

### **I thought fox hunting was banned – so what can we do?**

- The Hunting Act 2004 did ban some of the activities we used to do, but there are a wide variety of legal ways we can continue to provide a service to the rural community, keep our hounds in work, and have fun!
- We undertake a variety of legal activities, some days will involve just one, some days all – and plans sometimes have to be changed quickly in response to weather, conditions etc, so hunting does remain very unpredictable
- Sometimes we go out just to exercise hounds, we may also lay fox-scent based trails for trail hunting, and may “flush” (that means channel or drive) a fox towards a bird of prey which may then pursue it
- There are also exemptions under the Hunting Act for certain terrier work under ground and for flushing to guns
- This does mean as well as providing opportunities for mounted and unmounted supporters to follow hounds we can still help our landowners manage fox populations

### **How does hunting work?**

- September and October are our autumn hunting months. We hunt early in the morning, and our Masters work very closely with our farmers and landowners as harvest can vary in its timing and we must not risk damaging crops.
- During autumn hunting, the huntsman and his whippers in will be training young hounds alongside the experienced ones.
- Autumn hunting will often involve following Masters’ instructions to surround a covert (pronounced “cover” which might be a wood, hedge, field of sugar beet, maize or other vegetation). This is called “holding up” and often involves work with a bird of prey. Though there is some limited fast work, there is also quite a lot of quieter parts to the hunting in the autumn so it can be a good introduction for horse and rider.
- Autumn hunting mornings will generally last around 3-4 hours, but it does vary.
- From November, the main season starts, and meets are usually at 11am, usually finishing late afternoon depending on conditions and light. By then harvest is in, young hounds have been trained, and our hunting becomes faster and more mobile than in the autumn season.
- Masters and hunt staff will normally change to second horses half way through the day – their horses have to work hard, and also have to be fresh enough to deal with whatever needs doing
- Please be careful and don’t over-tire your horse – adrenaline in horse and rider can mask tiredness! You don’t have to stay to the end, and in fact very few people do. Better to leave whilst you are both still fit and enjoying your selves.

### **What do I wear (and what does my horse wear)?**

- You should be smartly dressed and your horse turned out well to show respect to our hosts
- Normal dress for autumn hunting (or for children throughout the season) is light coloured breeches, tweed coat and coloured hunting tie or collar and tie
- Normal dress for the rest of the season is a black or navy coat for adults and light coloured breeches with a white or cream hunting tie (or as for autumn hunting)
- When wearing a jockey skull, please wear a black or navy silk
- For safety and smartness, tie back long hair and/or use a hairnet
- Your horse should wear whatever tack you and your horse feel comfortable with – generally we stick to traditional black/brown tack, and black/brown numnahs, girths, boots etc
- Adequate “brakes” for your horse are a must, and a neck strap of some sort whether on a martingale, or otherwise, is highly recommended (most experienced people would never hunt without one!)
- Horses are usually plaited from the opening meet onwards, but it is not compulsory

### **Who can come hunting?**

- A very wide variety of people hunt, from all walks of life and all ages.
- People who hunt regularly usually pay a subscription (details on the hunt information card that comes out every season, or from the hunt secretaries) which means they can come out multiple times for a set price.
- We welcome guests who pay a day “cap” or fee (again details on the information card or from the hunt secretaries) and allow up to three day visits before subscribing
- You will see out hunting that some people wear green velvet collars and special buttons on their hunting coats – these are experienced subscribers who have supported the hunt over an extended period and are invited to wear the collar and hunt buttons at the discretion of the Masters. If you need help/have a question out hunting, people in green collars are good ones to ask!

### **Can children come hunting?**

- They are very welcome to hunt with us.
- However, children of 14 and under must be accompanied by a mounted adult
- If there is no suitable family member or friend available to escort a child, ring the secretaries in advance to enquire if any other arrangements may be made, but please be aware this is not always possible
- The only exception to the rule about children requiring adult escorts are the pony club/childrens’ priority meets where all adults hunting that day help the children

### What happens at a meet?

- Most people travel their horses tacked up, mount to be ready for the meet time and remember, keep your horse's head not its heels towards hounds! Horses can get a bit excited when hounds come out of their lorry, so take extra care.
- When mounted, introduce yourself to the secretary on duty, and pay your cap (preferably in an envelope with your name and phone number on it)
- Out autumn hunting, you will simply mount up and be ready to move off at the appointed time – listen carefully for any instructions from the Field Master who will direct the mounted followers where to go and stand, what to do etc.
- In the main season, we usually have a short “social” period before we move off when kind hosts provide a drink/light refreshments – again listen carefully for any announcements/instructions and keep your wits about you so you are ready to follow the Field Master to leave the meet – the Field Master will ask for “hounds please” when ready to move off, make sure you turn your horses head to them

### What happens after we have moved off from the meet?

- The hunt then begins, and one or more of our legal activities may be undertaken
- Ask experienced followers to explain the notes of the hunting horn etc to you
- Unless you have been asked to go “on point” (which means leaving the other mounted followers to go on look-out duty to feed information back to the Master/Huntsman as required), follow your Field Master.
- Some hunts involve jumping fences and ditches – it does vary. If you don't want to jump, ask at the meet who to follow and someone will be able to show you ways round – but please ask for help, don't just take off across country on your own, you may end up somewhere we aren't allowed.
- If you hear someone shouting “war” something, for example “war wire” or “war hole” they are indicating a hazard like loose wire or rabbit holes – so look sharp and keep your horse safe, and don't be shy about warning others.
- If you hear someone shout “gate please” as they go through it, they mean it needs to be shut when the last one is through, “car please” means clear the road to let vehicles through etc
- When you leave say “goodnight” to the Master and on the way back, stick to roads, and tracks we have used, unless you are 100% certain you are allowed to cross other land



## The Fitzwilliam (Milton) Hunt

# NEWCOMER WELCOME LEAFLET

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT HON SECS AT  
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