

the Thatcher's Standard

Issue No. 27



In this issue...
Remembering Malcolm Dodson
Life Membership Awards
The Society at Cereals 2011

THATCH-SAFE® ATTIX

Using *StatX* technology

Thatchers - Earn £100 by talking to your clients*

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Additional copies of the Thatcher's Standard are available from the Editor at a cost of £3.95 each (inc.p&tp).

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EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

For those of you who don't know me I've been on the executive for about 3 years and I work in the Hampshire/Wiltshire areas.

There have been a few recent changes, so I'd like to welcome back Andy Raffle who is taking over as Secretary from Marjorie, who, I'm sure everyone agrees, has done a fantastic job.

A particular highlight of being on the Executive for me, so far, has been seeing all the regional variations when judging the BTHC. It was a real eye opener and a privilege to be involved in the process.

A common theme for recent Exec meetings has been suggestions for increasing NSMT income. It would be interesting to hear any responses to Bob's letter in the last Standard. Any sensible suggestions are welcome as subscription increase may be the only way forward at the moment.

I've enrolled my first ever apprentice on the NSMT scheme this year and I am really pleased with the documentation and support available. Apprentices can join at any stage and it would be great to see more joining the scheme and attending the various events.

At the end of August we have the Denmark trip to look forward to which coincides with fellow Exec member Matt Fuller's 50th birthday celebrations.

A European thatching association will be under discussion which I personally feel would be a great prospect.

Wishing everyone a good summer and especially the growers out there and looking forward to seeing you all at the annual conference next year in Dorset.

Adam Follen



Editors note

HELLO

Summer is speeding along and I would like to start with a couple of Editor Apologies, firstly, for the Spotlight mugshot mix up, featuring Dave Nicklen instead of Tony Jackson and, secondly, to those of who didn't receive their magazine promptly. I've now made amendments to the mailing list but please let me know if you experience similar difficulties again. Inside, we remember with great fondness and respect, Malcolm Dodson, who was a pillar of the thatching community. Jack Edgley, Marjorie Sanders and Roger Angold receive Life Membership and there is Rushbearing at Sowerby, Yorkshire.

Please may you all add thatchersstandard@hotmail.com to your Contacts list and include it on any thatching news circulars.

Happy thatching!

Claire Tozer, Editor.

thatchersstandard@hotmail.com

Claire

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Your Letters...

Dear Marjorie,

My name is Nic Donati and my partner and I run a farm in the north of Costa Rica. One of the main focuses of our farm is the introduction of more sustainable ways of living to the local communities. We have spent a lot of time creating beautiful natural buildings that local people can emulate and we are trying to organise a number of workshops to help disseminate the skills required to reproduce these buildings.

We have been mainly using a local roofing material: corrugate iron sheet roofing, however we would like to try and move away from this and one of our ideas is to run a course for local people and any other interested parties on building thatch roofs in the traditional method practised in the UK and other countries.

I was hoping that perhaps with the help of one or two of your members we might be able to make this happen and bring a craft of thatching to a whole new set of people and try to kindle some interest in moving away from unsustainable building practices.

Please have a look at our website for general information and pictures of our farm and perhaps you could disseminate this information to your members and see if anyone would be interested in taking part.

I look forward to hearing from you and please feel free to ask any questions.

Nic Donati & Erin Cave

**Nic & Erin may be contacted through their website on:
www.fincalalibertad.org alternatively the Thatcher's
Standard is happy to forward your replies:
thatchersstandard@hotmail.com**

Dear Marjorie,

We once lived in one of Lord Braye's thatched cottages in Stanford-on-Avon, Northamptonshire.

Verney Cottage was one of three built in 1929 and finished with a thatched roof. Whilst we were tenants in the early '90s, the roof was re-thatched by a Mr Wood, of Welford, Northants. He told me something to the effect that there is a tradition amongst thatchers to hide something in the thatch for the next thatcher replacing the original material to find.

This theory is not confined to thatched roofs for the Rev'd Ralph Sadleir took me up onto the roof of Eton College Chapel in 1956/7 and we were shown etched in the lead work, "Here ye shall finde enough money to buy ye a hogshead of beer". Below the lead were three Henry VI half-pennies.

I ask if you could please elaborate upon what Mr Wood told me for the other recipient of this transmission is having a new house thatched here 100 miles due west of Durban. If you can substantiate the story related by Mr Wood, I guess that Mr Choromanski may well continue the tradition and we shall document it appropriately.

Yours faithfully,
Mr McGillicuddy

**If you would like to help Mr McGillicuddy the Thatcher's
Standard will be pleased to forward your replies and if you
have any interesting roof finds of your own write in or
email: thatchersstandard@hotmail.com**

Your Letters...

Dear Marjorie,

I would like to thank and congratulate Bob West on his very professional tribute to my brother Malcolm, who, I am sure, will be sorely missed, not only in the world of Thatching, but in many other directions. Regrettably I missed Bob at the funeral, but do sincerely hope that we can meet up again, one day!

May I wish the Association success in these difficult times for Thatch, but this has always been the like, but the skills and artistry of the craftsmen has always pulled them through.

Sincerely
Jack Dodson

Hello,

We would just like to say thank you for your excellent static display for our Cereals Event plot. It was very eye catching and there was much interest in it and the plot of Square Heads Master and especially the stook of the variety.

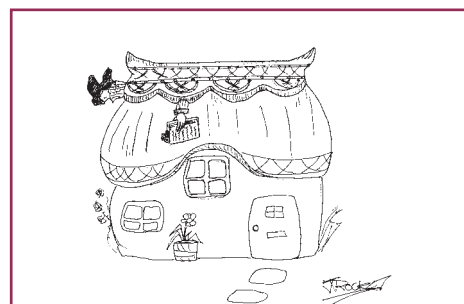
Many farmers were envious of the length of straw on these older conservation varieties. Jack and I will have a discussion on Monday on the many issues that were raised on sources of seed and get back to you.

I hope I can join you when you visit Jennifer at NIAB to look at the plots there. We were very lucky with the weather at the event and I enjoyed talking about our RHM colleagues with Roger.

Kindest regards
Mara and Jack

Richard Kenyon has just completed a successful apprenticeship with Jeff Helme, we look forward to welcoming him to the Society as a journeyman member and to see him and Jeff at Society meetings.

Marjorie

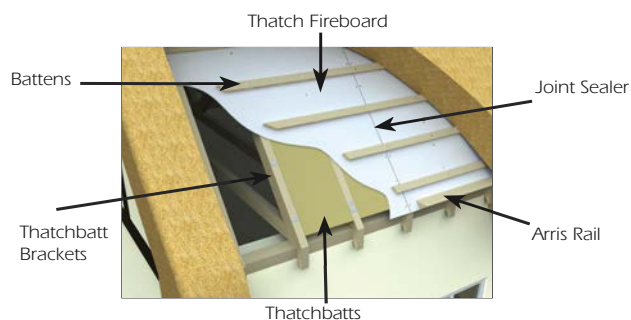


New Website Information - Now Available

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

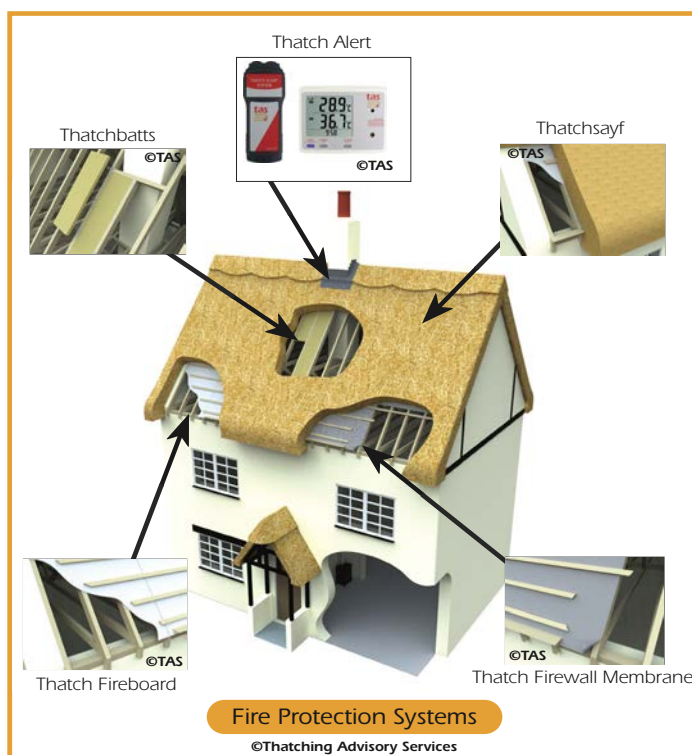
We have recently added additional information to our website, to include the following:

- 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.



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

8-10 Queen Street, Seaton, Devon EX12 2NY





MALCOLM DODSON, 1940 – 2011

With the immensely sad passing of Malcolm Dodson, I am prompted to look at part of his life's work, and try to look into a crystal ball and see if the future of sustainable thatching, that Malcolm fought for so valiantly, will be achieved.

Inextricably linked, Arthur and Malcolm, the Dodson brothers, are legendary in our craft industry. Utterly honest, I witnessed some who felt the lash of Arthur's tongue, or the refusal to take the outstretched hand of a man who could no longer be trusted. His honesty could be brutal and without compromise.

Malcolm, no less honest, was the peacemaker, the diplomat, self effacing and willing to listen and to learn from anybody. Both brothers dedicated to their craft and dedicated to see its future sustained, to enable their children and children's children, to continue in the craft if they chose to do so.

I remember a conversation with Paul Reading, who said that Malcolm had been to visit him to inspect some thatch for membership to the NSMT. Malcolm had got up on the ridge with Paul, and said, "Can I show you something that somebody else showed me" and proceeded to show Paul a particular technique and left. Paul said to me later, "If you've got people of his calibre in the National Society, I want to part of it". That was Malcolm.

The Dodson brothers were legendary for the work they put into thatching, the development and growing of crops, and design of machinery for harvesting, understanding of farming and cereal crops,

the understanding of how a thatched roof works. But also their willingness to help other thatchers and anyone who needed advice and guidance, "without fear or favour," freely and willingly given.

Malcolm was the "thinking man's horny handed son of the soil." I say this with the greatest respect, and I also remember a barrister in Court when referring to Arthur's overt honesty, using those exact terms.

Above all was their work ethic, the quality of their finished work, and output of work.

They won the best thatched house competition regularly, and I'm not sure that they were out of the top three in the past 10 years.

It seems even longer ago that Malcolm, Arthur, Alastair West and I, set off to meet some German thatchers with a view to forming a European Thatching Society. What a pleasure and what an education to have Arthur and Malcolm captive in the car all the way there and all the way back. We learnt from them their views on pre wetting long straw, improving roof longevity by using water reed in valleys and under chimneys, and many other things which they had given great thought and years of experience to understanding, and putting into practice. We also laughed a lot.

Neither should it be forgotten that Malcolm was a true conservationist. His work on areas of his own land to benefit various species of birds, plants and butterflies and insects, and attract new, won him recognition and awards in the field.

A passionate, experienced, highly

knowledgeable, courageous, caring, generous, family man, he was a man who enriched the lives of those who knew his friendship.

God bless you Malcolm.

Bob West

• • • • •

As you all know Malcolm Dodson's funeral was on Friday 27th May. Many of the NSMT were there and many more in spirit to celebrate the life of Malcolm.

After a very moving service in St. Peter's Church at Kings Ripton, Malcolm was buried in the churchyard and a wake was held at Slepe Hall Hotel.

Malcolm will not only sadly be missed by his family, as a loving family man of first class integrity and one prepared to stand up for what is right, but also by me. I wish I had known him better. I will always remember the delicate way in which he voiced his beliefs and our early morning chats, often along the seafront at conferences, which enriched me and taught me much.

A wise man of gentle nature beyond doubt. God bless you.

Andrew Raffle



HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS



Presentation of the Membership of the NSMT to Jack Edgley for services rendered

Honorary life membership was awarded to Jack Edgley.

Jack has recently retired from the Plant Breeders Rights office of FERA, part of DEFRA. Over the past 10 years Jack has worked with thatchers to ensure the derogation to the EU regulation, which allow the multiplication and sale of registered seeds from conservation cereal varieties suitable for thatching.

Jack has supported the NSMT by providing speakers at meetings, inviting us to exhibit at cereals 2011 and supporting the Triticale trials at NIAB.

We wish him well in his retirement and hope that he will still feel welcome at NSMT events.

Marjorie Sanders and Roger Angold

Marjorie and Roger were also awarded Life Membership and Marjorie was presented with a beautiful, handmade Love Seat thatched by NSMT Director and Secretary, Andy Raffle. "We are not completely fading away, just taking retirement a little more slowly. We shall still provide a technical service to the Society but hope that along the way we can find the next generation of thatchers willing to take up the baton and take the Society in new directions and achieve new heights of success. The thatching community that makes up the NSMT is a great group of people and rewarding to work with, we enjoy our relationship with you all, and like drugs just can't give you up!"

Marjorie and Roger



Andy Raffle completing the capping of the roof



The final completion of Marjorie's Love Seat (right to left) Andy Raffle, who has just finished assembling it, Alan Martin, Marjorie's friend Georgina Raffle, Marjorie and Jacqui Angold who is fitting the upholstery!

Dear All,

The love seat is now expertly installed in my garden and gives the impression that it has nestled in so well that it has always been there. How do I start to say thank you for such a wonderful gift? It is absolutely perfect, far more than I deserve and I shall now be able to ignore the needs of the Society and achieve my dream of spending longer in the garden lingering over a cup of tea doing absolutely nothing.

For once in my life I am lost for words, thank you seems inadequate somehow.

Best wishes Marjorie

CSCS NEWS

CSCS is assessing how the scheme is delivered to the construction industry so it can improve service levels. Currently CITB Construction Skills provides the helpdesk and application processing service under contract to CSCS and the five year notice period to terminate the contract has been served.

CSCS chief executive Brian Adams comments:

"We need to ensure that the CSCS scheme continues to be fit for purpose and meets the needs of the construction industry. Planned changes include an updated card structure and the intention to introduce an online card application service. CSCS will continue to consult with representatives from across the industry to determine how best it can provide the best possible service going forward."

CSCS Standards Strategy Consultation

CSCS is undertaking a consultation exercise across the construction industry to gather evidence to support development of a revised card standards strategy and structure to drive forward competence of UK site based construction workers in line with industry requirements that will:

- Provide a clearer series of levels focussed on achievement
- Recognise 'labourer' and 'semi skilled' as occupational levels
- Provide greater assistance for sites to manage/police 'Right Card for the Job'
- Allow a widening of what could be recognised and accepted to obtain certain levels of card beyond S/NVQ or Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) equivalent to reflect industry requirements within set guidelines.

If you would like to contribute to this process we would be grateful if you could complete the online consultation form by

Friday September 9th.

As we have been so critical of this system the NSMT should contribute to the survey. It may or may not have an effect. The Exec needs to decide if individual comments would be useful as well as a formal response from the Society.

Note the closing date 9th September.

Please let Andy Raffle know if you have any problems making applications for cards.

Marjorie

THE SOCIETY AT CEREALS 2011



Cereals is firmly established as Europe's leading technical arable event, with over 64ha of stands and live demonstrations involving more than 450 leading suppliers. Crop plots have always been a feature of the event, featuring all the latest recommended list varieties, with other plots creating a great backdrop for all the latest agronomy messages.

Mention was given in the programme to conservation varieties. The Society was asked to provide a sample of Squareheads Masters last autumn for planting adjacent to the FERA stand. With a prominent position on the corner of the stand, attention was immediately captured by a rustic love seat built and thatched by Andy Raffle. Interest was such that it kept two senior FERA staff busy talking to visitors for both days of the show. The sandy soil and dry conditions meant the crop was slightly shorter than last year, however last year's crop of prepared Squareheads with examples of Triticale and Maris Widgeon demonstrated just how important conservation varieties are in setting the standard for quality thatching materials. Martin Willmott is in the process of registering his seed with NIAB. Registration will give Martin the rights to the variety as a certified holder of seed.

NIAB have obtained seeds for other thatching varieties these have been planted on the Cambridge plots and will be available for inspection along with the twenty Triticale varieties on the NSMT trial plots.



As first time visitors we were unprepared for the size and scope of the event. Awesome is probably the word best used to describe the machinery section, enormous, impressive, and very difficult to work out what some of it is for and of course very expensive. There is most certainly no place for the traditional, small scale and precious attitudes in today's farming businesses.

We were asked by a member to research ways to prevent lodging in cereals grown for thatching. Amongst all this scale and grandeur it took us a while to pluck up courage to reveal our specialist niche to find better ways to grow straw for thatching. To our surprise our enquiries were taken seriously with some very positive proposals. To take the ideas forward we are looking for growers who are prepared to have some small scale experiments carried out on their farms. The lines of approach are two fold, in the understanding of trace elements in the soil and remedial applications where applicable. The second is in the early application of growth retardants.

A speaker on the importance of trace elements has already been booked for the spring conference 2012.

Marjorie and Roger

AVERTING CRISIS IN HERITAGE A REPORT FROM CLA

Although not specifically mentioning thatch, or any other heritage skills for that matter, this is an extremely useful approach to dealing with any planning issues that might arise concerning the maintenance of listed buildings.

It can be downloaded from the Country Land and Business Association website: www.cla.org.uk or viewed by typing in: www.cla.org.uk/Policy_Work/Averting_Crisis_in_Heritage/Government_Strategy//1007021.htm

Marjorie

PITFALLS OF SUBCONTRACTING

The old adage "if you want a job done properly, do it yourself" is all very well, but from time to time it is necessary to take on labour. No problem when the job is large or urgent and the help is a local thatcher you know well. Difficulties are being experienced when more casual labour is used with little commitment to the job except the pay cheque at the end of the week. Without close supervision these people could damage your local reputation.

In assessing complaints the NSMT will always adjudicate that the primary contractor must take responsibility. If it is your name on the contract then ultimately you are responsible for ensuring any work meets your standards. This is something that comes up regularly, don't get caught out! I know, the whole point of employing help is to free you up to do other things, but do heed the warning, some supervision is essential, without it poor workmanship can cost you dear.

The National Society was recently approached by Kris Clarke regarding advertising on his new website, CCI. We invited Kris to write in and tell us about his new venture.



"Cottage Craft Industries is a unique selling platform created and developed by skilled individuals who have a keen interest in the success of the newly revived and now flourishing cottage industry business.

CCI was developed due to the current work place not providing the stability it once did. As a result more people are turning to work self employed or to earn a second income. Realising that most of us have an inherent skill that can be developed and enhanced, some through time honoured traditions and craftsmanship, others, with a more contemporary, modern approach, out of which many timeless and often priceless hand crafted pieces are available for the more appreciative consumer to purchase, this lead to the concept of CCI.

With so many dedicated artisan people working on bespoke, unusual pieces it seems only fitting to have a website specially designed to enhance and promote their pieces at realistic prices, targeting people who appreciate individuality not mass produced goods.

Further research demonstrated the need for www.cottagecraftindustries.co.uk to be extended to include traditional trades such as thatching, stone masonry, and glass blowing etc.

CCI is an internet based vehicle designed to encourage all specialist skills often passed down from master to apprentice to come together with cutting edge technology, to both promote consumers awareness of craftsmanship, and the opportunity to increase overall sales, so securing Cottage Craft Industries for our future generations to enjoy.

CCI actively now needs your support to allow us to help to grow your craft, with this in mind please visit the site, register with CCI, and start using our store as an extension to your business."

Contact details: email: kris@cottagecraftindustries.co.uk
tel: 07530550405

Kris' website goes live on the 17th August.

SPOTLIGHT

Michael Powell
is a new NSMT
member, here,
he goes under
our Spotlight...



Tipple after a dusty days work?
A nice cold Stella

Favourite sandwiches?
Tescos smoked ham and mustard. Can't go wrong

Hobbies?
Riding my old school GSXR 750

Best roof?
The one I'm on

Pet hate?
Short, doglegged reed

Claim to fame?
Being in the spotlight section of the
Thatcher's Standard!

Vehicle you use for work?
My trusty and rusty old Toyota Hilux.

Dream wheels?
Honda Fireblade

Preferred radio station?
Radio 1

Last film seen at cinema?
Avatar

Time your alarm clock's set for at the weekend?
It's not any more.

No.1 holiday destination?
I can't choose there are so many places I'd like to go to

One wish?
To get my knee down one day.

SPOTLIGHT

Apologies to thatchers Tony Jackson and Dave Nicklen when their mugshots got mixed up in last issue's (TS26) Spotlight. Here is the real Tony Jackson!



GALLERY

Duddenhoe End, Essex (long straw) by Brian Mizon



Shalbourne by Adam Follon



Damerham by Nigel Turton



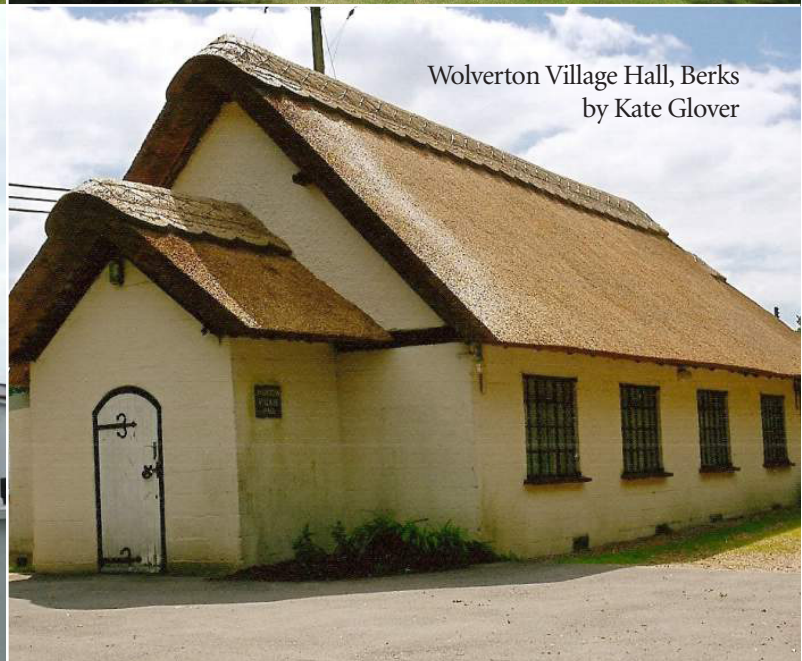
Damerham by Nigel Turton



Cottage in Northern Ireland by Peter Brugge



Wolverton Village Hall, Berks
by Kate Glover



WHAT PRICE INTEGRITY?

As a thatcher, what do you do when the morning post brings, out of the blue, a solicitor's letter demanding, in compensation, a sum of money three times larger than the charge you made for thatching the roof nine years ago? This was the recent and very unpleasant experience of a member of the Society. A claim of this nature is outrageous but even so, it quickly becomes evident that resolving the situation is going to cost money. Where there is limited legal or factual basis for the claim the priority is damage limitation. There are three such cases active at the present time. Among these, only one thatcher has professional indemnity insurance which at least means he is able to engage legal support.

In current hard times, unscrupulous owners appear to be prepared to make spurious claims and these can be difficult to defend and however unfair, they result in stress and cost to the innocent. Large corporate companies in other industries face these assaults regularly, and with their financial resources; they are able to respond with "see you in court then".

Unfortunately, most individual thatchers cannot afford risking going to court. The unscrupulous know this, and it gives them a major bargaining position. In court, just because the small individual is right, there is no certainty that on the day the judgement will be found in their favour and even if it is, going to court is not without considerable cost. It would not be so bad if all of these litigious owners have a genuine problem. The difficulty for a caring industry is in fighting specious claims while

dealing sympathetically with cases where things have genuinely gone wrong.

It might be a long-winded and tedious process confronting ill conceived planning decisions, but they are much easier to challenge successfully than to defend against the fundamentally dishonest with money and the application of the law working in their favour. Recent experience shows the bullying owners to be ones without a real case, on thin technical ice, but ruthless and well heeled, they could not care less if their action causes a thatcher to lose his business and as a consequence, possibly his home and his family.

Finding a common factor

In some cases investigated by the National Society it seems that there are individual "experts" who appear to be motivated by personal gain and who, by providing biased advice, are misleading owners who then may be persuaded that legal action is their only route to resolving the "problem" and in this, these "advisers" are acting in their own interest, not that of the owner or thatcher. Unfortunately, even with insurance cover, the NSMT and individual thatchers have only limited resources that may be insufficient to challenge these, fortunately few, dishonest or ill advised home owners.

"Consultants" who are behaving in such an unethical fashion will only survive in this destructive activity by charging their mercenary or misled clients for what are, effectively, dishonest reports. In the long run, it would be considerably less costly and a lot more rewarding to see some of

these self-styled experts defending themselves in court. In reports that we have seen, there are unsupportable claims that should be tested in court.

The National Society archive contains copies of all investigations carried out over the past 15 or so years. The Society also monitors the long term outcome for properties involved in any disputes. There is already sufficient documentary evidence to bring forward against some of those individuals who seem to be prepared to make a living by bringing the industry and good thatchers' work into disrepute.

If at any time you think someone is undermining your business and unreasonably maligning your work, please let the officers of the Society know. Unscrupulous advisers can be resisted by the strength of good thatchers working as a group and where appropriate using legal representation. By providing a united challenge this approach can weed out the dross and ultimately benefit all thatchers who care about the heritage entrusted to them and the high standards of their craft.

In writing this, Malcolm Dodson's life and craft ethics were very much to the forefront of our minds. Malcolm embraced honesty, integrity, generosity, commitment and pride in his craft all topped with a wonderful sense of humour. At times, Malcolm faced considerable adversity in standing by his principles. The National Society of Master Thatchers, encouraged by Malcolm's standards and as a tribute, must also stand on principle and resist this corrupt activity.

Marjorie

A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

These days, running a business is not just about superb thatching. The exchange of good clear paper work, quotations, invoices and terms and conditions, makes for a professional approach to customers and can provide protection for the thatcher when things go wrong.

The National Society has produced a set of forms that can be personalised with your own logo and Company details and modified to reflect your terms of trade.

- In addition to the forms there are information articles which include:
- Writing a planning application.
- Understanding fire risk

- Code of Practice for thatchers, owners and conservation officers
- Health and Safety advice
- How long will a roof last?
- Thermal performance flow chart (Courtesy of Charles Chalcraft)
- Thatch survey for owners.

The CD is in Word format price £10.00 and are available from the secretary:

Andrew Raffle. 07930 392652. e-mail avraffle@gmail.com

Marjorie is still on hand if you have trouble customising the business form templates.



RUSHES TO SOWERBY BRIDGE

Rushbearing dates back centuries to when church floors were packed down mud and rushes were used as floor covering.

For centuries in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cumbria and parts of Cheshire, bundles of rushes were brought to the church door every year on a handcart pulled by a team of local men.

As one can imagine, the arrival of a newly harvested floor, following the 'mucking out' of a foul, well trodden one came as a

Sowerby Bridge in West Yorkshire decided to commemorate the royal occasion by reviving their old memory of Rushbearing, and, so, a cart was purchased for a £150 from a local farmer, thatched with rushes and pulled through the streets of Sowerby Bridge, accompanied by a storm of partying.

Following its success the event was held again the next year, and every year after that, with the same cart being used each time, loaned back to the Rushbearing Association by

streets of Sowerby Bridge and adjoining villages following a predetermined route, during the first weekend in September. The route has been re-directed slightly over the years with the closure of one church and the fire of another and to incorporate new churches and pubs too.

The Rushcart is traditionally blessed on the Saturday, before it begins its journey. It makes stops at churches along the way, where a token bundle of rushes is laid, and



Photographs by kind permission of Jo-An Roulson

welcome relief, and during the 17th century Rushbearing evolved into an annual celebration with dancing, singing and heavy drinking, as well as a fair amount of beer induced brawling, usually between the fiercely competitive Cart Builders.

Over time as drainage was improved and churches across England modernised with permanent flooring, Rushbearing ceased to exist, although the festivities it attracted continued well into the mid 1800's.

In 1977 to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee,

Calderdale Museums who purchased it in 1978. A new cart was commissioned in 1984 when the old one fell into disrepair and was built by Frank Stott of the Outlane Engineering Company.

Today, the Rushbearing event is as popular as ever and continues to grow, attracting thousands of spectators.

In the week leading up to the celebrations a cart is piled high with fresh rushes, cut at Fly Flatts, above Warley Moor. The rushes are taken to Canal Basin in Sowerby Bridge and thatched by team of between fifteen and twenty people. There is no set pattern to the design and the Rushcart is thatched from scratch each year and about 1000 bundles of rushes are used.

The Rushcart is an ever evolving work of art; a decorative, hand woven spectacle of approximately sixteen feet high. Dressed with heather, the ridge features a Cart Maiden's Saddle, a hand painted apron, a white triangle and garlands of tankards at the front.

Pulled by a team of sixty, local men kitted out in white shirts, black trousers, Panama hats and clogs, the Rushcart travels the

at Public Houses where there is more dancing and refreshments.

The villages that line the Rushbearing route take the opportunity to fundraise for their local community during the weekend with stalls, games, crafts and activities.

Accompanying the Rushcart are teams of Morris dancers and a group of young ladies, also attired in traditional garb, who take it in turns to sit upon the Cart Maiden's Saddle, (although this position would once have been taken up a man.)

The festivities kick off on Friday with a Pre-Rushbearing knees-up at The Puzzle Hall, Sowerby Bridge. On Saturday the main entertainment is held at Sowerby Bridge Market and on Sunday the celebrations continue with a Festival Service at St Peter's Church with Ripponden holding its annual Village Fair in the afternoon.

Festivities reach a peak when the cart arrives in Ripponden for a special 'Songs of Praise' service, held in St.Bartholomews Church.

This year the event takes place on the 3rd and 4th September and more details may be found on www.rushbearing.com

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