, the public view will then settle more closely to the reality of what we in rural Britain do daily as we have done for millennia.

Writers, campaigners and rural activists are beginning to shed the mantle of silence imposed by the cold hand of spiteful, prejudiced and discriminatory bad law and admittedly, from within our own wider community, and are beginning to speak out. The team of rural writers for Scribhound, Jamie Blackett and Charlie Jacoby among them, along with country magazines, Jeremy Clarkson, Ian Botham and the voice of Wales in Gareth Wyn-Jones, are beginning to take root and help normalise our way of life to an urban majority.

Whilst we make the best of the poor hand that we have been dealt, organisations such as the British Hound Sports Association and the National Working Terrier Federation, among others, continue to make positive steps towards ensuring that practices are legal and well regulated. The NWTF has for several decades ensured that its codes of conduct are robust, practical, effective, well managed and can withstand scrutiny. The BHSA, in a very short space of time, is getting very close to achieving the same. The tide is turning in favour of common sense.

As the only regulatory body for scent hound hunting activities, in my view, membership of BHSA should be mandatory for those who follow hounds. In that way, effective representation can grow, and hunting can continue to be represented from a hunting perspective.

Hunting Kind as an agile and effective action group, has contributed to facilitating interaction within the natural hunting community of hounds, lurchers, terriers and gundogs, aiming to ensure that we all conjoin on common ground, rather than looking for reasons to push each other closer to the firing line.

We have had positive input to campaigning strategy and political

outcomes. We have represented natural hunting at national and international level having been involved with hunting politics in Stormont, Cardiff, Holyrood and Westminster, including the Trophy Hunting Import Prohibition Bill as well as the Kept Animals Bill.

We have been largely successful in all of our stated objectives and have formed associations or collaborated with twenty hunting-based organisations and experts and have a following of circa 70,000 people:

- Making the case for 'natural hunting' intrinsic to wildlife conservation
- Defending our Cultural Heritage
- Calling for scientific research on welfare aspects of wildlife management
- Proposing a review of UK wildlife law
- Lobbying our cause in the political and public realm
- Informing and educating

We are currently grouping together research topics with leading UK based scientists, vets, anthropologists, farmers and practitioners, along with fellow organisations from other disciplines within UK wildlife management and conservation. This will blend into a political and legal framework to ensure that our case does indeed get the representation it needs and that ultimately UK biodiversity benefits.

The Protection of our cultural heritage and our way of life is a central thread. Fieldwork, through interviewing members of our hunting community has been completed to compile and assess the evidence of what hunting means to us and how much we value it as part of our lives. Further socio-anthropological studies will be conducted over the next few months.

The aim is to establish a set of cultural minority protections for us a sector of society that is consistently the target of discrimination and prejudice. If any of you feel that you qualify in that category, whether that be in an employment or goods and services context (having your business negatively impacted through anti-hunting campaigners on social media etc) then please do get in touch via the website www.huntingkind.com and we will help.

Wishing you all a peaceful and merry Christmas,
Happy Hunting,

ED SWALES