

A History of the Burton Hunt 1672 -2004 Part II

In 1863, “*The Burton*” was one of the premiere hunts in England. Under the mastership of Lord Henry Bentinck (1842 – 1863) everything was done that was conducive to the sport. The country was hunted six days a week, with sometimes two packs out on the same day.



“His hounds were scientifically bred, not for looks, but light, active and full of stamina. His pack was regarded by many as the best in England”

*Lord Henry Bentinck’s Hounds
By William Barraud*

Although much of the county was now under the plough, it was still possible for the hunt to meet near Gainsborough and gallop across country to Wragby and back to Lincoln in pursuit of the fox. But the nature of hunting was changing. Tenant farmers now formed the majority of hunt members and there was a greater need to consult through the formation of a hunt committee. Diplomacy, not a strongpoint of Lord Bentinck, was now required to deal with conflicts of interests between the hunting and shooting lobbies.

When Lord Henry retired as Master in 1863, the hounds were purchased for £3500 by Henry Chaplin of Blankney Hall who planned to take over as Master. Chaplin, who was a member of the Prince of Wales set at Oxford, was engaged to Lady Florence Paget. Unfortunately she eloped with the degenerate Lord Hastings just days before their wedding was due. In an effort to forget the affair, he embarked on a Grand Tour of Europe (he was accompanied in Paris by the Prince) and in his absence, he invited the Irish Peer, Lord Doneraile, as acting Master. He paid Doneraile £3000 per year and the pick of the horses in Lord Bentinck’s stables, an offer he could not refuse. Unfortunately the appointment was a disaster. He mismanaged the hounds which had been so carefully prepared by Lord Bentinck and he proved unpopular with the members. Bad luck also played its part with an outbreak of foot and mouth disease and bad weather restricting hunting for a large part of the season.

When Chaplin returned as Master in 1865 he spared no money to restore the Hunt’s reputation. Although now elected as the MP for Lincoln, he hunted with the Burton twice a week, and if working late in the Commons, he would engage a special train from King’s Cross to take him to a spot in Lincolnshire to be met by his groom with a hack to take him to the meet.

Unfortunately the scale of his extravagances placed a burden even on his finances and in 1870, Chaplin proposed that the traditional boundaries of the hunt be divided into the Northern half, The Burton, and the southern, The Blankney. The Hunt Committee begged him to continue but in 1870, Chaplin became Master of the new Blankney Hunt and Mr Foljambe appointed Master of the old Burton country.

The division of the country marked the end of a great period for the Burton and for half a century the Masters had been the most famous and dedicated of a golden era.

Henry Chaplin later created Viscount Chaplin of Blankney, was the last of the squires of Blankney Hall before the extravagant expenses of his hunting and racing stables forced him sell his 25,000 Lincolnshire estate. He stood down as Master of the Blankney in 1883 but he continued to hunt at the age of 80, and weighing in at 18 stone, he still rode to hounds!



*Henry Chaplin, 1913
Aged 80*

The next 30 years to the turn of the century were difficult years for the Burton. The absence of a major sponsor placed financial burdens on the members who were only just able to find the £500 guarantee in subscriptions for the Master. Cheap imports of grain from North America reduced farm incomes by 50% and struggling farmers sought better compensation for damaged crops and a greater say in the administration of the hunt. Democracy is a wonderful thing but the lack of a titled patron to fight your corner may have also contributed to the difficulties! The loss of some of the best coverts on the boundaries of the Burton territory to adjoining hunts such as Lord Yarborough’s Brocklesby in the North, almost led to its demise.

It was a brave decision of the hunt committee to appoint a twenty year old Master in 1889, but over the next 23 years, Thomas Wilson reestablished the reputation of the hunt through outstanding management, consideration for farmers and attention to hound breeding. His appointment was in contrast to the landed traditions of the day, for his wealth was founded on Trade, his fortune based upon the family owned Westbrook Snuff Mill in Derbyshire. Under his stewardship the Hunt may have lacked the brilliance of past years, but was regarded as a more resilient, workmanlike farmers’ pack.

Wilson endeavoured to look after farmers and gamekeepers who otherwise would shoot or poison foxes to preserve the valuable shooting rights on their land. In 1898 gamekeepers received an annual remuneration of £47.15s and poultry claims amounted to £111.9s.6d. In 1906 at the invitation of Lord Monson, the Burton Hunt Steeplechase racing was reestablished on Burton Cliff. The event proved extremely popular with the public and was accepted for racing under National Hunt Rules.

Point-to-Point Racing continued on the course until 1967 when it was transferred to Carholme at the invitation of

the Lincoln City Council. The remains of some of the hurdles can still be seen on the bridleway to South Carlton.



Burton Cliff Point to Point Meet 1960