

HUNTING IN HISTORY

"He made large forests for the deer and enacted laws therewith, so that whoever killed a hart or a hind should be killed."

Anglo Saxon Chronicle 1087 referring to William The Conqueror.

It could be argued that the New Forest owes its very existence to hunting. Historically, the word 'forest' referred to a royal hunting area in which certain animals, like deer, would have been protected by law. The New Forest was William The Conqueror's first hunting forest in all England and it was where he hunted 'beasts of the chase' for enjoyment and food.

Even the fallow deer (*Dama dama*) for which the New Forest is famous, and where they were still hunted up until 1997, probably owe their existence in Britain to hunting (venison literally means 'the meat of the hunt'). During the last Ice-age, which ended C.10,000 years ago, they had become extinct in Britain (Chapman, N G and D I, 1982). No-one knows for certain who first introduced fallow deer back into Britain. Evidence that Romans kept fallow deer here is uncertain, and if they did, they did not persist (Rackham 1987). It seems likely that it was the Normans who introduced fallow deer into the forests of England (Chapman, N. G. and D. I., 1982; Chapman 1991; Rackham, 1987; Tubbs, 1986).

HUNTING IN THE NEW FOREST TODAY

The Forestry Commission has always allowed hunting over its lands in the New Forest where it has been traditionally carried on. Fox hunting continues in the New Forest under permission granted by the Deputy Surveyor and is subject to strictly enforced conditions.

In July 1997, after over 900 years, the New Forest Buckhounds stopped hunting fallow bucks. This preceded a move by the Forestry Commission to suspend buck hunting licenses pending the outcome of the Bateson Report on the welfare of hunted deer. In November 1997 the Forestry Commission decided not to license the hunting of deer with hounds on its lands.

The Labour Government also ordered the Forestry Commission to examine the licenses of the New Forest Foxhounds and Beagles. Since there was no detailed report on the welfare of hunted foxes, it was felt that a decision to ban fox hunting could not be made. Fox hunting will therefore continue on Forestry Commission land but will be subject to further restrictions.

THE FACTS...

The hunting season for fox is from late August/early September to late March/early April. Forestry Commission Keepers are always present during hunts to ensure the hunt follow the conditions set out in the permission granted to the hunt. Keepers also ensure that the Forestry Commission byelaws are observed by all that are present.

...AND FIGURES

In the 1997/98 season:

2	hunts were issued with licenses
28	foxhunts took place
31	beagle hunts (hares) took place
33	foxes were killed during foxhunts
0	hares were killed by the beagles

Source: Forestry Commission

DO FOXES NEED TO BE CONTROLLED?

This is a widely debated subject on which opinions are very much divided.

FOR

“Hunting both controls and protects the fox population.”

The British Field Sports Society

“There is no doubt... that foxes can be damaging and indiscriminate predators of birds and other animals...control methods must remain available to those suffering economic damage from foxes.”

Labour Party Document “Wildlife in the Countryside”

AGAINST

“It is clear that foxhunts play no significant role in the control of fox population.”

Dr. Harris of Bristol University 1987

“In the absence of any form of fox control, there was neither an increase in fox numbers or in the number of lambs lost.”

3 year study by Aberdeen University



New Forest District, Education Section, Queen's House,
Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7NH. Tel: 023 8028 3141