



NATIONAL HEDGELAYING SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Preserving the past, protecting the future

WINTER 2023

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FROM THE EDITOR



The National Championship on October 28th followed by a highly successful Patron’s Day on December 9th represented superb days in our Society calendar and all I wanted to do here was to salute everyone who put so much into them, perhaps especially Chief Steward Richard Hooker but obviously the cast of actors was just about everyone... on a more personal note thanks to David Walker for helping me to sort out my Midland binding against the clock on that wet and blowy day on Home Farm. The printer couldn’t get it out before Christmas so you will be receiving this newsletter in 2024. Happy New Year and keep the content flowing to me please, by end-March for the Spring Newsletter.

Richard Lofthouse

The front cover shows 2023 Supreme Champion Peter Gibson and his winning length of hedge.

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



Dear members, what a great event this years National Championship was with over 100 competitors taking part. Congratulations must go to all those who competed, the prize winners, and to NHLS Supreme Champion 2023 – Peter Gibson. It was also good to see the Derbyshire style back in strength with seven competitors entering. Sadly only five cut on the day after two late withdrawals but the class provided the Reserve Champion in Jonathan Stafford.

As I often say, these events don’t just happen. A lot of hard work goes into organising them especially since we try to hold the Championship in locations around the country. The logistics of this is hard work and we could not hope to achieve what we do without the dedication of some of the Society’s members. They put in a huge amount of work over the months running up to the event and for some time afterwards.

Thanks must go to Nick and Lucy Fothergill and their team at Stanford Hall for the use of the site and their support and assistance during the event. Also to the judges and stewards who gave up their time to come along and officiate for us on the day.

To all our sponsors, thank you. If you attended the event we hope that you enjoyed your day and that you feel it has been worthwhile for you. Long may your support continue. As a volunteer run organisation, we could not hope to continue what we do without your generosity.

More recently, on the 9th of December, the NHLS Patron’s event took place on the Highgrove Estate. The previous day, a few volunteers gathered at Home Farm, in not the best of weather and difficult ground conditions, to prepare the site. They worked hard all day to cut back a hedge that had put out a lot of suckers and briars but after a few hours of grafting got the hedge in a reasonable state for the mainly novice cutters the following morning. It dawned and continued as the day before with a wet start. After a briefing from the His Majesty’s Head Forester, Geraint Richards, 57 cutters set about their task to lay the 290 metres of hawthorn and blackthorn – some working in pairs and others individually. Thank you to the group of experienced hedgelayers that turned out to assist them in their task.

His Majesty arrived in the early afternoon as the weather improved and met and talked to all of those taking part as he proceeded to walk down the length of the hedge. It really is appreciated that he still finds the time to come along and talk to these young people and encourage them to continue the art of hedgelaying – something that he enjoys doing himself if he can find the time.

Thank you also to Henry-James, the tenant at Duchy Home Farm, for all your help and your staff for keeping the tea flowing throughout the day and subsequently feeding everyone back at the farm. At the end of the day when we looked back it turned out to be a brilliant event very well organised by our Chief Steward and Secretary liaising with Geraint. Well done to all concerned Planning is now underway for next year’s Championship to be held at John Fenton’s Elmswell Farm in Driffield, Yorkshire. I hope everyone taking part in 2023 will come along and compete and be joined by some of the new faces that are now appearing.

Training courses continue to be fully booked and interest in hedgelaying at an all time high. With that in mind let us continue our good work as the Society goes from strength to strength.

Your Chair – Joe Craig

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**Saturday 11th May 2024 at 10:00am****Cutnall Green & District Memorial Hall****Addis Lane, Cutnall Green, Droitwich WR9 0NE****W3W: ///under.fail.deleting****AGENDA:**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of AGM – 13th May 2023
3. Matters arising
4. Correspondence
5. Chair's report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Election of auditors
8. Other officer reports (training, accreditation, and media)
9. Election of executive, trustees, and committee
10. Any other business
11. Date and time of next meeting

Nominations for Trustees:

Nominations are required for a total of six Trustees: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, and three others.

Anyone nominated as a Trustee must be a paid up or life member of the NHLS. Persons nominated for any of these positions must have agreed to stand for election and must have a proposer and seconder.

Nominations for President & Secretary:

Two other posts requiring nominations are: President and Secretary.

Must be a paid up or life member of the NHLS, and must have agreed to stand for election and must have a proposer and seconder.

Nominations for Committee.

We are once again asking for nominations for the remainder of the committee to save time at the AGM. Nominations are required for up to 30 members who are over the age of 18 and willing to stand. Should there be more than 30 nominations then there will be a vote. Committee members do not require proposers and seconds and may put themselves forward for election or have agreed to stand if nominated by someone else.

All Nominations

Nominations for all the above must be made in writing by post or email to reach the Secretary:

David Whitaker, 2 Armitage Way, Galgate, Lancaster LA2 0BN

By Friday 11th April 2024 – 30 days before the AGM

Pre-AGM Social

Before the AGM we are planning to have a social event on the evening of Friday 10th May at the Premier Inn, Bromsgrove B60 1GJ.

MIDLAND TRAINING COURSE AND ASSESSMENT

Once again, on a clear day in the Cotswolds, a handful of trained candidates were successful with their Bronze Accreditation assessments. I thought that, on this occasion, all the candidates who he trained had gained a lot of knowledge during their four day training course. I recommended that they visit the, then upcoming, National Championship at Stanford Hall and aspire to the high standards of the competitors taking part.



At the event, I spoke to all the candidates that made the trip – and with lots of questions it is clear that this new generation of cutters are keen to lay hedges and set those high standards for themselves.

As we gain momentum in delivering these bronze assessments, it is clear that with correct training and guidance it is possible to set a high standard which is expected for the Society assessment awards. This is evident in the quality of the finished hedge on which they took their bronze assessment on this year.

After inspecting the hedge, Steve Budding who was also assessing on the day, made it clear that he wanted to see better use of hand tools and so emphasise the benefits of pleaching with a billhook and limiting the use of chainsaws. This was met with a positive response from all of the candidates.

Russell Woodham, another of the NHLS assessors, was kind enough to produce a really comprehensive question and answers sheet on hedges which I think has become an important tool in both training and setting these assessment days. All the NHLS assessors are passionate about ensuring that we keep the standards high and all have contributed to the way we set these assessments.

One year on, it is evident that this new generation of hedgelayers are committed and enthusiastic and are inspired by their local mentor regardless of which region they're from or which style they want to work on. Therefore anyone embarking on the profession of hedgelaying should contact their local trainer and hopefully sit the NHLS assessment.

Mike Hartnell

THE CONTINUING TRAVELS WITH THE TRAILER...



The 2023 show season started in May with our first visit to Great Harwood show near to Blackburn – only thirty minutes from our house. After that, the diary looked like this:

- June** FWAG event at Strickley Farm, Kendal then “Groundswell” near Stevenage in Hertfordshire.
- July** Hanbury Show near Redditch, Great Yorkshire Show, Game Fair at Ragley Hall.
- September** Moreton-in-Marsh Show, Westmorland County, Malvern Show, Flintham Show.

In October, we had a presence at the Scottish Smallholders Event at Ingleston near Edinburgh with Graeme Walker taking the display boards and a supply of leaflets.

In total we attended eleven shows this year with several other shows asking us to go. Sadly we had to turn down the invitations but there is a limit to how many we can do in a season. Overall, Carol and I spent 28 days setting up and manning the stand. I would like to say a very big thank you to all those who helped setting up, crewed the stand, and most especially those who hung around and helped take down and pack everything on the last day of each show so we could get home just that little bit earlier.



We talked to many people, some very interesting, but we always try to encourage children and people with youngsters to take part in our easy wildlife competition. It really helps make them more aware of the importance of hedgerows in the countryside and they depart clutching many leaflets and hedgehog stickers.



Flintham show had several school groups attending throughout the day, with some of the teachers very knowledgeable and explaining to the children the importance of hedgerows.

This year we also had a few landowners come onto the stand offering to host the National Championship. We are following up on this and some look promising. Next year’s venue, Driffield, is one that we learned of this way. A few celebrities came and spoke to us as well: the Duchess of Edinburgh and Matt Baker from BBC Countryfile, to name but two.

Peter Gibson wanted to lay a hedge at Yorkshire show so we asked him to lay a Bonsai in the Yorkshire style, and our President Robin Dale showing me the finer detail of how to do the binding on the midland style.



NHLS President Robin Dale (left) demonstrates binding in miniature while current Supreme Champion and winner of the Championship “Best Competitor using Hand Tools Only” prize Pete Gibson, shows that all you really need is a Stanley knife after all

Bookings for the 2024 season have started already. We will attend the Driffield Show in July since we will be holding the National Championship a short distance away in October and it will give a chance to publicise the event. Also Cartmell Show in the Lake District ask us to attend last year but weren’t free but we promised to be there in 2024.

On behalf of Carol and myself, I’d like to say a long term thank you to all who have helped over the years while we have been taking the display trailer around the country. Not only have we spent all those days attending the shows, but maintenance of the bonsai hedges is very demanding. They need constant care and attention to keep them looking their best.

We keep adding to the NHLS stand and its displays so if anyone has any ideas to help us improve it further please feel free to let us know.



David Whitaker

THE GREAT HAMPSHIRE HEDGE

Ellie Banks, Hampshire CPRE



The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Hampshire is the local branch of a national charity that works to protect and nurture the local countryside, for communities to live, work and enjoy. Hedgerows have long been a priority issue and CPRE Hampshire have been running their Hedgerow Heroes initiative over the past three years. If you are a hedgelayer or a lover of hedges, there are plenty of opportunities and activities that you could get involved with and benefit from. One element, a trainee hedgelayer scheme is looking for more hedgelayers interested in expanding their business and passing on their craft, as well as applicants to take part. Even though the charity is Hampshire based, they are still striving to connect with individuals across the country.

Initially, the campaign was launched to ask for government commitment to hedgerows through a 40% increase in the extent of hedgerows by 2050. #40by50 was in recognition of the role hedges can play in tackling the climate and biodiversity crisis, as well as the many other benefits. Since then, CPRE Hampshire has continued its work at grassroots level, helping to achieve the planting and restoration of hundreds of miles of hedgerow across the county.

Currently, a series of free hedge-centric online talks are open to anyone with an interest. These include talks from renown hedgerow expert Nigel Adams on *Managing Healthy Hedges* to the impact of hedges on wildlife, with the British Hedgehog Preservation Society. There are also a series of hedgelaying and planting workshops and training days for those who are local or willing to travel, as part of the ongoing initiatives featured in this article. Visit the CPRE Hampshire Eventbrite page for more details and to book your place.

Some of the Hedgerow Heroes work has focused on education, working to share the knowledge of the incredible benefits of well managed hedges. Classroom talks and getting resources into schools has been key and they've seen the benefit. One primary aged schoolgirl went on to nominate Hedgerows Project Officer, Ellie Banks, as their *International Woman of the Year*. That's quite an impact!

Practical projects have seen volunteers and community groups from across the county take part in hedgelaying and planting. Working in specific locations with local farmers and landowners, the *Hedgerow Heroes* initiative has not only introduced people to the concept of hedgerow management, but it has also promoted the benefits and the skills required. This has included a tenant farmer creating miles of new hedgerow along the South Coast path. This project included the involvement of local schools, youth groups and members of the local community.

One critical element has been looking at how the project could be optimised to provide support for healthy hedgerow management into the future. Ellie Banks, CPRE Hampshire Hedgerow Projects Officer, explains further:

"We know from our own experience and through work with partners that whilst the work we are doing with volunteers is great at raising awareness, what is critical to future success is the craft and industry of hedge laying. Whilst, once upon a time, most areas of land would have

employed staff to manage hedges, that is sadly no longer the case. Following the reduction in hedgerows over the last 75 year the number of people practicing the craft has hugely reduced.

One crucial area in which we're working, is in reinvigorating the craft and skills needed, with a trainee hedge layer scheme. This is part of our ongoing Hedgerow Heroes project with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It might be an ancient craft, but there is a need in our modern world. What we would love to see are more women and minority groups becoming involved."

At the beginning of 2023, three trainees were placed for three months, coming away with a completed chainsaw cross cutting and maintenance course, a Bronze Level 1 Hedgelaying assessment run by the South of England Hedge Laying Society and a real passion and drive for the craft. All have gone on to use this experience in the scope of their current roles and as an additional avenue of work. We now have another 3 trainees on this scheme for a 5 month traineeship.

Talking to our apprenticeship trainers, we know the work is there to be had. It's just finding the people to take it on. Through the scheme, CPRE Hampshire are stepping in to make some contribution to making this happen. If you are interested in being a trainee hedgelayer or are keen to expand your business and take on a trainee as a hedge layer yourself, CPRE Hampshire would love to hear from you. The next traineeships will be advertising in August next year, but if you sign up to our quarterly newsletter you will be the first to hear about them. Email ellie.banks@cprehampshire.org.uk to find out more.

The most recent ambitious and far-reaching initiative being undertaken by the charity is *The Hampshire Hedge*. The vision is to connect the two National Parks in Hampshire, the South Downs National Park and the New Forest National Park, with a nature recovery corridor of hedgerow. It will wind its way through the central heart of Hampshire parishes and link woodlands, meadows, local nature reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The idea is to work in areas of Hampshire that are without an AONB, national park or other protective status and therefore more vulnerable to development pressure, with less funding available to protect and enhance habitats. It will be a network of interconnecting hedges and will include a range of hedgerow activities that encompasses local areas and communities. Another critical element will be working closely with parish councils to identify and access communities and landowners to work with.

Most hedgerows involved will be agricultural with the aim of striking a balance between providing a shelter belt and habitat, amenity and wildlife. They are also keen to plant and lay hedgerows in amenity areas such as recreational ground and schools to connect with local communities, raising awareness of the lack of hedgerows and encouraging local ownership of the work being done.

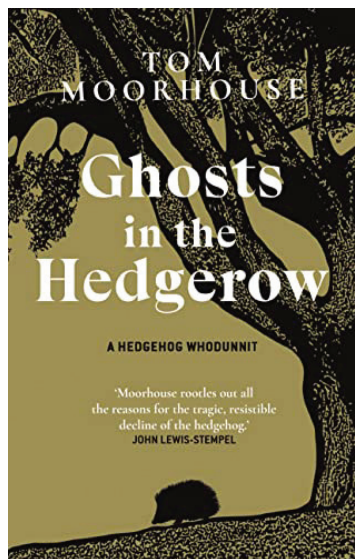
CPRE Hampshire is a charity and with some support from the national CPRE charity, have had to be thorough and creative in raising funds to ensure the future of Hedgerow Heroes. As well as applying for grants, they have worked directly with local partner organisations and landowners to find funding streams and ways of working together. They have also undertaken appeals and match funding such as Big Give and received support from the National Heritage

HAMPSHIRE HEDGEROWS *CONTINUED...*

Lottery Fund, The Linbury Trust, Trees for the South Downs and Hampshire County Council County Farms. A real partnership project it is set to continue for at least the next three years. They're hoping the Hedgerow Heroes legacy, lasts much, much longer.

If you are interested in any of the events or would like to know more about CPRE Hampshire and the Hampshire Hedgerow Heroes initiative, visit www.cprehampshire.org.uk. If you would like to offer a space to a potential trainee, or apply to become one, CPRE Hampshire would love to hear from you. Please email ellie.banks@cprehampshire.org.uk.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HEDGEHOGS? *Richard Lofthouse*



The author, a very-qualified wildlife expert and conservationist, sets out to explore and explain the crash in UK hedgehog populations.

The book is worn lightly with a “whodunnit” theme and footnotes that poke a bit of fun at the wildlife research scene.

One of Tom’s colleagues got nicked for suspected burglary, caught crawling hands and knees down a back passage behind some terraced houses in the middle of the night. He was actually tracking suburban hedgehogs.

Unfortunately there is only so far the jokes can go to lighten a topic, the theme of which is disastrous if you love wildlife.

Fortunately there are some hedgehogs left, so the often-cited figures that get sloppily rehearsed again and again in newspapers, of a 36 million population in 1950, now wiped out by 98% to less than a million, these figures are simply not true because there was no reliable census of hedgehog numbers back in the day. It’s very difficult to track hedge-

hog populations, then and now, says Moorhouse.

But modernity has conspired to destroy a creature widely held to be popular, even if you haven’t read Beatrix Potter.

To summarise, the biggest culprit is intensive agriculture, the second biggest is probably traffic volumes, with the nation’s vehicle count now touching 40 million, a doubling since 1990.

Then there is a vast array of other negatives such as gardeners using slug pellets and robotic lawn mowers, the majority of which will ride up and over a hedgehog slicing it to bits (think what AI will bring in all its cleverness?). That last point was proved in a huge Scandinavian study where real (dead) hedgehogs were used.

But let’s get to the point: the clue’s in the name and the pig that lives in hedges (HEDGE-HOG) has dramatically fewer hedges these days, as we all know the result of zillions being grubbed

up in the post-war decades in the name of farm efficiency.

While this forms a core habitat loss for hedgehogs, it appears to be worse than that. Merely putting the hedges back, even the nicely laid ones, is not enough if the adjacent fields have been heavily sprayed with pesticides, destroying the invertebrate food base that hedgehogs rely on.

This was proven when one of the author’s colleagues deposited a collection of live hedgehogs on an Oxfordshire farm, hoping that they would lead researchers to other hedgehogs, to establish where they were living. (1) there were no ‘others’ (2) the deposited hedgehogs all leg-

ged it to the nearest village and assorted gardens, with a typical travelling range of up to 2kms. One of them then ate a slug pellet and got poisoned. Well done us. What they want is warmth and food, and they no longer get it on a modern farm unless nesting happily in a dung heap, only to get inadvertently wiped out the day it is carted away (this happens all the time – it is referred to as a ‘dire accidental outcome’).

Of the hedges left, gappy-at-the-base, flailed disasters are not suitable habitats and offer no cover from foxes and badgers, the latter a major source of predation.

‘Tidiness’ is the enemy of profuse wildlife and biodiversity so there is pause for thought there on the way we at the NHLS judge competitions, the very point being technical perfection.

The broader point and purpose of a laid hedge is to set up a thoroughly dense future living structure and linear copse/habitat, and wider margins at the base with room for a bit of sprawl is good not bad.

We’ve somehow got to achieve food security without destroying the biodiversity that is ultimately the basis for it, once you remove technology and inputs.

I wonder if this broader purpose of British hedges is in danger of being lost – or as discussed elsewhere in this newsletter (Hampshire, CPRE) it is actually being re-discovered by numerous regional initiatives to re-seed and re-evaluate the brilliant wildlife role of hedges in the British countryside.

Our recent Patron, HRH The prince of Wales, His Majesty The King, has led the way in this regard, the 2023 Patron’s Event taking place on an organic farm with purposely restored hedges interspersed with trees.

Ghosts in the Hedgerow by Tom Moorhouse (Penguin/Doubleday, 2023)



2023 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

THE 44TH CHAMPIONSHIPSATURDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2023

STANFORD HALL, LUTTERWORTH, LEICS.

BY KIND PERMISSION OF NICK & LUCY FOTHERGILL



SUPREME CHAMPION

PETE GIBSON – LANCASHIRE & WESTMORLAND OPEN



RESERVE SUPREME CHAMPION

JONATHAN STAFFORD – DERBY OPEN CLASS



FROM THE CHIEF STEWARD

Richard Hooker

It's been a strange old hedgelaying season so far. I think we all agree that climate change has a hand in the unprecedented weather conditions that we are becoming used to. That being said, it would appear that there has been a recent change of those in office on the "hedgelaying weather-god" committee. Those who arranged monsoon conditions at Chew Valley Lakes and then Charles Bowerman's place at Pewsey have obviously been dispensed with (or more likely promoted). Yes, there have been a few damp days for competitions and courses this season, but most appear to have been spared the worst, and this year's National Championship was no exception – the forecast rain starting just as the final hooter sounded.

The team setting up on the Friday had almost perfect weather for the job. The site was wet and marked up a little as we drove around, but the sun shone from time to time and allowed us to work unhampered. Anyone who has laid out a hedgelaying competition of any size, will know that what the competitors see neatly laid out in front of them on the morning, bears little resemblance to the starting point the previous day. This Championship is a prime example and the perennial task of fitting the various sized classes into suitable hedges taxed all involved. Thanks to everyone who assisted, particularly Assistant Chief Steward Derek McNamara, Chris Stanton and Russell Woodham without whom we may not have succeeded.

The competition itself went with no major hitches but the absence of Derek on the day was a blow. Obviously Montezuma hadn't got the memo about being nice to hedgelayers and inflicted his "revenge" on Derek keeping him at the hotel, happily recovering in time for the journey home.

There were a few minor organisational issues which we will try to sort out before 2024. Among them the number of stakes and binders supplied and trying to reduce the time taken for the "cross-class" judging, such as for Supreme Champion.

Many congratulations to all who took part and thanks for making our day as trouble-free as it was. Finally, I'd like to thank Mandy Woodham, whose control of the scoring and marshalling of the trophies and presentations is a staggering effort. I had no idea of the work involved until I saw it first hand.

As I write this we are in the middle of a "yellow warning" downpour and in two days time I have a hedgelaying course to run. The forecast is for a sunny, crisp and cold day. Long may the current crop of hedgelaying deities remain in post.

The 44th National Competition, 2023
Was held near Lutterworth at Stanford Hall
A good flat site, quick hedges nice and even
Not too much of a challenge for all;
The weather fine for most of the day
Brought people from far and wide
To see one hundred and eleven hedgcutters
Cut in their style, their plot, with pride;

So good to see many old friends
Reminiscing of years past,
All hedges finished, looking a treat
A hard job for Judges, but at last;
The shining Trophies handed out
To the winners in every class, with a cheer
Then the Supreme Champion announced -
Lancs and Westmorland's Peter Gibson this year!

There was the huge National Raffle too
And various stalls to see along the way,
A wonderful occasion, thanks to all who worked hard
Your dedication made it a very special day.

Chris Key



**A FEW OF THE PHOTOS
TAKEN ON THE DAY BY
TIM RUSS.**



All photographs courtesy of Tim Russ. Tim's Flickr pages contain albums of the various NHLS events he has photographed including the 2023 National Championship. It is totally free to access and open to all. Simply search for "Tim Russ Flickr" and go to the "Albums" page.

HEDGELAYING CLASS RESULTS

Midland Open

- 1st Malcolm Johnson
- 2nd Steve Budding
- 3rd David Walker
- 4th Clive Matthew

Midland Intermediate

- 1st Allen Sharp
- 2nd Mark Palmer
- 3rd Russell Critchley

Lancs & Westmorland Open

- 1st Pete Gibson
- 2nd Andrew Kirkwood
- 3rd Craig Procter

South of England Open

- 1st Simon Damant
- 2nd Nigel Adams
- 3rd David Dunk
- 4th Dean Dyer

Cheshire Open

- 1st Matthew Teece
- 2nd Heather Swift
- 3rd Paul Loughnane
- 4th Peter Robinson

North Somerset Open

- 1st Colin Clutterbuck
- 2nd Paul Gulliford
- 3rd Alex Bown
- 4th Chris Chivers

Welsh Open

- 1st Gwyn Davies
- 2nd Neville Powell
- 3rd Mark Pritchard
- 4th David Pritchard

Derby Open

- 1st Jonathan Stafford
- 2nd David Etherington
- 3rd John Dunbar

Yorkshire Open

- 1st Gary Moore
- 2nd Andrew Holding
- 3rd Jasper Prachek

South of England Intermediate

- 1st Marcus Broome
- 2nd Jeff Critchley
- 3rd Iain White

South of England Veteran

- 1st Clive Gilligan
- 2nd Mark Moore
- 3rd Eric Wilkinson

Devon Open

- 1st Steve McCulloch
- 2nd Andrew Burrough
- 3rd Martin Turner
- 4th Dan Strawbridge

Dorset Open

- 1st Tim Frampton
- 2nd Russell Woodham

OTHER AWARDS

- Overall Best Veteran *Nigel Adams (S. England Open)*
- Best Staking & Binding – Midland Style *Malcolm Johnson (Midland Open)*
- Best Lady Competitor..... *Tina Bath (N Somerset Open)*
- Best Staked Length -Derby Style..... *Jonathan Stafford*
- Best Competitor Aged Under 27 *David Pritchard (Welsh Open)*
- Best Work on a Poor Length..... *Chris Chivers (N Somerset Open)*
- Best Work Using Hand Tools Only..... *Pete Gibson (L&W Open)*
- Oldest Competitor *Malcolm Dowling (Dorset)*
- Youngest Competitor..... *Aidan Handley (L & W Open)*
- Youngest Midland Cutter *Russell Critchley*
- Best Intermediate Cutter..... *Allen Sharp (Midland Int.)*



(L-R) Tim Frampton, Colin Clutterbuck, Steve McCulloch, Gwyn Davies, Pete Gibson, Gary Moore, Clive Gilligan, Simon Damant, Marcus Broome, Allen Sharp, Matthew Teece, Malcolm Johnson

2022 CHAMPIONSHIP REGROWTH AWARDS

- Best Midland Regrowth *Graham Teece (Midland Open)*
- Best Regrowth – Welsh *Chris Davies*
- Best Summer Hedge – Lancs. & Westmorland *Pete Gibson*
- Best Regrowth – South of England *Nigel Adams (S. England Open)*
- Best Regrowth – South of England Veteran..... *Lex Roeleveld*
- Best Regrowth – Devon *Chris Stanton*
- Best Regrowth – North Somerset..... *Ben Pritchard (N. Somerset Int.)*
- Best Regrowth – Dorset *Pete Etheridge*
- Best Regrowth – Cheshire *Matthew Teece*
- Best Regrowth Overall..... *Chris Davies***

CHAMPIONSHIP RAFFLE & DRAW

Congratulations to **Megan Gimber** who won first prize of £100.

Prizes, not collected at the event are being distributed. Any queries should be sent to: treasurer@hedgelaying.org.uk

A full list of all **50 Prize winners** is shown below.

Our mega annual raffle raised an incredible £2,251.40 to support the costs of staging the National Championship Event. This would not be possible without the great generosity from everyone; the donations of prizes, the buying of tickets and of course all that name writing and folding! A special ‘thank you’ to all the team who helped on the day. The weather was exceptionally kind again this year and we all enjoyed chatting and meeting up with you.

Best wishes for 2024.

Jenny Crow – Raffle Organiser

1 st	£100 Cash	Megan Gimber	27 th	Bottle of White Wine	Terry Coombe
2 nd	Food Hamper	Chris Smith	28 th	Cap	Derek Smith
3 rd	Pamper Hamper	Rosemary Heard	29 th	Desk Organiser	Chris Key
4 th	Net of Sprouts	James Archer	30 th	Biscuits	Sophie Stanton
5 th	Wooden Coat Rack	G D Truran	31 st	Body Spray	Tom Stawton
6 th	Chopping Board	Steer	32 nd	Soaps	Mark Palmer
7 th	Book	Jackie Andrews	33 rd	Tub of Chocolates	Oswald Hoskyns
8 th	Sack of Potatoes	Carwen Jones	34 th	Biscuits	Jenny Holmes
9 th	Bottle of Whisky	Iain Feller	35 th	Biscuits	Taffy
10 th	Bottle of Champagne	KKL Logging	36 th	Chocolates	Oswald Hoskyns
11 th	Bottle of Prosecco	J Hallam	37 th	Chocolates	Emma Southon
12 th	Bottle of Prosecco	Jenny Holmes	38 th	Chocolates	I Dewar
13 th	Bottle of Moscatel Wine	King	39 th	Chocolates	John Barber
14 th	Bottle of Baileys	Iain Feller	40 th	Oven Gloves	Taylor
15 th	Bottle of Port	Mark Palmer	41 st	Book	H Brown
16 th	Bottle of Pimms	Peter Gibson	42 nd	Beer	Charlotte c/o Alex Hayton
17 th	Bottle of Blueberry Gin	Paul Martin	43 rd	Stool	Dave Shepherd
18 th	Bottle of Rose Wine	Keith Edwards	44 th	Bark Pot and Honey	James Archer
19 th	Bottle of Malibu	Terry Coombe	45 th	Glasses	Vivi Payne
20 th	Bottle of Rose Wine	Josie Portas	46 th	Glasses	Adam c/o Steve
21 st	Bottle of White Wine	Guy Robinson	47 th	Bath Bombs	K Pilgrim
22 nd	Bottle of White Wine	Craig Proctor	48 th	Advent Calendar	DWS
23 rd	Bottle of Dutch Liqueur	Dave Shepherd	49 th	Air Freshener Diffuser	Rob Graham
24 th	Bottle of Red Wine	Ian Ford	50 th	Aspen	A Plumley
25 th	Bottle of Red Wine	Hugh Fitzwilliams			
26 th	Bottle of White Wine	Clive Heard			



**THE PATRON'S EVENT
HIGHGROVE ESTATE
9TH DECEMBER 2023**

The 2023 NHLS Patron's Event took place on Saturday 9th December and was BRILLIANT.

This event does not just happen! Months before plans begin to form. Visits to the potential hedge by Richard Hooker, our Chief Steward and Roger Parris NHLS "Chief Steward Emeritus", start the process. The location found, the diary of His Majesty is scrutinised for a suitable time and date.

What length is the hedge? How many cutters? Pairs or single? Styles acceptable to His Majesty? Hand tools or chainsaws? When all has been decided the week of the event draws near. Teams of dedicated National Hedgelaying Society members volunteer their time and help to bring the day together.

On Friday morning, as mist lifted, the sun came through and the frost began to melt. Those from up North had spent a challenging journey down and those from the South and West a busy Thursday fight up motorways. 4 x 4's began to appear along an extremely muddy, wet lane and hedgelayers appeared through the mist. Friday was spent preparing the hedge for what was coming! Initially, a strange hedge that only young shrubs had thrown out metres each of side suckers, small plants and lots of trip hazards. All was cleared together with determined briars and brambles.

The wet and windy Thursday night added to the very soggy location. Undeterred the cutters arrived for their early briefing. The first few hours were wet, windy and challenging. Gradually, the weather improved and the hedge started coming down.



Chief Forester Geraint Richards, NHLS Chair Joe Craig and HM The King at the finished Midland hedge



The Welsh section, ably overseen by Hefin Davies and Richard Lewis



Keith Perry

Some Chippenham Young Farmers Meet His Majesty (L-R) Reg Hendy, Walter Perry, Rob Gooding and Fred Perry



The whispers started around 1.30pm and promptly at 1.45pm the King's Land Rover appeared down the muddy lane.

His Majesty, wearing shiny brown shoes told us he disliked Wellington boots! Starting from the top he walked down to meet every single cutter. Everyone spoken to will realise the huge privilege they shared and perhaps could sense how passionate the King is about hedge laying. His security team knew that the next day, would be his turn to lay hedges at Highgrove.

Thanks must be given to everyone who gave their time and help together with all of those cutters that transformed an "odd" hedge into another work of art. It was suggested to the King that this was the best gift the National Hedgelaying Society could offer and absolutely agreed that it was.

Claire Maymon

MEMORIES OF A WET DAY THAT GRADUALLY IMPROVED...



The picture on the right is a rare one of the photographer Tim Russ himself (centre), flanked by "Chief Steward Emeritus" Roger Parris (left) and current Chief Steward Richard Hooker
Many thanks to Tim for all he does for the Society

PATRON'S "BEST HEDGES"



Best Midland Hedge – Dave Ellis



Best South of England Hedge – John Handley



Best Welsh Border Hedge – Malcolm Edwards



The finished hedge

The Patron's event is not a competition as such, certificates are awarded for the "best laid hedge" in each style. Everyone taking part also gets a commemorative certificate – thanks to Mandy Woodham for the work involved in providing those.

All photographs courtesy of Tim Russ Event Photography unless otherwise credited

YORKSHIRE ANNUAL COMPETITION



This years Yorkshire Hedgelaying Association annual competition was again a great success.

Ten days before the competition a good section of hedge was under water due to heavy rainfall, so for a while it was touch and go, but the weather behaved and the day itself was splendid.

Again with another record turnout of thirty one cutters, including fourteen novices, many of whom were first time

competitors, it is proving to be an up and coming competition.

With support and guidance from Jasper Prachek and David Boyson, the overall standard was superb. We couldn't do it without you, so many thanks to both of you.

This year's event was mostly funded by the Yorkshire Agricultural Society, thank you. Also thanks for the generous sponsorship from John Dale, David Lyle and others. Also, many thanks to John Tyson



with the bacon for the ten o'clock sandwiches. Ripon Farm Services again helped with the use of their exhibition unit for refreshments and an A.T.V. for ferrying folk and kit over soft ground.

The food cooked by Lisa was fantastic and thanks again to Sheila for the apple pies, Simon for refreshments, Stuart for driving and photography, Sam and Dean for the risk assessment, Mike for health and safety talk, Jay-see for photos, Guy for social

media and everyone else who helped.

Tony Leonard sadly had to cancel due to injury — get well soon Tony.

First place in the Novice class with plot thirty was first time competition cutter Charlie Britton. Steven Britton was placed first in the Intermediate class with plot eleven. Incidentally Steven got placed first in the Novice class last year so climbing the ranks fast, look out Open class!



This year's Open class champion was Peter Gibson (left) with plot eight. The rest of the Open class cutters will have to up their game now recently crowned NHLS Supreme Champion Peter has developed a taste for the Yorkshire style.

The day was finished off with judges critique and a buffet at the Kings Head in nearby Masham market square.

Many thanks to all who attended and everyone who helped to made the day possible, especially to the welcoming hosts the Sampson Family.

With next years National competition announced to be in Yorkshire we look forward to more hedging.

Happy cutting!

Charlie Calvert



DRST HEDGING COMPETITION 2023

The Devon Rural Skills Trust (DRST) held its Annual Hedgelaying Competition at Cornworthy near Totnes on 7th October by kind permission of Mike and Yolanda Pearey.

In comparison with the 2015 contest, which was held at the same farm in gale force winds and heavy rain, this year's event enjoyed perfect conditions with day long sunshine attracting a steady stream of interested spectators.



Nick Dawe's formidable task in the Intermediate/Veteran class

The double comb hedge on a traditional Devon bank was last laid nine years ago so was ideal for a hand tools only competition – with chainsaw stewards available if required.

Species included mainly hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn with a profusion of sloes, rosehips and haws adding colour to the scene. A good number of small, well rooted standard trees were retained on top of the bank as is the current fashion.

Preparation day the previous week had seen stock fencing removed and competitors' sections pegged out in readiness for the big day. Hillside Farm is tucked away down narrow winding lanes along the River Dart estuary but competitors were assembled and ready for the 09:30 klaxon horn to sound.

Those taking part came from all over the South West with the Blackdown Hills Hedge Association well represented as usual. Current NHLS Supreme Champion Colin Clutterbuck, who regularly competes was not available this year and a couple of late withdrawals reduced to five the number of competitors in the Open Class but judge Peter Yeates was called upon to make difficult decisions on some excellent work. The final result: 1st Steve McCulloch, 2nd Martin Turner and 3rd Richard Hooker.



The finished Intermediate/Veteran class hedge

More good work was evident too from the eight entrants in the Intermediate/Veteran Class Adrian Mills was a clear winner with George Pidgeon second and Robin Toogood third. Ian Conna-beer was the Class judge.

It was good to see more entries in the Novice Class this year with nine cutters in the field. Richard Rowe from Cornwall just beat DRST trainee Tim Wills for first place with Will Feay from

Bristol one point behind in third place. Judge Bruce Baker took a long time to separate competitors with a mere eight points covering the whole field.

Izzy Ponsford won the Ladies Cup, Nick Dawe the Jack Connabeer Cup for the highest placed non prize-winning DRST member and Jordan Harris the cup for the Best Regrowth on last year's competition hedge at Hillhead Farm. Mark Bowden from North Devon was awarded the certificate for best work on a poor section.

Our regulars Jan and Andrea, with cakes from Helen, once again fed and watered competitors and spectators while they waited for the results and presentations.

A very enjoyable and worthwhile day with a chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

Don Gaskins



The Open class hedge

SOMERSET HEDGE GROUP COMPETITION

Thank you to our competitors who took part in the Somerset Hedge Group Hedgelaying Competition on Saturday 25th November. We certainly chose the right weekend!



RESULTS OPEN CLASS

- 1st Tim Frampton
- 2nd Chris Chivers
- 3rd Colin Risdon

NOVICE PAIRS

- 1st Liza & Guy Dibble
- 2nd Mike Tull & Gareth Ford
- 3rd Steve Loud & Piran Treen

NOVICE

- 1st Jack Richards
- 2nd Rich Booth
- 3rd Simon Watts

ALL PLEACHERS GREAT AND SMALL

Richard Lofthouse



Claire Maymon and family hosted a brilliantly executed training day for the Midland style on Saturday November 25th, the hedge belonging to Mr and Mrs Lawton-Smith of Willow Farm, Buckland, Gloucs.

The day dawned cold and icy and by the time we left off in the early-mid afternoon, the shadowy dells of the fields were still frosty. But being a dry sort of cold, we got hot. That was too bad because you couldn't afford to take off arm protection due to the fierce brambles, much as encountered a fortnight later at the Patron's Day. The brambles, it's fair to say, did too well for themselves in 2023.

Mike Hartnell among other experienced hands were on hand to help various novices and while the pathway was technically closed there were various locals who came to observe and discuss what was going on – mostly with great

interest and encouragement despite the large quantity of brash, which can so often lead to a misunderstanding.

The hedge was interspersed with some good standards and these 12-15 year old trees were left in place, while the field maple and other thicker stems were pleached.

I was reminded that in a mixed hedge like this you can get much younger, thinner stems of blackthorn or hawthorn that have happily self-seeded since the original seeding. Pleaching them requires care but it is also delicious easy, often a single bill hook stroke, and one can imagine these small pleachers doing very well into the future as regrowth. Hence my headline which came to mind as I was working...



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OBITUARY - TOM EVANS MBE FRAGS



Tom Evans MBE FRAGS of Beulah died on 13th December 2023 aged 80.

A LEGEND in his own lifetime. A master of all he did. A family man, farmer, sheepman, hedgelay, shearing contractor, Judge of hedgelaying and shearing, chorister, worldwide commentator, after dinner speaker, author of his life story: "A Life in Farming".

A great GENTLEMAN

His knowledge always freely given.

So many stories, as told to me by Tom.

Tom had taken on The Pont Rhulen 1962-63:

"It had started to snow on Boxing Day, terrible snow. A councilman rang me: 'Tom, are you good with a shovel, I've a bit of work for you.' I had to work until mid-March clearing SNOW!"

Tom was NHLS Supreme Champion at Ledbury in 1986 and runner up in 2007 to Malcolm Johnson at Wantage. He was Welsh Champion many times.

A huge funeral was held at Beulah for a great Gentleman, attended by many hundreds.

ROBIN DALE



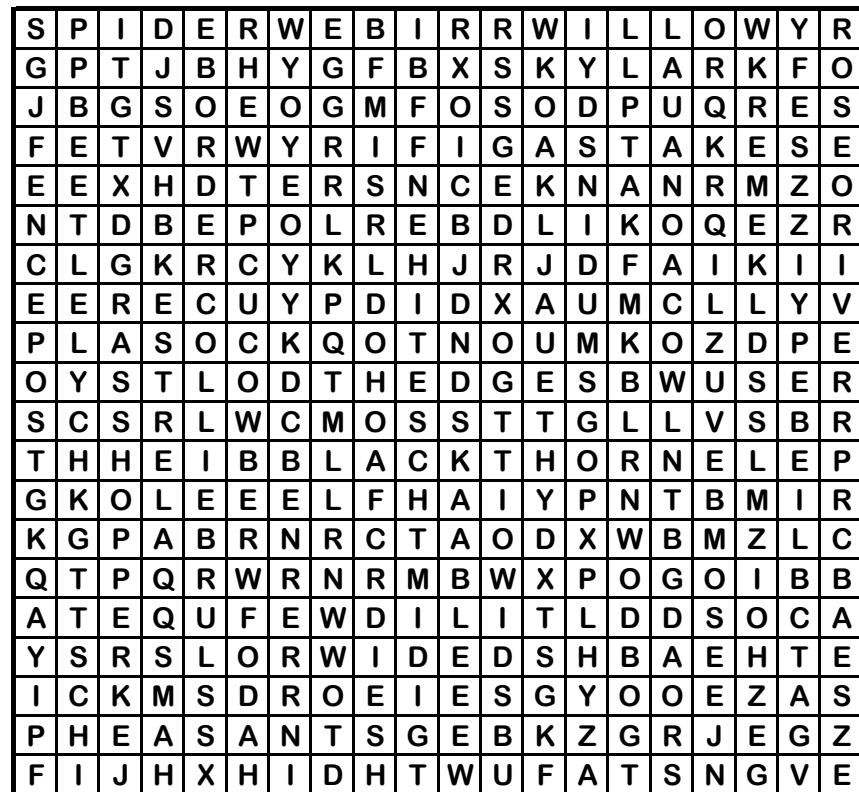
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THE FIRST COMPLETE WORD SEARCH TO BE MAILED TO THE EDITOR AT [NEWSLETTER@HEDGELAYING.ORG.UK](mailto:newsletter@hedgelaying.org.uk) WINS A BOTTLE OF JOHNNY WALKER RED LABEL SCOTCH.

YOU CAN PHOTOGRAPH YOUR ENTRY AND SEND AS AN EMAIL TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MAKE SURE YOU INCLUDE YOUR FULL NAME, ADDRESS AND POST CODE.

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