

A NEW PUBLICATION

LAST MAN STANDING

The History of Otterhunting in the Dumfriesshire Hunt Country
by Robert Thorne

On January 1st 1978 the otter came under the protection of the Plants and Wild Creatures Order, and by the terms of this Order it became illegal to kill otters. By the end of the season 1977 all otter hunts in England and Wales had voluntarily disbanded themselves. Many had done so previously as they became aware of the diminishing number of otters in their waters, not as a result of hunting, but by the loss of habitat, use of pesticides and increased activity on rivers by canoeists, fishermen, campers and the public in general.

This Protection Order was not extended to cover Scotland until three years later, thus making the only pack of otterhounds in Scotland, the Dumfriesshire, literally the "last man standing".

A new book to be published in May 2021, entitled *Last Man Standing*, traces the history of otterhunting in the Dumfriesshire Otter Hounds hunt country from 1822, through the years of visiting packs such as those of Squire Lomax, John Gallon and the Carlisle Hunt, to a point in 1889 when the Dumfriesshire Otter Hound Hunt came into being, and from thence the history continues up to 1980, when, at the AGM of that year, the decision was taken that from 1981 the hunt would turn its attention solely to mink-hunting. The name was to remain, as was the uniform, the mastership of four members of the Bell-Irving family remained intact, and the ebullient and charismatic Billy Scott would continue to hunt hounds. These arrangements remained in place until 1986 when the decision was finally made to disband.

Last Man Standing is based on the otter-hunting archive in the possession of the Bell-Irving family. It contains diaries, photograph albums, hunting reports, correspondence and much more, and, at the request of John (Robin) Bell-Irving, the archive was catalogued by Robert Thorne, author of *Beyond the Solway Shore*. At this point Robin suggested a book about the otterhounds should be produced.

Written by Robert Thorne and published by the Bell-Irving Press, this profusely illustrated book consisting of about 220 pages, is limited to 200 copies. Those old enough to have participated in otterhunting will be reminded of summer days spent with friends and fellow-sportsmen on the river bank. To the younger reader it will give a thorough insight into a sport no longer with us.

If you would like to be included in the List of Subscribers please send a cheque for £40, to include postage and packing, to J. Bell-Irving, Broom Farm, St. Mungo, Lockerbie, DG11 1BZ, including your name and address for despatch. For those paying by BACS the bank details are: Bank of Scotland, account no. 00153474, sort code 80 08 88. Please quote reference LMS and your name. Please email the delivery address to johnbi@talktalk.net.

The subscription list closes on 15th April 2021.