



December 2013

Urgent help is needed **HELP!!**:

Towing the caravans – Help towing the vans is needed though-out the year. The Society has two caravans – the winter van which is taken to training events, the competition etc. and the show van for the summer shows. A team of drivers willing to tow is urgently needed please.

Don't leave it to the faithful few who seem to do everything. The Society can only function properly with help from all members. The more who get involved the less onerous it is on any one person.

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

➤ ITEMS FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER TO RACHEL BY END END MARCH PLEASE ◀

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi all,

Well done to all who have taken part on the competition front this season. The training days were well attended but we still don't have enough trainers.

Coppicing at Wakehurst - What a day and what a turn out. 1,000 stakes and 1,300 binders were cut. Well done to everyone, Thank you.

When I took on the job as chairman, I said I would speak as I find so here goes - these are my views and not the views of the society.

Cutters - If you are going to lay South of England style, please do lay it true to style. That's a double brush hedge with pleachers covered up so livestock cannot eat the new growth, and stakes down the middle of the hedge. If you do have to place two or three out of line to hold a pleacher in place, that shouldn't matter - they are doing a job and not just looking pretty in a dead straight line. The stakes should be driven in firmly so livestock cannot push through or pull pleachers out. The height of the hedge should be between 3'6" and 4' so if you have a thin hedge you can knock it down to 3'6" to thicken it up. Deadwood should be allowed if you have a hole in the hedge because it should be stock proof – it is not a garden hedge. ALSO, if you don't manage to finish your length in the allotted time, you should go back and finish it. If you don't then it makes hedge-laying and the society look bad.

Judges - If you are going to do the job of judging, then please judge by the criteria given to you and not to your preference. Pleachers and axe cutting should be judged during the competition and not after because if the cutter has laid properly then you shouldn't be able to see the pleachers. The rest can be judged at the end of the competition. I have seen judges measure the hedge from the road side and not the field side where the stock would be! I have also seen judges who did not walk round the back of the hedge. It's a double brush hedge - both sides should be judged. I have seen cutters who have been placed, when their hedge is not stock proof?

Stewards - You are the eyes and ears of the judges. It is down to you to sort out any problems arising during the competition, to find extra stakes and binders if needed and to help cutters lower big stems if requested.

I think the four most important criteria in laying a hedge to be; stock proof, cut and pleach, firmness and true to style.

What do you think?

Gary

TRAINING DAYS

The first two training days have been a great success this season, in as much as the hedges look good and are able to do the job of containing livestock.

From the organising point of view, not so good. It would be a help to Gary and I if those who say they are coming do turn up, and those who just turn up say in advance that they are coming. The form that comes with the newsletter accompanied by a cheque for the correct amount is all we require, we then know how many stakes and binders to take to the site. Fortunately, so far, we have managed to be about right.

The winter van has been washed and stocked with gas and tea etc. but unfortunately there is no one to tow it to the hedge sites. If you think you can perform this very necessary operation, please talk to a committee member.

Sounds like I am full of moans, sorry, you are all doing well. It's just the poor old leaders are struggling to cope.

Mike Parrott

COMPETITIONS

National Hedge Laying Society Results 2013

Congratulations go to the following:

South of England Open

1st Peter Tunks, Surrey
2nd Tony Gallow, Hertfordshire
3rd Roy Champion, Surrey

South of England Intermediate

1st Phil Hart, East Sussex
2nd Geoffrey Pitt, Devon
3rd Sarah Hooper, Kent

South of England Veterans

1st Rodger Taylor, London
2nd David Truran, West Sussex
3rd Lex Roeleveld, Netherlands

The Points Trophy 2013 / 2014

It's all to play for in the local championship, with one more competition to go and with only 8 points separating the leader from the chasers...

Name	Laughton	Hurspierpoint	West Grinstead	SEHLS Annual Comp	Total
Gary Moore	9	10	9	0	28
Bob Whitaker	7	9	8	0	24
Dave Truran	8	7	7	0	22
Paul Matthews	10	0	10	0	20
Phil Hart	6	8	6	0	20

HEDGE RAMBLINGS

A Hedge too Far



On a recent visit to Leeds in God's fair county, and a centre for culture with a population increase due to the expanding university and large numbers of students accommodated on almost every street, as well as paying homage to Elland Road and Headingley, I decided that part of my time would be well spent studying the Yorkshire method of hedge-laying. Since almost a third of the National Hedge-Laying Society officers reside in that corner of the country, I thought it would not be too difficult a task and where better to start than the Dales.

My journey took me through Otley, Skipton, Grassington and Kettlewell. Not one hedge, or certainly not one laid in the Yorkshire style, did I find other than mile after mile of dry stone wall. You would have thought that the enclosures act of the 1700's was introduced to give the local labour force experience in building walls that have no mortar joints. In fact I sought a hedge here, there and everywhere. There were on occasions plenty of post and rail fences but, alas, no hedges for them to support or do the posts and rails support the hedge? Could there be an element of chicken and egg here I asked myself.

After many miles of travel, encountering a number of fine country pubs and inns, I eventually stumbled, quite literally, upon a hedge which I have to say, I thought was still work in progress. However, on the basis of its length and from the growth, obviously laid earlier this year during last season and I was surprised to find there were no posts or rails, just heavy stakes driven into the ground every metre and half or so along its length. There was no top rail and certainly no binders but then, with the stakes this far apart, binders are of little use. It was obvious from the rigidness of the stakes that they were driven into the soil some distance and gave the hedge some rigidity. Something we could no doubt learn from when laying South of England style. This hedge, which must have originally been some 6m (20 ft) high, was woven in and out of the stakes. To look at it when it was laid it was obviously quite gappy but this summer's growth had started to redress this problem which seemed to be of less concern to them in Yorkshire when one considers how much emphasis there is on stockproofing with the South of England style, but then it did seem that the sheep I saw in Yorkshire were somewhat rotund – presumably well fed on Yorkshire puds!

Bill Hook

PRODUCT TEST!



Ever tried to get a tiny thorn out of your hand? Sliver Gripper Precision Tweezers are the best thorn and splinter removing tool I have ever come across.

These things are just under 2" in length and have precision ground points which provide pin-point gripping. They are springy and remain aligned at the tips. Use them in conjunction with a small magnifier and you can find and remove even the smallest and deepest splinters and thorn tips. A version is available to hang on your key chain, with a cover for the pointy end so you don't jab yourself.

They are typically sold in "bushcraft" or "outdoor" stores, or of course on-line and they cost between £5 and £10

Annual Subscriptions can now be paid electronically:

Account: South of England Hedge-laying Society

Sort Code: 20-49-76

Account No: 90867381

SUGGESTIONS CORNER

If there is something you would like to see us do differently at the South of England Hedge Laying Society. Please let us know by either ringing Gary Moore on 07767 894961 or email hedgehogharley@live.co.uk. Alternatively, contact any of the other members of the committee who's contact details are at the back of the Newsletter.

One suggestion is that we should have a list of Instructors who lead the training for the Society. This would free up more hedge for members to lay on their own. Training places would need to be limited and booked in advanced to allow this to happen. Please let us know what you think.

Thanks tons, to Pat Parrott and Ron Moulard for cleaning the vans.



NATURE NOTES

I often wonder how birds survive the strong winds we have had lately, particularly at night. Many roost in evergreen trees, garden shrubs or creepers such as Ivy. This is an important plant for wildlife, not only for the protection it gives to these birds at night but as cover for early nesting species, autumn blossoms for insects, and berries in late winter. Ivy takes no nutrient from the plant that supports it. The problem can be the weight of it bearing down, damaging the tree or wall so it has to be cut back. Where no problem occurs leaving it is much to the benefit of wildlife.

Many other birds use holes in a tree, nest box or cavity, often unnoticed, even close to our homes giving us a chance to have close up views of this under recorded part of Ornithology. I can remember years ago, a Blue Tit would come in to the dairy at Wales Farm each winter evening as the light began to fail. It took several evenings for us to discover where it roosted. It seemed to disappear as soon as we took our eyes off it but finally we saw it drop into a strip light. It is always the strategy of birds not to advertise where they roost because, of course, they are very vulnerable when sleeping. Other signs of a roost come to light once it has been discovered, the odd feather or droppings on the floor beneath can be a giveaway and could be evidence for one previously unknown.

Many hundreds of Jackdaws roost in Brock's Wood on Streat Lane. However strong the wind, these birds will roost on high branches, to the leeward side of the wood, clinging on till dawn. It was exciting to see how these birds used the strong winds during the day. As the gales blew many of them allowed themselves to be taken up, like black charred paper swirling high with great abandon, obviously enjoying the experience.

In the early part of December still there were many leaves on the trees and the colours are superb. I drove up Hundred Acre Lane through the "tree tunnel" which was quite breath-taking in the beauty of the bronze, orange, yellow and even still green foliage. I wondered how many would be left by Christmas as it is usually only the Beech hedges and small Oaks that retain leaves so late.

After such a favourable autumn, though quite heavy rainfall occurred, the field crops are well established and look very promising. The Oilseed Rape and Winter Wheat have germinated well and should be able to withstand whatever weather the winter provides. The autumn sown grass has also taken well so perhaps after such a bad year of 2012 the balance will be restored. It usually is.

The decline in the number of Starlings has been well reported, particularly of the British population. Many come in autumn from the Continent and a large flock is now to be found at Wales Farm. They alternately raid the maize in the dairy cow ration and feed in the large grass field nearby. Here the flock of at least a thousand birds probe the ground for grubs and worms. Leatherjackets, the larvae of the Crane Fly (Daddy-longlegs), are a favoured food and as these destroy grass roots, these Starlings are doing a very beneficial job for the farmer. To watch them feeding as a large group is interesting. They probe the ground with an open bill feeling for their food with their tongue. As they work their way across the area the back row of birds flies over to the front and so on allowing all to get a fair chance of the food.



We are starting an interesting study on the college estate. A member of the RSPB staff came to talk to the Game-keeping Students to monitor the seed bearing cover crops, established for the Pheasants, to record what other species of farmland birds use them. These areas are under the granted Stewardship Scheme and will be a way of checking their value. He gave the students hints on basic identification and they will, on a regular basis, record the species and numbers of birds seen. I hope this will give the students a new interest and perspective of balance in the countryside. We also put nets so that I could ring the birds and show them to the students at close range. So far we have had Chaffinches, Blue and Great Tits, Wrens, a Dunnock, Robin and a superb male Yellowhammer. Not such good news were two Roe Deer that ran through my nets leaving the sort of holes Desperate Dan might have made in the comics years ago.

Reg Lanaway

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness we note the passing away of George Streete age 88 - 11th January 1925 to 27th November 2013. He was one of our members from the 1980's.

George's early years were on a small farm in the countryside near Worcester, and at the age of 6 his work included a milk round which he did six days a week on his bike. On Sundays he was allowed to use the horse and cart to complete his deliveries. He joined the navy at the age of 15, which included being on a ship that was torpedoed off Malta - they managed to limp the ship into harbour without sinking.

After leaving the Navy George farmed Horned Hereford Cattle at Wadhurst. He was involved in the breed's competitions, including judging at local agricultural shows plus an overseas trip, to Judge Hereford Cattle in Canada.

George was a good member of our committee and always figured in the top flight of hedge-layers at Local and National competitions, winning the Veterans at the National Competition. The Joan Streete Memorial Shield ("The Best Work on a Poor Length") that we compete for today, is in memory of George's wife, Joan, who was our membership secretary for approximately 7 years. George was instrumental, with Neil Sands, in setting up the coppicing site we still use today at Wadhurst, East Sussex.

9 members of the hedge laying society attended his Funeral at Tunbridge Wells crematorium on the 16th December 2013. Donations in memory of George, can be made to either Hospice in the Weald or the RNLI at the undertakers
C Waterhouse & Sons, High street,
Burwash, TN19 7ET.



“Congratulations” to everyone that helped out at the recent coppicing day at Wakehurst Place, we managed to cut 1010 stakes and 1300 binders. A great team effort.



Any ideas for a caption – send your ideas to Phil Hart.

CHARITY HEDGELAYING DAY

We all moan about our weather but compared with others around the world, we get off lightly! I am sure, like me, you have watched with horror the devastation caused by a massive typhoon in the Philippines in November. The Committee have, therefore, decided that the hedge-laying day on 15 March should be a sponsored event with the proceeds going to the Disaster Appeal. Included with this Newsletter is a sponsorship form.

Please do your best to get as much sponsorship as you can so we can send a good sized cheque to help those who are still suffering and homeless.





2014		
January	4 th	Coppicing, Spatham Lane. BN6 8XL
	9 th	Committee Meeting
	11 th	Improvers Day, Southend Farm, Donnington, Chichester, PO20 7PS
	25 th	President vs Chairman Team competition
February	14 th	Annual General Meeting, Plumpton College
	22 nd	SEHLS Annual Competition, Colbrans Farm, Cow Lane, Laughton, Lewes, BN8 6BZ
March	15 th	Charity Hedgelaying Day for the Philippines Appeal, Colbrans Farm, Cow Lane, Laughton, Lewes BN8 6BZ
	20 th	Committee Meeting
April		
May	10 th	Plumpton Open Day, BN7 3AE – 10am – 5pm
	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

Anyone interested in scything, please contact Gary Moore – 07767 894961 or John French – 07787 652693 as there may be a scything festival at Wakehurst Place in the early summer of 2014.

Committee:

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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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