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Over the past five years, A&M Contracting has built up a portfolio of blue chip clients including the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust, English Nature, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire county councils, many large local estates and even a shoot in Wales.

Wherever possible, they use low ground-pressure equipment to minimise damage to soil structure and flora.

One such machine is the Bobcat tracked loader pictured, a jack-of-all-trades A&M has used for digging, bulldozing, fencing, sweeping, stump grinding, demolition, clearing unwanted scrub and vegetation to open up new areas for shooting, and even maintaining wildlife conservation areas such as deer glades.

The Bobcat has been a great success in their work on the Forestry Commission's most sensitive conservation areas because of its low environmental impact.

As well as large-scale estate work, A&M Contracting can tackle most outdoor tasks, small as well as large, from jump building at Shire Lane to domestic patios and ponds (director Andy Nash even tells us that on occasions when the weather has prevented outdoor work, they've turned their hands to kitchen building and decorating too!).

Andy's also asked us to say that in the unlikely event you have a job to be done outside which *doesn't* feature on their list, please do give him a call – much of their work comes from repeat business, and you really can't ask for a higher recommendation than that.



The Indominatable in Pursuit of The Unwearable

Christian Schwetz tries a different form of hunting with the Connaught Square Squirrel Hunt.

Mornings often challenge my sense of reality, and certainly when I opened the e-mail regarding a mounted squirrel hunt in central London I rubbed my eyes. Surely Guy Portwin has better things to do? Reality check in place, I concluded that it must be true and equally that I simply had to go. When else was I to get the chance to hunt down Rotten Row and support the sport I love? My lack of trailer was obviously a small obstacle that would simply have to be overcome. Places were strictly limited so I was thrilled to be given one. Blains were equally thrilled, no doubt, to empty my bank account. Nevyn, my Welsh Section D, could barely contain himself.

The event was, of course, an elaborate PR stunt. Organised by the Connaught Square Squirrel Hunt with its half-couple of squirrel hounds (Dylan the Jack Russell), a sock drag was to be employed. The Old Surrey Burstow

and West Kent had generously agreed to provide a pack of hounds and lend an air of reality to what promised to be the shortest hunt ever. Sadly, an article in the Times blew our cover and the antis had a complete sense of humour bypass so the mounted event was called off amidst threats of disruption and the paired cold feet of the Metropolitan Police and the insurers. Although I doubted the assurances of good behaviour freely given by Nevyn concerning the blessing of the horse ceremony, you can imagine my disappointment.

Ridicule is the most potent weapon of the disenfranchised and accentuating the ridiculousness of the law was achieved by forming a hunt dedicated to the elimination of the sock. The hunt was formed by Merlin Hanbury-Tenison last year after he had been reprimanded by the police for allowing his dog to chase a squirrel, and it's named after

the square where our dear leader has his new house. It brings to hunting, I suppose, one post-modern and green innovation, the re-usable quarry.

Undaunted, Duncan Macpherson JM let me know that the event would take place on foot. We were requested to come in full hunt attire, black not tweed, as the 'gentlemen' of the press were to be present. A small internal debate concluded that if I was to lend full support, it would have to be visible.

So it was that on the Sunday morning of the 17th September, with the sun beating down on my raging hangover and seasonally ridiculous attire, I poured myself into my car.

Tube travel is my preferred option, but on this occasion, I demurred. What after all was my cover story to be – fancy dress party, gay club? Neither would have sounded convincing on a Sunday afternoon...



Dripping and shaking like a leaf at the combined effects of the night before and the media frenzy, I forced myself to the bar and sought the most obvious consolation. This was swiftly followed by a mutual attachment between me and Sue from the Surrey, in similar attire and also sporting shades, for we were both in fear of our jobs, she as a member of the prison service and me as a freelance for several trade unions, whose sense of humour is about as elastic as rotten leather. Outside, we were immediately smothered by cameras and well-wishers alike. Duncan arrived on his moped with Dylan riding pillion. Speeches made, I set to work with the camera. As a photographer, I have organised many a media line-up but never had to simultaneously participate in one. There was one outside the pub, and after a brisk walk, outside Blair's house in Connaught Square. Then a brisk trot down to Hyde Park. All you royalists out there will be thrilled to learn of the drive-by show of support by Charles and Camilla just as we were about to cross the road into the park.

Flagging already and after yet another line up, we realised that we were expected to run with the field after the sock, not once, but four times for the cameras. Yelp! After leaving the appropriate distance between Merlin and our half-couple we stampeded off amidst blood curdling cries and much waving of crops. Delirious laughter appeared to be my default reaction. My word, this was almost as thrilling as the real thing! However Sue and I soon concluded that we were desperately unfit and longed for our mounts to provide the ambulatory assistance that we've come to rely on in normal proceedings.

The quarry out-run and duly dispatched, we were all set for another run. I served once more in the field and then decided to lie down on the grass and hide behind my camera. Correction: to get stuck into some



real work and get some pictures. Two more runs at full gallop then the blow for home, home being on this occasion a welcome return to the pub, the Duke of Kendall, its hunt-friendly landlord and his fare. There I met with Kevin Keating, filmmaker of *The Battle of Westminster*. Visibly left wing if you know what I mean, but with a firm passion for civil liberties. He would be very happy for us to screen his film. Is anyone in a position to help?

A quick drink and I was off to this magazine's compilers for a debrief before retiring gratefully to bed. It had been a long day.

TOP: the half-couple of squirrel hounds (Dylan the Jack Russell) and the joint master

ABOVE: The joint master with the quarry

FAR LEFT: the thrill of the chase

All photographs by the author

Do you want to know more?
<http://www.csshq.org.uk>





ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT Starter's orders; a young spectator gets up close and personal with one of the Vale of Aylesbury foxhounds; the crown jewels; playing the numbers game

OPPOSITE The 'real' racing in 2006 was competitive, but the pony races really stole the show...



Have a flutter at Easter

For 20,000 racegoers, the Easter Saturday Point to Point at Kimble is a permanent fixture in the social calendar

This year, the ever-popular Easter Saturday point-to-point at Kimble racecourse falls on 7th April.

Gates are open at midday and there are six races on the card plus two pony races (see right). The first race starts at 1.30pm, but if you beat the rush and get there when the gates open you'll find plenty to keep you busy before the real business of racing gets underway.

Stallholders come from all over the country to exhibit at Kimble and you can find anything from binoculars to country clothing to wicker baskets to old-fashioned sweets – with a whole load of other things sandwiched in between.

The Game Conservancy Trust have a stall, as do Riding for the Disabled and, of course, the Vale of Aylesbury Supporters' Club will be selling its usual mouth-watering array of homemade cakes, jams and pies of all sorts, plus eggs and other local produce.

There will be about 20 on-course bookmakers in evidence, plus the Tote, for those all-important bets on each race and, of course, it's always worth giving

one or two pounds to the smiling raffle-ticket sellers as you get out of your car to make sure you're in with a chance of taking home one of the massive bottles of whisky or champagne that are up for grabs: if your horse wins, you can celebrate; if he loses, you can commiserate!

If you're hungry and you didn't have time to put together your own luncheon hamper, don't worry – there are stalls selling hot food all day, such as jacket potatoes, beefburgers and chips, along with doughnuts for when you desperately need that four o'clock sugar rush.

The mid-afternoon highlight comes when The Vale of Aylesbury with Garth and South Berks Hunt's hounds are brought into the parade ring between two races and that's always fun to see. If you join them in the ring, as everyone will be invited to do, there's a real danger of getting licked to death by dozens of exuberant, friendly, loveable hounds. If you stay outside, you can enjoy watching everyone else getting licked to death – and probably also see one or two ice creams disappear down the wrong throats!

Pony Racing was added to the card at Kimble in 2006 for the first time and proved itself a hugely popular spectacle.

Two races were staged for ponies 13.2hh and under and 14.2hh and under, both with jockeys aged between 9 and 15. Several travelled from far afield, and it was great to see many ponies entered who regularly hunt with the Vale of Aylesbury with Garth and South Berks.

The 13.2hh race saw a maximum field of ten run over approximately half a mile. Charlie ridden by Joe Hill won, carrying on the family tradition, with My Boy ridden by Tommy Quesnel second and Rebecca Bullock on Weydown Sunflower third.

The second race was run over a slightly longer trip. Sparky Boy ridden by William Twiston-Davies was victorious and has since been placed in the Charles Owen Pony Racing finals held at Aintree. Emerald Girl ridden by Lucy Quesnel put up an exciting challenge coming in second with Gaby Hill riding Stonebridge Cascade third.

I am reliably informed by my own children that pony racing is fantastic fun. In 2007, races will be held at the Kingston Blount meetings as well as at Kimble. Competition is sure to be hot!

If you know of any budding Frankies or APs please contact me, Jon Quesnel, for more information on 01491 576338.

Don't forget, there are also three more point to points this season at Kingston Blount: 21st April, 12th May and 27th May, first race at 2.30 in all cases.



News from your Hunt Clubs

Social events and fund-raising with your local Hunt Club

The South Oxfordshire Hunt Club Invite you to their
'Off the Hoof' Country Team Challenge

Saturday 9th June 2007, Meadowbrook Farm, Moreton,
Nr Thame. £80 per team (limited entries)

Teams of four people, all over 18 years and one to be a lady!

Each member to participate in 4 events (clay flurry, cast fishing,
quad course and scurry)

Prizes include best team to 3rd place, best laugh,
best 'Old Git' and best lady

Pool Shoot throughout the day and scurry event for children

Food & refreshments all day followed by Prize Giving, BBQ,
Bar & Disco (free to competitors/helpers) others £5 entry

Entry Form

Team Name

Team Captain

Contact Number

Address

Team Member's Name and Phone Number:

1

2

3

4

Cheques payable to SOHC for £80 and send to Sarah Wynn,
Elmtree Farm, Moreton, Thame, Oxon OX9 2HR Tel: 01844 216822

ENTRIES CLOSE MONDAY 4 JUNE.

Please phone for times between 5-9pm on THURSDAY 7 JUNE

Garth Hunt Club:

21st April: Point-to-point at Kingston Blount racecourse. First race at
2.30pm.

May: AGM with guest speaker Clarissa Dickson-Wright.

27th May: Spring Ride in the Pang Valley.

8th September: Henley Show at Greenlands farm, Hambleden.

Helpers always wanted!

Old Berkley Hunt Club:

7th April: We are manning the cake stall at the Kimble point-to-point
and always welcome cakes, jams and home produce of all sorts. Please
bring them on the day or deliver them in advance to Terry Fryer (see
page 1 for details).

15th April: Clay pigeon shoot

9th September: Shire Lane Hunter Trials

South Oxfordshire Hunt Club:

9th June: 'Off the Hoof' Team Challenge (see separate advert)

23rd June: Farmers' Ball at The Oxfordshire Golf Course. Tickets £40
to include three course meal and coffee. Disco & Bar.

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ST HUBERT, THE PATRON SAINT OF HUNTING

Father Neil gives us a history lesson

St Hubert is believed to have been born to
a noble family circa 656 AD at Maastricht
in the Netherlands and to have died in 727
AD in what is now the Brabant region of
Belgium.

Apparently, St Hubert loved hunting, and
tradition has it that whilst out hunting on
Good Friday he had a vision of a stag with a
crucifix between its antlers and heard a voice
warning him that if he did not turn to the
Lord and lead a holy life, he would quickly
go to hell. This was a spiritual turning point
in his life and, after the death of his wife, he
renounced his worldly wealth and titles and
began studying for the priesthood.

St Hubert became the first Bishop of Liege
and played a major part in converting the
inhabitants of the Ardennes to Christianity.
Indeed, he is known as the Apostle of the
Ardennes.

We don't know exactly when St Hubert
was first invoked as the patron saint of hunt-
ing, or when the tradition of blessing hounds
on his feast day, 3rd November, began but he
was very highly regarded during the Middle

Ages and the custom of blessing hounds
continues in France and other European
countries. In Britain several hunts begin the
season with a blessing, including the Vale of
Aylesbury with Garth and South Berks.

RIGHT AND BELOW: Father Neil blessing hounds at
Woodrow Farm, Wigginton, 2nd November 2006



50 YEARS IN THE SADDLE

Heather Munn celebrates fifty years of hunting

At the 2006 Boxing Day meet on
Cholesbury Common, Master Val Barr
presented Heather Munn, formerly Hunt
Secretary of the Vale, with a framed
photograph to commemorate Heather's
fifty consecutive years of riding to hounds
with the same Hunt.

Heather started hunting at the age
of ten with the Old Berkeley Hunt in the
1956-57 season. In those days, the Old
Berkeley met on Chorleywood Common
amongst other places you couldn't
imagine hunting from today, and their
Boxing Day meet was held in Amersham
High Street.

The very first day Heather went hunting,
the meet was at The Dumbell at Hornhill,
and she was collected from the end of her
drive by a group of local hunters including
Daphne Agelesto (now Aidley). Together,
they hacked to the meet, had a great day,
and from that moment on Heather was
besotted with hunting.



Cliché

Shopping with a passion

THE LOOK

Be inspired by fabulous clothes with a new, strong femininity this season. There is a clearer silhouette to jackets and skirts, jeans are iconic rock chic, knits are essential, especially the sweater dress. For evening, look for that 70's and 80's inspired party dress.

The must-have cover up this season: the parka. A classic design that gives an instantaneous cool edge, casual or luxurious feeling with fur trims.

Coats with fabulous styles to suit every occasion, shearlings or wool: the epitome of the understated elegance.

Tailoring is new, much more sleek, after seasons of fluid fashion a wave of tailored trousers, from lean and skinny to slouch and wide.

Look smart with neat skirts and jackets tailor-made for women, in decadent brocade, pinstripe or soft tweed.

Femininity is full on and all about the dress: the tea dress, the prom dress, the halter dress, the strapless dress, the wrap dress and the babydoll.

Cashmere knits, soft and subtle or a bold statement with a flash of red to lift your winter wardrobe.

Mix rock attitude with romance, denim studded or sparkly, glamour goth with black lace or a bit of baroque, just love it.

The belt is Autumn's key accessory: it's all about the waist, oversized, skinny, chain, studded, patterned or chunky.

The key to the look, is a pared-down approach with muted colours and sleek clean silhouettes or layer up and create drama with a mix of striking fabrics and bold designs: pile on the textures to welcome winter in style.



THE WISH

With Autumn/Winter collections arriving daily, we have new and established fashion labels to add to your wish list!

Are you tempted by Armani Collezioni, Lamberto Losani, Maxmara, iBlues, Fenn, Wright & Manson, Marilyn Moore, Feraud, Christian Lacroix, Ochre Cashmere, Weekend, Rock & Republic, Stephen Collins or Shirt Passion?

Perhaps our new labels such as Ruth Tarvydas, Lato B, DtLM, Flora Kung or Day Birger and Mickelsen will excite you.

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PHILOSOPHY

There is an ideal which makes Cliché unique. The ideal is quality. Quality and the continuity of it, throughout our store, it's about our fastidious attention to detail. Striving to create a unique shopping experience in a relaxed environment.

We don't just sell clothes. The most important thing for us, is to give to you an enjoyable experience and build relationships which last. We can aid you in your buying decisions, not only with knowledge and skill, but also with individual personality.

Cliché is a mixture of both contemporary and classic, an environment which will ensure you want to visit us again.



For more information call the team on:
01494 678887

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