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NATIONAL HEDGELAYING SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Preserving the past, protecting the future

SPRING 2023

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FROM THE EDITOR

This month we welcome our first full time officer Graham Hackett, who many of us met for the first time at the AGM held on May 13 in Droitwich. This is a very exciting development because it will kick everything into a higher gear, including this newsletter which will see changes in the next, Summer edition.

Society news this month includes a full report about the NHLS’ first batch of bronze accreditations, a major milestone representing hard work by many people including the Chair and President.

The must-not-forget announcement to make here is that the Nationals will now take place in Stanford Hall, near Lutterworth, NOT Penrith. This is at the centre of an imaginary triangle made up of Northampton, Leicester and Coventry, so the Midlands style will be on home turf. But there is further detail in the newsletter and online.

Greatest thanks to Richard Hooker for his immense work to make this newsletter happen.

Richard Lofthouse

The front cover shows some serious Devon hedge restoration by NHLS member Dan Strawbridge and his team (see page 22).

Readers are reminded that views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily the policies of the NHLS

FROM THE NHLS CHAIR

We started the 2022/23 cutting season with the National Championship held by kind permission of the Chamberlain family at Crowmarsh Farm in Oxfordshire. It was in my opinion one of the best held in recent years. The BBC came to film the event for their Countryfile program, and we had over a hundred entries cutting nine different styles. Colin Clutterbuck took the Supreme Champion Award and Malcolm Johnson, again in the mix, taking Reserve Champion. Thank you to all taking part in putting on this superb event.

The Society continues to form links with other groups, for example the Tree Council, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, People’s Trust for Endangered Species plus others, and we intend to work more closely with our affiliated groups. Claire Maymon has made tentative inquiries about extending the Charity to cover Scotland.

So as we look back at the hedges we have laid, as they spring into life and rejuvenate themselves, so the Society also needs to do the same. I have for some time thought that the volunteer organisation that we all know had, so to speak, hit the buffers, and to take it forward we had to change – so change we did. As such, the past fifteen months has seen some big changes and a lot of work has been done to take the Society into the future.

On your behalf, the trustees approached Camino HR Consultants to create a job description for our very first employee. After a very thorough recruitment drive (with over forty applicants) I am pleased to announce the appointment of Graham Hackett as the new Development Officer for the Society.

Graham brings to the role an extensive range of Development experience supporting charities, conservation trusts and heritage organisations all from within the Rural Sector through a period of fifteen years within a twenty eight year marketing career. His experiences span fundraising, grant application, training, education, communications with associated digital development streams and development planning and implementation. All of these skills, combined with his passion for the Rural Sector, make him a valuable addition to our cause.

Employed on a full-time basis, Graham will be developing a range of initiatives for the Society to further bolster the future ambitions that we collectively want to achieve.

I trust you will extend your good wishes to Graham and we look forward to the collective Development of the National Hedgelaying Society.

We are also in the process of building a new website having selected Penn Studios to do the work after a bidding process. Their design will create a website for the Society which will bring us firmly into the digital 21st century. A big thank you goes out to the team involved in making this happen. We are now close to the new website launch.

The PCF (Prince's Countryside Fund) And the RSH (Rural Skills Hub) funded by the Lottery has now come to an end so the Society will continue to seek further funding to continue with its work in protecting Britain's hedgerows.

We finally got the Lantra accreditation program up and running. We now have 19 people who have completed their assessor certificate and most have done a standard-setting day. The Society engaged with Jill Salt from Central England Training on a freelance basis to work with Lantra and do the registrations for us. In February and March 2023 we completed 30 Bronze assessments which I feel is a good start for a credible certification in hedgelaying. A meeting will be held this summer to iron out a few problems that came to light but there is nothing of major significance to note.

Sadly and due to circumstances beyond our control, the National competition in 2023 will NOT be in Penrith. The location is now Lutterworth, south of Leicester.

On a personal note, a few of us in the Society hit a milestone birthday this year – a big “thank you” to everyone who wished me the best on my eightieth! When you or I decide (or even Georgina decides) that my tenure as Chairman comes to an end, I hope you will remember me as the Chairman whether good or bad, who saw the need for change and drove that change forward with the help of others. Lets continue the work of the Society with a renewed vigour..



Joe Craig “OBE” - “Over Bloody Eighty”

Joe Craig

INTRODUCING GRAHAM HACKETT – THE NEW NHLS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

As Joe has mentioned in his introduction, following an extensive recruitment process, we are pleased to welcome Graham to the Society, in the role of Development Officer. Bringing with him a wealth of experience from a 25 year marketing and development career from within the heritage, conservation and rural sectors, Graham has now taken up post and fully immersed himself within the NHLS. “There are always challenges, that’s the nature of development,” comments Graham. “The NHLS has an established presence, and my areas of development across funding, partnership working, digital and media to name but a few, will help to take the NHLS in to an even stronger proposition.” Commenting upon his appointment, Joe Craig, Chair, stated “The appointment of Graham to this new role is very important. He will be working across a number of areas to further build upon our current sector position, preserving the craft of hedgelaying whilst at the same time, making sure the Society and its reach is developed for future generations. I’m sure you will all extend a warm welcome.”



THE 44TH NATIONAL HEDGELAYING CHAMPIONSHIP

SATURDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2023

STANFORD HALL, LUTTERWORTH. LE17 6DH
BY KIND PERMISSION OF MR NICK FOTHERGILL



As Joe mentioned in his Chair’s report, due to circumstances beyond our control, we have had to postpone our use of the Penrith site for the National Championship this year.

Putting out on Facebook that we were looking for an alternative site at short notice for this year’s competition, we have been very fortunate in being offered the facilities at Stanford Hall near Lutterworth, South Leicestershire. The landowner has been very helpful and it is an excellent site: the hedges are perfect, the access is brilliant and the site is located in the middle of the country near to the M1/M6 junction with lots of potential hotels in the area.



NHLS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

Saturday 13th May 2023

Cutnall Green & District Memorial Hall

Addis Lane, Cutnall Green, Droitwich WR9 0NE

There was a very good turnout with 49 members attending the 2023 AGM on a pleasant May Saturday. It was generally felt that moving the AGM from March to May was a positive step.

NHLS Chair, Joe Craig, gave his report on what had been a full year with the Society moving forward. NHLS President Robin Dale presented Andrew Crow the award of Life Membership of the Society.

Andrew then gave a detailed treasurers report.

A big thank you to the ladies for the teas and cakes after the AGM and before and after the committee meeting.

The Chair thanked the committee for all the hard work over the last year and to Clive Bethell for all his contributions over many years.

Elected Officers, Trustees and Auditor:

Joe Craig NHLS Chair
 Mike Hartnell NHLS Vice Chair
 David Whitaker Secretary
 Andrew Crow Treasurer
 Richard Hooker..... Trustee
 Margaret Budding..... Trustee
 Claire Maymon..... Trustee
 Auditor Chris Wade

After a paper ballot the following additional members were elected to the committee:

Tina Bath	Roger Parris
David Boyson	Richard Preston
Steve Budding	John Savings
Hefin Davies	David Smith
Malcolm Dowling	Chris Stanton
John Exton	Graham Teece
Pete Gibson	John Vickery
Andrew Kirkwood	David Walker
Richard Lewis	

NHLS Officers and other posts:

Training Coordination Jill Salt, Mike Hartnell, Graham Hackett with Phil Hart
 Membership..... Margaret Budding
 Safety Officer Dave Padley assisted by Steve Hayes
 Media Richard Preston, Graham Hackett
 Newsletter Richard Lofthouse, Graham Hackett
 Merchandise Russell Woodham
 Hedgelink Representation Graham Hackett, Dave Padley
 Championship Coordination Steve Budding, David Smith, David Walker (local team)
 Sponsorship Andrew Crow, Graham Hackett
 Chief Steward Richard Hooker
 Assistant Chief Steward Derek McNamara
 Championship Awards Mandy Woodham assisted by Annette Martin
 Raffle Jenny Crow
 Archives David Smith

David Whitaker

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

I was pleased to present the Examined Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December 2022 to the AGM on Saturday 13th May 2023. This examination was by Chartered Accountants, Lealindis Limited.

Pages 13 and 14 of the report are reproduced here, with the full report and the actual Treasurer's Report being available in full on our website.

Chris Wade of Lealindis Limited, our 'Independent Examiner' confirms, in his report to the trustees that, in so far as he can ascertain, the accounts have been kept correctly, in accordance with relevant legislation and provide a proper account of the finances of this Society.

Being a non-company charity with a gross annual income of less than £250,000, the accounts are prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis, rather than the more complex Accruals Basis. Furthermore, because the gross annual income of the Society is less than £500,000, the accounts are required to be independently examined rather than audited. An audit is more in-depth and requires the underlying documents to be checked and verified. This is a more time-consuming exercise and hence would be more costly to the Society. However, I would have no concerns regarding these accounts being subject to audit.

Overall, the Society had a healthy balance of £198,653 to carry forward to 2023, which represents an increase of 14% over the previous year. However, of that figure, £69,655 were within Restricted Funds with £128,998 of Unrestricted Funds.

The increase in the Restricted Funds is primarily due to grant funding from the Ernest Cook Trust of £15,000 and the remaining balance due of £12,000 under the grant funding from the Prince's Countryside Fund (PCF). The points worth noting are that the funding from the Ernest Cooke Trust was to provide for apprenticeship placements but finding such placements has been challenging and we are presently in discussions with the Ernest Cook Trust regarding other beneficial purposes to which those funds may be allocated. The balance of the funds from the PCF grant was for the Training and the development of the NHLS/Lantra Accreditation scheme which ran to the 31st March 2023. Since the year end, there has been considerable activity relating to the Training and Accreditation scheme and the balance of the PCF grant has now been fully exhausted in meeting the objectives of that funding grant.

One further element to which I wish to draw your attention is identified on page 14 under the title of 'software, IT support and related costs'. Of the figure of £4,680, £4,536 is for the initial interim payment for the development of the new website. I can also advise that this amount has been reclaimed, but not yet reimbursed, under grant funding obtained through a partnership project with The Tree Council. This grant funding provides up to £5,000 towards the development of our new website and £3,000 per annum over a three-year period towards the employment of a Development Officer.

Additional to the great progress made to develop the Training and Accreditation Scheme, considerable time and effort has been expended on the development of a new website.

Our major annual event is the Championship. This has in the past normally been run at a financial loss but whilst this may have generated a financial loss, it should also be viewed as

an expenditure in an event to showcase the craft of hedgelaying and bring the environmental benefits of properly managed hedgerows to the attention of the wider public, an educational investment. However, as can be seen on page 13, the 2022 Championship, having regard for outstanding invoices at the year end, virtually broke even. Please also note that unlike previous years, both the income and expenditure for shows is shown separately from the Championship which explains why no figure is shown against 'shows' for 2021.

The major source of the unrestricted funds to the Society is from the Membership.

As at Year End	2022	2021	2020
Individual	366	361	315
Affiliated	24	17	13
Contractors	113	112	107
Income	£16,905	£16,853	£14,468

The membership subscription rates remained as follows:

- Individual £20
- Affiliated £50
- Contractor £75

It is pleasing to see the increase in the affiliated membership but we need to raise our profile to attract membership from a wider audience and to enhance the standing of the Society in general. To achieve this the Society is investing in the development of a new website, to which I referred earlier and the employment of a Development Officer who I am pleased to say is now in post.

Treasurer
Andrew C Crow

WHY NOT JOIN THE NATIONAL HEDGELAYING SOCIETY?

If you have come across this newsletter or been given it and if you find it interesting, then why not join the National Hedgelaying Society and have delivered three times a year?

- Annual Membership Fees**
- Student (under 21) Free
 - Ordinary member..... £20
 - Contractor Member £75
 - Affiliated Organisation..... £50

More details are available on the NHLS web site



National Hedge Laying Society
Detailed Statement of Financial Activities
for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
	2022	2022	2022	2021
	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies				
Donations	685	15,000	15,685	800
	<u>685</u>	<u>15,000</u>	<u>15,685</u>	<u>800</u>
Charitable activities				
Membership subscriptions	16,905	-	16,905	16,853
Championship	19,926	-	19,926	17,494
Skill development fees	250	12,000	12,250	5,000
Shows	2,250	-	2,250	-
Patron's events		-	-	2,356
	<u>39,331</u>	<u>12,000</u>	<u>51,331</u>	<u>41,703</u>
Other trading activities				
Merchandise	1,061	-	1,061	674
Advertising	100	-	100	125
	<u>1,161</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,161</u>	<u>799</u>
Investments				
Bank interest	394	-	394	10
	<u>394</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>394</u>	<u>10</u>
Total income and endowments	41,571	27,000	68,571	43,312
Expenditure on:				
Costs of other trading activities				
Merchandise	1,349	-	1,349	1,032
	<u>1,349</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,349</u>	<u>1,032</u>
Total of expenditure on raising funds	1,349	-	1,349	1,032
Charitable activities				
Membership subscriptions	2,956	-	2,956	1,513
Championship	20,600	-	20,600	25,669
Skill development fees	594	5,161	5,755	2,080
Shows	2,773	-	2,773	-
Patron's event	-	-	-	1,662
	<u>26,923</u>	<u>5,161</u>	<u>32,084</u>	<u>30,924</u>
Total of expenditure on charitable activities	26,923	5,161	32,084	30,924
Other expenditure				
Website costs	796	-	796	151
	<u>796</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>796</u>	<u>151</u>

National Hedge Laying Society
Detailed Statement of Financial Activities

Premises costs				
Other premises costs	224	-	224	144
	<u>224</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>224</u>	<u>144</u>
General administrative costs, including depreciation				
Depreciation of Equipment	1,516	-	1,516	837
Bank charges	324	-	324	-
General insurances	2,142	-	2,142	2,153
Postage and couriers	148	-	148	276
Software, IT support and related costs	4,680	-	4,680	-
Stationery and printing	-	-	-	6
Subscriptions	40	-	40	-
Sundry expenses	-	-	-	1
	<u>8,850</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,850</u>	<u>3,273</u>
Legal and professional costs				
Audit/Independent examination fees	420	-	420	428
Other legal and professional costs	353	-	353	-
	<u>773</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>773</u>	<u>428</u>
Total of expenditure of other costs	10,643	-	10,643	3,996
Total expenditure	38,915	5,161	44,076	35,952
Net gains on investments	-	-	-	-
Net income	2,656	21,839	24,495	7,360
Net income before other gains/(losses)	2,656	21,839	24,495	7,360
Other Gains	-	-	-	1,107
Net movement in funds	2,656	21,839	24,495	8,467
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	126,342	47,816	174,158	165,691
Total funds carried forward	128,998	69,655	198,653	174,158

PORTRAIT OF A HEDGELAYER



You never know what's around the corner...

About 3 years ago, whilst flicking through Instagram I happened across a couple of pictures of friends drawn and painted by @toby_wiggins_art. Master blacksmith Simon Grant-Jones and our late friend Alan Brown, an 8th/9th generation hurdle maker. I passed a compliment and from that found out they were part of a collection of pictures from a long-term project by Toby relating to the countryside and rural workers. A good few months later I was contacted by Toby, asking would I be interested in being part of the project. He had seen one of my wooden signs in a hedge and by chance the hedge was on the road leading to his studio.

Briefly, what followed over the next 18 months or so was a few long chats, a couple or three site visits by Toby, and me sitting for a couple of mornings. A great deal of work by Toby culminated in these pictures. The portraits were part of a collection submitted, by Toby as a member, to the Royal Society of Portrait Painters annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries.

Now, having an article written about hedgelaying with a couple of pictures is nice, and to also be part of a rural Dorset collection is brilliant; however, to then be part of a collection hanging in a London Gallery starts to become surreal, with the icing on the cake for Toby, winning

The Ondaatje Prize for Portraiture, 2023. [Editor note - This is an annual prize of £10,000, plus the gold medal of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters. It is absolutely a top prize and very prestigious in every sense.]

So on Thursday 11th May Mandy and I went to London to view it in situ.

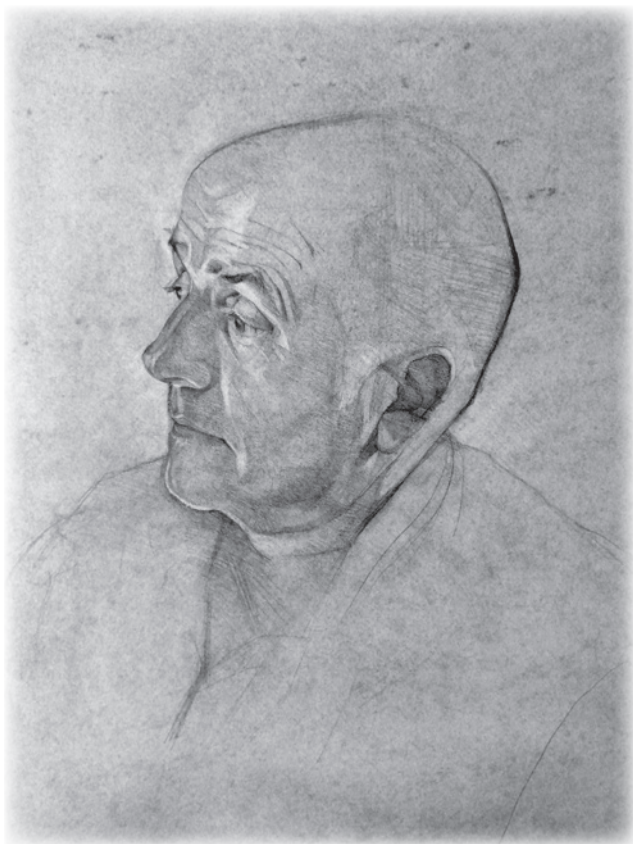
I have previously laid some hedges for the actor, Edward Fox (“*Day of the Jackal*”; “*Edward and Mrs Simpson*”) who showed a keen interest in hedgelaying and supported our local competition. I informed him of the exhibition and to my delight and surprise, he joined us on the trip.

A few pictures of an amazing day to remember, congratulations again Toby, and thank you for inviting me to be part of this exciting project.

Please do look up Toby’s page (also the credit for the pictures):

https://www.instagram.com/toby_wiggins_art/

[Editor note. Toby was elected a member of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters in 2006. He won the Prince of Wales Drawing Award in 2005 and 2013, a nice link to our Patron.]



© Toby Wiggins 2023

One of Toby’s preparatory sketches for the portrait



© Toby Wiggins 2023

Toby Wiggins – Study of Laid Hedge Midwinter (Oil on Board 20 x 30 cm)

Merchandise

Thank you to all who made purchases at the National Championship and during the last twelve months.

Social Media

Our new Development Officer Graham is reviewing the NHLS’s presence on various social media platforms. Whilst that is in progress, just a brief reminder of what we have at the moment.

The NHLS are on social media with a Facebook “private group” page for chat, info and benign banter. This page has a “Green Shield” NHLS logo

You will need to apply to join the group but we do receive spam requests generated by “bots” so ***please do answer the question posed to join in*** once you have applied. **No answer no join!** (If you have friends wanting to join please ask them to request directly and not via someone else.)

The other pages are also a FB page, they have a Coloured NHLS Logo. This page is for general advertising promotion; likewise our Instagram page.

Russell Woodham

FIRST NHLS BRONZE ASSESSMENTS

On a typical January morning we set our first bronze assessment day in the Cotswolds. The first two candidates sitting this practical, hands-on assessment were closely monitored by Steve Budding and Mike Hartnell. Both assessors needed to keep a close eye on the day's progress.

This first assessing day had to be scrutinised because the Society's aim is to set a high standard for this very anticipated qualification.

Fortunately, our president Robin Dale, who farmed close by, also called in as a spectator. He was full of admiration for these candidates who were the first in the country to take part and sit this bronze assessment.

Robin commented that it was nice to finally see the assessment come together after such a long time in the making. He also went on to say that it was refreshing to see it being carried out on what we would describe as a challenging Cotswold hedge.

At the end of the day, Steve was pleased to announce to both candidates that they had passed their bronze assessment. Both Russell Parker and David Molloy were experienced and competent hedgelayers. This could be seen in the quality of their work during the day.



Mike and Steve commented that this level of assessment works well with hedgelayers who have had good training already, also those who have hands-on experience.

We therefore hope that more will follow and join the best hedgelayers in completing this bronze award.

Since that first assessment the hedge has produced another ten bronze awards. With other active assessors this season, numerous bronze awards have been achieved in other parts of the country.

It has been a long hard slog from the trustees, NHLS committee and all the assessors now on board, to deliver this prestigious award. We should also mention our Chair Joe Craig for sticking it out and seeing this whole process come to fruition.



With lots of support the Society will now continue to expand on the 2022-23 season's success, continuing to run further assessments across the country. We look forward to those experienced layers to come forward and achieve the assessments they deserve - including those exceptional hedgelayers who could be capable of achieving a silver or even gold.

Thanks to David Gabb, Ditchford Farm, for preparing the site with Mike to use for a training hedge and a perfect location for the new assessments being rolled out by the Society.



MDH Forestry Services Ltd. & MDH Rural Education
07881 832406
E-mail: mike@mdhforestry.co.uk *Mike Hartnell*

NHLS/LANTRA ACCREDITATION SCHEME

The NHLS Chair's response to an email (quoted in line) received from Steve McCulloch...

Dear Steve

We refer to your email of 9th January to Jill Salt.

Jill passed your email to the Trustees for their attention. We apologise for not responding earlier but we have been hard at work on behalf of the Society and it has been necessary to prioritise our time.

In your email you raised a number of concerns which are restated below and to which we now respond as follows:

1. The current criteria are more a hedgelaying qualification rather than accreditation. In my mind, accreditation means the contractor has a vast array of experience and can consult, advise and complete any work to a high standard.

We disagree. The accreditation system has been approved by Lantra. The NHLS are Lantra Approved Customised Provision Providers, meaning that the accreditation scheme has been approved by one of the leading awarding bodies in the UK. At this stage there are three levels of award, Bronze (Competent), Silver (Proficient) and Gold (Advanced). The skill levels are assessed on hedges of appropriate difficulty and the candidates are expected to show a level of knowledge commensurate with the experience required to gain the award to which they aspire.

2. Personally, I think the assessment should be made on a range of commercial work completed by the applicant. It should show a range of situations that have been encountered and overcome. For example, an overstood hedge, a hedge with poor material, a hedge with good material. This way, the applicant can demonstrate a consistent range of skills and expertise. The current scheme is timed over 5 hours and simply reflects what is required from a hedge match rather than what is encountered day to day. I think the majority of cutters competing at the nationals would be of Gold standard, so where does the differentiation come from?

As explained above, the candidate will be required to demonstrate their skill on a hedge which presents an appropriate challenge for that skill level. Not all hedges are equal and even a Gold standard hedgelayer may not be able to lay the 10 metres within five hours but time is not of the essence and the assessors will have regard for the challenge the hedge presents. It is definitely not a hedgelaying competition. The Gold award will be for the very best and the majority of those competing at the National Championships are unlikely to reach the required standard.

3. Other than bronze, silver and gold, how will it be made plainly clear to the average customer that one hedgelayer has a higher level of accreditation than another when they are researching local cutters?

The same question could be asked of many activities such as the football leagues or the various martial arts. In competition, who stands on the top step of the podium?

4. The current scheme doesn't allow for any recognition to those hedgelayers that can cut a range of styles to a good level, especially when the styles are not related to one another. For example; Midland, Lancs & Westmoreland, and Welsh border. Or Devon, North Somerset & South of England. Similar styles could be grouped together and any cutter could apply for "Master" status if they can cut 3 styles to a high standard.

We agree, it doesn't.

An accreditation scheme was created some years ago, but other organisations were also devising their own schemes, none of which had the backing of a nationally recognised awarding body such as Lantra. Over several years there has been endless debate about accreditation and a 'Master Craftsman' category. Some have even taken it upon themselves to claim that lofty status. Until the Committee and Trustees grasped the nettle, nothing of real consequence actually happened apart from debate. Why three styles and not five?

Whilst we would not claim that there is no room for improvement to the scheme now in place, we at least have something to build upon. Candidates are required to submit themselves for assessment in the style or styles of their choosing and pay for each assessment. It may be that in the future the Committee will decide that a category of Master Craftsman should exist and what criteria should apply. Provided that Lantra agree with the proposals of the NHLS, we see no reason why that should not occur. We would also remind you and all Members that any Member is entitled to put themselves forward to be elected to the Committee and make a positive contribution to the work of the Society. The amount of time and personal expense which a relatively small proportion of the membership have contributed to achieve the scheme we now have in place should not be underestimated or dismissed lightly.

5. I fail to see why a higher level of accreditation should be more expensive when the duration of assessment is the same for any level. I find this approach exclusive.

There has already been recognition by various bodies, including the Forestry Commission, of the value of a nationally recognised accreditation scheme and we have no doubt that these organisations will also recognise the relevance of the award system and be prepared to pay accordingly for those demonstrated skill levels. It will also be incumbent on those selling their services on the basis of those skill levels that the work they perform meets the appropriate standard. It is therefore only right that those presenting themselves for the higher awards reflect their commitment by investing more to achieve that award. Furthermore, someone presenting themselves for assessment at Gold standard will be assessed by two holders of the Gold Accreditation and those presenting for Silver assessment will be assessed by at least one assessor of Gold standard. You suggested that the assessment should be carried out on a range of commercial work. This has been considered but this presents its own problems such as accessibility, travelling and, indeed, verification that the work is that of the candidate.

It is worth noting that much of the scheme was developed from a similar Lantra approved scheme operated by the Dry Stone Walling Association. The difference is that

the assessments are mostly (at some levels for an additional charge some assessments can be done off site) done at their premises at Crooklands. There the DSWA have the various stone types available and the candidates are required to build structures to a predetermined level of complexity for assessment. Following the assessment, the stone can be recycled for use in future assessments. The DSWA assessment charges also increase according to the level at which the candidate is being assessed. The charges we make need to cover the assessment costs and contribute to the running of the Society which is a charity. We consider the NHLS assessment charges, which were agreed by the Committee, are appropriate and reasonable.

We hope that we have answered all your concerns. We also hope that you will wish to not only support the Society with the work it does but also make a positive contribution to it.

We do feel that your email is one that concerns all Members and that it should be published together with our response. We trust that you have no objection to this.

Yours sincerely

JOE CRAIG

Steve's Response to the above:

Dear Chairman and Trustees,

Thank you for the considered response to my concerns regarding the accreditation scheme. I would firstly like to say that I never underestimate the contributions made by others. As a trustee myself, to the BHHA, the local tennis club and Sandford Millennium Green trust, I know exactly how much time needs to be dedicated alongside working and a young family. I also hope my original letter didn't appear as a light dismissal of the scheme, for that was not my intention. It was a genuine note of concern, which you have addressed.

The response to item 4 is very positive. We would all accept that things are never perfect from the beginning and the fact that there is room to improve and carry the scheme forward is encouraging. I suggested 3 "contrasting" styles simply because it would require a high level of dexterity. Having only cut five styles myself I am certainly not declaring any expertise in this area, but have found the differences between some to be nuanced rather than radical.

For item 3, I would, however, still stress the importance of the clear differentiation for the average customer. I and my team don't work for big organisations who will pay extra for a Gold standard cutter. We principally work for individual landowners and some want to know the credentials of a cutter, and that is why I applied for the original accreditation and to also stand out from the crowd. Now, for example, when they are searching on the exceedingly good NHLS web site "Find a Hedgelayer" page, how will it be made clear and obvious what the 3 levels are and mean?

For item 5, I did not realise there would be two assessors present to a gold assessment, that explains the increased cost. I presume the assessors would have expertise in the style being assessed? Also, surely the charges should be used solely for the accreditation scheme and not the society in general?

Finally, I do support the Society and hedgelaying as a whole and contribute where I am currently able, like volunteering for my local association. I sincerely hope you don't see this as a simple reason to throw stones. I hope you will also recognise my small contribution by putting myself forward for the Gold accreditation along with a prayer that I cut the mustard!

STEVE MCCULLOCH

NHLS Treasurer's Comment: It would be a mistake to restrict the use of income from the accreditation scheme solely for the accreditation scheme. All monies raised contribute to meeting the 'Objects' of the Society as set down in the NHLS Constitution which are:

1. To advance the education of the public of the need for the conservation and proper management of our hedgerows and how this is achieved through the traditional craft of hedgelaying.
2. To encourage landowners and occupiers to utilise the services of those skilled in the craft of hedgelaying to manage their hedgerows for the benefit of wildlife and the environment.
3. To encourage the development of hedgerow management skills through demonstration, the provision of structured training with a skills award system and through competition, thereby providing the opportunity for the public to learn a skill which is of particular benefit to land-based workers but which is also a healthy physically and mentally demanding recreational activity, thereby ensuring the continuation of this traditional craft into the future.

REACH FOR A RAISIN!!

Many years ago when I was working on a hedgelaying job in Devon. I myself received a painful thorn injury which duly when through my gloves and snapped off. There was no sign of the thorn, after a few days as anyone knows it can really hurt. I decided to visit YouTube for a possible answer!! Where I found an American guy suggesting to put a single raisin on the area then cover it with a plaster, which I did. After recommending the plaster to stay on for up to 48 hours. 24 hours later, I removed the plaster and there's was the top of the thorn!! The theory is the raisin draws out moisture and this in turn pulls out the thorn. This tried and tested method has worked many further times. I pass this knowledge on to whoever mentioned about thorns. A friend had a thorn in his foot and this method got it out also. My local hospital had never heard of this and now use this method I believe. So REACH FOR A RAISIN!!

MICHAEL THOMSON

...AND A WORD OF WARNING

If you get a thorn in your hand (like me) and try Michael's remedy above (like me) remember to tell your partner that you are going to sleep with a raisin taped to your finger (unlike me). The stain it leaves on the pillow case is of a very disconcerting colour and shape and can be the cause of some alarm with, of course, a barely plausible explanation.

RICHARD HOOKER

CORNISH LABYRINTH

'Kerdroya' is a 56 metre-diameter labyrinth built from traditional Cornish hedging in the middle of Bodmin Moor.

For many Cornish people, Cornwall has never been the 'periphery', i.e. the county on the south-western fringe of England, far from the power and money in the capital London. No. For us the peninsula has always been 'Kernow', the ancient granite kingdom right at the heart of the transnational Celtic seaways – it's own centre.

Secondly, Kerdroya is not a 'maze', a puzzle with branching paths and dead ends, but rather a 'labyrinth', a single meandering path that leads the pilgrim to the centre and back again. That is a widely misunderstood distinction.

It is perfectly expressed in the Cornish language: '*Yn milhyntall yth omgellir, yn kerdroya yth omgevir.*' ('In a maze you get lost, in a labyrinth you find yourself!')

In fact the classical labyrinth icon is found all the way along the Western seaboard of Europe dating back some 4,000 years to the early Bronze Age, with its proto-Celtic *lingua franca*.

Thirdly, in Cornwall a 'hedge' is not a row of green bushes, nor is it a dry-stone wall, but rather a distinctive hybrid of the two. Most, but possibly not all, the NHLS membership knows this.

A Cornish hedge is a stone-faced bank with a rammed-earth core; a construction technique that, just like the labyrinth, can also be traced back 4,000 years. Its antiquity has led to the claim that Cornish hedges are amongst the oldest structures on the planet still in use for their original function!

The project at hand is a huge community effort. Kerdroya is a carbon-neutral piece of land art that is busily recycling an abandoned car park into a reclaimed habitat for flora and fauna.

Cornish hedges support more than 600 species of flowering plants and more than ten thousand species of invertebrates, including critical pollinators. Not only are Cornish hedges corridors through ecological space, they are also corridors through time – preserving a pre-agricultural seed array within their banks. With many miles lost to development in recent years, and an ageing demographic of skilled hedgers, Cornish hedges are increasingly at risk.

So, as part of the Kerdroya project, the 'Outdoor University of Cornish Hedging' was launched. The Guild of Cornish Hed-



Will Coleman



ers have been on site nurturing the next generation of hedgers with more than 100 individuals learning the traditional craft.

Once Kerdroya opens to the public, later this year, the visitor will walk the path of the labyrinth, through stretches of artisan stonework celebrating locally distinctive building styles from the far-flung corners of Kernow.

At the centre lies a bespoke commissioned sculpture, 'The Heart of Kerdroya' crafted by father and son metal sculptors Thrussells, whose studio sits just half a mile away. When much of our modern life feels so short-sighted, Kerdroya is Slow Art, consciously taking a view 4,000 years into the past as well as 4,000 years into the future.

How shall we communicate with those who will come after us? How do we create something that is benign ecologically, and that sets the right tone about humans in the landscape, and



the fact that we aren't here very long in the scheme of things? This is a project that is designed, at its very heart, to be here long after we've gone.

Kerdroya is the brainchild of Will Coleman, Artistic Director of Golden Tree Productions, a CIC masterminding projects that celebrate Cornish culture, heritage and language.

<https://goldentree.org.uk/projects/kerdroya/>

OUR BLUNDERING GOVERNMENT

Richard Lofthouse

24th March saw the Guardian newspaper report that the DEFRA target for replacement and new hedgerow was ‘an error’.*

DEFRA minister Thérèse Coffey said that the real hedgerow proposals for England were far less ambitious than those set out in first draft of environment document, and even the less ambitious ones seem to be based on back-of-the-envelope calculations dreamt up in an office.

No one can tell if the typographical ‘error’ that was used by environment secretary Ms. Coffey to explain the discrepancy was the real reason or a smokescreen for incompetence or a simple lack of ambition.

At the end of January, environment groups had been delighted when Coffey revealed the government’s Environmental Improvement Plan would include aims to plant 30,000 miles of new hedgerows a year by 2037 and 45,000 a year by 2050.

Unlike many of the other pledges, this significantly outstripped recommendations by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and other experts.

However, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has admitted that this was in fact a typo, and that the targets are for 30,000 miles altogether by 2037, and 45,000 altogether by 2050. This is significantly less than the first draft of the plan promised and only half of what the CCC recommends, which is 40% more hedgerows by 2050.

Expanding hedgerows has been seen as a relatively easy win for tackling the climate and biodiversity crisis, as they quite easily fit into the farmed environment while having many benefits for carbon storage and wildlife. Half of England’s hedgerows are estimated to have been ripped up since the Second World War for farming purposes, and campaigners have been asking for them to be put back into the landscape.



The Liberal Democrat environment spokesperson, Tim Farron, jumped on the failure, telling the Guardian:

‘Once again, the government has failed to create a meaningful plan to recover our natural environment. Their targets lack ambition and without the proper systems in place are likely to be missed entirely.’

Environment groups called for more ambitious targets. Tom Fyans, the interim CEO of the countryside charity CPRE, said: ‘We need to see at least double the level of ambition. The Climate Change Committee’s

recommendation was for 40% more hedgerows by 2050. We estimate that means around 100,000 miles by 2050 instead of the 45,000 miles ministers have included in the Environmental Improvement Plan – so less than half of what’s needed.

‘But putting the target to one side, it’s also important that the government turns its mind to delivery. This target isn’t worth the paper it’s written on without more funding and support for farmers.’

Barnaby Coupe, the land use policy manager for The Wildlife Trusts, added: ‘We desperately need to replant lost hedgerows, as well as improving the quality of those that exist today. Government funding and ambition should reflect the importance of hedgerows in creating wildlife corridors – and planning and planting of this vital habitat should be a key priority.’

A Defra spokesperson insisted,

‘We set out our ambition in the Environmental Improvement Plan that through the support of government schemes 65 to 80% of landowners and farmers will adopt nature friendly farming practices on at least 10 to 15% of their land by 2030. They will also be supported to create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037 and 45,000 miles of hedgerows by 2050.’

*See <http://tiny.cc/5oe7vz>

(Readers are reminded that views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and are not necessarily the policies of the National Hedgelaying Society)



March 2023. Richard laid an over-stood blackthorn hedge near Thame (Oxon) in the southern style. Some of the pleachers were getting on for 40 years old.

HEAVY DUTY DEVON HEDGING

It's amazing what you can do with an axe and a billhook...



...and a 15 ton Takeuchi digger fitted with an LMS Scorpion 440 tree shear...



...plus 3 skilled hedgelayers with chainsaws...



Work done near Honiton in Devon by NHLS member Dan Strawbridge (above) and his team, Lee Blackmore and Jack Richards. 806 metres of neglected and overgrown hedge laid, dug up and restored to a traditional Devon bank.

ON FARM HEDGELAYING COMPETITIONS

Robin Dale

There are different ways to have a hedgelaying competition. In the Midlands, in the popular hunting counties, hedgelaying has the additional purpose of opening up the landscape to horses, and this was reflected in the way competitions were held.

I believe the Cottesmore Hunt was the first, quickly followed by the Quorn Hunt.

Historically, the winter months saw hedgelaying by farm workers, contractors and even farmers themselves. Competitions often required 3 chain length or 1 chain length to be laid. Preferably jumpable by horse.

Hunts devised this additional requirement to preserve the skills of hedgelaying and to open up the country, at a time when every farm had a ditcher, hedgelay, waller and thatcher.

Entries are taken, and on a day in early May, judges will visit the paid hedges and judge them.

Prizegiving was normally held in June, in someone's lovely garden, and a great social gathering took place.

As well as the Cottesmore and Quorn hunts, the Warwickshire hunt and the Heythrop hunt, the last named hold a walling competition in addition to hedgelaying, an occasion for great camaraderie and leg pulling.

Way back, I judged the Cottesmore competition. I left home at 6am on a Tuesday and got home after midnight on Wednesday morning. Hospitality was second to none – that was 20+ years ago. What a day.

All these competitions were and remain about keeping communities socializing together. We missed it during COVID.

Great credit goes to the organisers of these competitions, over the years.

A few to mention:

For the Cottesmore: Brian Haselgrave, William Cross

Warwickshire: Mr Motion and Charmaine Green

Heythrop: Guy Woodin, Guy Avis, Tom Lovell.

2022 Results

Cottesmore: 1st Steve Budding; 2nd David Fletcher, 3rd David Walker

Warwickshire: 1st Colin Smart; 2nd Henry Hawes; 3rd Robin Dale

Heythrop: 1st Glyn Cose; 2nd Robin Dale; 3rd Henry Hawes

NHLS MERCHANDISE



The NHLS has a range of high quality, great value merchandise available. The price list below shows a selection of what is available. Shirts and jackets can be ordered in a variety of colours and size from S to 3XL. In addition, items can be customised with embroidered text front and/or back. For example, your style of hedgelaying or county.

Merchandise Requests

The Society would like to thank you for your purchases over the last year. If there is anything you can think of you might like us to try please do say.

Rugby Shirt (Navy/Bottle Green)	£26.00
Polo Shirt (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon)	£18.75
Fleece (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon)	£28.00
Gilet (Black/Bottle Green/Navy)	£25.00
Beanie Hat (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon).....	£8.00
Baseball Cap (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon)	£8.00
Pin Badge.....	£4.00
Car Sticker	£1.00
NHLS Tie	£5.00
Vintage Canvas Dispatch Bag (to order)	£25.00



Thank you to all who made purchases at the National Championship and over the last year.

Order forms from:
merchandise@hedgelaying.org.uk

1958 AND ALL THAT

Richard Hooker

Russell Woodham unearthed the following Farmer's Weekly piece about the 1958 National Championship held in Stoke Prior, Herefordshire. It is interesting, not only because of the "colourisation" of the photographs but also because of the description of the rivalry between the "Border" and "Midland" styles of hedgelaying – the former being what we would now refer to as "Welsh Border". The other thing of note is the fact that the event hosted a hedging and ditching machinery show. They were apparently unaware of how deeply the promotion of mechanised hedgelaying would affect the future of the craft being practised as part of the event.

I've added a second piece (overleaf) taken from Farmer's Weekly in February 1958 which comments on the competition. The observations about the use of dead wood are interesting as they relate to the structure of the style rather than for cosmetic purposes.

(Note, the originals of both were poor quality so text has been transcribed and pictures enhanced)



BORDER ARTISTRY in the National Hedge-Laying Contest. Note the ditch and bank: also the immense quantity of wood cut out and lying in the foreground.



MIDLAND METHOD: In comparison with the Border hedge, how little has been cut out! The pleaches are laid well back. New growth can spring all along from the stumps

BORDER OR MIDLAND?

We had the most magnificent spring day for the National Hedging Championships at Stoke Prior: so warm that one of the doughty contenders was all but stripped to the waist. Here was the art, muscle and craft of England. At half-past two, when a whistle blew for all to stop and allow the judging to begin, there was plenty to look at and think about. The silent crowd watching the Border classes; a silence of deep approval – contrasted strangely with the *burr* and *clack* and *click* of the native tongue disapproving of the lusty Midland way. The delicate tracery of the Border contrasted so

strangely with the great thick pleaches of the strong-bottomed Midlanders. Some said they would sack their men if they messed up their hedges like that; others, like our bailiff, could see the great power of the Midland hedge as a living stock-holder. Perhaps the Border man is a shepherd at heart, the Midlander a grazier of big beasts.

The proof will be next year – and a few years hence, for England's hedges are living things. I hope there will be a prize in five years' time to the men whose lengths have grown out the liveliest. Good hedge-laying at fifty bob a chain may well be the cheapest fencing yet.



PRACTISING WHAT HE TEACHES: Mt Aubrey Harris, Instructor at the Institute of Agriculture, Usk, competed in the Border class and demonstrated the classic method.

You try some oak posts and rails or concrete posts and some wire for the price. If you find me wrong, then make a discount for the partridge nests you won't get under anything else but a proper hedge.

Those who regard hedges as something already in limbo of the past should take note that both the winners were Young Farmers' Club members, not over 25. Supreme Championship went to Gwyn Davies of Talybont-on-Usk, Brecon, who also won the Senior Welsh Border Style. The Junior Supreme Championship went to T.O. Carter, of Crick, near Rugby, Warwickshire. Breconshire claimed the first three places in the Senior and



BORDER PERFECTION: A good example. The contest is the fourth in this national series organised by the Farmer's Weekly.

the first two in the Junior; Herefordshire had to be content with fourth in the Senior and third and fourth in the Junior. In the Midland style, Warwickshire and Leicestershire shared the four places alternately, first Warwickshire. In the Junior, Warwickshire claimed the honours as well, with Leicestershire second.

There were some 150 competitors and some 30 different varieties of hedging and ditching machinery for the record crowd of 12,000 to look at. The Milk Marketing Board ran a very popular milk bar: selling 50 gallons and then sending out for 30 more; so, like the Usk instructor who competed, the farmers practised what they preach to the housewife.



MUSCULAR MIDLANDER: With a solid obstacle in the making. How will it look in a few years' time?

A COLD WAR BLOWS AROUND THE HEDGES

OFFICIALLY, our fourth national hedge-laying contest was not a battle of the styles, despite the fact that we had classes for both Midland and Welsh Border styles and two supreme awards.

Unofficially, it developed into a cold war. Cold only inasmuch as billhooks, slashers and axes were not used to emphasise points in the many arguments that took place up and down the hedgerows and in the refreshment tent.

“Training rambler roses” and “trelliswork” were two picturesque descriptions of the Midland hedge overheard during the day, which summed up local people’s attitude to a fence which, in the opinion of many, would fail the acid test of a good hedge – to stop a Welsh Mountain ewe with two lambs in March.

The Welsh Border artists on the other hand were said to be doing no more than building elongated wattle hurdles *in situ* – a measure of the Midlanders’ contempt for a hedge in which dead wood predominated.

Partly because the Senior Supreme award went to a Welshman and partly because the event was held in an area where the Border style is ubiquitous – and thus there were many more Border enthusiasts among the vast crowd – the odds were against the Midlanders for the first time.

Mr J. R. Phillips, the supreme judge, made it perfectly clear that in judging the four winning entries he was not judging one style against the other.

He was viewing each entry as an example of its style. In other words, when looking at the winning senior Midland and the winning senior Border hedge he asked himself, “Is this a better Midland hedge than that is a Border hedge?”

So, in this respect, there was no inter-style contest. It was simply a matter of craftsmanship.

But it was inevitable that, when the judges and stewards assembled for their usual pow-wow at the end of the day, a certain amount of hair should be let down.

The essence of the argument was this: the Midland hedger tries to pleach as much wood into the hedge as possible, to make his hedge entirely of live growing wood and only to put dead wood in as a last resort. (Dead wood used in this context means wood cut out of the hedge during laying).

He lays his hedge at an angle to the line of the hedge, so that most of the new growth comes up unimpeded at the front of the hedge, with all the brush on one side.

The Welsh Border man cuts out most of his wood, leaving only enough pleachers to strengthen the hedge, and then trims up the wood he has cut out and works it back into the hedge. All his new growth comes up through the hedge.

In other words, the Midlander “lays” a hedge; the Border man “builds” a hedge. The point at issue was, how desirable is it to keep the hedge alive?

Or, as Mr H. G. J. Harvard, one of the Border judges put it: “Do you pleach to grow or survive?”

The general answer was that the aim was to make the pleachers survive until the new growth came.

Points in favour

In that case, argued Mr Harvard, was not this a task which could be accomplished satisfactorily with well-placed dead wood as with live pleachers?

Having made this point, Mr. Harvard went on to make a few more in favour of the Border hedge. If you left your pleacher with a little too much sap, you would find that the new shoots came from halfway up instead of from the stool.



Some of the wood to be laid was so big and gnarled that competitors had to pleach the roots. This picture shows Mr. J. A. C. Walker who won the Junior Class in 1954 but was taking part in the Senior Class this year.

Those shoots would turn into small bushes and in strong wind would probably blow down, taking the pleacher with them. Then you would have neither new growth or a pleacher.

If, on the other hand, you cut the pleacher off when laying the hedge in the first place, you would get five or six shoots from ground level and you could still put the deadwood back to make the hedge, until they became strong enough.

Mr. H. Hitchman suggested that when it came to laying a hedge again, the Border hedger would rather tackle a hedge which had been laid Midland style, with the new growth coming up free of the laid hedge, that a Border one. The Border men disagreed.

Much as these men love the art of hedge-laying, they appreciate that the after-care of the hedge is largely a matter for the machine.

Most of those present agreed that the Welsh Border style of hedge is better suited to machine trimming.

Mr. Harvard observed that if you simply wanted to be able to slash a hedge for years, the stronger you made your pleachers the better – “but I wouldn’t like to be the man who has to lay it next time.”

Yes, all these hedges will be laid again, although it may be several decades before this comes to pass. That is why these contests are so important.

The mechanical hedge trimmer may have robbed the manual hedger of a lot of work but it has not yet ousted him. Sooner or later these hedges, after years of machine cutting, will be allowed their heads – and then the hedge-layer will come into his own again.

Finally, Mr. Hitchman, on behalf of the Midland enthusiasts, said that in the interests of a common and more serviceable hedge, the Midland men would be prepared to lay their hedges over their stools if the Welsh Border enthusiasts would stop putting so much dead wood into their hedges.

But the Border men, bloated perhaps by the day’s success, refused to budge. They denied that there was too much dead wood in their hedges. They regard the Border hedge as unimprovable.



Now in production in 1958 form is the powerful Fisher Humphries hedge cutter.

BHHA “SKILLS OF THE HILLS” COMPETITION *George Pidgeon*



The Blackdown Hills Hedge Association held their annual “Skills of the Hills” hedgelaying competition this year at Luppitt just north of Honiton in east Devon.

This was the third time we have held our event in ground owned by the Sage family. On this occasion it was Fred Sage and his sister who were very welcoming to the BHHA.

The hedges used for this year’s competition were ideal having probably 20 to 40 years of growth on the bigger ones but with ample smaller shrubs for the novice classes.

BHHA prayers were answered for dry weather as well. The lack of rain in February meant that in early March the site was easily accessible and damage kept to a minimum. Without the dry spell it may well have been unusable being a typical Blackdown Hills farm: quite steep and forming a natural bowl which was still quite wet in places despite the dry weather.

The Sage family do not farm the ground themselves preferring the let it to neighbouring farmers for their sheep and cattle. That being said, Fred Sage is very passionate about trees and his hedges, managing them all with regular laying and casting up.

Although the “Skills of the Hills” post-Covid is scaled back from the event it used to be, there were still 76 competitors and a lot of members of the general public turned up to spectate.

Thanks to a “Farming in Protected Landscapes” (FiPL) grant, the BHHA has acquired some catering equipment including a substantial barbeque which allows us to feed large numbers of people. A special “thank you” to the ladies of the BHHA committee for their huge efforts during the day which did us proud.

The competition itself comprised its now usual five classes: Open, Intermediate, Intermediate Pairs, Novice, and Novice Pairs.



Andy Mayson

Because of the very wide Devon banks, up to four metres wide in places and typical of the Blackdowns, we were able to have competitors working on both sides of the hedge at the same time whilst maintaining a safe distance from each other. The Novice and Novice Pairs classes worked this way and laid a single comb in their lengths. The other classes were less fortunate in that competitors were required to lay both sides of the hedge. It sounds complicated but it works and the result is a traditional double comb hedge on all lengths used during the day where the width of the bank permitted it.



Intermediate class at work

The hedge consisted of mainly hawthorn and hazel with some blackthorn, holly, spindle, maple, dogwood and willow predominant in some parts of the damp site. All in all, a pretty typical Blackdown Hills hedge.

The standard of work was excellent once again particularly in the Novice class – this year a new trophy was instigated for the best novice competitor who had been trained by the BHHA this season. It went to the worthy winner of the Novice class Andi Rickard.

It was a great pleasure to welcome some friends and familiar faces from the NHLS committee to our event and to show them some Devon hedge bank management in action.

It is not always realised that the banks have two habitats: the banks themselves for small mammals and flora (primroses, bluebells, red/pink campion, foxgloves etc) as well as the shrubs growing on top. In addition, the centre of the bank is cleared at each laying so slumped earth can be “cast up” into the gap between the combs. An added benefit is that saplings can be identified in the centre of the hedge which can be allowed to grow up into standards. This year’s competition hedge had several mature oaks over 200 years old which will have been left by previous generations doing what our competitors were this year.

Many thanks to all the judges and stewards for all their work and for doing it all on an extremely sloping site.



The wide banked hedge laid by the pairs classes

RESULTS



Open Class

- 1st Russell Woodham
- 2nd Dave Brackley
- 3rd Rob Sturmeay
- 4th Jon Sibthorp



Intermediate

- 1st Lydia Lee
- 2nd Neil Gemmell
- 3rd Martin Vickery
- 4th Adrian Mills



Novice

- 1st Andi Rickard
- 2nd David Clark
- 3rd Neil Kelly
- 4th Tim Wills



Intermediate Pairs

- 1st Tim Frampton & Nigel Dowding
- 2nd Steve Eldridge & Graham Adams
- 3rd Clive Bethell & Marie Clark

Novice Pairs

- 1st Paul Middleton & Logan Dunn
- 2nd Andrew Harris & Nigel Moore
- 3rd Ben Morgan-Brown & Marije Zwager
- 4th Mo Mulligan & Tom Waters



Overall Awards

- Best Veteran Competitor... **David Clark**
- Best Local Competitor **Colin Risdon**
- Best Lady **Lydia Lee**
- Best Under 19 **Logan Dunn**
- Best YFC Competitor **Josh Sturmeay**
- Best Work on a Poor length . **Colin Risdon**
- Best BHHA 2022/23 Trainee . **Andi Rickard**
- Best Regrowth from 2022..... **Dave Brackley**

All photographs in this and in the Cotley report (page 36) courtesy of Tim Russ unless otherwise credited.

LODGE FIELD FARM

Richard McLane

Hedgelaying organised at Lodge Field Farm, Gilling East, North Yorkshire. Ed Caldecott gave tuition. Soup, tea and coffee provided for the cutters.



LANCASHIRE & WESTMORLAND GRAND PRIX



From left to right: Francis Williams, Nora Pillay, John Gibson, Craig Procter, Andy Kirkwood, Aidan Handley, John Handley, Angus Ellwood

The Lancashire and Westmorland Hedge Laying Grand Prix competitions got under way this year on the 3rd December 2022, with the Yorkshire Dales event. There were several competitors and happily the weather did not put people off.

The Yorkshire Dales Competition was followed by:

- Arnside & Silverdale Competition on 7th January 2023,
- Wyre & Myerscough Competition on 22nd January,
- Friends of the Lakes Competition 11th March, and finally
- Forest of Bowland Competition 25th March 2023.

Sadly, this year the Hy-Fly Competition and Westmorland County Agricultural Show Competitions had to be cancelled as competitor numbers were low.

2023 saw a record number of people wanting to take part in the training events that each competition hosted and were very well attended.

In May 2023 a meeting will be held to look at the progression of Lancashire & Westmorland Hedge Laying Association with a view to its development, improvement, and its ongoing success.

Finally, on a sadder note, our Association said farewell to Mr Peter Ainsworth who passed away in December last year. Peter was a staunch supporter and experienced Judge within the Lancashire and Westmorland Hedgelaying Association and will be sadly missed

Dinah Robinson

GRAND PRIX RESULTS

Yorkshire Dales

Open Class

- 1st Andrew Kirkwood
- 2nd Aidan Handley
- 3rd John Handley
- 4th James Haigh
- 5th Heather Swift
- 6th John Gibson

Arnside & Silverdale

Open Class

- 1st John Handley
- 2nd Andrew Kirkwood
- 3rd Robert Hogarth
- 4th John Gibson
- 5th Heather Swift

Starter Class

- 1st David Moore
- 2nd Tom Clifford
- 3rd Beth Stevens

Veteran Class

- 1st John Gibson
- 2nd Heather Swift

Novice Class

- 1st Lillian Main & Edward Carefoot
- 2nd Mark Reynolds

Wyre & Myerscough

Open Class

- 1st Craig Procter
- 2nd John Handley
- 3rd John Gibson
- 4th James Haigh

Starter Class

- 1st David Moore

Best 2022 Regrowth

- 1st Craig Procter
- 2nd James Yates-Bell
- 3rd William Bell
- 4th Neil Croskery
- 5th Stephen Thompson

Friends of the Lakes

Open Class

- 1st John Handley
- 2nd Craig Procter
- 3rd John Gibsont

Starter Class

- 1st David Moore
- 2nd Bridget Pickthall

Junior Class

- 1st Angus Ellwood
- 2nd Clark Ellwood

Novice Class

- 1st Nora Pillay & Francis Williams
- 2nd David Graveston
- 3rd Charles Carefoot

Veteran Class

- 1st John Gibson

Forest of Bowland

Open Class

- 1st John Handley
- 2nd Craig Procter
- 3rd John Gibson
- 4th James Haigh
- 5th Stephen Thompson

Starter Class

- 1st Nathan Guy

Novice Class

- 1st Lucy Mason
- 2nd Mark Reynolds
- 3rd Mark Richards
- 4th Tony Parnell
- 5th Ian Procter & Rebekah Mulligan
- 6th Tom Chew

Grand Prix – Special Cups & Trophies 2022/23

L.W.H.L.A Starter Class Trophy

Cup awards for gaining most points in the starter class..... David Moore

Alan Duckett Memorial trophy 2014

Tankard for the junior (under 18) gaining most points..... Angus Ellwood

The William Hodgson Shield – Young Farmers Grand Prix

Shield awards for gaining most points in the junior class..... Angus Ellwood

Lawrence Hull Trophy (donated by his daughter Carol Hull)

Awarded to Best Beginner for the 2022/2023 Season..... David Moore

Best Veteran

Awarded to the veteran gaining most points John Gibson

The Dick Jackson Memorial trophy – Best Hedger in the Novice Class

Cup awarded for gaining the most points in the Novice class..... Mark Reynolds

The Roger Robinson Memorial Trophy – Best Hedger in the Open Class

Cup awarded for gaining most points in the Open Class..... John Handley

The Colin L Wright Memorial Salver – Hedger with the most Points in the Grand Prix

Salver awarded for gaining most points in the Grand Prix..... John Handley

Lancashire & Westmorland Hedgelaying Association - The Peter Ainsworth Cup

Presented for Best Overall summer Growth..... Craig Procter

COTLEY ANNUAL HEDGELAYING COMPETITION 2023

On Saturday 18th March 2023, seventy-one competitors from all corners of the country met at Blackhayes Farm, Stockland for the Cotley Annual Hedgelaying Competition.

Thank you to Roger Parris, wife Christine and son Samuel for hosting such an amazing event.

Despite a mixed week of weather and some dampness underfoot, the day was dry and the conditions perfect for a day of hedging. Competitors met for breakfast and a safety briefing, before starting their days work. The competition consisted of four classes, and all were to lay traditional Devon style on a Devon bank hedge. The hedge was of mixed species and of varying heights. Ladders were definitely required for some competitors!

At 11am, work paused for the meeting of the Cotley Harriers. Many hundreds of supported joined the hedgelayers for further refreshments. An uplifting speech from the new hunt master praising the coming together of two important country pursuits, and their importance to rural life, energised all, and work on the hedges soon re-commenced.

With such a calibre of talent on show, and with such a fantastic turn out, the judges, as usual, were faced with a difficult and time-consuming task ahead. We thank them and their stewards for giving up their time and expertise.

Cutting finished at 3.30pm and the hedgers retired to Roger's sheep shed for a well-earned BBQ and a barrel of his famous home-made cider. They were joined by the Cotley supporters and the atmosphere was great. Lot of like-minded country folk enjoying good company, great food and a few drinks. Devon hospitality at its best.

This year was a double celebration too! Not only does the Cotley mark the end of the competition season here in Devon, (so is always a good knees up!), but this year also coincided with Rogers 80th Birthday. I know he will want to pass on his thanks to everyone for their cards, gifts and well wishes.



Roger started the Cotley competition many years ago with the help of Mary Perry from the Cotley Harriers. It continues to go from strength to strength and has raised many thousands of pounds for local charities. This year alone, over £1,100 was donated to The Devon Air Ambulance Trust. Thank you for everyone who donated on the day.

Roger's aim is for this competition to not only showcase the very best of Devon style hedgelaying, but also to provide an inclusive and encouraging place for novices to learn and be supported. He believes the day should be a mix of hard work and enjoyment, and the hospitality provided this year was, as always, excellent.

A huge thank you to all the catering team for their hard work on the day.

Judging was finally completed and the score sheets returned. Roger and Mary had the pleasure of announcing the results to the waiting crowd.



Open Class

- 1st Steve McCulloch
- 2nd Mike Reed
- 3rd Alex Bown
- 4th Adrian Mills



Intermediate

- 1st Lydia Lee
- 2nd Chris Stanton
- 3rd Bob Parsons
- 4th Gary Moore



Novice

- 1st Jack Richards
- 2nd Graham Adams
- 3rd Andi Rickard



Pairs

- 1st Tim Frampton & Nigel Dowding
- 2nd Darren & Paul Ackroyd
- 3rd Serena de la Hey & Pat Lehain
- 4th Stuart Curtis & Simon Cullingford

Overall Awards

Best Veteran Competitor.....Mike Reed

Best Lady..... Lydia Lee



Steve McCulloch working on his winning length in the Open Class

A thank you speech followed the results, which included huge gratitude to the sponsors of the event. Thank you again to Buglers, Cornish Mutual, The Cotley Inn, Steve and Jenny Whitley and Roger for providing Class sponsorship.

As a finale to the event, Roger was presented with a beautiful 80th Birthday cake, kindly baked by Mary Perry. The cake was decorated with a matchmaker hedge, some harriers, a fox and even a cardboard cut out of the birthday boy himself! An enthusiastic version of “Happy Birthday” echoed across the valley.



More cider was consumed and all departed having enjoyed an amazing day.

Thank you to every single person who helped on the day and before.

Thank you to judges, Stewards and sponsors and finally to every single competitor for their hard work. We look forward to seeing you all again next year!

Lynda Cregan

The British National Ploughing Championships



The British National Ploughing Championships are held in a different part of the country each year.

We are delighted to have been invited back to Somerset this year when the event will be held on **14th & 15th October at Bishop’s Lydeard, near Taunton**, Somerset, by kind permission of K S Coles & Family.

As there is a hedge there that is suitable for laying in a competition, the Coles Family and the British National Ploughing society would like to invite hedgelayers to come and compete as it is the first time this has happened at this ploughing match.

The hedgelaying competition will be on **Saturday 14th only**. The site is on a 275-acre part of the farm.

You **do not** have to be a member of the NHLS to take part.

The styles the landowners would like in the competition are:

- Lancs & Westmorland
- South of England
- Welsh
- Midland
- Cheshire
- North Somerset

There will be Open, Intermediate and Pairs classes in all styles.

If you would like to join us and enter, or need more information please contact Clive Bethell on somersetthedglayers@hotmail.co.uk

Alternatively, send a text 07976 895643 for an entry form.

Closing date for entries is 31st August 2023

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THE FIRST COMPLETE WORD SEARCH TO BE MAILED TO THE EDITOR AT NEWSLETTER@HEDGELAYING.ORG.UK WINS A ONE LITRE BOTTLE OF HANKEY BANNISTER WHISKY.

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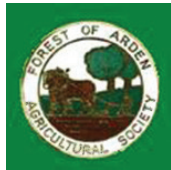
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