

MASTERS OF FOXHOUNDS ASSOCIATION

ENQUIRY INTO ALLEGED CONDUCT OF THE KIMBLEWICK HUNT on 1st JANUARY 2019

Enquiry was held using Web Conferencing on Friday 18th September 2020

25th September 2020

For The Chairman MFHA – The Lord Mancroft

Those Present at the Enquiry:

Chairman of Panel – Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) N J Foster
Panel Member - A I Jackson Esq
Panel Member – Mrs C E Green
Director MFHA – M K K Hankinson Esq
Hunting Office – Ms Mary Cookson

Kimblewick Hunt – A P D Sallis Esq MFH
Kimblewick Hunt – Mrs M Smith MFH
Kimblewick Hunt – Mrs J M Howard Jones MFH
Kimblewick Hunt – A Hill Esq

The Masters of Foxhounds Association (MFHA) established an independent Panel to enquire into the circumstances which led to reports in the Times Newspaper and ‘online’ of members of the Kimblewick Hunt evicting a fox from an earth in order to allow the hounds to hunt it. The MFHA Enquiry was convened in January 2019 and then adjourned in March 2019 to allow a police investigation and the subsequent criminal prosecution which was concluded in August 2020 with the decision by Mark Vincent and Ian Parkinson both employees of the Kimblewick Hunt, not to appeal their Court sentence. The Enquiry was restarted and the agreement reached for it to be held using Web Conferencing due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Enquiry followed the Terms of Reference which had been sent to the Kimblewick Hunt in advance. A P D Sallis MFH (AS) was hunting hounds on 1st January 2019 and was the nominated lead spokesman for the Kimblewick Hunt, A Hill (AH) was out on the day and riding ‘forward’ of hounds and is a former Master and long time member of the Kimblewick Hunt. Mrs M Smith MFH and Mrs JM Howard Jones MFH, Joint Masters were also both present on the 1st January 2019. The Enquiry Witnesses were not on oath.

1. Whether, taken as a whole, the evidence (including, but not limited to, covert video and sound recordings upon which the basis of which the allegations have been made) satisfies them that those allegations (or some, and if so which of them) are well founded.

AS did not dispute the evidence as shown in the video(s) and therefore accepted the allegation that the Kimblewick Hunt had bolted a fox from an artificial earth/drain on the 1st January 2019. AS confirmed that the video(s) showed Mark Vincent (MV) who at the time of

the incident was the professional terrierman and countryman for the Kimblewick Hunt and also Ian Parkinson (IP) the amateur terrierman and countryman. Two other men shown with MV and IP were assisting and were not employees of the Kimblewick Hunt and had no direct involvement. The Kimblewick Hunt only became aware of the video a week later when the Countryside Alliance (Polly Portwin) rang AS who was mounted at a Meet; they followed it up that evening with further calls. The Countryside Alliance handled the interlocution with the Press and at no time was the Kimblewick Hunt contacted directly.

2. Whether, if those allegations (or some of them) are well founded, the events which took place on 1st January 2019 (as has been alleged by the media and social media) were against the best interest of hunting and/or brought hunting into disrepute and/or may have caused reputational damage to hunting.

AS stated that the actions shown in the video(s) “appear to be contrary” to the Hunting Act 2004 and that the bolting of a fox and the language used would damage the reputation of hunting. This was taken by the Panel as an admission by the Kimblewick Hunt of bringing Hunting into disrepute.

AS and AH went to some length to inform the Panel that the timeline and distances suggested in the video(s) were implied as being foreshortened. AS stated, that hounds arrived on the earth/drain some minutes after the fox had been bolted and that the bolted fox was seen by AH to be out of covert/copse and nearly a field away before hounds followed.

3. Whether, if those allegations (or some of them) are well founded, an employee of the Kimblewick Hunt, or anyone acting under its authority, acted contrary to any instructions from their employer or anyone else with authority over them.

AS confirmed that MV and IP were employees of the Kimblewick Hunt and that as Master/Huntsman, he further confirmed that neither individual had acted contrary to any instruction that he may have given them. AS stated that he had regular meetings with his Hunt Staff and Terriermen and at the beginning of the Season he had set out what he expected from their roles and support on any given hunting day. The *modus operandi* was for the terriermen to be working in front of the hunt and to assist hunting above ground. There were no specific instructions given to the Terriermen pertinent to dealing with earths on 1st January 2019 other than it was a ‘High Day’ and the given direction of draw. In addition AS states that he gave no specific instructions to MV or IP over the phone on that day.

4. Whether, if those allegations (or some of them) are well founded, the events which took place are or were (as has been alleged by the media and social media) a necessary or normal incident of the practice of hunting with hounds (after as well as before the implementation of the Hunting Act 2004).

The Panel asked AS about earths in the Country and whether the Hunt had a specific policy relating to them. The practice of stopping earths is minimal and checking of known earths is occasional. No artificial earths have been put in recent years nor is there any kept record. The earth/drain in question was known of and believed to have been put in circa 2010 but is not maintained.

Of particular note, MV and IP were prosecuted not under the Hunting Act 2004 but the Animal Welfare Act 2006 as the act of handling a fox and releasing it to hounds constitutes cruelty to an animal. The carrying of and the use of drain rods to clear the fox from the earth/drain into the hands of the Terriermen was not an agreed practice within the Kimblewick Hunt. AS confirmed that the permissions required for terrier work in support of the Hunting Exemption were in place and the folder of certificates carried and that there were generally good relationships between the terrier team and the keepers particularly in the south

of the Country. There was no specified permission for this location.

5. Whether, if those allegations (or some of them) are well founded, any of those who were Masters of the Kimblewick Hunt (and, if so, who) had authorised the events (or any of the events) which are alleged to have taken place on 1st January 2019.

AS confirmed that he was the Master and Huntsman on 1st January 2019 and therefore in charge and Mrs Smith and Mrs Howard Jones accepted that there was a collegiate responsibility on all Masters for conduct on the day. AS said that MV and IP were experienced men and knew what was expected of them on any given hunting day and they were not in sight of the Master/Huntsman or hounds at the time of the incident. Although AS had communication available with the Terriermen by mobile phone, it was not used during this incident.

6. Whether, if those allegations (or some of them) are well founded, any of those who were Masters or members of the Committee of the Kimblewick Hunt or were otherwise in positions of responsibility within that Hunt on 1st January (and, if so, who) were aware that such events might be taking place; and, if not, whether they should have been so aware.

As previously stated, no one in the Kimblewick Hunt knew of the allegations (video(s)) before the Countryside Alliance (Polly Portwin) was notified by the Times a week later and she then spoke by telephone to AS. The Masters believe it was discussed at a scheduled Masters' gathering on 9th January and again at a Hunt Committee Meeting on 13th January. Of note, no one from the Kimblewick Hunt ever spoke to the Press and they were also never approached by the Police either for interview or to write statements. They were unable to tell the Panel how MV and IP had been identified from the video and subsequently their names passed onto the Police.

7. Whether the Kimblewick Hunt was at the relevant time, and is, adequately resourced, managed and administered to carry out the activities of and incidental to hunting with hounds in the circumstances which exist under current legislation (including the Hunting Act 2004 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006).

AS and the Masters stated that the Kimblewick Hunt was and remains adequately resourced and that good management practices are in place. AS summarised that their approach to a hunting day was to plan in advance, ensure that areas are cleared and that country is well organised and that a high standard approach is maintained. In light of the incident, all terrier work was stopped in most instances. AS was well aware of hunting with hounds being continually in the public eye and the significance of the changes made due to the Hunting Act 2004 and that the Kimblewick Hunt were bound by the Act. AS confirmed to the Panel that they had good amount of Country and that they well supported by Landowners and Farmers with a good and loyal following. The Kimblewick Hunt were not constantly monitored or followed by antis and that they were not a problem on the few occasions that they had been targeted. The worrying aspect for the Hunt is the increasing availability, usage and technical sophistication of covert monitoring devices both ground and aerial and their usage on private land.

8. Whether those who were masters, officers (including, in particular, the chairman, secretary and treasurer) or employed or casual staff of the Kimblewick Hunt had attended courses, seminars and regional meetings (being meetings arranged by the MFHA and the Hunting Office with the object of providing guidance on the management of hunts and the conduct of hunting) which were relevant to their

respective roles and responsibilities; and, if so, when they did so.

The Masters felt that they were all well able to manage and conduct hunting through their collective experience and good relationship. They had all attended various courses and seminars and were updated on various guidance as available. AS confirmed that his Staff and Terriermen had attended the annual regional courses and as a Team shared experience and trust. MV has left the employ of the Kimblewick Hunt since the incident however IP is still an amateur countryman and licensed terrierman. Director MFHA asked AS whether IP should still hold a terrier licence given his criminal conviction over the incident. AS and others then eulogised IPs contribution to the Kimblewick Hunt over a great number of years and his continued value. Neither the Masters nor the Committee had considered such an action. The Kimblewick Hunt had no recommendations for improvement or prevention of a similar incident.

9. Findings of the Enquiry Panel

The Masters of the Kimblewick Hunt accept that the events as portrayed in the video(s) on 1st January 2019 did happen and they identified the individuals – Mark Vincent and Ian Parkinson - as being Hunt Staff (employees) of the Kimblewick Hunt on that day. They accept that as a Mastership, they share a collegiate responsibility for the conduct of hunting on any given day. They also accept responsibility for the conduct of their Hunt Staff and on this occasion Mark Vincent and Ian Parkinson as Terriermen.

The Masters of the Kimblewick Hunt are judged to have brought hunting into disrepute by their responsibility for the actions of their Hunt Staff on 1st January 2019 which have been subject to criminal prosecution and circulated widely in the media.

The decision and actions of Mark Vincent and Ian Parkinson and the methods they used to clear the earth/drain and the handling of a fox were not specified or supervised by those in authority on the day. However this does not absolve the Masters/Huntsman of their overall responsibility for ensuring that Hunting is carried out in the proper prescribed manner at all times.

There is nothing to suggest that the Kimblewick Hunt lacked either the resources, knowledge or experience to carry out Hunting in a correct manner on 1st January 2019.

10. Recommendations of the Enquiry Panel

That the Masters of the Kimblewick Hunt are given a severe reprimand for their actions on 1st January 2019.

That a suitable monitor is appointed by the MFHA to oversee the Kimblewick Hunt for the Season 2020/21.

That the Masters of the Kimblewick Hunt ensure that they and their Hunt Staff attend all of the necessary training days and seminars as directed by the MFHA.

That Mark Vincent and Ian Parkinson have their Terrier Licences immediately revoked and that furthermore they may not to be issued a Licence for two Seasons (not before 2023/24) for any licensed hunt under the MFHA.

That the MFHA review the issue of Terrier Licences and their renewal and qualification.

That the MFHA consider appropriate guidance and training for Hunt appointed Countrymen and their activities in support of hunting.

MFHA to remind all Masters of their collective responsibility and in particular the necessary command and control measures that should be in place for all Hunt Staff both professional and temporary. Warning that the use of covert surveillance techniques both ground and aerial are likely to proliferate and may well be used as admissible evidence.

e-signed by:

Nicholas Foster

Alastair Jackson

Charmian Green