



THE BLACKDOWN HILLS HEDGE ASSOCIATION

Devon Style Hedgelaying on a Bank

In Devon, we have a unique style of hedgelaying because the overwhelming majority of field boundaries consist of a hedge bank with a hedgerow on top. The bank is the primary livestock barrier, therefore, when laying a Devon hedge, the main objective is to improve the stockproof element by filling in gaps and increasing the height of the overall barrier. We achieve this by cutting and laying the hedge material so that it runs parallel to the bank. The material is then built up and interwoven to fill in gaps and increase the overall height. The description below is designed to assist hedge layers taking part in BHHA training days and hedge competitions. It is not to be used as a standard for the whole of Devon.

Height and build of the hedge.

The laid Devon hedge should consist of a “double comb” where the hedge is laid either side of the bank with a clear gap down the middle. This area is for surplus soil when the bottom of the bank is dug up. Each “comb” should have a vertical outside edge (standing next to the bank and looking along the line of the hedge) and the top of the hedge should finish slightly above the top of the bank. The position of the “comb” is relative to the height of the bank. For example, a bank that is 2 foot high will need the comb running more along the top of the bank to increase the height of the overall barrier, a bank of 3-4 foot will need the comb running more along the outside to increase the vertical plane of the barrier.

When viewed from the field, the top line of the hedge should be flat. The height of the “comb” will be specified by the trainer or judge at the beginning of the day and should be adhered to. Ideally, pleachers from within and just below the comb would be used. However, during competitions, in order to achieve this height, material from any part of the bank can be used. You will be judged upon the “**appropriate use of material to achieve a stockproof barrier**”. For example, a section lacking in material but with pleachers low down on the bank that have been

laid up to achieve the given height will be judged equally with a section where only pleachers within the comb have been used.

Deadwood is a term used to describe material that has been cut out and then reused in the build of the hedge. Deadwood can only be used to fill gaps when there is NO USEABLE MATERIAL. During competitions, the use of deadwood will be monitored solely by the judge. Inappropriate use will be penalised.

Cutting

When cutting pleachers the length of cut should be proportionate to the diameter of the stem. Therefore, the thicker the pleacher the longer the cut. The cut should be smooth with no splitting back up the pleacher. The hinge should be strong. Use of hand tools on smaller material is desired. During competitions, excessive use of chainsaws on small material will be marked down.

Once a pleacher has been laid the remaining “heel” must be removed, ideally a sloping cut leading away from the hinge. The only circumstance where it may remain is when it is retaining another pleacher.

Securing the hedge leading to overall strength

Crooks may be used to strengthen a hedge in order to create a stockproof barrier, these are like large tent pegs cut from the excess material in a hedge. Crooks can be used on any part of the hedge, including the outside. The hook part of the crook must be turned towards the centre of the bank, the stake part should be angled so that it is driven into the heart of the bank. When viewed from the field, crooks must be either level with or below the top line of the hedge and must only be used where required to improve the overall strength and form of the comb.

Short lengths of sticks may be used as a brace to hold material in position, however, they must be internal and not visible.