

SOUTH OF ENGLAND HEDGE LAYING SOCIETY

Reg Charity No 1046124



July 2012

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everybody,

Hope you are all well and looking forward to the new season. As I write this, it feels like we should be laying hedges now with this weather. I've still got my hay to make. Went to a scything competition back in June and surprisingly met a few hedgelayers there.

The Society has all the normal events this season plus a charity day, advanced training and tool sharpening, so lots to do. Take time to read this Newsletter to get the details of the various events.

I'm now off scything!

Gary

Hi Everybody,

Do we ever stop moaning?!!

A few weeks ago, sitting in my office, rain bucketing down and unable to go a few yards across the patio to the house without getting drenched, everybody was moaning. Today, as I sit in the same office preparing this Newsletter, the sun is shining, only a few wispy clouds in the sky, and everybody is still moaning because it is too hot. It won't be long before the first frosts arrive and everybody will be moaning that they are cold. Are we ever satisfied?

Now, it's the Olympics so hopefully that will liven us all up a bit whether we are cheering for Team GB or another country.

As Gary said, there is plenty to do on the hedgelaying scene so do get involved. If you are not a layer, why not have a go? Speak to Mike Parrott who will give you all the details. As well as learning the craft, Training Days are good social occasions as well.

Rachel

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

TRAINING

For those who are coming to training days for the first time this season we look forward to making your acquaintance. We strongly recommend that you come to the first Coppicing Day at least, to learn to use your tools correctly and appreciate the correct size and length of coppice materials we require. It is a good day out as well. If, as is also recommended, you do the three Training Days and the Improver's Day, a certificate of attendance is awarded. This can be useful for building a CV or just to show mum!

When your application is acknowledged by post, please take time to read the site safety notes on the back. We all have fun at our meetings but we take site safety very seriously and take a dim view of those who do not comply. As I got off my soap box I remembered that you must book early as it is on a first come first served basis.

Trainees by their very nature, require trainers, so can I make an appeal to all our experts within the Society to come and impart their considerable knowledge to those making their first steps towards the skill that only our members can impart,

Enjoy the rest of the summer. As I write it is grey and cool. Not to worry I am sure that another memorable season is in store for us all.

Mike Parrott
Training Day Secretary

TOOL SHARPENING DAY

1st September 2012
Plumpton College, Ditchling Road, Lewes, BN7 3AE



Many skilled crafts are made a lot easier with sharp tools and good technique!

Well, we can try to get the "sharp tools" part sorted on the 1st September 2012 at the "Tool sharpening session" at Plumpton College. 9 30 am to 1 pm.

Please make cheques payable to South of England Hedge Laying Society.

Please bring a billhook and an axe plus your sharpening stones / files/ gear.

To book a place contact Gary Moore 07767894961 or Phil Hart 0771 705 4172 by the 18th August 2012.

Gary Moore will have his sandstone wheel in operation, please form an orderly queue....

BOW MAKING COURSE

Field Farm Project

20-22 March 2013



This 3 day course will be held in the magnificent 1600c barn at Field Farm Projects, Colemore, Hampshire.

Course contents:

- Bow history
- Wooden bow design
- Factors affecting bow efficiency
- Wood selection
- Bow woods
- Tillering
- String materials
- String construction
- Arrow design (inc. primitive methods)
- Arrow woods
- Fletching
- Archery techniques

You will make your own bow with a choice of making a traditional English Longbow from laminated timbers or a flat bow or a prehistoric recreation from Wych Elm or Ash.

Our bow making courses are led by John Ryder who made his first 'grown up' bow in 1990. Since John began teaching the art of bow making he has taught around sixty people a year which averages at more than one bow per week. What this means for our students is that we have seen and dealt with pretty much all possible problems you as a student are likely to come across.

Teaching alongside John is Mick McMillen, who learnt the art from John and has been producing bows for six years.

£260 per person (inclusive of all material costs).

Camping available on site at £6.00 per night or we can provide details of local B&B's.

This course is self-catering. There are indoor and outdoor cooking facilities available.

Aimed at 18 years and over although we do offer places to younger people at our discretion.

To book please ring 07979 321369 or visit our website: www.fieldfarmproject.com

FOCUS

FROM FLYING TO HEDGELAYING FRANK WRIGHT

Frank lives in Small Dole, a West Sussex village. Not yet in full retirement, he works as a flight simulator instructor.

Frank had from an early age wanted to fly and gained some early training in a Tiger Moth. The pilot wanted to impress by doing some acrobatics – in no way to deter him. He then gained his pilot's licence and tried for the RAF but was considered too tall!!

From then on he flew in succession for BOAC, British West Indies Airways, Freddie Laker (remember?) and then a long succession of different companies after the airline went bust. Finally he ended up at his present job as a simulator instructor. This will be his last commercial job.

So how did Frank get from flying to hedgelaying? He had more time, and an interest in country crafts, pole lathing for one. It was on a visit to Bentley Wood Fair, some five years ago, he saw the South of England Hedgelayers "lads" at work and subsequently joined up, making good use of the S of E Training Days, which he was greatly pleased with. Following this he entered ploughing match hedgelaying competitions and pleasing enough, gaining some awards. Last October he cut at the NHL Annual Championships, at Arlingham, Gloucestershire and came third in class.

I have wondered how he felt, going home after laying a thorn hedge with scratches and flecks of blood on his arms. Are hedgelayers slightly masochistic?!!!

Well done, Frank. Long live hedgelaying.

John Blake

John French Open International Hedge Laying Competition.

4 November 2012

The Second John French Invitation Hedge Laying Competition is due to take place on the 4th November 2012.

Hosts: Mr & Mrs D & A L Winter, Rocks Farm, Westfield, East Sussex. TN35 4RS

The Draw will take place at 8.5am and cutting starts at 8.30am.

A training day for Axe cutting is being organised by John French on the 3rd November.

For details contact John French 07887652693 or Gary Moore 07767894961.

Places on this course are limited.



Peter Tunks, winner of the 1st John French Open Hedgelaying Competition
4th February 2012

NATURE NOTES

As so often happens in Nature, things are evened out over a period of time. The extraordinary warmth of March, during which time flowers bloomed before the normal date, birds began building their nests, some having well grown young before the end of the month and large numbers of migrant birds arriving from the south was followed by much lower temperatures.



At Portland in Dorset, migrants arrived in huge numbers on the last day of March. It is normal for the West Country to get the first influx of these summer visitors at least a week before we do farther east but this land-fall was of record proportions when over six hundred were ringed. This was estimated at being only a fifth of the total birds arriving. The weather conditions were ideal for such a phenomenon, the sky being clear over night as they left the Continent but the northerly wind brought cloud cover at dawn and unable to navigate, they were grounded. The following day with clear blue skies, hardly any were seen as they carried on flying inland.

This year there is to be a count of the Nightingales breeding in Britain. This is a species that is found to the south of the country and we are in one of the best locations for them. The census will be done by counting the number of males singing as each one sings to defend its own patch and it is likely that each will be matched by a female. This species has only one breeding attempt each year so the song occurs from mid-April until the first week of June at the latest. During this time the nest will be built on the woodland floor, the four or five eggs laid and the young reared to be self reliant. Having but one brood annually, the life expectancy of Nightingales is longer than most small birds as the turnover is smaller. Many live for more than five years, the record being about twelve.

Another summer migrant you may care to look for is the abundant Whitethroat. Along many of the hedgerows and field margins these lively warblers breed in low brambles or nettle beds. Their territorial song is a spluttering effort delivered either from a tall piece of vegetation or as a flight dance about ten feet in the air. These birds nest throughout the summer with their later nestlings still being fed well into July. They are easy to recognise as, although they are "Little Brown Jobs", the white throat and white outer tail stripes are very visible.

I have just had a report of a Blue Tit getting tangled in the green netting of a fat ball on a feeder. It had to be cut free and was successfully released. I had not heard of any such problem before but please be aware.

At the time of writing this we have endured one of the most difficult Springs many can remember. March had record breaking warm temperatures with so little rain that the "Hosepipe Ban" was enforced in early April. We all know what happened next - record rainfall!!

How has this affected the birds? Some of those that had attempted early nests were successful in raising young but only small broods. A Blackbird I recorded laid four eggs but hatched only one which it reared successfully. This may have been through the chilling of the eggs when the weather changed but she is now laying a second clutch of eggs.

Many water-birds, Mallards, Coots and Moorhens, usually the earliest of birds, were seen with good broods on the lakes. Often they start with a large number of chicks but as the days go by their numbers dwindle through predation from Pike attacking from below and Herons and Crows from above. The production of these large families ensures that some survive for the next generation while others provide food for the top predators. It is a tough life.

The unsettled weather also halted for a time, the incoming migration. By mid-April when we visited the Observatory, the huge numbers of birds arriving on the South Coast had largely dried up. The conditions over North Africa and the storms over Southern Europe were so bad that the birds delayed their migration until early May when very large numbers arrived and all was well. Many experienced birders feared a calamity and the loss of a large part of the population of some summer visitors. As always in nature things right themselves if the problems are natural. It is human activities that can cause long term damage.

Here on the college farm the policy is to harvest as much grass and store it as silage from the first cut. This is the time it is most productive and of the highest protein. The short term Italian Ryegrass leys, part of the arable rotation, yields three cuts in the first season and an early one in May the following year. The field is then ploughed, worked and sown with Maize to feed the cattle the following winter. In a normal year this will have been achieved by mid-May but due to the wet weather the grass was cut and the Maize sown a fortnight later than planned. The knock-on effect will be that the Maize will mature later, thus harvested later and the field delayed for sowing with the next crop. The problems if we get a wet autumn are obvious so perhaps our obsession with the weather justified!

Reg Lanaway

HEDGE RAMBLINGS

THE ALTERNATIVE OLYMPICS

With the wall to wall Olympics in progress at the moment including a total of 20 odd TV channels most of which appear to be available on the red button, I thought I would see how the hedgelaying team were progressing.

After all, if they can build a beach volley ball court on Horse Guards Parade so that David Cameron can watch with his binoculars from his back bedroom window, it shouldn't be too difficult to plant a drop in hedge down Whitehall or The Mall or even Piccadilly for that matter. It seems that, if the organisers put their mind to it, almost anything is achievable.

One of the biggest problems of course would be deciding upon a national style and we could imagine the various regions lobbying the Olympic Committee for their particular style to be included. No doubt His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales would be expected to add his weight to one of his favoured styles but at the end of the day would probably end up sitting on the fence so to speak (or should that be the hedge). Therefore, the organisers would probably end up combing various styles. You can imagine it being a cross between Yorkshire, Midland and South of England or any other combination for that matter.

There would also be a need for standardisation of kit. Would it be necessary for competitors to wear thorn proof Lycra and a particular type of hat with their name and country of origin on it or should such information be emblazoned across their backs? Any winners would of course be drug tested. Do alcohol or caffeine constitute banned substances? It may be necessary for only authorised food to be handed out at various points for the duration of the competition. This would also be necessary to avoid non-sponsored beverages being on site. Temporary seating would be needed along the length of the hedge and it would be necessary to introduce some method of musical chairs so that the spectators could be rotated along the length of the seating to enable them to view the methods of the individual cutters.

Like all new sports introduced at the Olympics, the countries where the sport was first nurtured and expanded upon would clearly have an initial advantage. That is until the Chinese and the North Koreans get the hang of it when of course we can expect them to monopolise the sport.

Since the hedge would be specially grown in a nursery or some other horticultural establishment, much the same as turf is prepared to-day off-site for venues such as Lords and Wimbledon, the consistency of the hedge would be extremely even. The stems would be equally spaced between each other thus avoiding any gaps so there would be no competition for the best work on a poor length. Stakes and binders would be specially turned with a point at one end and the binder probably manufactured of plastic such as polypropylene so that competitors had standard stakes and binders to work with overcoming the indifferent quality of natural stakes and binders now in use. Being of an open class, all competitors would be equal and in the true Olympian spirit, competitors would be competing for pride in representing their country and medals awarded to only the first three places.

This all seemed very straightforward until it was realised that now was hardly the season for hedgelaying so the whole idea would need to be carried forward to the Winter Olympics.

Bill Hook



2012		
September	1 st	Tool Sharpening, Plumpton College
	8 th	Laughton Ploughing Match, Hedge-laying Competition
	13 th	Committee Meeting
	15 th	West Grindstead Ploughing Match, Hedge-laying Competition
	21 st -23 rd	Weald Wood Fair
	29 th	Coppicing – Wadhurst, East Sussex
October	6 th	Hurstpierpoint Ploughing Match, Hedge-laying Competition
	6 th -7 th	SEAS Autumn Show
	13 th	1st Training Day – Laughton, East Sussex
November	15 th	Committee Meeting
	17 th	2nd Training Day – Laughton, East Sussex
December	1 st	Coppicing – Venue to be announced
	8 th	3rd Training Day – Chichester, West Sussex
2013		
January	5 th	Coppicing – Venue to be announced
	10 th	Committee Meeting
	12 th	Improver's Day – Chichester, West Sussex
February	15 th	Annual General Meeting, Plumpton College
	23 rd	29th SEHLS Annual Competition – Chichester, West Sussex
March	16 th	Charity Hedgelaying Day (Bi-annual event) – Ansty, East Sussex
	21 st	Committee Meeting

Committee:

President	John Blake Tel: 01444 482414
Chairman & Training Officer:	Gary Moore Tel: 01273 841854
Vice Chairman:	Dave Truran Tel: 01444 235447
Treasurer & Training Secretary:	Mike Parrott Tel: 01273 410292
Secretary	Phil Hart Tel: 0771 705 4172
Assistant Secretary & Newsletter Editor:	Rachel Howkins Tel: 01428 645899
Membership Secretary:	Dick Morley Tel: 01273 843633
Competition Secretary/Awards Officer:	Jim Vantassel Tel: 01483 416210
Transport Manager:	Bob Hunt Tel: 01273 400898
Show Officer & Caravan Manager:	Ron Moulard Tel: 01273 513597
Coppicing Officer (Non-Committee position):	Terry Standen Tel: 01580 892090

Editor: Rachel Howkins, 9 Manor Crescent, Shottermill, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1PB

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.

Email: thesouthofenglandhedgelayers@googlemail.com

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