

## THE COMMON HUNT AND THE DOGHOUSE

Today, there are three Esquires in the Lord Mayor's Household, the Swordbearer, the Common Cryer and Serjeant at Arms, and the City Marshal, and at various times in the past papers relating to the history of all three of these offices have been read to the Guildhall Historical Association. As bearers of the sword and mace, the Swordbearer and Common Cryer have always been very closely associated with the Mayor. On the other hand the Marshal, whose office came into being in the late 16th century, did not join the Household until after two other Household Officers, the Common Hunt and the Waterbailiff, who formerly ranked as third and fourth Esquires, had disappeared. The office of Common Hunt was abolished by resolution of Common Council in 1807 and that of Waterbailiff came to an end in 1857 when the City lost the conservancy jurisdiction which it had long exercised over parts of the Thames and the Medway.

All the officers of the Household, who once numbered twenty-four, had duties of attendance upon the Lord Mayor. They took part in public processions and also in accordance with a prescribed weekly rota took their share of duties in waiting at the Lord Mayor's house. But many of them had other duties, for example, the picturesquely named Yeoman of the Waterside on the wharves at Billingsgate and the Waterbailiff on the Thames. The Common Hunt, the subject of this paper, had many responsibilities arising from the City's privileges of hunting.

These privileges were exceedingly ancient if not very precisely defined. Henry I confirmed to the citizens by charter the hunting rights which their ancestors had enjoyed at some unspecified time in the past in the Chilterns, Middlesex and Surrey, and privileges of hunting as in the time of Henry I were among the liberties claimed by the City before the royal justices at the eyre of 1321.

It is perhaps rather curious that neither Henry's charter nor later charters of confirmation make any mention of the great royal forest of Essex, later Waltham Forest, which lay so near to the City on its eastern side. William FitzStephen in his late 12th century "Description" of London speaks of this forest with its wooded glades and lairs of wild beasts, its deer both red and fallow and its wild boars. Certainly the citizens claimed and exercised hunting rights in Essex. In 1460 a certain John Danyell of West Ham, a

tenant of the Abbot of Stratford, impeded the Common Hunt from entering the Abbot's lands to hunt, whereupon the Mayor, a number of the Aldermen, the Sheriffs and the Common Serjeant, accompanied by the Common Hunt and a sufficient number of men, rode out in exercise of their rights and the Abbot and his tenant appeared personally before the Court of Aldermen and made their submission. In 1706 an action was brought against a constable who on the orders of an Essex Justice of the Peace had arrested the Lord Mayor's foot huntsman for hunting the City's hounds in the forest there, and long after the abolition of the office of Common Hunt the citizens were still claiming hunting rights in Essex before the Essex Forest Commissioners in 1875.

The first man whom we know by name to have held the office of Common Hunt was one John Charney. He was appointed in 1379 although it is possible that the office itself is older than this. The element "Common" in the Common Hunt's title has the same meaning as in Common Council, Common Serjeant and Common Clerk (the latter being the old name for the Town Clerk) i.e. appertaining to the commonalty or citizens at large.

Charney and his immediate successors were granted a serjeant's livery and an annual fee of £10. The Common Hunt's fee remained at this figure for at least another two hundred years although it was supplemented from time to time by allowances for special purposes. It has to be remembered, however, that such annual fees were in no way comparable to modern inclusive salaries and officers expected to draw the greater part of their remuneration from a variety of profits and perquisites of office.

On appointment in 1379 John Charney was to do all things touching hunting and fishing which belonged to his office. In practice, however, the Common Hunt's duties seem to have been concerned principally with hunting and to a lesser extent hawking and there is no reference to fishing after the close of the 14th century. One of the chief responsibilities of the Common Hunt was the keeping of the City's hounds. In 1460 William Sudbery, the then Common Hunt, was granted 20s. a year for hiring a "house" for his dogs and horses. This was almost certainly in Moorfields as seven years later John Stokker, Sudbery's successor, was also granted 20s. p.a. for "the kennel in the moor" and the Chamberlain paid to the farmer of the moor two years' arrears of rent.

These may well be the same kennels which at the close of the 15th century were described as being near the Moorgate. There they gave great offence to all the passers-by since the Common Hunt used bones, horns and small

pieces of leather among the fuel used to boil up meat for the hounds. To avoid the noisome smells the Mayor and Aldermen in 1500 strictly commanded such practice to cease forthwith and agreed to pay the Common Hunt 26s. 8d. a year with which to buy wood. If he used any other fuel than wood for cooking the hounds' meat he was to be dismissed his office.

It was not long after this, however, that it was decided that the kennels should be moved to a more distant part of Moorfields. In 1512 the Chamberlain was ordered to have a piece of ground levelled under the oversight of the Mayor and Sheriffs and there to provide a convenient place for the Doghouse of the Common Hunt, the old house being removed. The Doghouse is the name by which the kennels and their associated buildings are nearly always described in the City's records, and a building on Moorfields marked as the "Dogge Hows" can clearly be seen both on Agas' map and on another 16th century map of this area of the City which is now in the Museum of London. The building appears to be quite substantial and may have included a house and other offices for the Common Hunt as well as the kennels although there were certainly times in the 16th century when the Common Hunt was granted living accommodation in one or other of the City gates. The site of this Doghouse lay a little to the north of the present Finsbury Circus, approximately on the south side of the present Eldon Street at its junction with Wilson Street.

In 1552 the Common Hunt was given an allowance of four marks (£2.13s.4d.) a year towards the provision of meat for the hounds. In 1561, apparently in confirmation and continuation of an existing practice, it was agreed with the wardens of the Butchers' Company that in return for a yearly payment of 13s. 4d., the Common Hunt should have all the measled or diseased pork or brawn that members of the Company should kill within the City and liberties and also all their ox polls towards the feeding of his hounds. Order was given that such meat should be taken to the Doghouse in a closed cart.

Such entries make it easy to see why the Doghouse was again the subject of complaint in the 1560s. In 1560 the Court of Aldermen received a petition for its removal. Persons were appointed to look for a new site but the Aldermen also threw the ball back into the petitioners' court by asking them to put in writing the names of those persons having gardens near the Doghouse and whether each would be prepared to give the equivalent of one year's rent of his garden towards a new Doghouse. The answer, if any, is not recorded. In 1568 moves were again made to find a new site "so that

the citizens may be discharged of the great nuisance and grief that they are nowadays often time grieved withall by reason of the City's old doghouse and of the unwholesome airs and stenches coming from the same". After consideration of several sites, the new Doghouse was finally erected in 1570 near the brick kilns on the north part of Finsbury Fields and here it was to remain for the rest of its existence.

The site, which can be seen clearly on Faithorne and Newcourt's map of 1658, lay a little to the south of the highway which later became Old Street, in the vicinity of the present Cowper and Leonard Streets, and was bounded on its western side by what is now City Road. In 1570 the site is described as extending 460 feet from north to south and the house and yard built within the precincts were enclosed by a wall. Leases by the Corporation of Bunhill and other fields in the lordship of Finsbury in the 17th century always excluded the Doghouse and reserved both the Common Hunt's right to pass with horse, cart and carriage to and from the Doghouse and his "horse grass" or right of grazing for one horse, mare or gelding and for one cow. When the City reached agreement with Peter Jennings in 1708 for the west part of Bunhill Fields to be laid out in new building it was part of the negotiated terms that Jennings should pay the Common Hunt £12 p.a. in compensation for loss of grazing.

There is little evidence as to the number and type of hounds kept at the Doghouse. In 1558 two men who were temporarily exercising the office of Common Hunt were ordered to put away their worst hounds and to keep but four couple of harriers and to acquire at once four couple of otter hounds. These sound very small numbers and it is unwise to attach too much weight to a single reference. It seems that it was usual in the 16th century also to keep spaniels.

There are 16th century references to hawking. In 1548 Thomas Abbot was reimbursed 40s. which he had laid out for a goshawk and it was agreed that so long as he should continue in office as Common Hunt and keep a hawk he should have a similar allowance each year. In 1574 John Lunne was granted 5 marks a year (£3.6s.8d.) by the Court of Aldermen upon condition that he should keep either a longwing hawk or a goshawk and a tercel of a goshawk and a kennel of spaniels as had been customary, and his successor soon after appointment in 1584 was given the same allowance.

There was a curious sideline to the Common Hunt's responsibilities for keeping the City's hounds. Presumably by an association of ideas it was the Common Hunt's subordinates who were entrusted with the execution of the

many orders passed in the 16th century for the killing of dogs which were running loose in the streets. In 1563 a proclamation against letting dogs wander loose in the streets imposed a penalty of 40d. for every offence as well as the loss of the animal which was forthwith to be killed, and John Smith the elder, the Common Hunt's man, was allotted the task of killing the dogs and carrying away the dogs, cats and other carrion and burying them near the windmills outside Cripplegate. Another proclamation was issued in 1584 and in 1586 citizens were given six days' notice to keep their dogs tied up or shut within their houses before all dogs found in the streets should be killed. The Common Hunt's men who performed this unpleasant task earned a fee of 2d. per animal in 1584 and 1½d. in 1586. In 1590 the Common Hunt was ordered to arrange for the killing of all dogs found in the streets and lanes with the exception only of greyhounds, spaniels and hounds. Dogs were suspected of spreading the plague and some indication of the number of stray dogs is shown by the fact that between Michaelmas 1584 and Michaelmas 1585, 995 dogs were killed and in the following year 1055.

But to return to the more pleasurable side of the Common Hunt's activities. There are few, if any, descriptions of hunting expeditions in the official records but the diary of Henry Machyn gives a vivid account of a hunt which took place on 18 September 1562 when the Lord Mayor and Aldermen made their customary inspection of the conduit heads near where the Tyburn brook crossed Oxford Street and dined at the Lord Mayor's Banqueting House there on the site of Stratford Place.

"afore dinner they hunted the hare and killed, and so to dinner to the head of the Conduit ... and after dinner to the hunting of the fox, and there was a goodly cry for a mile, and after the hounds killed the fox at the end of St. Giles [in the Fields] and there was a great cry at the death and blowing of horns, and so rode through London my Lord Mayor Harper with all his company home to his own place in Lombard Street".

That is a picture to conjure up if caught among the throngs of Saturday shoppers in Oxford Street.

Another and most important part of the Common Hunt's duties was to procure from the King or other great lords venison warrants in favour of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen and to execute the same. The provision of a supply of venison was perhaps not always so pleasurable a thing as we would think. In 1515 the Court of Aldermen decided not to seek to obtain any

more warrants because besides being costly they were often granted to be served in far distant places so that not only were they costly to execute "but also the said venison is often times unseasonable for man's body". This decision was soon reversed and by 1527 the Common Hunt was instructed, notwithstanding this resolution, to "go forth this year and labour for new warrants". He was not, however, to sue for any warrants without prior approval of the Court upon pain of losing all reimbursement of his expenses. The Common Hunt's bills for the purchase of warrants and the hunting of venison figure quite often in the proceedings of the Court of Aldermen. In 1549, for example, he was reimbursed £4.2s.6d. spent by him about the serving of warrants given by the King to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen; in 1592 he was repaid £6 in respect of his expenses in repairing to the court and his charges in procuring warrants for eighteen bucks and two stags and in 1595 £3.5s.0d. spent by him in riding and for the serving of sundry warrants at Windsor. A vestige of this once prevalent custom lingers on in the warrants issued in July and November each year under the Queen's royal sign manual whereby the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs and certain Officers still receive small quantities of venison from the royal parks.

But to return briefly to the Doghouse. In 1615-16 William Middleton, the Common Hunt, was repaid £17.16s. which he had laid out in making new kennels and a pump and it was agreed that the Doghouse, by which is clearly meant the officer's own house, then in a ruinous condition with the rain coming into all the rooms, should be rebuilt one storey higher. Middleton's fees were increased at this time in respect of various charges which included the breeding of young dogs for the kennels. In 1687 approval was given for another rebuilding of the house, the dimensions of which are given as 20 x 40 ft., at a cost not exceeding £350.

Times were soon to change, however. In 1746 a complaint was brought against the Common Hunt for not keeping the customary pack of hounds. He confessed to the investigating committee that he no longer did so, the profits of the office not permitting the expense, but that he paid a gentleman's huntsman £7 a year to provide him with a pack on occasion. It seems doubtful if the pack of City hounds was ever re-established although the committee thought it should be. In 1788 the City Lands Committee, which thought that improved use could be made of the Doghouse stie, found that it then consisted of a large dwelling house and garden, a house and warehouse, a house and cow-yard, four small tenements and an ice-house, all of which were let out in several leases which brought the Common Hunt, Charles Cotterell, a clear yearly income of just over £200. The City Lands Committee appropriated the rents to the Finsbury

£200. The City Lands Committee appropriated the rents to the Finsbury Estate and compensated Cotterell with £160 p.a. for his interest in the estate. Upon Cotterell's death in 1807 a committee was appointed to review the duties of the office which were found to be wholly concerned with ceremonial and attendance upon the Lord Mayor, and by resolution of Common Council of 17 December 1807 one of the most colourful of the City's ancient offices was extinguished after a history of more than four hundred years.

M.H.O.  
31.10.78

## COMMON HUNTS

(Note. Dec'd after the name indicates death in office)

1379-1387	John Charney
1387-1388?	Thomas Biringtone
1392- ?	James Ormesby
? -1417	Nicholas Brincheslee
1417-1423	John Courtenay
1423-1448	John Russell
1448-1457	John Tyler
1457-1459	John Grene (John Pichard as deputy)
1459-1463	William Sudbury
1463-1500	John Stokker
1500-1521	Arnold Babington (dec'd.)
1521-1523	William Rolt
1523-1541	John Burton (dec'd.)
1541-1558	Thomas Abbot (dec'd.)
1558 Jan-Oct? (jointly)	John Smyth George Byrde
1558 Nov-1559 Oct	Office suspended
1559-1571	Thomas Underhill (dec'd.)
1571-1584	John Lunne

1584-1600	John Daywell (Dewell)
1600-1614	William Richbell
1614-1625	William Middleton (dec'd.)
1625-1626	Hugh Smalewood (dec'd.)
1626-1638	Gregory Oldfield (dec'd.)
1638-1657	John Clutton
1657-1666	John Wells
1666-1672	William Davenport
1672-1677	Nicholas Delves
1677-1681	Robert Cheyne (Cheney)
1681-1682	Thomas Price
1682-1685	William Tooke
1685-1687	Maximilian Stephens
1687-1688	John Cruys (dec'd.)
1688 Sept-Nov	John (Charles ?) Shorter
1688-1689	John Utber (Uthber)
1689-1690	Walter Master
1690-1691	Edward Buckley
1691-1698	Alexander Dawson
1698-1700	John Hale
1700-1722	John Barton
1722-1723	John Deale
1723-1729	Robert Cruttenden
1729-1744	William Ferrian
1744-1752	May Hill (dec'd.)
1752-1757	Michael Lally (dec'd.)
1757-1786	James Chamness
1786-1807	Charles Cotterell (dec'd)