



The QH Hunter



→ A new hat, designed by the Quorn Hunt and **CHARLES OWEN** is bringing safety to the hunting field this season.

Tradition dies very hard on the hunting fields in Leicestershire. It is a strength that has maintained Britain's hunts in fine heart and good fettle since the restrictions of the 2004 Hunting Act. Part of this tradition is to maintain the highest standards of dress and turnout, a mark of respect to the farmers and landowners who allow the hunt access to their land. But another element of tradition has come under scrutiny. The top hats, bowler hats and traditional hunting caps that are donned for a day in the field offer very little head protection in the event of a fall when following hounds.

The Quorn Hunt is regarded as one of the premier hunts in the country, if not the world. It was founded by in 1696 by Mr Thomas Boothby of Tooley Park, Leicestershire, and has a colourful and sporting history. Only two years after the death of Thomas, Hugo Meynell, the father of foxhunting, rented Quorn Hall and became master of the hunt from 1753/4

to 1799/1800. The Quorn has always attracted hard riding and stylish followers enjoying the thrill of riding to hounds over the best of High Leicestershire. In its hunting heyday the fields of Leicestershire rivalled the Capital as a denizen of fashion.

This bastion of hunting tradition has recently been involved in a major initiative to encourage the hunting fraternity to think again before they don traditional hunting headwear, and instead consider changing to modern protective headwear.

The reason behind the initiative was the tragic death of a well-known, local subscriber in a hunting accident. Peter Collins, who has been the Quorn's professional huntsman for 14 years, was asked by his eight-year-old son, "Is your hat safe, Daddy?" As a result of the innocent question Peter C. decided to discuss his concerns with the former honorary secretary of the Quorn, Peter Morrirt.

"The Quorn Hunt, the committee and

officers, felt very strongly that they had a duty of care to provide the best possible headwear for their staff," explains Peter M. "The best way for this to happen was to set an example, and to encourage others to do so by setting a practical example".

So armed with the idea of a safer sort of hat for the hunting field Peter M. raised the issue with Charles Owen, one of the major manufacturers of riding hats. The firm is acknowledged as being at the forefront of improving safety standards so it was an ideal fit for the hunt looking for a modern solution. Technical expertise is all very well, but for the hat to hold sway when seen following hounds it was crucial that it looked the part, too. Luckily, Peter was on hand to provide extensive design input. The result is a brand new riding hat, called the QH Hunter. It is BSI kite marked with chin harness and has been modelled on the traditional deep crown cap favoured by most huntsmen, masters and subscribers.

"I have been wearing the hat all season



Quorn Huntsman Peter Collins models the QH Hunter in the field and in kennels

and find it extremely comfortable" says Peter C. "There have been many favourable comments from our subscribers and from other huntsmen, too."

The response to the Quorn Hunt's initiative has been encouraging. "We have sold many hats to local subscribers, of this hunt and neighbouring packs," says Peter M. "Quite a few have gone further afield and even overseas. The hats have been bought by both modernists and dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists. They have made the decision to ditch the top hat or traditional cap to wear something that fulfils all modern safety standards, yet retains a certain style beloved by people who ride to hounds."

He says. "There have also been numerous comments about how comfortable the QH Hunter is (I often had our old hunting hats cooking in the Aga trying to make them fit at the

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beginning of the season!). Unfortunately, we all know how easy it is to have a fall when out hunting. So if through the Quorn Hunt's action in taking this initiative we save one person from having a life changing accident, or worse, then our efforts will have been worthwhile."

"We also cannot thank the managing director of Charles Owen enough for becoming involved. What started off as an idea has become this season's reality largely due to their support."

Peter's well-clad pate has been modelling the navy hat this season as the Quorn Hunt staff traditionally wear navy as part of their dress. But the hat is also suitable for other hunting countries as it comes in black, grey or brown velvet. A dashing grey velvet has already been spotted with the Belvoir, and ladies have the choice of navy or black to match their hunt coats, which means adopting the QH Hunter look does not require a full kit rethink. Although the hat is intended for the hunting community there have been enquiries from the showing fraternity and other pleasure riders who have made the decision to wear a safety hat. ●



The hat is manufactured to the highest standard and is available in black, navy, grey or brown velvet at a cost of £250. It is available to order from the Quorn Hunt, either directly online via the Quorn Hunt website or fittings may be arranged by appointment at the Quorn Hunt kennels - www.quorn-hunt.co.uk Telephone +44 (0)1162 596694