

Busy working towards the 2019 Review

*Not Scotland but the Yukon.
See page 2. Photo: Stefan Hope*



Richard Cooke, Chairman
Association of Deer Management Groups

At our AGM on 22 March at Aviemore I announced an ADMG health check service for Deer Management Groups.

This is based on the SNH Assessment process and is intended to indicate the progress made by a DMG since the 2016 Review, and to identify priorities in preparation for the next Scottish Government review of the deer sector in 2019. It is fully funded by ADMG and will involve one of our panel of freelance consultants, in many cases, the consultant who prepared your Group's Deer Management Plan.

I am pleased to say that the uptake from DMGs has been excellent and that almost all Groups will avail themselves of this service. Linzi Seviwright is co-ordinating the health check programme and Groups will shortly be notified as to who will be doing their assessment and when. The intention is to have this process completed by the end of the summer.

Any Groups that have yet to apply for this free health check please be in touch with me or Linzi.

By the time this newsletter is published the two Regional Meetings/half day Seminars, scheduled for 6th and 7th June at Birnam and at the Kingsmills Hotel, Inverness respectively, will have taken place and hopefully will have been well attended.

As with the health checks, the Seminars focus on the deer sector review next year and emphasise the importance of implementing deer management plans, introducing habitat

impact assessments across all DMGs, and considering woodland expansion, improvement in native woodland condition and peatland restoration, in addition to the more routine functions of a DMG. The Seminars also focus on the importance of leadership at Chair and Secretary level in maintaining momentum and demonstrating the growing capacity of DMGs to deliver collaborative and integrated deer management under the voluntary principle. While we have not escaped the previous two parliamentary reviews without criticism, excellent progress has been made in almost all cases. The process of progressive change has been unprecedented and we can all take pride in that.

It would be wrong to overlook that there are still a few DMGs that are lagging behind and also some new ones emerging. SNH is giving these particular attention and ADMG also stands ready to provide support. The sector will be judged as a whole next year and our job is to help all DMGs to do themselves and the industry justice.

ADMG has itself evolved substantially over recent years and we now have considerable knowledge and skill to draw upon for the benefit of our members from those consultants with whom we work regularly.

Changing the subject, the sporting rates situation continues to evolve and it is far from clear where it will settle bearing in mind the variables of the Small Business Bonus Scheme and recent Scottish Government guidance to local authorities that Vacant Property Relief may be applicable in some cases. ADMG is closely involved, with Scottish Land & Estates and others, in ongoing discussions with the Association of Regional Assessors and will keep members informed on further developments.

New NZ experience programme linking with Scottish stalking estates



*On horseback in Canada.
Photo: Stefan Hope*

Stefan Hope,
Ultimate OE

A moose guide stands in reverence to the Pelly Mountains of the Yukon; steam rises from tweed and horse; ghillie and highland pony enjoy a quiet moment at the end of a long highland beat.

I have come to learn there is an unspoken consanguinity amongst those who make their living in the mountains. Gratification through honest hard work; a deep connection and internalised stewardship for all things wild. It tethers us all together; keeper to ghillie, wrangler to guide, hunter to naturalist. Often an unspoken undertone of connection that is present when we meet others cut from the same cloth but born of a different mountain in a different land.

Ultimate OE brings hunters together to learn from one another and to work together.

I first heard of the Ultimate OE programme in 2015 and was instantly attracted to the idea of expanding my horizons as a New Zealand hunter to Canada's vast and regulated outfitting industry. I was already well versed in the numerous different genres of hunting New Zealand has to offer and was at the time gainfully employed in New Zealand's conservation sector.

Kuran and Matt at Ultimate OE planted the seed of a new experience and the opportunity to expand my hunting knowledge. I applied, interviewed and then attended

a Canadian specific 10-day training where I was taught everything from diamond hitches to bear defence. Soon after, I found myself placed as a wrangler/assistant guide in the mountains of the Yukon, a truly amazing place to exist and to grow.

Over the course of my experience in Canada I quickly came to further confirm that I was built for this kind of work and I was going to make my life's work in the mountains.

Moving on from Canada I searched for the next chapter and in 2017 I landed on the Scottish Highlands, connecting fortuitously with David Allison at Reay Forest Estate.



Briefing three of the NZ lads who are coming to Scotland this year. Photo: Stefan Hope



*Alaskan moose in the Yukon.
Photo: Stefan Hope*

A new set of unique variables and challenges; a new mentor in David, and a new accent to wrestle with - I found the same unspoken kinship with those making their living here in the Highlands.

I came to realise that, like Canada, there was a genuine appetite for skilled, hard working and motivated seasonal staff in the form of ghillies in Scotland. Several stalkers I encountered expressed an interest in the idea of hiring a "kiwi ghillie" for next season. The Ultimate OE programme which has been established now in Canada for 7 seasons could also work in Scotland.

By selecting the right New Zealand lads, giving them the tools to hit the ground running on arrival through Scotland-specific training, facilitating their paper work and visas to mitigate headaches, and finally matching them with the right estates, could provide an experience of a lifetime for young kiwi hunters. At the same time providing an annual source of seasonal ghillies to estates that could use them.

Fast-forward 8 months and at the time of writing this I find myself an Ultimate OE instructor, part way through the first ever Ultimate OE Scottish programme training. Working closely with Kuran and Matt, the three of us combined my own learning from Scotland and input from other key Scottish based stalkers.



For the Attention of Estate Owners, Woodland Managers and Conservation Bodies

ABOUT US

Roddy Macaskill has 35 years of deer management with both the private sector and government bodies. We offer a range of professional contracting services. With the emphasis on delivering targeted deer culls in a very cost-effective and sensitive manner in woodland settings, private sporting estates and agricultural land.

We are a very experienced team certified and equipped to the highest standard, and operate to Best Practice guidelines.

Our services have been purchased by a wide range of clients, but most notably Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) who have engaged us continuously since the mid 1990's

SERVICES

We offer a wide range of services including:

- Short-term help with deer culls on the open range or in woodlands
- Long-term contract support for deer culling
- Advice on population control and sporting management for estates and private owners

CONTACT US

If you would like to discuss a new project in confidence please call Roddy Macaskill on **07808168404** or e-mail him info@highlanddeersolutions.co.uk www.highlanddeersolutions.co.uk

We have recruited and are currently training 10 young men from New Zealand who will be working in Scotland for the 2018 season. Should this season's pilot prove to be successful, having ironed out any kinks we encounter during our first season, Ultimate OE will be looking to expand the number of ghillies for 2019.

If you're interested in learning more about the programme, please don't hesitate to reach out ultimateoemail@gmail.com

www.ultimateoe.co.nz



*Working on Reay Forest Estate last year.
Photo: Stefan Hope*

Sector-led action plan is next step for move to non-lead says Lead Ammunition Group Chairman

The lead /non-lead ammunition debate continues with the publication of an Update Report from the Lead Ammunition Group. This contains new evidence about the risks to wildlife, the environment and human health from lead ammunition, and follows submission of the Group's 400+ page report in 2015 to former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the Rt. Hon Elizabeth Truss to which she responded that "the risks did not merit a change in current policy."

Whilst Defra took the view on the 2015 report that FSA advice was sufficient and that impacts were not significant enough for change, John Swift, Chair of the Lead Ammunition Group, speaking at the Deer Management Round Table (DMRT) in April following publication of the Update Report was bullish that change was necessary and it was for the industry to take the lead.

In his presentation to DMRT he said that there was acknowledgement that lead was poisonous and that sub-lethal effects were now being reported at lower levels than pre-2015. According to the gun trade some 6000 tonnes of lead were fired annually in the UK, and this was getting into wildlife through ingestion by birds, in scavenged dead animals, and in the prey of some raptors, with a major problem in wildfowl.

He said that current restrictions on the use of lead over wetlands did not go far enough, and that lead was finding its way into the human food chain through other pathways including wild venison and wild venison products.

"There is no level below which lead does not cause harm," said Mr Swift. "Lead in game meat is at levels harmful to adults, children, and pregnant women and there is new evidence from recent studies linking blood lead with game consumption."

The alternative, non-lead ammunition, was effective, safer for the environment and human health, he said, although some non-lead alternatives still needed closer study with regard to fumes and toxicity in water.

Reducing the risk from lead by careful butchery had been assessed, and there was no doubt that such risks in lead-shot game could be mitigated this way, but could not be removed entirely, and that there were impracticalities for both some large and small game.

"The next step," says John Swift, "is the production of an action plan which should be industry-led, or failing that, is led by Defra backed by the FSA. Failing that, LAG will call for statutory, regulatory measures for the restriction of lead ammunition."

The conclusions remain the same as outlined in 2015 – the problems are most likely larger than extensive research has indicated, but there is now a much better understanding of the risks. Also, the sector should be more confident that there are benefits to be delivered by replacing lead with alternatives, and that this change should not threaten the game shooting and deer stalking sectors to any significant degree.

The LAG update also flagged up that dogs in particular could be at risk from being fed trimmings of lead-shot game by hunters, and that trials by Forest Enterprise requiring use of non-lead ammunition for culling deer and wild boar were based on clear evidence that lead ammunition could contaminate carcasses. This could undermine FE's position in putting lead-shot game into the food chain when there were proven alternatives available. Similar extensive trials have been undertaken by FE in Scotland.

With the majority of deer shot entering the food chain, and a large volume of gralloch being left on the hill being scavenged and consumed by birds and other wildlife, then the risk to human health, the environment, and other animals is readily understood. Use of non-lead bullets could remove that risk completely and, as the price differential between lead and non-lead reduces, then that becomes an even harder proposition for the sector to ignore.

www.leadammunitiongroup.org.uk

Written by Dick Playfair



Section of lead (left) and copper bullet.
Photo: Jim Govan



Scottish venison in the spotlight

There is much to report in the Scottish venison sector right now, most of it positive. Firstly, Scottish Government is showing renewed interest in venison and its potential. Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing called a venison 'summit' in March attended by some 25 key players from right across the sector. Those attending heard about the opportunities in the UK market, supply falling short of demand, and reduced imports from New Zealand. Mr Ewing led discussion about how the shortfall can be addressed, possibly by continued expansion of our farmed deer sector and delivering better routes to market for roe where the raw resource is increasing, but the infrastructure has yet to develop.

An important outcome will be the production of a strategic plan for Scottish venison to fit with Scotland Food and Drink's national food strategy Ambition 2030. The venison plan is currently in development with the aim to have it ready for launch, possibly in draft form, for Scottish Venison Day on 4 September.

The PGI process for Scottish Wild Venison is well underway and the UK consultation phase closed on 25 May. Whilst a European award, PGI remains relevant after Brexit, recognising the product's special qualities in terms of its production and provenance, from a completely wild, natural resource. More work may be required before the application moves to Europe for further consultation, but if all goes to plan then PGI could be achieved next year.

Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV) is in good health, with producer and processor members increasing. This scheme is crucial in ensuring that the process of getting material from hill/kill to processor and then onward to the consumer is subject to inspection and certification, and around 75 per cent of wild venison is currently assured through this process. SQWV has offered free larder assessments for non-members to bring producers outside its scheme up to speed, and is currently exploring the development of a new category so that small producers including individual vocational/recreational deer managers can also join; and for them to benefit from the additional confidence and safeguards that SQWV membership delivers.

Regarding food safety, venison is in a process of evolution and a major study is in progress to better understand the prevalence of *E. coli* O157 in deer (see report).

E. coli O157 is an issue in which Food Standards Scotland is taking a strong interest and the sector is being tested to demonstrate that it can show 'due diligence' and minimise risk. And The Scottish Venison Partnership, with SQWV and SNH, has produced three short films under the Best Practice banner as a reminder of the risks of contamination, how to reduce those risks, and the responsibilities of being in the food business.

We also want the EU small quantities/trained hunter derogation to work better in conjunction with the venison dealer licensing system, so providing a short, traceable supply chain and allowing locally shot venison to be sourced and sold safely and legally. This requires more work, but the system already exists; although in some cases, resources at local government level are in short supply.

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has also stepped up its inspections of Approved Game Handling Establishments (AGHEs) with its inspectors on site to reject carcasses uplifted from producer larders, but deemed unfit to go into the food chain.

All this will result in improving our Scottish wild venison, making an outstanding product better and safer, and one in which everyone who is involved in its production can justifiably take pride.

Written by Dick Playfair

Update on the Scottish Deer Health Survey 2017 – 18

The Scottish Deer Health Survey, funded by FSS and the Scottish Government, started in July 2017 and is now coming to the end of its first year. Thanks to the efforts of upland and lowland deer stalkers and deer managers, the project has been a great success, with over 1000 faecal samples from deer being analysed for the presence of *E. coli* O157 and *Cryptosporidium*, both of which can cause human disease. In addition to these samples, tissue samples have been processed and archived for Chronic Wasting Disease testing, if this disease emerges in the UK.

To determine which practices are most likely to cause faecal (and therefore *E. coli*) cross-contamination of the carcass, samples have been taken from five approved game handling establishments distributed throughout Scotland and analysis of these is underway.

It is our aim to publicise final results as soon as they are available. Sampling of wild deer will continue until the end of June, after which the prevalence of *E. coli* O157 within Scottish deer will be estimated and subsequently reported in late summer/early autumn. The results from the *Cryptosporidium* prevalence study and cross-contamination studies will be available at a later date. Respondents will be informed of results from the samples they submit, and all results will be anonymous.

This study will provide key information on the safety of wild venison for human consumption as it will inform the overall risk of *E. coli* O157 infection from venison and improve best practice guidelines for venison processing. The *Cryptosporidium* study will inform on the species and strains of the parasite present in Scottish wild deer populations, and will be used by Scottish Water as an indicator for catchment health and to inform risk assessments for water quality.

This project has only been possible due to the enthusiasm and efforts of the deer industry, from deer management groups and the Forestry Commission through to the stalkers on the ground. We extend a big thank you to all those involved!

For more information please contact:

Tom McNeilly | E: Tom.McNeilly@moredun.ac.uk
Beth Wells | E: beth.wells@moredun.ac.uk
Tel 0131 445 6157

Deer sector must face up to the challenges of sporting rates and the cost of deer management.

Looking down Loch Long



Winston Churchill,
Winston Churchill Venison

The deer world is going through a time of change. I spoke at the ADMG AGM earlier in the year and appreciate, as I said then,

that this is a good opportunity to air my thoughts.

I was born in Essex, my father was a gamekeeper and from an early age, all I wanted to do was to follow in his footsteps. I left school at the earliest opportunity at the age of 15 in 1966.

In 1968 we moved to Northamptonshire to an estate near Corby. The owner loved highland red deer stalking – stags of course - and had a good friend who invited him stag stalking at Altnaharra every year. I was invited to go to help the ghillie, which I did for ten consecutive years and completely lost my heart to the highlands. For a young man who had never seen anything but flat fields, roads, towns and houses, it was awesome. I would also take a week hind stalking with a friend, we went to a number of different estates across the highlands and it was the highlight of our year.

At the time we had family connections with a senior manager in the Economic Forestry Group based near Dunoon. The company, better known as EFG, eventually merged with Tillhill and, as a result of the connection, our stalking holidays also extended to EFG at Dunoon. Coincidentally, my affection for gamekeeping was waning due to modern farming methods which were not conducive to wild game management and commercial game shooting had arrived which was completely changing the game management world that I grew up in. By complete contrast, I could see that the creation of plantations and forests in the southern highlands reflected a huge change going on which opened opportunities to work in a truly wild environment with truly wild creatures.

My opportunity came during 1983 when I was offered a post in the wildlife department of EFG which I accepted. I moved north with all my possessions – including guns

and dogs – packed into my Ford Capri to start this new life. I worked for EFG for five years but with the changes to the rules on tax benefits for forestry investors, my wife, who I had met locally, and I started the venison business that we still run today.

Initially, the young plantations offered a fantastic habitat for roe deer, but slowly and surely that habitat declined for them. But the red deer arrived and colonised all the forests on Cowal. They have also now colonised the island of Bute which had no red deer until approximately 15 years ago.

I'm now realistically approaching the end of my working career and maybe have become slightly cynical in my old age, but I see challenges ahead for the next generation and I wish to highlight two related points, in my view both controversial issues that should be addressed.

Sporting rates

We rent approximately 12,000ha from a number of different landowners – all linked to commercial forestry in the private sector. Each property falls beneath the Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS) threshold but when aggregated they put me in a situation where I will be asked for upwards of £20,000 per year for sporting rates. If that happens our business will close and the five families that depend on it will be unemployed. Due to peculiarities in our leases we may find a way out of this predicament but if so I will still have a hefty fee to pay to our agent – either way, we are the losers!

I thought our business was unique and I would be the only one affected by this half-baked process. However, I was contacted by someone else who finds himself in an even more difficult situation – his tenancies are with FCS, SNH and the Scottish Government with no manoeuvrability, and unless there is quick action from the authorities, he will have to close his 25 year-old business.

I have taken my own campaign to Government ministers and have received sympathetic replies with quite a lot of talk about discussions and reviews but am still in limbo with regard to any positive outcome for my case.

I have recently written again to Ministers pointing out that if something is not done with some urgency, small niche businesses like mine will be lost and will be impossible to replace. The knock-on effect to our fragile rural economy is obvious – not to mention the negative effect on deer control within forestry and woodlands.

I would urge all to appeal against their sporting rates assessment, no matter how small, as our way of life is at stake here. SNH and FES must also speak out on the negative impact of sporting rates on deer control. Incidentally, the reason forestry has been rated so highly is because stalking on almost all privately owned forests is leased for significant amounts. The assessors picked up on this and have rated forestry accordingly so we have shot ourselves in the foot.

The cost of deer control

We are all under increasing pressure to reduce deer densities and we have to consider the cost. Deer densities are certainly too high in some parts of Scotland and I can only talk with confidence about our own situation on Cowal. By planting thousands of hectares of spruce back in the 1970s and 80s we have created a perfect habitat for deer where access for stalking is very poor and, despite extending the hind season into March, we are struggling to shoot our annual increment. To make things more difficult and confusing, we have sporting rents.

When I joined EFG, the forest owners/investors were being charged for deer control; however, as the plantation established and stalking became more popular, there was an opportunity to turn this cost to the investor into an income and why not? The ocean of single age Sitka spruce was not under threat from deer. There was perhaps a limited amount of bark stripping but nothing of major concern. Rents and other costs associated with deer control have continued to increase at least with inflation (rents probably higher than inflation) but venison has not increased for decades.

When I started my business during 1988, I could cover all my costs with venison income and any sporting income from bucks and stags was a bonus – the focus was on deer control. Today we have a very active sporting side to our business which is necessary to fill the ever-increasing gap between costs and venison income. To make the tight rope we walk between deer control and sporting even more difficult is the fact that we now have restocks to protect, and where damage occurs we come under pressure to reduce deer and control damage, and yet the rent bills still come in. All mine for the coming year have increased – venison values have not and almost certainly will not so the gap gets bigger, so the need to increase our sporting income grows.

Forest Enterprise has a clear approach – they see deer control as a cost to the forest and sporting is almost non-existent. I am not sure that the private sector is clear as to what it wants – but without being too controversial, I would say that it wants tight deer control and the rent as well.

Maybe we should be turning the clock back and consider going back to landowners paying for deer control? Equally, it is difficult to quantify all of this because even with tight control, there will be damage. We know that with Sitka spruce, providing the ground preparation and the plants are good, they will grow through browsing as Sitka is a very resilient tree – unlike hardwoods and soft conifers.

We also have to consider the wider picture and the impact of what we do on other local businesses. I estimate that our business brings in approximately £30,000 per annum to other businesses in accommodation alone, evening meals and bar bills not included - so probably nearer £50,000 in total. All of this comes outside the tourist season so is hugely important. Foresters/land managers have a responsibility to their clients, the owners, who invest in forestry. That is their job, but with our rural economy so fragile, I feel the bigger picture needs to be addressed and a balance struck.

The net cost of deer control has to be considered by all, whether it is within woodlands or on the open hill, and all our situations will be slightly different, but the gap between venison income and cost will continue to grow.

In conclusion, if our deer populations are managed properly, they are an asset to us all and a significant factor in our rural economies. I have been fortunate enough to have travelled to various parts of the world, on stalking/hunting holidays and I have concluded that we have some of the best stalking in the world but it is also some of the cheapest, if not the cheapest.

We, the industry should in my view bite the bullet and increase our charges for this wonderful and almost unique experience. It is a question of balance – and I don't think we yet have it right.

Note: *Since the time of writing there has been a concession gained by Scottish Land & Estates resulting in Scottish Government instructing local authorities to grant rates relief where sporting rights are not being "exercised for commercial gain."*

The guidance, which is non-statutory has been issued to local authorities and states that Unoccupied Property Relief can be awarded at 100 per cent for shooting rights where there is no commercial shooting or stalking, backdated to April 2017. It is now up to local authorities to follow this guidance should they choose to do so in cases where deer stalking is undertaken purely as a management exercise.

There has also been some encouragement given to Winston Churchill Venison by Ministers although it is yet to see whether this will translate into a suitable response at local authority level.



Highland countrywoman and 'compulsive fund-raiser' who upheld all that was best about stalking

Iain Thornber



Sarah Holman, who died in June 2017 aged 65 stood out among a dwindling number of Highland landowners who hold the view that owning an estate carries with it a duty and responsibility to the land and the local community.

She took an active part in the life of the villages of Ilmington in Warwickshire and at Acharacle, Argyll, where she delighted local residents with her eccentricities, and a family trust made land available for a new primary school, a commemorative woodland walk, and an extension to the graveyard.

Her own great love of stalking was on the family's Shielbridge estate in Argyll, on the west coast of the Scottish Highlands. There was nothing she liked better after a morning swim in the icy Atlantic waters, which she did every day summer or winter, than setting out for the high tops, often not returning until late evening.

Where deer were concerned she was a traditionalist and upheld all that was best and grand about stalking. Not for her a short walk, an easy beast in the early morning mist or loosing off a few rounds from an all-terrain vehicle. She was an accomplished stalker and got involved in all aspects of the day, including the galloching which she once performed wearing a pair of Marigolds.

The eldest of four daughters of Christopher Boot Holman and his wife Winifred, née Ponsonby, Sarah Charlotte Holman was born in London on July 9 1951. A paternal great grandfather was Jesse Boot, the first Lord Trent and founder of Boots the Chemists. In 1930 he had purchased the 50,000 acre Ardnamurchan estate (of which Shielbridge formed a part), the most westerly property on mainland Britain, from the father of the art historian Kenneth Clark. The estate comprised a 70 stag deer forest and the south bank of the river Shiel, famous for its early run of sea trout and heavy salmon. Also included was the massive red-sandstone Glenborrodale Castle and Shielbridge House.

Sarah developed diabetes when she was five, but never made a fuss, always telling her family that she was fit as a fiddle, had her diabetes under control and that her doctor recommended a bottle of red wine a day. This was a prescription she adhered to until her last year when she announced she was giving up wine for Lent, although when asked how she would manage she replied: *"I'm drinking whisky instead."* When she was 10 her parents bought Foxcote House, a magnificent 18th century manor near Shipston-on-Stour in Warwickshire, which, until the death of Robert Canning in 1848, had been the seat of the Canning family since the reign of Henry VI. There she was taught to ride and she hunted with the Warwickshire all her life. Sarah was educated at Lawnside in Malvern, the Sorbonne in Paris and the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

Despairing of her getting married, when she was 35 her father asked her to take over the running of Shielbridge estate, by now reduced to 10,000 acres. Moving to the Old Manse at Acharacle, she provided generous entertainment for a shifting cast of guests, the quality of her wines making up in some measure for such dubious delicacies as mushroom and mackerel paté. The sporting artist Ian MacGillivray was a frequent guest; some of his best deer paintings were done on the estate with the Inner Hebrides as a backdrop.

Sarah Holman served as chairman of the Ardnamurchan Deer Management Group and on the executive committee of ADMG. Always concerned for animal welfare, she disliked the commercial aspects of stalking and nothing annoyed her more than being told by Scottish Natural Heritage that more deer needed to be culled to make way for yet more trees – although numbers were already at an all-time low.

Sarah Holman served as a Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Warwickshire as her father and various ancestors had before her. She was always organising events to raise money for her many charities. When her bank manager asked her what her job was she replied: *"compulsive fund-raiser"*. For the last 20 years of her life she ran the Cheltenham Countryside Race Day for the Countryside Alliance, raising more than £2 million and bringing attendance numbers up from 6,000 to 20,000. When the committee tried to retire her, giving her a farewell lunch, she refused to take the hint and raised a record amount the next year.

Sarah Holman had no airs and graces and at a smart charity lunch in Gloucestershire she invited her carpenter, her gardener, her plumber, her rat catcher and Barry her local taxi driver, and had the most fun of all the tables there.

A woman of forthright views, described by a friend as: *"95 per cent wonderful and 5 per cent maddening"*, Sarah Holman lost her keys, wallet and telephone on a regular basis and was oblivious to any rules that did not suit her. On one occasion, rushing back to Foxcote at high speed late at night, she was pulled over by the police. She explained that she had been playing the part of a tart in the village play and when she saw the lights of a car behind her apparently giving chase, she was terrified that she was being pursued by two men in the audience who had been eyeing her up. The policemen were so impressed by her defence that they sent her on her way.

On another occasion, arriving at the airport check-in desk and finding herself barred from her holiday flight because she had an out-of-date passport, she demanded to speak to the pilot.

Sarah Holman was unmarried, explaining she had two lovely proposals when she was younger, but had turned them down, as *"things were great as they were"*. She was adored by her sisters, nephews, nieces and godchildren and welcomed them to the Old Manse each year. She is survived by Corrie, her beloved Norwich terrier.

First printed in The Daily Telegraph, July 2017.

Newsletter produced by

The Association of Deer Management Groups, c/o Bidwells, Carn Dearg House, North Road, Fort William PH33 6PP
Tel: 01397 702433 | Email: finlay.clark@bidwells.co.uk | www.deer-management.co.uk