The Windrow

Windrow No 22 April 2026

Newsletter of The Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland



Peter Blackwell

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From the Hayrick

Welcome to the latest issue of The Windrow! This year I am glad to be able to announce the first truly international edition. Achieveed with the kind cooperation of scything enthusiasts in Holland and Belgium who have produced a several articles describing the nature of scything in their respective countries. I offer them my grateful thanks for their effort. It is not easy to write coherently in a foreign language particularly where there are technical terms that require translation. I once knew a German translator who made a living out of interpreting technical German he was in great demand! Additionally in the Letters section we have an interesting communication from America. The authors of the Belgian contribution Peter and Christina De Schepper are visiting The Green Scythe Fair this year, please seek them out and welcome them to our scything community.

For the first time in this issue I have managed to elicit an article from from outside of the scything community. Donna Cox, co-founder & Chair of Moor Meadows a group of people who are dedicated to preserving and restoring the number of meadows in Devon kindly agreed to write for us. I hope that perhaps in the future some mutual benefit (Apart from the obvious one) can grow from this communication as we are all on the same side so to speak.
On pages 18 & 19 you will find "Scythe Song" written by Jennifer Whittaker there's a good chance that this will be sung at the Green Scythe Fair so be sure to give the chorus a turn.

I apologise for the lateness of this edition, my personal life has been somwhat flooded with family matters recently and free time has been in short supply.

This year in August I will be 75 years old and as age would have it my eyesight has started to deteriorate. Having edited The Windrow for ten years I have decided that the time had come to pass on the Snath (nee Baton) to someone else.

At this years winter meeting Jo Haywood volunteered his services for the task and to him I offer my grateful thanks for stepping up and ensuring that The Windrow will continue to be published into the future. Jo has had previous experience editing a newsletter for the RSPB so I am confident that The Windrow will continue to flourish under his editorship.

I would also like to thank all those who have contributed their time and creative skills to provide interesting and diverting content for me to include in these pages; be warned though whereas my work for The Windrow has stopped for you the readership it has not. Without quality content this newsletter will be thin and uninteresting so please support Jo as you have supported me. I should also apologise for boring you all to death about peening machines; unfortunately I cannot promise that there will not be more content in this regard!!!. There are two people I would especially like to to thank and they are Suzanne Raven and her piece Backbreaker Meadow and Andi Rickard whose article Scything Through The Noise prompted me to write of my own experience. These articles have, I hope, have opened up the possibility for others to write about aspects of scything that are not immediately obvious. Handling and mowing with a scythe even when it is difficult terrain encourages reflection and builds internal fortitude but on a warm summers day with the smell of mown grass, watching natures diversity at your feet and surrounded by the gentle swish of the blade and birdsong is, should I say it? A spiritual experience?
For me it is, it is the place of peace that I can go to become fully part of this universe.

I have tried to come up with a way of saying goodbye to you readers but I cannot come up with anything better than what the Dolphins said in Nigel Adams book The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Universe when The Earth was about to be blown up by the Vogons.

Goodbye and thanks for all the fish!

P.S. If you don't know the story; the Dolphins pulled The Earth into an alternate universe so most likely I'll see you at the Green Scythe Fair

Colin Close

EVENTS

Please note that events not necessarily listed in date order!

Confidence Booster Boot Camp

2nd - 3rd May 2026

Hosted by Somerset Scythe School

A residential weekend in beautiful South Somerset, specifically aimed at increasing diversity in the Scythesphere:

for those who wish to improve their scything skills in a fully supportive setting, with a particular emphasis on boosting confidence to improve competition performance.

All welcome as long as you bring no toxic masculinity!

Cost £60 per person, per day.

Camping at £10 per tent per night plus please bring food / drink to share.

Camping available from 6pm Friday 1st until 11am Monday 4th

Please email mowermeadow@yahoo.com to enquire and book.



Join Phil, Andi and Kev for a Scything deep dive!

This workshop is great 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

Learn to get your blade sharper and to scythe expertly at the BIGGEST gathering of Scythers in the UK!

SCYTHING EVENTS



Pre-Fair Courses and Talks

An introduction to the English Scythe
Self-sufficient medicine: using herbs at home
Recycled Copper Jewellery Workshop
Beginners Spoon Carving
Prehistoric Copper Smelting Alchemy
Casting Tin Jewellery in Cuttlefish Moulds
Prehistoric Pottery Making
Smocking Through History
Hay Rake Making Course
The Wonders of Westcountry Hedges
Sharpening Edge Tools
Running Horse Shamanic Drum Making
Soulful Iron Blacksmithing
Scythes in Grassland and Habitat Management

Programme for 2026 Green Scythe Fair Saturday Scythe Workshops.

This year we will be offering some Morning courses (marked *) to the wider public advertised alongside other GSF courses on GSF Website at a fee. These courses can be booked by SABI members (some FOC).

See Course Details in appendix below.

On Saturday afternoon there will be other practical sessions and workshops which are open to SABI members and Scythe course attendees.

Note:
Entry to GSF Saturday requires registration and wristbands.
To register for Saturday admission Email Neil scything@greenfair.org.uk

Entry to the Green Scythe Fair and competitions on Sunday is by separate prebooked ticket only, and for which Saturday tickets are not valid.

Overnight Camping should also be prebooked using the link above if required.

Provisional Saturday Schedule

Morning: 10am-12am Course English Scyethe. Location Scythe Marqee 12am - 1pm field with Danny Hodgson, Terry Standen & Mark Allery.
11am – 12am Peening Masterclass. Location:
Peening Tent Phil Batten, Andi Rikard1, Kevin Austin
Leading Groups and Teaching scything? - with Andi Rickard
Exploring different Scythe and blade set ups to match the task (including for competitions!) - with Kevin Austin
Freehand Peening with Phil Batten
Lunch 1pm – 2pm
2pm - 3:30pm Scythes in Grassland and Habitat management*– with Richard Brown
3:30/4:00pm Scythes in Belgium Peter and Cristina
Afternoon:
5pm-6pm Peening machines Demos – with Peter Blackwell, Richard Toogood and Colin Close
5pm - 6pm Hay making amd Hay Racks Simon Fairlie
Plus others tbc on the day
Evening:
6pm SABI AGM
7pm Q&A Session on Scythes and Grassland management. Led by Richard Brown with other panel members tbc.

Appendix: Saturday Morning Workshop Details
As listed for prebooking on https://gsf.idloom.events/green-scythe-fair-2025/register

Scythes in Grassland and Habitat management
This workshop aims to present and discuss the pivotal role of the scythe in habitat management for wildlife. Scythes and people together are potentially a keystone element in developing and maintaining heathy ecosystems. 'No Mow' and Rewilding campaigns of recent years may seem to suggest otherwise. We will discuss how practically the different strategies do work together.
COURSE LEADER Richard Brown. contact richard@wildscythe.co.uk

Richard is a Botanist, Ecologist and Seedsman and will present the session based on his 40 years' experience promoting the creation and maintenance of wild flower meadows. He is also Chair of the Scythe Association.
£35.00 (SABI members may use the discount code 'Grasslandfree')

Optional blade peening service £10 Contact Richard Toogood – 07594 506084 - toogood127@hotmail.com

The English Scythe Course
History, Restoration and Use



It's a common phenomenon: you meet a nice fellow or gal and during a polite discussion about the weather and your respective interests, your passion for scything comes up. There's then a good chance that this fellow or gal will offer you their relative's old scythe that's been hanging in the old barn for decades.

If this has ever happened to you, you are in good company. It seems that old American, English, Scottish and Northumbrian scythes (and others) are cropping up in various sheds near you, as well as antique and bric-a-brac shops. You might have given it a go in your usual mowing spots, decided a bit of TLC was needed, and left it in your own shed for what might turn out to be another few decades.

However, if you'd like to restore this old scythe to its former glory, we've got just the thing. A group of traditional scythe enthusiasts are getting together on the Saturday before the Green Scythe Fair (7th June) to share their knowledge on how best to get these bulky beasts into racing condition. Like Shire horses, traditional scythes are beautiful, imposing and will confer extra cachet to their wielder in the competition area. With bulk comes grunt, more punch and a load more power. With the advice of Danny Hodgson, Terry Standen, Mark Allery and Richard Brown you'll be leaving the workshop with knowledge on how to create a beast so sharp and powerful you'll be handling it more carefully than you would your trusty Austrian.

The team will have grinding stones, hafting angle modification advice and even some trade secrets to share on how to restore snaths and nibs. They might even share pointers on how to scythe for competition success. This workshop will be a brilliant amalgam of green woodworking hints as well as backyard metalworking tips. We'll cover:

- Blade construction and history
- Blade restoration (including grinding and tang setting demo)
- Discussion on traditional snath designs
- NB: this workshop is designed to demonstrate the restoration of old blades and snaths rather than providing a restoration service

We invite all interested parties to book their place at https://gsf.idloom.events/green-scythe-fair-2026/register

See also https://www.greenfair.org.uk/scythe-info (scroll to bottom of page)

For any queries please email hand.powered@yahoo.com

Saturday 7th June 10am – 12am
COURSE LEADER: Danny Hodgson and others. Contact hand.powered@yahoo.com
£30 (SABI members may use the discount code 'Englishscythefree')


Wandlebury Scything Festival
Incorporating
The Eastern Counties Scything Championship
Wandlebury Country Park
Wandlebury Ring, Gog Magog Hills, Cambridge CB22 3AE
Sunday 12 July, 10am - 4pm
Hosted by kind permission of Cambridge Past Present and Future.
Entry Free. Donations welcome.
There will also be a scything course on Saturday 11th July.
To book go to:- https://cambridgeppf.org/etn/learn-to-scythe-day/


The Northern Scythe Festival &
Northern Scythe Championships
Sat 25th and Sun 26th July 2026
Basic camping available Friday to Sunday night at £10 per person per night.
Book with Jim McVittie (jim@mcvittie.me.uk).
Large barn for communal meeting and bring and share meals each day.
By Kind Permission of Tom Lord
at Lower Winskill Farm,
Langcliffe, Settle BD24 9PZ

HAYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES 2026

Haymaking operations depend on appropriate weather, and cannot be scheduled in advance.

Please make contact with the organisers of the following events well in advance.

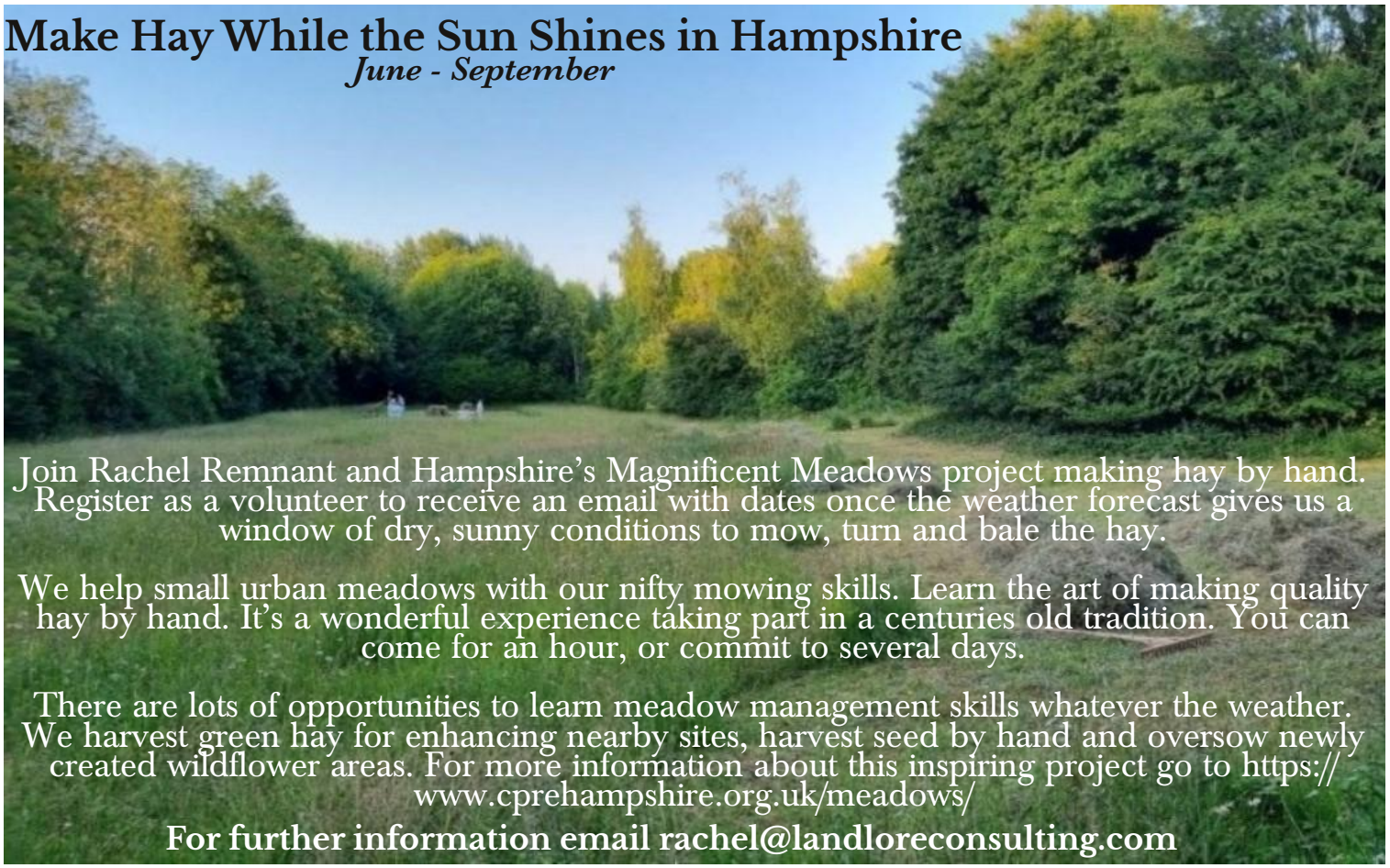


Haymaking at Fairhill Farm

June to August

Throughout June, July and August, we make hay by hand on our small farm in the Teign Valley, on the edge of Dartmoor . Novice scythers are welcome to assist and learn; food and lodging/camping is provided. This is weather dependent.

If you might be interested please email Simon Fairlie at scythes@myphone.coop
Fairhill Farm, Pound Lane, Bridford EX6 7LQ



Make Hay While the Sun Shines in Hampshire

June - September

Join Rachel Remnant and Hampshire's Magnificent Meadows project making hay by hand. Register as a volunteer to receive an email with dates once the weather forecast gives us a window of dry, sunny conditions to mow, turn and bale the hay.

We help small urban meadows with our nifty mowing skills. Learn the art of making quality hay by hand. It's a wonderful experience taking part in a centuries old tradition. You can come for an hour, or commit to several days.

There are lots of opportunities to learn meadow management skills whatever the weather. We harvest green hay for enhancing nearby sites, harvest seed by hand and oversow newly created wildflower areas. For more information about this inspiring project go to https://www.cprehampshire.org.uk/meadows/

For further information email rachel@landloreconsulting.com

A WEEK OF DROP IN SCYTHING IN THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS

27TH JULY TO 1ST AUGUST

COME AND MOW A MEADOW



SCYTHING WITH A VIEW



Introductory course (booking only) on the 27th July.

Drop in scything sessions at a different location each day (Tuesday to Friday).

Peening session (Friday pm).

'Have a go' and scything competition on Saturday at the Discovery Centre in Craven Arms.

Contact:: simon.cooter.97@gmail.com

For more details or to book the introductory scythe course cintact Simon Cooter at simon.cooter@gmail.com

Gloucestershire Orchard Trust Scything Day

Saturday 4th July 2026 10.00am - 4.00pm

Longney Orchard, Bow Lane, Longney, Gloucestershire, GL2 3SW

Join us for the second Gloucestershire Scything Day!



Expect a relaxed day of group mowing and bonhomie in our peaceful, historic orchard next to the River Severn. We are a small team who meet regularly to manage the orchard grassland with scythes, and we would love fellow scythers to enjoy this special place with us. All are welcome. Bring your scythes with blades for grasses and rough mowing. There is water on site but please come with your own picnic.

Gloucestershire Orchard Trust



For roadside parking and the start of the path/track to the orchard: What3Words digested.shelter.expert – it's a country road so please park with consideration. The orchard is a pleasant 5 minute walk along the path/track (no vehicle access) – through the trees then bear right, then left, through the field gate into the orchard, along to our restored byre which is our base for the day.

Contact: www.glosorchards.org/events

INTERNATIONAL SCYTHING EVENTS



https://www.facebook.com/events/1260345758898058/?acontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A



Acorn Project in Graine, Kilkenny
The fourth Song of the Scythe festival is a one day ‘meitheal’ or community co-operative effort to celebrate and connect the culture and skills of the countryside. With the scythe as the focus previous workshops have ranged from creative writing, interpretation of hedgerows, meadow plant identification as well as scythe specific skills.
Details for this year will follow.
https://theacornproject.ie/

The Dutch National Team Championship

Sat 29 August 2026 Boer'ndag, Elspeet



For more information contact info@leonlibre.nl

Belgian Scythe Fair

30 May 2026 10.00am - 10.00pm

Parc du Bosquet,
Welkenraedt, Province of Liège,
Belgium (near the Dutch and German borders)

Provisional Programme

All day
- Demonstrations and initiations
- Various workshops and stands
- Sale of scythes and accessories
- Bar and food featuring local products

10.00 am Scything Championships
Three categories men, women, youth 12+, scythe vs. brush cutter
(prior registration required)

2.00 pm Local produce market

3.00 pm Live music with Arlette T'en Jette and another group (to be announced)

For the safety of everyone dogs must be kept on a leash at all times.
Scythes are very sharp, and a running dog may not be seen in time by a mower.
A plus for sustainable mobility !
The parc du Bosquet is a 14-minute walk from Welkenraedt train station.

COURSE DIRECTORY

Adrian Thomas*
North Devon
adrianthomas59@gmail.com
I run training courses either at my home in Buckland Filleigh or at a local site of your choice, for individuals or for groups. I sell scythe kit and offer a blade peening service.

Courses:
- Please email for details

County Served:
- Devon

Andi Rickard*
Somerset
andirickard@me.com www.scytheschool.com

Scythe tutor with 13 years teaching experience.
UK ladies champion.
Running courses in the South of England from April to October.
Also available to book in the Midlands / North / Scotland the weeks either side of 19th July.

Courses:
Please go to my website for full course dates and details and to book.

- Saturday 25th April – Scything for beginners and improvers – Mower Meadow
- Saturday 2nd / Sunday 3rd May – Confidence Builder Boot Camp – Mower Meadow
- Saturday 9th May – Scything for beginners and improvers – Mower Meadow
- Wednesday 13th May – Learn to Scythe at Ashley Court, Devon
- Saturday 30th May – Scything for beginners and improvers – Mower Meadow
- Friday 12th / Saturday 13th June – Improvers Masterclass at the Green Scythe Fair
- Saturday 27th June – Scything for beginners and improvers – Mower Meadow
- Date TBC September – Learn to Scythe at Lytes Cary NT

County Served:
- Somerset

Andrea Gilpin*
Presteigne, Powys
hello@wildmeadow.co
https://www.wildmeadow.co/scything-classes
Master the art of scything in a 3-acre meadow with diverse terrain and vegetation.
Small groups (max. 7) ensure personalised instruction.
We have a Scythe assistant tutor on most courses.
I am a meadow ecologist with 15+ years of scythe tutoring experience, so we cover meadow management in our lunch breaks!
Equipment provided and available to purchase. 1:1 training available.

Courses
Saturday 14th June – 11am-4pm, beginners course £80
More dates to follow.

County Served
- Mid Wales
- Shropshire

Beth Tilston*
Forest of Dean
https://bethtilston.co.uk/scythe-courses-in-the-forest-of-dean/

Day long courses and one to ones with a teacher of 10+ years experience. Learn everything you need to get mowing.

Courses:
- Flaxley, Forest of Dean: 20th July
- Blakeney, Forest of Dean: 17th August
- One to ones available in Blakeney, Forest of Dean. Contact bethtilston@googlemail.com
- 30 minute Pay What You Want online course available at https://cloudcottageland.vhx.tv

County Served:
- Gloucestershire

Chris Hayes
Wexford,
Irelandchris@crannogmedia.ie
https://www.scythe.ie

I have been teaching scything for over ten years all over Ireland and sell scythes through my website.
My courses cover everything you need to get cutting confidently and give you the skills necessary to keep your scythe in top condition.

Courses:
Follow on Instagram @scythealive for updates on courses.

Confirmed courses for 2025-
- Irish Seed Savers, Co.Clare May 24th and October 4th
- Lismore Castle Gardens, Co. Waterford June 22nd
- Badgers Hill Farm, Wexford Dates TBC

County Served:
- Midlands East
- South East
- All Ireland willing to travel

Chris Riley*
North Dorset
chris@pratensis.net
http://www.pratensis.net/

With 13 years experience, I provide beginners' courses, as well as bespoke instruction at any level. I sell Austrian scythe equipment. I operate mainly in the Wessex area, but it can sometimes also be feasible to go further afield. See my web site for more information.

Courses:

- Friday 26th June 2026 – Meadow Management: Learn To Scythe Kingcombe Centre, Dorset DT2 0EQ Details at www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/courses-and-workshops
- Friday 17th July 2026 – Scything Workshop Vallis Farm near Frome BA11 3JQ (9.00am – 1.30pm) Details at www.vallisfarm.co.uk/eventsold/scything-with-chris-2026
- Sunday 26th July 2026 – Meadow Management: Learn To Scythe Kingcombe Centre Details: see 26th June above

County Served:
- Dorset
- Gloucestershire
- Hampshire
- Somerset
- Wiltshire
- All England willing to travel

Clive Leeke*
Berkshire
hedgecraft@theoldfarmyard.co.uk https://www.theoldfarmyard.co.uk/

Fourteen years' teaching experience since qualifying. Courses in scything and wildflower meadow management on own meadow in South Oxon, or on your land by arrangement.

Courses:
- Introduction to Scything. Gallowstree Common, South Oxon. Saturday, 20th July 2024. £85 pp
- Combined Course: Introduction to Scything; Improve Your Scything Technique, With Introduction to Peening Gallowstree Common, South Oxon. Saturday, 7th September 2024. £85

County Served:
- Buckinghamshire
- London W
- Oxfordshire

David Kuegler*
Parrysfield, Orcop Hill, Hereford
david.kuegler@btinternet.com
https://www.instagram.com/parrysfieldorcop/

We cover all aspects of Scything in a fun filled day, either Parrysfield or your meadow. https://www.instagram.com/parrysfieldorcop/
I sell fully prepared Scythe Kits: oiled, peened & sharp!, plus hay rakes & hay forks, & beautiful Peening ponies too!

Courses
- 1:1 Courses anytime/anywhere to suit March-December
- Group Courses up to six scythers, every second Saturday of the month March-October

County Served:
- Worcestershire

Heather Beaton
Lochalshheather.beaton@lochash.uk

Scythe courses run on the community land of the Plock. One-day courses cover the basics in scythe set up, peening and sharpening and mowing. One to one courses can be arranged, as can courses at a location of your choice. All proceeds go to community projects within Lochalsh.

Courses: Please contact the above email address.

County Served:
- Highlands and Islands

Helene Ducrotoy and Danny Hodgson
Near Whitland, West Wales
hand.powered@yahoo.com
www.handpowered.co.uk

Courses provided by two tutors to groups of up to 11 attendees. 1- day and multiple day courses in scything technique, maintenance, hay making and meadow management. Courses are suitable for beginners or experienced scythers and we are happy to travel to meadows anywhere in the UK. Scythes available for purchase at courses.
We specialise in repurposing and restoring vintage scythes. Restoration includes repair or reconditioning of blades and production and repurposing of snaths. We also sell custom-made scythes with hand-made snaths produced from local wood.

Courses: See website & email info above

County Served:
- All England & Wales

John R Grundy*
Northumberland
contact@wildernesstamed.com https://www.wildernesstamed.com/scything

Training groups and individuals from conservation charities, friends of groups and small holders. More information at and

Courses: Information and bookings see above

County Served:
- Durham
- Lothian & Borders
- Northumberland

Karl Jermy
Bacton, Norfolk
karl@moandmeadow.com

I've been scything since July 2023, under the guidance of Richard Brown from Wildscythe
I completed my masters course at the Green Scythe

Fair in June 2025.
To date I've run scythe workshops and individual "learn to scythe" tuition for voluntary groups. I also offer a peening and blade maintenance service
You can email me as per the above address or contact me on 07722 505110 or 01692 218544
Courses:-
Available for individual and group training course of up to 6 people.
Please contact me for a quote
County Served
- Norfolk

Kevin Austin*
Cornwall
kevin@skyegrove.co.uk https://skyegrove.co.uk/

For all your scything needs, training and equipment, specialising in the use of the Austrian scythe. Bespoke courses for singles, couples and groups and tailored for beginners and improvers

Courses:
- Cornwall Scything Meet & International Peening Day 2025 ~ Sunday April 6th 2025 10:00 — 4:00
- Saturday 10th May 10.00-4.00 Beginners Course
- Saturday 17th May 10.00-4.00 Beginners Course
- Saturday 31st May 10.00-4:00 Beginners Course
- Saturday 5th July 10:00-4:00 Beginners Course
- Saturday 19th July 10:00-4:00 Beginners Course
- Saturday 26th July 10:00-4:00 Beginners Course
- Scythe Masterclass at the Green Scythe Fair
- Saturday 24th May and Saturday 12th July 2025

County Served
- Cornwall:
- Devon

Mary Ellis*
southeastscything@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61564912050178

Learn to scythe in a day with others, or tailored 1 to 1 tuition in scything, sharpening and peening, in Kent, Sussex and Surrey. Learn the joy of an ancient skill. Please email southeastscything@gmail.com for more info.
"I have never seen anyone pick up a scythe and not smile."

Private and individual courses by arrangement.
Austrian and English scythe courses and restoration of English scythes.
Courses are delivered by two tutors to individuals or groups (11 max). 1-day and multiple day courses in scything technique, maintenance, hand hay-making and meadow management. Talks also delivered in meadow conservation.
Scythes available to purchase at courses.

Courses
Course dates for 2026 are still being confirmed and will be listed soon. Public courses will be held in Woodchurch (Kent), Nyman's NT and Hurstpierpoint (West Sussex) and other locations!
Please email me for enquiries about specific locations or dates.
Confirmed date:
Friday 29th May in Compton near Guildford. Please book through Surrey Wildlife Trust
We provide external courses at your venue

County Served:
- All England, Scotland and Wales

Neil Foulkes
Co. Leitrim, Ireland
neilfoulkes62@gmail.com

Formal and informal workshops on mowing and maintenance, including through local authorities. Mainly covering NI and the border counties. I also sellAustrian scythes and equipment

Courses:
- Please email to the address above.

County Served:
- North West
- Northern Ireland

Nicole Clough*
Oxfordshire
https://joyofscything.uk/

I provide training in the use, maintenance and joy of the Austrian scythe, within Oxfordshire, nearby counties and southern Midlands, and further afield on request. Please visit my website for 2025 venue dates or to enquire about arranging a bespoke session.

County Served:
- Oxfordshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Gloucestershire
- Hertfordshire
- London W
- Northamptonshire
- Warwickshire
- West Midlands
- All England willing to travel

Philip Batten*Dyfed Permaculture Farm Trust, Carmarthenshire
info@scythecymru.co.uk https:// www.scythecymru.co.uk/

Learn to scythe or improve your skills, learn to peen from a master peener.
Workshops give you – 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 year round in a variety of

situations.

Courses
Introductory Scythe Courses at Dyfed Permaculture Farm – Saturday 30th May, Saturday 4th July, Friday 31st July
Book and more dates at www.scythecymru.co.uk/product/introductory-scythe-course/
Peening Workshops at Dyfed Permaculture Farm – Saturday 11th April
Book and more dates at www.scythecymru.co.uk/product/peening-sharpening-workshops/

County Served:
- South West Wales

Rachel Remnant*
Winchester, Hampshire
rachel@landloreconsulting.com https://www.landloreconsulting.com/

Expert habitat advice, with a specialism in floodplain meadows and community engagement.
I teach an Introduction to the Austrian Scythe and can provide 1:1 tutoring or teaching and contract mowing for meadows.

Courses:
Introduction to the Austrian Scythe
This course is suitable for those wanting to refresh their skills and those learning from scratch.
Venue: The University of Winchester, Bar End Stadium, Winchester, Hampshire

- Fri 17th April 2026 Bar End Stadium
- Sat 9th May 2026 Bar End Stadium
- Wed 3rd June 2026 Bar End Stadium
- Sun 28th June 2026 Bar End Stadium
- Tues 21st July 2026 Bar End Stadium
- Fri 11th September 2026 Bar End Stadium
- Sun 20th September 2026 Bar End Stadium

Improvers ;
Refresh the principles of set up, peening, honing.
Improve your mowing technique.

- Fri 15th May, Winchester Cathedral
- Mon 6th July, Winchester Stadium

County Served:
- Hampshire

Richard Brown*
Kings Lynn, Norfolk
richard@wildscythe.co.uk
https://wildscythe.co.uk/calendar/

I offer courses and individual tuition in East Anglia and East Midlands. As an experienced Botanist, Ecologist and seedsman I can tailor courses to include both practical scythe instruction as well as meadow management theory. I sell scythes and offer fitting and peening services from my scythe workshop and meadow.

cont:

Courses:
Scheduled Scythe and grassland management courses in June July and August. Other individual and group courses and tuition available by arrangement see https://wildscythe.co.uk/calendar/

- 16th May 2026 – Scythe maintenance and peening workshop, Norfolk, PE34 4PL
- 24th June 2026 – Learn to scythe and grassland management course, Norfolk, PE34 4PL
- 8th July 2026 – Learn to scythe and grassland management course. Beds. MK44 2JU
- 9th July 2026 – Learn to scythe and grassland management course, Norfolk, PE34 4PL
- 22nd July 2026 – Learn to scythe and grassland management course, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4RA
- 29th July 2026 – Learn to scythe and grassland management course. Heacham, Norfolk, PE31 7LJ
- 19th August 2026– Learn to scythe and grassland management course. Heacham, Norfolk, PE31 7LJ

County Served:
- Cambridgeshire
- Leicestershire
- Lincolnshire
- Norfolk
- Suffolk

Rob Brodie
Fife, Scotland
robmaculture@yahoo.co.uk
https://quietertimes.org

Beginners and Improvers scything workshops suitable for anyone interested in using a scythe to manage green spaces. Blade repair and peening service available too. Please email to arrange a workshop, a blade repair enquiry and for more information. Also visit https://quietertimes.org for more details and to see current workshop dates.

Courses:
Please email or see website

County Served:
- Lothian & Borders

Ross Adams*
Totnes, South Devon
ross@abundantgardens.uk https://www.abundantgardens.uk/courses/

I run fun and informative courses covering everything needed to get you mowing efficiently and effectively. I have courses for beginners and improvers, I also offer 1-1's, 1-2's and I can run a course on your land. For more information have a look at my website https://www.abundantgardens.uk/courses/

County Served:
- Devon

Simon Cooter*
The Stiperstones National Nature Reserve
simon.cooter@naturalengland.org.uk

Formerly the 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. Also happy to carry out courses on other folks' land.

Courses:
- 19th July – Introduction to scything course – https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introduction-to-scything-course-tickets-1981699122421?aff=oddtdtcreator
- 27th July – Introduction to scything course – https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introduction-to-scything-course-tickets-1981699390222?aff=oddtdtcreator

County Served:
- Shropshire

Simon Fairlie*
Teign Valley near Exeter
07778898031 scythes@myphone.coop
https://www.thescytheshop.co.uk

Scythe courses covering basic skills, haymaking, grassland management and jig and freehand peening. One or two days. Complete range of scythe equipment available to buy. One-to-one tuition by appointment. Also three-day course with Kevin Austin: Outdoor Manual Tools for Novices, including scythes, forestry, hedging and garden tools etc

Courses:
- Our first course is on May 23-24 2026. £90 one day, £168 for two days including VAT. Lunch provided.
- There will be a second course in September.

We also offer one-to-one tuition by appointment throughout the year.
During June, July and August, we make hay on our small farm in the Teign Valley.
Novice scythers are welcome to assist and learn; food and lodging/camping is provided. This is weather dependent.

If you might be interested please email scythes@myphone.coop

County Served:
- Cornwall cont:
- Devon
- Dorset
- Hampshire
- Somerset
- Wiltshire

Steve Tomlin*
Manchester
stevetomlin8@gmail.com
https://steveTomlinCrafts.co.uk/learn-to-scythe

Practical, fun courses covering all the skills to use and maintain your scythe. I have been teaching scything since 2010, am author of 'Learn to Scythe' and sell scythe kits. I can travel to teach you or your group at your venue.

Courses:
Learn to Scythe Courses 2026
- 30 May, Slaidburn, Lancashire
- 13 June, Sedbergh, Cumbria
- 19 July, Slaidburn, Lancashire
- 14 August, Chapel-le-Dale, Yorkshire Dales
- 5 September, Sedbergh, Cumbria

Peening workshop, tbc – please join the newsletter for updates.
Book your place on Eventbrite:
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/cc/learn-to-scythe-2859659
Visit www.stevetomlincrafts.co.uk/learn-to-scythe for more information.

County Served:
- Cheshire
- Cumbria
- Derbyshire
- Greater Manchester
- Lancashire
- North Wales
- Staffordshire
- Yorkshire - South
- All England willing to travel

Susanne Raven*
Co Cork, Ireland
rowanlily@yahoo.de http://www.susanneraven.ie/

I run improvers' courses and scythe clinics for individuals or small groups of people. I also offer scythe mowing and peening services and can provide information regarding scything in Ireland.
You're welcome to join the Facebook group An Faobhar – Scythe Group Ireland at:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/215248119929200

County Served:
- Cork & Kerry
- All Ireland willing to travel

LETTERS

This is the new Windrow letters page hopefully to start some interesting discussions on scything related subjects.
If you would like to write or respond to letters for this page please address your correspondance to itchka@compuserve.com with WLETTERS somewhere in the subject.

The Scythe Community Podcast

Hello, everyone!

I've just started a new podcast for the worldwide scythe community called — naturally enough! — the Scythe Community Podcast. Our website is www.scythecommunity.org and you can find our episodes on YouTube and the audio versions on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

I wasn't sure the world really needed yet another podcast, so why did I start this? When I took up scything a few years ago, I suddenly realized I was pretty much on my own. Here in the USA we have few if any scythe instructors or workshops, no scythe associations and no scythe festivals. In other words, no real community, just many of us doing our own thing.

Yet I knew that across the Atlantic, there was a thriving Scythe Association of Britain & Ireland and a lot of scythe instructors, workshops and festivals. And plenty of people using scythes to manage and restore meadows! Of course, this is true in other European countries, too. I wanted to tap into all this expertise and share it with others who also might feel a bit isolated in their scything journey and would like to connect with the rest of the worldwide community.

A podcast seemed like the ideal platform where scythe users could hear from and learn from each other, wherever they are in the world. We clearly have a focus on scything but we like to talk about meadow restoration and management as well. As Richard Brown points out, scythes and meadows go together.

Speaking of which, Richard was our very first guest! It was a fascinating interview and I learned so much from him. You can watch that episode on our YouTube channel here:

https://www.youtube.com/@ScytheCommunity-x9h

If you know of other scything and meadow experts you'd like us to interview, you can submit your recommendations at our website or by emailing me directly at steve@scythecommunity.org.

I think it would be appropriate for me to sign off with…

Stay Sharp!

Steve Smith, New Hampshire, USA

Scythe Song Lyrics
By
Jennifer Whittaker

It's up with the lark and follow me,
(Mow the grass away)
A team of mowers we will be.
(Mow the meadow hay)

Chorus A
Swing swing the scythe blades sing!
Snath and tang on the land together.
Sing sing the orchards ring:
Mowing the meadow on a summer morning.

Instrumental interlude)

With stone on steel we'll hone the blade
(Mow the grass away)
When razor sharp, light work is made,
(Mow the meadow hay).

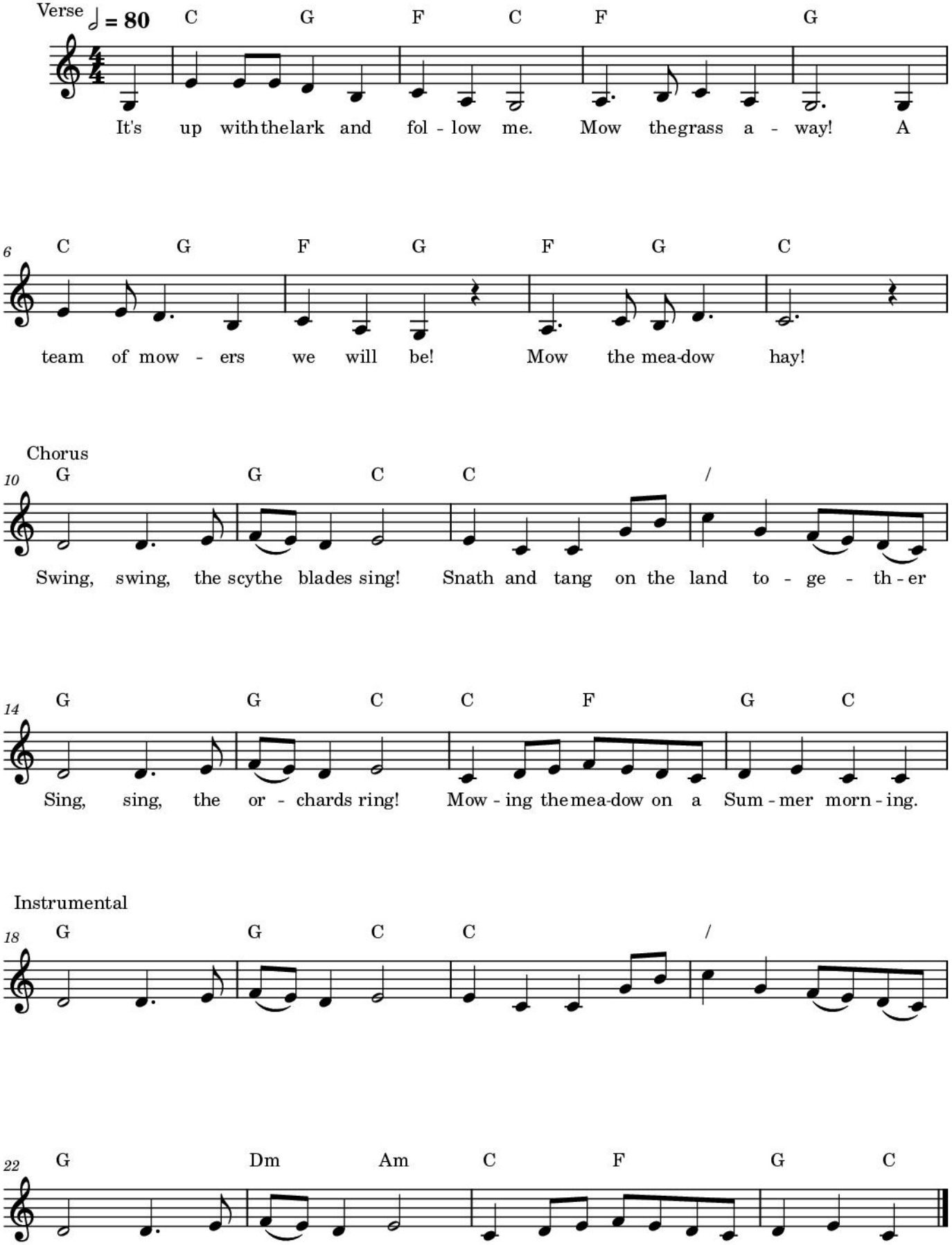
Chorus B
Bang bang our hammers clang!
Snath and tang on the land together.
Peen, peen, and make it clean for
Mowing the meadow on a summer morning.
(instrumental interlude)

Our windrows weave through the orchard trees,
(Mow the grass away)
Connecting through the centuries
(Mow the meadow hay).
Chorus A
Instrumental interlude.

And in Muchelney once a year,
(Mow the grass away)
For the Green Scythe Fair we all appear and
(Mow the meadow hay!).
Chorus A
Instrumental interlude.

Scythe Song

Jennifer Whittaker



Starting the Mowing Season:

By

Kristien Zaal-Dijkstra

The Netherlands has a long tradition of scythe mowing. Most people remember a grandfather that could mow and stories about this work. Grandfather's scythe still hangs on the wall in the barn, blade rusted and gathering dust. Fortunately a group of enthousiast has picked up the tradition in recent years. In the northern provinces, a group mows regularly throughout te season and is organised in volunteer groups by our local landscape conservation foundation, Landschapsbeheer Groningen. This group is the Groninger Zeisbrigade. A crew of city and country folk, all with a passion for the peace and quiet that scythe mowing offers. Our season starts early spring with jobs that involve mowing where motorised mowing is not wanted or possible such as in areas with fragile habitats for plants or insects or small conservation wetlands. Each year we are all keen to start after a long winter without our mowing excercise. Experience teaches us though that our scythe did not always get the attention it needed after the last season and invariably, is not very sharp anymore. Somehow we feel in autumn that peening our scythe is a perfect job for winter, but come spring, the blades are dull. Peening is a job that not all of us like and some of us city folk find troublesome to do with neighbours nearby, worried about noise. Peening is not the peace and quiet we yearn for, but mowing with a dull blade is also not the way to happiness come spring.









Our crew has resorted to combining peening with a social gathering at the barn of Landschapsbeheer Groningen. The location is remote enough not to hinder a neighbour even if 20 mowers are hammering away for several hours. Ear protection is mandatory. It is our first event of the year and everyone enjoys seeing each other after the long winter. In our crew, mowers are encouraged to bring their own peening bench and anvil. Depending on the skill or preference, each has her own type of anvil and hammer. Some of us follow the traditional method of a anvil that is mounted in the ground and a short hammer is used. Most of us, especially people new at peening or not so used to hammering, use a newer invention, known as a jig. This consists of a small round anvil mounted in a wooden block, combined with a cone on which to strike. The blade is held between the cone and the anvil and sharpened that way. For the best result, this s followed by a second round on a separate pointed anvil. Many people have their own unique method, equipment and technique to get to a sharp blade. In the photos you can get an impression from out gathering this year and the different setups. Part of the joy of our meeting is to exchange tips and learn new ways of peening and of course exchange stories. But most of all, spend a pleasant day together and end up with sharp scythe blades ready the season of mowing, at home or with the Zeisbrigade in the beautiful fields of Groningen, Drenthe or Friesland.





Scything Championships in the Netherlands

by

Carleen de Graaf, Zeisbrigade Groningen (NL)

Scything in the Netherlands is mainly performed by groups of volunteers throughout different provinces. Last year I wrote a piece about how our volunteer scything group, the Zeisbrigade from Groningen, is organised (The Windrow No 20, March 2025). This time, I would like to introduce you to the way competitions are held in the Netherlands.

There are two main events, the NK Maaien met de Zeis (The Dutch National Scything Championships for Teams) and the Iepen Frysk Kampioenskip Seinemeanen (The Frisian Open Individual Scything Championships).

The Dutch National Team Scything Championship

The National Championships are organised by Landschappen.nl, the landscape conservation foundation that protects and maintains natural and cultural heritage of the various provinces in the Netherlands. During a study trip to the UK in the early 2010s, a party of volunteer work coordinators of Overijssel, Gelderland and Flevoland got inspired when they attended scything competitions during the Green Scythe Fair in Somerset. They decided they wanted to organise something like this in the Netherlands too, aiming to bring scything under the attention of a wider public and to promote green community work. What started out as a small contest, gradually grew to last year's event where 22 teams were competing for the gouden strekel (gold whetting slat). Scything is becoming more and more popular in the Netherlands too.
Nowadays, the National Championships are part of the Boer'ndag (Farmers' Day) in Elspeet, that takes place



during the last weekend of August. Main attractions on this yearly event are a display of vintage tractors, agricultural machinery demos and various stalls. The day is a joyful opportunity for fellow volunteer scythers to meet up, inspire each other and demonstrate their skills. There are separate women's and men's competitions. Contestants enrol in advance, in teams of three (with a fourth spare mower). Every mower has to bring their own scythe that they have sharpened at home. Peening in between heats is not allowed. Scythers without a team can participate in one of the 'provisional teams' that are formed on site. Basic knowledge and owning a scythe are required.

The plots that have to be mowed measure 4.5 by 10 meters. Each of three scythers should mow one third of



the plot, in a lane of approximately 1.5 meters wide. The jury members assess each individual contestant on quality, technique and safety.

The following scoring rules are adhered to during the competition:

1. Quality (max. 10 points)
- smooth result in own lane
- smooth result on the transition between lanes
- no unmowed grass left under windrow

An even distribution of lane width amongst the three scythers is desirable.

2. Length of the vegetation (max. 10 points)
The judges assess if the whole lane is cut at an even length (not too short or under ground level)

3. Finishing touch (max. 10 points)
- grass neatly and evenly distributed at windrow
- no tufts of grass left in own lane
- no triangles of grass left at end of lane

4. Technique (max. 10 points)
- body posture relaxed during mowing
- mowing movement evenly paced without stress

However officially not a reviewed item, some teams put extra effort in getting their swing synchronised. It's a bit of eye candy and underlines the team effort too. The audience loves it and the mowers hope to impress the jury with it as well. Whetting is preferably done at the same moment too, usually the first mower indicates when this is necessary.

5. Time (max. 5 penalty points)
- exceeding time limit of ten minutes during preliminary

rounds: 5 penalty points
- exceeding time limit during finals: two penalty points

Time starts on instruction of the judge and ends when all three mowers have placed their scythe safely on their strekel (whetting slat). For both men and women the time is set at a maximum of ten minutes during the preliminary rounds. Time limit during the finals is reduced to seven minutes for men, for women it remains ten minutes.

6. Handling of the scythe before, during and after mowing (max. 10 points)

- one's own safety and attention for team mowers

The scythers in the second and third lanes may only start when the preceding scyther has mowed at least two meters. During contest a minimal distance of one meter between the tip of the mower's scythe and the heels of their precursor must be respected. Failing to do so results in a warning from the judges and three penalty points. Whetting must be done in such a way that one's own safety is not compromised (hands away from sharp edge).

- safety of bystanders and situational awareness

Unsafe carrying of the scythe to the competition area results in 2 penalty points. A good situational awareness is of great importance at all times. A couple of years ago, a child suddenly ran onto the field into the scyther's area with the heats in full swing. Mowers should notice this immediately and must stop mowing at once. During this particular incident, fortunately, no one got hurt and the child got off with a fright.

Ranking

In the end all points of the three individual team members are added up to form the final team score. The six teams that score the most points advance to the semi finals. In case of equal points, mowing time is the deciding factor.

During each of three semi finals, two teams compete against each other. Each winning team proceeds to the finals, which consist of three teams competing against each other. With only four or five women's teams participating in the competition, there are not enough teams for the aforementioned arrangement. Therefore the two highest scoring women's teams, will compete against each other in the finals. Unfortunately, the National Championships are not open for teams from other countries. The Frysk Open Individual Championships, however, are.

The Frysk Open Individual Championships at Flaeijel

Every last weekend of September the Iepen Frysk Kampioenskip Seinemeanen is organised. These scythe championships are part of a larger local village fete in Oudehorne and Nieuwehorne in Friesland, called Flaeijelfeest (Flail Fair). This yearly event goes back to 1977 and celebrates the rich cultural history of Friesland with a one-day open-air museum that turns back time to the years 1920-1930. Participants are encouraged to dress accordingly. On this day separate men's and women's scything competitions are held. The best mower in each category will win a Challenge Cup. There is also a prize for the best dressed person.

Because of their relatively long scything tradition, back in the early 2010s Frisian scythers were consulted by the National Landschappen.nl Committee to assist with setting up the National Championships. The scoring rules of the Frisian Championships formed the basis for those of the National Championships. Therefore, the assessment of quality, technique and safety is the same



The National Championships for Teams during the Boer'ndag in Elspeet

during both events. The two contests differ to the extent, that at Flaeijel each individual scyther has to mow a 5 by 6 meters plot on their own.

For those of you who would like to participate in a Dutch scything event and want to learn more about local heritage, traditional sports (ringrijden, kaatsen) and traditional costume – Flaeijel is definitely worth a visit.



The Frysk Open Individual Championships at Flaeijel

Also on site: strongest man/woman contest, farmers auction, crafts, food stalls, a vintage carriage and steam engine parade, street theatre and folk dance. Feel free to come over to experience this day with us. You are more than welcome. I can bring you into contact with the organising Frisian committee. The Zeisbrigade Groningen will offer fellow SABI-scythers ample choice of places to stay by members of our group.

Want to know more?
Flaeijelfeest Oudehorne, Friesland, The Netherlands
Scan the QR-code for a photoseries of the 2026 edition of this fair.
Contact the Zeisbrigade Groningen at info@zeisbrigade.nl or visit our website (in Dutch):

Scything in Winter

by

Peter Totman

It's my guilty secret. I really enjoy scything during the winter. This year has been an exception, the weather has driven me indoors. Vicious storms and half the annual rainfall in one month have scuppered my plans. Normally January and February are active months for me. I am privileged to be involved in a friend's environmental project. They have six acres of woodland and meadow they have managed for 40 years. For much of that time the meadow was cut for hay by a local small-holder farmer in return for a load of manure, but when five or so years ago he wanted to dress the land with fertiliser they decided to decline the offer, being primarily organic gardeners with thoughts of re-wilding.



This is where I became involved. At the time I was learning the scything craft under the tutelage of Kevin Austin, primarily to enable me to maintain the Quaker burial ground at Halbathic. Having lost access to mechanical mowing, another way had to be found to manage the meadow. I already had some involvement on the periphery, as it were, using my new-found scything skills(!) to contain and control the bracken invading along a boundary from an abandoned pasture next door. The dreaded bracken, given even less than half a chance will take over in a trice once your back is turned.



It was decided to divide the meadow into several segments. Some would be left alone, a couple planted out with saplings with the remainder to be cut regularly, and irregularly on a rotational basis to see what differences it made.

A marked change occurred from the first season in terms of the diversity of flora and fauna found in the meadow. The uncut areas have sprouted self seeded



native saplings that are doing far better than the planted specimens. Voles have created townships, much to the delight of the local owls, foxes and raptors. The areas that are mowed provide mulch and a heap for the growing of squash, marrow and pumpkin. Some areas are left to provide winter seed for the flocks of finches and such that take advantage. By the rear end of winter though, these are the exhausted and need to be cleared for the next growing season.

Winter mowing is a very different bowl of petunias. My



go-to spring and summer grass blades make very heavy weather of the lodged and tangled grass with its dense, dead dry thatch and woody stemmed thistle, milk and knotweed. I experimented with a ditch blade, even resorting to removing the spike that seemed to dig itself in at every opportunity, (that was a laborious process!) to no advantage. As an aside, removing the spike, tip protecter, or what ever, has actually made the blade

much more use in clearing bramble and rough vegetation from boarders and around trees where the spike used to get stuck in practically everything it could.

The answer to my prayers has been the profisence. I started my mowing journey with a second hand 65cm



profisence and, although it worked sort of OK it was when I got myself a 75cm grass blade that my mowing skills improved dramatically. To some extent the profisence lay neglected, I would get it out periodically, then return to the 75. I think the 'flatness' of the blade was not suited to the undulating roughness of a Cornish meadow, coupled of course, with my inexperience. The curve of the grass blade allowed it to surf the turf.

So it was at some what of a loss, that I turned to the profisence, more out of desperation that reasoned argument. I wedged the blade to raise the tip off the ground, which gave it a fighting chance on the decidedly uneven surface and away it went! It was a revelation! Nothing stood in it's way. Where I'd struggled with tangled thatch, cocksfoot clumps and woody stems, it swept all before. Mowing winter grass became a joy. And there is nothing like being outside on a winter's day, the shadows long and low over the field and the scythe singing through the swathe. With a little experimentation I found a neutral hafting angle worked the best for me. Too closed up and it lost bite, too open and it took too big a slice causing it to stall.

At the beginning of February last year I was working away on the last few square meters of a soggy bottom quadrant when there was a 'clink' and my faithful blade, along with my heart, broke. Ah Death, where is thy sting?

As it happens I had the ditch as a back-up, but it wasn't the same. The heat had gone from the sun and the world was a darker, sadder place.
I have a replacement profisence, and very fine it is too. I have used it on spring and summer grass, though even wedged, it's not a patch on the 75 but I have yet to let it loose on a Winter offering. I am hoping by the time you read this the rain will have abated a bit and I can get out there and let it sing its song.



Moor Meadows

By

Donna Cox



Wildflower meadows and scything belong to the same story. Both are rooted in a way of farming that shaped not only our landscapes, but the extraordinary richness of life they once held. Today, that shared heritage is under threat - but it is also, in places, quietly returning. This is the story of meadows, of loss and recovery and of a growing movement to bring them back.

A Vanishing Habitat

Wildflower meadows - species-rich grasslands - are now one of the rarest habitats in the UK.
Grassland covers round 40 percent of England and the vast majority is intensively managed for agriculture. Species-rich grassland, which supports the highest biodiversity, makes up only 1% of the UK land area.



To understand what has been lost, it helps to look back. Maps of Devon from the late 19th century show a very different countryside: a patchwork quilt of small fields edged with hedgerows, dotted with orchards and managed as mixed farms. Livestock and arable farming went hand in hand. And crucially, livestock needed hay.
Each farm would typically have its hay meadows - fields shut up in spring, left ungrazed, then cut in mid-summer to provide winter feed. Many of these meadows were managed in this way for centuries. Over time, they developed a natural glorious botanical diversity: fine grasses interwoven with clovers, vetches, knapweeds, orchids and countless other species.

Compare that with many landscapes today and the change is stark. Two-thirds of ancient hedgerows have gone. Orchards and ponds have disappeared. Small fields have been merged into large, uniform blocks and with them, the meadows.

From Hay to Silage

The shift really began after the Second World War, as agriculture intensified to increase food production. Haymaking, with its dependence on settled weather and later cutting dates, gave way to silage. Silage allowed earlier, more frequent, cuts and higher yields. but it also required a different kind of grassland, Traditional meadows were ploughed up and reseeded - often with perennial rye grass, a species that responds well to fertiliser and produces abundant growth. What had taken centuries to develop could be destroyed in a matter of hours.

Today, around 98% of all lowland grassland has been reseeded and is species-poor, offering little in the way of wildlife habitat and food for pollinators.
The visual markers are familiar: uniform green swards, frequent cuts, and the black plastic-wrapped silage bales that now punctuate the countryside.

The Cost to Wildlife

The impact of this change has been profound. Traditional hay meadows were cut once a year, typically in summer - after ground-nesting birds had raised their young. In contrast, silage systems often involve multiple cuts beginning as early as April.
For birds such as lapwing, skylark, corncrake and curlew, this has been catastrophic.
Curlew, in particular, are deeply tied to place. Adult birds are remarkably site-faithful, returning year after year to the same breeding grounds. Their chicks, in turn, often go on to establish nesting territories close to where they themselves were fledged. What this means is that when a breeding site is lost, it is not easily replaced - the memory of that place is effectively erased from the landscape.



In Devon, records from the 1980s Devon Birds Atlas show numerous breeding pairs across the county. By 2010, that number had collapsed to a single pair.

The loss of meadows is not just about plants. It is about entire ecosystems - intricate webs of insects, birds, fungi and soil life that depend on the continuity of traditional management.

A Community Response

Against this backdrop, a quiet movement has been growing.



Moor Meadows began in 2015 with a talk in a village hall on Dartmoor. From those beginnings, it has developed into a community of over 2,000 people, all connected by a shared interest in meadows and wildlife.

At the heart of the project is the Meadows Map: a living record of over 3,000 acres of meadow across Devon and beyond. Anyone can add their meadow to the Map - whether it is an ancient, species-rich grassland, a field in restoration, or even a small patch in a garden.

The diversity is striking. The smallest meadow on the map is a shed roof. The largest is a 70-acre expanse of unimproved grassland at Deer Park Farm in Chudleigh - one of the rare sites that has escaped ploughing, reseeding, drainage and fertilisers. In spring and early summer, it holds fields of green-winged orchids.

The map is more than a record. It is a way of connecting people, sharing knowledge and making visible what still exists - and what is possible.

Restoration in Practice

One of the most encouraging aspects of the Moor Meadows project is that much of the restoration work is being carried out by landowners themselves.

Pic5:MaryinherMeadow

In 2021, a partnership with the charity Plantlife, supported by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, enabled over 100 acres of members' meadows to be restored to species-rich grassland. But beyond funded projects, many individuals are quietly transforming their land.

Take, for example, Dartmoor farmer Steve Pollard. On his farm, around 50 acres of downland, that had been cut for silage, are being restored. The soil, with its thin top layer, was never highly fertile - a crucial starting point. Year by year, wildflowers have come back. Among them, greater butterfly orchids have appeared in remarkable numbers - now several thousand plants, each one counted by Steve.

Elsewhere, at Bridford, a community meadow has been created on a third of an acre. Here, the approach was more interventionist: the nutrient-rich topsoil was stripped away and species-rich hay was spread and trampled in by volunteers.





Photocredit:WendySearle

From that hay came seeds - including yellow rattle, a semi-parasitic plant that suppresses grasses and creates space for other species. Within a few years, the meadow has developed into something of real ecological and aesthetic value.
These examples show important truths: that meadows can be restored and new ones created and that people are willing to put in the effort to do so.

Time and Patience
And yet, there are limits to what can be recreated.
A newly established meadow, however beautiful,



cannot replace one that has developed over centuries.
Just as a newly planted woodland cannot replicate an ancient forest, there are layers of complexity - particularly in soils and fungal networks - that take generations to build.
What meadow creation can do is create something meaningful in its own right.
Within five to ten years, a new meadow can support a wide range of plant and insect life. Meadow butterflies such as Marbled White, for example, depend not only on nectar sources but also on specific native grasses for their larvae to feed on.
This interplay - between flowers, grasses, insects and management - is what defines a meadow.
Management: The Role of the Scythe
Which brings us back to scything.
The management of a meadow is everything. Without it, diversity declines. With the wrong kind of management it can be lost entirely.
Traditional hay cutting - whether by scythe or machine



- remains one of the most effective ways to maintain and enhance species-rich grassland. A single, well-timed annual cut, followed by removal of the hay and later aftermath grazing, allows plants to set seed while preventing more vigorous species from taking over.
But for many meadow owners - particularly those working on smaller or more intricate sites - the scythe offers something more than practicality. It offers precision, sensitivity and a closer relationship with the land.
From the beginning, Moor Meadows has offered scything training to its members, recognising that this is not a lost art, but a living skill with a real role to play in meadow management today.

Many members use a scythe to manage relatively small areas - awkward corners, steep banks, or places where machinery cannot go. Others take on larger areas, sometimes cutting an acre over a period of time. This slower approach can be markedly kinder to wildlife, allowing insects and other creatures to move away as the work progresses.
The scythe also lends itself to selective management. It can be used to control more dominant or invasive species - hogweed, bracken, coarse grasses - without disturbing the wider sward. In this way, it becomes not just a cutting tool, but a means of shaping the balance of a meadow.
And then there is the experience of using it.
A well-set, lightweight Austrian scythe moves with an ease that often surprises beginners. It does not require



great strength, nor years of expertise to begin. With a little guidance, most people can learn the basics quickly and take real pleasure in the work.
Over the years, more than 150 people have been trained through Moor Meadows, guided by the highly experienced Chris Riley. What begins as curiosity often becomes something deeper: a skill, a rhythm, even a kind of quiet meditation.
In a world of increasing speed and mechanisation, the scythe offers something rare - a way of working that is attentive, low-impact, and deeply connected to place.

A Living Landscape
A meadow is not a static thing. It is dynamic and constantly changing.
Stand in one long enough and this becomes unmistakable. It's alive. The soundscape is the buzzing of bees, the clicking and whirring of grasshoppers,

crickets and myriad beetles. It's not only birds that produce sounds to defend territory or attract a mate.
Meadows have a vital role to play in nature's recovery. Not in isolation, but as part of a wider mosaic of habitats: hedgerows, woodlands, wetlands and farmland.
What Moor Meadows demonstrates is that this recovery does not depend solely on large-scale policy or funding, though both are important. It also depends on people: landowners, volunteers, communities and those who care enough to act.
If you are already part of the scything community, you are part of this story.
The skills you hold, the practices you maintain and the values you embody are directly connected to the survival of meadows.
Because in the end, the recovery of meadows is not just about conservation. It is about continuity.
A thread that runs from the past, through the present and into the future.

www.moormeadows.org.uk –
See the Events page for news of our annual Open Meadows events, practical workshops and more. Join our mailing list to receive our newsletter.

https://www.youtube.com/@moormeadows1364/playlists
See Moor Meadows Youtube for many of our inspirational talks with top experts, on a wide range of subjects, from meadow restoration and creation to managing hedgerows for wildlife, from plant ID to our Life in the Meadow series.

https://forum.meadowmakersnetwork.org.uk/ You need not live in Devon to be part of Moor Meadows. Anyone from anywhere can join our Forum, called The Meadow Maker's Network, for free.
The Forum has over 1,100 members and brings together meadow-makers and meadow groups in a shared online space. Register to post a message or simply view to see what people are sharing.

SF Dengelapparat Modifications

By

Martin Rowland

A while ago I treated myself to an SF Dengelapparat peening machine, purchased from Scythe Cymru, along with the optional foot lever. When it came to fitting the foot lever I encountered the expected faff to remove the circlips on the clevis pins, even with proper circlip pliers. It may have just been my machine, but the pin through the lower jaw clevis needed pressing out. It wasn't going to slide out, and hammering didn't seem to be a good idea!
To allow easy swapping of the levers, I exchanged the clevis pins provided for pins with a head section, which would accept an "R" clip. Removing the paint from the holes through the lower jaw clevis provided enough ease to be able to slip a pin through.
I used two 10mm x 30mm clevis pins and two 2mm R clips, length 48mm. I chose stainless steel, but mild steel would obviously be OK.
The chain attaching the support arm just seemed to be a nuisance, so I removed it and filed down the crimps on the arm.
Just in case I ever need to make transport or storage easier, I've also made up a link from scrap metal to substitute for the levers. It's just long enough to join the lower jaw clevis to the silver links. 11mm holes allow an easy fit.
I'm still learning how best to set the pre-tension and how far to insert the blade edge between the jaw to achieve the level of peening I want, but feel it will give me a great deal more precision and control.





The History and Revival of the Scythe in Belgium

By

Peter De Schepper

I have always had a bit of an aversion for loud machinery and, having been living in the countryside in the Belgian Ardennes (a hilly, forested region in Wallonia, the French-speaking part of the country) since the late 80s, I have never owned a lawn mower or brush cutter. I became more seriously interested in hand tools in the early 90s after having spent some time in some of the Ark communities started by Lanza del Vasto in the south of France. The first Ark community was founded in the late 40s based on principles of non-violence inspired by Gandhi. Some of the communities had no electricity or machines, and all the work was done by human and animal power. Upon our return to Belgium, I started maintaining our piece of land with a scythe and I also got into hand tool woodworking. We had no internet back then and information about these things was not so easy to come by. It was some years later that I met an elderly man who taught me how to peen, which was a true revelation to me. This man peened with much care and the edge on his blade was thin, but nice and even. At that time he was one of very few people left in the region who mastered the technique.

Long scythe blades in good condition were almost impossible to find, so for a long time I mowed mostly with 65cm blades, some of them nice vintage ones. I had a steel snath before I started making my own wooden snaths, and I had some nice natural whetstones, as well as a hammer and anvil found at flea markets. I think it was in 2004 that I read an article by Simon Fairlie in Permaculture Magazine, in which I learned that good blades, wooden snaths and peening accessories were still being made in Austria. I soon ordered a copy of The Scythe Book with Peter Vido's addendum. In those days, I had a part time job which involved maintenance work in public spaces, where I used machines such as chainsaws and brush cutters, but as I got better at using the scythe, I used the brush cutter less and less often and finally abandoned it altogether. For a period of about 10 years I used scythes regularly in this professional context of green space maintenance, which gave me good opportunities to learn about the use of the tool in different types of vegetation.

Our business, Le Pic Vert (French for green woodpecker), had already existed for some years before that, but it was a part time craft activity centred around green woodwork. In 2010, my wife, Christina, and I ordered a first batch of blades and snaths from Schröckenfux, as well as some basic accessories. I started teaching scything courses that summer and we began selling scythes. At the time and for the first several years, there was very little interest in the scythe in the Benelux and France, which are the main regions we sell to. We were one of only three retailers in that whole area for many years, and we were eager to let more people discover the many advantages of the scythe.

For a number of years, Flanders also has had some motivated groups of volunteer mowers active in the maintenance of natural reserves. Flanders hosted the first scything competition in Belgium in 2021. That same year, we started training other teachers with a program that allows trainees to learn and hone their skills over a extended period of time. Some have finished training and are now running their own courses. Having more qualified teachers out there helps to boost the scythe revival while allowing me to teach closer to home, do less courses myself and free up more time again for woodworking as well as other activities.



Belgium used to have specific blade models and some different types of snaths depending on the region, and they are rather different from the now popular scythes made by Schröckenfux or Falci. We never had much of a scythe industry in the country even though Wallonia was renowned for its steel industry. The town of Ciney had a company that produced scythes until the 1920s. In later years, scythe blades with the brand name "Ciney" were being made for the Belgian market by Krenhoff in Austria. Many old scythe blades are still around and some were made by other Austrian manufacturers or came from other countries like France, Italy or Germany. They usually are of a similar style made for the Belgian market at the time. These Belgian style blades typically have strong thick backs, rather wide beards (although not as wide as some French models), and they are usually much heavier than the Austrian and Italian blade models we sell today. A typical vintage Belgian style blade of 65cm can weigh around 600g. Their tangs usually sit

at a high angle of about 40°, which works well with the common straight snath of the Ardennes. This snath is of a simple design, in some ways similar to snaths found in Eastern Europe, but with some characteristics of its own. The snath is usually octagonal in cross section and tapered along its length, being heavier near the blade. It has two grips



that are usually turned on a lathe, but on some old snaths they were simply carved with a knife or a draw knife. The lower grip is fixed with a mortise and tenon joint, but the left hand grip is different. It is wider on one end where it is pierced with a hole big enough to fit over the end of the snath. Sometimes a nail or screw is added to hold it in place, but when the grip is fitted properly and the user mows with good technique, it will hold well just by friction without the extra help. Different kinds of wood were used to make these snaths and I have seen them made from oak, beech, ash, or sycamore, and I even have an old grain cradle snath made from what seems to be a spruce sapling. Two different types of grain cradle snaths were known in the Ardennes, each one with a different name and a slightly different use. The most common one was also the simplest one to make and was used for harvesting grains while mowing into the standing grain. The other one was less common and of a more complex construction and it was used for mowing the grains to the outside, like when mowing grass. These grain cradle snaths were usually fitted with long blades, some of them a meter long or more.

Whetstone holders were most often wooden ones



turned on a lathe with the hook that fits the belt carved out of the same piece of wood. Cow horn whetstone holders are common as well, and old galvanised iron holders are sometimes found too. On flea markets I have often found old natural stones and some of these are from the Pyrenees, the same type as the "Royale" stones that were made until a few years ago. I also see old Italian stones at flea markets of a fine grit like the Pradalunga stones we used to sell until the quarry closed during Covid. It was common practice among mowers in the Ardennes to add a drizzle of vinegar to the water in the whetstone holder. The acidity increases the bite of the stone and also keeps the stone clean. Some stones have a tendency to glaze over time and progressively lose their bite, and a little vinegar in the water prevents this. On some stones like the Rozsutec or the Pradalunga, this effect is very pronounced, while on others like the Royale, it is less pronounced but still noticeable. In late Summer and during Autumn, mowers would use a small amount of hawthorn or rowan berries instead of vinegar. The berries were

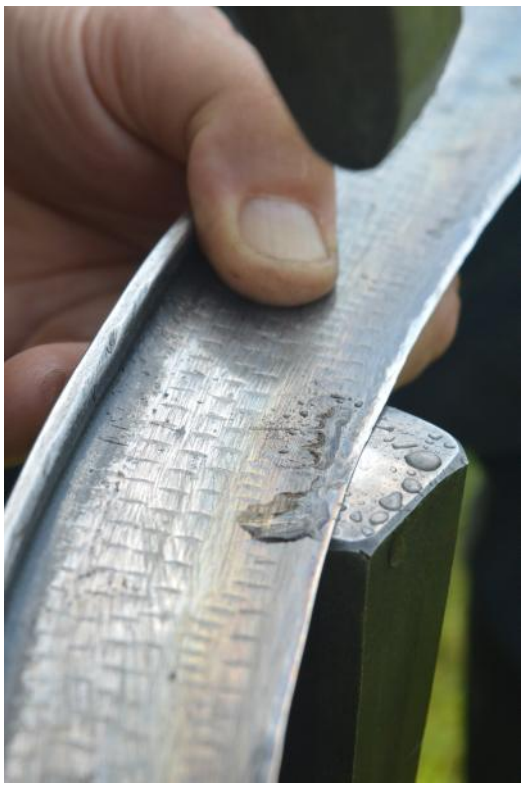


crushed in the whetstone holder with the stone. In some parts of Flanders the use of a strickle with tallow and sand was common, but I have found no evidence of their use in Wallonia. The Ardennes are higher country than the neighbouring regions, and in the old days, many mowers would do seasonal work away from home, making hay in areas where Spring comes earlier. Some people continued to make hay with scythes into the 60s and even the 70s. Tall hay stacks were sometimes still made in those decades, and during the 50s and the 60s, small tripods were commonly used to finish drying the hay when the weather was unsure, but also to see to it that the hay was properly dried to avoid any risk of mould or fire.

In most of Belgium, wide faced peening anvils were common. In some parts of the Ardennes, narrow-faced anvils were used and around where we live both types show up regularly at flea markets. From what I've seen, it appears that only field anvils were used in Belgium in the past. The use of abrasives to make the hammer blows more visible is a recent idea, and sometimes people may wonder how mowers in the past managed without it. In Belgium it was general



practice to dip the face of the hammer in water while peening. The method works very well on blades that have been used in damp or wet grass. The moisture in the grass tends to darken the steel, giving it a blue gray colour, and the wet hammer brightens up the steel were it gets hit. On Falci blades the contrast tends to be stronger than on Fux blades, but it works



on any blade I have tried it on. Another thing, and one I find harder to explain, is that the wet hammer seems to draw out the steel more efficiently than a dry hammer. In any case, I never feel the need for any abrasives when peening. I learned to peen on a narrow faced anvil but for several years now I have been peening mostly on wide faced anvils. I came to prefer this method because I like that the hammering is happening on the beveled side of the edge and also, I think it's more relaxing in a way. When peening on a wide faced anvil, dipping the hammer's face in water has an even bigger advantage because it's more difficult to sand the bevel of the edge than to use the abrasive on the underside of the blade. The brightening effect of the water is also usually stronger on the bevel because that area tends to be darker than the underside of the blade, especially when mowing dry grass.

Most mowers in Belgium today use the Fux wooden snath with either a Fux or Falci blade. The heavy Belgian-style blades are rarely used these days but some people still like them and even prefer them in certain situations. I have abandoned my old blades and much prefer lightweight ones for most tasks. I very much like the Ardennes snath, on which I mostly use thin and light Falci blades from the pre-covid era.



I occasionally make and sell small batches of traditional Ardennes snaths. I mostly make them from cleft straight grained ash wood, but sometimes I use beech as well. I also occasionally turn some old style whetstone holders on my spring pole lathe and I have made some traditional hay rakes and wooden hay forks.

This year, along with some of our other scything teachers and trainees, we are organizing a scything competition in Wallonia, with the help of the notes we received from the organizers of the Green Scythe Fair. The idea is to have the event alternate every year between Flanders and Wallonia. We will also be present with some of the other Belgian teachers and trainees at the Green Scythe fair this year. We are all really looking forward to the experience and we hope to meet many of you there!

Peter De Schepper

Notes and Thoughts on Tang Angles in Relation to Scythe Set Up

By
Richard Brown

Here are some thoughts and observations on the concepts behind basic set up and tangs which I get asked about. It's not about how to set your scythe as this is well covered by instructional leaflets and books.

The "Haft", "Lay" and "Tilt" (of the blade) – are the three fundamental concepts we address when tuning the setup of a scythe blade in relation to the ground when mowing. These are analogous to the three orientation concepts yaw, pitch and roll of an airplane in flight.

The hafting angle and lay are the two main settings which you will likely check and adjust each time you assemble your scythe for mowing. The third angle, the Tilt or Neigung, may be less familiar as it is largely preset in the conformation of the scythe as it comes out of the factory. It can be fine-tuned as I will explain later.

In all of this always bear in mind that the height, posture, movement styles and grip positions of the scythe user all have an over-riding control over the presentation of the blade to the ground and vegetation being mown. Within reason an experienced scyther can pick up any [working] scythe and by adjusting their hold and style get it to mow (as scythe instructors like myself frequently do when testing scythes set up for pupils of different heights).
The point here is that for ergonomic efficiency one's personal scythe should be tuned such that the minimum compensatory compromise to posture is needed to mow with ease and so minimise body strain and fatigue.

The **Tang angles** of the blade are the foundation and are factory set (to our UK preference) in all three dimensions: Haft, Lay and Tilt.
Whilst these fixed tang angles determine the default relationship between the snath and the blade, (including the range of adjustment possible), the final working Haft, Lay and Tilt are a combination of the tang angles, adjustments applied, and an individual's body posture and movement.

The Haft. The Hafting Angle is the first and most crucial adjustment. It determines the balance between slicing and chopping/hacking.



The tang angle of new blades is factory set to give a mid-position hafting angle and only rarely needs any alteration.

The hafting angle is readily adjusted and set at the ring clamp, and can be fine-tuned in the field to suit conditions (if you keep the allen key in your pocket), with the widest "in circle" setting for light easy mowing.
Incorrect wide hafting angles make mowing a struggle. The excess brute force required for hacking is the most common cause of bent clamps, broken blades and snaths.

The Lay. The lay is the pitch of the blade from the rib at the back to the leading edge.



The lay is determined first by the angle the tang is [factory] set at, and secondly by adjustment using a wooden wedge.
The tang angle of a blade can be measured directly whilst holding the blade down at the mid-point as flat as it will sit on a flat level surface. The tangs on factory set blades typically slope upwards 18-20 degrees from the horizontal.

The actual lay of the blade whilst mowing however is not determined by the tang angle alone but by how the tang angle translates through to the blade body. This is variable across different blade styles having different architecture of curves and shape.

To get a meaningful measurement of the actual lay it is necessary to assess the attitude and edge height of a blade when fitted to its snath. This assessment is done in the factory for us before they are shipped to get consistency across different blade models. This measurement is made with the blade fitted to a size 3 snath, with no wedge, and the top of the snath supported 1 meter above the ground (to approximate the angle a snath would be held at in use). With the

blade resting on a flat surface the height of the edge from the ground is measured at the midpoint along the blade whilst holding this section down. On this basis we ask for our blades to be set to a height of height of 12mm +/- 2mm.

A tang angle set **too high** will result in a low flat lay with the cutting edge and tip too close to the ground. A low lay can be adjusted by adding a wooden wedge which reduces the angle and so pitches the edge up.

A tang angle set **too low** will hold the cutting edge too high off the ground, even when the wedge removed (as with no wedge it is at its lowest limit of adjustment). An "anti-wedge" (a coin or similar small object placed under the lug end of the tang) will sometimes resolve minor issues but alterations to raise the tang angle maybe needed.

It follows that as the lay of a blade fitted to a snath without a wedge it is set at its lowest adjustment it will deliver the shortest cut (as might be required for lawn mowing). For most regular mowing and on uneven ground a higher cut and lay is needed, and this will need a wedge.

The standard wedge sold with kits is a 10mm wedge (measured at its thickest end). This has a 6 degree slope and effectively reduces the tang angle by the same, and lifts the midpoint cut height by approximately 5mm and the tip by 15mm. Other wedge sizes can be used. I cut all the wedges I supply with scythes myself from oak, and can supply these In a range of thicknesses and angles from 5mm to 15mm.

The lay with regard to cutting height

In use the lay of the blade is never set flat to the ground, but is pitched up so when the back of the blade is in contact with the floor the cutting edge will be elevated 10mm or more above the ground. By this means the minimum height of cut is controlled. Functionally this ground clearance minimises contact with the soil which frustratingly blunts the cutting edge, and greatly increases the frequency of honing. More importantly raising the cutting edge prevents scalping the grass which damages it by taking out its active growing points. These growing points are important as they generate fresh grass shoots and leaves. They are generally held above soil level. Some fine grass species like fescues and bent grass, if trained by frequent close mowing or grazing, can maintain growing active points very close to the soil surface at 10mm or lower; this makes them ideal for bowling greens. Other meadow grasses, and even fine grasses if left to grow freely, will have growing points somewhat above 10mm and will vary in their tolerance to low cutting. For a healthy sward it is important to understand this and to be able to regulate the height of cut height via the correct lay setting.

The Lay with regard to the 'ski' tip lift

Because of the curved geometry of the blade the change in height after adding a wedge when measured at the mid-point is actually quite small. The lift given to the tip by adding a wedge is in many respects of greater significance. Lifting the lay of the blade is what gives the blade its upturned ski tip profile. This is essential if the blade is to flow over uneven ground without the tip digging in.
Raising the lay to lift the tip higher relative to centre of the blade does however mean that the cutting height varies more along its length compared to a flatter lay setting. You will experience this as increased scalloping: ridges and furrows where the tip and heel cut higher than the mid-section of the blade. Practically this does not matter but might become more aesthetically challenging if you are mowing a lawn or perhaps in competitions. This will vary with different blade models and styles, so the answer is often to choose and set a blade to suit the purpose.

The Tilt ("Neigung"), describes the horizontal attitude of the blade, which if it were an airplane wing would be called the roll – the tilt of the wings when banking.



The Neigung tang angle of the blade is factory set. The easiest way to check this setting is not to measure the angle directly, but to lay a straight edge across the tang and note where it touches down along the blade. If correct this should land approximately one third of the way out from the tang (as shown above: landing 25cm out along a new 75cm 2010 'Profisense' grass blade)
When mowing the Tilt describes the horizontal balance of the blade when set up on a snath. If set up and trimmed well, a blade should glide level over the ground with the majority of the blade running parallel to the ground by default with a comfortable relaxed grip.
You can always check the Neigung tilt on your assembled tuned scythe simply by holding it in your usual relaxed stance and grip with the blade hovering just above the ground and with your eyes closed. When you feel comfortable and balanced with the scythe, open your eyes and observe its horizontal balance.
Whilst the tilt of the blade is preset by tang angle and snath geometry, the curved shaping of the hand grips

does allow some adjustment of the tilt whilst you mow to match the state of the sward in front of you. To alter the effective Tilt, reposition your hands forward on the grip to lift the tip, move them back to lower the tip. In addition you can tilt your wrists to tilt the blade more or less as needed. Typically, I find myself doing this to get the tip to slip down under patches of flattened grass stems.
In circumstances where I face mowing a lot of laid grass, I have noticed the that the constant wrist straining needed to tilt and engage the blade tip gets uncomfortable. The remedy for this is to temporarily reset the Neigung by changing the regular wedge for an asymmetric wedge which tapers from side to side as well as along its length.

Tang angle alterations

If you find you cannot get the settings you want



within the range of adjustment possible an alteration to the tang angles may be needed.
Be aware that the tang is set in three planes for haft, lay and tilt. Adjustment by bending in one plane will invariably affect the other two (especially from sideways haft adjustment). Check all three after any alterations and correct each as needed.

Cold adjustment

The steel in the tangs of Austrian blades is malleable enough that it is possible to cold bend the flat of the tang to deliver small changes in the lay. Clamp the blade in a sturdy bench vice (with wood fillets to protect the blade shape) and bend using a pipe or strong wrench for leverage.

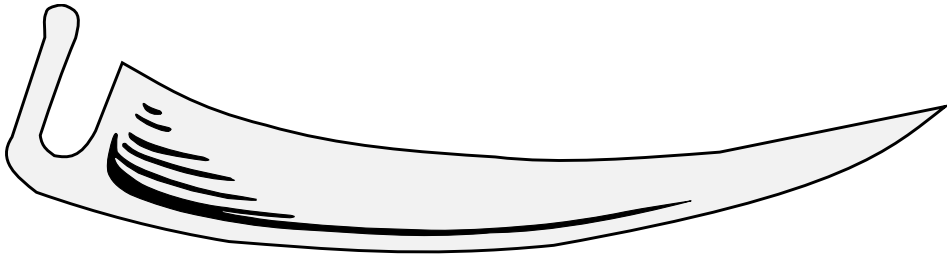
Cold bending sideways to adjust the hafting angle is not recommended. If you need just a bit more adjustment to close the hafting angle you can file or grind a bit of the tang away where it touches the clamp.

Adjustment using heat

More significant adjustments require heating the tang to red heat.
A regular DIY blow torch will not deliver enough heat focused in the right place to do the job. An improvised forge (BBQ charcoal and hair dryer as bellows) delivers enough heat but it is difficult to keep the heat just where you need it. With delicate Austrian blades it is hard to prevent heat transfer to the blade itself which is likely to spoil the hardening and tempering of the edge.



The high-tech answer is to use an electric heat induction coil. These are magic! They work using the same principle as induction hobs and can focus heat very precisely just at the section of tang you want to bend. They are sold to heat and free seized nuts and bolts and can be purchased online for less than £200 (worth it if you adjust tangs regularly like me, or have lots of seized nuts and bolts to free up).
After heating and bending let the metal air cool slowly. Do not quench as this will harden the steel and leave the tang brittle. Recheck the three angles and reset as needed.



The Last Jig?

By

Colin Close

Oh no not more scything jigs!!
I'm afraid so. Why? Well with this final jig but probably not the final implementation! I think I have explored almost all the options of using an electrically powered device to peen a scythe blade. Since my last article I have explored two further options one a re-implementation of the Russian jig featured in the very first article in this series (Windrow No 17) The "improved" version uses a Makita nibbler a more robust and powerful version of the tool used on the original jig . I had hoped that this implementation was going to address some of the the shortcomings of the original units weight and size but despite my efforts to design it so that it was light and rigid the rigidity despite locking the swinging anvil solid there was still enough flexure to absorb much of the pressure applied by the striker. This, added to the difficulty of constructing an adjustable stop that sat close to the striker was also problematic.



Even if all these issues were overcome there would still be the marked propensity of jigs that utilise swinging anvils to curl the edge. Though this could be perceived as an advantage as it is the equivalent of hollow grinding thus reducing the amount of metal that needs to be removed to regain a sharp edge it does have the potential to increase the likelihood of the edge folding when in heavy use.

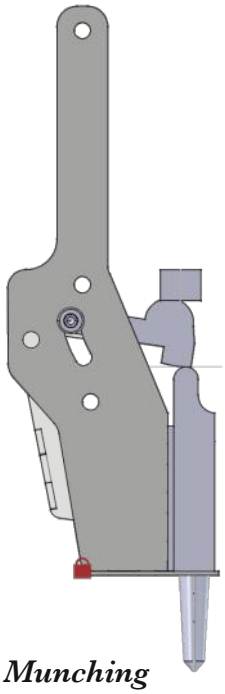
So where to go from here? Some may have seen the very crude device that I had had fitted to my peening pony. Basically the idea was to use an SDS hammer with a FUX bar anvil. Apart from the Dengeldoofer the bar anvil is the anvil of choice for the skilled peener. With this anvil accuracy of the hammer blow is vital.
The crude hammer holder on the initial implementation I had created just about worked but because the

overall structure wasn't very rigid and the fact SDS hammer bits tend to wander around in their chucks made it difficult to use. There was always a tendency for the blade to be grabbed and pulled in toward the the rib with the potential to quite severe damage to the blade.

The AI scything jig….
I will digress here to describe AI's brush with the scything jigs. I'm not really a fan of AI if fact I consider it to be a rather dangerous tool in the wrong hands (particularly political) but when I last visited my brother in law (a budding novel writer) who told me that he used it for his work he gave me a tour. It went the usual way or so I've heard; you know "Ask it something, anything" I thought "I'll banjax the thing good and proper!" So I asked it to design me a peening jig. What came back was quite remarkable. The first surprise was that it actually knew what a peening jig was! The second was that it described the action of the jig but it was the final bit of information that really surprised me. It gave me an amount of energy required to move the metal of blade. (in other words how hard you have to hit with your hammer to thin the edge) I had searched for this number all over the internet I couldn't find any information that would even give me a clue as to how to calculate it. I was impressed so I went a bit further. I asked "how would I apply that force" It suggested a magnetic solenoid and came back all the design information (calculations) to manufacture one along with suggestions of existing devices.
I was impressed and put some of the information to good use. I spent £40 on a cheap and cheerful 2 Joule SDS hammer with speed control to use with the new jig design, I also bought an old car starter motor for two pounds from local scrapyard, which, as those of you of the generation who used to maintain their own cars know contains a substantial solenoid used to engage the starter which would be more than powerful enough to create the necessary force.



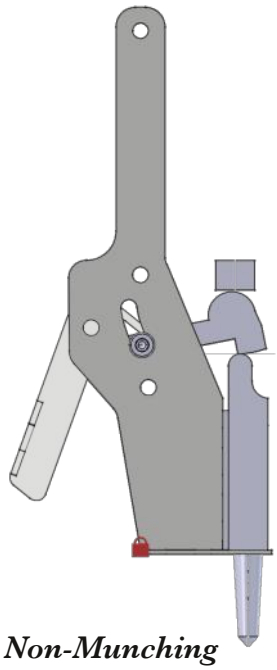
Back to the latest jig though, I needed to overcome the instability of the tool in the SDS hammer. I had previously tried a secondary hammer as described in a previous Windrow article. This is a very effective way of keeping the area of impact in a consistent position on the anvil and blade as well as some control of the profile of the surface that strikes the blade edge. One of the challenges of using an SDS hammer drill as the hammer in such an arrangement is that it is quite difficult to position the SDS hammer at the correct height in relation to the secondary hammer and the anvil. SDS tools have limited travel (the half round slot in the tools give a clue to this) so it's necessary to position the SDS tool quite close to the secondary hammer and the secondary hammers striking surface close to the blade in order to realise the full power of the tool.
In order to achieve this it was necessary to alter the position of the secondary hammer so that it's profile could be used to adjust the clearances.
It's possible with careful design to keep the profile of the face that strikes the blade (and anvil) consistent while moving the pivot point of the secondary hammer forward and backward and up and down in relation to the anvil; this allows shaping the top section of the slave hammer so that it's distance from the SDS hammer head changes. This gives a way of accurately adjusting the clearances to get the best out of the SDS hammer but it does have drawbacks. The main issue is "munching" this is where the slave hammer is set in such a way that the blade is drawn into the maw of the machine; if not controlled this can damage the blade due to excessive stretching. This makes it essential to have some form of stop and so this, once again brings the issue of stops and blade curvature to the fore as was discussed s previous article.



Munching

Simply putting a stop either side of the anvil immediately introduces this problem, however a single stop on one side of the anvil allows compensation for the blade curvature unfortunately this leaves the door open for munching and potential blade damage.; another possible option is to place a stop either side of the slave hammer which minimises the curvature problem but is difficult to implement tidily. Either way 'munching' will still be present in a single stop arrangement.

The only other option is to minimise or prevent the munching. Why does munching occur? Observation and testing have shown that if the crown of the secondary hammer is positioned past the crown of the anvil and the secondary hammer pivot point is high above the



Non-Munching

face of the fixed anvil munching. The action with this setup causes the blade to be pulled in toward the body of the jig. The diagram below shows an extreme version of the setting. In order to avoid the problem the pivot point of the secondary hammer needs to be below the highest point of the fixed anvil. With the pivot point level or below the fixed anvil height the blade should be pushed out of the maw.

Alas I had not realised this when I did the initial design which meant there was only one position (at the extremes of the adjustment) in the current jig that fulfils that requirement so it's not so convenient to adjust the overall clearance between the hammers and the blade. With this setting the jig works and produces a satisfactory peened edge however some practice is needed to be able to achieve this. The biggest difficulty is the choice and control of the strike rate snd thus energy imparted to the hammer. The way these hammers work (at least the variable speed versions) is such that the energy imparted to the hammer varies with the number of strikes per second. This is bad because lots of heavy strikes at a high rate will deform the metal very rapidly greatly increasing the potential for overstretching the blade locally causing ripples along the edge. The ideal is a fixed rate of striking with the ability to increase the energy of the strike. The solenoid hammer described earlier could fulfil this requirement and I will be pursuing this in the future. I said earlier that I thought I had exhausted all the options for this kind of jig but as I was writing this another possible configuration occurred to me so maybe there will be another article after all.

