



April 2013



**SEHLS 29TH ANNUAL COMPETITION
23RD FEBRUARY 2013
WINNERS**

CONGRATULATIONS

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi all ,

Well the season is over, and what a season - rain, wind, snow, and more rain. I cannot recall one like it. However, all hedges were laid and all training carried out, so THANK YOU ALL for turning out and doing your section and more. Congratulation to all winners this season and to all who took part , well done.

As you all should know, John Blake stepped down as President at the AGM and Ron Mouland stepped up as our new President. Congratulations Ron, and a BIG THANK YOU to John for all his help and support over the years. THANK YOU Dick also. He also feels it is time to put his feet up after being our Membership Secretary for many years. Phill Piddell was elected as his replacement at the AGM. I hope all our new officers will wear the boots well. I'm sure they will.

The season is over but the show goes on. If any of you can help out at any of the shows please give Ron a call.

Have great summer.

Gary

Hi Everybody,

Today is sunny. Has Spring sprung at last? I hope so. (That was yesterday, raining again today!!)

Plenty to read in this issue – reports on the competitions etc. Take a look at the diary page and make sure the dates are firmly in your diary. Lots to get involved in and if you can help in any way do give one of the Committee a ring (all their numbers are at the back).

I'm always on the lookout for new items so if you have anything you think would be of interest or any suggestions, do let me have them.

Rachel

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

The Society has for many years maintained the annual subscription at £10. However, due to increasing costs, it was agreed at the AGM in February that this should be raised to £15.

As you know the membership year now starts on 1 April so would you please complete the Membership Renewal Form and return it to Phill Piddell, our new Membership Secretary. Phill's details and ways to pay are noted on the form.

£15

COMPETITIONS

Chairman's V President's - "Use the loo and enjoy the view!"

The snow lay deep and crisp and even and the hedge was a natural occurrence that had established itself over the years by nature doing its best to show "barbed wire" who's best. It may have taken time, but mother-nature had won. The hedge was self-sown by birds sitting on a barbed wire fence line, dropping seeds, as they admired the view from the side of the South Downs, hence the term "use the loo and enjoy the view!" Now a line of overgrown thorn bushes, the original wire fence having rusted and rotted away leaving a challenge to be dealt with. Overgrown mis-shapen stems and gaps to be filled all added to the challenge.



The fire crackled, axes and billhooks swung and chainsaws roared as cutters and helpers full of enthusiasm settled into their task. Judge, Alan Ashby, was kept gainfully engaged, taking note of proceedings as the hedge was transformed. Gary Moore grafted away, patrolling the line encouraging both teams, oiling the cogs and keeping an eye on the cutters all crafting away towards a wonderful dinner of pheasant pie, peas and jacket potatoes, followed by sticky toffee or Christmas pudding. Good job we had finished hedge-laying for the day!

The Chairman's team was awarded first prize with the President's team collecting the award for the best stakes and binders.

SEHLS 29TH Annual Competition

The Annual Competition this year took place in Donnington, near Chichester on Saturday, 23 February by kind permission of William Fleming of Southend Farms Ltd. The event was well attended with 28 competitors on the day. 34 actually signed up in advance but a virus depleted this number somewhat. The weather was cold but dry and this in itself was a stroke of luck because the previous weeks had been extremely wet and cold. The Improvers Day which is traditionally held a few weeks prior to the competition was also wet and cold. The Blacksmith's Arms, only a few hundred yards down the road, was originally intended as the venue for the lunch and prize giving.

However, they were overcome by flooding and a gas leak the night before which necessitated moving the venue to The Elmer in Middleton on Sea some 12 miles away. Thanks to the sterling work of our Secretary, Phil Hart, a map and directions to this new venue were hastily printed overnight.

The hedge was fairly even over its length with no stems of any great thickness but the density of the stems created some problems for our novices and despite adding extra time, some were unfortunately not able to complete their cant. However, experience has shown that in the past Novices who struggle initially with the pressures of laying on their own with a time limit, often come good in subsequent years and a number of Novices who have previously struggled, have gone on to win the class.

There was also a Dutch contingent competing again this year and it was gratifying to see that Lex Roeleveld managed 4th place in the Veterans and took away the Joan Streete Memorial Shield for the Best Work on a Poor Length. Our congratulations should go to him and all our winners details of which can of course be found on the enclosed result sheet.

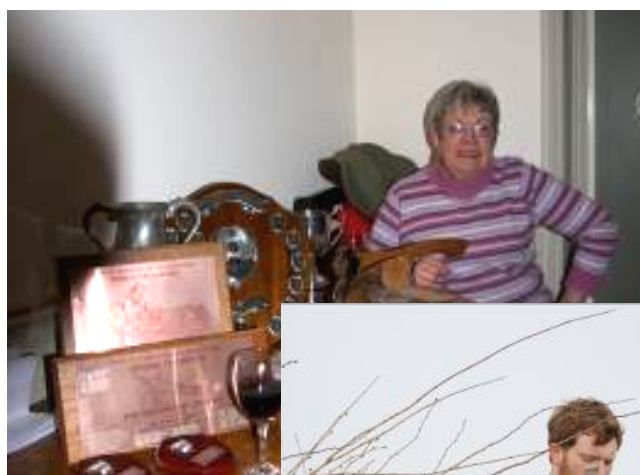
As well as acting as Stewards, our newly appointed President, Ron Mouland, and Frank Wright made a cameo appearances as a 'Tea boys'!



Special thanks as always to our hard working Stewards and Judges for making this, our 29th Annual Competition, another success. Thanks too go to Jackie Gilligan for her photos of the event.

A number of trophies this year have been refurbished including the addition of new individual shields for each year's winners, re-plating and re-polishing which has ensured that our trophies are up to date.

Jim Vantassel



CHARITY HEDGE

£1.475 raised for Charity



Despite yet another cold and wet day this happy bunch of layers turned out to complete the Charity Hedge at Pickwell Lane, Bolney.

At the time of going to print £1,475 has been raised for charity.

TRAINING

Training days at Colbrans were a mud bath! All the trainers and trainees took it well and produced a good result which was appreciated by the landowner. William Fleming at Southend Farm likewise was impressed by our hedge-laying on the third training day (a rare warm sunny day) and the Improver's Day won by Darren Hulbert and Joe Mouland in the now familiar weather, cold and very wet.

It was felt the hedges chosen for the four training days, although suitable for hand tools, were not a good example of the normal rough, thick stemmed hedge which is the usual type presented to the hedge-layer. This became evident when novices came to tackle the competition hedge which was so different from the ones that came before - sorry chaps. Blunt tools again caused a problem, so perhaps another tool sharpening day is planned for August. Only when the tools are sharp can you appreciate the difference.

Thank you to all those who turned up on the coppicing days - without your support there would be no training days to write about. Hope to see all the now familiar faces again in 2013/14 season. Enjoy the summer.

Mike Parrott.



HELPER OF THE YEAR

Ron Mouland has kindly donated a trophy in memory of Maureen. This is to be presented to a non-laying helper each year. This year's winners are Pat Parrott and Marina French. Congratulations and many thanks for all your help.

AGM Matters

- Sadly John Blake and Dick Morley have felt it necessary to step down as President and Membership Secretary respectively. John and Dick have both served the Society well over many many years and we thank them for all the time and effort they have put into their roles. They will be missed both by the Committee and the membership at large and we hope we will still see them at the various Society events. Gary presented both with bottles of their favourite tipple.

To take their place, Ron Mouland was voted in as President and Phill Piddell as Membership Secretary. Ron has been a member since the Society was formed so this is a fitting tribute to his long and loyal service. Phill Piddell is one of our newer members and we thank him for stepping into the Membership role.

- As I am sure you will all appreciate, as is the case in all walks of life, the cost of running the Society is rising each year. After managing to keep the Membership Subscriptions at £10 for many years, the Committee proposed and the Meeting agreed that the subs should be increased to £15. For this you will get 4 Newsletters per year, entry to the annual SEHLS Competition which includes a two course lunch and insurance for entry into the Society events and competitions. A good deal!! This is payable on 1 April each year. Phill Piddell will be pleased to receive your dues. As always, remember that you can only enter the Society competitions if you are a members – because of the insurance. I am afraid we have to be strict on this.

One of our members, has sent me an article from The Geographical Magazine, November 1951 entitled "The English Hedge". This is a really interesting article with B&W photos and giving some history to the craft.

As it is several pages in length, it is too much to reproduce within the Newsletter. However, if any member would like a copy I would be happy to forward one on. Please send me an S.A.E (the envelope needs to be A5 in size).

I have also been given an article on Coppicing from Living Woods magazine November/December 2012. I will send that as well.

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

NATURE NOTES

The pictures of the floods over parts of the country have set me thinking! Where rivers had overflowed and the fields beside them covered with water, what happens to the wildlife? Perhaps the fish leave the depth of the usual watercourse and feed over the flooded meadows and when the water recedes could be left stranded. This would be good news for Gulls and Herons who would find easy meals from these unfortunate fish. Today on the television news a Seal was filmed leaving a flooded river and swimming across flooded marshland.

Mammals too, have to adapt or perish. In West Sussex, where some of the slightly higher ground in the floodplain remained green but surrounded by water, Rabbits were marooned and exposed with nowhere to go. I don't know if they can swim but their burrows had filled up. The population of small mammals must be devastated. All Mice, Voles, Shrews and Moles in some places will have been completely wiped out and it will take some time for recolonisation as, unlike birds, these earthbound creatures can be restricted in movement when on the wrong side of a river or main road.

As everything is part of an ecological food chain, the knock-on affect will be seen in the future. Mammalian predators, Stoats, Weasels and Foxes, and birds of prey, particularly Owls, after an initial bonanza of stranded prey will find food hard to find and next breeding season probably low in success. In those places where the adults are in poor body condition, they may not breed at all, surviving to get fit for future years.

The largest flocks of Starlings I have seen for many a year at Wales Farm feed where the dairy herd is housed. Their favourite food is the maize seed from the silage stored in clamps to be mixed as part of the balanced ration the cows receive daily. Hundreds of these, probably East European birds, will be here until late March and we are hoping to find a method of catching and ringing a cross section of them. In years gone by I did the same and had several recoveries from Russia, Poland, Germany and Finland during the summer.

There are also large numbers of Chaffinches many of which must also be winter visitors as to the north and east of Britain these birds are migratory so these will also be interesting to ring. As yet I have not identified any Bramblings amongst them but you never know!

During the recent snow it was interesting to see how the wildlife coped. The sheep I could see from my bedroom window spent much of their time scratching the snow away to expose the grass below. This in turn attracted flocks of Rooks and Jackdaws and as the snow began to thaw, huge numbers of Starlings arrived all trying to find worms and insect food thus exposed. For the first time this winter Lapwings flew over and amongst them a single Golden Plover but they moved swiftly towards the south-west. Amongst the sheep I watched a Hare also taking advantage of the exposed grass.

After the thaw I took a walk along the stream at Wales Farm hoping to find a Snipe or Jack Snipe to add to my year list. Both had been seen recently but I did not find them. In a shallow muddy place along the watercourse that had been made into an obstacle for horses in the cross country course, much to my surprise I turned up a Green Sandpiper. This is the same species that was featured on Countryfile last month, spending the winter in the Midlands in a reserve where the watercress had been managed to hold invertebrates for their benefit.

We visited Dungeness for one day early in February to see how many species of bird we could identify. This I must stress is not "Twitching". Twitching is travelling a distance to see a rare bird that has already been found by someone else and, although it can be exciting, has little scientific value. Some quite eminent birders literally shudder at the thought of visiting Dungeness as there is nothing for miles to stop the wind. Acres of flat pebbles and a few Gorse bushes make it among the coldest places in Britain so it is for those who are brave or foolish! This large area of shingle has over the years been used for the extraction of gravel leaving large deep lakes that attract much wildfowl.

We identified ten species of duck and four of geese. The star of the day was a Bittern that flew in front of the car across the road from one lake to another alighting near a patch of reeds beside another before they both slipped into the vegetation becoming quite invisible. In three places we found Great White Egret, Little Egret and Kingfisher. A wonderful bird that one can be guaranteed to find is the Marsh Harrier. These large birds of prey seemed to be in the air wherever we looked. Perhaps six or eight individuals were present, a fine adult male seen not far from the hide we were in was memorable.

It is with great humility? that I announce that I won the sweepstake for the number of species we each predicted before we left. We recorded a total of seventy-two different birds, one fewer than I predicted.

Reg Lanaway

A bit more from Reg.....

Breeding Birds

There can have been few years when we have had to endure so much cold weather for so long and the affect upon wildlife has been severe. Hopefully by the time this is published a more seasonable spring will have arrived and the breeding season well under way. Many birds, the Tit species in particular, time their nesting according to the food supply that will be available for their young and because they feed them on green caterpillars that are available only in May and early June, literally putting all their eggs in one basket producing only one large brood of between ten and fifteen. If that attempt fails they are unlikely to try again as the timing will be too late for them to succeed. Other species such as Robins that feed their nestlings on insects and Goldfinches that feed theirs on weed seed porridge have two or three attempts thus spreading the risk and producing repeat clutches successfully. Thus if the leaf buds soften and open late, the caterpillars from the eggs of moths and butterflies laid on them last year, will hatch later. The female birds will not be in the right condition to lay their eggs until they have had sufficient nourishment. Following that the Sparrowhawks will also synchronise their breeding for the time when there are abundant immature birds about for their broods.

Over the years we have recorded the laying dates in the nest boxes around the farm and woods. The earliest any of our Blue tits laid its first egg was on the first of April whereas the latest first egg when spring was very late was on the twenty-sixth. It will be interesting to follow that up this year as by now in the middle of the month very little nest building material has been taken to the nest boxes.



HEDGE TRIVIA

Old Hedge: Many hedges are older than they look. In Devon, the most hedge-friendly English county with 33,000 miles of hedgerows, at least a quarter are more than 800 years old, which means they pre-date most of the local churches. Some growing on the top- of banks and dykes are thought to be Iron Age or even Bronze Age field boundaries, so might be 4,000 years old or more.

Young Hedge: In 1974, an English botanist called Max Hooper, devised a system for dating hedges. Starting with a selection of several hundred old hedges that could be accurately dated using old deeds, maps, charters and the Domesday Book, he counted the number of species in a 30 yard stretch along each of them. He found that the number of species correlated with the age of the hedge in centuries, so a hedge known to have existed 1,000 years ago had at least 10 species in it: a 100-year old hedge just one. This is now called Hooper's Rule.

Answers to Crossword – January issue

Hedge Laying





2013		
May	8 th	Kent Living Land
	9 th	Committee Meeting
	11 th	Plumpton Open Day
	25 th	Heathfield Show
June	2 nd	Sussex Festival of Nature, Stanmer Park, Brighton
	7 th -9 th	South of England Show, Ardingly (SEHLS not attending)
	9 th	Burgess Hill Country Fair
July	6 th -7 th	Smallholders Show
	11 th	Connect with the Countryside
	11 th	Committee Meeting
August	31 st	Tool Sharpening, Plumpton College
September	12 th	Committee Meeting
	20 th -21 st	Weald Wood Fair
	28 th	Coppicing, Wadhurst
October	5 th -6 th	Autumn Show, South of England Show Ground
	19 th	Training Day 1, Colbrans Farm
November	14 th	Committee Meeting
	16 th	Training Day 2, Donnington
	30 th	Coppicing, Wakehurst
December	14 th	Training Day 3, Fairlight
2014		
January	4 th	Coppicing, Spatham Lane or Wadhurst
	9 th	Committee Meeting
	11 th	Improvers Day, Venue to be confirmed
	25 th	President vs Chairman Team competition
February	14 th	Annual General Meeting, Plumpton College
	22 nd	SEHLS Annual Competition
March	15 th	Hedgelaying Day
	20 th	Committee Meeting

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Vice Chairman:	Dave Truran Tel: 01444 235447
Treasurer & Training Secretary:	Mike Parrott Tel: 01273 410292
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Membership Secretary:	Phill Piddell Tel: 01580 850768
Competition Secretary/Awards Officer:	Jim Vantassel Tel: 01483 416210
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Show Officer & Caravan Manager:	Ron Moulard Tel: 01273 513597
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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 Hedgelayering Society.

The Editor reserves the right to edit or exclude any item sent.

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