

# **SOUTH OF ENGLAND HEDGE LAYING SOCIETY**

Reg Charity No 1046124

**April 2019**



1.



2.



## **WE ARE NOT ALONE**

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1. Normandy  | 2 Ireland |
| 3 Costa Rica | 4 Holland |
| 5 Germany    |           |

3.



4.



5.



### Message from the Chairman

Dear members, thank you for the re-election as Chairman. We welcome Graham West to the committee, Graham has also taken up the post to help out as the assistant training officer. Thank you to all the committee officers for all your contributions to a great seasons hedge laying.

The Veterans class has been reinstated at the National Championship, with the South of England Hedgelaying Society sponsoring the class This will give the intermediate cutters a real purpose & chance to progress at National level. This years National championship is being held at Pewsey Hill Farm, Pewsey, Wilts. SN9 6NJ in October.

I look forward to seeing you at some of the summer shows, best wishes for the 2019 - 2020 hedge laying season.

Phil Hart.

Chairman

### Editors Comments

I'm banging on about flooding today see page 13

#### re Front Page.

1. **Normandy.** The traditional Normandy style utilises pleaching as we know it combined with binders at various levels which are tied with twine. The Bocage contains hedges grown on banks and allowed to assume fearsome heights before being coppiced for fuel and allowed to re grow. They caused much grief to the allied forces during and after D day.
2. **Ireland** um -rather variable, may be something to do with horses.
3. **Costa Rica** The fertiltly and humidity there is such that sticks can be placed in the ground and they just grow. Many different plants are used. They are for both stock control and ornamental/windbreaks around property. To ensure stock proofing they tie horizontal logs to the trunks.
4. **Holland** Many of you will be familiar with the style. Pleached at three different levels and designed to allow water through. See flooding article.
5. **Germany** Traditionally have a weaving style utilising twine rather like Normandy but in The Eifel region they plant beautiful Beech hedges, variable in height and often containing regular standards as shown. Mainly ornamental but some used for stock.
6. **Elsewhere.** In **Tasmania** the craft is being revived using Hawthorns planted by the original colonisers. On the Australian mainland the hunt is on for native species that may do the job. If you attended the Nationals in Cheshire a few years ago you may have come across an enthusiastic delegation from **Canada** but they will need to do some planting before they do any laying.

*Ian Runcie*



# South of England Hedge Laying Society

Reg. Charity NO 1046124

Promoting the craft of hedge laying, training, competitions and countryside management



## Training in Hedge Laying

The following training days for Coppicing & Hedge Laying are planned.

Date	Event	Venue
14 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2019	Coppicing	Blunts Wood, Haywards Heath
12 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2019	Hedge laying day1	Isfield
2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2019	Coppicing	Blunts Wood, Haywards Heath
9 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2019	Hedge laying day2	Street (nr Plumpton)
24 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2019	Tool sharpening	Plumpton
7 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2019	Hedge laying day3	Horsted keynes
28 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2019	Coppicing	Blunts Wood, Haywards Heath
4 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2020	Hedge laying 4 improvers day	Hastings
18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2020	Coppicing	Blunts Wood, Haywards Heath
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2020	President v Chairman	Magham Down
16 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2020	Annual Competition	Fletching
14 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	Fun day	Fletching
21 <sup>st</sup> March 2020	Additional day	Magham Down

Note that dates and locations may be subject to change

**Coppicing days are FREE to all Members**

### Fees

Hedge Laying: the course (days 1 to 4) is £150. 1 “taster day” is £60

Tool Sharpening is £10

If you are unable to attend a training event please let us know, re-booking fees apply as follows

Over 1 week – no fee

Between 2 days and 1 week - £10

Less than 2 days – £20

No show / the night before / on the day - £30

## Experienced current members

A section of hedge will be allocated for experienced current members wishing to lay hedge, please contact The Training Co-ordinator Phill Piddell for more details.

More details for all events will be published nearer the time. Please bring your membership cards to all events.

Please note to take part in any of these events you need to join the society so you are covered by the Society's insurance. Membership is £15 per annum, send a completed membership application form to The Membership Secretary, Phill Piddell.

1 Hope House Farm Cottage, Crouch Lane, Sandhurst, Cranbrook, TN18 5PD 01580 850768 [phill.piddell@bt.com](mailto:phill.piddell@bt.com)

# South of England Hedge-Laying Society



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (or RENEWAL) April 2018 to March 2020

**PRESIDENT:**

Peter Tunks  
The Coach House  
Waltersville Way  
Horley  
RH6 9EP

Tel: 01293 784826 / 07836 757570

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:**

Phill Piddell  
1 Hope House Farm Cottage  
Crouch Lane  
Sandhurst  
Cranbrook  
Kent TN18 5PD  
Tel: 01580 850768

Annual membership of the Society	£15 per person	
Lapel Badge	£5 per badge	
<b>Total</b>		
Please treat my membership as a Gift Aid donation (YES / NO)		

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

**PLEASE USE CLEAR BLOCK CAPITALS**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact (Name and Number) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age (if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

It is your responsibility to ensure that the Society is informed of any changes in your communication details.

Please return the completed form to Phill Piddell You will receive a Membership Card in the post.  
Alternatively please email the above details to [phill.piddell@bt.com](mailto:phill.piddell@bt.com) and transfer the money directly to our bank account: SORT CODE **20-49-76** Account **90867381** (South of England Hedge Laying Soc)

Renew online - [www.sehls.co.uk](http://www.sehls.co.uk)

## COMPETITION RESULTS

### 35 th Annual Hedge Laying Competition. Sunday 17th February 2019. Angmering Park **PRIZES**

Class	1st		2nd	3rd
Champion	The Society Cup +	£50	£25	£15
	TONY GALLOW		PAUL MATTHEWS	GARY MOORE
Senior	MIKE BENTLEY		TERRY STANDEN	DAVID DROSCHER
Novice		£50	£25	£15
	ROBERTO GRILLI		JOHNNY ADAMS	TREVOR COLBRON
Novice Pairs		£50	£25	£15
Veteran	The Society Trophy +	£50	£25	£15
	FRANK WRIGHT		CLIVE GILIGAN	DAVE TRURAN
Best 1st Year re-growth	The Whittington Shield +	£25	£15	£10
	NOT AWARDED THIS YEAR			
Best Veteran re-growth	The Fred Moulard Memorial Trophy		£25	NOT AWARDED THIS YEAR
Best length of bindings	Presidents Prize - kindly donated by the Society President		£20	JOHNNY ADAMS
Most improved Novice	The Bill Truran Memorial Trophy		£25	ROBERTO GRILLI
Best work on a poor length	The Joan Streete Memorial Shield		£25	MIKE MASON
Best staking & binding	The Jim Vantassel Tankard		£25	TONY GALLOW
Best work with hand tools - Novice			£50	PHILL PIDDELL
Best work with hand tools - Novice Pairs			£50	
Best work with hand tools - Veteran			£50	FRANK WRIGHT
Best work with hand tools - Senior			£50	DAVID DUNK
Best work with hand tools - Champion			£50	GARY MOORE

Amendment - "Best improved novice" was awarded to Roberto in error. The award was won by Trevor Colbron, sorry Trevor.

### POINTS TABLE

	Laughton	Hurstpier point	West Grinstead	SEHLS	TOTAL	POSITION
Gary Moore	0	8	11	9	28	3
Darren Hulburt	4	2	4	1	11	
David Crouch	3	3	0	3	9	
Bob Whittaker	10	10	8	8	36	2
Michael Bentley	8	9	10	10	37	1
Mike Mason	6	2	0	4	12	
Steve Thorns	6	7	3	2	18	
David Dunk	9	6	5	6	26	4
David Droscher	7	4	6	8	25	
Phil Hart	0	5	7	6	18	

# COMPETITION RESULTS

## 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Competition 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. Angmering Park

Cant	competitor	cut and pleach 35	stakes and binders 35	Appearance 30	Total 100	position
<b>Novice class, steward: Roger Taylor judge: Phill Hallam</b>						
8	Phill Piddell	25	21	18	64	
	Natasha					
12	Stonestreet	24	22	16	62	
15	Trevor Colbran	27	25	17	69	3
14	Alan Miller	25	24	19	68	
10	Roberto Grilli	27	25	20	72	1
	Jonathan					
9	Adams	24	27	20	71	2
13	Kevin Jeffries	22	21	17	60	
16	Gwyn Alford	24	23	16	63	
11	Graham West	26	24	17	67	
<b>Veteran class, steward: Mike Parrot, Judge Des Whittington</b>						
5	Frank Wright	27	21	27	75	1
6	David Crouch	19	20	19	58	3
7	John French	22	17	17	56	
3	Bob Taylor	23	17	17	57	
1	Dave Truran	22	19	19		
2	Tim Hughes	19	18	17	54	
4	Clive Gilligan	25	20	20	65	2
<b>Senior class, steward: Roger Ferrand, Judge: Peter Tunks and Alan Ashby</b>						
22	Darren Hulbert	22	20	19	61	
	David					
19	Droscher	25	31	22	78	3
	Martijn					
24	Schippers	27	22	21	70	
23	David Dunk	31	22	23	76	
21	Phil Rowell	24	26	24	74	
18	Mike Bentley	32	30	28	90	1
27	Terry Standen	27	29	26	82	2
25	Stephen Thorns	25	25	19	69	
	Russell					
20	Woodham	26	24	24	74	
17	Mike Mason	25	26	24	75	
26	Matthew Beard	23	23	20	66	
<b>Championship Class, steward: Roger Ferrand, Judge: Ke</b>						
32	Gary Moore	30	28	25	83	3
31	Paul Matthews	29	29	27	85	2
30	Tony Gallow	30	30	27	87	1
29	Phil Hart	26	22	24	72	
28	Nigel Adams	27	21	23	71	
33	Rob Whittaker	28	27	26	81	

## MAASHEGGENVLECHTEN 2019 HEDGELAYING IN HOLLAND

Several people in SEHLS will know the small Dutch group that compete in our February competition led by Lex Roeleveld and Martijn Schippers. Some may also know that for several years a return visit is made to a hedgelaying event in Holland, the Maasheggenvlechten. This year's intrepid adventurers were John French, Roger Taylor and Frank Wright. We were invited over to give some instruction in South of England style hedgelaying on the Saturday, up near Utrecht, and then travel down to Boxmeer, near the German border, for the event on Sunday; we were laying a demonstration hedge with the locals competing in the local style of hedge-weaving or hedge-braiding.

The Saturday session was pretty standard on a nice, double row thorn hedge that has evidently been used as a training hedge several times in the recent past. What was particularly interesting, though, was a tool that Martijn's son Luke was using for taking the heels off – a tool that was designed for cutting willow osiers and tree pruning. Nice and sharp and being wielded to great effect by Luke, who we hope will be entering our novice competition next year.



Picture from A Load of Old Billhooks

There were six trainees and we laid three cants, joining onto a length that had been laid in the local style. The weather was OK for most of the day but, naturally, turned wet towards the end.



The Maasheggen in Holland received approval in 2018 as a UNESCO biosphere reserve – an area in which humans and nature coexist. It claims to represent the oldest cultivated landscape in the Netherlands and is a mosaic of hedgerows, meadows and ponds on the bank of the river Maas. Not unlike some areas of England ... but flat. Within this area there are 275 kilometres of hedge.



Every year they hold a “hedge-braiding” competition, this was the fourteenth. Usually they expect to get 5,000 or more visitors to the event. No, that's not a misprint, 5,000. However as we were in the teeth of a gale with occasional driving rain numbers were greatly reduced and there were only about 1,000. At most of our competitions in the UK you could knock two zeroes off those numbers and still have spare fingers. Many of the spectators come by bicycle either because they are local or they park remotely and cycle in. Many of the competitors also turned up on bikes with



polesaws, long-handled pruners and long hooking sticks strapped to their crossbars and sticking out about 3 feet each end. Bicycles are a really big deal in Holland.

Their hedging style is possibly unique in that it is designed to allow the free flow of water to and fro through the hedge and (not good news for coppice workers) uses no stakes or binders at all. The “weavers” use only live stakes and lay the rest of the hedge in 3 layers, one from ground level as in the British styles, a middle level and then a top level that is intertwined to form the top of the hedge. This style is centuries old, as are most of the hedging styles around Europe. It tends to look rather untidy to many British eyes and the high pleaching is a definite no-no on this side of the North Sea. However, it is only meant to be effective against cattle and the live stakes mean that the whole thing is actually very robust even though it doesn't look very substantial. A blackbird should be able to fly through it apparently. The argument against the more robust style of British hedging is that the river floods but when it recedes it brings with it all the detritus, natural and man-made, and whereas the Maasheggen style allows all this water and debris to pass through the substantial gaps without any significant problem the fuller, denser style of British hedges allegedly causes all the accumulated rubbish to build up against the hedge, creating a dam which eventually gives way under the accumulated weight of water. This argument is not universally accepted though and there are, I understand, something like 80 kilometres of South of England style hedge.

The British hedge usually attracts quite a lot of interest and apparently gets a high approval rating from the viewing public.

Some brave souls were attempting to defy the weather and generate a bit of enthusiasm and party atmosphere with a pantomime horse and lots of bubbles. I fear they were not very successful.



This is our South of England hedge – hopefully proof against sheep and cattle.

And just around the corner from us is this Maasheggen style hedge – hopefully proof against cattle and flood.



**This year's winners**





**Lex, who came second**

The Dutch were extremely hospitable and the event was well organised; there were 37 cants I think. The small group of them who come over

every February to enter our South of England hedgelaying competition enable a bit of cultural cross-pollination. Some of them were using an unusual type of billhook that looks very like a butcher's cleaver and some of them appear to do a great deal of the pleaching using a saw rather than an axe or billhook. Most of them lay in teams compared to the British competitions, which are nearly all individual contests. There were no chainsaws used, except by us. We acknowledged the local sensitivities by using only a battery saw. Picture from A Load of Old Billhooks



General impressions of Holland: it's very neat and tidy with tiny little roads in the towns and villages. There is a lot of infrastructure for bikes – cycle lanes and paths, dedicated crossings and lots of traffic calming in town to keep speeds down. Nearly every house with a patch of garden has espaliered trees either up against the house wall or on the boundary. There are a huge number of willow trees lining roads, fields and ditches, which they keep closely pollarded. (That was the job of one of our hosts, a willow-pollarder.) The bicycle is king.

Words by Frank, pictures by Roger

Pictures: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/vjGxjiY6gKcnyLTs9>



**Photo from  
this year's  
SOEHS  
annual  
competition**

## Our 35th annual competition

was again at Angmering park, a massive estate north of Worthing. After turning on the main road its still a few miles to drive to the hedge. And set in the middle of the south downs national park, what better setting could you want?



There are a few pictures from Matthew from the setup crew.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/maJZCUfrBFyax9bv9>

The setup team did a fantastic job, the marking out was looking good.

## Midland Day, in the deep south (Angmering Park)

Everyone arrived (almost) on time. Our competitors were mainly locals but we also had visitors from Yorkshire, Dorset, and Holland. We were greeted with clear sunny skies, which was a welcome break from the winter rain.

Phil briefed the cutters, and reminded everyone of the new hand tools rules

Our stewards managed the theatre of the cant draw, then all to soon the start horn blasted. The hedge was pretty consistent, pretty tall, and generally not to big.

Once the cutters started many had an eye on the hand tools prize money, and set about removing heals with swinging tools. It has to be said the results were variable. The canny veterans were on the whole wise to this, and most set off with chainsaws from the get go.

Our judges and stewards spent the day checking everything, and passing occasional timely comments, much to the approval of anyone on the receiving end.

All to soon we had an hour to go, and a little panic set in on many cants. Fortunately by the final horn everyone had finished, with maybe a little last minute tweaking missed.

By the end of the day it was actually hot, and many had caught the sun.

Our last event of the year was our "Try something different day" and we decided to give the popular "Midland" style a go. We have a few cutters in the society who lay this style, so we herded them up for some training.

For those not familiar with Midland style its very "showy" with all the pleachers on view, and all the fluffy stuff on the "back". If you search the internet for a picture of hedgelaying you will probably see midland style.

The build of the hedge is different to SoE, in that we are looking for a wall of wood, with stems sitting neatly onto of each other, and nothing sticking out front. For us SoE people it seems very odd and brutal, but it regrows well!

All the attendees were regular cutters so the pleaching was not an issue, but laying off and the build did keep our experts busy helping us get the build started, poor Alan Ashby ended up building almost 1/2 the final hedge :-)

The stakes are put in as you go, which keeps the line straight. Finally it was binder time, which to everyone's amusement Peter Tunks completely forgot how to do it, Dave Sands has a special binder style which he seemed to invent on the day which was a cross between SoE and Midland. Looked good, and had very little waste. Once again Alan demonstrated how to do this for every cant , but once started we were mostly able to finish this on our own.

A great day out.



We drove to the pub for a superb lunch, and prize giving. Well done to all the winners.

Massive thanks to the Stewards, Judges, the other admin people, and the setup and coppicing crews.

## Charity Day Sedlescombe

With the threat of rain, and a competition in Devon we were down to 26 attendees for this years charity day. I seem to remember horizontal sleet at last years charity day.... I guess it helps motivate people to dig deep

I brought along loads of cake from a party the previous night, so we had a good solid start to the day, which was overcast, but not as bad as it could have been. Our host for the day arranged a portalo, unheard of luxury.

Anyway we all (mostly) arrived on time and have a look at what was in store this year (Our charity day hedges tend to be on the 'interesting' side). I was a mixed bag, gappy in places, BIG in places. Oh and some bits had been laid before. I managed to blag quite a nice patch of bramble, which is always a bonus.

So the day started with the buzz of chainsaws, and this continued most of the day, while people dealt with some pretty large stuff

I happened to be working on the road side next to Dave Sands who was showing Bernard Warwick the ropes. within what seemed like minutes Dave had finished half his hedge, including a massive pleach, and I was still clearing out and pondering where and how to start.

One of my first plants was a massive Hazel stool, so most of this went on the brash pile. My hedge went down pretty well, it was however a little gappy in places due to a complete lack of material (I did ponder pleaching the Bramble at one point). Tucked away on the side of the field half the guys were busy standing in a ditch, I think Matthew spent most of the day knee deep in 'water'.

By 11:00 Dave and Bernard were pretty much finished, and I had completed my pleaching, so we were ahead of the game. Most people were well underway, but a few were struggling with either volume of material or massive trees.

Phil Hart had pruned out a massive bit of olive ash (a nice dark streak in the centre of a white outer), never wanting to miss a trick I got him to saw it into manageable chunks which I tucked away in my car boot, with a plan to adze out a few bowls.

Some of the neighbours were a little concerned by our activities (I think they were expecting a little light pruning), so I took them on a tour of the hedge and explained all the processed involved and showed them detail. I don't think I managed to collect any new members, but they did understand what we were up to.



All to soon it was lunch time, and the landowner had fired up the BBQ, so it was

sausages and soup all round, washed down with yet more cake and a welcome break from standing in water, or chainsaw art.

Dave was showing people his racing axes, and of course shaving his arm to demonstrate how sharp they really are.

The finished hedge was a massive improvement on what we started with, and the landowner seemed very happy

Our team of plucky hedgelayers had so much fun I collected £420 from them on the day with some more to come.

Pictures as always

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/Pbzy5LD5PGvfgTGP8>

Phill Piddell







### Floods.

Looking at the report of the Dutch hedging style has led me into reflection of the contrast between one of the lesser known functions of our own hedgerows and those of Holland. The Dutch hedges are left with deliberate gaps at their bases, no good for sheep perhaps but will restrain cattle and horses. The gaps are there to allow water to flow rapidly through the hedge and presumably into the ditches from where they can be pumped out over the protective dykes and into the sea as rapidly as possible. The pumping was previously done by windmills but is now performed by large electrical installations. This process has been going on in an organised form since about 1000AD [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood\\_control\\_in\\_the\\_Netherlands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood_control_in_the_Netherlands).

Our own country has recently had it's problems with flooding but, given the different nature of the terrain, the solutions are very different. As in Holland, huge engineering works have been suggested as solutions and flood defences have been installed to protect towns. Such works are horrendously expensive to build and maintain, may be limited in effectiveness and may just move the problem elsewhere. Nevertheless, as in my home town of Lewes, they may may be essential for the protection of the populace and property.

Climate change is often cited as the cause of our own flash flooding problems but that is not the whole story. The usual cause of a flash flood on the plain is severe rain further up the catchment area, often on hills. Farmers don't want the rain flooding their fields and improved field drainage plus mechanical ditch clearing means that the water can reach the valley river unimpeded within a few minutes. Under these conditions a prolonged downpour over much much of the river catchment, especially if combined with a high tide can cause devastation further down. The problem is compounded by straightening out rivers and giving them higher banks so the water can rush down them like in a flume. Also, in some cases, dredging can speed up flow. Like the Dutch we have been trying to get rid of the water as rapidly as possible but hydrologists are thinking that the opposite may be part of the solution for many areas in this country. Another result of fast drainage is that the aquifers on which we rely for our drinking water can't fill properly.

In the 1990s a group of farmers in Pontbren in Wales within the catchment area of the river Severn were getting disillusioned by the problems they were experiencing from the increasing intensity of their hill farming. Increasing their stock, deforestation and grubbing up hedges meant that their sheep had nowhere to shelter and, along with more efficient drainage, the land was changing and erosion increasing. So they tried an alternative. They planted some trees, restored their hedges and dug some ponds and used hardier sheep. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-mid-wales-21762207>. Only 5% of their land was turned over to woodland and ponds but they could make use the wood generated by the trees, the ponds reduced the requirements for field drainage and, no doubt, there were improved environments for wildlife. They were happier farmers but also some unexpected consequences occurred.

During a downpour in Pontbren it was seen that the water flashing off the land disappeared when it met the trees. A major research programme followed and it was found that water was sinking into the soil 67 times faster at the trees than within the pastures. The water was finding its way downwards along the roots instead of rushing over the land hardened by trampling of the livestock. The scientists estimated that, if the catchment area could be reforested by just 5%, the peak flood levels further downstream could be reduced by nearly 30%. A figure which could make all the difference to the farmers and population lower down. The optimal configuration of



woodland and hedges is not difficult to work out. Ponds and the use of leaky dams in ditches (a few well placed logs) will allow the hill farmers to drain their field without a sudden crash of water below and, helped by re emergence of river meanders, it seems this will all go a long way to help reduce our flash flooding problem. Of course the water gets to the valley river eventually but the point is to even out the flow rates. There is nothing new about these measures, it's just that they need re learning. The measures are not expensive compared to the extensive engineering works previously mentioned and the woodland can be productive.

Is this happening? Well not really

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/13/flooding-public-spending-britain-europe-policies-homes>

One problem is that farming subsidies are geared to land clearance and stock increase and the farm subsidy ship has a very slow turn around time.

Locally I am a volunteer ranger for the South Downs. We love our chalk grassland but many people may not be aware that a certain percentage of woodland has to be maintained within the Park and the volunteers do the odd bit of hedge laying. Also chalk is very porous and flash flooding tends not to be a problem. (The Lewes floods being more associated with heavy prolonged rainfall plus Spring tides.)

I can't speak for the rest of the South East but the SE is not without its localised problems.

[https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2010.00948.x?tracking\\_action=preview\\_click&r3\\_referer=wol&show\\_checkout=1](https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2010.00948.x?tracking_action=preview_click&r3_referer=wol&show_checkout=1)



### **Introduction to the Conservation Hedgelayers**

We started our voluntary hedge laying 10 years ago at a time when I became aware that many young hedges in our area were ready for laying but those bodies responsible for them could not afford to pay for the work. I was already a competent layer having been trained by SEHLS and used as a trainer too. With the help of Patricia McFarlane, also a S of E trained cutter, we started organising training and laying sessions with our many Conservation friends.

We now cut on most Fridays during the season and to date have layed over 6,000 yards. Although we work for free we expect the hedge owner to buy in or otherwise help us source the stakes and binders. In the years after laying we regularly visit “our” hedges and encourage the owners to manage them in a wild life friendly manner. When needed we will take on such jobs as tying in wild rose binds, removing or laying spires of fast growing trees in the hedge and planting up gaps.

This ongoing relationship with our layed hedges means that all our team have the opportunity of seeing their hard work lead to improved viable hedges in the part of Essex where we live, mostly within the M25.

Pat and I run a closed group where coming out cutting with us is by invitation only, we invite people we know who show a commitment to conservation in other groups and have a good work ethic. We affiliated with the NHLS some years ago and at that point chose the name “The Conservation Hedgelayers”. We have trained 55 people most of whom are still in our pool, others



have retired or moved on. We now take every opportunity to train younger people working in countryside management, who currently make up one-third of our group.

Finally a comment on our style of laying; a variation to the traditional South of England style made necessary by the intensive browsing pressure by fallow deer in our area. The deer will prevent side growth developing on a hedge to such an extent that in many places the pleachers are clearly visible up to binder height five years after laying. To mitigate this we now keep the hedge as wide and bushy as practical when layed. This gives the pleachers more protection and hides basal regrowth until it emerges from the centre of the hedge.

Peter Vaughan

### **The Work of the Conservation hedge layers**

1 Footpath, layed and regrowth

2 A difficult position up against a metal fence



## FEB 2018/19 Committee Members and Officers:

President	Peter Tunks 01293 784826
Vice President	Bob Hunt Tel: 01273 400898
Chairman & Training Officer	Phil Hart 0771 705 4172
Assistant training officer	Graham West 07870219429
Vice Chairman	Frank Wright 01273 493309
Secretary	Chris Burchall-Collins 01273 495026
Treasurer	Mathew Beard 07976009549
Assistant Secretary:	Vacant
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Committee Dates,

**Items for next Newsletter to Ian by mid July please**

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acknowledgements: ireland and dutch: flickyr Dave Perry

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