

SOUTH OF ENGLAND HEDGE LAYING SOCIETY

Reg Charity No 1046124



April 2014



Coppicing at Spatham Lane

MEMBERSHIP SUBS BECAME RENEWABLE ON 1ST APRIL. IF YOU FAIL TO RENEW BY PAYING YOUR £15, THIS WILL BE THE LAST MAILING YOU WILL RECEIVE FROM THE SOCIETY.

ITEMS FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER TO RACHEL BY MID-JULY PLEASE.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi All,

Firstly, thank you to all who took the time to get back to me about my views on the South of England style – good to have your input.

Summer is nearly here so all hands are needed with the show van. Anyone who is willing to help please call Ron Moulard (01273 513597) or me (07767 894961).

Next year the competition will have a new class – Novice Pairs. This is for those who find it a bit hard working on their own and who would prefer to work with someone else.

A number of members have mentioned that they do not get a chance to lay once they have completed their training so we are allocating a few extra yards of hedge on Training Days for those who just want to lay. However, this does have to be organised, so it is important you book with Mike Parrott in advance

I hear from Phil Hart that there is to be a Scything Competition at Wakehurst Place. This is a team competition and you will find details on page 13.

Best wishes for a great summer and do try to get involved and help in the various aspects of the Society.

Gary

MEMBERSHIP

Another great year of hedge laying comes to an end, which means... it's renewal time! We have kept membership to £15, and at the AGM we agreed to post newsletters, rather than emailing them.

Gift Aid

When renewing please tick the Gift Aid box if you are a tax payer, as it means we can claim back £3.75 from the government, I have just claimed £250 for the last membership year so it really does make a difference.

You can renew by bank transfer, credit/debit card, Paypal account on the website. I also accept cheques and cash.

Thanks

Phill

Annual Subscriptions can now be paid electronically:

Account: South of England Hedge-laying Society
Sort Code: 20-49-76
Account No: 90867381

TRAINING

Training courses do not just happen – they have to be organised!! Recently, this has become more and more difficult with people turning up in the hope, handing in money on the day etc. etc. Therefore the Committee have agreed the following:

- 4 Day Course – £150.00. This includes 3 Training Days, an Improvers Day and 3 Coppicing Days.
- Maximum number 12.
- **Course to be booked and paid for in advance.** Application forms will be included with the next Newsletter. **PAYMENT ON THE DAY WILL NO LONGER BE ACCEPTED** (this also includes the handing in of membership subs.)
- No turning up on the day in the hope you can get some training.
- A Waiting List will be set up.

There will also be hedge available for trained layers to get in a bit of practice. This part of the hedge will not be available for training. Please let Mike Parrott know in advance if you want to take advantage of this so he knows how many yards of hedge, stakes and binders are required on each day.

Improvers Day 2014

Saturday 11 January had the now usual wet start. By the beginning of the competition the sun was shining, views of Chichester Cathedral spire and the Downs were sharp and clear, buzzards circling overhead. Eight competitors working in pairs took part. The standard was very good –testament to the good training from Gary Moore and members who have worked hard on our training days. Dick Foulger kindly judged for us and had his work cut out to separate the winning couple, but, being the thorough chap he is, he got there with a clear six points between first and second. Congratulations to the winners, and well done to the runners up.

- 1 Tim Hughes and Mark Glover – 85 points.
- 2 Tom Grainger and Chris Burchell Collins – 79 points.
- 3 Cliff Hepburn and Mike Mason – 74 points.
- 4 Stuart Piper and Roger May – 61 points.

30th ANNUAL COMPETITION, COLBRAN'S FARM, COW LANE, LAUGHTON

They say a week in politics is a long time and the same could be said about hedge-laying. After all the rain we had had over the previous weeks, the sun shone for a few days before the Annual Competition and, although it was very wet underfoot, we were able to stage the event without a drop of rain falling on the day. Thanks must go to our host, Mr Simpson, who allowed us the use of his shoot wagon to ferry competitors to the site and to David Crouch who gave up his day competing to drive the vehicle for us.

23 competitors over a range of classes laid a total of 200 yards of hedge that was reasonably light in growth, with the hedge having been divided beforehand according to the experience of the competitor class. It was not necessary to allow any extra time to enable competitors to complete their cants so it was all off to the Green Man in Ringmer for lunch and the presentation of prizes. Because of a reduction in numbers in the Champions and Seniors Classes, the range of awards was adjusted, but the overall standard of hedge-laying shows an improvement from year to year.

The Whittington Shield for best over-all re-growth from the 2014 competition held at Donnington near Chichester was won by Geoffrey Pitt. He can now add this trophy to the other re-growth awards he has won at The National Competition, Blackdown Hills, Devon and North Somerset.

Once again this year we have seen that by continuing training to improve your hedge-laying skills, it is possible to gain a place or even win a class in the competition in subsequent years.

Paul Matthews made a very nice beadle which was presented to Darren Hulbert as the winner of the Novice Class in addition to The Westwood Plaque.

In recognition of his support over the years, Mr Simpson was awarded Life Membership of the Society and he promptly pinned his badge to his coat to present the trophies.

Thanks must also go to the Judges, Stewards and other officials all of whom made the Society's 30th Competition such a success.

A competition results sheet is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Jim Vantassel





NOTES FROM THE AGM

The Society AGM was held at Plumpton College on 14 February. Apologies to the ladies who missed out on a Valentine's meal – we promise to do better next year!! A few points to note:

- Gary Moore agreed to continue as Chairman for one more year and will step down at the 2015 AGM. A vote of thanks was extended to Gary.
- David Crouch, Frank Wright and Des Whittington were voted onto the Committee.
- Tim Hughes and Terry Standen have swapped roles – Tim is now Coppicing Officer with Terry as his assistant.
- Joe Simpson of Colbran's Farm was appointed a Life Member in recognition of his support to the Society for many years. It is very much appreciated.

DOWN AT THE CANAL

There are estimated to be some 2000 miles of canal-side hedge in the UK. Towpaths are mainly looked after by volunteers most of whom are not very familiar with hedge-laying. Roger May, a member of the Society, as well as a member of the Chichester Canal Volunteer Team, spent a few days with the team in 2012 laying a small part of their hedge to South of England (SOE) style, producing a very fine result. Unfortunately it wasn't long before the local kids discovered their efforts and started using the stakes as javelins and they all ended up in the canal (the stakes not the kids!). Additionally the canal preservation funds for 2013 were not looking healthy due to projects elsewhere and stakes and binders are expensive.

A re-think was required. Perhaps adherence to the SOE style was not strictly necessary, so, along with Ian Runcie and John List, both members of the Society, Roger has developed a pragmatic style, which it is hoped may form the basis of a national canal-side style, perhaps with applications elsewhere.

This style needed to be:

- Cheap
- Low (the surrounding countryside needs to be on view to the folk on the barges).
- Easy (easy enough for inexperienced volunteers)

Photos from the early 20 century exist showing newly layed hedges in a free style using live stakes (crops), the layers presumably using the material available within the hedge in front of them, rather than importing stakes and binders from elsewhere. The hedges look strong and well built. There is, therefore, nothing new about our style and we understand that the crop and pleach style, as the live stake style has been called, is still practised in parts of Wales. Consideration of the Dutch style suggested that binders may be simulated by live trunks layed at the height of the top of the hedge.

So off we went, improving and improvising as we went along. We have now layed some 200 metres of canal-side hedge and consider the result to be satisfactory. We are not constrained by style rules and use material from the hedge as we see fit. Generally we lay the pleachers as in the SOE style and leave approximately every 5th or 6th trunk as a





live stake. We pleach the stake at 3 feet or so and lay it on top as a binder, usually but not always in the opposite direction to the pleachers, which we think creates a bit of tension within the hedge and may therefore increase its strength. Its main purpose is to hold down the pleachers and maintain the 3ft– 3ft 6 height. Larger trees are frequently left as standards, as is currently encouraged by DEFRA, and we have used laterally pleached branches from the standards as binders. If the hedge is too thin we add a cut stake or two and there is nothing to stop us reinforcing the live binder by weaving in suitable branches as required. We do not expect the binders to live but we shall see in a year or two. The main criteria is wildlife preservation and, with the farmer's permission, we place the frith between the hedge and the adjacent fence for hedgehog use but this is likely to remain a local variant.

With regard to the criteria above: so far we have used only traditional tools and the hedge is going down much more rapidly than we would be able to achieve utilising the SOE competition rules. As we are all volunteers it costs nothing except our own time, which pleases the Canal Trust. It is a low hedge but the height can be varied at will. We are very pleased with the result and will be looking to bring our efforts to the



attention of other canal trusts and possibly to other groups, e.g. National Parks, where volunteer groups may be faced with miles of untended hedgerow and inadequate funds.

FAQS

Is it stock proof?

As far as we can see it is just as stock proof as the SOE style.

Could it be used as a competition style?

We believe so, perhaps as a team event. The style is still evolving and we are open to any suggestions for improvement. Some marks at such a competition could be given for innovation.

Can live stakes be used with other pleaching styles?

We don't see any reason why not.

Are there any disadvantages?

The TCV (previously BTCV) hedging book lists three disadvantages (as well as a number of advantages) to live stakes. These are:

1. Every crop is a lost pleacher: we mostly have plenty of pleachers but where the hedge is very thin we just place ordinary stakes in the usual way.
2. Thick growth from the top of the crop may cause reduced growth below: this remains to be seen but canal hedges are trimmed fairly frequently.
3. Cattle may injure themselves on the strong crops: so far we have only layed adjacent to arable land but better a sore cow than one that's landed in a canal!

Roger May

Ian Runcie

We asked for captions for the photo “Tim Hughes in a spot of bother!” The following have been suggested:

Driving along, singing the song, “we’re on the road to nowhere”.
All revved up and nowhere to go...
Just hanging around waiting for the next bus.
Shame I can’t get my pleachers at this angle.
I couldn’t find a gate, so I thought I’d put the car in the hedge instead.
With a boot full of tools, it was Tim’s full wallet that provided the balance...
Who needs a Land Rover!
Anything a Land Rover can do, my Saab can do better.

PLEASE LET PHIL HART (07717 054172 OR DAVE TRURAN (01444 235447) KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY PHOTOS OF THE SOCIETY AT WORK WHICH COULD BE USED IN THE SHOW VAN OR ON THE WEBSITE.

BEES MEAN BEANS: BUMBLEBEE RESEARCHERS CALL FOR HELP



Image: Dave Goulson

Bumblebees are important pollinators. Bee researchers at the University of Sussex are asking for volunteers to conduct a simple experiment to see whether there are enough bees left in our gardens and towns to pollinate vegetable crops properly.

Many bumblebees are less common than they used to be. There is concern that bee declines might result in a 'pollination crisis', in which there aren't enough bees to go around and crop yields start to fall.

This has already happened elsewhere in the world. Professor Dave Goulson says: "This new citizen science project aims to find out what is happening in the UK." The experiment is simple, involving growing broad bean plants (seeds provided), hand-pollinating some of the flowers and leaving others for wild bees to pollinate, and then counting how many beans they eventually produce. Broad beans are pollinated mainly by long-tongued bumblebees, a group that have been hard-hit by agricultural changes.

No knowledge or experience is required, and the experiment will require just a few minutes each week through the spring.

Professor Goulson, who has been studying bumblebees for 20 years, says: "This is a fun and educational science project suitable for children or adults, which can be done in any outside space. It is very little effort to take part, and at the end you get some beans to eat!"

PhD student Linda Birkin, who will be co-ordinating the study, adds: "Bumblebees are really important, as they pollinate lots of our fruit and veg crops, such as beans, raspberries, tomatoes, blueberries and so on, as well as hundreds of species of wild flower. "We really need to monitor their numbers; if there aren't enough in particular parts of the UK, then we can focus conservation efforts on those regions."

The Bees 'n Beans project will start in early April. To find out more about the project, and to sign up, go to www.ljbees.org.uk, or e-mail Linda Birkin at l.birkin@sussex.ac.uk.

Participants will be sent a pack containing everything they need to know alongside materials for the project. They will be asked to enter their results on a simple online form, and at the end of the summer they will be sent a report on the results of the project. The hope is to repeat the project in the future, to see how bee populations are changing over time.

NATURE NOTES

January

The question as to whether the leaves would remain on the trees until Christmas was answered decisively when the strong winds and rain removed practically all of them in the previous week. Only Beech hedges and some small Oaks now hold any foliage. One glimmer of hope for the coming spring I saw recently were some well grown catkins on Hazel. I must have a close look to see if any of the tiny red female flowers are yet present. I always consider them to be a real sign of spring coming.

The wet weather and resultant flooding across much of the country will have a serious effect on wildlife in many ways. Many small mammals, the food upon which Owls and Raptors prey, will have drowned or moved to higher ground. The loss of this food source for those at the top of the food chain will mean fewer will survive to breed and as reported, few Barn Owls bred in 2013 after such a prolonged cold winter because the bodyweight of the adults was too low for the females to produce eggs. It seemed that with pairs present in many territories they would succeed this year after a rest. We will monitor the situation.

One group of birds that relish these waterlogged conditions are Gulls. I must admit I do not find Gulls particularly interesting but it is worth checking through a flock. Many of the smaller ones will be Black-headed Gulls that will soon get into breeding plumage and have a brown head! In flight they show white on the fore wing and grey on the underside. With all these Gulls the juvenile birds show a dark line across the tail. The next size up is the Common Gull, not at all common, and has a larger more rounded head, greenish bill and legs. At rest the wing tips protrude beyond the tip of the tail. The largest will be Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls that are similar but the darker mantle distinguishes them. Both of these species are now more commonly found breeding on buildings in towns than in their former strongholds, seaside cliffs.

The vast majority of these winter visiting Gulls come from Scandinavia and the Baltic region seeking food in our less severe conditions. Many studies on the migration of Gulls are in progress and a number of them have been fitted with large coloured rings with numbers and/or letters that can be read in the field. There is a website from which you can gain information as to the movements and longevity of any such bird you might observe.

In December I recaptured a Blue Tit that had been ringed as first year bird on 12th December 2007 in the same garden so it was six and a half years old. This is a good age for such a small bird to live but the longest ringing to recovery of a Blue Tit as recorded by the



British Trust for Ornithology is nine years and nine months. The BTO website gives the longevity records of all British species, some of which are really impressive. Several species of sea birds exceed fifty years from ringing to recovery and some of those were first ringed as adults of unknown age and therefore could be much older.

March

I know we are fed up and depressed by all this rain and wind but I hope that by the time you read this it will be just a memory and spring well on the way. The Bluebells have come through the woodland floor and the white blossom of the Wild Plum and Blackthorn is several weeks earlier than a year ago. Some of the Hazel trees have produced long catkins, the male pollen bearing flowers, while others have small hard catkins that look to be weeks away from flowering. This is one of Nature's marvels that spread the risk so that bad weather will not decimate the whole lot. Let's look forward then and not dwell on all this wetness!

The first signs will be local birds singing and holding breeding territories and the arrival of the earliest summer visitors. There are reports of juvenile Blackbirds already out of the nest in early February. In urban areas it is not uncommon for this to happen. The artificial lights stimulate the breeding activity of these birds fooling them that spring is already here. If all progresses well we will hear Chiffchaffs many of which will have spent the winter in The Gambia, West Africa. Those that went farther south, the trans-Saharan migrants, will necessarily turn up later in April having longer distances to fly.

I joined the Game-keeping Students here at the college in their recording of other species of bird using or associated with the game cover crops. The RSPB had provided identification charts and a check list of those species in which they were interested. Of course we found those species like Robins, Dunnocks and Blue Tits that will be found in any local habitat but we also found many seed eating species making use of the Teasels, Fennell and Sunflowers. Goldfinches, Greenfinches and Chaffinches were there as one might have expected but to find over thirty Yellowhammers and a small flock of Linnets was a bonus as they are species of concern as their numbers have declined and they are seen as threatened.

Behind hedges that were reasonably sheltered from the wind we were able to put up a couple of mist nets and manage to capture eleven birds. Among them were three Yellowhammers, two of which were first winter birds. This is particularly pleasing as studies have shown that one of the causes of their decline is poor survival of juvenile birds. We also caught three Chaffinches, all males, but two were suffering from "Bumble-foot" a grotesque crusty formation of lesions on the legs and feet. Obviously they could not be ringed in that condition. One of them had lost a foot but was of good average weight so must have been able to forage for food.

I have been told by several people that there are fewer birds than usual visiting their garden feeders. Perhaps there are fewer birds about or the abundance of natural food such as fruit and berries keep them in the woods and hedges. I recorded the January

Garden Bird Count on the really foul weathered Sunday when few of the hoped for species showed. The thirteen House Sparrows will have pleased them as in towns they are in decline.

April

Now April, one of the most exciting months of the year, is here we have so much to anticipate. The first date we see a Swallow, hear a Nightingale or see juvenile Blackbirds out of the nest have for many been key events in the countryside year. In recent times the once familiar Cuckoo has been scarce in this part of the country. Following their winter and migration patterns on the BTO website through the trackers fitted to them that are powered by the sun, it is easy to see the problems that they have travelling such vast distances over such difficult terrain. One bird disappeared from the system for a couple of months and it was anticipated that it had not survived.

Suddenly it resumed transmitting from its tag and the conclusion was that it had spent a long time feeding so deep in the forest that the sun could not penetrate and when it broke cover to start moving north, the battery started charging again. Of course over the centuries Cuckoos have successfully completed the migration routes but, if conditions where they breed become less favourable, the replacement of the population by young birds will not take place and the population will dwindle.

Around the coast after the devastating storms, there has been a large wreck of sea birds. Several hundred have been washed up on the Sussex shoreline. Guillemots, Razor Bills and Puffins are the species most effected and reported to be very emaciated. Normally these are ocean dwelling birds spending the largest part of the year well away from land and only coming in to breed. The problem when such large numbers are lost is that it takes a long time for them to recover their numbers as many do not breed until four or five years old and lay just one egg.

With passerines it is different. When the numbers of small garden birds decrease after a hard winter they can recover quickly. Most breed at one year old and command a territory from which they gather food for their broods. When the numbers are low, necessarily the territories are larger and more food is available resulting in bigger families surviving and second broods succeeding. In a couple of years the optimum population is recovered.

Already in mid-March the Milkmaids, Lady's Smock or Cuckoo Flower as it is known, is showing colour alongside the wet places and ditches fully a month earlier than last year. This is the food plant of the beautiful Orange Tip butterfly that flies only in the spring and is such a welcome sign. So far this year in the warm sunshine, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma and Brimstone have been seen flying having left their safe hibernation places but the Orange Tip will have over-wintered as a pupa.

Reg Lanaway

Scything and Cider Festival Wakehurst Place 19th & 20th July

Our Scything and Cider Festival plans are coming along quite well. The dates are 19th and 20th July. On Saturday 19th July there will be a day of free tuition run by members of the Scythe Association and then on the Sunday there will be the competitions. We are looking for teams of three individuals in each team all competing for the Wakehurst Trophy. The festival will include a food and cider tent, working horses, a few demonstrations of green wood working and falconry displays.

It would be great to have a couple of teams from the hedgelayers

Iain

Iain Parkinson

Conservation and Woodlands Manager, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Wakehurst Place, Selsfield Road, Ardingly, West Sussex. RH17 6TN

i.parkinson@kew.org

Help required for the Summers Shows

Helping hands are required for the summer shows. Tasks include:

- Meeting & greeting the general public as well as past and current members.
- Enrolling new members.
- Talking hedge laying & countryside management.
- Discussing with farmers/land owners the opportunities to lay hedges & coppice woodland.
- Helping gather brush, stakes & binders for the dummy demonstration hedge.
- Setting up & packing up the show caravan.

Bring along a Fruit cake or Victoria sponge for Gary & Bob... Thank you David, it was wonderful & very welcome.

Days out available at Plumpton Open day, Heathfield Show, Small Holders Show Ardingly, Weald Wood Fair, The Autumn Show Ardingly.

Contact Phil Hart if you can help – 07717 054172



CHARITY DAY 2014 “THANK YOU”

On the 15th March 2014, 21 hedge layers, friends & one dog took part to raise money for the Somerset Levels Flooding Relief Fund. Other hedgelayers & friends donated to the worthy cause of people affected by the persistent flooding in Somerset. (In advance of the day, the Committee made the decision to support people suffering in this country – announced at the AGM).

Just over 100 yards of hedge was laid in summery conditions. Our latest life member and consistent supporter, Joe Simpson, came to give his encouragement, inspect the work & give his support. It was on his estate the event took place.

As the money rolls in, we are around the £1,000 mark at the moment. Please send in your donation to Mike Parrott if you have not already done so.

A BIG “THANK YOU” to EVERYONE.



2014	10 th	Plumpton Open Day, BN7 3AE – 10am – 5pm
May	22 nd	Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn
	24 th	Heathfield Show
June	28 th	“South Sheep” Black Cap Farm, Firle, East Sussex BN8 6LR
July	5 th /6 th	Smallholders Show, South of England Show Ground, Ardingly, RH17 6TL
	13 th	Southern Shears UK, Sheep Shearing Competition, Holmbush Farm, Faygate, Horsham RH12 4SE
	24 th	Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn
August	30 th	Tool sharpening, Plumpton College
September	25 th	Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn
	26 th -28 th	Weald Woodfair
	27 th	Coppicing, venue to be confirmed
October	18 th	1st Training Day, venue to be confirmed
November	15 th	2nd Training Day, venue to be confirmed
	20 th	Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn
	29 th	Coppicing, venue to be confirmed
December	13 th	3rd Training Day, venue to be confirmed
2015	3 rd	Coppicing, venue to be confirmed
January	10 th	Improvers Day, Venue to be confirmed
	15 th	Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn
	24 th	President v Chairman Comp
February	7 th	SEHLS Annual Competition
	13 th	Annual General Meeting, Plumpton College
March	14 th	Charity Hedgelaying day
	19 th	Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn

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.

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