



**December 2014**

**HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS  
AND  
VERY BEST  
WISHES FOR  
2015**



## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi All,

Welcome to the new hedge-laying season. The first two Training Days have gone really well and it was good to see a couple of faces from the past turn up. Pete and Alan, thank you. Well done to the Coppicing Group for all their hard work. Without these guys there be would be no hedge-laying days so – thank you. A big thank you also to Mrs P for the lovely chocolate cake and lemon drizzle cake – yum yum. I do like coffee and walnut as well!!!

Frank Wright is doing a great job as hedge co-ordinator and is looking at lots of hedges for us to lay. Well done Frank.

Work now calls, so Happy Christmas to you all and have a great New Year.

Gary

## Hedge laying days and training

Sorry to have misled those who came to the two hedge-laying days at Scotney Castle. I thought there was to be transport for tools and people to the hedge site, and it was quite a walk. We will be returning to the National Trust site in the future so I suggest that we all arrive early to get a lift from the early birds with four wheel drives! I will way mark the route to wherever we are to work. **I would also like to stress the need to book a place for the day, as this ensures the correct amount of coppice material is delivered to the site.**

The National Trust are very satisfied with the good job we made of the hedge at Scotney Castle and the efficient way in which it was done. They are pleased for us to return to work on miles more of their hedges so a big thank you to all who took part.

The next hedge laying/training day is at Rotherfield, please contact me if you wish to be there, other than those who booked at the November day, and I gave maps to.

Don't forget, coppicing is an important part of the craft so I suggest you give our Coppicing Officer, Tim Hughes. a call to book in for the next coppicing day on 3 January 2015. No coppicing, no hedge-laying!

May I wish everyone all the best for the festive season and good luck in 2015.

Mike Parrott

# SEHLS 2015 Annual Competition

We are pleased to announce that the 31st annual competition will take place at the Angmering Park Estate, Lee Farm BN13 3XJ (North West of Worthing)

## CHANGE OF DATE

Due to circumstances beyond our control (HRH The Prince of Wales has just announced that his annual hedge laying competition at Highgrove will be on the 7th February), our Annual Competition has now been moved to the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2015.

## NOVICE PAIRS

Finished your training, and wondering what's next? Put off competitions because you don't feel confident progressing from cutting 8 yards in pairs to 11 yards on your own?

We are pleased to announce the introduction of a new competition class **novice pairs**, so you can enter with a friend or be paired up on the day.

The novices and novice pairs are allocated the easier section of the hedge, and while you can only use hand tools you are able to call on a trained Chainsaw operator if you encounter a tough section. As with all our competitions we would love you to join us for lunch (paid for by the society) and prize giving after the event. You never know you might even come away with a cash prize! As with all competitions you will be expected to finish your section of hedge, if you are struggling after the competition there will be plenty of people able to help.

There is still time to get some practice in before the annual competition, have a look at the diary at the back of this magazine, or on line at [www.sehls.co.uk](http://www.sehls.co.uk)

## CHAMPION CLASS

The **Champion** class is for the elite hedge layers so we have also introduced three significant changes to the eligibility for this class –

- **First** you will only be eligible to enter this class if you have competed in the SEHLS annual competition within the last three years (i.e. if you have not competed for three years or more you must enter in the Senior or Veteran classes).
- Secondly this class is strictly restricted to a maximum of eight entries allocated on a FIRST COME FIRST SERVED basis, so please get your entry forms in early, there will be NO EXCEPTIONS!
- Finally the person in last place will not be eligible to enter this class the following year, so they will “swap” places with the winner of the Senior class.

All other classes remain unchanged

**Please get your entries in as soon as possible as entries close 7th February 2015.**

Any questions please speak to me, or ask any member of the committee

Phill Piddell

# ADVERTS

We are pleased to launch a free ad's service. Anything related to hedge laying is welcome. For example if you have products or services which would be of benefit to members, need some help laying hedges, want to lift share etc.

<http://sehls.weebly.com/ads.html>

The South of England Hedge Laying Society takes no responsibility for the products or services offered.

If you wish to place an advert please send details to [phill.piddell@bt.com](mailto:phill.piddell@bt.com) I will put the advert on the web upon receipt and include a summary in the magazine.

## HELP

The Society is in need of lots of help at the present time in order for it to run effectively and efficiently. Not only is there the ongoing need for people to tow the caravans, help with coppicing etc. there is also a need for help with administration of the Society.

Enclosed is a questionnaire which we would be grateful if you would complete and send to the Secretary, Phil Hart, (address on form) as soon possible please.

You do not need to be a hedge-layer to get involved. There are non-laying tasks that are essential to the Society as well.

PLEASE do not ignore this. PLEASE return the form and get involved.

## Nature Notes Autumn 2014

We often hear how the changes in farming practices has a detrimental effect on wildlife so it is interesting to see how the growing of Maize for cattle feed benefits many creatures. A dense plot of maize resembles a reed bed and birds that are found in such a habitat make use of it. Swallows roost in large numbers in maize, the flock making several passes over the crop at nightfall and with each sweep more alight until all are roosting safely.

Reed and Sedge Warblers find the same sort of insect food in the maize and during migration times can be found well away from water. I have ringed each of these this late summer in my garden, not far from a crop of maize. Not, perhaps, so welcome, are the visits by Roe Deer and Badgers that can take out a large area in the centre of the field, not obvious until the harvesting machinery opens it up. Badgers roll against the stems of the plants and devour the cobs they have knocked down. I was fortunate that my tiny patch of sweet corn was left alone with the greater area close by.



I spent my usual few days in early September at Portland Bird Observatory with more success than in some years. I am usually greeted by “you should have been here last week” or on checking their excellent website find a week later would have been better. The range of migrants we ringed was impressive if not large in number. Being to the west, birds from up-country from there and uncommon here are regularly found. A look at the Weather Map illustrates the advantageous position of the Isle of Portland reaching well out into the Channel making it an ideal point of departure.

Species that breed only in very limited places in Sussex such as the Redstart are common in the west and north. We had a dozen of these beautiful birds and several Pied Flycatchers, birds we seldom see here. We caught even more Spotted Flycatchers. Formerly these were quite common, breeding locally, but now hardly seen here in the summer. While we were there two young trainee ringers joined us. How good it is to find younger people so keen and interested in wildlife and the outdoors.

At the time we were there, the wind was from the north-east and news was coming through that on the east coast observatories, rare migrants had arrived. It was only a short time before some turned up down there. An Icterine Warbler, Ortolan Bunting and several Wrynecks were found by the very astute birders who regularly record that area.

Closer to home it is always a challenge to record the last Swallow seen and the first Redwing or Fieldfare. With such a bumper crop of berries these thrushes should be easy to find. At the same time a Ring Ouzel may be present, moving south from mountainous regions in the north to the Nile Valley. To get familiar with these and other unusual species may I suggest the gift of a book for Christmas might be a good idea with the Collins Bird Guide that shows all European species at various ages and also gives maps of the range over which they are found, among the best.

It was interesting to see some out of season plants blooming in early October that we would normally associate with about June time. Meadowsweet and Dogwood each had fresh flowers in a hedge when along-side them similar plants had set seed. Plants always aim to reproduce to ensure the next generation and where, earlier in the year they had been cut off, later flowers have been produced. It is in just the same way that Roses are dead-headed to keep them young and vigorous and to ensure a good show over a longer than natural length of time. Wild plants also react in the same way when a hedge or bank is trimmed and will do so any year so has little to do with the wonderful summer we have had.

Now in October flocks of birds are appearing in the fields. On the grass, Meadow Pipits rise up – as they are approached their high pitched notes and rather dangling flight are diagnostic to their identity. Because they are found in open places, they might be unknown to many other than experienced birders. About the size of a Robin but resembling a small thrush they are coloured brownish olive, have a speckled breast and white outer tail feathers that show well as they fly away. Indeed they are one of the most widespread of British species.

Starlings are arriving from the Continent to join the local population to forage the fields for Leather-jackets the larvae of Crane Flies (Daddy Longlegs) that do damage to the roots of grass plants so are beneficial to agriculture. It is interesting to watch a flock as they feed on the ground to see how the birds at the rear fly over the leaders of the group to forage and shortly after are replaced by the next group so that each gets a fair chance to find food. They also feed on the maize kernels from the balanced ration of the dairy cows in the winter housing often leaving quite a mess! This is not so welcome.

After a year or two when Greenfinches have not been very successful due to disease, they appear to be making a come-back after a good breeding season. There must be a large population of them now as my son ringed over fifty of them in his garden this September without re-capturing one of them. Proof that they move about the country came from an adult female I ringed at Streat in 2012 being found at New Romney in Kent this August. The Observatories in Kent and East Anglia regularly get Greenfinches they have ringed recovered from the near Continent or ones ringed there on this side of the sea. The fascination of birds for me is this total freedom to move from place to place and the more we learn about their movements the more we realise how little we know.

The Game cover crops are full of seeds for the Pheasants and Partridges but this also attracts many small birds as a food supply always does. Goldfinches, Linnets and Yellowhammers will be the most numerous but already a couple of Reed Buntings have been identified. The aim is to cover these areas to record the spin off benefits to wild birds and report to the RSPB. By putting nets through these places and ringing, weighing and recording wing lengths of these birds, good data can be found. If recaptured by us, they will be re-weighed to see how well they are surviving the winter. If eventually recovered far away each individual can be traced by

the British Museum address and unique number on each ring to the ringing site here.



**Reg Lanaway**



<b>December</b>	13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Training Day, venue Rotherfield</b>
<b>2015</b>		
<b>January</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Coppicing, Ticehurst (very close to Improvers Day)</b>
	10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Improvers Day, Ticehurst</b>
	15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn</b>
	24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Society Fun Hedgelaying day, Colbrans Farm</b>
<b>February</b>	21 <sup>st</sup>	<b>SEHLS Annual Competition, Angmering</b>
	13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Annual General Meeting, Plumpton College</b>
<b>March</b>	14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Charity Hedgelaying day Angmering</b>
	19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Committee Meeting, Ardingly Inn</b>

Please note, the 2015 AGM will start at 7.30pm. Following the meeting (for members only), Reg Lanaway will be giving a talk entitled “A Year in the Sussex Countryside”. Attendance is free – donations to charity.

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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