

# *The Windrow*

*Windrow NO 16 April 2021*

Newsletter of The Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland



NEW ONLINE EVENT!  
SCYTHERS QUESTION TIME:  
SEE PAGE 4

VIRTUAL SCYTHING  
COMPETITION RESULTS:  
SEE PAGE 20

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## SABI NEWS



### International Peening Day

International Peening Day this year falls on Sunday 4th April which is Easter Day.

This is an 'everywhere-event' — it aims to remind us all to prepare our scythes in advance of the mowing season and support each other by encouraging this shared activity.

Barring any unforeseen events one the day the event is due to be held up to six people will be allowed to meet (socially distanced) at an outside location in the UK.

Additionally the "stay at home" rules will no longer be in force. So International peening day is an opportunity to allow us to renew some of our friendships within the scything community.

It's not just peening though, our snaiths will need re-oiling and no doubt the ring screws will need cleaning and lubricating, handles tightened. Peening ponies also need some TLC! There's plenty to do.

Have a great day!

### A New Innovation

Learn to scythe... ONLINE!

And you can choose how much you pay for it

If you want to learn to scythe but can't make it to a real life scythe course then why not try the new online course made by scythe teacher Beth Tilston.

The course condenses a day-long course into 30 information-dense minutes. You'll want to take it in bite-sized chunks! Beth has included everything you need to pop out at the other end a proficient mower.

No need to cobble together different bits of information from YouTube, you can download it to your tablet and take it out into the field. There's even a forum where you can ask questions if you are struggling.

The course is offered as Pay What You Want. Here's what Beth had to say about this unique pricing system, "I'm offering this course as Pay What You Want mostly because I wanted quality scythe tuition to be within reach of everyone. The lowest price that Vimeo (the host) will let you pay is £0.80, which should be within everyone's budget. I've used Pay What You Want for projects before though, and each time I do, I am always surprised by how few people choose to pay you the lowest price. People can see how much time, energy and expertise have gone into the things you make."

Beth's course can be found here:

<https://cloudcottageand.vhx.tv>

## SCYTHING EVENTS

If all goes well the Covid-19 situation in the UK we will see the restoration of some scything events. Unfortunately the situation was too uncertain for the "The Green Scythe Fair" which, sadly has been cancelled for a second year. All is not gloom and doom though; later in the summer there is an event being organised at the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve. The Shropshire Hills Hay Meadow Festival and is scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> July.

There are indications that the The Northern Scythe & Meadows Fair may happen this year too at Bell Sykes Farm in the Vale of Bowland, Lancashire. Bell Sykes Farm has a wonderful collection of unimproved and restored flower-rich grasslands.

The Wild Meadow Scything Festival is set to happen on Aug 27-29 with crafts, making music, wood fired pizzas, 1.6mile walk up-to Coles Tump, Scythe Mugs from local craft friends, & lots of team scything. All refreshed with local cider: Artistray Cider. Free please email, only a few places left. [https://www.instagram.com/p/CA2GQ\\_cjxG0/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA2GQ_cjxG0/) There were 100 Orchids last year. Bring a tent or van & some food.07450. Also A scything/cider weekend at Hay-on-Wye date tbc. For scythers in Scotland the Scottish Scything Festival Is set to go ahead on Sat 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at Blackhaugh Community Farm, Perthshire

For more information visit <https://blackhaughcommunityfarm.weebly.com/scythe-festival.html> or contact Rob Brodie at [robmaculture@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:robmaculture@yahoo.co.uk)

If you are not a member of SABI and want to hear about other events you can easily join for a small membership fee which entitles you to a SABI badge and access to the SABI Google Group where events are announced.

Membership renewal subscriptions to SABI thereafter are optional but are encouraged.

### Equipment News

#### Jigs

I am now importing three kinds of jig.

The Slovak jig (red and yellow) has quite hard steel, but is not finished very well and occasionally small chips can come out of the cap.

The Czech jig (black) is better finished but made of rather soft steel; the anvil tends to get dented.

The new model of Austrian jig (gold and silver) is far superior, but costs over twice as much as the Eastern European models.

#### Snaiths

Fux have changed their snath design (again). There is no longer any plastic cushion at the bottom end of the snath. Instead the D ring is a more complicated shape to allow the tang of the blade to move so as to alter the hafting angle. The reason for this change seems to be that it means one manufacturing operation can be avoided. Some of the earlier versions of the new D ring can get jammed on the snath. If this happens put the snath on a firm wooden surface with the grub screw side facing downwards and give the ring a couple of sharp smacks on its rounded top with a lump hammer. If you break your snath (God forbid) and want to order another shaft, you will need to let me or any other dealer know when you bought your snath.



# The Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland

invites you to an online

## Scythers' Question Time

Thursday 15th April 6:30pm

**Join us to hear our experienced panel of experts answer your questions on all matters scythe-related.**

- what, how and when to mow
- scythe set up and technique
- maintenance and repair: sharpening, honing and peening
- meadow management, lawn mowing and topping weeds
- haymaking and other uses of cut grass
- **any question the scythe community can come up with!**

### Want to join the Zoom?

To attend the event register with <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sqt-scythers-question-time-tickets-147678509397> and we'll send you a Zoom link two hours before the session.

The Zoom session will be opened from 6:15 – we will start promptly at 6:30

### Have a question you want answered?

Please send it to [sabimatters@gmail.com](mailto:sabimatters@gmail.com) by **midnight on Wednesday 7th April**.

Questions will be preselected to ensure a wide range of subjects.

You will be able to pose additional questions during the session via Zoom Chat



6:15pm  
6:30pm  
6:35pm  
7:10pm  
7:25pm  
7:30pm

### Running order

Zoom meeting open to dial in  
Introductions  
Questions and answers  
Questions from the floor.  
Wrap up  
Finish

**Join SABI at**

[www.scytheassociation.org/membership/how-do-i-join/](http://www.scytheassociation.org/membership/how-do-i-join/)



# COURSE DIRECTORY

**Please note that due to the current Covid-19 pandemic all courses are subject to cancellation.**

Teachers marked with an asterisk usually have scythes for sale.

## Northern England

### Steve Tomlin\*

stevetomlin8@gmail.com

stevetomlin8.wordpress.com/learn-to-scythe  
Practical, fun courses covering all the skills to use and maintain your scythe. I am an internationally respected scythe expert, author of *Learn to Scythe* and sell scythe kits. I can travel to teach you at your venue at £80/day. Email stevetomlin8@gmail.com to book  
Learn to Scythe 4<sup>th</sup> June, 23<sup>rd</sup> July at Slaidburn, Lancs  
Learn to Scythe 5<sup>th</sup> August Chapel-le-Dale, Yorkshire  
Learn to Scythe 4<sup>th</sup> September at Sedbergh, Cumbria  
Peening workshop tbc at Slaidburn, Lancashire

### John Robson Grundy

Can be contacted at [contact@wildernesstamed.com](mailto:contact@wildernesstamed.com).  
Offering courses for groups or one to one courses for individuals who want to be more eco-friendly.  
Details at <https://www.wildernesstamed.com/training-courses>  
Join the mailing list to receive up to date details. <https://www.wildernesstamed.com/north-east-cereal-killers>

### Danny Hodgson

Yorkshire & Midlands  
Contact [danny\\_hodgson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:danny_hodgson@hotmail.co.uk)  
Beginners and Improvers courses

## Wales & Borders

### David Kuegler\*

Parry's Meadow, Orcop Hill, Hereford  
[david.kuegler@btinternet.com](mailto:david.kuegler@btinternet.com) Mob 07485 450402  
Day covers everything to make you happy and efficient with your scythe through to maintaining a sharp peened edge. I sell full scythe kits, all oiled and peened.  
Courses every other week @ Parrys Field, Orcop Hill, Hereford or clients meadowgarden. Either Weds or Sats  
Lydia, client 2000, scything cider orchard: so happy she scythed twice, & he peening is to die for!

### Phillip Batten\*

Dyfed Permaculture Farm Trust, Carmarthenshire  
Learn to scythe or improve your skills. Workshops give you lots of hands on experience; a chance to "try before you buy" or get your own scythe set up well; a visit to a smallholding where the scythe is integral to the management and is used all year round in a variety of situations.  
Scythe Cymru run scythe and peening courses on a smallholding in West Wales throughout the summer. For current availability see:-  
<https://scythecymru.co.uk/courses/> or contact Michelle on [info@scythecymru.co.uk](mailto:info@scythecymru.co.uk)

### Phillip Lewis\*

Mold [phljoinery@googlemail.com](mailto:phljoinery@googlemail.com)  
Instagram: [smithy\\_farm\\_](https://www.instagram.com/smithy_farm_)  
Available to teach individuals or groups in North Wales.  
Hill fort scything course 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> August  
Accommodation any nationwide groups or individuals. To make bookings > <https://wildbushcraft.co.uk/courses/hill-fort-scything-course>

### Simon Cooter

Stiperstones and Downton Gorge NNRs, Rigmoores, Pennerley, Minsterley, Shropshire SY5 0NE  
Tel: 01743 792294; Mob: 07967 693507;  
[Simon.Cooter@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Simon.Cooter@naturalengland.org.uk)  
Site manager for the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, courses are usually run from the nature reserve base where practice can be carried out on a variety of vegetation and slopes.

## South West England

### Kevin Austin\*

Liskeard, Cornwall/SW Devon. 07943653825  
[www.skyegrove.co.uk](http://www.skyegrove.co.uk) [kevin@skyegrove.co.uk](mailto:kevin@skyegrove.co.uk)  
Learn to use and maintain the Austrian scythe. Group courses or one on one tuition, beginners or improvers, please contact.  
Beginners Courses 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 19<sup>th</sup> June, 17<sup>th</sup> July  
Improvers Course 21<sup>st</sup> August  
All Courses £65 10am - 4pm plus lunch  
Please check the website for more detail.

### Richard Brown\*

Kings Lynn, Norfolk. [richardjbrown556@gmail.com](mailto:richardjbrown556@gmail.com)  
Botanist, ecologist and seedsman offers scythe courses and tuition by arrangement. Can tailor courses for individuals or groups to include practical scythe instruction plus wildflower meadow and grassland management. Visit Emorsgate Seeds website or email as above for more details.  
Practical scything & grassland management courses provisionally scheduled 2021:  
Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June at Emorsgate's Wild Flower Seed Farm in Norfolk.  
Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June at Emorsgate's Wild Flower Farm near Bath, Somerset.  
Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July at North Meadow, (Fritillary meadow) Cricklade, Wilts.

Practical scything & grassland management. Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020. near Bath BA1 8AJ. An opportunity to learn to scythe on Emorsgate's wild flower farm on the edge of the Cotswolds. Mow our restored flower rich grasslands, surrounded by a patchwork of small fields, orchard, woodland and hedgerows. For details and to book online go here <https://wildseed.co.uk/articles/2020/01/08/scythe-and-grassland-courses-and-events-2020>

### Simon Fairlie \*

Dorset/Devon  
Two day course in scything, including peening freehand and with jig, haymaking by hand and some aspects of grassland management. Lunch is included.  
Accommodation and other meals are available on site.  
Begins Friday evening 14 May. Ends 5pm Sunday 16 May.  
For information about the course content:  
[scythes@myphone.coop](mailto:scythes@myphone.coop).  
For pricing, booking etc: [info@monktonwyldcourt.org](mailto:info@monktonwyldcourt.org), 01297 560342, <https://monktonwyldcourt.co.uk>

### Andi Rickard\*

[andirickard@me.com](mailto:andirickard@me.com) 07581 239453  
Somerset  
Current UK Scything Champion, Ladies Champion for 9 years. Eight years experience teaching scythe skills throughout the South West.

Course dates and venues booked by arrangement, one-to-one sessions or group bookings.

Please go to [www.somersetscytheschool.com](http://www.somersetscytheschool.com) for more details and how to apply.

### **Chris Riley\***

(North Dorset) [chris@pratensis.net](mailto:chris@pratensis.net) 07719 691312  
[www.pratensis.net](http://www.pratensis.net)

Available for scythe training in the Wessex area, and beyond.

For the following beginners' courses, contact me or see the relevant web sites for info and to book. Scythes available for purchase.

Carymoor, near Castle Cary, SE Somerset. Tues/Wed 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (Two day beginners' course)

Lords of the Manor Hotel, Gloucestershire. Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021 [www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk)

Lords of the Manor Hotel, Gloucestershire. Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020 [www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk)

Lords of the Manor Hotel, Gloucestershire. Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 [www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk)

### **Adrian Thomas**

North Devon

Full courses when and where required in the North Devon area. Also taster/have-go-sessions

Contact: [adrianthomas59@gmail.com](mailto:adrianthomas59@gmail.com)

### **Beth Tiltson\***

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June, Flaxley, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire £80

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July, Flaxley, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire £80

Visit <https://cloudcottageland.co.uk/scythe-courses-in-gloucestershire> to book online.

### **Ross Adams**

South Devon

For more information [ross@abundantgardens.uk](mailto:ross@abundantgardens.uk)

or visit my website at... [www.abundantgardens.uk](http://www.abundantgardens.uk)

Introduction to scything – June 19<sup>th</sup>, July 17<sup>th</sup>, August 14<sup>th</sup> £65

## **South East England**

### **Clive Leeke\***

<https://www.theoldfarmyard.co.uk/training-courses/>  
Bookings: [Hedgecraft@theoldfarmyard.co.uk](mailto:Hedgecraft@theoldfarmyard.co.uk)

I've been teaching scything for 10 years, in the South East and London, for colleges, local authorities and environmental groups.

My courses are for novices & improvers, with or without their own scythes, and cover all types of vegetation. I can also give one-to-one tuition on your own meadow.

Introduction to Austrian Scything; Gallowstree Common, South Oxon RG4 9DS; Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2021; price £70, including refreshments

Improver's Course with Peening; Gallowstree Common, South Oxon RG4 9DS; Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2021; price £70, including refreshments

Email [Hedgecraft@theoldfarmyard.co.uk](mailto:Hedgecraft@theoldfarmyard.co.uk) to book

### **Stephan Gehrels**

Brighton [admin@brightonpermaculture.org.uk](mailto:admin@brightonpermaculture.org.uk)

Scything Workshop, Stanmer Park, Brighton BN1 9PZ, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 10:00-17:00, £56-£175 (depending on income).

A practical and theoretical workshop covering the history, use and maintenance of the scythe, enabling the participant to use a scythe competently. (There is also an option to volunteer the following day.) For full details and bookings: [brightonpermaculture.org.uk/scything-workshop/](http://brightonpermaculture.org.uk/scything-workshop/)

### **Claire White**

[clairewhitegardens@gmail.com](mailto:clairewhitegardens@gmail.com) Mobile: 07899 843 061

I offer demonstrations, individual and group training in Essex and the south east for beginners and improvers.

Essex Scythe Weekend 2020 Scythe practice, meadow management and peening, camping available.  
Booking and more info: [chesmcgee@gmail.com](mailto:chesmcgee@gmail.com)

### **Nicole Clough\***

Oxfordshire. [good\\_clean\\_mud@icloud.com](mailto:good_clean_mud@icloud.com)

I provide training in the use, maintenance and joy of the Austrian scythe. I run one day courses in Oxfordshire and surrounding counties and also offer tailor made sessions.

Sun 21<sup>st</sup> July 2019 – Cogges Manor Farm, Witney, Oxfordshire [www.cogges.org.uk](http://www.cogges.org.uk)

Sat 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 2019 – Ragmans Farm, Lydbrook, Gloucestershire [www.ragmans.co.uk/home/](http://www.ragmans.co.uk/home/)

Sun 8<sup>th</sup> Sep 2019 – Cogges Manor Farm, Witney, Oxfordshire [www.cogges.org.uk/](http://www.cogges.org.uk/)

Places on the above courses are £60 per person, with an additional cost of £20 if equipment hire is required. To discuss your requirements or make a booking, please get in touch.

## **East Anglia**

### **Richard Brown\***

Kings Lynn, Norfolk. [richardjbrown556@gmail.com](mailto:richardjbrown556@gmail.com)

Botanist, ecologist and seedsman offers scythe courses and tuition.

Can tailor courses for individuals or groups to include practical scythe instruction plus wildflower meadow and grassland management.

Visit Emorsgate Seeds website <https://wildseed.co.uk/articles/events> or email the address above for more details.

Introduction to scything & meadow management. Wed 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Norfolk

Introduction to scything and orchard management. Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, Norfolk. Each course is £60

## **Scotland**

### **Steve Tomlin\***

[stevetomlin8@gmail.com](mailto:stevetomlin8@gmail.com)

[SteveTomlinCrafts.wordpress.com](http://SteveTomlinCrafts.wordpress.com)

Steve has taught several courses in Scotland, as far north as Caithness. Email to book a group workshop at your own venue and Steve will travel to you which is much more economical.



**Rob Brodie**

Fife, robmaculture@yahoo.co.uk,  
 Beginners scything workshops suitable for anyone  
 interested in using a scythe to manage green spaces.  
 Please email to arrange a workshop and for more  
 information. Visit <http://quieterimes.org> for more  
 details and to see current workshop dates.

**Ireland****Chris Hayes\***

Wexford, Ireland, chris@badgershillforestry.ie  
 Learn to use a scythe in the wonderful environment of the  
 Irish National Heritage Park in Ferrycarrig, Wexford. See  
<http://www.irishheritage.ie/> for details about booking,  
 payment and all our wonderful courses!  
 An Introduction to the Austrian Scythe Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>  
 and Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup> 75 Euro per class  
 Book Here:- [http://www.irishheritage.ie/product-  
 category/courses-2019/scything-with-chris-hayes/](http://www.irishheritage.ie/product-category/courses-2019/scything-with-chris-hayes/)  
 Scythes available to buy all year round and private tuition  
 available at The Irish National Heritage Park  
[www.irishheritage.ie](http://www.irishheritage.ie)

**Susanne Raven,**

Co. Cork, Ireland office@susanneraven.ie  
<http://www.susanneraven.ie> 00353-86-2132035,  
 Trying to find other scythe people in Ireland and

Northern Ireland to connect with and network. The more  
 people voice their interest, the more likely it is we'll make  
 more courses and mowing events happen in future. Do get  
 in contact. You're also welcome to join the facebook page n  
 Faobhar – Scythe Group Ireland.

**National**

If you have a group of friends and your own grass, the  
 following teachers can be booked to teach at your location.

**Steve Tomlin\***

Cumbria stevetomlin8@gmail.com  
[stevetomlincrafts.wordpress.com/learn-to-scythe](http://stevetomlincrafts.wordpress.com/learn-to-scythe)  
 Courses across the UK for beginners and improvers, run  
 by an internationally respected mower and tutor. I have  
 been teaching since 2010 and am the author of the Learn  
 to Scythe book, the first practical instruction manual for  
 the Austrian scythe.

**Chris Riley\***

chris@pratensis.net 07719 691312  
 Experienced scythe trainer based in North Dorset. I  
 mainly deliver beginners' courses in the Wessex area, but  
 sometimes it can be feasible to go further afield. Austrian  
 scythes available for purchase. See web site for more  
 information [www.pratensis.net](http://www.pratensis.net)

## Haymaking in Wales in the 1800's

by  
**Steve Leppard**

Five good hay-makers to each mower  
 Hay-making practices in 1815

'The following passages are from a book about South Wales, written by Walter Davies and published in 1815.  
 The photograph by John Thomas was taken around 1885.'



Here are various opinions respecting the best method of harvesting, commonly called making hay.

The hay-maker's day begins, in fine weather, as soon as the dew is perfectly evaporated. Some farmers tedd the first day as much hay as had been mown before ten o'clock, and put it into cocks that evening; what is mown after ten that day, and before ten the following day, is tedd the second morning, and so on to the end of mowing.



Others ridicule the idea of cocking any part of the first day's math in the evening of the same day; therefore their practice is, "mow and tedd the same day, leave the hay open for the night; windrow and put into small cocks the second day; spread and put into larger cocks the third day; spread, collect, and carry, if convenient, the fourth day..."

The most general method of making hay, is spreading each morning the former day's math, always putting it into small cocks in the evening; the third day these cocks are carefully spread as soon as can be after the dew is up; about noon the hay is turned, and before sun-set is collected into middling sized cocks; the fourth day these are again spread, turned, and collected ready for carriage...

Dry and warm weather is the season of danger to hasty hay-makers; weather of an opposite description compels them to give the hay time to season. Careful farmers are very scrupulous in attending to the well-tedding and spreading of their hay, during the first and second days, as they are the operations on which the success of making good hay chiefly depends; when these are well done, there is less danger of burning, than in other hay under equal circumstances as to succulency, time in making, &c.; but not so minutely tedded and spread: what they call "locks of hay," seldom find their way into their stacks. The document that has given us the greatest satisfaction on this

subject, is that published by Practicus, in the *Agricultural Magazine* for June, 1802, wherein is described the excellent method practised by the farmers in the neighbourhood of Cricklade, in the county of Wilts, and which we beg leave here to insert, for the satisfaction of such South Wales farmers whose practice is nearly similar, as well as for the instruction of those whose method of hay making is very different.

"The land here, though a strong clay [clayey loam] to the very surface, produces an herbage very luxuriant, and at the same time fine, and plentifully intermixed with white clover. This herbage, when converted into hay, according to the excellent practice of this neighbourhood, is found to be equally fattening with the best hay and corn, or hay and oil cake, of almost any other district in His Majesty's dominions. Indeed nothing but grass and hay are ever used here in the process of fattening, even the largest oxen. If the graziers in this part of Wiltsbire should think it worth their while to exert themselves in pursuit of the premiums given by Lord Somerville, no other graziers in the kingdom could possibly contend with them. "In the mode of hay-making here, they excel as much as in their herbage. I shall therefore relate a few particulars of their process as given me by one of them.

—"My chief consideration is (says he) to make such hay as will fatten, not merely keep cattle alive; and my least consideration is the expense of doing this. Before I begin, I always engage five good hay-makers to each mower. On the first morning of mowing, although there is apparently little for them to do, I order out my whole strength, and first, by a careful tedding, and, as soon as this is done, by an immediate turning of the grass, whilst it is in its grass state, this herbage is so worked, that scarcely any two blades of it can be found adhering to each other, or lying in the same direction. Thus the whole is made to lie as open or hollow as possible, and





every blade is equally exposed to the drying effects of sun and air, and the colour and smell of the whole is, as much as possible, preserved. By having plenty of hands, I can give it repeated turnings, and I gain nearly a whole day in the process, by working it well at first; and thus, a few shillings extra expended at the beginning, is frequently the saving or gaining of pounds. I never suffer my hay to lie abroad upon the ground after five o'clock in the afternoon, when the falling of the evening's dew commences, which is, I am convinced, very injurious to hay. I never suffer my hay to be touched in the morning, till the dew has entirely disappeared. I never carry my hay together into a barn or building, but always into a rick, where, I know, it settles much closer together, and will keep much sweeter, and preserve its weight much longer than in a covered building."

"These rules and regulations, although they may not be new to many, are, I assert, genuine and essential to the process of making good hay; and the man who observes them not, is either ignorant of, or inattentive to his own interest... The true principle of hay-making surely is, to dry every particle of the hay alike, and never suffer fermentation to take place before the hay is collected in the rick."

General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of South Wales: Containing the Counties of Brecon, Caermarthen, Cardigan, Glamorgan, Pembroke, Radnor, Volume 1 by Walter Davies, A.M. Board of Agriculture (Great Britain) Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1815 pp. 563-568

## The SABI Video Competition A Success?

In the last issue of The Window it was suggested that we have a video competition during lockdown in an attempt to cheer everyone up after the cancellation of all of last years scything events. I'm glad to say that the response was very positive. Grateful thanks to all those who took part both in the creation of videos and in viewing and voting on them.

The information on the competition was disseminated to the entire SABI and Windrow Mailing lists (some 1800 people) This resulted in a total of 2670 total views of the channel. None of the videos were made public. The links to the individual videos and the playlist were only made available to the mailing lists. I received a number of emails regarding the various videos. Some people even voted by email and alas some had a few issues with the voting mechanism my apologies for the confusion I caused with this. Here are a few extracts...

*Watched all the videos and decided not to vote. Don't want to mark anyone down. Just happy to applaud the combined effort from the competition organisers, the movers and the camera/drone operators. Brilliant!*  
*John Volker*

*Thanks for this. Most delightful and a reminder of good times past.*  
*Michael Orton-Jones*

*Apologies. Cannot crack the technology for voting but much enjoyed everyones efforts. Thanks for brightening up a dreary time*

*The videos are splendid - each in its different way. That they bothered to do them and share is fantastic enough alone. But where do I vote?*



# Words From an Undiminished Woman

by  
*Chris Hardy*

If you're ever passing by the Prieuré de Sainte-Gauburge in Normandy then I'd whole-heartedly recommend you stop in for a visit to the brilliant Perche Eco-Museum. Unashamedly parochial and French, dripping in an astonishing collection of agricultural tools, artifacts and the odd old video (making a wooden cartwheel fit its steel rim is as real eye-opener). Language, humanity's most common tool, has been



created using totems from many aspects of our development and expansion. One of those activities, our travels (and *travaux*!) through and over water and land gives us nouns, adjectives and verbs to universally describe direction, form, texture, mapping, weather patterns and emotion for example. Farming, food, hunting and gathering also are big drivers in language development.

La faux armée (the armed scythe) – the noun arm and its



function as part of our human physiology is made a verb: to care, gather, hold and weaponise; and it becomes an adjective 'armed' to characterise this ancient tool. Is that weaponised for cutting and/or multi-armed for gathering? This armed scythe has many other names in many other tongues - scythe cradle,

grain cradle, scythe basket, turkey wing scythe, grape vine scythe, faux a rateaux (rake scythe).

Just like human tool-sharing, language is also a tracking device letting us follow humanity's route though time and landscape as we pursued the necessities of gathering, farming, sharing and carrying.

This particular mowing and gathering tool is huge, difficult to wield by virtue of its size and shape. The etymology of 'wield' is derived from many sources - Old English weldan, West Saxon wealdan, Proto-Germanic waldan, Old Saxon waldan, Old Norse valda - all roughly meaning to have power over, compel, tame, subdue (and used as a noun to describe landscape features too.)



In the Eco Museum's display this scythe's function was put thus: Les faux armées necessitent une grande force pour etre manoeuvres. Leur emploi diminue le role des femmes dans le moisson qui furent, tout au long du XIX siecle, chargees de remasser les javelles.

Translated by Google: Armed scythes require great force to be manoeuvred. Their employment diminished the role of women in the harvest who were, throughout the XIX century, responsible for collecting the bundles(of corn).

Strength is a necessary force to be able to use any tool – but poise, balance and a great deal of experience must be employed as brute force alone is physically unsustainable even if just mowing for an hour.



What the French author didnt say, and what I think as an ever-to-be mowers' understudy is that this ancient tool's evolution has been very carefully considered. Language and function have been its designers as well as (relative) ease of use, availability of materials to

make it, a deep understanding of material durability – the right wood to form and take the stresses of its operation, the maintenance of peened and brilliant cutting edges (this would all come under the banner of Material Science today). Nor does it refer the right cutting conditions – level earth, crop moisture content, weather patterns – known and transferred through language. We do get a sense of shame and embarrassment for those poor diminished women though!

And finally my brief web searches found this, ‘The term (scythe) is found in Latin-Old English glossaries

from as early as about 725..and is likely to originate from a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) language. No direct record of PIE exists but it is hypothesized to have been spoken as a single language from 4500 BC to 2500 BC during the Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age, though estimates vary by more than a thousand years.’ It’s pretty amazing to think that when you pick up your scythe it has actually been 6000 years in the making – from concept to production. It is the artefact that reveals this tool’s route but language describes the way.

Chris Hardy  
Undiminished woman!

## Making Hay with Vikings

by  
*Shane O'Reilly*

At about the age of twelve I recall my mother explaining to me the reason behind algebra and how, suddenly, the penny dropped and its usefulness became clear. I experienced a similar moment on a trip to Norway and the Naturforvendbund annual gathering to carry out a “Hesjing”.



We are fortunate, at Wimpole, to have flower meadows and vast expanse of grassland to mow; I have also tried to mow at Mucheleney on the iron weed they call grass and so thought I understood the what and the why. when the opportunity to mow in Norway arose, Jayne jumped at the opportunity and I was dragged along. I knew what mowing was about, you cut the grass and stacked it up, where's the difficulty in understanding that.

Per-Øystein Klunderud had sent explicit instructions; how to get to Rygsetra, a small community 50 kms north of Oslo, what to bring and a programme of events. It worked like clockwork. We were met off the train by Kjell and then realised we had been travelling with about 6 others also attending but we were in the wrong carriage. The motor transport promptly dropped off at the site where Per-Øystein showed us our accommodation and let us settle in. But we weren't

allowed to relax, Gunnar appeared on the scene and insisted on us viewing the grass meadow that we were to mow the next day.

A 5 to 6 hectare (25 acres?) expanse of light grass and flowers, set on a steeply sloping hillside and surrounded by thick birch, pine and other woodlands. With a farm at the bottom of the hill and a lake beyond that, the setting was idyllic and in my limited knowledge of the country seemed typically Norwegian. However Gunnar was not there to show us the grass to cut, oh no, he wanted to show us his pride and joy, the Gentianes. He had discovered a patch of these blue beauties and had carefully cut around them and marked them with posts so that they would be spared the butchery that was to come.

His enthusiasm and friendliness set the tone for the weekend. As we toured the site with explanations of the various flowers

and constant references to a large tome of wild flowers we were joined by other members of the group and our informal tour was only brought to a close when a bell sounded for dinner. A selection of salads, Norwegian cheeses and meats followed by cake and coffee outside where we were introduced to each other and began to attach names to faces. We were a group of approximately 40 and of those, most were from Norway, Sweden or Denmark and spoke a common tongue and some special guests from Rumania - the reputed Atilla, a mower of extreme talent and great charm.





At breakfast the next day we were divided into 2 groups Norwegian and English speaking, of which the latter group was composed mainly of Swedes, Spaniards and us 2 lonely English.

Our group had a session with both flora and fauna experts, Arne and Evan, and toured the meadow examining all the various habitats and their inhabitants. The explanations included how to find insects from the plant behaviours and what to find where. After lunch we swapped over and our group became the mowing debutants.



First was the safety lecture, followed by how to sharpen both types of scythe blade, hard by grinding and soft by peening and then blade and snath set-up. With that we were sent out onto the meadow with instructions to 'dance' and breathe but it was more like havoc. Little by little we all fell into the beautiful rhythmical method of mowing taught by Mats with him giving instruction and encouragement. In my case this included showing my faults on video taken on his phone (sneaky Mats). So I had to mow with a ball of grass under my left arm to stop it swinging out wide.



After dinner, most retired and slept the sleep of those who had done a hard days work, especially as the next day was an early start - 6 o'clock prompt - to get the meadow cut in time for the open day show in the

afternoon. With the mountain dew still heavy on the light meadow grass, the group set to. Newly learnt techniques were being put to the test as metre by metre the uncut area was reduced.

As the newbies were mowing, the old hands set to on



the "Hesje" (pronounced Heshay) making. Lines of posts were driven into the ground and a steel wire strung between them about 250mm off the ground. Once secured, the helpers layed cut grass onto the lines and once the entire length was laden, a second wire was strung about 100mm above the first layer; and so it continued until the poles were fully laden to a height of about 2 metres. As the mowers moved to newer areas, so the helpers moved and erected new Hesjes. Eager to learn, some mowers also began to fill the wires and quickly gained the knack of laying on an armful of grass so that it didn't slide off to either side. Not easy when the lines were being loaded from both sides. Quickly the hillside was being denuded of its lushness and more Hesjes were taking shape as helpers and mowers continued their work. More poles and reels of wire were brought out from the farm barns as required and the holes in the ground located by probing, as the grazing sheep of the previous year had closed them over. Due to the calcareous geology (yes I was listening) the hard ground required re-using the same holes every year.



The early start meant we had to halt for breakfast and to make our own packed lunch as we were to work through until all mowing was complete. All ingredients were provided even the wrapping paper and a pen to record your name on the packaging. The organisation was incredible and newcomers learnt by watching the regulars or were given instructions on how to wrap a lunch (thanks Sidsel) properly.



Then it was back to work on the hillside, taking turns mowing, raking and stacking.



By way of a break, demonstration of tree pollarding for



animal fodder was given. A large elm was selected and after instruction the group set about demolishing its branches. It was the one moment that I felt limbs (human) were in danger as men up ladders flailed bill hooks in all directions. Happily there were no fatalities. The severed branches were tied up with elm bark and piled onto an old farm trailer which was dragged down to the open day site. I hadn't seen this before but apparently it provides good nourishment for livestock.



The other extra curricular activity was the bread and cake making. "Look out for the oven smoke" we were told as this signalled the making of the bread. Sure enough the smoke pattered up into the clear air from the hillside oven barn and we all tramped down to "assist". Under instruction we allowed to knead the bread and stack it alongside the now increasing heat of the wood fired oven to prove.

Cake was also prepared and I am grateful to Aud for letting me into her kitchen and help. Both the smell and atmosphere were incredible and just added to the potency of the day prior to guests arriving to witness the ceremonial "mowing charge"

Lunch time loomed and our pre-packed parcels were brought out to us. We ate in the field with a musical accompaniment on the fiddle, such a great feeling of work and play coinciding. Nothing can beat eating a door-stopper sandwich on an open hillside with Norwegian jigs wafting over the now warm air, washed down by Norwegian coffee.

Being a bit of a lightweight, I had to dilute mine 50/50 with hot water but once I discovered this I quickly became addicted to it. Just as well as we were 'forced' to have coffee and cake at every opportunity.





By lunchtime the meadow was cut apart from a lower hillside section that opened onto the Open Day arena, this was saved for the Open show mowing “charge”. With the public seated at the lower level, mowers formed up with the Romanian contingent in national costume leading the charge. As the first mower cut enough ahead, the second would start behind and so on until the whole

obstacles and leaving bare earth in its wake. As each mower finished their cut at the bottom of the slope the spectators broke into applause and the mower returned to the top of the slope to start another row at the far end of the charge. To celebrate the end of the mowing, that evening we had a dinner with specialities brought from Spain and Rumania alongside more traditional Norwegian items such as Rummer Grot and a brown cheese. I didn't quite attach myself to these delights as much as my hosts but I'm sure that's because of my bad taste and not that of the food. To top the day off, we were all invited to sit around a campfire up in the meadow and having started at 06.00, yours truly finally called it a wrap at midnight leaving the others gossiping under the semi daylight that is a Norwegian summer night. Sunday, the final day, the last chance to finish the Hesje and the cleaning of the rooms before a farewell lunch and departures. We also managed to squeeze in a dip in the lake, bracing but memorable. It was then as we returned to work that I had my moment of Epiphany, the whole event seemed to gel, I got it. That grass meadow mowing and tree pollarding provided much needed winter fodder and were not just stand alone activities, they were part of the whole picture. The drive to finish the Hesje before departure was like completing the summers activities before winter set in. If you are lucky enough to take part next



hillside was filled with a phalanx of mowers. Instructed to stop and sharpen when the lead mower did, the effect was one of a team working in unison and harmony. Indeed I felt completely relaxed and was enjoying the way my blade followed the terrain running over

year, I hope that like us, you will enjoy meeting some lovely people and relish the completeness of being in a team where the only competition is to finish the Hesjing and make hay like the Vikings.



# Wild Flowers and Scything in Suburbia

by  
*Daphne Ison*

Unlike most members of the scythe association, I do not live in a rural environment or have large areas of hay meadows to mow. I live on a suburban housing estate in North Warwickshire in a town near to Coventry. When we moved into our first house I kept the garden in a traditional way with borders, flower beds and bedding plants. Nice as it was, my eye would frequently stray to the more unkempt parts which reminded me of childhood days of picnics in the Warwickshire countryside, which I now missed.

Moving on to our next house nearby, the scene was set. It had a much larger garden than before and was



bordered on one side by a line of native trees of hawthorn, elderberry and blackthorn which the builders had left untouched. I was further inspired by photographs in magazines of meadows rich with colour and I decided then that this was the way to go.



My first vision was to plant snowdrops followed by other Spring flowering bulbs such as wild daffodils, fritillaries and then follow with wild flowers suited to growing in grass. This would be confined to one area and would become the 'Spring' meadow as it is today. The rest of the ground I prepared for a whole season



before sowing with meadow mixture supplied by Richard Brown's company 'Emorsgate Seeds' in Norfolk.

It proved to be a steep learning curve, not because the seeds failed, but because the soil was too rich. It was heavy clay, sticky and low lying and the grasses soon overwhelmed the flowers.

Apart from cowslips and oxeye daisies, most of the flowers migrated to surrounding borders, i.e. the very beautiful meadow cranesbill, musk mallow, red campion and betony. It's hard to name my favourite. Over the years I added more and created another area to be kept relatively free of grass. Dropwort, teasel, fennel and borage have all been very successful here and self seed where they will.

I developed a 'go with the flow' policy and avoided flowers which were too much struggle. A self seeding garden proved to be done, only the pulling out of the excess. Plants from garden centres were generally, I thought, too 'gaudy' to be included, but there are some exceptions and one such example is nicotiana of the tall variety which suits the soil and looks in keeping with its surroundings.

As I write, now well into March, wild daffodils are in bloom and the fritillaries are following close behind have increased in numbers



this year despite the annual invasions of red lily beetles during the summer, (which my granddaughter stalks regularly and swipes what she can, into jam jars of water). Alliums didn't succeed here for more than a couple of years, probably disliking the damp soil that the fritillaries thrive in. The grass here is left uncut until the end of June unless the sward shows signs of collapsing in which case it necessary to cut sooner.

Each year I have cut the remaining grass dutifully at the end of each season, at first using a heavy duty 'cow horn' handled strimmer, (noisy, heavy and kept stalling



as the grass wound itself round the line) a rotary lawnmower angled upwards, again noisy and not at all satisfactory. I even tried using hand shears before turning my hand to the scythe.

The first scythe I purchased was from eBay. It had a metal snath and what looked like a typical Austrian blade. I soon knew I needed to know more, so then signed up for a day course in the Cotswolds, led by Chris Riley. I purchased my first 'proper' scythe there, and a year later very much enjoyed a residential course at Monkton Wyld with Simon Fairlie. Here I added another blade to my collection and later faced the inevitable need to buy a peening jig. My husband made the peening pony and set me up banging away in the garage on days too wet to work outdoors.

The neighbours think I'm mad.

My last trip before lockdown was to the Green Scythe Fair in Somerset in 2019, this time meeting up and learning from other teachers (Steve Tomlin, Phil Batten and Christiana) I also had the pleasure of



meeting Richard for the first time, from whom buying the wildflower seed led me along this path.

After many years of cutting and removing the grass, and aided by sowings of yellow rattle, the fertility has declined and I can now re plant into it. I create spaces by leaving plant pots around overwinter and introduce the plants in the Spring. Often I will sow seed in the greenhouse and grow the plants on until they are strong enough to survive in grass. Other times I will move plants which have seeded in other areas.

My hope is that when I finally become old and unable to cope, the garden will be established enough to be maintained with just a couple of necessary cuts each year. I might even be glad to call upon the services of S.A.B.I. members for that, but one thing I won't be doing is calling in men with mowing machines to keep it 'tidy'. I am reminded of Miriam Rothschild, the early pioneer of wild flower gardening, for whom visitors to her home thought she had 'gone away' because the frontage to her house was so overgrown!

Soon, as current restrictions are lifted our two young granddaughters will run around once again, butterfly nets in hand, looking for insects, examining seed pods, overturning stones and picking flowers for their tray gardens. For the latter, fennel heads make excellent trees!

## *From the Editor*

In the previous issues of The Windrow I have thought about writing a short editorial but have always felt a little presumptuous in doing so; especially in the light of such luminaries as Simon Fairlie and Richard Brown and the other nine individuals who met together and founded SABI. (Please feel free to chide me if I have this little bit of history wrong.) It is remarkable to me that this simple tool is capable of so many things; it doesn't just cut crops, grass and brambles and save the lives of field mice, frogs and toads but serves as a binder for like minded people. Despite the difficulties the last year our community of scythers has continued to thrive and grow. We all got together to creating articles to allow the publishing of the 2020 and 2021 copies of The Windrow we have held the winter meeting (virtually), organised an online scything competition and will soon be running a "Scythers Question Time" (Just in case you hadn't noticed the flyer on page 3!). Some of you have even been able to run socially distanced courses. All from a bunch of diverse individuals brought together by that knife on a stick The Scythe!



# Transylvanian Hay Rescue

by  
*Steve Tomlin*

Back in 2011, Christiane Laganda and I set off for the far east of Romania to attend the International Haymaking festival at Gyimes in the White Carpathian mountains of Transylvania.



The event was organised as a collaboration between Attila Sarig, a local farmer, and the Pogány-havas Microregional Association which aims to to increase local incomes, preserve the region's cultural heritage, and conserve the natural environment.



We were hosted during the week by Attila and his wife Réka as well as in local homestays and enjoyed delicious food as well as entertainment from local musicians and cultural visits. Each day we headed out to scythe and make hay, culminating in building of one of the distinctive, tall Romanian haystacks. We learned a huge amount about haymaking, building haystacks and the local culture but for me, the highlight of the week wasn't even on the programme.



We'd been working hard all morning turning and raking down the hay and stacking it into pikes. It was a difficult morning, the heat was oppressive for us Brits and we struggled to understand Attila's instructions on how he wanted us to be working. Once we'd finished, we returned to the courtyard tired and dirty. We ate an excellent meal prepared by Réka and then settled down to relax for the rest of the day. Half an hour later, however, our plans changed when Attila appeared and told us that he'd spotted his neighbours still working in the next field. There was no obligation, but he was going over to help and, if we wanted, we could join him to help them gather in their harvest before the coming thunder storm.



Off we went, half running up the lane with rakes and forks in hand while Attila shouted back that it was just like we'd been doing all morning, to work the same way. In the field we found the farmer with his son and daughter working to stack up a single pike while hay lay on the ground covering almost an half an acre of steep hillside. We set to work and suddenly everything fell into place and the confusions and irritations of the



morning fell away, leaving an efficient haymaking team in its place. I could certainly feel the adrenalin running through me as we raced to beat the weather while lightning crashed around us. Everyone found unknown reserves of energy which at times came out as whoops of joy which were echoed back by others.



We finished just as the rain started, shook hands with the farmer and headed back to the shelter of our courtyard barn, still fizzing with excitement and telling stories of the adventure. Attila's father brought out his fiddle, Tom picked up his accordion and five minutes later the neighbours arrived with a crate of beer to thank us for our help. Attila said they'd resigned themselves to only saving a small part of the hay and were amazed to see us arrive and how well 'the English' could work! Attila himself was rightly proud and it helped give credibility to his project. With music and beer, we passed the rest of the afternoon drinking, talking and learning traditional dances from the local boys, flushed with the feeling of tired satisfaction.

The festival took place in 2018 but was cancelled in 2019 due to lack of interest. Hopefully this article can encourage renewed interest in a fascinating part of Europe and a beautiful landscape.

## A further Extract from 'The Land'

by  
*V. Sackville-West*

Next shall you reap your corn. Your oats shall fall  
Before full ripeness set them on to shed,  
But leave your barley till it droop the head  
With ripened beard. The tall  
Wheat for an early cut; at midday, walk  
When sun is hot and high, and if you hear  
Straw crackle in the standing crop,  
And see the slender forest of the stalk  
Still green towards the ground, but gold at top,  
Then you may know that cutting-time is near.  
Peas are pernickety; cut when you may.  
Beans, the sweet-scented beans of spring, shall stand  
Till pods are turning black, or till you clear  
Against the needs of autumn for your land.  
Now as to cutting: you shall choose your day  
When weather signs are fairest, as for hay;  
Scythe first the heading round the field by hand,  
Then send your reaper up the flat gold wall  
With whirling sails and clash of toppling sheaves:  
See that the cutter keen and sharply cleaves,  
And that the horses, driven with a level gait,  
Work the full width, and keep the measure straight.

And in the evening when the final square  
Of standing corn fast dwindles to its end,  
When the tired horses take a sharper bend,  
A shorter strip each time, as day grows late,  
Let boys stand round, with ready stick and stone,  
To watch for the dash of rabbit or of hare  
Within the last small narrowing refuge penned;  
Poor frightened Wat, that all the day alone  
(Since first the reaper with its whirring noise  
Made terror of the field,)  
Crouched to the ground, by friendly straw concealed,  
Inward and inward creeping, as the voice  
Of men came nearer, and the sheaves were thrown  
Out on the widening stubble, there to lie  
Until the stooker with his fork came by,  
And horses' shaggy fetlocks trampled past  
At their monotonous pacing, till at last  
Through thinning stalks, pressed flat against the earth,  
The fugitive saw, with starting eye,  
Their shining shoes strike fire on errant flints,  
And the sharp knives slip by with level glints.  
Then goes the lean brown body for its life,  
Streaked for the distant shelter of the wood,  
Across the new, strange stubble hurled,  
That was not there at dawn,—a different world  
Since men and horses came with cutting knife,  
And razed the corn that tall and rustling stood.  
But odds too heavy end the frantic race;  
There's nothing but a twitching body cast  
Down by a jacket, as 'twere nothing worth  
But shillings to the farmer's frugal wife.

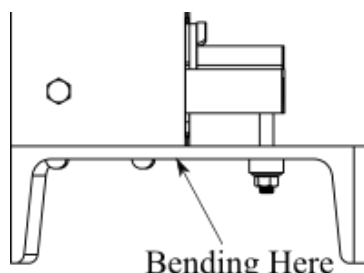
A full copy of this poem may be found here....

# Russian Jig Postscript?

by  
*Colin Close*

I know! I know! you're all asking the question 'How much longer is he going to keep going on about this project!' ?

I will try and make this the last one but I make no guarantees that I will not resurrect the beast in an alternative form.



You may recall from the previous article that the effectiveness of the jig was being degraded because it was not stiff enough. The baseplate was distorting across it's width (see sketch) and this was setting the limit on the force that could be applied to the blade.



There was no point in making the loading spring stronger if the jig was going to bend somewhere else.

The picture below shows where I have welded on some additional bracing to the mounting plate.

Unfortunately all this did was to move the flexure to the next weakest place in this case the part that carries the anvil and striker.



The movement on this part was severe not only upward but but at 45 degrees (see sketch). This was much more difficult to deal with as it required an increase in thickness of the material on which the striking machine

was mounted but also an arrangement to prevent deflection in the other plane too. You can see the solution in the picture; it's not elegant but it has minimised the problem. In testing with the stronger coil spring it was possible to detect the individual strikes of

the tool on the blade. With careful setting of the stop it was possible to peen an edge. There were still two issues though. The first is blade curvature; the jig does not deal well with hooked blades. As can be seen from the next picture I had modified the shape and width of the stop against which the blade rests this was my first attempt. It was better but still not really good enough.



The other issue which was still occurring was that the edge of the blade was still being curled up. Those who have been following these articles will remember that I did

an engineering study of how this jig might operate. In it I stated....

The stop arrangement causes the edge to be pushed forward as the striker descended forcing the metal of the edge to be stretched away from the main body of the blade just as it would if peening by hand. Though the movement is small (circa 1mm)"

I now believe this to be wrong! What actually appears to be happening is that the edge is locked hard on the anvil and as the anvil swings the edge is "wrapped" around the striker and it is this action that causes the curvature. Is the curvature a bad thing? Not in itself I think because it does give an effect similar to "hollow grinding" which reduces the amount of metal that needs to be removed to sharpen the blade. The downside is that the edge is weakened as it is already partly folded over. So how to get a flat edge? A little thought led me to the conclusion that if the swinging anvil did not go past the horizontal then the edge would have to remain flat.

After a bit of cogitation I came up with the solution in the pic below. Unfortunately one of the snags with the



design is that changing the load on the spring with the adjusting bolt also alters the position of the anvil in relation to the striker. This in turns means



that the whole device has to be dismantled in order to adjust the spring pressure for different settings of the anvil/striker positions.

The solution was to move the pivot point of the anvil in the vertical direction that the starting location of the anvil could be varied without altering the spring pressure too much.

This worked and the curvature could be prevented. Unfortunately the modification could not be fully exploited because tilting the swinging anvil significantly from the horizontal greatly reduces the force applied by the striker. An inclined plane is formed between the striker and the anvil and even with the spring wound as tight as possible there was still insufficient load to compress the steel of the blade. It was possible though to minimise the curling effect by using a small offset and still have sufficient spring pressure.

Here is a pic of a Falci blade peened with the tool. It



can be seen that a satisfactory result has been achieved. The thickness of the blade at the edge is approximately 0.05mm. A lick with a stone gives a usable edge.

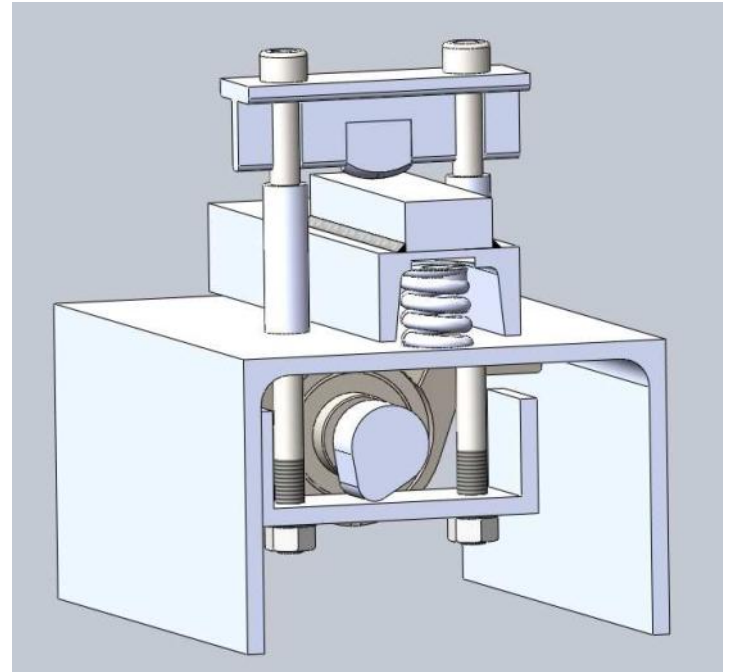
A picture of the finished article. The 'G' clamp and



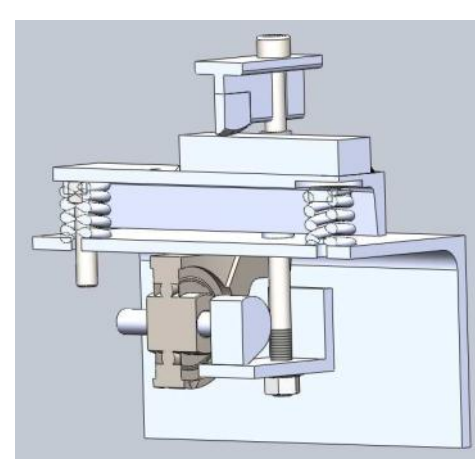
weight are an attempt to reduce further flexure of the striker mounting. In conclusion the jig works but it has some disadvantages. The first is it's weight I'm not so young any more it's true but all up it weighs at least 20 kilos (44lb) so I wouldn't want to be carrying it around the Green Scythe Fair!! It

requires a mains electricity supply of around 500 Watts so would need a powerful inverter and car battery to run it in a remote location and even then the length of

time it could be operated would be very limited. It does not deal well with hooked blades in its present form. On the upside it only takes 30 seconds or so to peen a blade and the quality of peen is high as the number of blows per unit length of blade is high even when working fast. I have thought long and hard about how to improve on the basic concept and have the start of a



revised design which can be seen in the sketch below. It will be much lighter and could be powered by a cordless drill (or impact driver) allowing it to be independent of mains power. Weight will be greatly reduced and it will be far stiffer. A new concept of anvil



design aims reproduce some of that which is possible with a bar anvil and peening hammer. For those of you with a mechanical bent consider what happens if one spring has a higher load than

the other and that the anvil is not constrained in the longitudinal direction. There is alas still the issue of edge positioning and I have yet to come up with an effective solution for that.

In conclusion making and testing this device has been an interesting adventure. It is not perfect but if you have a need to peen a lot of blades fast; at 30 seconds or so per blade it's hard to beat. Will the new design feature in the next issue of The Windrow? Only if the editor hasn't enough articles to fill it!!!



# The Winner of the SABI Video Competition is

**RICHARD BROWN** with his brilliantly composed  
**MEADOW MOW**

*Runners up were*  
*PETER BLACKWELL with his charming My Little Friend*  
*and*  
*ROGER CO with his technically brilliant Team Mowing in Lockdown*

*Grateful thanks to all the contributors for helping make this happen.*  
*Thanks also to all the viewers and voter who brought us a worthy winner.*

## Results

Total Votes YouTube + email

Video	Total Votes	Impressions	Click Through Rate	Total Views	Comments	Postal Votes
Meadow Mow	35	615	8.60%	509	5	2
My Little Friend	28	752	8.30%	274	5	
Team Mowing in Lockdown	20	773	8.50%	313	1	
Scything the Garden Lawn	19	785	8.50%	318	11	2
Apple, Pear and Plum Song	11	358	17.30%	300	3	
Bush Hack	8	54	101.90%	127	4	
Mowing in Flipflops	7	647	9.90%	264	2	
Mowing at Wood Henge	6	752	10.20%	324	1	
First Time	5	488	10.50%	241	2	

These results show that Richard Brown's 'Meadow Mow' is the clear winner. Richard said to me that it was probably because it was first in the playlist however as soon as I saw his submission I knew it would win.

If one looks at some of the other data generated by YouTube you can see some interesting numbers that seem to indicate that video order had little to do with the result.

The 'impressions' column gives a clue to this. Here's some background on what 'impressions' are...

When a viewer comes across a video thumbnail on YouTube, they are called impressions, i.e. how many times your video thumbnail is shown on YouTube.

Think of each impression as potential reach on YouTube, an opportunity for a view.

If you look at the data you can see that the impressions for Meadow Mow are less than some of the other videos that got a significant number of votes.

The other metric which is a useful measure of a videos quality is the 'click-through rate' This is the percentage of 'impressions' that have resulted in a view. Quite why Bush Hack has managed to exceed 100% is a mystery that only Google knows the answer

to! Again it can be seen that the percentages are very similar in the top 4 videos

A YouTube view is only counted when the following two criteria apply: A user intentionally initiates the watching of a video. The user watches it on the platform for at least 30 seconds.

Given the other data this shows that Richard Brown's video commanded the greatest amount of attention from viewers.

When Easter is over and the publishing rush dies down I will make the videos publically available for all to view. Sadly there are two videos that contain copyrighted music. As the channel was in my name I decided to take the risk of leaving them as they were and accepting any personal liability that may have arisen. However making them publically available is a risk I am not prepared to take. YouTube offers a service that mutes the offending material and one author has opted for this option. The other video will be delayed until the music is replaced.

We now have a SABI YouTube channel so lets fill it. We may even have an autumn competition to feature all those videos you took over the summer!!



# Ninth SABI Winter Virtual Meeting

Minutes of the Winter Gathering of the Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland  
held 'On Line'  
on  
Saturday 30th January 2021

## ***Present***

Peter (Blackwell), Steve (Tomlin), Andi (Rickard), Ida (Fabrizio), Ruth (Pullan), Raffi (Martin), Richard (Brown), Mary (Ellis), Chris (Riley), Fi (Pollack), Phil (Batten) and Michelle (Laine), Colin (Close), Adrian (Thomas) and Mark (Allery)

## ***1) Introduction and welcome from Chair(s)***

Mary facilitating – welcome and house-keeping for zoom meetings .

Thanks to Richard for instigating, Chris for setting up and Michelle for hosting.

Richard – welcome to our 10th meeting, 10 years ago we first met with the intention of forming a scythe association at John Letts house in Oxford. It was a great weekend, though at the time it was far from clear that such a disparate bunch of individuals would be able to form and maintain a scythe association. We're still here so it must have been a success.

This time the aim is to have a meeting as we haven't been able to hold one physically under the current restrictions and also just to allow us to get together.

## ***2) Note of apologies and non-zoomers***

Charlotte, Simon (Damant), Nicole (Prater), Jez (Hastings) sent apologies

Jim (McVittie), Simon (Fairlie), and Gill (Barron) are not on zoom and sent inputs to the meeting separately

## ***3) 'Go-around' update from each zoom participant***

Each zoom participant gave a brief personal update in turn on their activities in the past year.

Hi from Ida, Raffi and Ruth on a farm in Worcestershire at the moment, Peter in Yorkshire, Andi in Somerset, Chris in Wiltshire, Phil and Michelle in Cymru, Steve in Manchester, Mark in West Sussex, special welcome to John on the farm in Oxfordshire, Richard in Norfolk, Adrian in North Devon, Colin in South Devon, Mary now in Kent and Fi currently back in Guernsey.

Everyone's circumstances differ but a common theme was the cancelling of all the usual events which usually allow us to get together as well as most courses. Those selling scythes noticed a continued high demand for scythe kits despite or perhaps due to the lack of courses.

John's barley crop – John has a large amount of heritage barley under cultivation through the Heritage Grain Trust and suggests a Barley scything event – an opportunity to scythe cereals without needing to tie up the crop to be held at John's farm – subject to restrictions allowing– and with the aim of making a scyther's beer from the heritage barley.  
Harvest will be around the end of July.

Turkish blade – Adrian has contacted the Turkish manufacturer and has received two demo blades from Turkey – once we are able to meet up hopefully people who would like to try them will be able to before, the only issue is the tang angle which needs a big wedge as currently set.

## ***4) Treasurers summary***

Chris sent around the annual financial report to the committee google group prior to the meeting.

Summary: The accounts show a deficit this year for the first time of around £400.

Income was similar, the expenditure has been on appropriate items and the balance is still around £3000. With a suggested minimum of £500 – still leaves around £2500 to be spend on worthy causes.

Colin asked whether any sources of income had been lost. Chris said no, a slight reduction in income together with slightly larger expenditure on things like banners previously agreed made the difference.



**5) Membership Update**

After a quick change of hats Chris reported on membership. Heartening that membership subscriptions remained almost the same level despite the lack of festivals and events that typically introduce new membership.

Mary has agreed to take on the membership secretary role – Chris will tidy up and handover in February.

**6) Review of key SABI objectives for 2021 – in view of the time available for the meeting, the current lockdown and lack of information on likely restrictions through the rest of the year – the objectives for 2021 are covered in the remaining agenda items.**

**7) Events**

Festivals (including Green scythe fair) - Sadly the Green Scythe Fair has once again had to be cancelled for 2021. Unlikely that events of this size and popularity will be allowed by June. The same is likely for any large gatherings in the near future – though smaller, more local and ‘wilder’ events may be able to proceed later in the season. How best to proceed in the absence of most of the usual events and festivals?

Promoting smaller local events – Small, local events that can be organised quickly and run by a single person at short notice aka a ‘pop-up event’ may become possible – particularly outdoors and for small numbers of people later in the summer – as restrictions are eased.

SABI would not run or take responsibility for such events but where an individual wants to run one and can do so within the prevailing restrictions then SABI is keen to help promote and support such a pop-up event. This could be through promotion, facilitation, advice or through the provision of some funding to support infrastructure.

Jim has produced a short document to help with inviting proposals for small events that SABI could support and offered to help administer the application process. Mary suggested that the process should be open to events involving the public as well as members (restrictions allowing). The proposal should make it clear whether the event is aimed just at members or at members and public. In principle it was agreed to proceed with the promotion of and/or funding of small events – Expressions of interest will be invited. (Action Jim)  
Somerset Event – One proposal is to organise a small scythe only event on the Thorney Lakes site. Details are tbd – it is recognised that the cost of the site might be an issue.

**8) Communication and promotion**

Website - Richard is maintaining the website. It does what it does – and like Windrow depends upon content. Contributions are welcome and contributors can always be made editors so they can put up their own articles.

Colin – suggests a header article for small events – so that details of individual events can be added at short notice.

Windrow – providing content for Colin

Colin – as always – needs content otherwise there won’t be a windrow. Please – anyone – provide content. Suggestions:

- In the form of a Covid Diary – what’s happened and what hasn’t scythe-wise a way to record the year for posterity.
- An ‘How I started’ article – which could be in the form of a short note and appear in a ‘letters’ page of the windrow
- There may also be room for a ‘Dear Colin’ problem page – if people send in the content
- Otherwise if not enough content is sent in Colin will have to write yet another article on the Russian Peening Jig – so please remember to help him out!

Action: All – write just one piece for Colin, John – offered to write an article on grain.

Facebook page is still going well – and largely looks after itself in that people are posting.

Approvals are automated which helps people get on quicker.

Google groups It was agreed that the committee group be widened to include those at the Zoom meeting who are not currently on the committee. Action: Chris

Regional coordinators – to be changed to contacts. Chris suggests moving to ‘local contacts’ primarily for areas that have an active group.

For example Rob Brodie – who is based in Scotland should be on the list.

Richard suggests that contacts should simply be listed with where they are based and define where people are rather than defining areas.



Michelle suggested - rather than putting more pieces of paper in scythe supplies that people could be directed towards appropriate lists on the website.

Mary proposed that a single list is used for contacts with symbols or similar to indicate the services or activities that the contact is willing to provide. Mark noted that the Bodgers use a similar approach on their website which seems to work.

Action: Mary will take this on with her role as Membership Secretary

Flyers – would become quite short and simple – mainly pointing people to the website.

Colour of Badges – suggestion that green badges are easily lost in green grass fields – in discussion those present felt that green should remain and a quick survey revealed that no one at the meeting had yet lost theirs in a field

Action: inform Gill (Chris – completed already)

Recruiting Members – Colin asked about how and whether to contact local meadow and rewilding groups to help raise awareness of the Scythe Association.

Steve – asked about the meadows initiative and meadow maintenance training which will apparently be funded under future grant schemes. Richard noted that at the moment there are plenty of discussions and good intentions but few details on the implementation and funding of future schemes. Richard has set up meetings in February with his local Norfolk Wildlife Trust (Helen B – a scyther and an old friend of Simon F) and others to try and find out more. Action- Richard to monitor and feedback any news to SABİ via website etc. when he knows more. Others to feedback also (either directly or via Richard)

### **9) Future meetings**

Zoom follow ups

Richard – suggests trying further zoom meetings which may encourage wider membership to ‘drop’ in. Circulate to the googlegroup which is about 300 in membership. Chris agreed. Mary suggested seeding the meeting with a topic and perhaps a video – to give something for the event to start.

Colin suggested a ‘scythers question time’ panel approach.

Action: Mary, Colin and Richard will coordinate to create the first event. Perhaps try a first event in a months time to get something happening.

The AGM will be on-line via Zoom on the weekend of the 12th and 13th June (tbc) when the GSF would have happened.

### **10) AOB**

Schroekenfux new D-ring clamp (Steve). This changes how the blade is hafted. Christiana has posted a short video to show how to do it. Phil and Michelle have a video on you-tube to show how to mount the blade with the new D-ring. A second video shows how to fix the D-ring if it becomes stuck on the snathe.

Scythe Cymru - Fix a Stuck D-ring via Youtube

This involves hammering – Phil has been hammering rings before shipping. Steve will be updating his book to reflect the change. Use the link to view or search for Scythe Cymru video's on line.

Virtual Scythe competition (Peter) – Colin is sorting out the how to post the video but still maintain privacy on the google group. There are about 7 entries. Colin expects to post this in a week or two.

Simon (supplied in advance) – Still awaiting large delivery from Europe which is unable to ship at the moment. New Fux Jigs are good and has been advising customers that the cheaper Easter European jigs may prove a false economy.

Scythes in the future Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) – John asks whether the proposed ELMS (which will replace the EU scheme) recognises the role that scythes can play in environmental management. Peter is involved in an ELM trial and has heard scythes mentioned but seen no outcomes. Mark noted that current proposals are about policy and tools such as scythes are typically decided at lower level. Also that ELMS will include a wide range of participants, farmers, land managers, wildlife trusts, conservation groups on site as diverse as farmland, nature reserves, SSSI's, national parks and rewilding schemes. Scythes will likely appeal more to environmental management projects than agribusiness scale projects.

### **11) DONM**

The next formal meeting will be the 10th SABİ agm – to be held via Zoom on the – the weekend of the 12th and 13th June (tbc) the date that the green scythe fair would have been held.

The meeting closed – with thanks to Michelle for hosting, Mary, Chris and Richard for setting up, running and facilitating – and everyone for taking part.

M.Allery - 4th Feb 2021