

ROYAL ARTILLERY HUNT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The above virtual meeting was held for all Royal Artillery Hunt Subscribers, Supporters, Landowners, Tenant Farmers and Hunt Puppy Walkers on Sunday 22 November 2020. The purpose of the meeting was for Hunt Officers (Chair, Mastership and Hon Treasurer) to provide a summary, covering elements of last Season and this Season so far. These were put into context against the delivery of hunting within a Pandemic and its effects on delivering fund raising, I have extracted key points from the meeting and summarised them below:

THE AGM:

There is a statutory requirement to deliver a Subscribers' Meeting annually. This virtual AGM replaced the original meeting to present a more inclusive meeting, with the objective of reaching deeper into the Hunt family, to all those who contribute to the Hunt both on hunting days and for fund raising.

FINANCIAL STATUS:

Hunt expenditure exceeded income last Season. This was attributed to the effects of the COVID pandemic stopping both hunting and the delivery of our larger fundraising events. At the same time the Hunt was required to fund departing Staff redundancy measures.

Through financial rigor, prudence and efficient management by Phil Hodson and Charles Carter, the kennels spend has been reduced to a working minimum. The majority of income generation this Season will come from Hunt Subscriptions and Cap, instead of a reliance on fundraising. This has set finances on a predicted glide path to deliver a minimum of zero income over expenditure during an extremely difficult year, i.e. 'breaking even'. That said, we are reliant on the delivery of hunting itself to generate income, therefore I hope November will be the last lockdown this Season. The other step change is the management of finances passing from military accounting to civilian business banking with help from Ali Wilson, allowing for a smoother, accurate and transparent system going forward.

THE WEATHER AND COVID:

Persistent wet weather placed a strain on our country last winter and made life very difficult for our farmers. Undoubtedly it also dampened the spirits of some of the Field and numbers were down by early Spring 20. Then the COVID Pandemic took hold and Lockdown was announced, hunting was stopped. We lost several days hunting, associated Cap and the opportunity to say thank you and goodbye to Master's and Hunt Staff. The majority of Spring into Summer fund raising events were cancelled. Sadly this included some of our mainstay events, which the hunt historically depend on to get through the Summer months and into the early autumn such as the End of Season Breakfast, Hunt Ride, Newcomers weekend and the summer ball. However there are some positives:

- Our Staff remain protected from COVID
- The Masters and Staff delivered varied and imaginative series of Hound

Exercises. Special thanks to the Household Cavalry Regiment and 5 Rifles for their support

- The delivery of a kennels open day for 90 people over 3 events
- Superb and thoroughly engaging Autumn Hunting
- A rolling series of virtual fundraising events, for which I thank everyone who joined in and those who have run them. A special thanks to Trisha Badham and her Team for their exceptional performance
- Supporting ARAHT and confirmation of a donation coming to the Hunt
- Advanced or on time Subscription payments affording the Hunt to cross into the New Season in good order (a sign of support and faith from subscribers)
- A united hunt going forward, and you need to look no further than yourselves for that

HUNT STRUCTURE:

Angus, before his departure from Chair, managed the change in Staff and Mastership, specifically bringing in the Hunts first civilian Amateur/ Huntsman Master, Charles Carter and his wonderfully supportive fiancée Rebecca. With his team of Guy Loader together with Charlotte, Rifleman Bell and wife Amber they have been a first-class act from arrival and, I will say, are delivering some of the finest hunting in Wiltshire this Season. Welcome to Emily Schlesinger, a real driving force within the Mastership, fund raiser and social media guru, making up the 4th Master of an experienced and dynamic Team. Nestled within the very capable hands of Pam Baker who has been a great sounding board for Charles and our existing military Master David Puckey. Together, they have had to handle some difficult negotiations and behind the scenes preconceptions, firstly in their task of getting Autumn Hunting started and secondly delivering hunting on the Plain. A great effort, and what was also heartening to see was our neighbouring hunts, both Tedworth and Avon Vale, offering support when ground was running short before getting back on to the Plain. Returning to Pam, she provided the meeting with her own update, and although recovery is taking longer than she would have like, she is determined to get back out, secondly she thanked the Hunt for its support, we miss her and look forward to seeing her out with us soon.

POINT TO POINT:

The Hunt remains on track to deliver our Point 2 Point this Winter. Carrying reassurances forward from the governing body that we should be able to deliver as a minimum, a cost neutral fixture. One of a very few Hunts which will deliver an event this Season, and highlights the dogged determination of a hardworking Committee. Not only does this highlight the Hunts ability, dexterity and commitment, it provides much needed support to Larkhill Racecourse, the home of military racing. Alex and his Team are doing an outstanding job, but I would like to single out Seamus Mullins for his personal support, professional acumen and historic support to the RAH in general and Gunner P2P. To our Subscribers, I ask for your help and support when called on to deliver our fixture on the 16 January 2021.

COVID PROTOCOLS:

COVID restrictions have made general hunt duties last Season into time consuming accountability tasks this Season. Special thanks must go to our hard-working Hon Secretaries (Katie and Alex) who have to comply with capped numbers and the prioritisation of people to ensure we stay within COVID rules. Behind the scenes, David Puckey has the insurmountable task for administration to complete to keep us compliant and hunting on Salisbury Plain.

OUR HUNT COUNTRY:

The Mastership confirmed a strong hunting relationship with Farmers, Shoots and Landowners on and off Salisbury Plain which always secures access for the future. With early red-letter days at Great Durnford and Wilsford. On return to hunting on Salisbury Plain a fantastic morning with a 4 mile point. Special thanks goes to Sam Bialek and John Eccles for providing trail laying, proof of practice and collation/storage of data. Finally, the provision of hirelings and Staff horses from Larkhill Saddle Club, with thanks to Rupert Hicks and Team for assuring standards are maintained and horses are delivered on time.

HOUNDS:

There are currently 28 couples in Kennels. 6 couple of puppies have been returned from walk and are out on couples. 3 bitches have been identified to be bred from, largely using VWH Fowler.

THE FUTURE:

I started the Season by saying we must protect our people, remain vigilant and flexible to deliver hunting within a COVID environment, this has not changed as we go forward. Those with Hunt appointments are 'delivering in spades' to ensure not only we keep going, but we flourish where we can. To the hardworking Mastership, I thank you on behalf of the Subscribers, for delivering brilliant hunting in the face of adversity. I thank Charles and his close Team for providing superb sport, of which, I hope you have all experienced and no doubt enjoyed. Like you all, I look forward to getting into a hunting day rhythm on the Plain for the remainder of the Season, so please remain positive, engage with events and keep supporting out hunting family. The Mastership finished off by reaffirming their dedication to the Hunt and the delivery of good hunting. A look forward and when appropriate, to a return to meets, hospitality and social functions. A sentiment we can all empathise with and look to enjoy in the future.

One final point, for anyone that has any thoughts, ideas or suggestions for hunting or fund raising, please do get in touch with the Mastership or Supporters Club who will be delighted to hear from you.

Yours aye,

Paul Snodgrass