

The Cottesmore Hunt Prosecution

5&6th February 2026



The Cottesmore Hunt
February 5 at 8:53 PM · 🌐

The Cottesmore Hunt has been conducting lawful hunting for 21 years since the Hunting Act came into force in February 2005. We are delighted that today our huntsman, Sam Jones was today found not guilty of illegal hunting following a two day trial at Loughborough and Leicester Magistrates Court. We will continue to work with the British Hound Sports Association, hunting's governing body, to maintain best practice and our high standards.

Caption

The verdict did not establish the Hunt's innocence. It showed, once again, that the law does not protect foxes from being hunted with dogs.

This isn't about trail hunting; this is about fox hunting.



Caption

Cottesmore Hunt Court Case, February 5th and 6th 2026. Sam Jones, huntsman, found NOT GUILTY of hunting a wild mammal with dogs, Hunting Act 2004.

Introduction

The most recent prosecution of a huntsman under the Hunting Act 2004 has ended in a “not guilty” verdict. The Cottesmore Hunt, whose huntsman was in court, has since claimed this proves they are legally hunting. But does it?

No — absolutely not. What it really shows is that the Hunting Act is almost incapable of securing a conviction against someone who is fox hunting.

The Government is, as we know, planning to ban trail hunting. There is intense debate around this, and hunts have produced a long list of reasons why it should not be banned. They tell us the rural economy depends on it — yet offer no figures or research to support that claim. They say trail hunting benefits their mental health — while it undeniably damages the wellbeing of those forced to witness it and live among it. They ask what will happen to the hounds that would no longer be “needed” — yet they continue to breed more.

In AAF, we have said from the outset that banning trail hunting, while welcome, will not solve the real problem. Trail hunting exists largely as a legal defence, not as a genuine activity in the countryside. So how will banning it stop animals being chased and killed by hunts?

It won't. In this recent court case, trail hunting featured heavily, but the central issue was the court's inability to prove the huntsman's intent. We cannot see into someone's mind. No one can. And as the prosecution must prove beyond all reasonable doubt that a huntsman intended to hunt a wild mammal, then ‘not guilty’ becomes almost inevitable. Trail hunting is a problem — but fox hunting itself is the far, far greater one.

It is time we stopped focusing on trail hunting. It is time we focused on legislation that properly and effectively bans fox hunting.

Given that the hunts claim that they accept fox hunting is banned (so they don't do it), then that should not be a problem for them either.

We were in the position to observe this recent case from the inside, in all its grim detail. We know what happened on the day of the hunt. We saw the footage from Northants Hunt Sabs. We followed the case in court, watched how the prosecution unfolded, and saw the defence once again expose the deep flaws in the Hunting Act. In the end, the court could not convict — not because the fox hunting wasn't real, but because the law itself stands in the way.

In any change in the law, every element of traditional fox hunting must be banned: the search, the chase, and the kill. Proving a person's intent is notoriously difficult, so the law must no longer depend on it. Using dogs to find a wild mammal to chase must become illegal. Pursuit of a wild mammal by dogs should always be illegal. The killing of wild mammals by hunts should be illegal.

Full stop — regardless of claimed intention. Ban these activities outright, and hunts won't be able to gamble with wildlife's lives every time they let take their dogs out on a hunt.

Our group is called Action Against Foxhunting. We chose that name carefully. We never considered calling ourselves Action Against Trail Hunting, because that would miss the point entirely.

The Government must face the truth: if fox hunting is to end, the law must deal with what hunts actually do — not the fiction that protects them.

Pip Donovan, Action Against Foxhunting

11th February 2026

The Court Case

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Summary

Location	Launde Abbey, Leicester
Charges	Hunting a wild mammal with a dog, no exemption
Defendant	Sam Jones, Huntsman, Cottesmore Hunt.
Dates in Court	4th and 5th of Feb 2026, Loughborough and Leicester
Evidence came from	Northants Hunt sabs
Brief details of event	Hounds flushed a fox out of a wood. In cry, they pursued it for some distance, with sabs following and trying to intervene. A person can be heard 'doubling the horn' which is usually meant to encourage hounds.
Outcome	Not guilty. Intent not proven.

Events in Detail

On 18th January 2024, the Cottesmore Hunt took hounds and riders out in Launde Abbey, Leicester. Sam Jones was huntsman, with the whipper-in Marcus Speed. Northants Hunt Sabs were present.

The hounds began 'drawing' around a hedgerow and began speaking. A horn call (doubling of the horn) was heard, and 13 seconds later, a fox was seen escaping from the

scrub and fleeing the hounds, who were in full cry by then. The fox ran across a field, with the hounds a metre or so behind him.

Sabs videoed the pursuit, trying repeatedly to call the hounds off the fox.

The hounds continued to chase the fox, out of sight. Sabs followed and filmed as far as they possibly could, continuing to try and call the hounds off with voices. They were shouting “Leave it” and “get back to him”. The fate of the fox is unknown.

A little later, sabs filmed the same hunt in the same area. They advised the huntsman that they have film of their hounds pursuing a fox and that they should stop hunting. The hunt ignored them and continued to allow the hounds to search for foxes in the wood.

In court, the magistrates established these facts:

- Fox was disturbed by the hounds
- Fox ran out of the hedge and the hounds pursued it in full cry.
- The huntsman did not recall the hounds when they pursued the fox
- A ‘Doubling Sound’ on the horn was heard [*doubling the horn means encouraging the hounds to continue*].
- Only Mr Jones had a horn.
- The trails were laid in areas where foxes live

Mr Jones was found not guilty, because intent could not be proven beyond all reasonable doubt. While the horn call was heard, Mr Jones is out of shot at the time.

Investigation

At his police interview, Mr Jones said he could not remember much about what happened on the day of the hunt. He said he didn’t remember blowing the horn. He did not know who had laid the trail. He was unsure of the trail route, explaining that his role was to find the trail rather than plan it. At the time, he was focused on the hounds, which were searching for a trail. He admitted that there was little difference in hound behaviour whether they were on a scent or pursuing quarry. He confirmed that the trail might have been laid by the master. He disputed making the “doubling” horn call, suggesting that it was Mr Tucker who had made it. He stated he was unaware of the presence of a fox and that the whipper-in was in control of the hounds. He also noted that no one was positioned in front of the hounds to stop them. He described the horn calls used by the hunt as either for encouragement or to recall the hounds.

No trail maps were produced at the time. They were produced in December 2025.

The whipper-in was not charged. A whipper-in is responsible for controlling the hounds.

Three videos were examined. One shows the hounds in pursuit of the fox. The other shows the hunt continuing to hunt, despite sabs telling them they have the pursuit of the fox on video. Both videos were seen in court.

Prosecution

The trial was held on 4th Feb 2026 at Loughborough Magistrates and finished at Leicester Magistrates on 5th Feb 2026.

Mr Stephen Welford was defence barrister for Mr Jones

Mr Mark Fielding was the prosecution for the CPS

Witnesses

Luke Tucker - Northants Hunt Sabs

Bee Bell (former Cottesmore master) as trail layer

Expert Witnesses

Stewart Skull (for prosecution)

Adrian Danger (for defence)

Mr Tucker's Evidence - Northants Hunt Sabs

Mr Tucker attended the hunt meet at approximately 11:00 am. He was positioned too far away to hear the initial briefing and did not see any trail laying taking place.

While the hounds were drawing along a hedgerow, Mr Tucker and his group attempted to call them away using their voices. He did not want to go too close to the hedgerow in case they caused a fox to appear. At that point, a fox was flushed from the hedgerow and the hounds went into full cry. He heard the horn call but could not see Mr Jones at the time.

Mr Jones' Evidence - Huntsman

Mr Jones did not explain why his statements in court were more detailed than in his police interview, where he said he couldn't remember much about the day in question. In answer to a direct question on the subject, he replied, "that's your opinion."

He described his close relationship with the hounds, noting that he knew their voices, actions, and even names, and could tell when they were in full cry. He could still tell what the hounds were doing, even when out of sight.

He did not know where the trails were laid about 20 —30 mins beforehand. He noted that trails could be laid on foot or on horseback, but he could not confirm how the trail in question had been laid. He explained that trails were sometimes placed around fox coverts to simulate fox hunting.

Mr Jones said that he had not made the doubling horn call, but he had blown the horn to gather the hounds. He acknowledged that he had initially struggled to recall the day or location during his police interview but did not accept suggestions that his evidence had been crafted to counter video footage.

The fox was found nowhere near the trail laid by the trail layer. Mr Jones explained this by saying he didn't know where the trail was.

Mr Jones admitted he blew the horn.

Bee Bell's Evidence - the trail layer

Ms Bell stated that she laid three trails on the day in question. She did not inform the huntsman of their locations but did give the master a rough indication of where they were and in which order. The hounds were on the trails within the hour.

A video of trail laying was reviewed, in which Ms Bell identified the date as 17th January [the date in question was 18th January] and confirmed it was for the second trail. She explained that she had not recorded the other trail routes because she had difficulty managing her phone, which had been switched off at the time.

Ms Bell confirmed that the trail map was produced after the trails had been laid. She explained that the areas chosen were not covert locations but simply woods, and that the routes were selected to suit the country and the enjoyment of the followers. Access to the areas was generally via some jumps. She clarified that the trails were laid in those locations because they offered suitable jumping for the "punters", but they are in places where foxes live or rest.

The Not Guilty Verdict

The defendants were accused of illegal hunting, contrary to Section 1 of the Hunting with Dogs Act 2004. They were found 'not guilty' **under this Act.**

The defence used these arguments:

The video and evidence do not show intent. Hunting is by definition intentional - if it is not intentional, it is not hunting. (DPP v Wright).

Trail hunting and fox hunting look identical.

Searching for wild mammals is not an offence.

The burden of proof is greater for the prosecution than the defence. The defence introduced doubt, and the prosecution had not proven beyond all doubt that the hunting was illegal.

The video did not show Mr Jones blowing the horn.

Evidence and statements suggesting the defendant was deliberately hunting a wild animal with dogs

The evidence given by Mr Jones in court was inconsistent with what he said in his police interview. This suggests that the evidence he relied on in court to prove his innocence was fabricated.

The trail layer's evidence was vague and inconsistent. She confirmed in court that she laid a trail on 17th January, when the incident took place on 18th January. The trail map was not produced until almost a year after the incident. This suggests that it was fabricated.

A fox was definitely hunted by hounds. The court agreed that this happened. Sabs tried hard to call the hounds off, but Mr Jones took no action to stop the chase. If the sabs can try, so can the hunt.

Mr Jones was not seen on video blowing the horn, but as he was the only person to have a horn on the day, it is unlikely that the call was made by anyone else. The horn call is clearly heard on the video. In his police interview, Mr Jones said the horn was probably blown by Mr Tucker. Doubling of the horn is certainly a signal to encourage the hounds to continue hunting. Mr Jones admitted to blowing the horn, but he denied that he was encouraging the hounds. However, Mr Jones said he was just gathering the hounds. The hounds DID continue to pursue the fox, suggesting they were obeying the horn call.

After the incident, the hunt continued to hunt in the same area, where they knew foxes were living. If they did not want to risk pursuing a fox, they would have taken their hounds away from the area.

CPS prosecution said that he thought the hunt's expert witness, Adrian Danger (AD), was biased. The full detail of the CPS questions to Mr Danger is produced below, with a paraphrased extract here:

- Mr Danger stated that the CPS lawyer's statement regarding using fewer hounds on a trail was **"ludicrous and ridiculous"**. The adjectives are clearly judgemental and contemptuous and should not be used by an independent witness.

- CPS further reiterated that his evidence was not independent as shown by his disputing remarks.
- CPS questions *AD's ability to provide impartial answers* and that *his replies had been 'biased opinion – not objective'*

As this clearly requires further enquiry, our full comments will be published in a report to come.

An observer in court said afterwards, *"We were nearly there. The magistrates wanted to convict, but they knew it would fail on appeal. The Hunting Act just wouldn't allow a conviction, even though Sam Jones was clearly fox hunting."*

Did the Hunting Act fail?

The defence case was weak and contradictory; the defendant and defence witness were weak. Nevertheless, the court could not say with conviction that intent had been proven, even though a fox was chased, and possibly killed. The Hunting Act 2004, and the case law from *DPP v Wright* states that 'hunting' must be intentional. If it is an accident, it is not 'hunting'.

How should the Hunting Act be amended in the light of this case?

- Hunting any kind of a scent, including artificial, cannot be used as a defence for accidental chases or kills
- Accidentally killing a wild mammal with hounds should be an offence
- If any kind of scent laying is allowed, hunts should keep full records of trail laying; records of scents and purchase of scents must be kept. Video of trail laying should be mandatory.
- It should be mandatory that hounds are rated or called off any chase immediately
- Hunts cannot take hounds to areas where wild mammals might be hiding or resting.
- The definition of hunting must include employing dogs to: search for a wild mammal, pursue a wild mammal and kill a wild mammal.
- The Hunting Act must be clear-cut and specific.
- Complete guidance should accompany the law, to ensure that everyone understands hunting. Lack of expert witnesses has been a problem for many Hunting Act prosecutions. However, in this case, there were two experts. Because what they said was completely contradictory, the court was faced with two experts saying opposite things, with no way to verify which one was right. Proper written guidance is crucial.

Full Court Case Report - by court observer, present on both days. From contemporaneous notes.

Loughborough 4th Feb 2025

Mr Fielding outlined the case including three videos. He went on to confirm that 'Doubling of the Horn' 'could be heard and that combined with the video of the hounds chasing a fox showed 'Intent'.

Mr Fielding outlined the area of where 'trails' were laid and that they were laid adjacent to known 'coverts' and 'fox territory' He went on to say that that the trails were just a 'smokescreen' and reiterated government policy to address the law because of these issues. He also raised issue why so many hounds were needed on a trail hunt?

CPS- Mr Tucker (MT) X Exam in Chief

- MT – was asked by Mr Fielding about what time he attended the hunt meet and the usual start of the meeting. He asked if MT heard any comments of following trails at the initial hunt briefing, or if he saw any trail laying going on.
- MT said he was too far away to hear the briefing and that he arrived at around 11 am and he was not aware of any trails being laid.
- Mr Fielding then asked about the landscape and the area where the incident took place. This included asking about access & ground conditions for the horses and any difficulty areas of scrub.
- MT was then taken through the incident and the actions of his group as the hounds were *drawing* around a hedgerow. MT explained they tried to call the hounds away with voice calls but explained he did not want to get too close to the hedgerow. At the time a fox was flushed from the hedgerow and the hounds went into full cry. They again reviewed the video and the 'doubling' of the horn was heard as the hounds went into full cry.

The hounds were within two meters of escaping fox. Despite the groups attempts they could not find out what happened to the fox being chased by the hounds. The CPS asks about the location of the huntsman during this incident. MT was not sure of the huntsman location.

The further videos were reviewed and show the Hunt still in the same area with hounds drawing along a similar landscape of hedges and scrub. MT can be heard informing Mr Jones that his hounds have been filmed chasing a fox and please call them off. This is reiterated several times. Mr Jones and the hunt remain in the same area where the previous hunt was flushed by hounds and appear to continue searching the area.

Mr Tucker – Cross Examination by Stephen Welford (SW)

- SW asks about MT intentions on the day
- SW asks about number of SABs in his group

- SW asks about who had cameras within the group and who was filming
- SW asks about MT Monitoring Experience
- SW goes into depth about MT arrival time and the hunts pre-amble discussions and suggests that if trails were laid, they would have been done before his arrival.
- SW also asks again if MT could hear the preamble brief or discussions—Mr Tucker agrees he could not hear the briefing
- SW discussed the route followed by the hunt @Launde Abbey area. He went on to confirm the location of the riders and then focussed on the relative location of the hounds.
- SW asks again about trail laying and were any sabs there at 10.30.
- SW and MT agreed that the Sabs were behind the hounds most of the time.
- SW now discussed any when MT started recording and lack of evidence prior to the fox appearing. SW agrees that the hounds are in full cry on the video chasing the fox.
- SW asks why MT mentioned not getting too close to the hounds and the hedgerow. MT responded that he did not want to disturb a possible fox & that his presence could stop the fox escaping or turn it back.
- SW asked about the location of SJ when the 'doubling' horn call took place & it was agreed his location was not visible.
- ***13 Seconds after the doubling of the Horn the fox can be seen escaping the scrub – chased by hounds.***
- SW confirms sabs followed the hounds but questions the lack of recording following the chase.
- SW asks about the delays between videos and timing of incident,

Mr Tucker Re- Examination Defence Mr Fielding.

Asks if the monitoring group had a horn- NO. It was agreed by all that the only person with a horn on the day was Mr Jones.

Mr Fielding CPS then discussed the initial police interview with Mr Jones following the January 18 2025 incident. He also raised issues about why the trail laying routes & maps were not provided until September 9th 2025.

- Police ask SJ who laid trail--- reply '*don't know*'

- Police ask SJ about trail route- *'Unsure of trail route – it is my job to find them'*
- Police asks about where the hounds were- *'looking for a trail'*
- Police ask about behaviour if on scent or quarry- *'little difference'*
- SJ says *'trail laid by master'*
- Police ask about doubling horn call SJ disputed & said *'he had not made the horn call. In his witness statement SJ suggested it was 'Mr Tucker who made the doubling horn call.'*
- SJ stated he was unaware of the fox
- SJ stated the 'whipper in was in control of the hounds'
- SJ stated no one in front of hounds to stop them
- SJ was asked about how long he would wait for the hounds to find a trail at a location
- SJ was asked about the Hunts protocol; for reporting accidental kills. SJ replied 'it has never happened in the 3 years I have been here'
- SJ was asked about the horn calls used- encouragement or recall

Stewart Skull (SS)– CPS Expert Witness

Mr Skull had prepared 3 reports for the case

- Initial 50-page report
- Addendum following delivery of trail laying maps on 6/12/25
- Further report following defence expert witness report on 30/1/26

CPS – discuss SS knowledge and experience and his previous knowledge of hunting. Mr Skull lacks knowledge of current practice and in particular 'trail -hunting' -SS confirms he has observed around 50 trail hunts.

- SS was asked about who and how many horns are used on the day. SS replied the only Horn on a hunting day is held by the Huntsman.
- They discuss the horn calls on the videos. SS confirms the horn call heard is 'doubling' for encouragement
- SS states 'doubling the horn' is only used when on a fox
- CPS questions that 'doubling' could be used to round up lose hounds?
- SS Confirms it was 'doubling the horn' and only usually used when hounds are on a fox.

- CPS asks about distance of horn call from hounds (fox) in the video. SS replied it was difficult to assess the distance but *'the huntsman would know by the hound's response, and they were in full cry on the video'*
- CPS discuss about stopping hounds & horn calls to stop. It was suggested they had no one to stop the hounds or anyone get in front. SS said a long blast would indicate stopping the hounds; this was not heard on the video. There were no voice calls from hunt staff, no use of whips, no one to intervene, or get in front of hounds to prevent the pursuit.

Stephen Welford to Stewart Skull CPS Expert Witness.

- SW Challenges SS knowledge and that he had never overseen a pack of hounds.
- SW goes on to suggest that SS only has knowledge of pre-ban type hunting. SW continues to discredit SS ability and knowledge of present hunting methods.
- SW and SS agree that trail hunting is like pre-ban hunting & both look the same
- SW & SS agree that doubling the horn took place on the videos.
- *SW now agrees that SJ did make the horn call*
- SW discuss the role of huntsman and whipper-in. SW goes on to state that the whipper-in should have been on point but was not visible in the early videos. The whipper-in can be seen in the later recordings.
- SW confirms hounds will chase a fox if they find it- SS replies they will follow the strongest scent.
- SW replays video 1 and suggests they are 'not drawing' but are following a scent trail. SS replies they have gone from scenting to hunting.
- SW disputes the horn call and suggest it to *'encourage'* the pack to consolidate and loose hounds to gather in the pack.
- SW then discusses the appearance of the fox. It is a 'FRESH FOX' just broke cover and its appearance shows it has not been involved in a lengthy pursuit, its brush was not down.
- SW – states *'so what disturbed the fox?'* was it *'hounds? was it Mr Tucker it could be any number of reasons.'*
- SS suggests that the horn calls are the reason for the hounds returning to the hedge line.
- SW and SS both agree there is no recall, no whipper in or anyone at the head of the field.

Sam Jones (SJ)– Examination by SW

- SW ask about experience and SJ confirms he has been a professional huntsman for 11 years at the Bicester, Berkeley, Belvoir & Cottesmore
- SW asks about a normal hunt day. SJ confirms he is informed of the country they are visiting on any individual day but **not** the trail route, not even the starting point.
- SJ confirms his whipper-in is Marcus Speed who has been with the Cottesmore for about a year. He mentions that Mr Speed was previously with the Monmouthshire Hunt.
- SW suggest that the whipper-in lacks experience
- SJ asked about how he used his horn. The horn was used it inform for contact with the field and it was a tradition before mobile phones.
- SJ asked about how he controlled hounds- he replied 'I use voice calls, cheering to keep them together or return. Voice calls is more the responsibility of the whipper-in
- SW asks about trail laying. SJ says he now knows Bee Bell laid trails, he goes on to add *'They are usually laid around 20 minutes before the hunt leave and are around 2 miles long. SJ again states he has no idea of where they are.*
- SW asks if SJ could observe the hounds all day. SJ states' *he does not follow hounds and that they can be out of sight'*
- SW then discuss 1st Video when the fox was disturbed. SJ says *'I cannot confirm exactly where I was when it bolted, I think I was the other side of the hedge'*
- SW asks why he blew horn was it encouragement? SJ replied *'I was trying to gather the hounds together; I had not seen fox and it was not encouragement'*
- SW asks where the whipper- in was located. SJ replies *'he was in another field where the farmer had lambs and wanted to ensure the hounds kept out.*
- SW asks SJ how he would stop hounds and SJ admits *'he couldn't'*
- SJ stated *'horn would not recall hounds on a chase'*

Mr Fielding CPS to SJ

- CPS asks about his relationship with hounds and that SJ *knew their voices, actions and even names- he would know when they were in full cry.*
- CPS asks –*'even if the Huntsman was out of sight you will know what they are doing'* SJ replied YES
- CPS asks SJ *'how you know which direction the scent is laid; you could be in the middle of a scent –* SJ replied *I don't know where they trails are.*

- CPS ask about how long laid scent trail lasts- SJ replied *20-30 minutes*.
- CPS raises issues about why the whipper in is not giving evidence?
- CPS ask SJ about his initial Police interview and that at that interview *he failed to remember the day or even location*. CPS suggests that *the evidence and replies have been crafted to counter video evidence*- SJ *'that's your opinion'*
- CPS questions SJ about his exact location & doubling the horn. SJ replies *'he was not doubling the horn but was blowing to gather the hounds'*.
- CPS again brings into doubt SJ ability to recall the events of day.
- CPS asks why the fox was found nowhere near the route shown on the trail map?
- SJ replies *'the trails are sometimes laid on foot or horse*. But I cannot confirm how this trail was laid. CPS suggest that no trail was laid.
- CPS questions *'why do you lay trails in known areas of fox habitat'* SJ replied *it simulates fox hunting so trails are laid around fox coverts*.
- CPS suggest the area was used because it was your *'Intention to find a fox by using this location'*.

Bee Bell (BB) Trail Layer – Short video provide where she states the 17th January as trail laying date?

- SW – discusses the good character of BB as a prep school teacher/owner.
- BB was 14 years as a master. Now mainly admin for hunt activities.
- SW asked for an explanation about a trail hunt day.
- BB replied that it is for the master to ensure permission for the land. The master will co-ordinate area, which order they will trail, where the trail will be laid.
- BB stated they will *avoid pheasants and shoots*. *Some areas allow hounds but not horses*. *In this case the landowner Mr Ward had said hounds are okay but no horses*
- SW asked *how many years she had laid trails*- *she was unsure how many years she had laid trails* and failed to provide an answer.
- BB stated she *laid 3 trails on the day in question*. *She did not tell the huntsman where they were but did tell the master, roughly, where they were & in which order*
- SW asked: *how long before the hounds were on the trails?* BB replied *'within the hour'*

- SW played a trail laying video where BB states it was the 17th January and that this was for trail 2. *She was questioned why she failed to record the other trail laying routes. BB replied she had trouble managing her phone and it was switched off.*

CPS to Bee Bell

- CPS questioned about when the trail map was produced. BB replied after the trail was laid.
- CPS questioned why visit areas know to have foxes? BB replied that it is not a covert but is just a wood. It is about the country what the punters want.
- CPS questioned about route followed and how did they access the area – no real reply except they did have access via some jumps. CPS presses the point ‘was it the **intention** to lay your trails where you know foxes are found. BB replies it was because the area provided ‘*jumping for the punters*’

Adrian Danger (AD)– Defence- Expert Witness

AD had prepared a report for the defence. He had hunting experience pre and post ban with: Spooners & Weston, Quorn Hunt, and a Yorkshire Hunt. He retired in 2000 and became a hunting correspondent for Horse & Hounds.

In 2011 he was a master @ Sinnington Hunt for 3 years and has had no official hunting since 2014. He had done a study of fox behaviour, actions, and locations. He had also written books about hunting.

SW x Examination

AD states that the CPS, Mr Fielding’s statement regarding using fewer hounds on a trail was ***ludicrous and ridiculous***’

AD states that hounds are hunting, speaking throughout the videos.

AD suggests the horn call was *NOT* a ‘Doubling Call

AD states it does not matter if they are on a scent or fox the call is the same.

AD states that in his opinion the call was to ‘*rally stragglers*’

AD agrees it is a ‘*fresh fox*’ that intervenes within the laid trail

AD states it was disturbed by the hounds but it could have been but Mr Tucker shouting. AD goes on to say ‘*foxes do not like loud noise*’

AD states he hears ‘*no encouragement calls*’

AD states *there is nothing in the video to suggest they are hunting*

AD continues to dispute video evidence and why the hunt returned to the same place despite disturbing a fox

SW asks how they could have stopped the hounds. AD replied ‘*they do not chase the hounds but need to get in front. They need to find a pinch point, or cut across a field and*

block the hound's route' He goes on to suggest that the whipper-in did not do his job & that it is not the Huntsman job to stop hounds.

CPS Mr Fielding – AD

- CPS asks about comments made by AD where he called the CPS *Ludicrous & ridiculous*
- CPS -further reiterated that his evidence was not independent as shown by his disputing remarks.
- CPS questions *AD ability to provide impartial answers* and that *his replies had been 'biased opinion – not objective'*
- CPS asked: *how many times AD had been called as an expert witness-* reply: *this my first*
- CPS asks about who, how and where a trail is laid. *AD replied: primary objective is to replicate hunting and not break the law.*
- CPS asks 'if the aim is to avoid law breaking why lay trails in fox areas' AD replied: *It is to provide country where jumping could take place.*
- AD further adds *trails are laid in woods, kale, and turnip type fields*
- CPS presses again on the significance of trail location- AD replies: *it is to provide Jumping experience*
- CPS asks about use of the horn and AD report. AD goes on to criticise SS (defence expert witness) report and calls out inaccuracy in his report.
- CPS questions the hunts actions on the third video- AD states: *'I don't know what's going on and perhaps they are searching for another trail'*
- CPS ask about 1st video and why the 'whipper-in' did not intervene. AD defends the whipper-in and states the whipper-in was NOT NEGLIGENT
- CPS again raises issues of why they have failed to bring the whipper-in to explain his actions
- AD now states that *'the whipper-in would WATCH the chase for a while then look for a location to stop the hounds, but he didn't.*

Leicester DAY 2

CPS summing up-

- CPS replays all 3 videos.
- CPS discuss Video 1 – Doubling Horn Call - 13 seconds later fox appears. CPS state shows the 'Intentional Hunting

- Police interview with SJ- he failed to recall anything, even stated he never blew the horn. But yesterday in court he had total recall.
- Further evidence of intentional hunting is shown by laying a trail in known fox habitat
- Bee Bell had stated the day was about *'putting on a show for the punters'*
- Bell grudgingly accepted *she had laid trails where SHE knew foxes were found.*
- Bee Bell said the day was about *'rides, jumpers and watching hounds work'* the CPS suggested it was about *finding a fox.*
- CPS pressed on the point that it has been a theme of the trial that it was the 'whipper-in' who should have diverted or stopped the hounds, if they believed that then we should have had the whipper-in at the trial?
- CPS mentions Video 3 and that it reinforces 'intent' they were not near a trail and the hounds were searching for the fox: the same as in video 1.
- CPS confirms they have doubts about the defence expert witness who appeared to show bias.

SW Defence Summing Up

- Outlines the area about the law on fox hunting and section 1
- Outlines Section 11 and Interpretation in Sub-section 2
- Suggest case law consideration of *DPP v Anthony Wright*
- Suggest case law Maurice Scott, Peter Heard & Donald Summegill v Taunton Deane Magistrates Court (2009)
- Burden of proof Paragraphs 26-37
- <https://www.huntingact.org/assets/images/hunting-high-court-ruling.pdf>
- SW states that searching for wild mammals is not an offence. However, intentionally pursuing the fox is illegal.
- SW suggests the video & evidence do not show intent.
- SW explains how trail hunting is no difference in appearance to hunting.
- SW suggests that SJ is of good character & unlikely to commit an offence and asks for weight to be considered on his character.
- SW suggests that BB should have weight accredited to her evidence because she was of good character.

Leicester Magistrates Verdict

Magistrates - Ms Partridge, Mrs Dhillion, Chairman -Mr Maguire

Magistrates had reviewed all the evidence.

Mr Tucker and Mr Skull evidence supported the prosecution evidence of illegal hunting.

FACTS-

- Fox ran out of hedge
- No recall
- Doubling Sound
- Only Mr Jones had a horn
- Fox was disturbed by the hounds
- Hounds pursued the fox and were in full cry
- Cannot stop hounds
- Trails were laid in fox areas
- However, the case was not proven beyond reasonable doubt that hunting was intentional.

NOT GUILTY

The magistrates made comments about the evidence provided by the prosecution witnesses. Interestingly they made no such remarks about the defence witnesses.

Appendix-

There have been many issues with the idea as to whether “searching” for an unidentified or unidentifiable wild mammal could be classed as hunting under the [Hunting Act 2004](#). It has also been a contentious issue regarding the actual meaning “hunting” under the Act. This issue was examined in the joint cases of DPP (Crown Prosecution Service CCU South West) v Anthony Wright; and the Queen on the Application of Maurice Scott, Peter Heard & Donald Summerhill v Taunton Deane Magistrates Court [2009] EWHC 105 (Admin). ***The Court had made it clear that the interpretation of the Act in terms of the term “hunts” under the Act does not include the mere searching for an as yet unidentified wild mammal. Therefore, an illegal hunt will only begin, when a person or persons engage or participate in the pursuit of an “identified” wild mammal, they would then be guilty of an offence under the Act subject to the facts.***

Pip Donovan, Action Against Foxhunting

Northants Hunt Sabs

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Video Evidence





