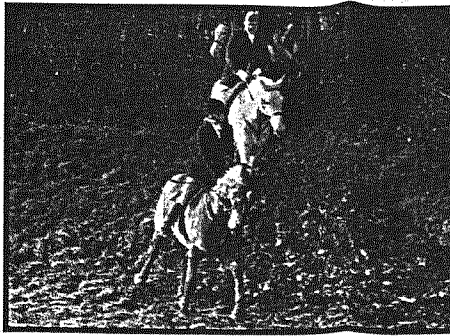


FOR FOUR YEARS, PRINCE CHARLES HAS PREPARED HIS SON FOR THIS



PURSUIT: The hunt on the trail of a fleeing hare

At the age of 7, Harry is blooded for the hunt

by CHARLES RAE

IT was the moment Prince Charles has spent four years preparing for.

Under his watchful eye, his seven-year-old son Harry climbed into the saddle and set off with his father for his first day's hunting.

The young Prince has been riding since the age of three in preparation for his "blooded" in the Royals' favourite sport.

Charles has taken him on strenuous gallops at Sandringham but this time it was the real thing as father and son followed the pack of hounds chasing hares across the Norfolk countryside.

Two hares were ripped apart by the dogs during the afternoon hunt organised by North Norfolk Harriers.

Anti-bloodsport campaigners condemned Charles for "blooding" his son at such a tender age. John Bryant, wildlife officer for the League Against Cruel Sports, said: "All this talk about a compassionate Prince Charles is rubbish. I am sure the public of Britain will be disgusted."

"Prince Charles is a real blood-sports man. He was indoctrinated by his parents and now he is carrying on the family tradition of butchering wildlife."

Another campaigner added: "It is totally irresponsible to hunt hares. They are in decline in many parts of Britain."

Charles, Harry and Princess Anne's 10-year-old daughter Zara Phillips rode with 50 riders over farms and through woodland on the private estate of Viscount Coke, at Holkham,

Norfolk, 15 miles from Sandringham.

Prince Charles, on a grey, and the children hung back till the hunt had set off. Then he urged the youngsters, to "hurry up" as they pursued the main pack.

It is believed Charles chose to ride with the North Norfolk Harriers at the weekend because of controversy surrounding his favourite Quorn Hunt in Leicestershire.

Two joint masters of the Quorn quit earlier this year over allegations about cruelty to foxes.



COACH: Charles

Yesterday joint master of the 20-year-old Harriers, car trader Mr Roger Bradbury, said: "We only had a couple of runs and the hare got away on each occasion."

"There is no question of the young prince seeing a hare torn apart."

He said that two hares were killed when they were surprised in the middle of a field.

"They didn't get up and run. It is one of those unfortunate things. The prince would not have seen it."

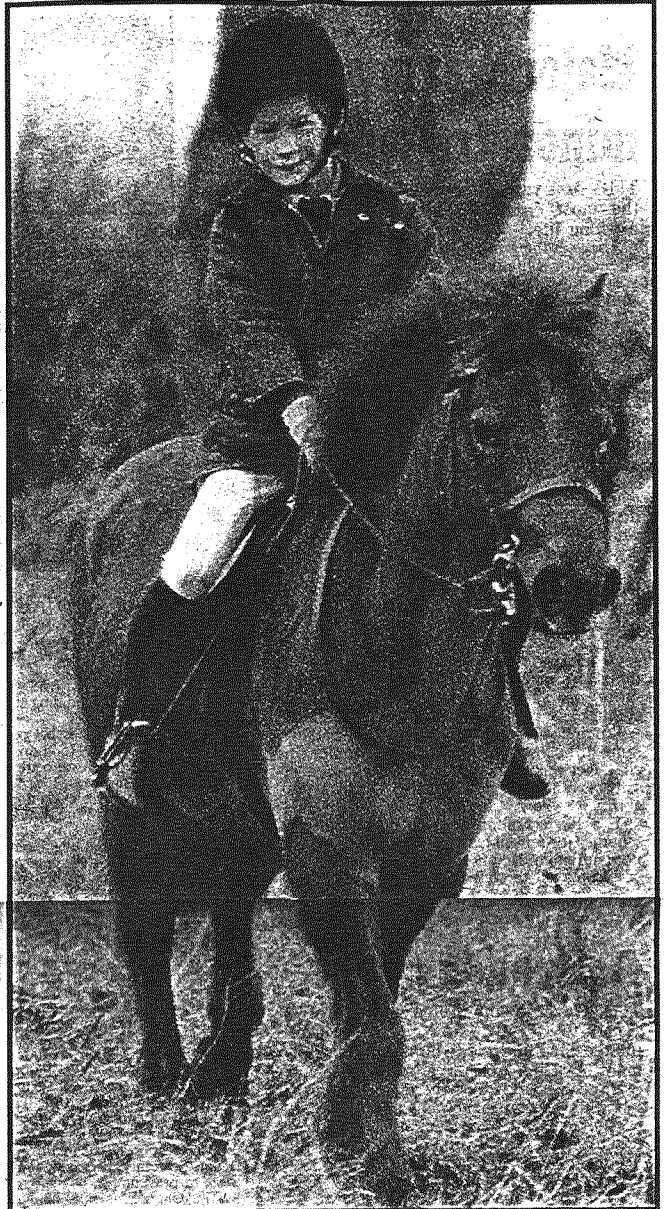
"None of us are bloodthirsty. Killing is minimal. The joy of riding over different pieces of countryside is what it is about."

He said Prince Harry had asked many questions about the hounds and was an excellent rider.

"Prince Charles was very caring. He kept his eyes on the children all the time and they were very competent."

A spokesman for the National Hunting club said it was not dangerous to take youngsters out on hunts.

"Prince Harry has been riding since he was knee-high to a grasshopper and he comes from a very horsey family. He has been well tutored."



YOUNG BLOOD: Prince Harry after his first hunt Picture: BRYN COLTON

Huntsmen quizzed over attack on car

by CHARLES RAE

A GROUP of anti-blood sports campaigners were trapped inside their car as it was smashed up and overturned by pickaxe-wielding thugs.

The three men and two women were kicked and punched as they tried to crawl from the wreckage.

Detectives were last night quizzing huntsmen from the Waddon Chase Hunt in Buckinghamshire, but say they have nothing yet to link them directly with the attack.

The car, driven by James Easton, had followed the hunt to Hanover Farm in Winslow, Buckinghamshire.

As it left the farm to pull out on to the road three men ran up to the red Peugeot.

They used pickaxes and spades to smash the headlamps, windows and body panelling before rolling it over.

Detective Sergeant Mark Kearney said: "We are treating this as a serious assault."

"The people in the car were just watching the hunt."

Link

"They were not causing any problems or being a nuisance to anyone."

"We have been questioning members of the hunt and our inquiries are continuing in that direction, although at this stage there is nothing to

link the attackers directly to the Waddon Chase Hunt."

A colleague added: "What concerns us particularly about this attack is that it appeared to be extremely well organised."

"The men who attacked the occupants of the car were equipped with dangerous weapons and obviously used them with intent to disable or seriously injured the occupants of the car."

Mr Easton, 30, Jonathan How, 38, and Kenneth Poulter, 28, all of Winslow, Ceri Gibbons, 24, of Bleckley, Bucks, and Suzanne Bardsley, 19, of Exeter, Devon, suffered slight injuries in the Boxing Day attack.

TRIVIA TEASER OF '91

TURN TO PAGE 28