

the Thatcher's Standard

Issue No. 24 Autumn 2010



In this issue...

Apprentices and the thatching industry

Joe Wykes' Travelling Fellowship

Swifts in thatch

QUALITY LONG STRAW SUPPLIERS

We are suppliers of quality long straw
“Maris Widgeon” variety

- Threshed in the traditional way
- Supplied in bouldings
- Quantities by the ton
- Fast/Reliable dispatch
- Delivered by our own transport



ALL ENQUIRIES / ORDERS

Nigel Brown

01536722352

07870624997

We will be only too pleased to help you!

Quality Long Straw Suppliers
The Bungalow
Manor House Farm
Isham
Northants
NN14 1HP

Contents

Your Letters	4
Dealing with thatching complaints	5
Joe Wykes' Travelling Fellowship	6
The Gallery	7
Apprentices in the thatching industry	8
Harvest 2010	9
Pauline Dawkins	10
Noticeboard	12
Swifts in thatch	13
Best Thatched House Competition	14

THE OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF MASTER THATCHERS LIMITED

Rod Miller	01929 462456
Kate Glover	01189 834880
Mick Dray	01647 277293
Andrew Raffle	01530 222954
Matt Fuller	01252 836646
Jason Morley	01635 298174
Geoff Sharp	01189 732805
Scott Sharp	01252 860018
Martin Willmott	01234 822501
Marjorie Sanders	01844 281208
Adam Follen	01264 358603

ADVERTISING RATES

Full page (back cover)	£150.00
Full page	£125.00
Half page	£62.50
Quarter page	£31.25

For advertising please contact Claire Tozer on
01929 405620 / thatchersstandard@hotmail.com

CONTACTS

Chairman: Rod Miller tel: 01929 405620 /
mb: 07786 981590 / info@rodmillers.co.uk
Secretary: Marjorie Sanders tel: 01844 281208 /
mb: 07947 012 927 / marjoriesanders@btinternet.com

Accounts: Sue Kempton tel: 01252 836646

Editor: Claire Tozer tel: 01929 405620 /
thatchersstandard@hotmail.com

Website: www.nsmtltd.co.uk

Additional copies of the Thatcher's Standard are available
from the Editor at a cost of £3.50 each (inc p&p)

The contents of the Thatcher's Standard are not necessarily the opinion of the
National Society of Master Thatchers Limited or the Executive or the Editor.
It is circulated to the membership and is copyright. Its contents may only be
reproduced with the permission of the Executive.

The Thatcher's Standard is the journal of the National Society of Master
Thatchers Limited. The Society is a limited company registered at Companies
House, No.4816229.

The registered office is: Warringtons, Gelsmoor Road, Coleorton, Leics LE67 8JF

Hello!

With Autumn nipping at
the heels of summer,
we gave in to the early
arrival of chilly
evenings and lit our
fire in September, firstly
having made sure that
we, like all good thatch
home dwellers, swept the
chimney well.



I don't know about you,
but I have a feeling that winter is going to be a
long one this year, and if the abundance of berries on
the bushes are anything to go by, I might be proved right,
as country lore has it that this is a good indication of
cold times to come.

You could say we have reached a mini milestone with this
issue as, thanks to new advertising, we have now extended
the magazine to twenty-four pages, which means more
room for all your lovely contributions that I so look
forward to receiving.

Inside we welcome new NSMT member,
Stuart Viggers, read about Joe Wykes' Fellowship, learn
about this year's harvest, take a look at wire mesh from
an artistic point of view and learn how thatchers can play
an important role in helping swifts. There are also events
pinned to our Noticeboard that you might like to
attend, including one on Fire and Thatch by
Hampshire Fire & Rescue.

The NSMT has been invited to participate in this
event with a stall and presentation, and Marjorie
is looking for thatchers to help with this.

I have also been asked to remind all thatchers about the
Best Thatch House Competition for which you will find
an entry form printed on page 14 – to be completed and
returned to the Secretary, in good time, please (before
the 31st December).

Good luck!

Claire

Dutch thatch ~ photograph taken by Joe Wykes





SIMON GRANT-JONES A.W.C.B, Cert.Ed. Mifl.
Award winning Blacksmith
An Associate of the worshipful company
of Blacksmiths
Hand-Forged Wrought Ironwork
and Specialist Toolmaker
2 Puddledock Cottages, Sutton Poyntz,
Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6LZ
www.simongrant-jones.com
Tel 01305 833059

Roof With A View

Please send in your photo to thatchersstandard@hotmail.co.uk

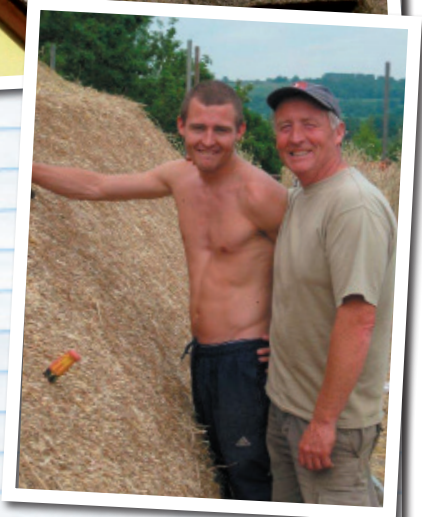


From a roof in the New Forest, Hampshire by R V Miller Ltd



Your Letters...

Keith Waldren with one of his sons, Tom Waldren



Dear Claire

The turkey escaped from a neighbour and quite fancied his chances with our chickens.

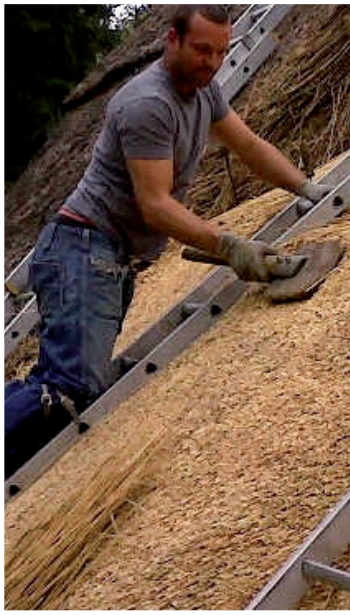
We didn't see him fly up on the roof but did see him fly down where he took on our cockerel and won. It was all very impressive and noisy!

Kind regards

Lorina Walden

Keith Walden Master Thatcher





NEW MEMBER

Stuart Viggers

Stuart began thatching in 1990 with a company based in Stratford-Upon-Avon. He subcontracted for another thatching company for ten years, before starting up his own in 2003: Stuart Viggers Master Thatchers.

“I started thatching when I was a junior rugby player for an established rugby playing thatcher during the summer holidays at first, then I was due to do A levels in the September of 1990, but never went to college on that first fateful day, so here I am now, still thatching.

I have worked as far away as Texas in the past but you can't beat building up a reputation locally. I love all aspects of thatching from the day to day running of the company to getting dirty stripping of old thatch. I suppose I'm very fussy with the attention to detail aspect, (probably one of my most annoying attributes if you were to ask the guys who work for me). I like my roofs to look as perfect as possible. I am a firm believer of “a reputation takes you years to build up, and only a minute to lose it”.

My future aims are to carry on building a good reputation to hold the company in good stead for this more competitive climate we find ourselves in.”

Dear all,

Please find on page 14 the entry form for the Best Thatched House Competition. A copy of the rules (and additional entry forms) may be found on and downloaded from the new NSMT website: www.nsmtltd.co.uk

Good luck!
Claire

Dealing with thatching complaints

Thankfully complaints against members are rare, and it is a great selling point for membership when I can recommend confidence in using an NSMT thatcher, because we have a policy of follow up and action, on the rare occasion when things do go wrong, thus providing peace of mind for the customer.

One of the primary objectives of the National Society of Master Thatchers is to maintain a high standard of quality thatching from its members on behalf of their customers. When the office does receive complaints, these usually come via a telephone call or e-mail. Most complaints can be resolved at the first discussion, and usually just require an explanation or a recommendation to talk to the thatcher. It is very pleasing to report that very few enquiries received by the office each year regarding quality of thatching or bad behaviour end up as full formal complaints.

Because the Society is prepared to stand up and fight for its members when it believes the complaint is unjustified, members, for their part, have a responsibility to comply with health and safety standards, always provide the highest standard of workmanship, deal with queries politely and put right problems when things go wrong. Those that fall below

these standards not only let themselves down but also compromise the reputation of the National Society; membership of repeat offenders may be terminated and with it the requirement to remove all NSMT logos from their business advertising within 28 days.

THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEEDURE

The initial lodging of a formal complaint, by a thatcher or a third party is a relatively simple process.

Most complains can be resolved through a telephone conversation, formal complaints however need to be received and responded to in writing.

- complainant is asked to submit their grievance clearly and in writing.
- The person and organisation being complained against is then contacted and invited to respond in writing.
- Based on these two documents the NSMT makes decisions about how best to follow up the allegations. When site visits and written reports are required the parties involved may be asked to share the cost.
- Following investigation, and depending on the findings, both parties will be provided with recommendations for resolving the issue. The parties are expected to behave responsibly and to work together towards putting matters right between themselves.

Joe Wykes' Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship

You may remember, (as printed in TS22), that NSMT member, Joe Wykes, was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to study water reed quality in Europe. Here are some of his e-mail-diary extracts.

18 JUNE 2010

I left Henk Horlings last Friday to visit Ludo Ibens, a Belgium Thatcher who has 32 thatchers working for him. We travelled to Brussels to look at some of his work and speak to some of his thatchers. I later made my way to Antwerp where the next day I would travel to Lubeck in Germany. Due to work on the lines it took a succession of 8 trains and 1 bus to complete the journey in 12 hours, arriving at the hotel at 22.00 hrs, 12 hours after I set out!

I met Tom Hiss in Lubeck the next day and he showed me around. The main city centre is an island and we had a guided tour by boat. The next two days I spent with his assistant Ole, a brilliant bloke who I liked very much. We did a very big tour of East and North Germany, speaking to many thatchers and looking at hundreds of roofs, in what is a most beautiful part of the world. Ole took me to meet Hans-Herman Ohms who showed me around the north part of East Germany, now a very well to do area where the rich and famous live. They are building an enormous amount of thatched houses here.

Onward and upward, with an unplanned visit to a remote part of the area, which now attracts a lot of German tourists. Another beautiful place on the North Sea Coast where they seem to be building thatched houses everywhere. The next day I was very kindly driven to the ferry by Sonke Bartleseen's son. Sonke is another thatcher with a massive team of 26 thatchers, who had accompanied me the previous day.

We drove over the border and into Denmark where I caught the ferry from Fished to Aero, a small but perfectly formed Island just 35 km long. Morten Perterson met me at the port and took me to the site he was working, a very big project thatching a museum that used to be barns.

Today I leave the Island of Aero and head for Odense, where Hans Christian Anderson lived.



23 JUNE 2010

I left Aero on Friday at 6.00pm and I arrived at my Hotel in Ordense at 10.00pm.

It rained all the next day, so I spent most of it touring the Hans Christian Anderson Museum and his birth place. What an interesting character, although it was said that Charles Dickens thought he was a bore. mmmm.

On Sunday I had arranged to meet a well known Danish journalist and TV presenter, Joergen, for lunch. He specialises in making programmes and writing books about thatch and had just had an interview for the job of running and promoting the

Thatching Federation in Denmark. After lunch he took me to a recreation of a thatched peasant village, similar to the Weald and Downland Museum.

Monday: time to head off again, so with my bags packed I got onto the train for the short 1 ½ hour journey to the Island of Jutland, where I was to meet Ian Reybekill. A funny name for an Englishman.

Ian Reybekill went to live in Denmark when he was fifteen, having had an unpleasant childhood in Birmingham. One day in Denmark he saw someone thatching and decided that's what he wanted to do. I shared a BBQ with him and his family on Monday night and was made to feel most welcome.

Tomorrow I'm off to see Eraling Pederson, a former thatcher who now makes skewers fixings for the thatching trade all over Europe.

He also used to be in charge of one of the Danish thatching organisations and secretary in the other. I have been told he spent many hours trying to reconcile the two organisations so they could work together, but gave up in the end. Ah well that's thatchers.

Joe is now back and will be speaking about his Fellowship at the "Sustainability" Conference in 2011 in Torquay.

The Gallery

Please send in your photo to thatchersstandard@hotmail.co.uk



A Scottish croft by Peter Brugge



Decorative ridge detail by Josh Metcalf



Straw barn in progress nr Tenbury for Natural England by Keith Walden



Sulhampstead Abbots, Berks by Kate Glover



Thatchers Cottage, Wool, Dorset by R V Miller Ltd



The Old Swan, Great Bourton, Nr Banbury by Stuart Viggers Master Thatchers

SPOTLIGHT Kate Glover



Tipple after a dusty days work?
Favourite sandwiches?

Lovely, lovely red wine

I don't like any rubbish. In fact, I get sick of sandwiches everyday and sometimes try to kid myself I'm not eating one by taking the filling out and eating the bread separately. Egg and Cress though, if I have to choose

Hobbies?

Going to the theatre, visiting art exhibitions and gardening

Best roof?

I don't know. You never see it the same way if you've thatched it yourself

Pet hate?

Sheeting up when it's windy, vacuum cleaners that don't work, milky tea (urghh), overripe bananas, bananas concealed in lunchboxes so that they taint everything else inside, the thought of banana bread or banana cake.... (that'll be bananas then, Kate?!)

Claim to fame?

Vehicle you use for work?

Mazda B2500 pick-up

Dream wheels?

The vehicle that never breaks down, doesn't need servicing, sails through the MOT and runs on thin air

Preferred radio station?

Radio 2

Last film seen at cinema?

Gran Torino (absolutely brilliant, I saw it twice)

Time your alarm clock's set for at the weekend?

Isn't set at the weekend

No.1 holiday destination?

New Zealand or Peru

One wish?

To have a fabulous garden and to be able to choose the art work to go in it

Apprentices

WITHIN THE THATCHING INDUSTRY

It is now expected within a majority of today's workplaces that the learner shows proof of their continual professional development. For many students this starts with the support of a College course and a work placement. When qualified, they accrue experience throughout their career and progress in responsibility and work opportunity. Popularly referred to as 'continual professional development' or CPD. The Thatching Industry has relied on its Master Thatchers passing onto the younger generation the necessary skills. The only College course, run by Hereford College at Knuston Hall, is in abeyance at present and when provided it was a short supplement to what the apprentice thatcher is able to learn working daily with a Master Thatcher.

Three years ago the NSMT decided that it should set up its own apprenticeship training scheme; mainly as a response to a number of phone calls from apprentices or their parents who felt that they were being treated very unfairly by their Thatcher. The stories were harrowing and the only good news was that members of the National Society were not involved, the bad news was a few rotten apples were tainting the whole thatching industry.

The NSMT's apprenticeship scheme has been devised through consultation with experienced thatchers. The basic premise is for an experienced thatcher (master man) to provide on the job training to an apprentice. It is important that the quality of training received is of equivalent quality across all providers and apprentices. With the demise of the thatching NVQ or equivalent training it is essential that the NSMT scheme is registered by an external body; Roger is investigating existing small craft liveries schemes and finding out what is required for the NSMT apprenticeship scheme and CPD training to be recognised.

To establish & maintain quality standards, it is important that all participants keep their own personal training record, evidence of competence is beginning to be asked for by some contractors. During their training apprentices are introduced to an independent mentor; it is their responsibility to liaise with the supervisor, arrange assessment visits and to ask for any additional help and assistance when required. Master-men are expected to encourage apprentices to attend and take part in CPD events when possible.

The Good the Bad and the Ugly

As with anything new there is always room for improvement, first the good news is six apprentices were enrolled in the first year, one of whom has already qualified and is going on to become a full member of the NSMT, two others are coming to the end of their training.

Followed by the bad news, it is inevitable that some would-be-apprentices fall by the wayside, so some have dropped



Apprentices bring fresh ideas to established thinking – in 2007 Leigh Selby is encouraged to contribute on equal terms to the first draft of "A Practical Guide to Thatch and Thatching in the Twenty-First Century"

From left to right: Tony Hart (background) Dave Turbitt (then President) and his wife (foreground) Mick Dray (then Vice President) and Leigh Selby

out; others who showed an initial enthusiasm for joining the scheme have never bothered to sign up. The most successful ones are those with a good rapport between the apprentice and the mentor, and problems are resolved. Apprentices need to feel secure in being able to participate with developing their own apprenticeship. They need to communicate their successes and their worries. Sharing helps the student complete their training and allows the modules to be evaluated and improved where necessary.

However, things do go wrong and the Society probably needs to agree an indenture where the responsibilities of both the master-man and the apprentice need to be laid out. Where apprentices are school leavers it might be helpful to have the parents also sign the indenture which gives them commitment and responsibility too. As well the Master Thatcher knows, the task of teaching a young person new skills requires time, patience and structuring 'accepted everyday thatching skills' into achievable steps. Not easy, but rewarding when the apprentice has learned his task and can contribute to the business.

Dos and Don'ts

- Training takes time and commitment. Decide at the outset if what is required is a long term commitment or a need for someone to do menial tasks.
- Agree acceptable terms for a written contract and stick to it.
- Apprentices must be employed by the masterman, they cannot be self-employed.

With the contacts made with the European thatchers opportunities are emerging for apprentice exchanges.

Marjorie Sanders



Triticale 2010 Trials

Trials of new Triticale varieties have continued at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB). The Society has been privileged to have access to plots in trial so that we can assess their potential as a source of thatching straw. This year there were 18 plots prepared for us. The first step was to evaluate them by eye and then measure the straw length as they stand. As with wheat, the breeders are progressively shortening the straw. As a result of this policy, only six of the plots were considered to be worth harvesting. All of the others were considered to be too short, or did not have suitable characteristics for thatching.

The plots were laid out in the order of the table right. Some varieties, such as Bellac, Tremplin and Benetto we have seen in earlier years but it is valuable to look at the year by year variation within the variety. Some of these were so new that they have numbers, not names. Figure 2 ("Benetto") shows Benetto after the adjacent plot had been cleared. Waxy, straight stems. Of this year's plots, those that were considered to be suitable for thatching (tough, waxy stems) and

that were long enough to be used were Amarillo, Constant, LP629.3.05, Benetto, Tribeca and Tarzan. These will be taken to the Annual Conference for scoring by the delegates, adding to our year on year data on quality.

Variety	Height (In)	Height (cm)
Tulus	40	102
Sequenz	36	91
Amarillo	50	127
Agrano	50	127
Bellac	36	91
Grenado	34	86
CHD6454 /02-17	32	81
Gringo	36	91
DED 7156/02	35	89
Constant	43	109
LP629.3.05	44	112
S14493	36	91
Benetto	46	117
Tribeca	46	117
Agostino	35	89
Borwo	37	94
Tremplin	35	89
Tarzan	40	102

Harvest

The review of the 2010 cereal harvest for thatching was discussed at the Executive meeting on September 21.

Mick Dray reported that the Devon harvest had been fairly good, but the dry period in the Spring had resulted in shorter straw. Hampshire straw seemed good this year, but Martin Willmott reported that harvest had been difficult with rain falling on stooked sheaves. Niger Turton remarked that the material brought to the Dorset Steam Fair for threshing demonstrations had been of poor quality.

Martin Willmott has been growing Squarehead Master with a view to registering it under the Conservation Varieties arrangements as organised for us by FERA. (Food and Environment Research Agency). Figure 3 (Binder) shows the first cut with the binder. The straw is waxy, slender and straight, with a good length.

Bob West reports, "August had three times the average rainfall, which caused problems for the stooked crop. Most thatching straw was cut in July and the weather was kind, but it quickly deteriorated and there can be little doubt that much was damaged or lost during August."

Pauline Dawkins

WIRE SCULPTOR

Few people are either lucky or talented enough to make a successful living from combining the interests that most excite them, but Pauline Dawkins is one. As passionate about nature as she is about art, Pauline is an artist who makes animal sculptures out of wire mesh.

Arriving at Pauline Dawkins' home and making my way up the garden path, I am met by her wire peacocks, a dog, a badger, a fox and a grazing deer, life size and lifelike, each faithfully reflecting the unique proportions and character of the subject.

Growing up in the New Forest in Hampshire with ponies of her own and surrounded by wildlife, Pauline's early sculptures include a zebra's head, small bronze horses and a clay otter.

In 1993 Pauline studied for a HND in ceramics at Falmouth School of Art and became an accomplished Potter. She then achieved a BA in Fine Art Sculpture and a MA in Sculpture at Winchester School of Art between 1996 and 2000, during which she experimented with materials, methods and styles. "I did some very strange, abstract work. My main influences were Peter Randle-Page, Eva Hesse and Barbara Hepworth."



After completing her formal education Pauline specialised in creating stone sculptures for the garden, finding inspiration in the character and contours of the land.

In 2006, Pauline's husband, Jay, who is a thatcher, was approached by a customer for a pheasant finial for his roof, he immediately delegated the task to Pauline, declaring that she would make "a much better job of it." She made such a good job of it that the pheasant was quickly followed by other birds and animals until soon the wire sculpting began to take over from stone carving.



Pauline's sculptures are regularly displayed and sold in galleries across Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire. She exhibits at popular events like Dorset Arts Week, Wylde Valley Arts Week, Henley on Thames and Craft in Focus, where she takes every opportunity to meet people and introduce them to her work. For Pauline, this personal approach is not only the best way to do business, but it is a social aspect of the job that she genuinely enjoys. She has also sold to private collectors and was commissioned by Shaftesbury Town Council to produce a sculpture (themed on water conservation) for permanent display for their Shaftesbury in Bloom Competition.

Before beginning a new piece Pauline thoroughly studies her subject: how the animal is put together and how it moves.

"It's not until you look at something properly, really look, that you find out about it. I take lots of measurements, for example the distance between the ears and eyes". She makes sketches, paintings and takes photographs, seeking as much information as possible to ensure she can accurately reproduce the physical build, character and spirit of her subject. Pauline tells me one of her more unusual commissions was for a panda and that she regularly receives requests for much loved, deceased pets and I wonder how she can accurately portray an animal she has never met. "Photographs" she says. It's a trickier task, but by discussing the pet with the owner she is able to glean the details she needs, and every one of her customers has been delighted with the results.

Pauline starts a new work by bending galvanized metal bar into a basic frame. She then begins to wrap wire mesh around the frame to slowly build up the layers. For the bigger animals she folds several layers of wire into a pad to create a 'giant ham,' which she then straps onto the frame to bulk out larger areas, such as haunches or shoulders, before continuing to wrap and mould the mesh. Some of her sculptures require welding and Pauline, who is slim and petite, attended evening classes to learn how to weld, much to the amusement (and bemusement) of her all-male classmates!

With a husband in the thatching industry, there is always a ready supply of used chicken wire, which Pauline is happy to recycle. "You can get different grades of wire; some are softer and more pliable. It also comes in different colours. I don't really like the very shiny silver," says Pauline.

Wire also lends itself to being painted and the fox skulking around the garden bench is a lovely muted rusty brown, while the badger has been given his characteristic black and white stripe.

Pauline's prices start at around £50 rising to £3,000 for larger pieces. A chicken takes a six to seven hour day to complete and a horse, three to four weeks.

Looking forward to the 2012 Olympics, one of Pauline's current commissions has a nautical theme: a mermaid, which will be displayed in the sculpture garden of The White



Stones Gallery Café in Portland. This full size model will feature a brighter wire for the tail to give her a wetter, fishier appearance, which will really catch the eye.

I am keen to know what Pauline has in mind for the future and how she plans to develop her work. "I want to progress from grounded to in-flight. In other words, to take the grazing pony and make it trot or jump. I want to see dogs leaping fences and a bit more excitement," says Pauline, her eyes shining.

www.paulinedawkins.co.uk

Claire Tozer




Prestige Fire Detection

Dedicated to helping protect thatched properties in the UK

We provide an early warning fire detection system installed at the critical point where the chimney meets the thatch—it has passed intensive testing at Chiltern International Fire Laboratory.

BECOME ONE OF OUR MASTER THATCHER PARTNERS!

All we ask is that you give our leaflets to existing and new customers. In return we will add you to our website under our Partners section and give you a £100 customer introduction fee for each customer that purchases our system.

Prestige customers benefit from insurance discounts and peace of mind that their property is protected 24/7.

Contact Malcolm for more info on 08450 805 150 or email: info@prestigefiredetection.co.uk

Kingfisher House, Bromley, BR1 1LT

NOTICE BOARD

FIRE & THATCH BY HAMPSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE 3RD NOVEMBER

There is an all day fire and thatch event being organised by Hampshire Fire and rescue on 3rd November. The NSMT has been asked to have a stand and to provide a presentation. I do not have any further details yet, but if anyone is interested in going or in taking part please get them to contact me.

Marjorie – All Members please send your email addresses to thatchersstandard@hotmail.com



NSMT CONFERENCE ON THE THEME OF "SUSTAINABILITY" ON MARCH 18TH – 20TH AT LIVERMEAD CLIFF HOTEL, TORQUAY

There will be a local speaker from English Heritage who will set out what they see as their requirements, to be followed by a response from a thatcher-grower who will balance the requirements with the realities of material availability and performance criteria.

It is hoped that Richard Starling will cover reed production and Joe Wykes will set the European scene.

There will be speakers from the Dartmoor National Park and the National Trust, Val Harrison and Rupert Lane will speak about the coppicing project.

Morris's will take a stand and will have implements for sale. Note the dates and watch this space and the website for full details as the programme is finalised.



SUBMISSIONS WELCOMED:

Letters, photo's, News, Views, Articles, Memories etc.

thatchersstandard@hotmail.com or Belhuish Cottage,

Coombe Keynes, Wareham Dorset BH20 5PS

P.S rough copies, scribbles, doodles and spelling mistakes all welcome every letter counts. . . !

WARNING!

THE HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE ARE CHECKING UP ON THATCHING

The NSMT office recently received an enquiry from the Health and Safety Executive regarding the training provided for thatchers and recommendations for good working practices. Fortunately the Society publicizes a policy which is available to members and the public. A copy was sent to the Executive. They are unable to comment on the advice we give to members but do beware that thatchers and owners have H & S responsibilities and thatch is obviously in the health and safety spotlight. Advice is on the NSMT website or copies can be obtained from the office.

You have been warned - do not get caught out!!!

Marjorie

CSCS Cards

Remember the final reminder for applications for thatching CSCS cards through the route of Grandfather's Rights, as published in the Thatcher's Standard Issue No. 23, is now closed. According to the National Heritage Training Group, CSCS cards are allegedly still available for thatching but to obtain one, applicants will now be required to undertake NVQ level 2 training, which takes two years to complete. As far as the NSMT understands there is at present no NVQ training being offered for thatching. If anyone still needs a card or has an application stuck in the pipeline, please let me know.

I can then chase up alternatives; it is essential that members are not losing out on work for not having a card.

Marjorie

Do Swifts need your help?

BY STEPHEN FITT

Swifts aerial antics are a universally welcomed sign that summer has come. They spend most of their lives on the wing in sub-Saharan Africa and migrate here to nest in nooks and crannies in our Public Buildings and under the eaves of our houses.

By early August our summer visitors are migrating through Spain, down the western fringe of the Sahara, to spend the autumn over the Congo Basin, before spreading south and east for the rest of the winter and early spring. By mid April they are on their way back and arrive with us by early May.



Swifts do not start breeding until their fourth season and one ringed adult, recovered after sixteen years, must have made the journey twenty times and flown between three and four million miles.

The mature adults are probably the first to arrive. Successful pairs will reuse their existing nest sites and defend them against all comers. New pairs will compete for places to rear their broods.

Swifts are colonists and those nesting groups in relatively close proximity will be the most likely to succeed.

Immature adults and juveniles arrive a little later and will also indulge in “low level screaming parties,” probably as a form of pair bonding - (they actually mate on the wing) - and to familiarise themselves with their territory.

Once they are all re-established they will forage within a fifty-mile radius but in really bad weather conditions will travel much further. Almost uniquely, both eggs and chicks will survive for a few days without incubation or food, but cold wet summers do reduce the

number of chicks reared.

Swift Conservation Groups, the BTO and the RSPB, are concerned that there are significantly less breeding pairs than there were ten years ago and are trying to do something about it.

For the last two years the RSPB has asked interested groups and individuals to contribute to an online inventory at www.rspb.org.uk/helpswifts to record where there are nests and “low level screaming parties,” these are relevant because there will be nests close by and the results were interesting.

Most nest sites are located in buildings dated prior to 1918 but some were also found in modern buildings.

It is obvious that as we refurbish or demolish our older buildings there are fewer suitable nest sites and we can do something about this.

Creating a new colony is a simple and inexpensive exercise and Local Authorities are beginning to take a far more proactive stance in making the installation of customised nest boxes in the fabric of new build projects a condition of planning consents, particularly if there are existing colonies in the vicinity.

Individuals and local groups are also installing nest boxes in suitable buildings. Ideally the eaves should be sheltered from the sun and five metres above ground level, with unimpeded air space below as swifts fledge by dropping out of the nest and rely on gliding to gain sufficient speed to start their epic journeying.

Playing recorded calls in the early morning and evening will encourage the “screaming parties” to come and investigate.

Retaining existing colonies is in many ways more important and a greater challenge. Unlike bats, swifts are not a protected species, although their requirements are very similar, so anybody undertaking property maintenance outside the nesting season is entitled to seal existing nest holes. However, if this occurs the birds will spend a significant time trying to gain access before looking elsewhere, if they fail to find somewhere suitable they may well fail to breed and the colony will be permanently lost, probably the most significant reasons for the recent decline in numbers.



Swifts don't make a mess, are very unobtrusive, in fact some property owners don't even know they are there and minor adjustments to the maintenance program to keep the holes open should not create a problem.

The maintenance of thatched roofs is no exception. The owner of one ancient Devon farmhouse knew they had a resident colony and wanted to make sure that they would not be disturbed, so, in conjunction with their thatcher, Dave Trant of Countywide Thatching, they planned accordingly.

The work was started in the Autumn when the Swifts had long gone, the reed was attached to an eaves roll as a kicker because the original wall plate was retained, the existing gaps were left open access to the roof void was prevented and the birds were able to access their existing nesting places.

Over the years the colony has expanded from two to seven pairs, including a pair that occupied a barn on the opposite side of the farmyard renovated in 2008.

Not very far away another householder with Swifts in his thatched roof realised that two pairs were in trouble when he saw them failing to access their nest sites after re-thatching. He put up nest boxes, which were immediately occupied and this year four pairs successfully reared nine nestlings. If he had not taken instant action the colony would probably have been lost. Two case studies both with successful outcomes.

So the answer to the question is yes and you are the ones that can help!

For more information contact:

Stephen Fitt at
RSPB South West Regional Office
Keble House, Southernhay Gardens,
Exeter EX1 1NT

Tel: 01392 432691 or
email: Stephen.fitt@rspb.org.uk



NATIONAL SOCIETY OF MASTER THATCHERS LIMITED

THE BEST THATCHED HOUSE COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

Name of Entrant:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No:

Mobile:

Owners Name:

Address of Property:

Postcode:

Telephone No:

Date of commencement of work:

Date of completion of work:

*As the entrant, I agree to abide by the NSMT competition rules and regulations for entry to this competition.
Accordingly, I confirm the accuracy of the details included on this entry form.*

Signed by the entrant:

As the property owner, I confirm that to the best of my knowledge these details are correct.

Signed by the property owner:

TO ACCOMPANY THIS FORM:

High quality photographs of each elevation size 8 x10 or larger.

Completed form (separate form for each entry), with photographs to be sent to:

The Secretary
National Society of Master Thatchers Limited
13 Parkers Hill
Tetsworth
Thame
Oxfordshire OX9 7AQ

**CLOSING DATE:
31ST DECEMBER 2010**

NB Thatchers can enter as many
properties as they wish.

The competition is open to
all thatchers not just NSMT
members.



www.thatchingadvisoryservices.co.uk

With over 25 years experience in the Thatching industry, we are proud to be at the forefront of the development of fire retardants for thatch properties. With the ever changing criteria in building control, we are able to supply materials to meet the most stringent building regulations.

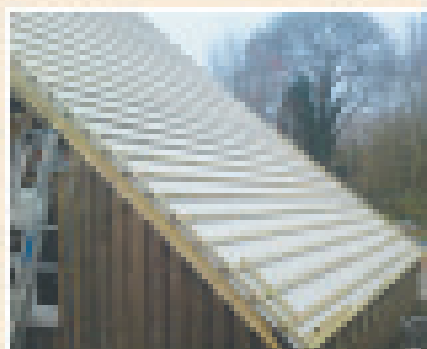
Thatch Fireboard®

Thatch Fireboard is an environmentally friendly magnesium oxide board offering a 90 minute fire barrier in accordance with BS476 Part3 classification EXT.S.AA.

Thatch Fireboard out performs cement based boards and regular gypsum plasterboard, due to its superior environmental credentials and performance characteristics.

Benefits

- Zero Spread of flame
- Meets the requirements of 'The Dorset Model'
- Easy to install
- Water Resistant
- Impact Resistant
- Sound Insulating
- Termite, mould and insect proof
- Can be cut, drilled, nailed & screwed with no splintering



Thatch Firewalk®

Thatch Firewalk is manufactured to meet the specifications as recommended by Building Control. Thatch Firewalk is a flexible fibre glass woven fabric, with a fire retardant coating of specially formulated grey polyurethane with added aluminium pigment on both sides.

With the Thatch Firewalk being fixed to the rafters underneath the thatch, it offers a 60 minute fire barrier in accordance with BS476 Part3 classification EXT.S.CA.

Benefits

- 1 hour fire barrier
- Easy Application
- Water Resistant
- Breathable
- Strong and Durable
- Flexible



For further information or advice please call Rob Norcott on

08455 20 40 60 or email: Info@tas-uk.co.uk

"The UK's leading advisor in thatch fire safety"

B-10 Queen Street, Sarton, Devon EX12 2NY



em go Thatch

em go Thatch is a multi purpose building board manufactured from Magnesium Oxide which provides good fire protection Certified Class A1 to BS476 and has excellent water resistant characteristics. The product also has excellent structural strength.



em go Thatch Is easy to cut and can be secured by screwing or nailing.

em go Thatch has already been used successfully on many projects and local stockists will soon be appointed in your area meaning you will have ready access to product at competitive prices.

em go Thatch meets the requirements of the "Dorset Method."

Density: 1000kg/m³
Thickness: 9mm & 12mm
Board Sizes: 915mm x 1830mm; 1220mm x 2440mm
Tolerances: Thickness +/- 0.3mm Width & Length -4mm

For more information please contact

Marisa Tanner on:-

01273 775 464

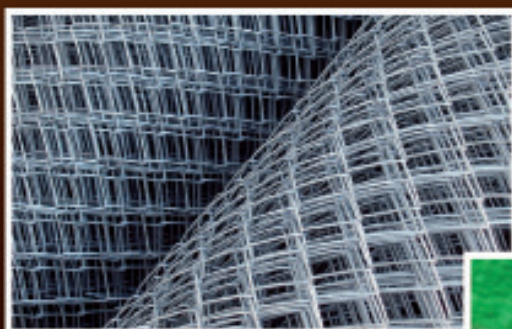
Email: info@em-go.com

Website: www.em-go.com

Registered Office: Unit 26 Churchill Business Park, Churchill Road,
Wheeler, Doncaster, DN1 2TF—Registered in England No: 7247881
Website: www.em-go.com

WIRE MESH & TARPAULINS

Top quality materials at unbeatable prices!



Our wire mesh is 100% British made. Ideal for almost any job that requires securing thatching material. Available in various widths and gauges.

£49.99 per roll, including delivery*

50m (length) x 1.2m (width) x 19mm (hole) x 22mm (gauge)

Tarpaulins are tough and durable, providing lasting protection against the weather. We provide them in various sizes, colours and finishes.



* Minimum order of 10 rolls

Call James today for the best prices on **0118 973 1615** and place your order!

BRANDED WORKWEAR

Hard-wearing clothing for the Master Thatcher

**Polo shirts • T-shirts • Shirts • Jumpers • Jackets
Fleeces • Trousers • Boots • Protective glasses
Hi-Vis Jackets • Hats • Gloves**

We can supply all kinds of hard-wearing branded clothing for all types of jobs and weather. Workwear comes in various sizes and colours. Your own company logo can be embroidered into the garments for that extra professional look.

**Call James McCormack for the best prices on
0118 973 1615 and place your order!**



THATCH UK – STRAW SUPPLIES

Edward Painter & Partners

Manor Farm, Chilbolton, Stockbridge, Hampshire SO20 6BN

FOR ALL YOUR THATCHING STRAW REQUIREMENTS

We now provide guaranteed straw supplies with our “Farmer/Thatcher Crop Growing Contacts” – secure your straw in advance with large discounts

Having grown thatching straw on our 2000 acre farming business for over 40 years we have the experience and capability to commit to the production of straw for your business

Sensible and consistent prices are maintained with our straw

Reliable deliveries available with our hiab lorry

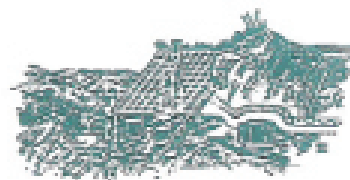
Please contact James Painter to discuss your present and future straw requirements

mobile: 07967 180199 office: 01264 860 764

e-mail: james@manorfarmhants.com

Covering the country...

INTHATCH
George Wakley



*For all your thatching needs – wheat reed – water reed
rye – long straw – rods – crooks – wire netting – screws
and wires – straw finials – spar gads and liggers –
straight spars – twisted hazel spars*

just give us a call on 01460 234477/234446

Higher Whatley, Otterford, Chard Somerset TA20 3QL

HAMPTON

Steel & Wire

**Supplying Thatchers nationally
with Galvanised Wire Netting.**

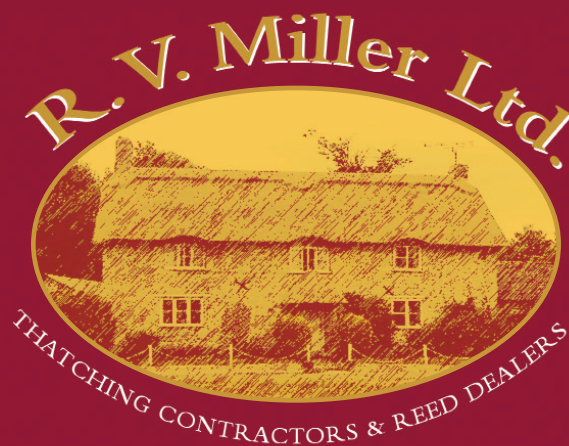
We also offer Steel Rods and Copper Mesh



For a fast, friendly and
professional service, with competitive prices..

Call 01933 234070
www.hamptonsteel.co.uk

Quality. Reliability. Service. Secured!



WE SUPPLY TOP QUALITY:

TURKISH REED

Containers delivered direct approximately 2200 bundles at a reduced cost

POLISH REED

Direct – approximately 2800 bundles per load at a reduced cost

HUNGARIAN REED

Direct against a reduced cost for approximately 3200 bundles

POLISH RYE STRAW AND WHEAT REED

WE ALWAYS HAVE SPARS IN STOCK

We support six spar makers using all English hazel – by buying English hazel wood you are supporting the flora and fauna of British Countryside

ENGLISH WOOD • WIRED SCREWS • GALVANISED BAR

Est
1966

Belhuish Farm House, Coombe Keynes, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5PS

Tel / Fax: 01929 462465

e-mail: info@rodmillar.co.uk website: www.rodmillar.co.uk



MAGMA FIRESTOP

INNOVATIVE FIRE RETARDANT SOLUTIONS

The “No.1” Fire Retardant Spray for Thatch.

Proven on Grand Designs 2008

- ‘A’ Rating for spread of flame
- Proven and tested throughout Europe
- Environmentally friendly - No Leaching, no detrimental effect on plants & animals
- Does not affect the Thatch appearance or longevity
- Treatment Certificate supplied

Treated with Magma Firestop

Not treated with Magma Firestop



Gas pipes to aid the flames (or not!)

Have a look on YouTube: Type in Thatch Safe

- Insurance premium reduction on treated roofs
- Gives Peace of Mind (Sparks, Bonfires, Fireworks Etc)

Offer added value to your clients, and receive an introductory fee!

*Terms and conditions apply

www.magmafirestop.co.uk

Tel: 023 8042 8992

* Terms and conditions: Introductory fee only applies to orders received and completed

SMF Conach and Co Ltd, 3 Triton Lane, Marshwood, Dorset, DT12 4UE

R J Matravers Ltd

Top quality crooks with
Forged points.

Screw fixings and galvanised bar.

Ruben Matravers
Mobile: 07773 286622
Tel/fax 01460 54432

Squirrels Nest, Donyatt, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 ORZ



Hills of Devon LLP
Hills of Devon LLP

Beechlea, Winkleigh, Devon EX19 8DH
Tel: 01837 83704 Email: info@hillsofdevon.co.uk

Suppliers of all thatching materials

Water Reed: Austrian, French, Hungarian, Polish & Ukrainian.

Wheat Reed: Maris Widgeon, N59 & Triticale.

Wire Netting

19mm x 0.7mm x 900mm x 50m - £25.00
19mm x 0.7mm x 1200mm x 50m - £31.00
19mm x 0.9mm x 900mm x 50m - £32.00
19mm x 0.9mm x 1200mm x 50m - £38.00

Blacksmith Crooks

6" & 7" £10.00 per 100
8" – 12" £14.00 per 100
13" – 18" £18.00 per 100

Also available at competitive rates:

Aluminium drift heads, Binder cord, Tarred cord, Hazel gads, Spar hooks,
Reed mats, Hazel spars, 4" Hazel liggers, Screw fixings and Pin wire.

THATCH-SAFE®

www.thatch-safe.co.uk Tel: 023 8042 8992

Email: enquiries@thatch-safe.co.uk



The New Insulating Fire Barrier. Designed especially for thatched roofs.

THATCH-SAFE® has been developed and tested after discussions with master thatchers, building surveyors, architects, insurers, builders, fire retardant manufacturers and fire brigades. For new build it meets the same criteria as the Dorset Model and beyond.

Fire Retardant – 1 hour integrity. **Insulating** – ½ hour

Micro-porous – Tested as vapour permeable – reduces risk of premature rotting associated with solid barriers. No counter battens required.

Flexible and Lightweight – 1m X 5m X 20mm weighs less than 4kg per m2. Easy to install around valleys, and windows.

- THATCH-SAFE® has LABC (National representative body for Local Authority Building Control) Type Approval – Certificate no 422-12-7117 (Dated 18/01/08)
- Satisfies both fire resistance and insulation requirements for new roofs.
- Also benefits the roof by being a truly breathable barrier.
- Proven on Grand Designs Live 2008 – see it on YouTube! Type in Thatch safe. (tested with Magma Firestop® fire retardant spray) The THATCH-SAFE® Model.
- Won NFBP Brilliance in Business ExxonMobil Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurship 2009.
- Insurance companies offer reduced premiums for roofs with this product.
- Cost effective – a one product solution for fire barrier and insulation requirements which is quick and simple to fit.



Other barriers without insulation keep out the flames but don't insulate against the heat so the timbers below will catch fire.

SMF Crouch and Co Ltd, 2 Tottle Lane, Marchwood, Hampshire, SO40 4UE

TURGIS COURT FARM

*Established growers and suppliers of
Traditional British Thatching Materials*

Phone Michael Mark at Turgis Court Farm
on 01256 882864 for both Combed Wheat Reed
and Long Straw. Both available now.

OR

By previous appointment, visit us at Turgis Court
Farm, Stratfield Turgis, Hampshire. RG27 0AT

All of our materials are grown specifically
for thatching, and are tested for low residual
Nitrogen content.

We are also the importers and suppliers of a wide
range of prefabricated natural materials: Reed fencing
panels, heather, willow screening, coir matting,
bamboo and many other natural products.



In need of fire protection?

Check! Our fire barrier is ideal for flat or pitched roofs, loft conversions, partition walls and suspended ceilings.

Guaranteed to provide 75 minutes of fire protection, it's breathable and waterproof material carries a class '0' rating.

Please call us on 0118 973 1615 for further information.



Fire Protection Barrier
Fire Protection Services

www.fire-protection-barrier.co.uk