

SIR JOHN AMORY'S STAGHOUNDS

Richard Lethbridge

When Sir John Amory's Staghounds were formed Queen Victoria was still on the throne, and their glory days were in the long Edwardian "summer" before the First World War, hunting country south of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds. It is a world away in time. But newspapers of the day carried copious reports of hunting of the period, and Richard Lethbridge has returned to the sources and painstakingly transcribed and edited the runs. Immediately, the excitement of these days – most of which will have been forgotten in the succeeding century – is recaptured and many a hardened Amory stag will be hunted again through these pages.

It was a period when there were no horse boxes and it was normal to hack the hounds to the meets and back again, and for far distant meets the hounds were brought down the night before and kennelled, the Fox and Hounds at Eggesford being such a favoured location. From time to time hounds, riders and horses would even travel on the train. The stalwart field often hacked to a meet, hunted for several hours and many miles over arduous terrain and then faced a ride home of 15 miles or more. At the end of the hunt the deer would have been roped and dispatched by a knife – or, occasionally – even captured and carted to a later meet.

Packed with fascinating detail, including records of the personalities – from the aristocracy down – who attended many of the meets, this book will be essential reading for anyone with a love of the glorious country where Devon meets Somerset, and especially for anyone with a passion for hunting and venery.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

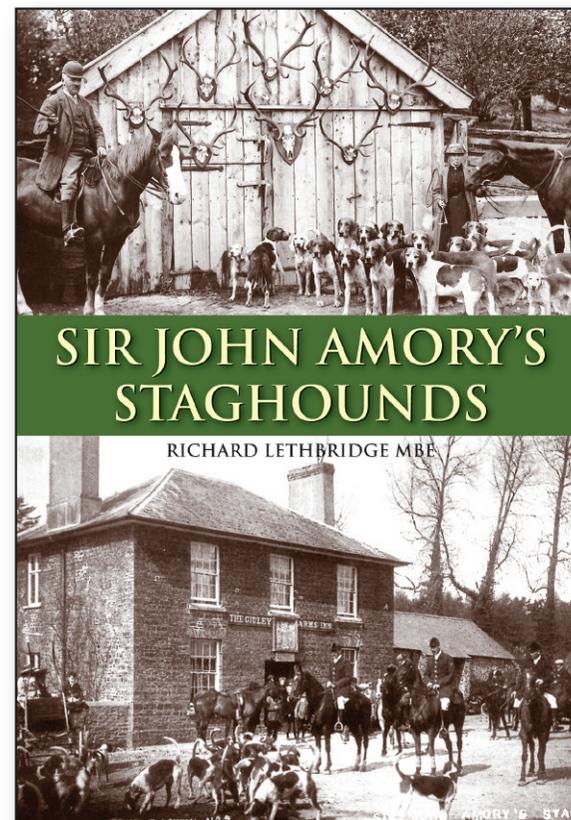
Richard Lethbridge MBE, 54, a Postman from Chittlehamholt, North Devon, was given his award by the Queen in 2002 for services to the Royal Mail and to the community it serves. He wrote his first book on the Tiverton Staghounds in 2000, followed in 2002 by the history of Chittlehamholt, Warkleigh, and Satterleigh parishes. In 2004 came a study of the Barnstaple Staghounds, and now Richard Lethbridge follows this with a volume recording Sir John Amory's and Captain Amory's Staghounds.

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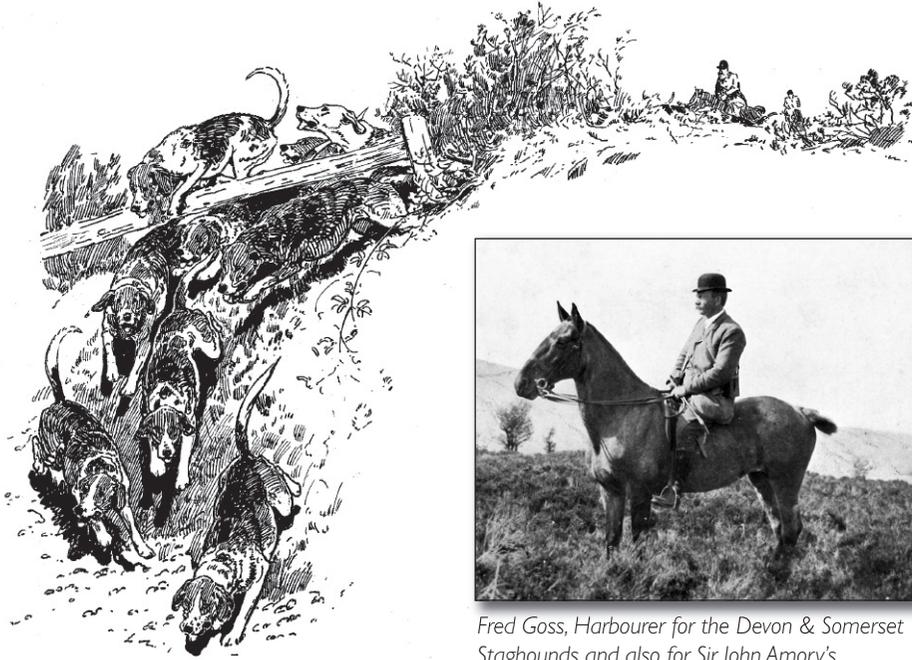


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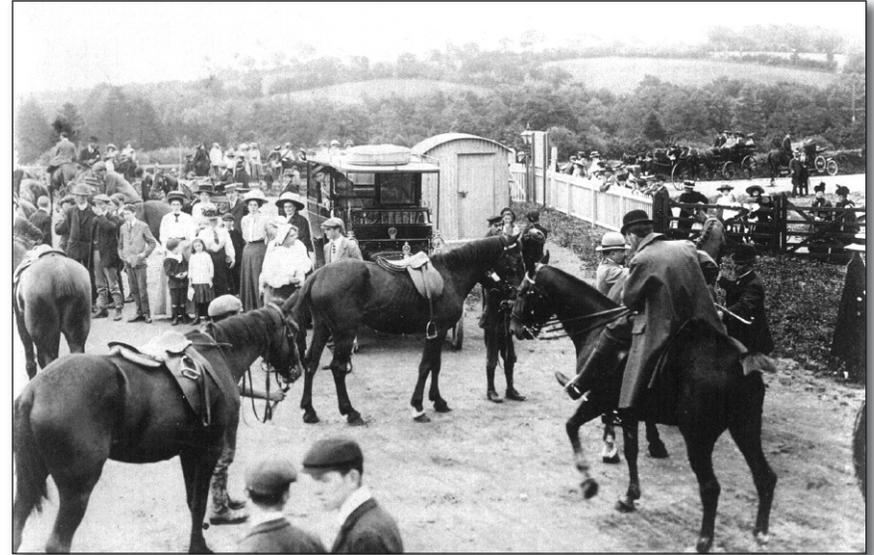
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Example of a double-page spread.



Fred Goss, Harbourer for the Devon & Somerset Stagounds and also for Sir John Amory's Stagounds.



Meet at South Molton Station.

Ian Heathcoat-Amory on his horse.

Sir John Amory's Stagounds in Mid and North Devon 1896-1915

The following article is from a piece written by the late Philip Everard and published in *Hunts and Horsemans of the South West* published in 1985.

THE HISTORY OF the pack goes back to 1896 when in February of that year at a meeting of the Devon and Somerset Stagounds a formal complaint had been made by Sir E. H. Dunning – then Mr Dunning – of Stoodleigh Court, Tiverton Devon, as to the somewhat inadequate arrangements for hunting the Stoodleigh district, in view of the fact that the Red Deer had increased considerably of late years in that neighbourhood, while the deer was constantly being augmented by fresh deer being driven over the line of the Devon and Somerset railway from the Haddon strongholds, and other large covers. For some time previously, successive Masters of the Devon and Somerset Stagounds had felt the difficulty of hunting the district, between the town of Tiverton and Dulverton station, with sufficient regularity, the distance from kennels being very great, and there being already more than enough material, much nearer home, to be dealt with. It was at this juncture that Mr Ian Heathcoat Amory came forward with proposals which readily solved the difficulty. He was able to announce the conclusion of negotiations with Mr E. H. Dunning which provided for the capture of a certain number of deer each year, and Mr R. A. Sanders, Master of the Devon and Somerset Stagounds, in April, 1896, reported that he had come to an arrangement with Mr Amory for hunting the country to the south of the Devon and Somerset line of railway, which runs nearly due east and west between Bampton and Taunton. This slice of country was then formally lent to Mr Amory by the hunt committee, with liberty of course, to follow his deer across the railway to the north of it. In the following year this scheme was extended, by giving Mr Sanders authority to allow Mr Amory to hunt on the north side of the railway. Following on the meeting of 1896, Mr Amory was not long in getting a pack together, and beginning to harry the deer, and, in the five seasons next following, his pack accounted for one hundred and fifty-one deer, of which fifty-seven were taken in the country lent to him, while sixty-six were the result of a series of invitation meets in the in the Dulverton district of the Devon and Somerset Stagounds



A photograph of the Amory Family. From left to right: Ian H.-Amory, C.R.S. Carew, Sir John Amory, Ludovic H.-Amory and Captain H. H.-Amory – at the time of this photograph Ian Amory was hunting the Tiverton Foxhounds.