

The Windrow

Windrow NO 17 April 2022

Newsletter of The Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland



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SABI NEWS



International Peening Day

International Peening Day this year falls on Sunday 3rd April (First Sunday in April).

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.

With restrictions now lifted we can gather with local scythes to prepare our blades and snaths for the new season. There always plenty of work to do to prepare and with our new found freedom we can renew our friendships and make new ones while enjoying the rhythm of the scythe.

There are a selection of events being held around the country here are some of them.

East Anglia, Norfolk

Richard Brown is running a day in Norfolk and says... "I will be hosting a gathering in my home meadow and workshop here in Norfolk. You are welcome to drop in anytime from 10am to 4pm for a bit of peening practices and advice, and a chance to test the results on the meadows new spring growth. I am also guessing that some of you will have some blades that were put away at the end of last season without any protective oil and forgotten?"

Peening is a mysterious and elusive art, and can lead to some fairly obsessive and compulsive behaviour. All happening at:-
Lovells Hall, 30 Station Road, Terrington St Clement
Norfolk PE34 4PL.
There's a map here: <https://wildscythe.co.uk/contact/>

South West, Somerset.

Andi Rickard is running a drop-in peening workshop at Somerset Scythe School 11am - 4pm.
Mower Meadow, TA20 3RF
Come and ready your blades for the season ahead - free assistance and guidance available. Tea, coffee and CAKE!

Cornwall, Liskeard

Skyegrove, Nr Herodsfoot, Liskeard
Contact Kevin on 07943 653825

Scything Meet & International Peening Day
Sunday April 3rd 2022 10:00 — 4:00

A perfect opportunity to prepare your blades for the season.

Free Advice & Guidance on hand
Tea & Coffee Provided

North West, Lancashire

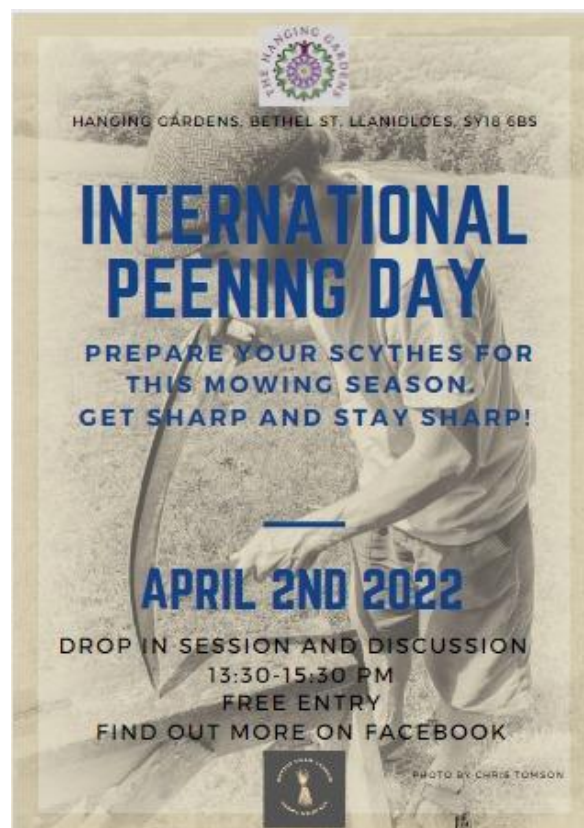
Peter Blackwell is hosting an open event 10am-4pm at Bell Sykes Farm (BB7 3AQ 07530807836 peter687@gmail.com).

Peening and Scythe workshop. Get ready for the new season brews provided cake donations welcome

Wales and Borders

International scythe peening day - 3rd April 2022.
Time to get your alpine scythe in peak condition for the season. Free drop in session at the Stiperstones 10am- 1pm. For more details contact Simon on Stiperstones.events@naturalengland.org.uk.

Danny Hodgson is running a day at The Hanging Gardens, Bethel St, Llanidloes, SY18 6BS on the 2nd April 13:30 to 15:30 **Please note the date!**



SCYTHING EVENTS

Green Scythe Fair

Sunday 12th June 2022

Incorporating the 16th West Country Scythe Festival After not taking place for two years due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is hoped that the event can return in 2022. This is the biggest and best scythe event in the country. Scythe championship, scythe and haymaking events, crafts, stalls, music, speakers, kids area, local food and drink. For more up-to-date information see www.greenfair.org.uk

The Sixteenth West Country Scythe Festival

and
Green Fair

SUNDAY

12 JUNE 2022

Thorney Lakes,
Muchelney, Langport,
Somerset, TA10 0DW



SCYTHE CHAMPIONSHIP

Team Mowing • Haymaking
Scything Instruction • Crafts • Stalls
Scythes for Sale • Tools and Tat
Green Things • Campaigns • Speakers
Kid's Area — Hay for Play
Two Music Stages • Ceilidh
Organic Food • Two Bars

SCYTHE COURSES

Improvers' Masterclass
10-11 June
Beginners' Course
11 June
plus workshops
on the English scythe,
grassland management
and haymaking.

Adults £15 • Children Free

Camping and Parking on Site
Bus Service Provided

Concessions for cyclists and bus passengers
Tickets available at www.greenfair.org.uk

More Information: scythes@myphone.coop
www.thescytheshop.co.uk/festival.html; www.greenfair.org.uk

Meadows and Kites Festival

Sat-Sun 18th-19th June 2022, New Chapel, Llanidloes
Zero Carbon, Llanidloes are putting on a 5-day celebration of meadows close to the summer solstice which will culminate in two days of scything and hand hay making. There will be plenty of opportunity to scythe, socialise and learn more about how meadows function and the important role they play in the local ecology and culture.

For more information, please contact Danny Hodgson on danny_hodgson@hotmail.co.uk

Sheffield Meadow Festival Saturday 16th July 2022

Brooks Bank Farm, Midhopestone, Mortimer Rd, Sheffield S36 4GZ

Join the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust for a day celebrating meadows in South Yorkshire on the edge of the Peak District. The day will be run as part of the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership

project that is in its' final year and looking to celebrate the important role that traditional meadows and meadow management play in the area. Scything will be taking place around some recently installed wader scrapes and there will be a variety of activities put on by the Wildlife Trust for all ages. There will also be an informal competition towards the end of the day. For more information, please contact Danny Hodgson on danny_hodgson@hotmail.co.uk

Scything With A View

17th - 22nd July 2022

The Stiperstones NNR, Shropshire Hills

For more details contact Simon Cooter on 01743



792294 or visit
stiperstones.events@naturalengland.org.uk

Forest of Bowland

Northern Scythe Festival and Meadows Day

Saturday - Sunday 2nd - 3rd July 2022

There is a great new site for the festival this year at Gathering Fields, Swainshead Hall Farm, Over Wyresdale, LA2 9DN.

Join us on the Saturday for guided tours in the meadow, meadow plant school, scything and hay time demonstrations, herbal tea and herbal essences, a range of local craft stalls and demonstrations, local meadow plug plants to purchase, music and more!

<https://www.forestofbowland.com/national-meadow-day-2022>

Sunday 3rd July
 Northern Scythe Festival, with lovely Lancashire grass to mow, a large practice area, individual and team comps with lots of medals!
 Registration and camping information for scythers
 Camping and van parking £10 per person per night with access to a camp kitchen, toilets and, wait for it!, showers. Please book camping with Jim (jim@mcvittie.me.uk) who will collect fees and pass onto our host, Helen. Cash only please!

Orcop Hill Scythe Festival – Hereford (2nd year)

21st – 24th July 2022

Parrysfield HR2 8SD

The first two days we are scything Parrysfield & making hay. This will happen during two morning sessions, one before breakfast & one after.

The second two days will be scything related courses, demonstrations, have a go. We'll even make a scythe this year!

Scything, Eating/Drinking, Singing/music/swinging, walking, Haymaking, Teaching teachers, have a go scything, beginners scythe course.

Children very welcome: a swing, playing castles in the

grass, making hay bales, hide & seek & all sorts of fun. If you are coming let me know so I can allocate a camping space, tent/van. Contact David by email: david.kuegler@btinternet.com

Kyle of Lochalsh Scything Festival

Saturday 20th August 2022

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust, The Plock, Kyle of Lochalsh IV40 8AZ

The day will include scything experiences for absolute beginners and learners, an informal competition, peening practise, opportunity to learn about highland meadows, and lend a hand in grassland management.

We are also hoping to have cut a grass maze.

Contact Heather Beaton heather.beaton@lochalsh.uk

Merlindale Scythe Festival

Merlindale, near Peebles

10th September 2022

There will be horse-drawn mowing as well as two scything 'have a go' sessions and opportunities to practice; various other environmental displays and organisations.

Contact John McLennan jsmclennan@gmail.com

Equipment News.....Scythe Bottlenecks

Over the past year there have been a number of different factors that have made it much more difficult to obtain scythes and ancillary goods from the continent.

1. Brexit.

Leaving the EU makes importing scythes slower, and more complicated and more expensive; but so far it hasn't prevented anything arriving. It also makes importing more expensive, and on top of that the cost of steel and timber has risen, so the factory gate price of goods has increased. However this is more or less offset by the rising value of the pound against the euro But that could change of course. Another difficulty is that the cost of going through customs means that small orders are no longer viable, so quickly topping up stock that has run out is no longer feasible.

2. The Pandemic

Austria has had fewer deaths per million from COVID, but more cases per million. The number of cases per day peaked yesterday (12 March) in Austria, whereas in the UK it peaked on 5 January. As a result the Schröckenfux (Fux) factory as I write is now virtually shut down because so many people are quarantined and not for the first time. This has severely delayed scythe deliveries. The delivery that was originally scheduled for early August did not arrive until December; and my main delivery scheduled for April has also been postponed.

3. Increased Demand.

There is increasing demand, year on year, for scythes throughout Europe. Sweden, I am told now imports 18,000 blades a year (the UK currently imports around 3000-3500 think. there is this considerable competition for Fux scythes, and orders have to be placed well in advance.

4. Skills Shortage

Fux are finding it harder and harder to find smiths who have the considerable degree of skill necessary to manufacture scythe blades. Old craftsmen have retired and younger generations are less keen on spending five years acquiring a skill through repetitive actions.

In other words there may be shortages of Fux scythe blades in the future. There are other makers. Scythe Cymru import blades made by the Italian firm Falci. Their blades are beautifully peened and finished, but Scythe Cymru say that they don't see the Falci blades replacing the core offering of Profisense / Rasierschnitt for the novice mower. Gunas, based in Turkey, make serviceable ditch blades, but they come with their edges completely unpeened and they are not easy to peen either. In short, Fux offer the best range of scythe blades for the average unskilled novice, and also supply by far the best snath produced in Europe, so they must remain our first port of call.

Those of us who are involved in importing and wholesaling scythes in the UK will try to co-ordinate our orders of scythe blades to ensure maximum buying power, and placing new orders as early as we can. It would be such a shame if growing demand for this wonderful tool is stymied by diminishing supply.

Simon Fairlie

Scythe Courses at the West Country Scythe Fair

Thorney Lakes. Muchelney, near Langport

BEGINNERS' SCYTHE COURSE

Saturday 11 June 2022

Set up, sharpening and mowing technique in the morning. Peening in the afternoon, plus optional workshops on the English scythe, grassland management, and haymaking by hand.

The cost is £65 for individuals, including lunch.

Camping on site is available.

To book contact: Colin Close, beginnersscythecourse@gmail.com

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IMPROVERS' MASTERCLASS

Friday 10 and Saturday 11 June 2022

a two day course for

- mowers with some experience who want to develop their skills;
 - team leaders managing volunteers or staff;
- people who want to teach scythe use to others.

You will get personal attention from three of the most experienced teachers in the UK:

Phil Batten master peener and scythe competition winner from Scythe Cymru;

Andi Rickard, of the Somerset Scythe School, currently UK champion mower.

Kevin Austin scythe teacher from Cornwall, and former UK champion mower.

The course covers: correct set up of the tool; your mowing stance and style; sharpening, peening and repairing blades; teaching and organizing volunteers and novices; optional workshops on the English scythe, grassland management, and haymaking by hand.

The cost is £150 for individuals, £175 for organizations, £100 concession for unwaged.

Meals are provided. The cost includes a free ticket for the fair on Sunday.

Camping on site is available.

Nicole Clough of Bucks Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust who did this course writes:

I came away with a far deeper understanding of the scythe and my technique, as well as the tools and course structure to teach others in a safe and efficient manner. It has revolutionised our team at BBOWT, and we now use scythes for a great many of our tasks. We have trained about 50 staff and volunteers across our three counties in just 2 years. Great for wildlife, great for people

To book on the Improvers' Course, email Simon at scythes@myphone.coop

* * *

The venue for both courses is at Thorney Lakes. Muchelney, near Langport

<http://www.thorneylakes.co.uk/>

You can find out more about the Green Scythe Fair at <https://www.greenfair.org.uk>

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
stevetomlin8crafts.wordpress.com/learn-to-scythe
Practical, fun courses covering all the skills to use and maintain your scythe. I have been teaching since 2010, am 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 28th May at Sedbergh, Cumbria
Learn to Scythe 2nd June, 22nd July at Slaidburn, Lancs
Learn to Scythe 5th August Chapel-le-Dale, Yorkshire
Learn to Scythe 3rd September at Sedbergh, Cumbria
Peening workshop 7th at Slaidburn, Lancashire

*Danny Hodgson**

Llanidloes, Powys & Sheffield South Yorkshire/ East-Midlands
Contact danny_hodgson@hotmail.co.uk
Scythe courses in Mid Wales, South Yorkshire and across the UK. Learn to scythe or improve your technique, I am happy to travel to you and cater for individuals and groups of all abilities and ages. Please visit my website for more details on courses and venues.
<http://www.handpowered.co.uk/>

John Grundy County Durham & Northumberland*

Contact email: contact@wildernesstamed.com
Relaxed group or one to one courses at your own venue. For more information please contact me directly using the email above. Visit <https://www.wildernesstamed.com/training-courses> for more info. Courses to be announced and published via Eventbrite

Wales & Borders

*Phillip Batten**

Learn to scythe or improve your skills. Workshops give you - hands on experience; a chance to "try before you buy" or get your own scythe set up to give the it's best; visit a smallholding where the scythe is integral to the management and is used year round in a variety of situations.

- Introductory Scythe Courses
- Peening and Sharpening Workshops

See our website for 2022 dates.

Andrea Gilpin, Presteigne, Powys*

hello@wildmeadow.co
<https://www.wildmeadow.co/scything-classes>
Learn to scythe or improve your skills in 3 acres of meadows and orchards with a variety of terrain and vegetation type. equipment provided and available to purchase. 1:1 tuition also available. Meadow management advice given

- Learn to Scythe- Saturday 7th May - £65
- Learn to Scythe - Saturday 12th June - £65
- See website for more dates

*David Kuegler**

david.kuegler@btinternet.com <https://www.instagram.com/parrysfieldorcop/>
I'm a very flexible scythe-techer, buy a scythe and I'll teach you to be very happy and confident with your scythe. Whether a group or 1:1. Turn-up when it suits and get a course easy peasy or I'll come to you. I sell fully prepared scythe kits (peened and oiled)

- Parryfields, Orcop Hill, Hereford monthly courses: Every second Saturday from March-November 10am- 4pm
- <http://www.stumpupfortrees.org/> 1st May 10am - 4pm Black Mountains
- <https://www.bigapple.org.uk/> 8th & 9th October 10am - 4pm

Phillip Lewis Mold*

smithyfar@gmail.com
Instagram: [smithy_farm](https://www.instagram.com/smithy_farm/)
Available to teach individuals or groups in North Wales. Anglesy to Mold. Peening and blade repair.
• Hill fort scything course 18th to 20th July 2022
To make bookings > <https://wildbushcraft.co.uk/courses/hill-fort-scything-course>

Simon Cooter Shropshire*

Tel: 01743 792294:
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. All proceeds go to the management of the nature reserve.

- Introductory Scything and meadow management course, Sunday 17th July, 10am - 4pm. £60.00pp (followed by optional free scything sessions all week)
- Introductory Scything and meadow management course, Saturday 30th July, 10am - 4pm. £60.00pp

Beth Tilston Forest of Dean*

Flaxley, Forest of Dean:
Contact bethtilston@googlemail.com
<https://cloudcottageland.co.uk/scythe-courses-in-gloucestershire/>
Day long courses and one to ones with a teacher of 10+ years experience. Learn everything you need to get mowing, and buy a scythe while you are there.
Courses on 28th May and 16th July

One to ones available in Blakeney, Forest of Dean.

- 30 minute Pay What You Want online course available at <https://cloudcottageland.vhx.tv>

Midlands

See Nicole Clough.

South West England

Adrian Thomas North Devon

Phone: 01409 282801 email: adrianthomas59@gmail.com
Learn to scythe as an individual or in a group (max 6). Volunteer groups (max 12)
Contact me to discuss further.
Location: Buckland Filleigh or your site.

Cost £65 per person
Dates : Arranged around you availability

Andi Rickard*

andirickard@me.com 07581 239453
Current UK Scything Champion, Ladies Champion for 10 years. Eight years experience teaching scythe skills.

Sessions: 1-to-1 Couples or group bookings - at my venue or yours.
Group courses at Mower Meadow, South Somerset every month (starting April 22nd) Camping available.
Go to www.scytheschool.com for more details and to apply.

Jeremy Weiss*, South Devon

jeremydweiss@yahoo.co.uk Lots of scythe courses and peening workshops for beginners and improvers.
Got to <https://properedges.com/courses/> for details.

Kevin Austin* Cornwall

Phone: 07943653825 email: kevin@skyegrove.co.uk
For all your scything requirements.
Individual or group bookings.
Peening and maintenance workshops.
All equipment stocked.
See : www.skyegrove.co.uk for arranged course dates.

Simon Fairlie, Monkton Wyld Court, West Dorset, East Devon

scythes@myphone.coop www.thescytheshop.co.uk
<https://monktonwyldcourt.co.uk>
Two day course "Scythe use, Haymaking and Grassland Management".
Tutored by Simon Fairlie and Camilo Liarte (especially suitable for people with livestock).
Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Food and Accommodation provided.
Scythes and other equipment for sale on site.
Dates: May 6th, 7th, and 8th and September 16th, 17th and 18th
For information about the course content:
For pricing, booking etc: info@monktonwyldcourt.org, 01297 560342,

Chris Riley* North Dorset

chris@pratensis.net 07719 691312
Available for scythe training in the Wessex area, and beyond.
Courses yet to be scheduled. For up-to-date information see: www.pratensis.net

Ross Adams, South Devon

Learn to scythe the copurses run amongst the beautiful rolling hills of Devon near Totnes. I can also come to your site and run group or one to one courses.
Scythe kits available to buy on courses.
For more information see www.abundantgardens.uk

South East England

Nicole Clough* Oxfordshire.

www.joyofscything.uk
I provide training in the use, maintenance and joy of the Austrian scythe within Oxfordshire, the nearby counties and the southern Midlands.
Please visit my website for the 2022 venue dates or to

enquire about arranging a bespoke session.

Claire White* Essex, London and East Anglia

clairwhitegardens@gmail.com
Scythe instructor and enthusiast. Offering one-to-one and group training in scythe practice.

Clive Leeke* Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and West London

hedgcraft@theoldfarmyard.co.uk
<https://www.theoldfarmyard.co.uk>
Ten years teaching experience since qualifying. Courses in scything and wildflower meadow management on my own meadow in South Oxon, or on your land by arrangement. Also now have a venue in Kent/Sussex area for a course around September time.

- Introduction to Scything; Gallowstree Common, South Oxon; Saturday, 18th June 2022; price £85 per person
- Wildflower Meadow Management; Gallowstree Common, South Oxon Saturday 6th August 2022; £85 per person.
- Book both courses for £130

East Anglia

Richard Brown,* Norfolk.

richard@wildscythe.co.uk
Website:- www.wildscythe.co.uk
I am an experienced botanist, ecologist, seedsman and scythesman and have been promoting wildflowers and meadows for 40 years. I offer scythe and grassland management courses and tuition for groups and individuals.

Courses and Events:-
13th February 2022
Reed Cutting with scythes.
Heacham, Norfolk, PE31 7LJ no charge*

2nd April 2022 Peening and Scythe maintenance course
Lovells Hall, Norfolk, PE34 4PL £70 per person

3rd April 2022 International Peening Day – event
Lovells Hall, Norfolk, PE34 4PL no charge*

16th June 2022 - Learn to scythe and grassland management course
Lovells Hall, Norfolk, PE34 4PL £70 per person

28th June 2022 - Learn to scythe and grassland management course
Emorsgate Seeds, Norfolk, PE34 4RT £70 per person

14th July 2022 - Learn to scythe and grassland management course
Heacham, Norfolk, PE31 7LJ £70 per person

19th July 2022 - Learn to scythe and grassland management course
Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4RA £70 per person

3rd August 2022 Learn to scythe and grassland management course
Heacham, Norfolk, PE31 7LJ £70 per person

Scotland

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://quietertimes.org> for more details and to see current workshop dates.

Ireland

Neil Foulkes, Co Leitrim, Ireland

neilfoulkes62@gmail.com
Formal and informal workshops on mowing and scythe maintenance, including through local authorities. Mainly covering Northern Ireland and the border counties. I also sell Austrian scythes and equipment.

Susanne Raven, East Cork, Ireland

rowanlily@yahoo.de
While I don't teach courses, I do offer scythe mowing and peening services and I can provide information regarding scything in Ireland. You're welcome to join the facebook group An Faobhar - Scythe Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/215248119929200> For more information visit <http://www.susanneraven.ie>

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* Manchester

stevetomlin8@gmail.com
stevetomlin8crafts.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.

Andi Ricard* Somerset

andiricard@me.com 07581 239453
Current UK Scything Champion, Ladies Champion for 10 years. Eight years experience teaching scythe skills. Sessions: 1-to-1 Couples or group bookings - at my venue or yours. Group courses at Mower Meadow, South Somerset every month (starting April 22nd) Camping available.
Go to www.scytheschool.com for more details and to apply.

Andrea Gilpin* Powys

hello@wildmeadow.co
Courses across England and Wales for beginners and improvers.
I have enjoyed teaching since 2010 and I frequently travel to tutor groups in their own patch. Can include advise on meadow management. Clients include Wildlife Trusts, The National Trust, RSPB and many community groups.

Danny Hodgson*, Llanidloes, Powys & Sheffield South Yorkshire/ East-Midlands

danny_hodgson@hotmail.co.uk
<https://www.handpowered.co.uk>

Scythe courses in Mid Wales, South Yorkshire and across the UK. Learn to scythe or improve your technique, I am happy to travel to you and cater for individuals and groups of all abilities and ages. Please visit my website for more details on courses and venues.

David Kueglar* Hereford

david.keuglar@btinternet.com <https://www.instagram.com/parrysfieldorcop/>
Courses in England & Wales, including Snowdonia. I teach North-South Wales & England, for all sorts of community groups & Trusts. & Individuals too.

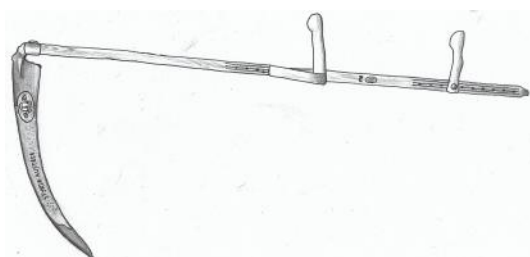
Chris Riley* North Dorset

chris@pratensis.net 07719 691312
Experienced scythe trainer based in north Dorset. I mainly deliver beginners' courses in the Wessex area, but it can often also be feasible to go further afield. Scythes available for purchase. See web site for more information:
www.pratensis.net

Online

Beth Tilston* Forest of Dean

<https://cloudcottageland.vhx.tv>
A new 30 minute course available online. Covering everything I go into on my day course.
Pay what you want – you decide what you want to pay for it.



How the Scythe Reached Nepal

Courtesy of the International Red Cross

This piece dating from the 1960's documents how the International Committee of the Red Cross and others brought aid to Tibetan refugees who had fled Tibet in the face of Chinese invasion. The remarkable article that follows this one puts this in context.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

AID TO TIBETAN REFUGEES

AN AGRICULTURAL COLONY IN NEPAL

In 1960 the Government of Nepal requested the International Committee of the Red Cross to lend assistance in order to attend to the besetting problem which arose from the arrival in that country of Tibetan refugees. In response, the ICRC decided, apart from other measures, to establish an agricultural colony in a high-land valley in central Nepal.

From September 1961, preparations were made for the installation of several hundred refugees at *Dhor Patan*, at an altitude of about 9,000 feet. This valley, which was inhabited only for the monsoon period by Nepalese, was to become the permanent home of the Tibetan nomad refugees. The following month a technical team arrived on the spot, sent out by the International Committee and comprising one doctor, two engineers, one foreman—accompanied by their wives—and two young agriculturists.

From the outset, almost insuperable problems arose. Due to the remoteness of the region and the scant means of access, communication was difficult and the arrival of refugees in much greater numbers than expected made provisioning exceedingly onerous. Moreover, the winter of 1961/62 was more severe than usual and forced the chief of operations to evacuate women and children to the lower regions of the Terai foothills.



Tibetan refugees clearing ground in the Dhor Patan valley...

THE ICRC IN NEPAL

... and receive vitamin tablets at the ICRC infirmary.

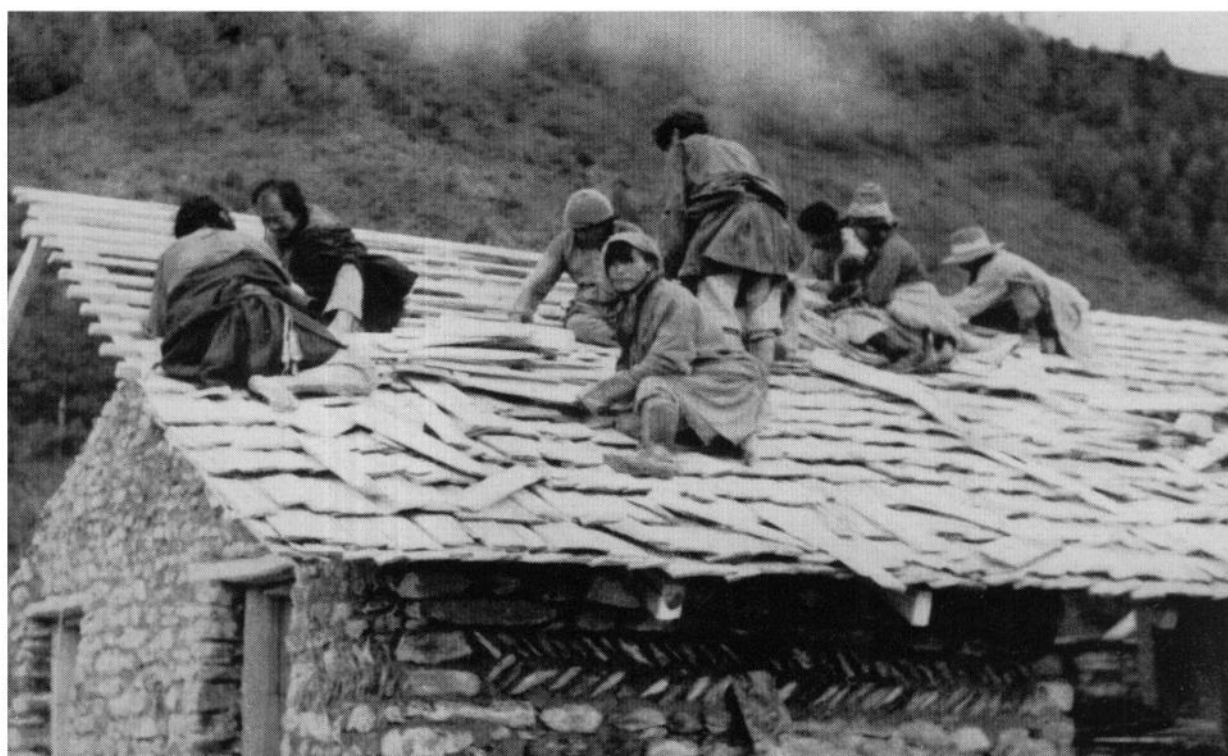




At Dhor Patan, Tibetan refugees prepare roof timbers...

THE ICRC IN NEPAL

...and learn how to build sturdy houses.



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Thanks to the ceaseless efforts of the team itself and of the ICRC delegation at Katmandu an air liaison was made possible, with "Pilatus-Porter" aircraft, although operation was irregular due to bad weather. However, this air service enabled the project to be completed in spite of a difficult beginning.

It soon became apparent to the team that the settlement of a yet larger group of refugees would require much more time and patience. Intensive exploitation of unclaimed land was therefore envisaged, necessitating two measures: to limit in a very strict manner the number of Tibetan settlers and, after six months of intensive work, to replace the specialized team by a smaller one composed of a nurse and two Swiss agriculturists.

Medical care had to be provided for Tibetans on their arrival as well as foodstuffs richer in protein and vitamins, in order to bring about a rapid improvement in their health¹. They were inoculated against typhus, para-typhus and cholera, smallpox and diphtheria.

The first task undertaken was ground clearance.¹ A trial plot was cultivated in order to determine what cereals and vegetables could be grown at that altitude and in that climate. Very soon the first crops of potatoes and wheat were visible.

Stock rearing of such animals as yaks, goats and sheep proved difficult, due to the inadequate fodder and pasture. Plans for setting up a cheese-making plant had to be postponed.

At the same time, the housing problem had to be tackled, for the yak-hide tents were unsuitable for the often damp climate prevailing in the valley. Solid buildings of stones and clay covered with shingle-boards were constructed under the directives of the Swiss foreman.¹ Two Tibetan villages and a "Gömpa" (Buddhist temple) were thus established in the Dhor Patan valley.

After having organized this social welfare programme in Nepal—although somewhat outside its traditional field of activity—and after ensuring its operation for three years, the International Committee considered that this work could be carried on by organizations more specialized than itself in the field of practical

¹ *Plate.*

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

mutual assistance. On May 31, 1963, therefore, responsibility for continuation of the whole operation was taken over by the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance.

Almost one year has since elapsed, and the International Committee of the Red Cross is pleased to learn that the Dhor Patan community is flourishing and prosperous. Cultivation extends now over almost fifty acres and thanks to a good potato crop and wheat harvest, food is available for a population of 250 for a period of seven months. In one or two years the present contribution of basic foodstuffs will no longer be necessary and little by little this community in the formerly uninhabited valley will be self-supporting. The success of the experiment will affect the whole valley and will be of benefit also to the Nepalese population.

Dhopatan - Best kept secret in Nepal

by
Alexanda Vido

When I received a scythe inquiry from Namgyal, I replied as usual — with more questions. Asking for pictures of the terrain, the type of the crops the scythes would be used for, and the existing means of cutting. What I received the next day was totally unexpected, something I would refer to as the “Best kept secret in Nepal”.

Namgyal’s inquiry was on behalf of the Tibetan community in Dhorpatan Valley.

The settlement is located in Western Nepal, with an elevation of 3,900 m. The Tibetan refugees, who crossed the Himalayas to Nepal after the Dalai Lama’s escape to India in 1959, were nomadic people.

It was the Swiss Red Cross program in the 1960s that introduced them to the farming practices needed for their new settled lifestyle. To sustain themselves in isolated in Dhorpatan Valley and the harsh Himalayan environment, self reliance was a necessity. They learned how to cultivate their fields and take care of their animals in new ways. The two young Swiss agriculturists wisely shared with new Tibetan settlers the Gift of the Scythe. It was a truly ‘appropriate technology’, before this term was even used. Then, it was probably addressed simply as a ‘common sense’ choice.

The nomadic people traditionally herd their livestock from place to place to assure adequate grazing throughout the year. However, once



they settle, they need to make hay to feed their livestock in wintertime. For haymaking, a scythe can cut much more material and is easier on the body than the sickles which are traditionally used in this region.





And today, almost 60 years later, the same scythes are still being used for harvesting oats, barley and making hay for winter months. Namgyal reached out to me because during those six decades, some scythes got broken and some were getting worn out. They had asked a local blacksmith to reproduce a blade, but unfortunately he wasn't able to. In the meantime, they're using what is left of the blades...



https://youtu.be/j7XSO_WSfDo

I sent to Namgyal three Swiss-style blades I had on hand. The tangs on Swiss-style blades are different from the more commonly used blades, as they use a single bolt for attaching the blade, instead of an attachment ring.

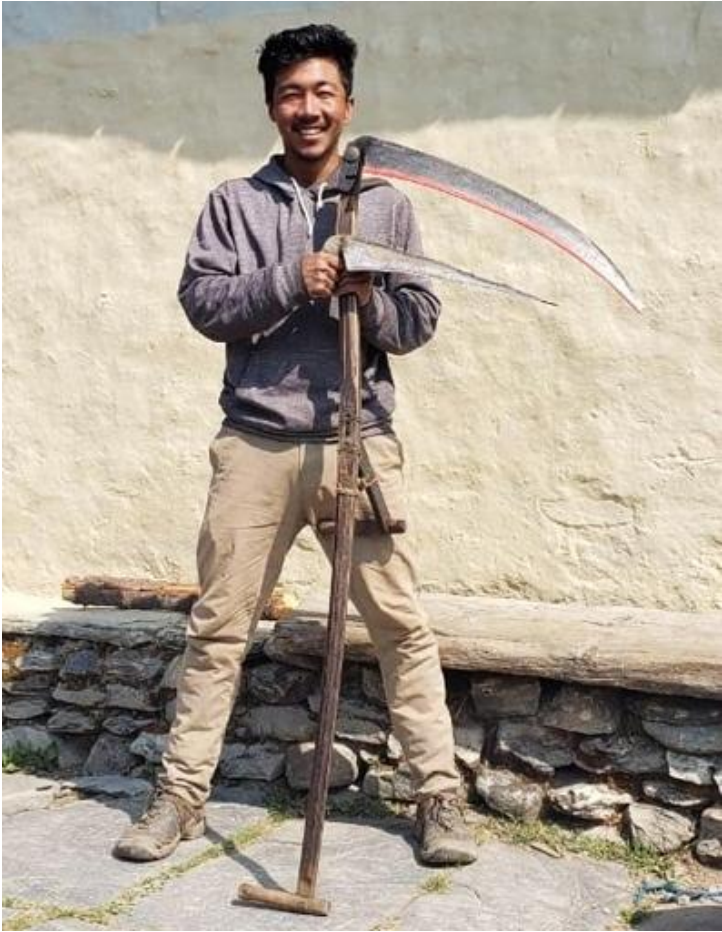


Namgyal later ordered a couple of additional scythe outfits from Vikalp in India.



I refer to this as the “Best kept secret in Nepal” because before the SPIN 2012 project, I searched four years for any traces of scythes in Nepal. I only found a reference to one brief attempt. The fact that scythes were used in Dhorpatan for all these years, and villagers are now seeking replacement blades, is itself a testimonial to the validity of scythe use in similar settings.

I wish I could connect with one of those Red Cross field workers from Switzerland and hear their stories of Dhorpatan. They must be pleased that the seeds they sowed are now well rooted, despite the harsh environment. Now I wonder if there are more unrecorded remote places in the world where scythes were successfully introduced.



Arisings

by
Adrian Thomas

The question of what to do with arisings is very common.

If the arisings are mainly grass then the good news is they do not “steam” up as readily as machine mown cuttings. If the arisings can be left to dry the ground for a while there is the added advantage of them being much lighter to move. Is use mine to make compost as follows:



1. Using old stock fencing, make a ring of approx 8' diameter. No need for addition support, just wire the ends together to form a ring.

3. Fill the doughnut with kitchen waste, garden waste, hedge clippings, chopped cardboard, etc- even machine cut grass to create heat, but that needs mixing with dry brown stuff. Then cover.



2. Line it around the inside with dry or fresh scythe cut herbage. You end up with a doughnut.

4. As the compost compresses, repeat actions 2 and 3.



The compost does not always heat as dramatically as a turned compost does so weed seeds may survive. However the chore of turning has been avoided, though it can be a bit rough. I use any uncomposted material to start the next heap. If you adopt a no-dig policy just pile up the compost on the soil as a feed or mulch, especially over winter to let the worms do their stuff

5. To harvest remove the stock fence ring and cover the pile of compost until needed. The ring is then moved to a new site ready to start the next heap.

Anti-Clockwise Sythes

Putting the label “Left-handed” Scythe to bed

by
Richard Brown

As a scythe instructor one of the most frequently asked questions I get asked is “I am left-handed, would I be better with a scythe configured differently to regular scythes?”

This is making the (not unreasonable) assumption that scythes are a handed tool, and are manufactured to suit the right-handed majority (roughly 90% being right-handed).

Having faced this question on numerous occasions I have thought about it quite a bit, and honed my answer over time. I have to ‘come out’ at this stage and declare that I am right-handed myself. I have however consulted often, without prejudice, on this topic with left-handed scythers.

The basic consensus that I have come to is that scythes are not a handed tool.

Anti-clockwise Scythes

If asked, in my response to all prospective new scythers I now refer to regular scythes as being anti-clockwise scythes. That is a scythe that you work from a 3 o’clock starting position on the right, in anticlockwise arc finishing somewhere between 11 and 9 o’clock on the left.

The reason I give for almost all scythes being configured this one way is because all members of a mowing team need to mow in synchrony and in the same direction around the field.

With anticlockwise scythes, all mowers progress

clockwise around the field mowing out from the centre, to leave cut swathes in windrows on their left. Evidence?

In the current climate I feel obliged to qualify this view with some evidence to fend off accusations of being complacently hand-ist!

Andi Rickard, our current ladies, and overall scythe champion is herself left-handed. I have talked with her about this handed question on a number of occasions. Andi has told me that she believes that, if anything, the standard scythe is left-handed in its bias. Andi puts part of her mowing prowess down to the fact that her stronger dominant left arm gives her more “grunt” delivering controlled power to the end of each stroke.

At the Green Scythe workshop at Muchelney last summer a number of scythers mowed 5 x 5 m plots with a clockwise scythe set up to compare results to mowing the same area with their regular scythe. Both right- and left-handed mowers found switching equally awkward at first. It seemed to all that motor memory developed for the set up they had trained on was the key factor, rather than handedness.

Interestingly, all found that with only a short bit of practice it was quite possible to mentally make the switch to mow in a clockwise direction so that it was not actually as challenging as one might imagine. This is much the same as making the mental switch from driving a car on the left to driving on the right – which is, even if it feels odd at first, fortunately for other road users not too difficult!

All of this confirms to me that scythes are not handed tools. All mowers have to learn balanced movement and to use both sides of their body equally to power and control the scythe. For this activity it does not really matter whether you are naturally right or left-handed. It seems that in practice left-handers have no more difficulty developing motor memory and adapting to an anticlockwise mowing pattern than do right handers.

I would encourage others to adopt anti-clockwise to describe the regular set up when asked this question. If nothing else it is easier to explain in these terms rather than confound the narrative with handedness.

What then is the point of a clockwise scythe set up? As so-called left-handed scythes are produced and sold, albeit in very small numbers, one is obliged to ask the question as to why, and for what purpose? Simon Fairlie on his scythe shop website says "The only good reason I can think of for buying a left-handed scythe is that you have a good excuse for not lending it."

If you are a lone scyther there is theoretically no problem with learning to mow with an atypical clockwise set up - the conflict of mowing out of sync with others simply does not arise. The limited availability of clockwise blades and snaths may however be an issue.

For many years I repeated this received wisdom: that there seemed to be no good practical reason for having a clockwise scythe set up, other than to be different. That is until one day I was put right whilst delivering a scythe course to a group of drainage workers in the Cambridgeshire fens. This was not my typical group. These were a group of land workers with a long unbroken history of using scythes to mow drainage banks. Whilst they now use high powered long reach flail mowers for most of their work, they each carry a scythe with them on their machines in case they come to a culvert or other area out of reach of the flail cutter arm.

I told them that to my knowledge there is no practical application for a clockwise scythe; they responded simply: "yes there is". They then explained the particular scenario where being able to mow from both the right and left, anticlockwise and clockwise, is very useful.

To start with, when mowing the often steep-sided embankments of drainage ditches, they mow uphill away from the ditch water. Whilst this seems counter intuitive (because one then has to move the weight of cut grass uphill against gravity), they explained that if they mowed down into the ditch they would then have to go back as a separate operation with a fork to lift the cuttings well clear of the water - double handling. If they did not do this, and there was a heavy flow after rain, the cuttings would be washed down and block culverts.

Organising mowing of each side of a ditch from the centre out is not a problem provided one can mow down one side (left side initially) and then mow from the bottom back up the other bank. If, however the prevailing wind has funnelled along the ditch line, laying the grass all in one direction, then (as all experienced mowers know), you can only mow following the direction of the laid grass. One practical solution they had for this scenario is to mow with an anticlockwise scythe down one side of the embankment, then walk up to mow back down the opposite bank with a clockwise scythe. Dah da! - a niche application for clockwise scythes!

As a footnote: The drainage team I taught had generations worth of unique scything experience and knowledge passed down from one team and foreman to another, and I learnt quite a lot myself during that session.

On the other hand, it was interesting that some of this knowledge seemed to have been somewhat corrupted over time, Chinese whisper style. This probably as result of the scythe only being an ancillary tool? It had resulted in some odd practices and set ups creeping in.

They largely converted to using Austrian Scythes, and a better sharpening strategy after my visit!

Left-handed sharpening

There is one additional practical issue our right-handed instructors like me report - that is, teaching left-handed people to hone their blades with a whetstone.

Honing is a handed operation that requires one to use the dominant hand to effectively and safely hone with a whetstone. In practice both anti-clockwise and clockwise scythes can be honed effectively by either right or left handers, however, different methods for hand holds and positioning are required for each. Andi demonstrated her method for left-hand honing a regular scythe during the 'Scyther's Question Time' zoom session last summer.

It seems much harder to remap the brain to switch hands for honing mirror imaged, or even to demonstrate this. In some Tai Chi classes pupils learn moves on both right side and the same moves mirrored to their left, practiced until they feel equally comfortable and natural. I feel that I need to try harder as an instructor to practice honing with a whetstone with either hand!

For those who would like to know more the late and legendary Peter Vido has written on this subject. You can find his piece here:-

<http://scytheconnected.blogspot.com/2014/08/q-left-handed-scythes.html> ED.



THE HARVEST MORNING

by John Clare (1793-1864)
Contributed by Steve Leppard



A Fleeting Moment: "City in the Sky"

*Early morning across the South Downs
where the aerial masts appeared in the mist
like a city in the sky.*

*Cocks wake the early morn with many a crow;
Loud-striking village clock has counted four;
The labouring rustic hears his restless foe,
And weary, of his pains complaining sore,
Hobbles to fetch his horses from the moor:
Some busy 'gin to teem the loaded corn,
Which night throng'd round the barn's becrowded door;
Such plenteous scenes the farmer's yard adorn,
Such noisy, busy toils now mark the Harvest Morn.*

*The bird-boy's pealing horn is loudly blow'd;
The waggons jostle on with rattling sound;
And hogs and geese now throng the dusty road,
Grunting, and gabbling, in contention, round
The barley ears that litter on the ground.
What printing traces mark the waggon's way;
What busy bustling wakens echo round;
How drive the sun's warm beams the mist away;
How labour sweats and toils, and dreads the sultry day!*

*His scythe the mower o'er his shoulder leans,
And whetting, jars with sharp and tinkling sound;
Then sweeps again 'mong corn and crackling beans,
And swath by swath flops lengthening o'er the ground;
While 'neath some friendly heap, snug shelter'd round
From spoiling sun, lies hid the heart's delight;
And hearty soaks oft hand the bottle round,
Their toils pursuing with redoubled might—
Great praise to him is due that brought its birth to light.*

*Upon the waggon now, with eager bound,
The lusty picker whirls the rustling sheaves;
Or, resting ponderous creaking fork aground,
Boastful at once whole shocks of barley heaves:
The loading boy revengeful inly grieves
To find his unmatch'd strength and power decay;
The barley horn his garments interweaves;
Smarting and sweating 'neath the sultry day,
With muttering curses stung, he mauls the heaps away.*

*A motley group the clearing field surround;
Sons of Humanity, oh ne'er deny
The humble gleaner entrance in your ground;
Winter's sad cold, and Poverty are nigh.
Grudge not from Providence the scant supply:
You'll never miss it from your ample store.*

*Who gives denial—harden'd, hungry hound,—
May never blessings crowd his hated door!
But he shall never lack, that giveth to the poor.*

*Ah, lovely Emma! mingling with the rest,
Thy beauties blooming in low life unseen,
Thy rosy cheeks, thy sweetly swelling breast;
But ill it suits thee in the stubs to glean.
O Poverty! how basely you demean
The imprison'd worth your rigid fates confine:
Not fancied charms of an Arcadian queen
So sweet as Emma's real beauties shine:
Had Fortune blest, sweet girl, this lot had ne'er been thine.*

*The sun's increasing heat now mounted high,
Refreshment must recruit exhausted power;
The waggon stops, the busy tool's thrown by,
And 'neath a shock's enjoy'd the bevering hour.
The bashful maid, sweet health's engaging flower
Lingering behind, o'er rake still blushing bends;
And when to take the horn fond swains implore,
With feign'd excuses its dislike pretends.
So pass the bevering hours, so Harvest Morning ends.*

*O Rural Life! what charms thy meanness hide;
What sweet descriptions bards disdain to sing;
What loves, what graces on thy plains abide:
Oh, could I soar me on the Muse's wing,
What rifled charms should my researches bring!
Pleas'd would I wander where these charms reside;
Of rural sports and beauties would I sing;
Those beauties, Wealth, which you in vain deride,
Beauties of richest bloom, superior to your pride.*

~~~

by John Clare, "English peasant poet of the Romantic school. Clare was the son of a labourer and began work on local farms at the age of seven." (Encyclopædia Britannica)

from "Poems by John Clare, selected and introduced by Norman Gale", 1901 (Project Gutenberg)



# Haymaking by *Bernadette Gallaher*

## Poetry and Farming: Haymaking

My poem 'Haymaking' describes my first year of scything in 2020. This year, 2021, I did manage to save the hay and build a stack. Our neighbouring farmers used it to feed young calves.

Growing up by the sea in Donegal my father used a scythe to cut the hay. There were no tractors or horses, all the work was done by hand. It feels good to continue the skill of scything even if our livelihood does not depend on it.

I learned how to use a scythe from Chris Hayes at the Irish Seed Savers Association in Scariff, County Clare late September 2020. The sun shone on our scything group of five women and three men. We travelled from Monaghan, Galway, Clare, Kerry, Cork, and our tutor from Wexford.

Chris got down to work promptly. Covid rules applied so we kept our distance from one another.

He explained all about the history of scything and the various types of scythes in use across the world.



We learned how to measure and ensure a good fit so I bought a Number 2 along with two whetstones and a holder. I also came away with the invaluable *Learn to Scythe* by Steve Tomlin.

Some of the participants came with one or more scythes so there was a mixture of ability in the group. Once we had assembled our scythes and had received the necessary instructions we headed for a slanting meadow. We spent a few hours practising our scything and laid low some grass.



We had brought a packed lunch with us as the café was closed due to Covid. I had a beautiful journey home through East Clare, driving for miles without seeing a house or human.

I love my wooden Austrian scythe; it is light and handles so well. My husband gave me one of his belts which is great for hanging my whetstone holder. My appetite has been whetted, now I need to learn how to peen.

Chris had Austrian scythes for sale and a few of us bought our first and for some a second or third scythe.

## Haymaking

Who is it beckons me to try  
 My hand and body with a scythe  
 Is it someone that I know or is it  
 Someone beyond, that now  
 Lifts whetstone to the steel?

My memory of seeing men cut grass  
 While women and children rake and turn  
 Until the hay is dry then build a stack  
 Fork up the hay to the one on top  
 Who walks around making even underfoot.

And then a cover thrown over  
 Held down by heavy stones  
 To keep the hay  
 For hungry cows  
 When morning and nights are cold  
 Farmers now admit  
 That was the way  
 Of yesterday, today machines cut  
 And lift and into silage pits  
 The grass that once turned into hay.

With my scythe I carry on  
 Cutting a small meadow  
 That once was lawn.  
 This year was my first and too late  
 For making hay.

The grass I cut will lie  
 In mini stacks, not fully dry  
 But dry enough to keep  
 Small wild things warm through winter  
 And into Spring.

Next year I will be prepared  
 Will clean down the blade  
 Tighten bolts, peen and sharpen  
 Remove the burr  
 And put aside my pen.

(c)Bernadette Gallagher

*From the Editor*

It's very satisfying to see The Windrow's "events" page showing a full programme of opportunities to allow us to exercise and improve our skills throughout the summer. Though the pandemic is by no means over some semblance of normality seems to be returning.

For the first time in two years we were able to hold the winter meeting (though it was really held in early spring) and review the efforts of SABI to introduce the scythe and its use to the wider community.

Those of us who attended returned to find emails in our inboxes advising us that two of the attendees had tested positive for COVID but as far as I know no one else reported sick. One attendee was particularly disappointed as it seems that all their efforts to catch it have failed despite multiple exposures, it's hard to know what to suggest except to keep on trying!!!

Recently a SABI member has created a new form of peening machine based on an SDS power tool as an alternative approach to the one that has featured in previous Windrow's. Maybe it will turn up at one of the International Peening Day events though purists will probably wish to stay with the neighbour annoying tap, tap, tap of the hammer and anvil. I'm looking forward to seeing an article on this in the next issue.

Whilst on the subject of peening there was a recent post on the SABI facebook page which asked the question. "My greatest peening problem is my glasses keep falling off. What's yours?" There were numerous replies which included mine which was.....Cutting through my trouser's!

I feel I ought to qualify this..... When freehand peening with a bar anvil whilst riding ones pony it makes it so much easier to keep the blade positioned on the anvil if its height is roughly at the height of one's thighs so when peening the blade is supported at its extremities.



There is though a bit of problem with this in that any small nicks in the blade end to snag and cut the weft of the cloth of one's trousers.

Whilst I realise that large rents in ones legwear is considered high fashion these days they can also be the cause of uncomfortable draughts around the nether regions.

Rather than to become a slave of fashion (and discomfort) in coordination with my local seamstress we have come up with the "Peening Trouser" which will be given a thorough trial throughout this scything season





In this issue of The Windrow is an article and poem from Bernadette Gallagher who hails from the Eirean branch of SABI who now have a facebook page here:- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/215248119929200>

Where this marvellous image can be found  
A Fantastic statue which can be found in Gortahork Co. Donegal

This year it's been possible to get The Windrow published before International Peening Day which has mean't that all those who are holding peening days on that date to advertise their event. I hope to be able to get the next issue of the newsletter out at a similar time but in order to be able to do this I need content. If you have an article or feel that you could write one do not hesitate

Finally a big thank you to all of you who took the time to write articles for The Windrow without such material it would be a very thin periodical indeed.

Finally it gives me great pleasure to publish the short piece below. The author kindly gave me permission to present their ideas and writing in a more 'universal' manner. I did this because I am sure that there is more than one of you readers who will smile and welcome



the obvious commitment of this individual to a more fulfilling way of life. What is equally if not more important is that he has the blessing of 'Anon'.

## Together We Are Strong

by  
*Anon*

A man now in his early thirties whose hobbies and interests are pretty different from those of his peers. An avid reader of books on the "ancient ways", rural crafts and "how we once lived", began trying to learn these essential skills and crafts in early adulthood.

He first met a scything master back in 2018 and was introduced to the art and passion for scything, something he had only ever read about in dusty, worn-out books. Indeed, since that day, has been inspired and encouraged to grow his knowledge base on traditional agriculture. Nowadays no longer reliant solely on books, as he's gained access to the knowledge of some of the best minds on the subject in the UK.

These people and the community around them have been a real lifeboat since the first lockdown, and although the pandemic has been a tragedy and a calamity in equal measure, it has cemented the decision to choose to live and work according to his own stringent ethical and environmental standards.

To that end the last couple of years have been spent managing time according to this priority, and has been able to exercise the skills read about in various books, including those by the legendary John Seymour. The hand tool collection has now outgrown the toolshed

and in mid 2021 it was time to to leave behind the rat-race and a relatively well-paid job to live and work the way that had always been the dream and to take the leap to try to earn a living by using the skills acquired through contract work as well as courses in hedgelaying, drystone walling and, most importantly, scything.

Having had a history of working for a number of charities, businesses and council-funded organisations in conservation whose reticence to embrace low-intensity, machineless fossil-free land management techniques because they are "uneconomical".

The main aim is to be able to spread joy and enthusiasm to revive these dying crafts through individuals and, more importantly, through these conservation bodies.

The vision is to educate, motivate and quite frankly, spread to others a passion for this life which, as we all know can be quite contagious. Incredibly so!

Time will tell whether a life can be carved out through scything tuition, other land-based work, but where there is such willingness there will almost certainly be a way!

# Minutes of the SABI 12th Winter/Spring Meeting

*Held at Heritage Harvest, Prestwood, Bucks, HP16 0HP*

*Saturday 5th March 2022, 2pm*

Present:

Petra R, Gill B, Simon F, Kevin A, Marina, Camilo, John L, Larry L, Phil B, Adrian T, Beth T, Jim McV, Mary E, Colin C, Danny H, Helene, Richard B, Chris R  
Present on Zoom: Michele, Andi R, Suzanne R (Rep. Ireland), Andrew Halliday (N. Ireland), Pete Vojak, Kate ?

Apologies

Mark Allery, Olga Damant, Jeremy Hastings, David Kuegler, Charlotte Oliver, Jennie Thomasson, Steve Tomlin,

Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

Treasurers Update

Chris R reported to meeting. Will email everyone subsequently. See report.

Membership Update

Mary E reported to the meeting. As well as regular £10 renewals, 18 members paid £40 for 5 years, 5 members paid £50, 1 person paid £80, and 3 people paid £100. There is generally good appreciation of the work of SABI.

There were 30% more new members in 2021.

Mary E asked if people wanted reminders – yes please.

Mary E piloted contacting members in a region, and asking do they want to share details with others nearby. Tried Dorset and Ireland. Successful, so will expand.

Mary E said she was mindful of GDPR in how this was delivered.

## **Annual review of SABI key aims: achievements and way forward**

### *Communication*

Web Site

Works well, but could do with more content.

temporary glitch sorted out quickly.

Beth T tracked visitors to her web site, and they always were from SABI site.

Mary E is developing a list of key people with expertise such as peening.

Everyone with their own site should put a link to SABI site.

Very good response for forthcoming issue, with nearly enough material already. (Incl. a front page picture). SABI web site courses page is Colin's main source for courses info, so please keep that up-to-date. Should it instead be just a list of instructors?

Some newly established trainers are being to be encouraged to put their details up, eg in Wales.

954 members in the FB group, of which 792 are 'active'.

451 posts in 2021. 3,000+ comments, almost 12,000 reactions (likes).

Discussion as to how much young people use FB, and other social media.

Gmail group has 250+ members. Different kinds of posts/information to FB. Gmail especially good for sharing tasks and activities and developing topics of or substance. FB ideal for lighter informal posts.

Still listed on web site as regional co-ordinators – needs to be sorted. (Action ME/RB)

### *To promote the use of the scythe throughout Britain*

More local events now held.

Green Scythe Fair (See APPENDIX 1 for further discussion), Northern (new site being investigated), Stiperstones, Sheffield, Wales, Herefordshire, and now 3 events in Scotland.

3 or 4 new banners need to be found homes – collect at the Green Scythe Fair.

For a digital version of the logo, it can be copied from the web site.

Badges are appreciated.

There was some interest in SABI car stickers, perhaps with scything based pun- if plastic could be avoided.



## Publicity.-

A discussion about involving 'personalities'. Some decline in coverage in the media. A mass mow in a conspicuous location would attract attention. Events should have a Press Release to engage the press. Perhaps join forces with an organisation that has good press links, eg FOE or wildlife trusts. Discussion to be furthered by John L, Simon F, Larry L and Colin C

A calculation of carbon footprint of alternative machinery would be useful.

Flyer put in scythe sets by Simon & Gill. But perhaps a sticker on the box would be a good idea to raise SABI's profile.

Young people generally know very little about scythes – but then they do not have the grass the cut! Joining volunteer groups will expose volunteers to scythes and other tools.

*To improve mowing skills through training and the broadcast of information*

Beth is offering an on-line course.

Web site page maybe utilise a widget (?) or a calendar.

A suggestion that a pinned post be placed on the FB page, linking to SABI web site. - Action:- Richard B

Discussion about community groups and local funding.

A number of tutors refer to other tutors, to reduce the mileage driven by trainees.

Sellers should be sure that they are not selling to under 18s!

Risk assessments are carried out.

*To maintain standards of manufacture and supply\* of scythes and ancillary equipment.*

After a long delay, sheaths have been made, and a delivery is expected in a week or so.

Schrokenfux order expected in April, but the last one was 5 months late. Struggling due to pandemic, but also to find skilled workers – quality of blades has been erratic. Orders should really be made a year in advance.

Simon looking at Gunas (Turkey) as alternative supplier of blades.

Gill and Simon trying to wind down a bit, as well into pensionable age. Distributors now have to collect from Monkton Wyld (or GSF).

Discussion as to how regional stockists might work to spread the load.

This preliminary discussion outlining the supply issues faced was adjourned to another meeting on Sunday morning attended by interested parties (sellers and tutors) for further examination of the problems and to discuss potential strategies.

*To promote the study of the history of the scythe and allied technologies*

Can Mark Allery write something? He is suffering from long-covid.

AOB

Irish membership had a Zoom meeting, plus Mary. Discussion of how to support them, given that we get their membership fees, and they are remote from the benefits. Fund travel to events? For that matter Scotland is in a similar position. Perhaps they could be supported to set up an Irish wing of SABI?

John L thanked people for attending the barley mow at Lammas time. He is planning to arrange for the 200-300kg of grain to be malted, then make beer from it. Combine processed barley from the rest of the field has already made good beer.

John Letts was thanked for hosting the meeting.

Next Meeting

12<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at the GSF

\*Note: there will be an opportunity to discuss the Green Scythe Fair and Scythe supply issues at greater length in separate focused meetings over the weekend.  
(Afternoon meeting)

1. Chris R suggested moving the scythers' camp to the old LWA camp, and having an area of practice grass here. However it was stressed that it was better to have the camp closer to the action for the courses and the fair day. Chris R will take back to the GSF committee, still with the intention of getting an increase in the area of practice grass, and reducing slightly the 'arena' grass area. There may be a cost implication, which Chris R is to discuss with the Englands. SABI should be able to cover this.

2. An alternative way of running the heats was suggested by JMcV – how fast can you mow a 5m strip. This would enable better planning of grass, and better safety by aiding control of the movement of contestants.
3. Financial planning was discussed. The fees for course participants pays for everything. So instructors fees need to be covered, and medals, food etc. Remuneration of setup crew should be planned as well, but a structure has not yet been established. Distinguish between crew and general volunteers.
4. Improvers's course will be led by Phil B, Kevin A, and Andi R.  
Beginners' course will be led by Adrian T, Danny H, Beth T, Larry L, Camilo
5. Separate tea tent should this time be open to the rear. (A separate deep rest area should again be established at the Scythers' Camp.
6. Safety rules are to be emphasised at a meet and greet point, and a written leaflet.
7. Bookings for courses will be dealt with by Simon (Improvers') and Colin (Beginners')
8. Simon is involved in the debate held in the marquee this year (check timings) and so will not be able to do the processing heats performance, but he should be able to do the compering. Jim McV will process the heats.