

WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! ITS YER GAGGING FOR IT...

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BUNCH OF HUNTS

THREE YEARS ON - SCHNEWS REVIEWS THE UK 'BAN' ON HUNTING

"It's pretty much business as usual hunt sabbing in the fields of rural England, three years after the hunting ban came into force - if you can call it a ban; week in week out we see hunts chasing and killing foxes in direct violation of the ban." - H.S.A. Press Officer

Three years since the ban on hunting with hounds was passed through parliament, has it made a blind bit of difference to the bloody fate of persecuted British wildlife? No – but it has provided an invaluable lesson on how people with cash and influence can buck the law with impunity. Not only that, but those trying to curb their illegal activities face police harassment and hunt thuggery.

When the the Criminal Justice Act 1994 was first introduced, one of its main targets was the Hunt Saboteurs movement, denounced as "Thugs, wreckers and bullies" by the then Home Secretary Michael Howard. Within hours of the bill receiving royal assent, police moved in and began arresting those disrupting bloodsports under the new offence of 'aggravated trespass'. At one point, Sussex police were fielding nearly eighty officers every weekend to arrest and harass hunt saboteurs.

Contrast this with the Hunting Act 2005. Pretty unequivocal in its terms, it made hunting with hounds a criminal offence. The more naïve might have expected a similar police effort made to clamp down on those now in breach of the law. What actually happened was that David 'there's none so blind as those who will not see' Blunkett announced a 'softly-softly' approach, letting the police off the hook. In a backstairs deal, hunting became an offence - but not one for which details of those arrested would be recorded, or one which would count towards national crime enforcement statistics. The same police forces which had deployed vast resources to harass anti-bloodsports activists now simply ignored the hunting issue.

Bloodsports enthusiasts carried on their merry way, initially using the flimsy legal camouflage of 'exempt' hunting. What this meant in fact was that some hunts took to having a bird of prey on hand (falconry isn't banned), others a few bumpkins with shotguns (because it's allowed to use two hounds to flush prey towards guns) and others still took to dragging smelly rags around miles from the action in attempt to pretend they were drag-hunting. Once it became apparent that across

the country police were not about to take any action anyway even these pantomimes were dropped. For example on Saturday 5th January, the Surrey Union foxhunt chased and killed a fox on the village green at Ockley, Surrey. This was photographed by sabs. Efforts to interest police in the footage were met with the thin blue line of complete indifference.

Of course there have been a handful of prosecutions across the country - twenty-five to be exact. Almost all of those prosecuted by the CPS have been targeted for 'low-level' hunting – using lurcher dogs to hunt rabbits and hares. While just as cruel as yer redcoated,

"Finally - seven years after Neo-Labour promised to ban hunting with dogs, the law's been passed. Foxes can relax and hunt sabs can hang up their balaclavas...Or can they?" - SchNEWS 486

stirrup cup drinkin' landownin' variety, the setting of dogs on wildlife isn't protected by that most vital exemption in the Hunting Act – the defence of being a toff.

When huntsmen from the more prestigious hunts find themselves in court, always as a result of footage taken by the League against Cruel Sports and often as a result of private prosecutions taken out by them, they are equipped with the best legal advice money can buy. As a result they can afford to pay for continual appeals and, like Premiership footballers charged with speeding, find themselves able to wriggle through the smallest of courtroom loopholes.

We are now nearing the end of the third fox-hunting season since the introduction of the ban. Sab groups, committed to taking direct action against bloodsports, have gathered hours of footage of hunts breaking the ban. In response, the hunts have upped the level of violence and intimidation – especially against those carrying cameras. This season has seen a rise in violence targeted at sabs, with vehicles attacked and people hospitalised. And it is usually the camera operators they go for first.

When police do turn up, naturally they haven't developed a sudden sympathy for the anarchists in their (t)rusty black landrovers. In November last year, sabs out with the notorious Old Surrey and Burstow fox hunt, filmed huntsman Mark Bycroft blatantly urging his hounds on to a fox.

One sab told us, "They were on to their third fox of the day – it broke out of some woodland and we were standing there filming. Police arrived and told the sabs, "You lot move away or you'll be arrested." When we asked what for, we were told aggravated



Crap Arrest of the Week

For getting fizzical...

During a superglue blockade of EDO MBMs premises at Fishergate last week, one student tried to pass a blockader a can of fiery ginger beer. Quite how he was going to drink it with both hands glued to a door remains vague (a straw and gaffa tape perhaps?).

Luckily the problem was swiftly solved when, for a refreshing change, Sussex police intervened – and she was put into a police van for two hours and is now awaiting a possible summons.

At least she probably doesn't face a long spell in the can... For more see www.smashedo.org.uk/news.htm

trespass. Pointing out that we were disrupting a unlawful activity didn't do any good as at that point Bycroft rode up and told the police, "You lot sort 'em out or we will." The cops then immediately jumped on one cameraman and wrestled him to the ground, putting him in handcuffs. Minutes later they arrested me." All charges have since been dropped.

Of course it's not surprising that the boys in blue line up with the chinless in pink – some of them ride with the hunt! On Saturday 9th February 2008, Sabs on the South Downs and Eridge hunt were bemused as to have an off-duty WPC from Surrey ride up to them flashing her warrant card. Strangely enough two sabs were later arrested and held for 22 hours. "Basically our vehicle had been blocked in by hunt thugs. After one female hunt sab had been ridden down we'd asked for police assistance and been told that the matter 'had already been dealt with' – i.e. they'd asked the WPC if everything was OK. To try and get out I rolled forward with the Land Rover and cracked a brake light on the 4x4 blocking the road. When the police eventually did turn up I was nicked for criminal damage!"

And the courts take a lenient view of hunt violence. One hunt supporter, convicted of GBH in November for breaking a woman's arm in two places, merely received an eight month suspended sentence. You can easily imagine what would have happened if the offence had been the other way round.

As one greying veteran of the anti-bloodsports battles told SchNEWS, "Screw this monitoring lark: no more standing around with cameras while still getting attacked by the huntscum and arrested by the plod – let's get back to old fashioned sabbing..."

With the law still an ass, all kinds of anti-hunt action continues – and help and support is still needed. See www.huntsabs.org.uk

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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SEPTIC THINK TANK

Enjoy a taste of the elite life - spend a couple of years' salary and take advantage of the superb facilities at Wilton Park, a sixteenth century grade 1 listed mansion, handily located (for us!) close to Brighton. Set in sumptuous grounds backing on to the beautiful South Downs near Steyning, it is now taking bookings for private meetings and weddings - although you'll have to work around their busy conference schedule, when the place is buzzing with secret service goons, chauffeur driven Bentleys and Chinook helicopters.

Since 1951, the building has been owned by the Foreign Office who fly in 'luminaries' from around the World for wine, dine and divine sessions - hoping to figure out how to keep their thin grasp on the reigns of power for just a while longer. Less 'think tanks' than 'think armoured limos'.

While the centre tries to keep a low profile, it's up front about its role - at least until it comes under any unwelcome spotlight, such as when details of talks on how to push globalisation and unfold the War on Terror™ swiftly disappeared from the website within a day of it being publicised by activists (see SchNEWS 471).

Let's hope flagging up some of their forthcoming attractions will not inconvenience their web-monkeys too much... March (13-16th) sees the dark artists of the defence sector emerge for "Meeting the Challenges of Counter-Insurgency and Stabilisation Operations: Strategic Issues and Options".

Among the speakers is Juan Carlos Pinzon, Vice Minister of Defence for Strategy and Planning in the right-wing Colombian government, well known for its use of death squads to crush opposition groups. He will be giving a few handy tips on how to brutally stamp out dissent in a talk on "Colombia and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy, Accomplishments and Way Forward."*

Other highlights include a fascinating section on National Security Interests and "Irregular Operations", to be addressed by Thomas Mahnken, the US's Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning. Later the "Creating Civilian Expeditionary Capability" session will ask, "Are there any lessons to be drawn from British and French imperial experience or from the US CORDS programme in Vietnam? How far can the "contracting out" model work for hot stabilisation and COIN [Counter-Insurgency] operations?" All pressing questions indeed.

Once the dust has settled from that, April 9-11th will be a shot in the arm for those wanting to privatise global healthcare. Supported and sponsored by such progressive do-gooders as the Global Health Group, BUPA, CrownAgents, Eversheds, Ovations Health and the Rockefeller Foundation, it goes under the snappy title of "Public-Private Investment Partnerships in Health Systems Strengthening".

Apparently, "The conference will develop the concept of what we are calling public-private investment partnerships (PPIPs) that go beyond private investment in hospital buildings and maintenance, such as that characterised by Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs)..." With PFI already such a success, they're now brainstorming the next stage of the grand corporate masterplan...

For more on the cheery programme of upcoming events see, www.wiltonpark.org.uk. In case you're a capitalist robber baron looking for a venue, or a society belle looking for the ultimate reception, for bookings tel: 01903 815020 or email: dutymanager@wiltonpark.org.uk

* 'Accomplishments' aren't what folk on this Friday's **March for victims of paramilitaries in Colombia** would call them. After a call out by the Colombia Support Network, people are gathering in Parliament Square at 11am in solidarity with the millions of Colombians who have had their basic human rights abused by the the army or paramilitary death squads - Four million have disappeared, been displaced, massacred and executed. See www.justiceforcolombia.org

HOW NOW DOW COW

Update from Dow Syndrome (See SchNEWS 621): Protesters have had a dramatic victory (for the time being), at the site of the Dow Chemical's proposed new chemical plant at Pune, 150km southeast of Mumbai in India.

Since January 16th, villagers and other supporters have occupied a road - having dug it up with bullocks - to blockade and stop construction work on a new Dow Chemical research lab.

Last week things came to a head when armed police were sent in to break it up. Initially they arrested twelve women from the BDBWSSS group after a massive protest rally on Feb 28th, but things got lairy when another group of 50-100 women actually surrounded the 200 police and held them hostage, demanding the release of the arrestees. Back-up police were called in but after the ensuing barny it took until after midnight before a further 143 were nicked. By morning, the protesters had built up numbers and ferocity once more - and the authorities started to take the threat seriously.

After the intervention of a Judge all arrestees were released unconditionally, and it was agreed to stop building work until the government committee submits its report.

For the time being the road blockade is still on, and going into its eighth week... See www.bhopal.net

COAL FACE OFF

It's time to get the tent ready and stock up on baked beans; the Camp for Climate Action has announced the site for this year's camp. This time round it's at E.on's proposed new Kingsnorth coal fired power station near Rochester, Kent.

After last year's Heathrow camp (See SchNEWS 599), the protest will begin with a day of events at the airport before they march across London to Kingsnorth. The new plant, if given the go-ahead by the government is scheduled to be operational by 2012 making it the UK's first new coal power plant for 30 years. It will pump out the same amount of carbon dioxide as the 30 least-polluting countries combined, and will produce twice as many emissions as a third runway at Heathrow. If Kingsnorth, gets government approval it would signal the green light for the approval of the building of up to seven new coal stations around the country.

The camp will run from the 4th-11th of August. Saturday the 9th has been named the a main 'day of mass protest and direct action'. So alert the Sun news desk! See also www.climatecamp.org.uk

* **Fossil Fools Day** - More direct action against climate change as Rising Tide are calling for an international day of clowning action on the 1st of April. In the UK, pranks are planned at such locations as power plants, petrol stations and supermarkets to highlight the inevitable destruction of the world, as we continue to burn fossil fuels like there's, er, no tomorrow. See www.fossilfoolsday.org and www.risingtide.org.uk

Rhubarb & Custody

Met Cops hit a new low this week - targeting a soup kitchen handing out food to the homeless. The 'Reclaim your food' collective were handing out free soup near The Oval, London (as they do every Sunday). Twenty cops in two vans - plus a CCTV crew - turned up to ensure that this act of flagrant charity did not go unpunished.

Enraged by the free organic bread, skipped soup and insurrectionary rhubarb crumble on offer, the plod had no choice but to act. Two of the servers were arrested, while everyone else was held in a kettle and photographed. All this because they were causing alarm, harassment and distress to the local 'community' and apparently 'attracting crack dealers' (well we all know how much *they* love a good crumble with the cops!)

SchNEWS's man on the scene has made a short film - see www.veoh.com/videos/v6333168tbH5b25n

* Please support reclaim your food. Email: reclaim_your_food_brixton@riseup.net

TAA'rd with Same Brush

Squatters fought off police as they used 'military siege tactics' to surround a squatted fund-raising gig in Brighton last weekend. The benefit was for the forthcoming Brighton Temporary Autonomous Art (TAA) space. The old Sainsbury's on London Rd (empty for over a year) was squatted as avenue for live bands and a sound-system.

Police arrived in numbers just after midnight. One party-goer told us, "There were a 150 people inside the building but another 200 were kept outside by police lines, which was stupid as they managed to create a public order situation. They deployed vans, dog units and special ops units, and taped the area off, working side by side with private security.

"The Chief Super in charge actually admitted that we were in legal occupation - but that didn't stop them trying to shut the party down. We opened another entrance to allow people in and the police attacked with pepper spray and dogs. One 16-year-old girl was badly mauled by a police dog and had to go to hospital with nasty puncture wounds."

Police then tried to storm the original entrance but were held off by hand-to-hand fighting - and they lost some of their equipment to the protesters. They didn't manage to gain entry and so Police served a Section 63 of the CJA 1994. Eventually people had living vehicles and equipment seized, and five arrests were made.

Brighton TAA: "We want the people of Brighton to come together to create a cultural, interactive autonomous space where people are free to be, free to create and free to express themselves." 2-5th April 2008 - venue TBA (of course) <http://www.subterraneanartbrighton.org>

* **Call For Decentralized Days of Action for Squats and Autonomous Spaces** - On the weekend of April 11th-12th there will be two days of demonstration, direct action, public information, street-party, squatting... in defence of free spaces and for an anti-capitalist popular culture. Linking and inspiring people and autonomous spaces, Europe wide. For updates and events see <http://april2008.squat.net>

...and finally...

Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside... Five unnamed cops from Gwent police have been found guilty of using patrol cars to take day trips to the coast whilst on duty. Dubbed the "Seaside five", they were competing to see who could travel the furthest from Blackwood police station in South Wales without being rumbled.

The self-styled 'thin blue shoreline' felt so untouchable they actually used their phone cameras to then record the results of their away-day jaunts to the likes of Barry Island and Porthcawl. The intrepid sightseers only came a cropper when they crossed the river Severn, after a punctured tyre brought them grinding to a halt on their way to Weston-super-Mare. Although they told local rozzers who tried to help that they were on an 'official operation', their own senior officers later confiscated their phones only to find photos of the filth munching ice cream and frolicking on the beach at various seaside landmarks. They had even snapped themselves riding the log flume at Barry Island Pleasure Grounds!

A Gwent Police spokesman described them as 'grotesquely stupid' (although we'd push that label a bit further than merely applying to those five). Two have resigned, and two others were fined thirteen days' pay each but remain on the force. The other one had already resigned over abusing a member of the public. Who watches the Baywatchmen? (Us, presumably when they start posting their exploits on YouTube).

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - laws might change, but class is permanent... Honest!

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