



NATIONAL HEDGELAYING SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Preserving the past, protecting the future

WINTER 2020/SPRING 2021

CONTENTS

NHLS BUSINESS	2
SECRETARY'S NOTES	2
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	3
THE HERITAGE CRAFT ASSOCIATION AWARDS	4
ACCREDITATION SCHEME	6
LETTERS & COMMENTS	7
ARTICLES	13
THE OXFORD "REAL FARMING" CONFERENCE	13
WYMESWOLD HEDGEROWS	14
PLASTIC TREE GUARDS	16
CLOSE THE GAP	20
THE GREAT BRITISH HEDGEROW SURVEY	22
NHLS MERCHANDISE	25
DIVERSIONS	26
PRIZE CROSSWORD	26
NHLS AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS	28

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our winter 2020 newsletter. Well what a year; roll on 2021 and hoping for things to return to normal – whatever that is. Thank you all who sent compliments of the summer newsletter. Apologies for the spelling mistake (“which one” you ask) And those who sent constructive criticism – as one well educated person said “Noah was an amateur and the Titanic was built by professionals”.

David Whitaker

The front cover shows the viaduct at Garsdale Head on the Settle to Carlisle Railway.

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

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

By the time you read this we will be approaching the end of another hedgelaying season. Just like last year it seems to have never stopped raining – a challenge that all hedgelayers seem to meet with their usual sanguine nature and get on with the job, but what we would all give for a long dry cold spell of weather. Everything seems better when the sun is shining instead of the grey dreary days when it barely seems to get light all day.

The last twelve months have been extremely challenging to all of us: going into lockdown, coming out and going back in again. Hopefully there is now a light shining at the end of the tunnel and things will return to an air of normality. Through all these trials and tribulations things have to carry on and this is so with the National Hedgelaying Society. The trustees have worked hard to maintain the fabric of the Society throughout the last year and we can all look forward to a brighter future.

A tremendous amount of time and effort has been put into designing the new accreditation scheme which is now almost complete. We will shortly be looking to train the assessors for this. The new scheme will be far more robust in the promotion, training and assessment of hedgelayers to ensure the skills and, more especially, the standards of workmanship are carried on into the future. I would like to thank the steering group for the amount of time and effort they have put into this project.

The summer season is usually a time for the Society to attend various shows and events around the country. As with everything else this depends on a situation out of our control but the prospects seem quite bright at the time of writing. Some early events we would have attended have already been cancelled, some have moved their dates, and some are still undecided. I am sure we are all looking forward to getting out and about at those that do take place and hopefully will meet many of you in the season.

I was saddened recently to hear of the passing of long time member Gordon Morris. Gordon was a keen and enthusiastic supporter of the NHLS and competed many times at the National Championship. He will be sadly missed.

With the coming easing of lockdown restrictions, as you will see elsewhere in the newsletter, a date has been set for the Annual General Meeting – 3rd July. This is your opportunity to come and express your opinions. It would be nice to see a good turnout of members giving us all a chance to renew contact with friends that we haven't had chance to meet in the last twelve months. With this in mind we are having an informal gathering the previous evening at the Premier Inn at Bromsgrove. If you wish to join us please make your own booking with the hotel. I am sure we are all keen to finally be able to get back together and take the NHLS forward.



David Smith

SECRETARY'S NOTES

At the time of the postponed National Championship I wrote to all trophy holders asking you to reply and confirm that you are prepared to keep hold of the trophy for another year, and get them engraved

Only 6 people out of the 32 that I wrote to have replied!

On a more positive note, it was a real pleasure to be involved in nominating John Savings as Volunteer of the Year for the Heritage Crafts Awards

John Savings is the best!

He puts all his effort into whatever he does, hedgelaying, gardening, bee keeping, cooking and even dancing. John is always found to be doing something, but he excels at talking to people and promoting and encouraging others to take part in traditional skills especially hedgelaying. John lays in the South of England style but can put his hand to any style showing young and old how to make a perfect hedge, he even taught the future king of England, Prince Charles how to lay hedges.

He can be seen at a large number of country shows and events around the country with his bonsai hedge trailer, that he designed and made himself, which is always the star of the show on the Hedgelaying stand, displaying eight different styles of hedges from around the country with gates and Styles all in miniature. We have not seen John stuck with an answer to even the more difficult question. He will help in any way he can, always there when needed, unassuming, he is a real gentleman and a pleasure to be with.

CALL FOR JUDGES

The NHLS would like to compile a list of people who are willing to be judges for hedgelaying competitions. We are constantly being asked for help in finding someone to judge at various venues for local groups' competitions around the country. If we have a list then we can point people in the right direction for available judges in their area. The list will also help when finding judges for all the different styles at the National Championship.

If you or someone you know would like to be included on the list please contact me.

...AND STEWARDS

It seems a long time ago that we all had a good but wet get-together at Pewsey so I am sure that we are all looking forward to the rearranged National Championship in Hampshire.

Scheduled for the 23rd October it will need a number of willing helpers, not only to judge but also people to steward the individual classes for the different styles.

If you think you would like to help with stewarding at the event please let me know so your name can be added to the list.

David Whitaker

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**CUTNALL GREEN & DISTRICT MEMORIAL HALL
ADDIS LANE, CUTNALL GREEN, DROITWICH.**

WORCS. WR9 ONE

ON SATURDAY 3RD JULY 2021 10:00AM



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 member of the NHLS
- Over 18
- Resident in the UK
- Must not have had any convictions for Bankruptcy or other financial irregularities.

Anyone elected will be required to sign a declaration to this effect.

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 paid up members of the NHLS, and must have agreed to stand for election and must have a proposer and seconder.

Nominations for Committee.

As last year 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 a secret ballot will be held. Committee members do not require proposers and seconders 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:

Mr.D.Whitaker, 2 Armitage Way, Galgate, Lancaster LA2 0BN

By Tuesday 1st June 2021

THE HERITAGE CRAFT ASSOCIATION AWARDS



John and his Bonsai Hedgelaying Display

As a member, of The Heritage Crafts Association, our Chairman nominated John Savings for an award. We searched high and low for pictures of just John and his trailer – quite a challenge in itself and then John’s name and all the reasons why he should be considered were put to the Heritage Crafts Association.

Before the menace of Covid, a truly fancy ceremony was planned with an overnight stay in London to which John had been invited. As it turned out, on a damp old Wednesday evening in early October, John, Hefin Davies, Robin Dale, myself and friends all got together in a barn in Broadway. With socially distanced precautions, we were able to beam the ceremony to a screen that John sat in front of. Not quite the black tie, London event promised but a great build up all the same. Awards were given to: endangered crafts – the winners were Sheffield scissor makers, tutor of the year went to shoe makers. Trainees of the year were recognised along with “Made in Britain” Awards. There were four nominations for the volunteer of the year.

After a great build up with details of each, the winner was announced... it was John!

A financial prize together with recognition for the events that John has attended around the country with his fantastic bonsai display promoting hedgelaying and the National Hedgelaying Society was rewarded.

I am sure all will agree that it is an award well deserved.

Claire Maymon

“Thank You John” by Chris Key

Through the year, a Committee Member
Has been going from Show to Show
Sixteen in all, with a tremendous display
A member, I’m sure you all know –
Yes, it’s John Savings, a lovely man
Who, for the Society works hard –his aim
To promote the Art of Hedgelaying
At many shows, like The Royal, Blenheim
and the “Game”

His stand is really smart and outstanding
With the small hedges of every style
Catching the eye of the passer-by
They stop and talk for a while,
There’s hedge plants and information to see,
Videos and books for sale,
Hedgelayers gather and stop for a chat
Laughter as they share a “hedging tale”!
So a very special thank you, John
For all the hard work you do,
Your loyalty and dedication, to hedgelaying
And the Society is a real credit to you



A NOTE FROM JOHN

My thanks to the members and the trustees for proposing me for the Marsh Heritage Craft Awards. It was not only a surprise but a great privilege to be considered.

Unfortunately due to the Covid restrictions we were unable to travel to London for the presentation but via a zoom meeting, this enabled me to participate in the event.

The competition was of a very high standard with many outstanding contributions therefore when the winner of my category, The Heritage Craft Awards “Volunteer of the Year” award, was announced I was speechless. It was such a great honour to be chosen not only for myself, but to highlight the sterling work that the National Hedgelaying Society continues to do.

The very best wishes to you all.

John Savings

ACCREDITATION SCHEME

Introduction

The National Hedgelaying Society will be offering a new nationally recognised accreditation scheme which will help to demonstrate the skill level and capability of individual hedgers who hold one of the accreditation levels. Accreditation is based on the achievement of Training and Assessment standards registered with Lantra Awards.

Background

The demand for accrediting the craft of hedgelaying is increasing. A traditionally laid and sensitively managed hedge allows farming and conservation interests to meet; for the farmer a natural barrier to confine and shelter stock is erected, whilst for the conservationist, a wild-life habitat is created. Government commitment to hedgerow protection was included in the 1990 Environment White Paper and appropriate legislation is included in the Environment Bill. Hedgerow protection, and encouragement for new hedge planting and management through Environmental and Countryside Stewardship Schemes has led to an increased call for hedgelaying and traditional craft skills. The demand for hedgelaying craft is no longer confined to agriculture; private estates, parks and other public areas, nature reserves, schools and gardens are increasingly employing this traditional skill.

The National Hedgelaying Society is registered with Lantra as a customised provider and offers training and assessment in hedgerow management. A series of progressive practical assessments which lead to three-tier accreditation awards in hedgelaying. The scheme is designed to ensure that hedgelayers achieve the highest standards of craftsmanship.

Accreditation assessments will be available at the following levels:

Bronze: Competent Standard

Sliver: Proficient Standard

Gold: Advanced Standard

Anyone will be able to apply for accreditation – please contact the NHLS secretary to register your interest in the new scheme.

The steering group is still meeting to finalise details, but full information will be available on the NHLS website and in the next newsletter.



LES DICKINSON

As some of you know, I am a collector of useless information. Well here is a true story.

**The Quorn Hunt
HEDGE CUTTING COMPETITION**

to be held at
UPPER BROUGHTON, MELTON MOWBRAY

By kind permission of
R. CHAPLIN Esq. and Messrs. H. S. & W. H. ROBINSON
on THURSDAY, 9th NOVEMBER, 1972
Commence Cutting at 9.30 a.m.

All Competitors to Cut, Lay, Stake and Bind 11 Yards of Hedge in 4½ hours. Stakes and Binders provided.

Competitors leaving in dead wood or exceeding the time allowed will be penalised and may be disqualified, this is at the absolute discretion of the judges.

VALUABLE PRIZES OFFERED IN FIVE CLASSES

as follows:—

CLASS 1 UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE (OPEN)
CLASS 2 25—35 (OPEN)
CLASS 3 25 YEARS AND OVER (OPEN)
(Confined to Competitors who have not previously won a First or Second prize in this competition)

CLASS 4 OVER 35 (OPEN)
CLASS 5 CHAMPION CLASS, Open to All Comers.
SIR NICHOLAS NUTTALL CHALLENGE CUP.
Winner must reside in the Quorn Hunt.

Any competitor having previously won 2 first prizes in Classes 2, 3, 4, or 5 MUST compete in the Championship Class.

Entries Close October 28th, 1972 All Entries Free
T. P. Wilkinson (Hon. Sec.), 95 Wymeswold Road, Hoton,
Nr. Loughborough Tel. Wymeswold 880341 & 880208

Competitors will receive £2 and Free Luncheon
Please help by sending Entries as early as possible.
The Committee reserve the right to amalgamate any classes

I was at the Quorn Hedge Cutting Competition on 9th November 1972 – see the poster on the left.

11 yards of hedge to be laid, staked and bound, cutting money £2. Some competitors arrived on bikes and one came on the bus.

This story is about Les Dickinson of Rutland. On the preceding Wednesday (1st November) Les had competed at the Cottesmore Hedge Laying Match at Launde, Tilton on the Hill, but got disqualified for putting in a bit of deadwood and Bert Clark won.

The next day Les departed on a holiday in America won as a prize for being a top regional salesman for the Hoover washing machine company. Before he left, he submitted an entry for the Quorn competition (left). Les landed back from America at 11pm on the 8th of November and was back home in bed at 3am on the 9th. Getting up at 7am, he said “I will have to go or it may be said I am a bad

sport”. Off he went with his 6lb axe, bill hook, and slash hook but in the clothes that he had landed in – a pair of grey thin trousers and dinky shoes – totally unsuitable for hedgelaying let alone at the prestigious Quorn competition.

The result? Out of 12 competitors: 1st Les Dickinson: 100 out of 100 points, 2nd Bert Clark 98/100, 3rd John Parker 97/100, 4th J Alton 96/100, and 5th Roy Hawkins 95/100.

A lunch and the prize giving was back at the local Village Hall, with lovely mushroom soup, homemade bread, pork pies, ham and beef rolls, pickles, cheese and biscuits tea, coffee and beer – it was packed as usual. The Lord Lieutenant of Leicester Colonel Martin OBE, JP of Woodhouse Eves was there with hunt subscribers and hunt staff. Always a big day in the local calendar it was always held on Thursday, a non-hunting day and one when the court did not sit. And the washing machine salesman had won!

PS I got Les’s permission to write this piece. Les is a great character and founder of Rutland Electric Fencing. In the spring when I spoke to him he had just got out of hospital after covid but felt hospital was not the place to be so he came home to be well cared for by his dear wife Goni.

Robin Dale

JOE CRAIG

Both Roger Parris and Joe have been given the honour of becoming life members of the NHLs.

After taking part in local competitions since the age of 14 (over 64 years ago!) Joe entered his first National Championship in 1990 – being awarded second place in the Lancs and Westmorland class. He followed this up a year later by winning the class. Joe continued to compete throughout the 1990s and early 2000s winning several more cards.

Joe judged the Lancs and Westmorland class several times and in 2011 was asked to judge the supreme champion at Arlingham on the banks of the river Severn.

Joe became a committee member in the early 2000s and used to leave home at 5:30am to attend meetings at Toddington arriving back home turned 8:30pm. He became vice chairman in 2013 and trustee and Assistant Chief Steward working alongside Roger Parris and the rest of the great team that set up the National Championship – positions he still holds. He has helped Roger set up and run the Patron’s Invitation event with the emphasis being to encourage young people in the art of hedgelaying.

Joe still takes an active role in training, whether the aspiring cutters be young or old, persuading the National society to hold a junior class for the Lancs and Westmorland style. He also trains on behalf of the Forest of Bowland AONB and Wyre Borough Council. Joe was chairman of the Lancs and West group for 14 years which holds 7 competitions amalgamated into the “Grand Prix”.

In 2017 Joe and I were privileged to attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace where we met Princess Eugenie where, Joe being Joe, he got a (gentle) slap for his comments. It was just a bit of light hearted banter and she was a pleasure to meet and full of fun.



I know that Joe missed meeting up with you all this year but when we get through this terrible time we will all meet again

Joe has helped manning stands at several shows and I know if he says “Do you fancy a weekend away” it often involves **HEDGES!**

Wishing you all the best and keep safe until we can all meet again

*“The Hedgerow Widow”
(aka Georgina Craig)*



HEDGE DILEMMA

From the May 2020 newsletter of the Dorset Coppice Group (DCG):

In 2018 Pete Moors [former Chairman, DCG] took on a hedge laying job in my village. I gave him a hand and – as a local – was well placed to scavenge the cuttings! Few others at the time would have noticed what my recent photo (right), taken in Spring 2019, now makes self-evident: the “hedge” is actually two quite different hedges end-to-end. In the foreground there are nearly 40 metres of hazel on a bank; beyond that the bank has a retaining wall for a further 20 metres, with blackthorn behind it.



How should the hedge be managed in future? The National Hedgelaying Society is hot on distinct styles of laying but pays scant attention to species. Its website states, without qualification, that “once a hedge has been laid regular trimming will keep it in good order for up to 50 years.” I dub this “thorn-think” and it makes some sense for the blackthorn. The logic is that laying represents an expensive major service to be delayed as long as possible by (mechanical) trimming – ideally every 3 years say – increasing the height a little each time.

The approach must be challenged in the case of the hazel. Our cuttings yielded numerous pea-sticks, beanpoles, hurdle rods and walking sticks, plus kindling and a little firewood. If the hazel is now left to regenerate as an in-cycle linear hazel coppice – with perhaps minimal hand-pruning on the road side if required for traffic safety – it should provide another, better harvest when laid again in about another 5 years. Even one trimming before that will trash most of the by-products. Quite apart from my own interest in them, there’s both a [thatching] spar maker and a thatcher in the village.

There remain two defensible options. The two hedges could be treated together like the hazel: left untrimmed to regenerate and then laid again. The blackthorn will be far easier to lay next time, suckering freely after we struggled along it in 2018 greatly assisted by Pete’s chainsaw. Any car mechanic knows that delayed servicing ultimately means more expensive servicing. There should at least be some blackthorn walking sticks sprouting from the plushers in 2025.

Alternatively, why not make a statement? Trim the blackthorn à la NHLs and re-lay the hazel after it has regenerated without trimming. If the contrasting treatments of such short lengths of a “single” hedge appear bizarre and provoke comments, educate those who make them! In-cycle hazel hedges are as rare as hen’s teeth and need all the publicity they can get.

GEORGE DARWALL

ROGER PARRIS

This year, along with Joe, Roger Parris has been awarded the honour of becoming a life member of the NHLS.

Roger has been active within the society for over 20 years. In 1998 Roger and a team from Devon laid a piece of Devon style hedgelaying at the National Championship in Oxfordshire as a demonstration. Roger was determined to show the trustees that Devon style deserved to be a recognised style within the NHLS and by 2000 indeed it had been.

Roger went on to win the first ever Devon Class at the National Championships and on two further occasions afterwards. For those in the know, his first win was the year of the now recognised Parris “double crook”.

A few years later, Roger joined the NHLS committee and was a regular helper at fairs and shows.

Roger has always encouraged support of the NHLS and has become recognisable for the Devon bus of supporters amongst other things!

Roger has most recently served the NHLS as Chief Steward and has been the driving force behind the new format encouraging novice hedgelayers at the Patron’s event. He has worked tirelessly to improve the National Championship, encourage attendance and has given so generously of both his time, enthusiasm and use of his Gator. He has become a recognisable, approachable face for hedgelayers around the country.

Roger admits his proudest moments have been meeting His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales on many occasions. They both share a passion for not only the continuation of hedgelaying as a craft, but also in the importance of encouraging the next generation. Roger was honoured to represent the NHLS at a Buckingham Palace garden party recently and we promise, there was no baler twine in sight!

Roger’s passion for the



craft has been a long one, and he has meticulously maintained the hedges on his traditional 240-acre dairy farm in the Blackdown Hills. He has also worked, alongside his farming, as a commercial hedgelayer and has protected the future of many thousands of miles of hedgerows over his 70 years in the craft.

Now in his 78th year, Roger continues to be actively involved in his local hedgelaying scene. He is a regular trainer of new comers to the skill through the Blackdown Hills Hedge Association, and also organises his own competition, in conjunction with the Cotley Harriers. Roger’s competition continues to go from strength to strength, regularly attracting over 60 competitors from around the country. His inclusive competition boasts not only Open and Intermediate classes but also a Novice Pairs and Ladies class. The emphasis of the day, along with showcasing the best Devon Hedgelayers, is to encourage novices. The day is known for its friendly welcome and

incredible hospitality.

Roger will continue to be a recognisable face. His Royal Highness has commented on his baler twine belt and his “characterful” persona will continue to be a draw for film crews and photographers alike! There is even a Japanese documentary about hedgelaying after a film crew followed Roger on his family farm for over a year! His “Budleigh overcoat” on rainy days will continue to be his faithful servant and whilst he will no longer serve as Chief Steward for the NHLS he has no plans to retire! His contribution to be promotion of the craft will be ongoing and he will continue to serve on the committee.

Thank you Roger for your service.

Lynda Cregan

A QUESTION OF STYLE

Two monks were patiently copying manuscripts in the abbey scriptorium. They were making a small contribution to the preservation of the heritage of centuries: past human thought remained alive on the vellum.

They also created beauty. Brother Simon preferred one style of black letter script and Brother Jude another, but both were exquisite. Few laymen would have noticed the difference: most couldn’t read. Either brother’s pages far outshone those of the new-fangled presses that worked so much faster.

Numerous texts in monastery libraries were never set into type. The sole surviving copies of many books perished in the bonfires of the Reformation. In hindsight, what mattered most? The conservation of heritage; the continuation of living skills; or the detailed aesthetics of individual pages?

George Darwall

CAN YOU HELP?

Mike Dudding, Lecturer in Arboriculture-Askham Bryan College (York), is asking for feedback and suggestions on any subject areas that members of the NHLS would like to have included in a PhD that he has proposed to undertake with York St. John University.

Here is an outline of what Mike would like to consider and believes is original and worthy of research but he welcomes further input from members. He can be contacted at

mike.dudding@askham-bryan.ac.uk

Title of research:

A holistic assessment of the contribution of UK hedgerows in the modern context.

Objectives:

Evaluate historic and contemporary hedgerow management practices to provide new and comparable evidence on best practice in hedgerow management.

Management practices include: Mechanical cutting, Traditional laying, wildlife hedging, abandonment and removal/replacement with alternatives.

Assess the contribution of a hedgerow to society, providing a new cost-benefit analysis of the hedgerow as:

An ecological community/wildlife corridor for birds, mammals and invertebrates.

A resource (including: food, shelter and carbon storage).

A flood mitigator including studies on best species of hedgerow tree for the soil condition and location, root structure (mycorrhizae) and water uptake.

A field boundary and security feature-reviewing the traditional/future use of hedgerows as a boundary, measuring the effectiveness of epicormic regrowth in a range of species and hedge laying styles.

An income generator (Including: Farm Stewardship Payments, Amenity Value).

Proposed contributions to knowledge:

New data that is comparable and allows a fair comparison between the different management practices.

A cost-benefit analysis of the hedgerow building on previous research.

THE OXFORD “REAL FARMING” CONFERENCE

The Oxford Real Farm Conference has become a huge success in recent years and is usually sold out in a couple of days. Held in January in and around Oxford at various venues it attracts well known environmental speakers and delegates from around the world and has developed over the last eleven years to become the unofficial gathering of the agro-ecological farming movement in the UK, including organic and regenerative farming, bringing together practising farmers and growers with scientists and economists, activists and policy-makers in a seven day event every January. Working with partners, the conference offers a broad programme that delves deep into farming practices and techniques as well addressing the bigger questions relating to our food and farming system



This year like most other events the conference had to be cancelled but the decision was made to hold the event virtually online. So taking a chance and almost on the back of a fag packet I sent in a proposal for a session on hedgerows and quite surprisingly it was accepted! My basic idea was to present three different hedge stories from three different countries with each country producing a short video.

Firstly the UK story, a country that has a continuous hedged landscape for many hundreds of years and has kept the traditional skills of management alive. Yet only 50% of our hedges are in favourable condition with that number dropping drastically in arable areas and it is management that is key.

Secondly from The Netherlands Lex Roeleveld and Louis Dolmans told the Dutch story from a country that lost all its hedgerows between the wars and is working hard to reintroduce them. Louis showed us his marvellously rich and diverse farm that he has created on previously industrially farmed land resulting in huge diversity and lots of hedgerows!

Finally Jim Jones from Ontario showed us how, on a continent that has little knowledge of planting or managing hedges, more and more people are becoming interested in the idea of a living fence and even learning hedgelaying.

I then recruited Jo Staley from the Centre of Environment and Hydrology to be our chairperson and host the session. She and I had worked closely on a recent hedge trimming research project. We had only a short time to make our videos, attend training events run by the conference, learn how to run the event with technical help from California, and generally plan what we wanted to say!

On the day it all went really well though rather nerve-racking with over 4500 people tuned in to watch! We had lots of questions and even were able to go into extra question time in a separate zoom room (the wonders of technology!)

At the end we felt very proud of ourselves and have even been asked to do another one. Thanks to all those who took part in spreading the hedgerow gospel around the world.

Hopefully the sessions will be soon be available on the Oxford Real Farming Conference YouTube page.

Nigel Adams

WYMESWOLD HEDGEROWS

Leicestershire Tree Warden Richard Ellison shares his journey mapping his local hedgerows, inspired by a passion to see healthier hedgerows for all the ecological benefits they bring.

Having lived in Wymeswold, a small village in North Leicestershire, for 30 years I am well aware of the inexorable environmental deterioration of the surrounding countryside. My wife and I have always recorded birds, butterflies and dragonflies, and the start of concern over ash dieback disease in the area coincided with me becoming village Tree Warden some 5 years ago. This event in turn led me to look more closely at the hedgerows in the parish, the hedgerow trees, and the best areas of good value for wildlife. Most of the hedges are flailed once or twice a year and many have almost no environmental value.

In early spring of 2019, I decided to attempt to record the state of the hedgerows and hedgerow trees in the parish. In the main they date from the enclosure of the village open fields in 1757 when ash and English elm were the standards, along with mostly hedgerow hawthorn. The elm is no more (except a few seemingly resistant ones). That leaves the ash trees which, if they succumb, will have a detrimental effect on the character of the countryside. Many are already in a poor state because of, among other things, ploughing close to the hedges, and herbicide spray drift. So, the survey I hoped ultimately would serve to focus on areas where tree planting and hedge improvement might take place for visual improvement, particularly on the skyline as seen from public access routes, and as the basis for establishing wildlife corridors.

Mapping the Hedges One by One

In recording the hedges, I simplified the classification recommended by HedgeLink which is particularly appropriate as it was designed to be applicable to the English Midlands. By combining several of the 10 categories in the HedgeLink scheme I came up with three hedge types that I could usefully record covering the ground at a reasonable pace.

Poor Hedges: Over-trimmed, many with gaps and with hard knuckles at a trim line (HedgeLink types 1 and 2).

Good Hedges: Healthy looking, may be over trimmed but have frequent stems and may be up to 4m high (HedgeLink types 3,5,6,7).

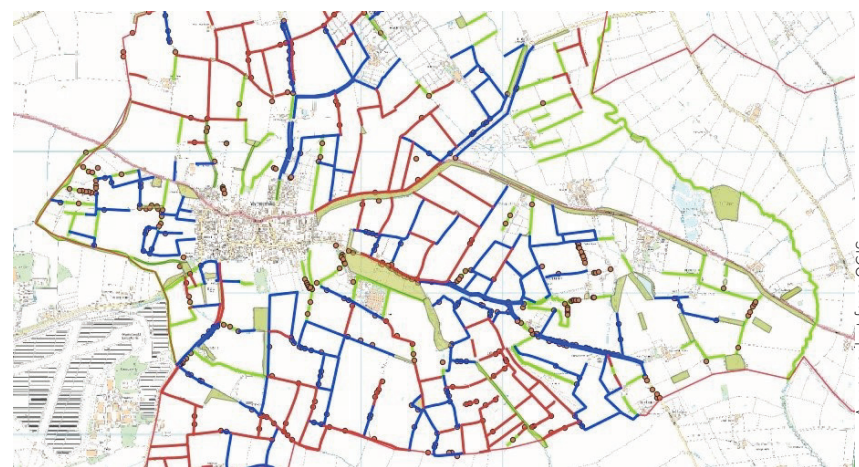
Mature Hedges: Tall (more than 4m) many with healthy stems and in places with trees 20 or more years old (HedgeLink types 8, 9 and 10).

In addition, I plotted all woodlands, copses, spinneys, wide verges of wildlife value, conservation meadows and linear, largely wooded, valleys.

Hedgerow trees greater than 30cm girth at chest height were plotted and the species noted (about 90% of these trees are Ash)

All information was plotted on a paper OS map in the field and then transferred onto Google Earth. The exact location of the hedgerow trees was also plotted on Google Earth, particu-

larly useful as tree shadows clearly show on an image with a low sun angle. The best image was taken in 2010 and therefore allowance had to be made for trees that had since died or had increased in size. Files of the information plotted on Google Earth were exported to the open-access geographic information service "QGIS" where they can be viewed on screen with the OS 1:25,000 scale map in the background.



It Takes Time and Perseverance

All in all, I carried out about 25 visits, with each field visit taking me a few hours at a time. I have completed approximately 80% of the parish, which in total is about 3200 acres or about 13 square kilometres!

For the survey I visited almost every hedge. Those not easily accessible from public rights of way or from land for which the owner had given permission were assessed using binoculars. At the time of writing about 20% of the parish hedges are inaccessible and have not been surveyed.

If I were starting again, I would take more photographs during the course of the survey.

What Next?

There is much more to do in terms of looking in more detail at specific hedges and determining more of those that date from before the enclosure. Also, to encourage local land managers/owners to support the establishment of corridors, to plant trees and widen hedges and the change to management of at least some hedges to a 3 year cutting cycle.

Thank you to Richard for sharing with us about your hard work! Ed

PLASTIC TREE GUARDS *David Wood – North East Hedgelaying Society*

I am aware that this article is somewhat at odds with the usual content of this magazine. However, if we consider the fact that almost every hedge that is now being laid, was at one time planted, then it would seem obvious that many readers will have an interest in the subject. It would therefore seem appropriate to share our experiences – good and bad – of “growing in plastic”. Experience which now goes back nearly thirty years, and which includes over ten thousand broadleaved trees and more than four miles of hedge.



Blackthorn hedge in its second year, growing rapidly in Tubex Eazywraps

I should stress that this account is of our own personal experiences with these products and I am aware that it might conflict with the findings of others or the claims of the respective manufacturers.

No one can say precisely when man first began to actively manage trees and bushes, although it is almost certainly a very long time ago.

As he developed basic agriculture to supplement his food supply, he would surely have wanted the more valued species of tree such as hazel, ash and willow, near at hand.

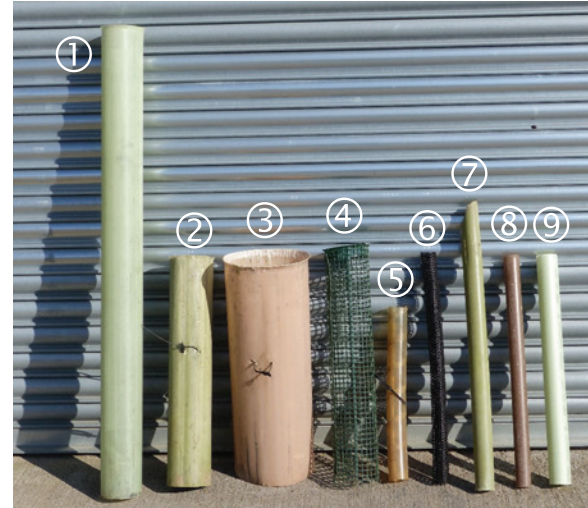
All manner of food, fuel and building material could be grown near to home without having to search the wild wood for it or face all the dangers that lurked there. The art of forestry – of growing and managing trees – would very soon have been invented.

Upon re-reading this it occurs to me that our first forester was almost certainly a woman. To this day, women in primitive societies do most of the subsistence farming, while the men divide their time between hunting game and sitting around the fire, drinking home-made hooch, and telling tall stories. Very little changes.

When that woman took home that very first seedling, which she had found growing on the edge of the wildwood, she could never have imagined how huge the industry would eventually become nor how many millions of trees would be planted every year. One thing is for sure however, shortly after she planted her seedling she would discover, to her dismay, that something had nibbled it, and would then have looked for something to prevent that happening again.

Our first forester probably pushed thorny branches into the ground around her precious tree to protect it from browsing, until it was big enough to look after itself. We have better ways to protect trees today, and on this farm, over the years, we have used most of them at one time or another. Some have stayed the course, while others disappeared as they were found to be

wanting.



Left to right

1 & 2: Tubex Standard Tree Shelters

Available in various heights according to the particular pest you need to protect against. Shown are 1.2 metre and 0.6 metre for deer and rabbit protection respectively. These have stood the test of time to become the industry standard. Many tens of millions of trees have been established in them around the world and for the most part they do a very reliable job. The only problems are, they are quite expensive, and they often need to be removed as the tree expands, in spite of the maker's claims that they split of

their own accord.

A further problem arises with the taller shelters, in which trees tend to grow much more rapidly than they normally would, due to the “greenhouse effect”. This rapid growth can continue, even after they exit the shelters, leading to a rather floppy tree unable to support itself and relying on the shelter to keep it upright. The shelters, of course, weren't designed to do this and when the wind takes hold of the rapidly expanding crown it can snap the cable ties and down comes the tree, leading to further expense in staking and aftercare.

Where deer are present there is often no alternative but to use tall shelters to protect trees. But where there are none, it is usually better to use a shorter shelter and allow them to be exposed to the strengthening effects of the wind at an earlier age. Trees will grow less quickly but will be much stronger and more resilient.

3 Tubex Shrub Shelters

Similar material to tree shelters but a bit stronger. Excellent for shrub protection but very expensive. They can often be removed – once the shrub has established – and re-used, reducing the cost.

4 Mesh Shelters for Conifers

Conifers generally dislike standard tree shelters (beech is not very keen on them either) finding them too warm, and they frequently do badly in them. Mesh shelters are intended to provide them with protection without them overheating, although the one time we used them to protect some seedling Scots pine, all the plants in the mesh shelters were killed during an unseasonal late spring frost. Perversely the only ones to survive were in standard tree shelters.

5 PVC Spirals

We have used many thousands of these, mostly to establish hedges, although we did plant one wood in them, which grew well as there were few deer around at the time. Originally supplied by Acorn Planting Products, these are now also made by Tubex who appear to have taken over Acorn. Supported by an internal cane they do an excellent job even in exposed conditions. They are fairly easy to remove (best done on a warm day when the plastic softens) once the plants are established and re-used. We have re-used some of ours up to five times making them very cost effective.

One of our earlier hedges – now around fourteen years old – being laid as part of the North East hedgelaying competition. Clive Matthew showing how it's done.



Picture by Jenny Crow

6 Hedge Start

Plastic spirals tend to prevent hedge plants from growing branches low down, leading to an open draughty base to the hedge. These were an attempt to address the problem by using a mesh tube which would allow some lower growth to develop while still protecting the plant. We trialled these on a new hedge by planting clusters of ten every twenty yards to compare the growth in them with the standard spirals used on the rest of the hedge.

They did indeed allow some growth low down. Unfortunately, the rabbits simply ate it as it appeared, leaving these plants no better than the ones in spirals. We also observed that plants in these grew less well and with higher losses, possibly explained by the lack of “greenhouse effect” which would normally be found in spirals.

The “trial hedge” was eventually laid in 2018 and the plants in Hedge Starts were consistently much weaker than those in spirals, with only the odd exception. Where branches had managed to form low down, they had not developed normally, as the plastic mesh appeared to be strangling them. We wondered if the plastic below ground was also strangling the main stem thereby accounting for the poor growth.

These guards also proved to be the very devil to remove when we laid the hedge, compared with the spirals which were quite straightforward. This, as you might imagine, made them most unpopular with the man doing the work. General thumbs-down all round, I think.

7 Quills

These seemed like an excellent idea at the time, a plastic tube cut at an angle at one end like a quill pen, hence the name. Single stemmed, cell grown seedlings could be planted in quills

at a phenomenal rate, with no need for canes or stakes, and they were pretty cheap. In use, a plug of soil was removed with a coring tool, leaving a hole. A cell grown plant was inserted in the end of the quill and the whole thing was pressed into the hole – simple as that. The plastic was photo degradable so would disappear in time.

The problem was, in order to photo degrade you need light and the bit in the hole was in the dark, so remained a ring of plastic and strangled the tree as it grew. We planted a few cherries in them as a trial and all went well to begin with. When they were about five years old and growing well, they began to die.

About this time, I heard of a whole hedge in Scotland which had also been planted in quills and was also beginning to die. The owner had identified the cause and brought in a gang of students armed with trowels and Stanley knives to remove the offending rings of plastic. It apparently cost more to do than the hedge had cost to plant in the first place.

Armed with this information, we dug down, removed the plastic and saved the remaining trees. To the best of my knowledge this product is no longer available, but like most other bad ideas, expect to see it re-invented at any time.

8 Sleeves

A roll of plastic punched for two cable ties and supported by an external cane. We planted three ponds larch in these using cell grown seedlings and they worked very well. These don't need to be removed as the tree grows, as the roll simply expands and pops off the tree when it's no longer needed. The small diameter was a bit restrictive for some species but all in all they did the job. I believe these also are no longer available.

9 Easy Wrap

Apparently the successor to sleeves, these are also a roll of plastic but supported by an internal cane with no cable ties. We planted our last hedges in them, and so far, mostly good, although we have had a few dislodged by the wind, so maybe not the best choice on a very exposed site. The larger internal size suits more species than sleeves and makes them more versatile. They are easier to remove than spirals and we have successfully re-used some of them already.

Hedgerow Plant Spacing (a related issue, while I am on the subject of hedge planting)

We have encountered many problems over the years and at times have had to come up with our own solutions. One seemingly trivial one caused us much irritation until we came up with a low-tech answer.

The spacing of hedge plants might seem of little importance. All Stewardship contracts however specify the plant spacing. Too wide and you risk penalties if you have an inspection. Too close and you are wasting money.

The solution – at least with cell grow plants being planted with a coring tool – is a cane, drilled at one end to accept a cable tie and marked along its length with the required spacing. The marks should be clearly visible – white tape works well. Bearing in mind that with a double

row hedge you are only marking one side, so the spacing should be half what is required, i.e. if the target is six to the metre, then the markings should be three per metre.

In use, the cable tie is placed around the toe of your boot and adjusted to fit. Assuming you are following a guide line, the first cane is inserted next to the line and the marker cane is brought along side with the rearmost mark next to it. Further canes are inserted next to the other marks. The leg is then swung forward until the rearmost mark is alongside the last inserted cane and the process repeated, and so on.

Rapid progress can be made with a little practice. It is only necessary to do one line like this as the canes on the other line are simply inserted opposite the spaces in the first line making a staggered double row.

I named this invention the “Space-a-matic” in deference to those plasticine engineers Wallace and Gromit. Feel free to make your own, there are no patents pending.



Space-a-matic in use.

CLOSE THE GAP

“Close the Gap” is one of the first environmental projects awarded a grant from the government’s £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund. It is an 18 month programme focused on achieving bigger, healthier, better-connected hedgerows.

British hedgerows have immense biodiversity, wildlife, carbon-capture and heritage value. However, hedgerows are often overlooked. Between 1998 and 2007 the total length of managed hedgerow in England decreased by 26,000km (source: Hedgelink).

Close the Gap will help shape the future of England’s hedgerows in four ways: through hedgerow planting and ‘gapping up’; by gathering and sharing knowledge to improve hedgerow management; by ensuring good local supplies of future hedgerow trees through local seed nurseries; and by engaging the public with England’s important hedgerow heritage.



Sara Lom, CEO, The Tree Council said:

“The Committee on Climate Change called for 200,000 km of new hedgerows to help achieve net zero carbon – but hedges are often forgotten in conversations about a greener future. Close the Gap will boost the immense potential of our hedgerows – for biodiversity, carbon-capture, conserving our natural cultural heritage and more. We want everyone to understand and value their local hedgerows and for more young people to consider the exciting land-based careers they offer. We’re grateful to National Lottery Heritage Fund for funding this partnership of leading organisations to improve the future of UK hedgerows.”

The partners are: The Tree Council, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, People’s Trust for Endangered Species, Moor Trees, University of Reading, Future Gardeners (Worshipful Company of Gardeners) and Hedgelink.

Among many other stakeholders we will engage with partner local authorities and volunteer Tree Wardens, many of whom work tirelessly at the local level to promote thriving, urban and rural hedgerows that are managed for wildlife and biodiversity benefit.

- The Climate Change Committee’s call for 200,000 kms of new hedgerow is equivalent to twice the circumference of the moon
- Close the Gap will take action in four areas: through hedgerow planting and ‘gapping up’; by gathering and sharing knowledge to improve hedgerow management; by ensuring good local supplies of future hedgerow trees through local seed nurseries; and by engaging the public with England’s important hedgerow heritage.

Activities will include:

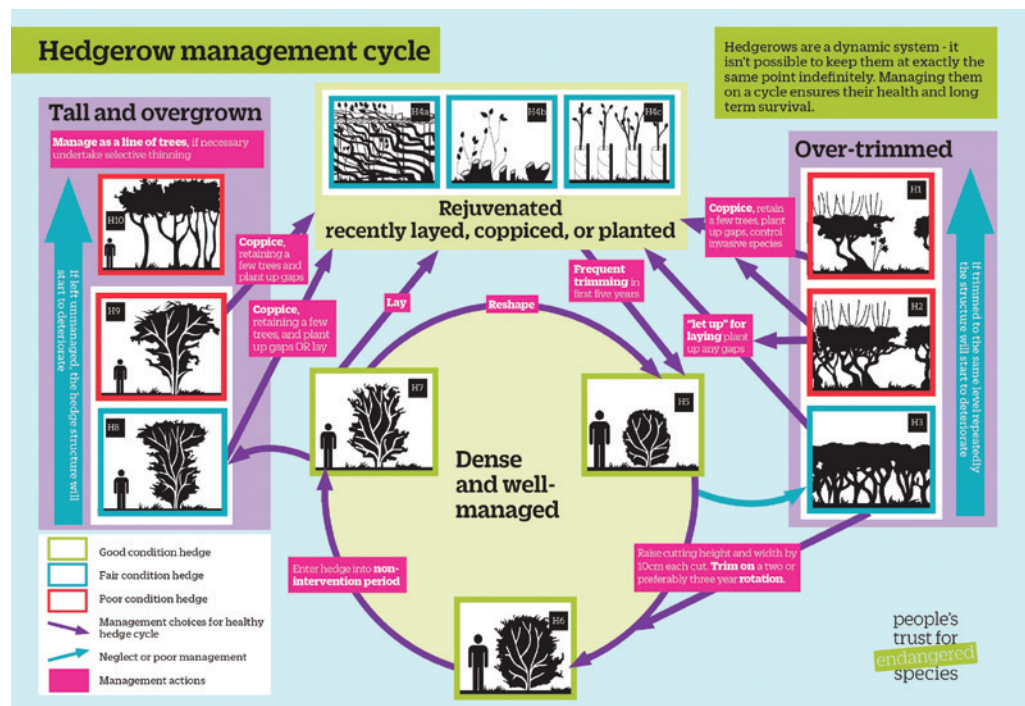
- Establishing and restoring urban and rural hedgerow with local partners and Tree Council volunteer Tree Wardens
- New online knowledge hub and shared training materials on hedgerow surveying, planting and management
- Raising awareness among young people, who have a growing interest in the natural environment, in land-based careers
- New community seed nurseries nationwide to create biosecure future tree supplies
- Raising awareness of the value of hedgerows through a new ‘National Hedgerow Week’ to launch next Spring and continue annually

About The Tree Council

The Tree Council is a charity and umbrella body bringing everyone together with a shared mission to care for trees and our planet’s future. We inspire and empower organisations, government, communities and individuals with the knowledge and tools to create positive, lasting change at a national and local level. The Tree Council also chairs Hedgelink the national steering group for UK’s hedgerows.

To find out more about Close the Gap, contact the Tree Council Science & Research Project Manager: Harriet Rix at harrietrix@treecouncil.org.uk

THE GREAT BRITISH HEDGEROW SURVEY



The value of the humble hedge cannot be overstated, especially at this time where we are seeing worrying wildlife declines. A massive 70% of the UK is agricultural land and within this, hedgerows are one of the best habitats for wildlife which use them to live in, shelter in, feed from and to safely travel through. But to fulfil their ecological or environmental potentials hedges need to be in good health, and unfortunately, not every hedge lives up to its potential. Although we appear to be winning the battle against the outright loss of hedgerows, evidence points to a worrying decline in hedgerow condition. If this persists, these hedges too will perish, dealing another blow to the chances of survival for all those that currently call them home.

The People's Trust for Endangered Species have launched an easy-to-use hedgerow survey, the **Great British Hedgerow Survey**, in a bid to halt this decline. Like many habitat surveys, one of the key aims is to collect information about the health of hedgerows at a national scale. You can't improve something you don't measure, as the saying goes, and when we have a better idea of where and why hedgerows are declining, we stand a much better chance of targeting our conservation effort to protect and improve them.

But perhaps more interestingly, this survey also produces instant feedback to the surveyor; not only about the health of the hedge as it is, but about the best management options for each hedge based on the survey answers. This way any landowner wanting to improve their hedges simply need survey them and follow the advised management options.

To do this, we have integrated the hedgerow management cycle into the survey; a 10-point hedge management guide developed by Nigel Adams. Once we ascertain where a hedge is in its lifecycle, this forms a large part of the management advice. For some hedges, it may be altering the trimming regime, increasing the cutting height, putting it into a period of non-intervention. For others, on both extremes of the management scale, it may mean rejuvenation; gapping up, laying or coppicing. What I particularly like about this hedgerow cycle, is that no matter where your hedge starts, there is a clear route to returning it to a healthy condition.

When you look closely, it becomes obvious that our hedgerows are a living system. So to keep them healthy, they need dynamic management; thinking of the whole lifecycle. Hedges can be managed by trimming for years, but to attempt to keep a hedge at any one size or point in its lifecycle *indefinitely* will inevitably cause their structural decline and eventually gappiness and outright loss; at some stage they will always need this sort of rejuvenation. This survey will help landowners understand when this change of management is needed.

At this time of year, the skeletal structures of hedgerows are on display, revealing how our management practices are treating them – so now's a good time to look! It may be time to give our hedgerows a health-check by taking part in our Great British Hedgerow Survey. In recent years the loss of the hedgerow network has slowed almost to a halt, but we can't take for granted those we have left. We must work to make sure our remaining hedges are the best they can be, reaching their full potential both as a lifeline for wildlife, and as an asset to us.

This hedgerow health-check supports landowners wanting to improve their hedgerow habitats, and helps us get a better idea of how well hedges are doing nationally: so we need your help. Surveying is easy, enjoyable and can make a real difference. It is ideal for local Parish Councils or a village to undertake as a community. For more info visit www.hedgerowsurvey.ptes.org to find out how to take part.

Megan Gimber – Key Habitats Project Officer PTES

POINTED QUESTION

I wonder any readers might be able to help with this problem: we recently had an interesting discussion on the Facebook Group of the National Coppice Federation regarding which end of a stake to point!

Opinion was divided, with a majority favouring pointing the butt end. There were some compelling points made by both sides, ease of trimming the stake to height with a hook being perhaps the strongest for the butt-end advocates. Tightening the weave of the binders when the stakes are driven home and then resisting the binders lifting off being the main benefit for the tip-pointers. Since I learned my hedgelaying from someone who learned from Bert Clark I felt that I had some pedigree in the argument, but I was in the minority as a tip-pointer.

Does the Society have an opinion on this matter or is it something that is down to the preference of the individual cutter? I would imagine that most of our members either supply to, or cut themselves, Midland or South of England styles, but the debate wasn't style specific.

I look forward to being able to report any views back to the coppicers.

Brian Williamson

Bringing forty-five acres of coppice back to life in Westonbirt Arboretum.

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?

We were founded in 1978 to ensure that the hedgerow management skills accumulated over many hundreds of years were not lost forever.

Benefits of membership include:

- This Newsletter published three times per year
- Free entry to the NHLS National Championship
- Access to a wealth of information and advice on hedgerows
- Links with local groups and national conservation organisations
- Opportunities for training and education events across the UK



Annual Membership Fees
 | Junior (under 18) Free
 Ordinary member £20
 Contractor Member £75

Leather Hedging Mitts – Arm Guards – Billhook & Axe Holsters



- Hedging mitts, various sizes, left and right hand. Made with chrome or alum tanned leather, seamed or un-seamed. From £40.
- Single edge billhook holsters and axe guards. From £15.
- Forearm guards: small, medium and large, in light or heavy duty. From £18.



Email: jasperprachek@hotmail.co.uk
 or Call: 07769 502100.

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.

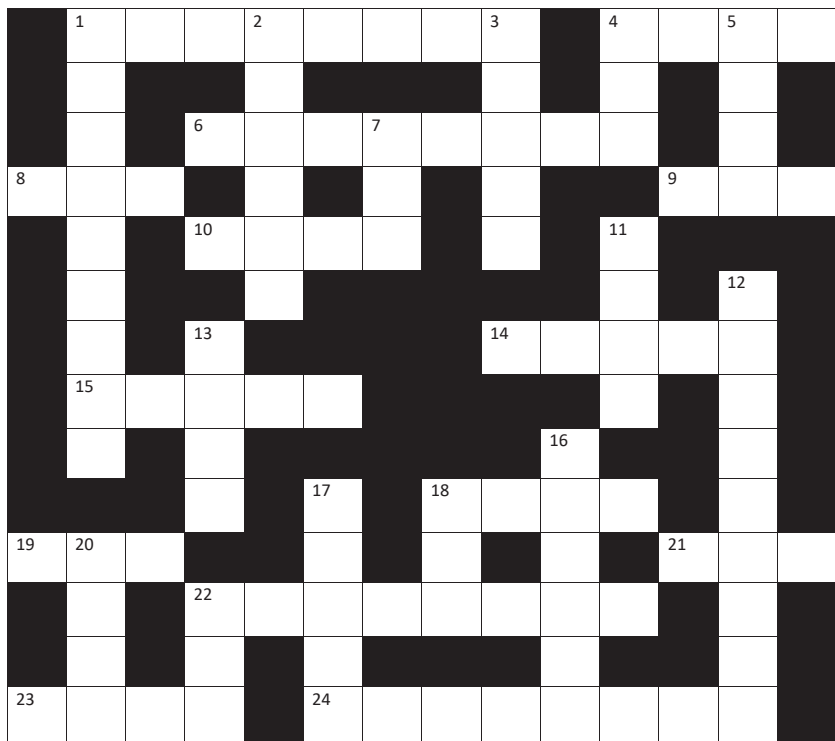
For more information about all the available items and options or to get an order form please email Russell Woodham using:

merchandise@hedgelaying.org.uk

- Rugby Shirt (Navy/Bottle Green) £24.50
 - Polo Shirt (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon) £16.50
 - Hoodie (Pullover) £18.00
 - Hoodie (Zip Up) £23.00
 - Fleece (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon) £19.50
 - Gilet (Navy/Bottle Green/Black) £18.50
 - Beanie Hat (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon) £6.75
 - Baseball Cap (Navy/Bottle Green/Maroon) £6.75
 - Dress Shirt (Khaki/Sliver Grey) £17.50
 - NHLS Tie £10.00
- Plus Umbrellas, Key Rings, Car Stickers etc



PRIZE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

DOWN

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Commonly used hedgelaying tool. (8)</p> <p>4. Holly. (4)</p> <p>6. Agricultural plant & soil science. (8)</p> <p>8. Antiquated measure of length, approx. 45 inches. (3)</p> <p>9. Chalara victim. (3)</p> <p>10. Nine times Supreme champion, 'the best there ever was': ____ Clark (4)</p> <p>14. Hedge support. (5)</p> <p>15. Criminal found in a Devon hedge? (5)</p> <p>18. 'Never lay down ____' (4)</p> <p>19. Might form on the hedge in winter. (3)</p> <p>21. The 'D' in DSWA. (3)</p> <p>22. Easier than a 7lb axe. (8)</p> <p>23. Narrow bladed spade. (4)</p> <p>24. Crataegus. (8)</p> | <p>1. Small bird above binders on a Midland hedge? (9)</p> <p>2. Lancs & Westmoreland pleacher. (6)</p> <p>3. Nautical speed in wood? (5)</p> <p>4. Found with 4 across at Christmas. (3)</p> <p>5. Grain bearers. (4)</p> <p>7. At the start of your stint you might lay your hedge _____. (3)</p> <p>11. 'Use of excessive ____ wood will be penalised' (4)</p> <p>12. A pattern of 1 across from Kent. (9)</p> <p>13. Spy round a Dorset hedge? (4)</p> <p>16. Cut & lay. (6)</p> <p>17. Bonfire material. (5)</p> <p>18. Farmyard fowl. (3)</p> <p>20. To use an axe. (4)</p> <p>22. According to the song the first one is the deepest! (3)</p> |
|---|--|

Prize Crossword - Send completed crossword entries to the NHLS Secretary and the first correct answer drawn out of the NHLS Beanie Hat will win it! (we'll take the crosswords out first)

If you want to enter but don't want to mutilate your Newsletter, a copy of the crossword is available to download from the NHLS web site - log in and navigate to the "Current Newsletter" page.

Wise old owl lived in
 an oak; The more
 he saw the less he
 spoke; The less he
 spoke the more he
 heard: Why can't we
 all be like that bird.

Edward Hersey Richards

Fly Box Reflection

Angling exalted to an art form:
 Exquisitely perfect counterfeit insects,
 Every hair in place.

But starving peasants can't afford them
 And dynamite the Dove...

George Darwall

There are four things you never recover.

- The stone after it is thrown.
- The word after it is said.
- The occasion after the loss, and
- The time after it is gone.

WRINGTON & BURRINGTON HEDGING SOCIETY

Contact: Clive Bethell, 19 Vicarage Lane, Shapwick, Bridgwater TA7 9LR
 Email: mowbarton@btinternet.com
 Tel: 07976 895643

Wrington & Burrington Hedging Society was formed in 1832; it is believed to be the oldest Society in the Country and was started by 3 vicars from 3 Somerset parishes - Wrington, Burrington and possibly Blagdon. Each vicar of the respective parishes reckoned their local hedger was the best so a match was arranged to decide the champion hedger. The Wrington, Burrington and Farmers Union Ploughing Society was formed. One of the vicars being the Rev. John Vane who was instrumental in founding the Society that continues to this day. The ploughing element was dropped some years later although it is recorded that there were 256 entrants for the 100th match held on October 12th 1932. The entrants being made up of 49 Field Crops, 101 Roots, 38 Ploughs, 32 Hedgers 19 Horses and 17 Thatchers. It is noted no less than 16 silver cups and 79 silver medals were presented.

It is also noted that the most recent Wrington and Burrington Hedging Match at Barrow Gurney there were 33 hedgers in the 5 classes, this testament to the late Frank Wear and Stuart Ford who were hedgers and committee members since 1946 and undoubtedly kept the Society alive in the 1970's and current committee members who offer hedging classes for up to 25 beginners each year. Frank Wear and Stuart Ford were rewarded for their long-standing services to hedge laying (North Somerset style) by the National Hedgelaying Society and received awards from HRH Prince Charles at a hedging match at Highgrove in February 2013.

Classes for young farmers & farm workers were offered free of charge for over 60 years. Those taking part having to lay a chain (22 yards) of hedge & throw the same length of ditch. More recently the Society charged £1 for the lessons from 2000 although lessons are now charged at a slightly higher rate to the benefit of the Society, the committee members giving up their time for 6 Saturdays early each year.

Clive Bethell - Chairman



HEDGE & WOODLAND CONSERVATIONISTS

Contact: Christopher Kersley, 14 Robins Dale, Knaphill, Woking GU21 2LQ
 Email: chris.kersley1167@gmail.com

Hedge & Woodland Conservationists (HAWCs) was first formed in 1988 and remains a strong organisation some 32 years later. However, we are finding it less easy to get new members nowadays and the age profile of our members is getting older! We are mostly 70++ with a few slightly younger. Though that does mean there is lots of valuable experience in the team.

HAWCs is a small group of local enthusiasts who meet regularly in the winter months (September to March) to coppice woodland and lay hedges, primarily in the Berkshire area but

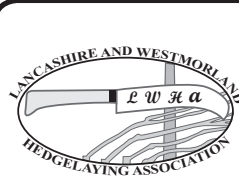
other areas by request or arrangement with Local Authorities and or landowners.

Our aims are to keep the ancient arts of Coppicing and Hedgelaying alive and to conserve and Maintain hedgerows, woodlands and rights of way in the areas for the benefit of the general public and the wildlife which depend on them.

We also try to educate the public in the practises of nature conservation. This is normally by way of dialogue with passers-by and notice boards. We also have a web site www.hawc.org.uk.

We are an autonomous self-funding group with affiliations to NHLS, TCV, & NCF. We make a small charge per meter for our work, with any surplus funds being distributed annually. This could be to local organisations that help educate young people in the pursuit of countryside skills and help plant new diverse hedgerows wherever possible. Last year we supported a new hedge in the Windsor Environmental Centre. This year we supported a new hedge planting in the Lake District and a local ash die-back tree project and bat survey for BBOWT.

At the time of writing are approximately half way through an old hedge which we are laying for The Crown Estate in Windsor. It is an old challenging hedge and will take us perhaps another two seasons to finish it entirely being about 3km in total. We are all enjoying this challenge despite "Social Distancing" to keep our volunteers safe.



LANCS & WESTMORLAND HEDGELAYING ASSOCIATION

Contact: Mrs Ann Kendal, Dale House, Grayrigg, Kendal LA8 9BU
 Email: annkendal43@gmail.com
 Tel: 01539 824276

Lancashire and Westmorland Hedgelaying Association was formed in 1999 by members of local hedgelaying competitions the objective was to pool experience in running competitions to promote their competitions and run training events in the local style and share advertising . Covering the South Lakes, West Yorkshire, and Lancashire, the individual competitions are. Arnside and Silverdale, Yorkshire Dales, Wyre and Myerscough, Friends of the Lake District, Westmorland County Show, Hy Fly, Forest of Bowland. Ellel and District Ploughing and Hedgelaying Association was involved at the outset but withdrew. A Competition is held every other weekend, with an accumulator competition called the Grand Prix with the person awarded the most points over all the events being declared the winner . Each competition has its own prizes, but a presentation event is held each year after the season. A get together and meal sets the evening of to a good start. Then on to presenting the prizes. All the individual competitions cups are presented and the overall win-



Lancs & Westmorland Presentation Dinner

ners presented with the Grand Prix trophies. Altogether 35 Trophies are presented. Up to 80 people attend including the judges who receive their meals free for thanks in judging the events. The emphasise has always been to encourage younger hedgelayers, with training events organised each year. and make land owners and the general public aware of the importance of maintaining traditional field boundaries.



HEART OF ENGLAND HEDGE LAYING GROUP



Contact: Bill Piper, 31 Dorset Drive, Moira,
Swadlincote DE12 6HU
Email: bill@billpiper.co.uk

The Heart of England Hedge Laying Group was set up in 2016. It would be fair to say that we took a while gathering momentum and the current pandemic has slowed everything down again, but we are in a strong position to pick up the baton again when allowed. The group finally became constituted in 2018 and our aims are listed on our website: hoehlg.co.uk



Raising public awareness of the craft, its benefits and techniques, is vital to the future of hedge laying. We have engaged with community groups and other volunteers, offering support and training. We supported The Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds laying a hedge in this town centre park and this contributed to the park being awarded Green Flag status. It is admired by many passers-by.

A charity hedge laying event was organised which raised £2500 for the air ambulance (photo above). The hedge belongs to Ralph, a local farmer who had cause to be grateful for their prompt attention. You can tell who are the photogenic amongst us!

Training is an important aspect of the group. Left, Graham Teece is explaining the intricacies of Midland binding to a group of trainees at Sence Valley Country Park.



Courses have been run for The National Trust and Forestry England volunteers as well as for the public.



On a very wet and cold January day this roadside hedge in Sibson was laid by trainees under the expert eyes of Rob Thompson, Clive Matthew, Graham Teece, Giles Bennett and Derrick Hale.

Having previously introduced the idea of "Improvers' Days", we ran a couple and had planned a similar event but were overtaken by Covid restrictions. This will be rescheduled, along with other events when we are able to reconvene. In all our training we aim for excel-

lence and understanding. Complementary to this is the online library of documents that we are developing, detailing methods and knowledge. We want this resource to be freely available to all.

The Facebook group that we administer serves a wide audience – there are now nearly 1000 members. Discussion is lively and folk are generally grateful for the constructive criticism and encouragement that their picture-posts receive.

We are very much looking forward to resuming our operations, hopefully before too long.



FAIRFORD, FARINGDON, FILKINS & BURFORD PLOWING SOCIETY

Contact: Megan Saunders, Keepers Cottage, Wilcote,
Chipping Norton, OX7 3SZ
Email: megan@ploughingmatch.co.uk

It gives me great pleasure to write an introduction about the Fairford, Faringdon, Filkins & Burford Ploughing Society.

The Society was started by several well known local farmers in 1948. The first match was at Warren's Cross Farm, Lechlade by kind permission of W.G Gammond. I can remember attending with my father and have attended every match since.

After several years, the popularity of ploughing matches (of which there were many) declined and the FFF&B went through uncertain times, before gaining in popularity, to become the principle local event in the farming calendar. Many people come to see the competitors, meet old friends, and see a range of activities connected with farming and the countryside.

Some of the Ploughing competitors travel a considerable distance with their equipment to compete.

The match is held within a 15 mile radius of Lechlade when possible, but while being in the Cotswolds, the brachy soil is not ideal for champion ploughmen – not as good as some would like but they soon realise it is the same for all the competitors, and are happy to all do their best.

We are very lucky and are very grateful to all of the hosts that over the many years, have offered their land for the event, which now needs a considerable area. It must cause disruption to their usual farming programme, and we offer them many thanks.

The Society holds competitions for children, as well as the Ladies Homecraft Section (which many remark on the very high standard of the entries), grain section and hedging competitions, and of course many different ploughing classes, including horses and steam.

Having had successful and well attended matches for a number of years, the Society has been pleased to donate to local charities, usually chosen by the host each year.

We are very fortunate to have such an active Committee who meet regularly throughout the year (sometimes quite lengthy meetings!!) to plan, fine tune and where possible, improve the match to make it a real country show for people of all interests. We must thank all the committee for tirelessly giving so much time to make the day so successful. Some of the older members have been on the Committee for over 50 years. It is pleasing to have more recently a number of younger people joining with enthusiasm which hopefully will mean a continued success for the Society.

Special thanks must go to Roly Paterson who has been Chairman for the past 13 years.

Aubrey Cole - FFF&B Trustee

Ploughing Match to Country Show

If we go back to a Ploughing Match’s origins – we can find a group of local ploughmen, often from neighbouring farms or estates having a light hearted competition to gain bragging rights in the local area. Remembering that almost everyone in the rural areas was connected in some way to agriculture, it soon developed into organised matches that were extremely popular.

A steady decline in the rural workplace made popularity difficult to maintain and many smaller matches and societies either fell by the wayside or joined forces to gain some much needed audience as well as enough ploughmen to make it worthwhile.

Unfortunately the decline continued and in the late 80’s to 90’s the show had lost some popularity and needed a boost.

We were already staging a ploughing match with a strong “show” element to it but we needed the numbers through the gate to increase.

A renaming was all that was needed.

A “Ploughing Match” which meant little to the “new” rural population became a “Show” which sounded a little more interesting. We went from a trade stand footage of little more

than 100-150 yards to over 600 now and growing.

The “Ploughing Match and Country Show” as we now know it, hasn’t had to change any core values or traditions but now welcomes 3-4,000 visitors annually and is surely the biggest show of its type in the surrounding counties.

A “must-do” event for an increasing number of people who can enjoy a step back in time as well as a huge array of craft stalls and ploughing.

The Ploughing Match lives on!!!!

We are in the process of writing a book to celebrate the 70/75 years of the Society

We are hoping to hold a Match/Show this year but quite what form it will hold is still unclear but the aim is for a basic ploughing match and hedgelaying competition – Saturday 25th September 2021 at Manor Farm, Hatford, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 8JH

Megan Saunders

THE CONSERVATION HEDGELAYERS

Contact: P Vaughan, 19 Tavistock Gardens, Ilford IG3 9BE

Email: linda@thewannas.co.uk

Tel: 020 8590 0879 or 07939 912097

This all started about 12 years ago when I became aware that many young hedges in our part of north-east London and Essex were ready for laying but the bodies responsible for them could not pay for the work to be done. I had many years of experience as a volunteer on conservation projects and had developed my hedgelaying skills after training with the South of England Society. Over the years I have taken part in competitions and been placed in the NHLS National Championship a couple of times.

I realised that there was an opportunity to lay local hedges and hopefully to affect their future management. So with the help of Patricia McFarlane, also a South of England trained cutter, we found our hedges and started organising training and laying sessions with some of our many conservation friends.

Over the years we have worked on behalf of, for example: local district and parish councils, Lee Valley Park, Scouts, RSPB, RHS, City of London Epping Forest, Essex Wildlife Trust and the Grange Farm Trust. Although we work for free we expect the hedge owners to buy or otherwise help us to source the necessary stakes and binders and to deal with the brash. A small team of us cut most Fridays during the season and to date we have laid over four and three quarter miles of hedge.

In the years following laying we regularly visit “our” hedges and encourage the owners to manage them in a wildlife friendly manner. When needed we will take on such jobs as tying in wild rose binds, removing or laying in spires of fast -growing species and planting up gaps. This ongoing relationship with our laid hedges means that all our team have the opportunity to see their hard work lead to improved viable hedges in our part of the country.

Pat and I run a closed group where coming and cutting with us is by invitation only; we invite people we know who have shown a commitment to conservation work in other groups and have a good work ethic. We have trained over 50 individuals some of whom are still in our pool, others have moved on. Every opportunity is taken to train young people working in countryside management; we are very proud that three of them were invited to demonstrate their skills at the Patron's Sandringham event in 2019.

Finally a comment on our style of laying which has developed from the traditional South of England. This has been made necessary by the intensive browsing pressure of Fallow and Muntjac deer in our area. They will treat the sides of the hedge as a salad bar and often stunt growth to such an extent that the pleachers are clearly visible up to binder height in the middle of summer for years after laying. To mitigate this we now keep the laid hedge as wide and bushy as practical. This gives the centre more protection and hides basal regrowth until it emerges from the centre. When we can we will deadhedge the base with discarded brush.



We were accepted by the NHLS as an affiliated group some years ago and at that point chose as our name "The Conservation Hedgelayers". In addition to our practical work on hedges Pat and I give demonstrations at local events and would be happy to take enquiries from anyone seeking such a demo.

We do not take on paid work and we do not have a paying membership; we work for free – just a group of like-minded individuals who enjoy a day out under a hedge.

Pat and I are now in our 70's, we are still planning for a year or two in advance.

I have no knowledge of any local competitions beyond an occasional one at the National Trust at Wimpole Hall Cambridgeshire.

NORTH EAST HEDGELAYING SOCIETY

Contact: David Boyson, Rothley Mill Cottage, Hartburn, Morpeth NE61 4ED
 Email: dbcountryside@btinternet.com
 Tel: 01670 774267 or 07771 721573

The North East Hedgelaying Society was set up initially to organise the first North East hedgelaying competition in 2010, held at Dunsheugh Farm, Alnwick, Northumberland, home of the co-founding Humble family.

Also a key figure in the creation of the society was NHLS President Mr Andrew Adams, who was instrumental in forming the Durham Hedgerow Partnership and the Durham County Council Hedgelaying and Dry stone walling competition. His daughter Karen was our secretary for a number of years.

Primarily covering Northumberland the Society holds an annual competition on the second Sunday in October (in non-Covid times). We are very keen to promote the Northumberland style of hedgelaying. The annual competition has always been part of a Northern Hedgelaying Weekend, with the Durham competition on the Friday, Jamie Scott's Scottish championship the Saturday and, for those still standing, the North East one on Sunday. We hope this format will resume when competitions are able to be held once more.



In the past, when sponsorship permitted, the weekend was a "Grand Prix" of matches – the cutter accruing most points over the three days taking home £200 on top of their other prize money. Due to the generous sponsorship offered by Mr Harry Humble's company we hope to resurrect the Grand Prix this year.

Hopefully by October we will be able to run matches once again and see a good number of entrants who have been unable to compete due to Covid and are keen to get back in the fray and see old friends again as well as trying to win some good prize money.

The NE Society has tried to share the competition venue between the countries of the local hunts: the Morpeth, Percy and Tynedale.

Keep an eye on the events page of the NHLS website to find this year's venue; we may not be able to offer you a lamb roast this year as at the Nelless's farm, but we will try and look after you and make you feel welcome.

Also if you live in the North East and would like to get involved with the society please contact me using the details at the top of this article.

David Boyson



BLACKDOWN HILLS HEDGE ASSOCIATION

Contact: John Scantlebury, Shoebrooks, Ashculme,
Hemyock EX15 3SU
Email: secretary@bhha.info



CHESHIRE PLOUGHING & HEDGE CUTTING SOCIETY

Contact: Susan Ball, The Croft, Church Lane, Smallwood,
Sandbach CW11 2UT
Email: sueball_lynhouse@hotmail.co.uk
Tel: 01260 270180



DURHAM HEDGEROW PARTNERSHIP

Contact: Sue Mullinger, Durham County Council,
Landscape & Arboriculture RED, Durham DH1 5UQ
Email: sue.mullinger@durham.gov.uk Tel: 03000 267142



FOREST OF ARDEN AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Contact: Mrs Sue Westmacott, Stockton House, High Street,
Henly-in-Arden, B95 5AT
Email: sue@westmacotts.co.uk Tel: 01564 793746

HALLATON & DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Contact: Gill Burbidge, Lynham, 31 Kelmarsh Road, Clipston,
Market Harborough LE16 9RX
Email: gillburbidge2014@gmail.com
Tel: 01858 525911 or 07950 738732



MELPLASH AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Contact: Lucy Hart, 23 South Street, Bridport DT6 3NT
Email: office@melplashshow.co.uk
Tel: 01308 423337



MID-SOMERSET AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Contact: Christine Barham, 3 Europa Court, Crown Trading Estate,
Shepton Mallet BA4 5QQ
Email: secretary@midsomersetshow.org.uk



READYHEDGE Tradition.



01386 750585

lindsay@readyhedge.com

matthew@readyhedge.com

www.readyhedge.com

Delivered across the UK ready-spaced and ready to plant, Readyhedge instant hedging is available in a huge range of varieties, including traditional mixed native hedging.

Readyhedge is proud to support the National Hedgelaying Society and the National Hedgelaying Championships.

WHO TO CONTACT IN 2020/21

PRESIDENT

DEREK SMITH

19 Glebe Road, Queniborough LE7 3FH
Tel: 01162 696145

CHAIRMAN & TRUSTEE

DAVID SMITH

Horewell House, 1 Highfield End,
Ashby Folville,
Melton Mowbray LE24 2TP
Tel: 01664 840347
Email: chair@hedgelaying.org.uk

TREASURER & TRUSTEE

ANDREW CROW

Fallowfield House, Bulby,
Bourne PE10 0RU
Tel: 07941 715734 or 01778 591158
Email: treasurer@hedgelaying.org.uk

CHAMPIONSHIP COORDINATOR, SPONSORSHIP & TRUSTEE

CLIVE BETHELL

Mowbarton, 19 Vicarage Lane,
Shapwick, Bridgwater TA7 9LR
Eml: championship@hedgelaying.org.uk

SECRETARY &

ACTING NEWSLETTER EDITOR

DAVID WHITAKER

2 Armitage Way, Galgate,
Lancaster LA2 0BN
Tel: 07734 134919
Email: secretary@hedgelaying.org.uk

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN & TRUSTEE

JOE CRAIG

11 Stoney Lane, Galgate,
Lancaster, LA2 0YJ
Tel: 01524 752665
Email: depchair@hedgelaying.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP

MARGARET BUDDING

42 Main Street, Cossington,
Leicester LE7 4UU
Tel: 07894 262783
Email: membership@hedgelaying.org.uk

TROPHIES

MANDY WOODHAM

2 Keepers Cottage, Hampton,
Dorchester DT2 9DY
Email: awards@hedgelaying.org.uk

MEDIA OFFICER

CLAIRE MAYMON

Coach House Farm, Cheltenham Road,
Broadway WR12 7BY
Tel: 01386 858030 or 07810 768098
Email: media@hedgelaying.org.uk

MERCHANDISE

RUSSELL WOODHAM

2 Keepers Cottage, Hampton,
Dorchester DT2 9DY
Email: merchandise@hedgelaying.org.uk

TRAINING

PHIL HART

1 Wales Farm Lane, Ditchling Road,
Plumpton, Lewes BN7 3AS
Tel: 07717 054172
Email: training@hedgelaying.org.uk

SAFETY OFFICER

DAVE PADLEY

Moss Side Farm, Wigglesworth,
Skipton BD23 4SP
Tel: 07729 333676
Email: safety@hedgelaying.org.uk

WEBSITE

Richard Hooker
Worhams Farm, Shute,
Axminster EX13 7QF
Tel: 07973 796826
Email: webo@hedgelaying.org.uk



THE PRINCE'S
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND

www.hedgelaying.org.uk