

REPORT FOR THE 2025/26 SEASON

On 21st April, 2026 we held our Annual General Meeting. A huge thank you to everyone who came to support us. It was a brilliant turnout and the hall was full. It was heartwarming for us all to feel the support from you all because, well, it's been a bit of the year. Indeed, it was a bit of day with press articles, swirling rumours and comments about which you can read at the end of this report.

The AGM was exceptionally well attended with over 40 members and subscribers present in the room.

After the Chairman's welcome, confirmation of quorum, and the minutes of the 2024/2025 AGM had been read to the meeting, the Chairman gave her report.

In this she covered changes the committee has made to the structure of the Hunt, which includes the appointment of a new Huntsman, Master Paul Hollis. She tackled rumours in respect of funding the pack and its housing. She set out for the assembled company the key points of a threatened litigation claim (totalling some £440k) pursued by Mr Ivan Massow against the committee both jointly and severally. This threat risked financially ruining each individual volunteer committee member and subjected them to unbearable stress over a period of five months. She confirmed the matter had been settled by legal agreement with Mr Massow and the committee, in the spirit of transparency, is pleased to confirm that the settlement was reached for no monetary value and no legal costs were incurred by the Hunt.

The Treasurer gave her report that showed, for the first time since 2022, that we had made a profit and are back in the black. The Treasurer detailed the increased revenue and decreased costs, the latter largely the result of the restructuring which replaced paid hunting day ground staff with volunteers, reduced feed costs and reduced veterinary bills. She also noted that we hunted one more day than last season.

Master Paul Hollis gave his Huntsman and Kennels report noting that we have now retrained our hounds to hunt the true clean boot in accordance with the requirement in our Constitution and the rules of our governing body the Masters of Draghounds and Bloodhounds Association (MDBA). He advised members that we had undergone a Kennels inspection by the MDBA, passing with flying colours with a huge compliment to our Kennel Huntsman, Viv Foord, for the quality of her care. Master Hollis informed the meeting that we will be moving our hounds into livery with another pack. Bloodhounds need constant supervision and, ideally, exercise behind horses. Whilst we have humans onsite at Slivericks we do not have the ability to train and exercise hounds as we did when under the mastership of the late Nic Wheeler.

Lisa Baker gave her report on the Supporters Club, noting the many events that had taken place to celebrate our 50th year and thanking those involved who made them happen. She drew the meeting's attention to depletion of the Club's funds in the amount of £40k for work to upgrade Mr Massow's property, Lewens Farm, as proposed new Kennels. This had been covered more widely in the Chairman's report. Despite discontinuation of this project these costs have not been recovered.

The meeting moved on to consider the election of the new committee, where several members offered themselves for re-election and others stood forward for the new season. By a unanimous show of hands in the room, and with a count of electronic votes and proxies, the following were elected without any objection:

Katrina Arnold, Paul Blagg, David Brightling, Gemma Green, Libby Lawson, Hannah Miles, Suzy Press, Sara Roberts, John Spencer.

These "lay" members will now appoint the Joint Masters.

The meeting then moved on to consider a proposed new Constitution. This had been driven with a view to avoiding the disruptive events experienced throughout the season just passed and to allow for remedies should they re-occur. By a unanimous show of hands and again with a count of electronic votes and proxies the Constitution was adopted with immediate effect and without objection.

Finally, the meeting honoured the departure from the mastership of Master Paul Blagg after 25 years of unswerving dedication and hard work. He was delighted to receive a bespoke painting and a tankard.

Katrina Arnold was also delighted to be presented with a bespoke painting for her work as Chairman, successfully leading the group through a tumultuous year.

It was very disappointing to learn of the online publication of a Daily Mail article detrimental to the Coakham Bloodhounds which appeared, apparently coincidentally, on the day of the AGM. Its genesis was likely the actions of a disaffected individual but, unfortunately, it generated a swirl of rumours and unpleasant comments on social media that day. If you haven't read it, we cannot stop you searching for it online, but what we can tell you is much of it is factually baseless and a good deal of it untrue. We can only assume the people behind the comments are misguided, misinformed or simply malfeasant.

That said, we do feel we should leave you with some cold, hard, evidenced and substantiated facts.

1. We are not struggling financially and on the point of collapse. Since undertaking our restructure we have turned a profit, replenished our reserves, and are back in the black.
2. We are not struggling for mounted or dismounted support. Our average mounted field is 40 riders with our biggest field this season numbering 106 and our closing meet 65.
3. We have never been "*gifted*" substantial sums of money or kennels. The Kennels at Slivericks are owned by Mrs Wheeler and the Kennels at Lewens Farm are owned by Mr Massow. Our status is, and always has been since 2022, that of tenant.
4. Our hounds are going into livery with another pack. The Coakham Bloodhounds is run entirely by volunteers all of whom are time-poor. Bloodhounds need supervision, regular exercise, discipline and training. By going into livery we not only reduce our costs, but we meet the welfare needs of our hounds.
5. We have a hound rehoming policy, which was originally put in place in October 2025 because Mr Massow had *ad hoc* rehomed a hound in circumstances where we did not know where the rehomed hound had gone, nor were we able to update vital information such as microchips. Our practice is that if we cannot rehome or redraft a hound due to chronic illness, they are humanely destroyed at a properly licensed facility where they are subsequently cremated in accordance with the rules for handling such livestock.
6. Our Kennels have never been visited by the RSPCA and they have not been closed down. In fact, they have recently passed an MDBA kennels inspection with flying colours.

We are very much alive and thriving and we look forward to welcoming old and new faces on horse or on foot next season.