

Hunting Etiquette

There is a long tradition of etiquette involved with hunting, much of which seems mysterious, but when explained is usually common sense and safety. The hunt is able to cross private land purely by the invitation/permission of the landowners and farmers so it is polite to acknowledge anyone who may be associated with the land that you are crossing, courtesy is vitally important and whilst riding within the North Shropshire country you are an ambassador for our sport.

Please remember

A lot of people have given up their time and worked hard to organise each days hunting, without them there would not be a hunting day for you to enjoy. But, most importantly, there would be no hunting at all without the goodwill of the landowners and farmers

On the day

When un-boxing before a meet park sensibly, you should make sure that you aren't blocking a lane or driveway or park on a manicured verge. You shouldn't do anything that may cause congestion or inconvenience to other road users. Remember to check when arranging your day with the secretary to ask if there are instructions on where to park, please make sure that you comply with these, they have been given for a good reason.

Make sure that you arrive at the meet in plenty of time and on arrival as a matter of courtesy say "**good morning**" to the Huntsman and Whippers-in and Master. Find the Hunt Secretary who is responsible for collecting the cap (your contribution towards the hunt's cost), and pay them. Remember, it is your responsibility to find them, not the other way round! If you recognise them thank the farmer whose land we will use, and thank the person who has provided the 'stirrup cup', (the food and drink).

Make sure to face your horse to the hounds should you be in close proximity to them, do not allow your horse to tread on or kick a hound.

The Field Master will normally address the crowd just before the start of the days hunting. It is the Field Master's job to guide the mounted riders (The Field) across country. They will know where we are welcome (and where we must avoid), which route to take and it is essential that everyone follows them. The hunt Field Master may also make any announcements relevant to the day, please listen to these and adhere to them. As hounds leave the meet, please remember to make sure that your horse's head is facing towards them. Then follow the Field Master. The Field Masters role is to ensure that the Field is kept in touch, but not interfering with what is going on, entertained and to ensure that the Field does not go where it should not.

Care should be taken not to '**over-ride**' (go past) the Field Master at any time, unless specifically requested to do so. If during the hunting day you need help or advice, do seek out a senior

member of the mounted field, (mounted followers). If the Field Master gives any commands it is the responsibility of each member of the mounted field to pass these commands back through the field. For example "**ware wire**", "**ware hole on the left**" - '**ware**' is a shortened form of 'beware' this is often pronounced 'war' and is simply quicker to say. You should always turn your horse to face a hunt official (Field Master, Huntsman or Whipper-in) if they are passing through the mounted field, this minimises the chance of your horse kicking a passing horse additionally, you must always give way to a hunt official and give a clear instruction to others to move as well "**Huntsman/whip please on your left /right**".

Gates should always be left as they were found. If a gate is open when you get to it, leave it open unless you have received the message "**gate please**", "gate please" means the last person in sight who can hear is to shut the gate you are passing through. If you are mounted and riding through a gate, and you cannot see other mounted followers behind you, or you are unsure if you are the last, YOU must shut the gate, and fasten it with whatever it was fastened with, (you may find it helpful to carry some spare string in your pocket in case you cannot find how it was fastened. Thank people who are kind enough to hold a gate whilst you ride through, especially farmers or farm workers who may be holding a gate or helping in some other way

"**Headlands please**" means you must keep your horse off crops and keep close into the edge of the field - we only have access to land by permission of landowners and farmers, remember that this is their factory floor and any damage you do damages their livelihood. Any damage to crops, trees, hunt fences, (jumps) gates, gate posts or wire fences must be reported to the Field Master directly at the time it happens. This is so that he can arrange repairs either immediately or at the end of the hunting day. Any accidents or livestock escaping should also be advised to the Field Master. **If in doubt communicate.**

When hounds are passing the mounted field you should always turn your horse to face the hounds and give way to them. This means if they are running about where you are, trying to pass an obstacle, you must move aside, stop, and allow them through, tell those who have not seen the hound/s that they are there.

Care should be taken not to hold up non-hunting traffic, cars, bicycles and walkers, it is easy to make enemies of the general public if the hunt blocks the road. Always leave enough room to allow motorists to pass easily, If a car comes up behind you pass the message '**car please**' forward to the Field Master who should ensure that the Field is moved to a position so that the traffic can pass, this also applies when standing on the road. When a car does pass or when oncoming traffic slows down you should **always** thank them. When riding along the road care should also be taken not to ride across verges that are obviously kept mown by home owners.

Individual members of the mounted field are responsible for ensuring that they do not ride too close to the horse in front. Always be aware that any horse is capable of kicking and by riding too close you risk treading on the heels of the horse in front. If you are riding a novice horse or a horse that is likely to kick you must indicate this with a ribbon tied around the top of your horses tail - a green ribbon for a novice, or a red ribbon if you're horse is known to kick. Please be aware though that it is your responsibility as a rider to make sure that your horse does not harm others. Horses with red or green ribbons should stay at the back of the mounted field.

Courtesy should always be shown to foot followers when passing them. You should give them enough warning for them to take up a point of safety and allow you to pass.

When jumping the hunt fences, remember to wait your turn and do not 'cut up' other riders. The same applies to the gateways. When jumping obstacles you should generally jump 'single file', (one behind the other) and do not jump until the person in front has landed safely. If your horse refuses a fence do not hold the field up by re-presenting it again and again, go to the back of the field before trying again. If you or your horse is not confident jumping you should jump at the back of the field and see if someone will give you a lead, or (if possible) find an alternative crossing. If a hunt fence is damaged remember to tell the Field Master as soon as you can so that they can organise its repair. If a rider has fallen before or after a jump, the rest of the mounted field should wait until the fallen rider is up and out of harms way. When following round a field care should be taken not to cross the path of other riders at corners causing them to change their line.

Members of the mounted field should always indicate they are going home by saying "**Goodnight**" and "**Thank you**" to the Field Master (regardless of the time of day) this will help them keep track of the mounted field. This is particularly important if you are a newcomer, perhaps in an area unknown to you and can avoid a search party looking for you when you are safely on your way home dreaming of a hot bath and a serious drink!. If when you go home you are unsure of where you are please ask the Field Master the best route back to the boxes, this is not necessarily the most direct route, the Field Master will be able to tell you where to go so as not to go on land where you should not be.

Dress Code

Autumn hunting

A tweed jacket with a shirt and tie or coloured hunting stock (not white) over buff or brown breeches or jodhpurs. This is called **ratcatcher**. Long brown or black boots are traditional for adults, and either long boots or jodhpur boots (with or without matching half-chaps) for children. Whips should be black or brown.

Full season

A black coat, (or Navy for ladies only) white or buff breeches or jodhpurs, white stock, black boots with garter straps and gloves. Red coats are only worn by Hunt staff.

Children - A tweed jacket – but blue or black are also acceptable, white or coloured stock or pony club tie, buff or brown breeches, jodhpur boots with or without matching half-chaps or long boots, gloves.

A hunting crop/whip should be carried if you have one, they are very useful for opening/closing gates. Long hair should be tied back neatly or constrained in a hair net. It is sensible not to wear jewellery.

Make sure that your horse is clean and well turned out for the meet and that the tack is clean, safe and not brightly coloured. Horses are not required to be plaited for Autumn hunting but it is preferable though not essential for Full Season.