

BHSC Chairman's Report 2021

The pandemic started not long after our AGM last year and who would have thought that one year on we would still be battling this terrible disease. Social activities have been put on hold and life in general has been very difficult for everyone. I think we have been extremely lucky that we were able to at least enjoy hunting for half the season.

Prior to lockdown we only managed to hold our annual Hunt Breakfast, a mini breakfast at Charterhall and the catering at Duns Castle, thereafter all fundraising events were brought to a halt. We had already decided at this point that our major fundraiser for the year would be a Silent Auction in October. We felt that, as we would be unable to do anything over the summer, we should focus on making this a high end event in conjunction with the Hunt committee and ensure that we had a variety of items for auction which would include high value items such as shooting, fishing, holiday homes, etc. We created a separate committee to coordinate this and held meetings with the factor at Ayton Castle but, as time went on, it became apparent that holding such an event would not be possible. Rather than cancel, the committee decided that it would be worth trying an internet auction but reserving the high value lots for another year. It proved to be a great success raising over £10,000 and it was very entertaining watching the bidding especially over the last 24 hours. It was a real learning curve and Elaine, who chaired the committee, put in a lot of work to pull it all together. Those funds went to the Hunt, not the Hunt Supporters, but we all committed to it and at the end of the day our purpose is to raise money for the Hunt.

We tried to be creative in raising funds in other ways which conformed to the lockdown and social distancing rules, but that proved to be very difficult. We tried to pull together a cook book which would be ready for Christmas time but didn't manage to gather sufficient recipes in time. We will continue to work on this and hopefully it will be ready for next Christmas. We had the idea of doing Chicken Poo Bingo which involves making a pen, the base of which has numbered squares. People pay an amount per square, a chicken is then put in the pen and whichever square it poos on is the winner. We have made the pen and it does sound a bit of fun, but it probably requires an event to hold it at and that has been the problem. If you think I've gone mad you can watch this on You Tube!

Remaining connected and maintaining enthusiasm throughout all of this has been particularly challenging. We have noticed that our subscriptions have gone down significantly and this may be partly due to a lack of events to remind people. We also felt that the outside catering has been so successful as a fundraiser that we have put on less and less social events and people may feel they aren't getting much for their membership. We started doing bacon and burger rolls at outside events about 10 years ago and it has gone from strength to strength raising significant funds for the hunt supporters. However, it's a lot of work for those involved and it is very labour intensive going to the cash and carry to do the shopping, distributing bacon and sausages for pre-cooking, getting the trailer to the venue, filling up water barrels, filling up flasks with boiling water, erecting the tents and setting up. That's before you spend the whole day cooking at the event. The committee has now decided that it would be better to have a separate committee which will focus on the outside catering and Jeanna Swan has agreed to head this up. The Hunt Supporters committee will focus on raising money through social events which always was the primary aim of the club and hopefully our members will feel they are getting something from their membership. The subscriptions will remain at £10 for an individual membership and £25 for a family membership. I would urge all those who support the Hunt in any way to join the Hunt Supporters Club and help us raise much needed funds for the Hunt.

I should remind people that we do have Hunt Supporters merchandise for sale and all of it is really good quality. It includes ties, fleeces, hoodies, rugby shirts, polo shirts, bobble hats, fleece hats, aprons. Again, we haven't sold much this year but hopefully next year will be better.

Before closing, we need to remember those who are no longer with us. This year we sadly lost David Darling who was a great supporter of the Hunt and the Hunt Supporters Club. He did a huge amount of work behind the scenes when Rhona was on the committee and he was also on the Point to Point committee for many years. He will be greatly missed by all of us but the family have kindly donated £500 to the Hunt Supporters Club in his memory. We haven't yet decided what we will spend this on but we will ensure that it is something which will be enduring and useful to the Hunt.