

7th March 2016

The Scottish Govt. —
Edinburgh

Dear Sirs

Lord Bonomy's Review.

In 1967, at the age of 38, I agreed to take on the hunting of the Berwickshire Hounds.

All my life I had got great pleasure from following hounds, so I was determined to try and produce similar enjoyment for the mounted followers. I soon discovered how difficult this could be.

The first essential was finding a fox and the second was flushing him out so that hounds could pursue him. For this, scent was vital and, in my 16 seasons at the job, there would not be 20 days altogether when scent was really good, and far too many when it was abysmal. The rest varied between the two.

In the autumn, the undergrowth in woods is very dense and foxes lie very tight in it, so I took out about 40 hounds each day. Even with this number, it sometimes took us a 1/2 hour or more to find a fox in a wood and as long again to flush him out, sometimes failing to achieve this. If this was the case with 40 hounds, what chance with 2?

If foxes are to be controlled under the existing legislation, then it must, surely, be essential that they can be flushed out. Obviously, it is less cruel with 2 hounds as fewer foxes will be flushed out and shot. However if, as the Watson Bill maintains, shooting is the most humane method of controlling foxes, I can see no possible justification for reducing the number of hounds which can be used for flushing out. The only result would be that the farming and shooting

Communities would feel justified in using much less humane methods of fox control.

I enclose 3 excerpts from my diary of Season 1968-69 which I felt would be of interest.

Yours Sincerely

David Thomson

Thursday 10th October. ✓

SWING BRIDGE RD END 9.0. Bitches + few dogs
I rode Pet, George-Sally. Jack. Willie.

Very wet in the night but nice bright
morning and unlikely to be any scent.
Found 2 or 3 cuts in Fishwick Jean,
One went away East and chased the others
around in' snatches for some time but no
scent. Ate down towards Tweedhill and
found trace on bank opposite Horncliffe.
1 to ground in' bodge's earth and the
other ran back to Fishwick but as
hounds couldn't track it at all on clean
grass went home.

Saturday 12th October.

HAWKSLAW 9.0am. Jogs.

I rode Post who pulled like a train. Geo-Nicky
→ found in Hawkslaw Gorse but could not push him
out and gave up after about 1/2 an hour. Ruthven
Square Wood blank apart from 2 deer. found in
Buttercass but again had a fearful job to push him
out.

N.B. Neither of these places is bigger than 2 acres.

Saturday 4th January. HIRSEL LAW TOLL

I took Sam and George Sally ✓

Super calm sunny morning but no hope of scent-
Castelans blank although a fox was said to have left for
the Hinsel when we were at the meet. Right round the
banks to Masfield blank. Fox said to have gone away
from Hawselaw before we got there. However, found ~~straightaway~~
straightaway but could hardly run at all in covert. Must have
taken at least 20 minutes to shove him out and a
brace were said to have left after we had gone.