

Game Keepers and Earth Stoppers 1926-1930

The gamekeepers, earthstoppers, and covert owners of the South and West Wilts Hunt were entertained on Wednesday, at the Seymour Arms, East Knoyle, by the Master (Mr J Bell). The afternoon was spent at the clay pigeon shooting and although the weather was hazy and visibility poor, some remarkably good shooting was witnessed by the large gathering present.

The principal competition was for a handsome silver championship cup, presented by the Master for competition by the gamekeepers. It was won by Mr W Buckett, of Vauxhall, Crockerton, in the employ of the Marquis of Bath, the following handicap being won by Mr G Poole. Mr De Tuyll won a sweepstake, but was later beaten by Mr Carlton Cross in a match. Two matches between the gentlemen and keepers were won by the keepers.

On the conclusion of the shooting competitions, the company, of about one hundred, adjourned to the hotel for dinner, where an excellent repast was served by Mr Sanson. The Master presided and was supported by Gernal W A M Thompson, Mr John Hastings, Mr Carlton Cross, Mr H W Reynard, Messrs R Stratton, RE Coles, T Genge, M Genge, T Doggerell, G Young, A Jacob, C Ricketts, R Jesse and many other well-known farmers and landowners. After the loyal toast had been duly honoured, the rest of the evening was marked by a spirit of geniality and an absence of formality.

Welcoming his guests, the Master said he had greatly enjoyed himself that afternoon, but he also hoped those present would help him to enjoy himself during the coming winter by preserving foxes. A lot of foxes, 57 brace, had been killed last season which was rather above the average, but he had had some rather dreary days towards the close of the season.

In a competition for a prize presented by Mr Mosselmans for the best rendering of a song not exceeding four verses by a keeper or earthstopper, Messrs W Reakes, H Poole, W H Marks and W Barnard took part, Mr Barnard being adjudged the winner.

Mr Carlton Cross, proposing the health of the Master, said that in Mr Bell they had a sportsman who was second to none (loud applause). They had a very jolly evening and he felt sure that all present were very grateful to the Master for giving them such a good time (applause). The Master's health was then drunk with enthusiasm, and accorded musical honours.

Returning thanks, Mr Bell, in a racy speech, said that he had been host that evening from a spirit of selfishness, he had thoroughly enjoyed himself in entertaining them (laughter and applause). After twenty one years in the hunting field, he regarded the gamekeeper as one of the finest type of sportsmen in England and that record of service during the war had proved it (hear, hear). It had been a very great pleasure to entertain them and next season he hoped to inaugurate a gamekeepers field trial with a prize, not for dogs of a highly bred type, but for good old "tyke" such as gamekeepers used (laughter and applause).

With Mr E Flower as M.C., some entertaining songs were rendered by Mr T A Brewer, Mr C Ricketts, Mr W Doggerell and Mr A Jacob. "Drink, Puppy, Drink" rendered as a duet by Messrs Mark Genge and E Flower, was greatly appreciated as were some recitations and other anecdotes, and Mr Bert Emblen, a visitor from London, who also sang, presided at the piano throughout the evening.

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By invitation of the Master of the South and West Wilts Hunt, Mr I Bell, some eighty gamekeepers and many well-known hunting gentlemen, followers of the Hunt, met at the Seymour Arms East Knoyle for the annual clay bird shooting competitions and dinner. The weather was ideal, especially for haymaking, and in consequence many prominent hunting farmers, who had never previously missed this enjoyable Hunt function, were unavoidably prevented from being present.

At the excellent course dinner, served by Mr Sanson, the toast list was conspicuous by its absence, but in expressing his great pleasure in again entertaining the gamekeepers and earthstoppers of the Hunt, the Master warmly thanked them for their care and preservation of foxes. Amid hearty laughter he said he knew of only one cub being shot, and as it had a collar round its neck, it was probably somebody's darling, so the destroyer would have to reckon with the owner and not with him (the Master).

Later in the proceedings, which included a jolly smoking concert, Captain Holland Hibbert's toast of "The Master" was accorded an enthusiastic reception and musical honours, with cheers for Mrs Bell and Miss Diana Bell. Those who contributed vocal and instrumental music and anecdotes to the evenings' programme included Mr C H Tremlett, Captain Holland Hibbert, Mr E Flower and Mr M C Marvin. Mr J N Johnston again proved a prime favourite with his Scots songs and Mr George Francis amused his audience with quaint stories told in the Wiltshire dialect, of an old Wiltshire couple's visit to London.

Results of Clay Pigeon Shooting Events



Gamekeepers' Championship (on two stages of 10 birds each stage)

1 D Blake (keeper to Lord Arundell of Wardour) 17 kills out of 20

2 J R Hames (keeper to Marquis of Bath) and W Barnard of Stockton tied with 14 kills

The shoot -off resulted in W Barnard taking second place.

Five keepers qualified for the fourth position: V Gray (Mr John Hastings), W Escott (Lord Arundell of Wardour), L Lever (Colonel Herbert), G Dulake (Duke of Somerset) and H Poole (Sir Henry Hoare). The shoot -off gave W Escott the fourth place. A match between the Hunt members and Hunt keepers was won by the latter with 30 kills out of 50, and the pool shoot between Hunt members and Hunt keepers was won by W Escott. The open sweepstake was won by L Lever; G Veasey of Upton Noble, being second and W Buckett (Marquis of Bath) third. Captain H Reynard won the second open sweepstake and a match between Captain Reynard, G Dulake, H Poole and J Hames was won by G Dulake. The prizes were presented to the winners by the Master.

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