

the Thatcher's Standard

Issue No. 26



In this issue...

BEST THATCHED HOUSE COMPETITION

Conference 2011 • AGM

THATCH-SAFE® ATTIX

Using *StatX* technology

Thatchers - Earn £100 by talking to your clients*

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HELLO!

Wow!

After what seemed
like a particularly long,
dreary and snowy
winter, spring has
finally come.

Inside we have on
display photographs of
some of the beautiful
roofs entered for the

Best Thatched House Competition, together with
the results.

The conference in Torquay in March was a huge success
and emails have been buzzing back and forth across the
water ever since, with exciting proposals for a European
Thatching forum. I understand the seaside venue was a
popular choice too.

We welcome new members, Michael Powell and Tony
Jackson, who get Editor's Top Marks for completing
(and returning) their Spotlight forms – THANK YOU!

I would like to request photos for The Gallery, please,
as there are currently none in the bag and any letters,
comments or news you think may be interest.

I decided it would be good to include a regular 'voice'
from the Executive and you will see that Mick Dray
has launched this by writing the first piece.

Thank you Mick!

Executive, so you don't all write in at once, possibly the
fairest way to do this is by alphabetical order, (starting
with Mick Dray and ending in Martin Willmott –
as listed at the front of the magazine:
The Officers of the NSMT).

Please feel free to write what you like: your news, views
on past, present or up-and-coming thatching matters,
(or your true opinions on this new idea!) I leave it
entirely to you.

Finally, I have very few of your email address,
so please mail them to me, it makes communication
so much easier.

email: thatchersstandard@hotmail.com

Happy thatching

Claire



EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

I would like to thank everyone who entered the Best Thatched House competition. As usual the standards were extremely high and the judges had a hard task to separate one from another.

I would also like to thank everyone who attended the Annual Conference at Torquay. We had quite a good list of Speakers, who carried out their individual talks to a high standard and all the members who attended the Conference, seemed to be very interested with what the speakers had to say.

The Hotel proved to be a very good venue, with a high standard of food and the staff were very accommodating.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members for making me President for the year 2010.

The National Society in that year led the world of thatching, as it usually does, and I had a fantastic year.

I attended the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in West Sussex last October, on both days, and had the pleasure of commentating at the Spar Making Competition where I was totally surprised, when presenting the Cup to the winner, to find that I used to buy spars from his grandfather in the late 1960s.

I would also like to thank the members for appointing me President of the Association for 2011. There are going to be many challenges this year with Marjorie giving up Secretaryship and Roger easing back as well.

We can only thank them for all of the services they have provided to us, they will be sorely missed.

Things must move forward and I know we are capable of coping with the changes.

On a final note, it would be really great to see all the old faces and a lot of the new members attending conferences in the future.

Thank you once again.

Mick Dray



Your Letters...

West's two 'penneth

Please don't think that I like to hear the sound of my own voice, but we, you and I, have a journal through which all members communicate, and we have an Editor, Claire, who regularly asks for content from you, and regularly, you, my fellow members, are unable to contribute.

Someone has to. I wish it were you, but it is not, and we have to help Claire help the Association. Nothing more, nothing less. Without content, even my repetitive protection of the thatchers craft from English Heritage, the Thatchers Standard would suffer. Please don't even think in your wildest dreams of criticising me, until you have contributed yourself.

In contributing, I think that I show my gratitude to Rod and Kate for their stewardship of the Society; every member of the Executive, who have made it possible for Rod and Kate to do their jobs, and Marjorie and Roger and Claire, who throughout the most awful adversity have added gravitas and humour in equal measure, and most of all, have been the glue that has held us all together for the past few years. So, from me, but I'm sure all of us, a huge vote of thanks.

I have thanked Mick Dray personally for all the effort that he put into making the Annual Conference such a memorable and enjoyable weekend. Thanks Mick, and how great it was to see Helen at the dinner in the evening, having only been sprung from hospital earlier in the afternoon.

70 this year. I can't believe how the years have flown by, and how blessed I have been to be a thatcher and to have so many friends within the craft.

Together, we have forged the National Society into a trade association to be proud of.

It is difficult to see how much further we can hope to increase membership, as there are an awful lot of thatchers out there who could not offer the members adequate proficiency in the craft to apply for membership, and those that could, are members.

We are a 'membership led' organization and we have achieved very nearly, optimum membership.

At the AGM our treasurer, Matt Fuller, advised that in the absence of other income sources, the association would probably have to give notice of increased membership fees in 12 months time.

Our association has experienced another year of greater expenditure than income. Although we have spent a couple of thousand pounds each year, more, than we have earned, we are still in a strong position. We could continue for some years at this rate of

GRANDFATHERS RIGHTS ARE BACK FOR CSCS CARDS, THOUGH THE PRICE HAS ESCALATED.

Change to Profiled Route

CSCS introduced the Profiled Route to CSCS cards for experienced construction site managers and supervisors as an appropriate alternative to achieving NVQs almost 12 months ago. This route has proved increasingly popular, especially in light of the lack of funding available for NVQ's. However, industry has demanded more rigorous review of applications made using this route which will result in a price increase to £250+VAT from June 1st 2011. There is more information about applying for CSCS cards under the Profiled Route at www.cscs.uk.com/profiledroute

Your Letters...

losses and still be solvent, but it is clear that the wisdom of the executive, and particularly our chairman and our treasurer, would like to see the association in a profit situation, rather than a loss.

There are a number of financial issues that we might all benefit from considering. If we are spending more than we are earning, in common with your business or any other business, we need to consider the options available to us.

Do we increase our income? Or do we decrease overhead?

There are limited methods of decreasing overhead. Do you want to consider the Thatchers Standard, or the cost of Sue, who supports or treasurer and our day to day finances, or our proposed new paid secretary. There are not many other costs which we might reduce.

My personal view is that we have come a long way with the help of these supporting folk, none of whom charge a market rate for the contribution that they make, and although overhead control is vital, now is not the time to reduce their inestimable contribution. We would be significantly less without them.

However, it is my belief that right now is not the time to increase membership fees either. We are in the middle of the worst recession for 70 years and have a number of members who have not been able to pay membership fees this year so far, and I believe there are a number of others who, an increase in fees, might tip over the edge.

Rod and Matt and I, are going to look at what other areas we might investigate to increase our income. Your help and suggestions would be mightily useful. If you have any thoughts on the subject, put them to Claire for the Thatchers Standard, or to Rod or Matt or myself.

Bob West – Thank you Bob and I look forward to readers feedback.

Here we have some very GOOD news to share with you!

Dear readers,

My book TEITOS was awarded the prize EUROPA NOSTRA for Cultural Heritage – category 2-Research!

It is to be announced by 12h EU time in The Hague.

Please, look at this web page:

<http://www.europanostra.org/projects/53/>

Study on thatching in western Europe, from Asturias to Iceland, Madrid, SPAIN. Now Thatching gets a higher consideration in Europe.

Could you make an announcement in Britain?

With best regards,

Carmen-Oliva

With pleasure, Carmen, we are delighted for you and here is what Bob has to say: “The book “Teitos” was published a couple of years ago and is an outstanding piece of work covering thatch throughout Europe, but with an emphasis on the very small remaining thatch in isolated areas of Spain.”

For everyone who is interested please take a look at the website address given above.

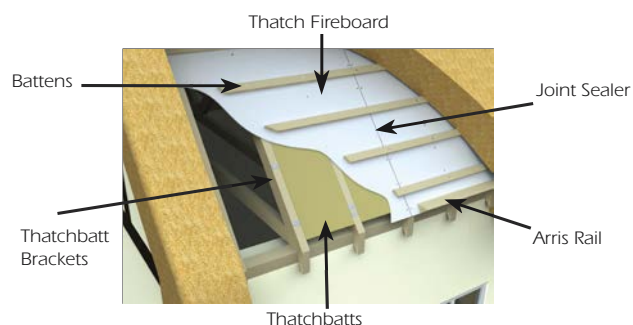


New Website Information - Now Available

For more details please visit: www.thatchingadvisoryservices.co.uk
or call 08455 20 40 60

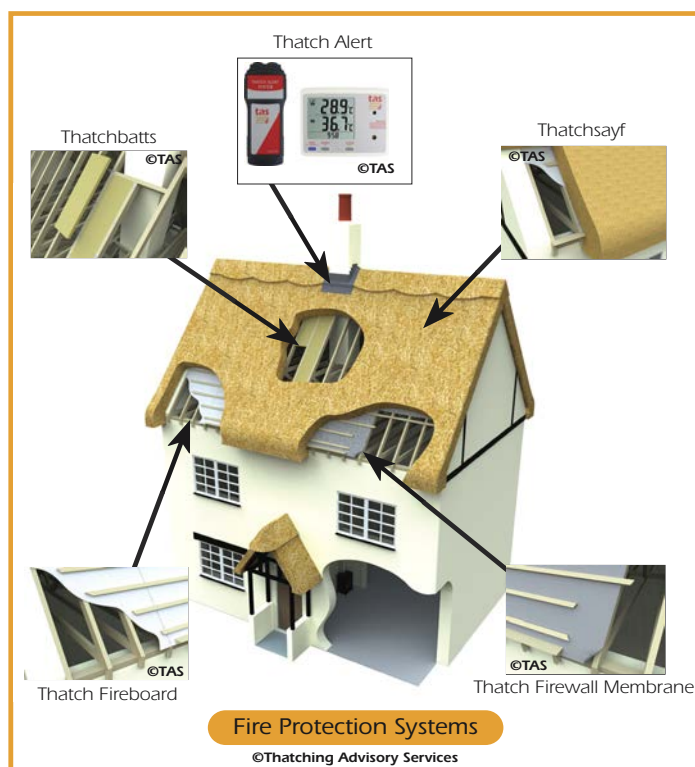
We have recently added additional information to our website, to include the following:

- Detailed drawings and descriptions to illustrate how our products should be installed within the fabric of a thatched house.
- New system drawings for both Thatch Fire Board and Membrane Systems.



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Your Letters...

Following the great success of the conference, emails have been flying back and forth across the water from England to Denmark, Germany and Sweden with an invitation for UK Thatchers to visit Denmark

Dear Marjorie Sanders and Roger Angold.

On behalf of the "Jydsk Taekkemandslaug", JTL – and in cooperation with the "Dansk Taekkemandslaug" – I have the pleasure to ask the National Society of Master Thatchers, if you are interested in having a trip to Denmark in late August?

We are inviting Dutch, German, English and Swedish master thatchers to visit Denmark – and to maybe establish a more formal international organization for thatchers in Northern Europe. Henk in Holland says there may be around 50 from Holland and we are looking forward to hearing how many we may expect from England.

We imagine that the visit will be a bit like when we were in England last year: That we are the hosts and will arrange everything, including bus transportation – but that the individual thatcher – or his organization – will pay the trip to Denmark, the stay and most of the food. I will try to get a sponsor to limit the costs.

I am now working half time here at the Danish Office of Thatching within "Jydsk", where Morten Petersen is the chairman. I met Joe Wykes last summer, when he was in Denmark.

I have talked to Finn Guld from our sister organization and they are positive about cooperating on this.

We suggest arrival on a Thursday, August the 25th and then returning to your home country on Sunday, the 28th.

A provisional schedule could be like this:

Three nights in Denmark, arriving Thursday afternoon and leaving Sunday after breakfast. (Ryanair flies Stansted-Billund – and Billund would be the right airport here)

This would give us two whole days for a trip:

One for the Danish west coast (North Sea), including a visit to the island Roemoe close to the German border. Here our biggest – and more or less only – big thatched recreation center is situated, 200 apartments plus a very big building with wellness center and restaurants.

Further on to Fyn, the idyllic quite big island that has a lot of traditional, Danish, cosy thatched houses. Maybe a visit to the house of H.C. Andersen – which is NOT thatched! Friday night in Odense.

Saturday: Going through Southern Fyn with the ferry to the "Bindedag", the annual gathering of Danish thatchers from both organizations. This will be, we think, on Lolland – so a visit to Søren Vodders Miscanthus fields and – houses may be a good idea.

I think it is on Saturday, our main meeting will be held, including a discussion about the problems of thatched roofs and maybe we establish an international organization for more formal cooperation that day?

I am looking forward hearing from you.

Kind regards, Joergen Kaarup –

Head of Thatching office Denmark

Phone (+) 45 21 25 91 88 email. info@jtl.dk

Our new website, unfortunately not yet in English: www.jtl.dk

Please check the NSMT Website to keep up to date with all the details for this

Hibernating Swallows

Some years ago, my brother and I were thatching a roof in the village of Osborne, a few miles east of Sherborne. We had just returned to work after the Christmas holiday, so it was probably early January.

I was stripping out a left hand barge, prior to crooking in a new wheat reed eave, and had got about two feet down from the chimney, when, to my astonishment, out flew a swallow! It hovered in front of my face then flew down the High Street, singing at the top of its voice.

Now it has long been said by country people that swallows hibernate, but is always dismissed as nonsense, indeed, there was an article to this effect in our local magazine recently. The Hampshire naturalist, Gilbert White, was aware of this country "mythe" and even offered a substantial reward to anyone who could prove it.

I once knew an old New Forest thatcher who swore blind that cuckoos hibernated, something that at the time was dismissed out of hand, but which, in hindsight, may have been unjust.

As you can appreciate, this sort of thing is very hard to prove. Even with a camera in hand a photograph would be hard to achieve.

Also a number of questions arise about this swallow.

Did he become stuck inside the roof in the autumn?

Did he make a conscious decision to remain and so avoid the extreme journey to southern Africa?

If so, how did he survive the winter?

Was he emerging on good days to feed on winter midges at the nearby stream?

Anyway, for me, the swallow cheered up a bleak midwinter morning and what I would love to know is, if any other thatchers have had a similar experience.

Mark Shaw

Thatcher

Please let us know what you think and if you have had any similar experiences



NATIONAL SOCIETY OF MASTER THATCHERS LIMITED

THE BEST THATCHED HOUSE COMPETITION

CONGRATULATIONS TO
WINNER DODSON BROTHERS,
THATCHERS
WITH SILVER BIRCHES.

Open to all thatchers resident in the UK, whether a firm or an individual, entry for the BTHC is free.

Entrants may submit an unlimited number of properties into the competition, which is judged by the Governing Body, the Executive, of the National Society of Master Thatchers Limited.



Richard Leonard from Dodson Brothers, Thatchers, receiving the cup from Rod Miller with Adam Follon, Chairman of the judges, ready to hand Richard his winners certificate



Sponsors of the BTHC from left to right:

George Wakley, Suzanne Johnston, Rod Miller, Tristan Johnson, Richard Leonard and Brian Jarrett.

The entered property/ies may be thatched with any one material or a mixture of materials and must have been carried out between 1st January 2005 and 31st December 2006. No repair work or re-ridging is accepted.

Initial judging is done by photograph, from which, depending upon the standard of entries, the judges may choose up to twenty finalists.

The winner is presented with a trophy which they may keep for a year, (after which, it is returned to the Executive to be presented to the next year's winner), with certificates of merit issued to the Runner Up and Third placed finalists.

Presentations for the 2009-2010 BTHC were made at the prize giving ceremony of the NSMT Annual Conference 2011.

Many thanks to Sponsors: Brian Jarrett, Suzanne Johnston, Tristan Johnson, Richard Leonard, Rod Miller and George Wakley.



Beautiful BTHC trophies crafted by Award Winning Blacksmith Simon Grant-Jones



Initial judging of BTHC



1st Place: Silver Birches



2nd Place: Frisby House



3rd Place: Mole Hall

THE BEST THATCHED HOUSE COMPETITION – 2011

Record of entries 25th January 2011

No.	Entrant	Owner & Property	1st Rnd	Place
1	Kit Davis	R Flint & S Cullen, The Mound		Highly commended
2	Steve Cobb	Ian Everett, Lodge Farm		Highly commended
3	Matthew Holt	Mr & Mrs Ashcroft, Little Glebe Cottage		Highly commended
4	Dodson Bros	Mr Moore & Ms Gardner, 129 Old Yews Cottage		Highly commended
5	Kit Davis	Ms S Norville, Beehive Cottage		Highly commended
6	Ben Thomas	Mr R George, Frisby House	✓	2ND PLACE
7	Dodson Bros	Mr A Augustein, Silver Birches	✓	1ST PLACE
8	Stuart Viggers	Dr & Mrs Weinstein, No Oven Cottage		Highly commended
9	Matt Fuller	Mr & Mrs Durham, Church Cottage		Highly commended
10	Matt Fuller	Mr & Mrs Medway, Fulling Mill	✓	Joint 5th place
11	Jason Morley	Mr & Mrs Fletcher, 6 Church Lane		Joint 5th place
12	Jason Morley	Sir P Cresswell, Mole Hall	✓	3RD PLACE
13	Jason Morley	Mr & Mrs Jeran, Old Houses		Highly commended
14	Jason Morley	Mr & Mrs Colvin, Batchelors	✓	4th place



4th Place: Batchelors



Joint 5th Place: 6 Church Lane



Joint 5th Place: Fulling Mill

SPOTLIGHT

Tony Jackson
is a new NSMT
member, here,
he goes under
our Spotlight...



Tipple after a dusty
days work?
A nice cool cider

Favourite sandwiches?
Ham Baguette

Hobbies?
Scuba diving

Best roof?
The next one

Pet hate?
Slack bales of reed. Trying to roll around a bale
of 70 and it's turning into a caterpillar track
makes it hard work.

Claim to fame?
Scoring a own goal against Sheffield Wednesday

Vehicle you use for work?
A bright yellow Vauxhall brava

Dream wheels?
Ferrari, but only if it can take a roof rack for the lad-
ders!

Preferred radio station?
Talk Sport

Last film seen at cinema?
Indiana Jones

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

No.1 holiday destination?
Florida

One wish?
To dive the Thistlegorm wreck in the Red Sea



NSMT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Livermead House Hotel Torquay.

The NSMT annual conferences have become part of the eagerly anticipated life cycle of the thatching year. Each year the conference is voted the “Best Ever” and this year was no exception. The sun shone for the entire weekend, the choice of hotel with a sea front view was a welcome diversion for the delegates, who usually operate in, albeit beautiful, but landlocked, locations.



The theme for 2011 was “The sustainability of thatching materials”. The true nature of sustainability must be to be able to recognise and embrace change. It is interesting to reflect the changes through looking back over past conferences, and, by doing so, recognise the contribution the Society has made in responding to change over the past 20 years. This is reflected in the choice of speakers this year and the selection of topics that

require attention.

A few years ago, no one could have predicted the serious need for good thatchers to protect themselves against vexatious claims and threats of litigation. Matthew Smith from the Solicitors Coles Miller, and Richard Playle from Thatchline insurance, clearly spelled out the modern need to cover any work carried out by legally binding written contracts and, for when the wheels do fall off, to have additional Public Indemnity insurance to help cover the high cost of defending ones self. The message here is for thatchers to be able to protect themselves by demonstrating due diligence through a clear paper trail; long gone are the days of a gentlemanly handshake!

Once again, Richard Starling travelled from Norfolk to highlight the frustrations and possibilities in increasing the supply of home grown water reed for thatching. Bob West, writing about the 2010 conference, commented on the disbelief of our European visitors on the layers of bureaucracy imposed on any thatching activity in the UK. How long before the competing “conservation bodies” charged with managing the Broads, wake up to reality? Any sustainability for wetlands as a habitat for wildlife and for recreational purposes, once the grants run out, can only be achieved through commercial

production of water reed and sedge for thatching. We can only hope the wake-up call comes before it is too late!

Judging by the time it is taking for some



BTHC display

died in the wool factions outside the NSMT to stop rehearsing old and long extinct battles, it was great to see the wind of change making it possible to welcome Val Harrison and Rupert Lane from the Dartmoor National Parks Authority. Val spoke on the need to conserve old thatched buildings with an historic past, into popular usable spaces for the 21st century. The Park does have small amounts of grant aid available and Val would be keen to see local NSMT members benefit with assistance to grow heritage cereal varieties for thatching within the Park. Rupert is head of the Park’s woodlands; he led us on an investigative



Straw hats!

journey to find out why some plants naturally re-grow from cut stools to produce coppice. Thank goodness they do; thus keeping the interdependent link between rural industries alive and well, with a supply of spars and liggers for thatching. With the importation of water reed from Europe is coming Polish hazel products. Again, we need to recognise the need for local production for sustainability.

This interdependence between rural crafts was further highlighted on Saturday when Simon Grant-Jones demonstrated

the high level of skill required to produce specialist tools to individual craftsmen's specifications. Simon also crafted the beautiful individual trophies for the winners of the Best Thatched House competition. It was also a special privilege to meet Gillian and Andrew Nott from Cornwall. Gillian has been an enthusiastic communicator with the Society through



Val Harrison speaks from Dartmoor National Parks Authority

her passion for straw crafts, those beyond thatching and on a more micro scale.



Richard Playle receiving life membership

Again interdependence for materials is all important; Gillian produces her art works using Maris Widgeon enhanced with decorations from ancient bearded wheats.

For those who missed out this year, the 2012 conference will be over the weekend 16th to 18th March, probably in Dorset, but we need to make sure all the hotels are not taken in preparation for the sailing Olympics.

See you there.
Marjorie Sanders

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF NSMT SATURDAY 19TH MARCH 2011 Held at The Livermead House Hotel, Torquay

High point of the year: Prince Charles, who, in the thatching of his own barn discovered the problems with the shortage of home grown water reed, resulting in his contacting the NSMT for a meeting in November.

Following attendance of European thatchers at last year's AGM and Joe Wykes' Fellowship, there is support for proposals of a European Thatching forum. To be organised by Joe Wykes.

Popular operation of the free, independent thatching Helpline is accessed on average once a day and considered a success.

Praise to Sue and Heather for their handling of Accounts and Kate for new memberships.

Marjorie and Roger understandably feel it time to hand over their reins. Secretarial duties to be covered by Sarah Knapper and responsibility for Fire Prevention issues, Simon Denney. Rod Miller to approach Andrew Raffle about becoming Secretary.

Marjorie and Roger are still available for technical advice. It goes without saying that the National Society is enormously grateful for their amazing hard work and winning results.

Three applicants for Apprenticeships. CMB to add their management certificate so on completion of the course, apprenticeship training is recognised.

Thatch and Thatching: A handbook for owners, thatchers and conservators should be available to buy Autumn.

Running costs to be reviewed and Pro-Forma letters to be issued to non payers of NSMT membership subscription.

FULL MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE

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Mark Shaw

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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 Model'

Density: 1000kg/m³

Thickness: 9mm & 12mm

Board Sizes: 915mm x 1830mm; 1220mm x 2440mm; 1200mm x 2400mm

Tolerances: Thickness +/- 0.3mm Width & Length -4mm

Stockists: We are looking for stockists in various parts of the country, if you are interested in considering this please contact:-

Marisa Tanner on:-

01273 775 464

Email: info@em-go.com

Website: www.em-go.com



www.thatchingadvisoryservices.co.uk

With over 25 years experience in the Thatching industry, we are still 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.

TAS100 - Thatch Fireboard®

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- Easy to install
- Water Resistant
- Impact Resistant
- Termite, mould and insect proof
- Can be cut, drilled, nailed & screwed with no splitting



Thatch Fire Membranes

Both Thatch Firewall and PU 28 Fire Membrane are manufactured in the UK using a flexible fibre glass woven fabric, with a fire retardant coating of specially formulated grey polyurethane with added aluminium pigment on both sides. The material used is halogen free and has an improved resistance to hydrolysis.

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For further information or advice please call Rob Norcott on

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

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