

A 'GOLDEN AGE' OF HUNTING WITH THE BADSWORTH HUNT

(a period which was oft' times blighted by incident & misadventure)

1875 – 1895

Edward William Harvey-Hawke (4th Baronet Hawke) was the Master of Foxhounds for the Badsworth for a long period, from 1826 until his unfortunate death in 1869 as a result of a hunting accident. Lord Hawke was excessively fond of blowing his horn, which he did on the slightest excuse, much to the annoyance of his Huntsman, Will Butler. On one occasion, Will Butler's temper got the better of him, due to his hounds having got their heads up in answer to the horn, Butler exclaimed in exasperation *'Damn that horn m' lord! I'll tell you when to blow it!'*

Lord Hawke was succeeded by Mr. James Hope Barton, the recently retired High Sheriff of Yorkshire (1863-1864) who had recently purchased Stapleton Park. Mr Hope Barton was in Mastership for seven seasons 1869-1876. Mr Hope Barton was a knowledgeable hound breeder and did much to improve the Badsworth Kennel. Sadly, Mr Hope Barton met with a tragic end on 20th March 1876, when, breaking a blood vessel when blowing his horn, he fell from his horse, and was dead in a few minutes.

Then followed the Mastership (1876-1892) of a truly great hound breeder : Mr C.B.E. Wright of Bolton Hall, Clitheroe, who, on taking over the Badsworth, lived at South Kirkby and then at the Kennels. During his sixteen years as Master, and with help from his Kennel Huntsman Tom Morgan, Mr Wright raised the Badsworth Kennels to a very high standard of excellence. Every thing was done in first class style during Mr Wright's Mastership. There were upwards of a hundred horses in his private stable and at Kennels. As well as being a hunting man Mr Wright was a great coaching man and in 1878 he started to run the Champion Coach from Buxton to Matlock. This ran for eight Seasons, it was always fully loaded and was driven by Mr Wright himself. The Hunt staff – Kennel Huntsman and whips were always beautifully mounted, as was any visitor, who was given his choice of hunting horse out of Mr Wright's vast stud. Mr Wright resigned in 1892 to take over the management of the Fitzwilliam hounds.

The following three seasons (1892 - 1895) saw Col. W.J.F. Ramsden of Rogerthorpe as Master with Chas. Orvis as Huntsman.

The Badsworth Hunt Country has never been the best when compared with 'prime grass Country' in, for example Leicestershire, but the Badsworth Country has always engendered loyalty and has been held in the hearts of local hunt Supporters. To this day, the Hunt Country still provides good runs for the Field.

During the period 1875-1895 the Badsworth Hunt Country saw many topographical changes which have continued into the 21st Century: including the growth of industry, road /motorway development, railways and coal mining, all of which have had an obvious impact on hunting. In Baily's Hunting Directory 1871, the Badsworth Hunt Country was described in less than flattering terms. *'It is in some parts heavy, blind and bad, with straggling, overgrown fences and blind ditches, while towards Askern it is boggy and divided by wide rotten drains. They have, however, a much nicer Country than this, which is also cut up by railroads, parts resembling the Wolds. There is a nice bit about Daws Lane, a remarkably pretty covert not far from Doncaster. The Badsworth is not a large Country : from north to south it is about eighteen miles, from east to west about twenty-three and the River Don is the boundary on the South-East. By Barnsley the Country is open. Round Fenwick there are some big woods, but here the Country is chiefly clay; it is very heavy but there are not many drains. The best scenting part is between Pontefract and Wakefield where the land is strongish. The best parts are Stapleton and Womersley.'*

To any Badsworth hunting man or woman, to this day it remains BADSWORTH COUNTRY