

SOUTH OF ENGLAND HEDGE LAYING SOCIETY



Reg Charity No.1046124

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

April 2021



FROM THE EDITOR

Well, the 2020-2021 season is over, and COVID took its toll of event days. Let us hope that, with everyone vaccinated, we will have a better time in 2021-2022. This newsletter is relatively slim, but I do commend the articles by Tim and Iain. There will be no excuse for turning up on coppicing days without sharp tools!

Please make sure that you have renewed your membership subscriptions so that you continue to get Society information and copies of the newsletter. Also, as ever, please send in your letters, comments, and articles. Newsletter deadlines are listed in 'For Your Diary'.

Mark Schofield

Front cover: Holly

CONTENTS

Message from the President & Message from the Chairman.....	3
Revealed at Last: The True Story of Alan Ashby's First Lesson in Hedgelaying <i>Dick Morley</i>	4
Hedges in the News <i>Mark Schofield</i>	6
Coppicing <i>Tim Hughes</i>	7
How to Sharpen Your Tools – Billhooks <i>Iain White</i>	13
Nature Notes <i>Reg Lanaway</i>	16
Living on the Hedge – The Holly <i>Mark Schofield</i>	18
Hedgerow Finds <i>Phil Hart</i>	21
For Your Diary.....	22
Committee Members.....	23

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thank you to the members at the AGM for allowing me to be President for a further year, not that my post has been very demanding for the past season. As can be imagined there has been much deliberation as to what we could and could not do and still follow COVID restrictions, our guides in this issue have been Chris and Jo Burchell-Collins, allowing us one- or two-days' hedge laying as a society, thanks to them, and I know I am always banging the same drum, our dedicated committee. Let us look forward to a full year coppicing and hedge laying starting this coming autumn and do our bit for the environment and our mental well-being.

Mike Parrott

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Thank you to the Committee for re-electing me as Chairman for another year, and a big thank you to the committee members for standing to serve again.

There is excellent information in the newsletter, leaving little excuse for blunt tools next season. Thank you, Iain White, for your contribution.

Thank you to everyone that has renewed your membership by signing up to GoCardless. If you have not paid up your membership subscription, please get in contact with Mark Schofield to make his task easier with the monitoring of membership. This will be the last newsletter to members who have not renewed membership.

There is a new feature in this newsletter, "Hedgerow Finds". Send in photos and stories of the items & artifacts you have found in the hedges as you were working on them.

I look forward to seeing you all at the events we have got planned.
(COVID 19 permitting)

Phil Hart

REVEALED AT LAST: THE TRUE STORY OF ALAN ASHBY'S FIRST LESSON IN HEDGELAYING

BY DICK MORLEY

Back in the days when John Wilson was Chairman, Peter Tunks learned of a master craftsman who was eager to extend his skills as a 'Brickie' to hedgelaying, and, as a result he was invited to come to the next Newcomers' session. It proved to be one of those days when trainees outnumbered qualified trainers and, in their desperation, I was asked to advise and work alongside one of the raw applicants. At that time, I had not long undergone training myself but apparently I met two criteria: my father had been a several times Champion of Champion Ploughman at the Hurstpierpoint Ploughing Matches in the nineteen-thirties; and I had only recently retired from teaching, ending my twenty-five years as Headmaster of a Sec Mod which had reinvented itself as a Comprehensive School. I have always gone a long way to believing the adage: "Those who can, do, while those who cannot, teach"! But perhaps I could buck the system; our very Chairman was a teacher-in-chief: Principal of Plumpton College. However, that first training day went OK as far as I was concerned and very shortly Alan was teaching me. Congratulations on his latest triumph in being internationally known and respected while I continue to rejoice in my Life Membership of SOEHS.

I am typing this early in December 2020 in the knowledge that the next publication will be several months ahead into 2021 by which time if accepted it may have to act post-mortem as my obituary. Accepting this possibility, I would like to note how I came to join, as encouragement to anyone keen to get to grips with pleaching etc.. The committee was keen to recruit new members and had issued an open invitation for anybody to turn up at any of their meetings as an observer. Luck was on my side: instead of my having to drive halfway across Sussex, the next venue was at a farmhouse in Hurstpierpoint, only a doddle from Ditchling, and I was hooked. Then fate took a hand, albeit sadly.

One of the original members of what was a close-knit community was George Street from Wadhurst who was happily blessed with a

remarkable wife, Joan, who had served in the WRNS in WW2. She volunteered to act as Membership Secretary because her knowledge of shorthand / typing was superior to her hedgelaying skills and I remember well the very warm welcome she gave me when I joined the Society. Suddenly, George found himself a widower and the Society was minus a Membership Secretary. I was only too happy to offer my services without having to supply a CV! My only secretarial experience was during my two years' National Service, spending thirteen months in Egypt running the District Education Officer's office. There were no hedges in the Canal Zone but it did provide some interesting experience. Part of my responsibility was to send out telegram-like signals to all units. One memorable occasion was announcing one day's off-duty holiday to all ranks to celebrate the birth of the Queen's first son, Prince Charles, in 1948. How very apt that he should grow up to be such a strong supporter of hedgelaying and to submit to training by John Saving, one of our most talented members.

I wish to contrast my early amateurish publications of the periodic newsletters with the exceptionally professional books that we members are privileged to be given today. My best was a single page of A4 produced on an old typewriter and run off on a duplicator. I do offer heartfelt congratulations to the present editorial establishment.

Finally, concerning all the problems now attending British agriculture, I would like to quote a poem that was on the English Language syllabus when I was a schoolboy and which I have never seen since. It had been published in the magazine 'Punch' and the author was a pessimistic farmer in the 1930s. I quote without seeking permission to do so because the periodical itself is no longer in print.

Farmers' Glory by A.G. Street

The hours of gold come back to me that Time has pinched; he
can't return 'em

The well-remembered Chestnut Tree (or was it Laburnum?)

The rural rill, the shriek of dying pigs, I hear it still.

T'is out of no bucolic whim I promulgate agrarian measures

But now that Farmers' Glory's dim and Agriculture holds no pleasures,

I'd give a lot, if I could farm when times like these were not.

With my very best wishes and gratitude for being invited into the magic circle of hedgelaying.

HEDGES IN THE NEWS

BY MARK SCHOFIELD

'Reservoirs of life': how hedgerows can help the UK reach net zero in 2050.

[*'Reservoirs of life': how hedgerows can help the UK reach net zero in 2050 | Environment | The Guardian*](#)

320m of hedge stolen from farmer's field

[Thieves steal 320m of hedge from field outside of Norwich | Eastern Daily Press \(edp24.co.uk\)](#)

COPPICING

BY TIM HUGHES

Coppicing is a traditional woodland process, now looked upon as a rural craft. The word 'copse' is derived from 'coppicing' and refers to an area of dense trees and bushes. In years gone by coppicing was an essential industry used to produce increased yields from various trees. Coppicing extends a tree's life to many hundreds of years and also encourages wildflowers and, in turn insects, to flourish. Dormice also are attracted to Hazel coppice and this is an important wildlife consideration as Dormice are an endangered species.

The act of cutting a tree down to the stump creates vigorous regrowth of multiple new shoots or stems. Almost any broadleaf tree species can be coppiced and species that respond particularly well include Hazel, Sweet Chestnut (an important source for post and rail fencing), Willow, Holly and Ash. All coppicing is carried out in rotation or a cycle, varying from seven to ten years. Generally, about one acre per season in rotation should give well over 1,000 stakes and binders but this depends on the regrowth. Good Hazel stools can yield 40 pieces, so if there are say 50 coppiced trees to the acre, then you are possibly looking at 2,000.

To some, the clearing of an area of woodland may appear destructive, but it is the correct way to work. Coppicing helps regenerate woodland, by allowing in light and air. If too many trees are left, then the regrowth will be adversely affected as the new growth is competing for light and will not do so well. When Hazel coppicing, other species such as Ash, Holly, Hawthorn, and Elder can be cut down, as necessary. These will regrow with the Hazel, so everything is uniform.

A good example of how light levels affect regrowth is where we cleared an area in Blunts Wood, Haywards Heath in the 2019 - 2020 season. This was our first visit to the wood for several years, (possibly as far back as 2009). The area we started clearing had a number of tall Oak and Ash trees and was largely very overstood Hazel. Further along, there were fewer trees. It required considerable effort to produce a relatively small quantity of stakes and binders and then the quality was not brilliant. At the end of the season, we had cleared a good-sized area. When I visited in the late summer to see how things

were doing, the regrowth throughout the whole area was quite pleasing, but the contrast in the growth rates was very interesting. In the area with larger trees, where we had started cutting, the growth of the Hazel was around 4 feet. In the centre part of the area, where there were fewer trees, it was around 6 feet, but at the far end where we finished, and there were hardly any trees, it was about 8 feet. I assume this was because of the increased light levels.

Furze field Wood, Turners Hill, which the Society took over to Coppice in 2017, was another labour-intensive task as the vast majority of the Hazel was well overstood, probably not touched for 50 years or more. The wood is about 9 acres and has been deer fenced. We spent four sessions of the 2017 - 2018 season cutting stakes and binders and the totals were in the 1,000's, but after the following season, we had exhausted the supply, hence moving on to Blunts Wood in 2019. I have carried out a lot of felling of the overstood trees over the past few winters and there is now a good rotation of regrowth appearing. The growth from our first season (2017 -2018) is now around 9 - 10 feet with other areas coming on well.

The most important part about coppicing is to ensure regrowth flourishes as I have already mentioned. Protection the cut stumps (stools) from deer (Muntjac are a real nuisance) and rabbits is vital where such pests are present, so I build brash walls and used fencing wire and wire netting to safeguard them. This is time consuming but extremely important work.

Experienced coppicers each have their own ways of working and this is my suggested approach to clearing an overstood area of woodland. Safety is paramount and it is important to carry out a site inspection before starting work. One needs to be aware of hazards such as rabbit holes, steep slippery banks, fallen wood, brambles, any leaning or potentially dangerous trees, and do NOT work where there are tall trees in very windy conditions. Work systematically and methodically in an area. I always clear the ground of hazards and use the brushcutter to clear brambles etc. before starting to fell trees. When the trees are down (I do a piece at a time), saw it up into movable pieces before continuing to fell. If you do not do this, you will never move what you have cut, and sawing it up after is difficult and

potentially hazardous. I then make separate piles of material that is of potential use for stakes and binders, and I process it. Stakes are normally put in bundles of 10, and binders in bundles of 20. The bundled stakes and binders should all be placed to lie the same way with the thick end down. This makes it far easier to cut points when laying a hedge. Then I clear the area, building brash walls and stacking the cord wood to season for logs later. These stacks are also good for wildlife. It is a good idea to leave light brash around the actual cut stools as this make them less accessible to rabbits and deer.

I have experimented how to cut the stems and Hazel seem to do better if not cut right down to the ground. Where there are multiple stems, each is cut at an angle sloping away from the centre (so rain doesn't sit) - like the heel in hedgelaying - and about 10 – 18 inches or so above the ground. I am talking here about using a chainsaw on a big overstood stem, because it is not possible do this this with hand tools unless the wood being cut is of a manageable size. I don't think there is an exact science to this though and I would say that smaller stems should be cut lower than this. You really have to be guided by existing growth and rotational coppicing would mean that just loppers could be used for example.

For a number of reasons, we in the Society have always placed importance on educating new members about coppicing materials for Training Days and the various other events. It helps members appreciate that, without good quality stakes and binders, you will not achieve a well-finished job when hedgelaying. Poor materials are harder to use. Trying to drive in a stake that has not been cleaned up properly or using binders that are too thick or crooked results in more energy being expended unnecessarily and causes frustration.

Last season, (2020 - 2021) saw a departure from our traditional coppicing days due to COVID and the lack of good material. The Committee made the decision to buy-in stakes and binders from a supplier in Hampshire. This has worked reasonably well, but due to us being unable to carry out our planned events, some material already bought has been wasted (binders only have about 3 months before they become too brittle to weave in) but stakes will do for a year or so. It also cost the Society several £1,000 as the average cost is just over £1 per item. I hope that we will be able to continue cutting at Blunts

Wood and Furze field Wood when out season commences in September. We have moved to an area with better material in Blunts Wood now and the rotation at Turners Hill has produced a ready to cut crop where the owner cleared an area about ten years ago.

Hazel makes the best stakes and binders, but Ash, Holly and Birch can also be used for stakes and Willow is an alternative for binders. Note: Willow must NOT be used for stakes as it will take root and grow, and this is not at all desirable.

Finally, the bit you have been waiting for - what size should the stakes and binders be? Binders - maximum of one inch (25mm) at the thick end, no maximum length but do NOT trim off the thin end. Minimum of 9 feet but, if thin binders have to be used, then use two together. Stakes - 5 ft 6 inches or an inch or two longer but never shorter and up to 2 inches (50mm diameter) ideally about one and a half inches (40mm diameter). They need to be straight, but a slight curve near the bottom can be useful when driving into a tight hedge base. The top part of a stake MUST always be straight and uniform otherwise hammering in the stake is impossible. A bent stake top also spoils the top line and overall appearance of a completed hedge. On both stakes and binders, the sides MUST be properly cleaned up with a sharp billhook to remove any 'noggins', in other words 'lumps and side-shoots'. This is vital. It makes it easier to put the stakes into hedges and to put the binders onto the stakes.

Cutting season like for hedge laying is basically over the Winter months when the sap is dormant or slow, from September to early March. Tools used like all our hedge laying tools, must be as sharp as possible, whether it is a chainsaw, hand saw, billhook, or axe.

Enjoy your Coppicing Days and we hope to see you in September.



Overstood Hazel just cut down. Wire netting placed around the stump.



Regrowth after two years.



Regrowth after three years.



Hazel coppice ready for cutting after about ten years.

HOW TO SHARPEN YOUR TOOLS – BILLHOOKS

BY IAIN WHITE

The definition of a sharp edge is the intersection of two polished surfaces, and the common phrase used to define a really sharp edge is 'razor sharp'. This article will cover how to achieve an edge on your billhook that is as 'sharp as a razor'.

There are three key factors that are important when creating an edge on a billhook to make it effective in use. These are surface finish, edge geometry, and metallurgy.

Metallurgy: this is clearly within the control of the person that made the tool, but the reason we must be aware of it is that inappropriate use of a high-speed grinder when sharpening the blade can alter the metallurgy and ruin the tool. Billhook blades are made from high-carbon steel and after initial forging to create the shape, the billhook blade goes through two heat treatment processes. The first is hardening to ensure that the blade is hard enough to maintain its edge, then tempering to ensure that it is tough enough not to deform in use. Hardening is done first by heating and quenching, tempering then follows, which is done by heating to a specific temperature and cooling slowly in a controlled manner. These processes alter the grain of the steel for the life of the blade, provided it is not heated again. If a high-speed grinder is used for sharpening and the blade edge gets hot enough to discolour, then the metallurgy is altered, and the blade can be wrecked – be warned!

Edge geometry: this is the first thing that must be created. A billhook is a slicing tool, therefore the blade angles must be fine, so the blade does not jam in the wood. An included angle, i.e. the overall angle from one face to the other, of, about 15 degrees (20 degrees max.) is appropriate. A billhook works best when there is just one equal angle created on each face not like the familiar sharpening of a domestic kitchen knife. It is typical with old, neglected tools, and surprisingly, regrettably, with a brand-new tool, to have to recreate the correct angle. Problems occur if the blade angles are too steep and there are 'shoulders' that must be removed to create the desired 15-degree angle. Unless you have access to a belt grinder, the safest way to do this is to use a file. To save time you should aim to use the coarsest

file possible (known as a 'Bastard Cut') to remove metal quickly. This will leave a rough finish on the steel which can be refined with the next two grades of file, known as '2nd Cut', and 'Fine' respectively. A half round file is best for the curved section of the blade. A coarse file removes metal more quickly, the finer files will then improve the surface finish. I use a G-clamp held in a vice to hold the blade horizontally which facilitates filing. Never forget to file away from the edge to avoid cutting yourself- not that you need reminding!

Surface finish: the final stage of the process is to create a polished finish on your blade which now has the correct angles. This can be done using oil stones or water stones (which cut more aggressively) or wet and dry paper. There is no right answer here, but, you should develop a system that you are comfortable with and stick to it. Once a blade is sharp, it should only take a minute or two to re-sharpen after use. My recommendation is to use successive grades of wet and dry paper, because they are more user-friendly. It is critical to work through the grades, as each one just polishes out the scratches from the previous grade of paper, until you have a fine finish. The time spent on each grade is very short. I glue my paper to either a piece of wood or MDF, for the straight parts of the blade, and a paper glued to a piece of 40mm sink waste pipe (or use dowel) for the curved parts of the blade. The number rating on the paper gets larger as the paper gets finer, so you start with 240 grit and progress through 320/400/600 etc. to 2000. It is possible to find pre-glued paper to make life easier. You can do a final honing with metal polish on a piece of wood, or a strip of leather i.e. an old belt glued to wood. Remember that you must always use paper and honing polish AWAY from the sharp edge or the blade will dig in to the paper, or worse, your hand.

Now that you have a beautifully shaped blade with a finely polished finish making it 'razor sharp' you MUST protect it immediately with some oil. Without oil, your wonderful blade surface will start to oxidise, which is the technical term for rust. The rust is too small to be seen with the naked eye but will chemically reduce the sharpness. Use 3-in-one oil, gun oil or even engine oil, all will give you the protection necessary to keep the blade in top condition. A final word is a plea to look after your files. These are the cutting tools that you expect to cut

through high carbon steel, so need to be well looked after, in the same way as your precious billhook. This means either hang them up, or wrap them separately so they do not touch anything else. Files that rattle around in a drawer together will soon be useless.

Recommendations for suppliers for sharpening equipment are below:

Where to source sharpening equipment

Available from Axminster Tools www.axminstertools.com. Files: they stock Bahco, but the best files are Vallorbe, a Swiss make.

I suggest the following:

1. Vallorbe 250mm half round, bastard cut.
2. Vallorbe 250mm half round, second cut.
3. Vallorbe 200mm half round, smooth cut.
4. 3x Python 110mm file safety handles.
5. Universal wire brush by Spid for cleaning the files (any make of steel wire brush will do).
6. Hermes wet and dry paper available in various grades, or a mixed pack (but this is not self-adhesive, so needs sticking to wood or plastic pipe - also available via Amazon).
7. Tormek honing paste.

You can source self-adhesive wet and dry paper separately in finer grades from hewnandhone.co.uk. They also offer stropping compound in blocks in three grades, the middle grade alone would work for bill hooks, but the Tormek paste above is a bit easier to use.

If anyone is interested in buying a bevel gauge to check angles on billhooks, axes and other woodwork tools, then there is a lovely precision brass one available at www.richardkell.co.uk for a very reasonable price.



NATURE NOTES

BY REG LANAWAY

This recent cold weather has brought birds close to homes and gardens. There is a well-known occurrence known as 'cold weather movements' when birds we seldom see close by, suddenly turn up in search of food. At the first fall of snow, above the field of maize stubble, a flock of at least two hundred and fifty Lapwings arrived. These are likely to be birds from Scandinavia or Continental Europe spending the winter here. This field has several wet patches and are the last places snow settles. In these areas these birds can find the invertebrates on which they feed.

Not very many years ago, large winter flocks of Lapwings were commonplace locally but now we see them only in these extreme conditions. Once a familiar breeding bird on local farms, now they are restricted to large expanses of marshland and the reserves established for their needs. Years ago, I can remember finding their nests in pastureland, spring barley, maize and I once found a nest in a field of potatoes. This nest was on the ridge where the crop had been earthed up and the four eggs covered in mud from the feet of the incubating bird as it turned them. Once hatched, the chicks are so well camouflaged that they are easy to overlook as they lie motionless, matching the foliage or resembling sheep droppings in the grass.

The saga of the Pheasants goes on. Though giving me a hard time messing up the garden, I do feel sorry for them as they are desperate for food waiting below for the finches to dislodge seed from the feeders.

This morning I went for my exercise walking to the top of Streat Lane and back, accompanied by a cock bird all the way there and back, like a small dog at heel. Hunger, it seems, does take away fear.

March is always an interesting month bird-wise. Winter visitors will be preparing to migrate back north and will start to look smart as they moult into their breeding plumage. Our first residents, particularly mature birds that have held territory all winter, will be nesting. Mistle and Song Thrushes, Blackbirds and Robins may well be feeding young before the end of the month. Others will be claiming territory by song and display. Nest boxes will be claimed by the Blue and Great tits, but it will be early April before their eggs will be laid. They synchronise their egg laying in anticipation according to the season. If it is an early spring when the caterpillars will be available early, so they adjust their egg-laying accordingly for the needs of their young.

In late March, look out for the first Summer visiting arrivals. The Chiffchaff will be the first. They will be recognised by their song, singing out their name which is exciting to hear at first because it is such a sign of spring, but later becomes somewhat monotonous. The beautiful melodious song of the Blackcap should be next and is widespread across the area. They can be found in woodland, copses and large gardens. Sometime before the end of March, the first Swallow may arrive. With the bad weather that we sometimes get in March, it can be seen where the phrase, "one Swallow doesn't make a summer" originated. Sadly, often these first arrivals don't survive because they feed on flying insects which are few in such conditions.

LIVING ON THE HEDGE – THE HOLLY (ILEX AQUIFOLIUM)

BY MARK SCHOFIELD

Family & Scientific Name

The Holly is an evergreen that belongs to a group of about 480 species that are widespread throughout the temperate and tropical regions of the world, mostly living in tropical mountains. In Europe there is only a single species: The Holly. Its scientific name 'Ilex aquifolium' is derived from the Latin words for 'oak' (*Ilex*) – perhaps because of the superficial similarity of the leaves – and for 'sharp-leaf' (*acrifolium*).

Vernacular & Folklore

Holly is seen as a charm against the devil, witches, and house goblins. In East Sussex, Holly is left as standards in hedgerows to prevent the passage of witches, who are known to run along the tops of hedges. At Brakspear's Brewery in Henley, a bush of Holly and Mistletoe is suspended from the eaves each Christmas and left there to ward off misfortune. There is also a widespread belief that cutting down a whole Holly tree brings bad luck. Every part of the country has stories of illness, heartbreak, and disaster if one cuts it down. However, this superstition coexists with bringing Holly-cuttings into houses at Christmas time. Pagans used Holly bows to deck-out barns and houses because they believed that its red berries were a powerful fertility symbol, and that its sharp spines were a charm against mischief. Christianity adopted the custom, with the leaf symbolising the crown of thorns, and the berries Christ's blood. In the traditional Christmas carol 'The Holly and the Ivy', the Holly represents Jesus, and the Ivy represents the Virgin Mary.

History

Hollies appear often to have been retained when hedgerows were grubbed out or lowered. The suggestion from several arable areas of the country is that ploughmen used the Hollies' conspicuous, dark shapes as sightlines during winter ploughing. Ordnance Survey mapmakers regard mature Hollies as being the best pointers to the

course of old boundaries: many hedge and boundary Hollies survive because to the stubborn persistence of the belief that bad luck accompanies the cutting down of Holly.

In the 1960s Holly was widely believed to be becoming scarcer, but it is now unquestionably spreading. Clumps have started to sprout into more substantial trees where grazing has ceased in hill-country, woods, and commons. The slowing down of thinning in Chiltern and Hampshire beechwoods has also favoured the shade-tolerant Holly.

Plant Description

Holly grows to between 10 and 16 feet (3-5m) high. It is usually a small, conical tree but often only a shrub. There is an immense variety between individual trees. Some Hollies carry yellow berries or variegated leaves. Occasional specimens have nothing but spineless leaves. A few trees sucker weakly, forming dense multi-stemmed clumps. Others root along the line of low whippy shoots. Some have down-curving 'weeping' branches which can take root at the tip and create a kind of bower around the trunk. Holly is especially common in oak and beech woodland and it is a useful hedgerow tree for shady areas such as under a large, spreading standard oak. Entire hedges of Holly are rare outside suburban areas.

The smooth, thin, silver-grey bark has lots of 'warts' and eventually becomes finely fissured. Stems are dark brown and the tips of young branches curve upwards. The alternate leaves grow to between 2 and four inches (5-12cm). They are stiffly leathery, waxy, wavy, and spiny on the margins, dark green and very shiny above, and much paler beneath. Young plants have spikey leaves, but the leaves of older trees are much more likely to be spineless, particularly those on the upper parts. *[Editor: the cover photo illustrates this]*.

Holly is 'dioecious', meaning that male and female flowers appear on different trees. Holly growing in deep shade is often sterile. Only male flowers are fragrant. The white flowers are about 6mm in diameter and have four petals in small axillary clusters. The flowers appear between May and August, depending on the weather, and are pollinated by insects.

The fruits are bright scarlet berries 7-12mm long. They are hard and unpalatable in autumn and early winter but soften and taste milder

after being several frosts. They are slightly toxic to humans and can cause vomiting and diarrhoea if eaten. Ingestion of over 20 berries could be fatal to children. Bumper berry crops are believed to be an ominous sign of hard weather to come rather than the result of a good spring.

The berries are an important food-source for birds and small mammals (such as Wood Mice and Dormice). The Holly's deep, dry leaf litter is sometimes used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation. Caterpillars of the Engrailed moth (*Ectropis cerpuscularia*) feed exclusively on Holly, and the larvae of the spring generation of Holly Blue butterfly (*Celastrina argiolus*) feed predominantly on Holly flower buds, berries, and terminal leaves. They prefer those of the female Hollies.

Plant Uses

The regular lopping of Holly to feed to cattle and sheep is believed to have been a widespread practice up until the eighteenth century. Holly leaves have one of the highest calorific contents of any tree browsed by animals and are rich in nutrients. Branches are still cut for sheep (and occasionally cattle) in Dumfries, Derbyshire, Cumbria and occasionally cut for cattle and ponies in the New Forest when there is snow on the ground.

Much of the Christmas Holly taken to market is cut on a small scale on local farms and commons. The market at Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire has a special arena devoted to Holly and Mistletoe sales in the four weeks leading up to Christmas. Holly trees are slow-growing, and it can take three or four years before a tree is ready for cutting again. In some areas Holly is illegally 'poached' on a large scale with whole trees often being chain-sawed just for their berries.

Holly has the whitest of all woods. It is heavy, hard, and fine-grained. It can be stained and polished and is used to make furniture and walking-sticks. Holly was believed to have power over horses and so its white, pliable wood made it the favoured timber for horsehip handles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Holly leaf and green timber is extremely flammable. Holly wood makes good firewood and burns with a strong heat and used to be used in tanners' fires. Up until the end of the Second World War, young Hollies were used to sweep chimneys by being hauled through them on a rope. In heraldry, Holly symbolises truth. Lastly (and perhaps most importantly), Harry Potter's wand is made from Holly.

HEDGEROW FINDS

BY PHIL HART

To start this off, here are a couple of items I have found in hedgerows as I have been working on them.

Spider Man



Children's party balloon, just part of the ever-growing amount of

rubbish found in the countryside. A danger to livestock, like the Chinese lanterns that get released.

A bike saddle and a bag of frozen peas



Found in hedge near a BMX and skate park. I can understand the connection of the bike saddle, but the unopened bag of frozen peas still leaves me wondering. Answers on a postcard...

To keep the article going, please send in your photos and a description to the editor. I look forward to seeing what you have found.

FOR YOUR DIARY

August 2021 Newsletter deadline	15 th July 2021	Selous1961@gmail.com
Laughton Hedge Laying Competition	4 th Sept 2021	Contact: Ms. S. Fenner shaunafenner6@gmail.com
Bentley Wood Fair & County Show	17 th – 19 th Sept 2021	Bentley, Ringmer.
West Grinsted Hedge Laying Competition	18 th Sept 2021	Priors Byne Farm, Partridge Green.
Air Ambulance Charity Event	25 th Sept 2021	Rotherfield Estate, Hants. Contact: Mr. C. Bethell mowbarton@btinternet.com
Training Day 1 (TD1)	9 th Oct 2021	To be confirmed (TBC): possibly Worthing.
Pre-National Event	16 th Oct 2021	TBC – possibly Tenterden.
National Championship	23 Oct 2021	Rotherfield Estate, Hants.
TD2	6 th Nov 2021	TBC – possibly Petersfield.
December 2021 Newsletter deadline	15 th Nov 2021	Selous1961@gmail.com
TD3	4 th Dec 2021	TBC – possibly Arundel.
Coppicing Day	29 th / 30 th Dec 2021	Venue & date to be confirmed.
Improvers Day	8 th Jan 2022	TBC – possibly Arundel.
Charity / Fun Day	22 nd Jan 2022	RSPB Pulborough.
Annual Comp	20 st Feb 2022	Alton.
President v Chairman	12 th Mar 2022	Magham Down.
April 2022 Newsletter deadline	15 th Mar 2022	Selous1961@gmail.com

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President	Mike Parrott Tel: 01273 410292
Vice Presidents	Gordon Fowlie MBE Dave Sands
Chairman & Training Officer	Phil Hart Tel: 07717 054172
Vice Chairman & Hedge Manager	Frank Wright
Assistant Training Officer	Graham West
Secretary	Chris Burchell-Collins
Treasurer	Matthew Beard
Assistant Treasurer	Phill Piddell
Membership Secretary	Mark Schofield Tel: 07961 229461
Awards Officer	Mike Parrott
Transport Manager	Dave Sands
Coppicing Officer	Tim Hughes
Assistant Coppicing Officer	Terry Standen
Newsletter Editor	Mark Schofield Email: selous1961@gmail.com
Caravan Managers	Mike Parrott Dave Sands
Committee Members	Dave Truran David Droscher
NHLS Committee Reps	Phil Hart John French Dave Truran Graham West

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policy of the South of England Hedgelaying Society. The Editor reserves the right to edit or exclude any item sent.