



CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CORNISH HEDGES

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This Code of Good Practice for Cornish hedges and other stone-faced hedge-banks of similar construction is regulated by the Guild of Cornish Hedgers. It is derived from the expert knowledge of many experienced practitioners and sets out the procedure and standard of work expected in the proficient performance of the craft. Where a contract seeks to depart from this Code of Good Practice, the conflicting details should be agreed in writing before work starts.

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Health & Safety The Risk Assessment advice available at www.cornishhedges.com or from the Guild's stewards is complied with.

Preparation Preference is given to the local traditional style of hedge, and the new hedge is built to the sequence of rows exemplified in the existing hedge at the arrowed location shown on the plan as agreed with the client.

Where a nearby Cornish hedge is being demolished its stones and fill are regarded as the primary material source. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, a new hedge is 1.5m (5ft) in height from ground level to the top of the last stone course. In time this will settle to about 1.40m (4ft 6"). The base is the same width as the height. The top width is half the height. If trees, excepting thorns, are to be planted on the hedge, these top and bottom widths are each increased by one metre, the height remaining unchanged.

The fill for new Cornish hedges is of damp granular or clay-shaley soil type of the locality (eg rab, growan, shillet), without peat, leaf-mould or other vegetable matter.

For repairs, existing material is used, with extra stones and fill if needed. The existing pattern of rows is followed. Gaps are cleared down to existing sound hedge structure. Rabbit tunnels are filled.

Preparing and laying grounders.

A trench, the width of the hedge base, is dug out ideally to subsoil, not less than 150mm (6") deep.

Excavated turf and topsoil are piled separately from subsoil for use in topping the hedge.

The largest stones are used for grounders (foundation stones) and are seated into the trench bed with their biggest and lumpiest side downward. No stone or fill packing is inserted under grounders before laying.

Grounders are set in to the correct angle, interlocking with each other. For the typical 1.5m (5ft) hedge, this is the angle of Cornish shovel blade to haft, (35 degrees approx).

At least half the fill between the two rows of grounders is free of stones exceeding 25mm (1"). This is rammed hard around each grounder in successive consolidated layers not more than 100mm (4"), the stonier part of the fill being put to the middle and well rammed.

Grounders may only be laid on edge as facers (shiners), if the width and depth are each more than one-quarter of the height of the stone. Facers are at least 150mm (6") thick at the top. No facer should be laid alongside another, but with ordinary grounders between.

For new hedges, a stone culvert not exceeding 150mm diameter may be built through the hedge where excessive ponding at a low spot might be a problem. Big adjacent grounders, lip-stones and paving must deter

undermining.

Batter

The batter is built in an inwards (concave) curve. At a quarter of the hedge height, the inward batter on each side of the hedge is one-seventh of the base width (ie the whole width of the hedge is just over three-quarters of the base width). At half of the hedge height the batter is two-ninths of the base width. The inward curve continues up to three-quarters of the hedge height, the batter getting less with each row so at this height the inward batter on each side of the hedge is one-quarter of the base width (ie the whole width of the hedge is half the base width). Thereafter the face of the hedge is vertical, or outwards by one-tenth of the top hedge width, to the top.

Filler Row

As few stones as possible are used to even-up gaps between tops of grounders. Fillers are laid with longest face running into the hedge, slanting in at the same angle as the grounders, and levelling up the top of each row of grounders horizontally along the hedge, ready for the next row.

Fill is well rammed around back of each stone before filling to top of each row in layers not more than 100mm (4"), well consolidated.

Coursed rows of stone

All rows are straight and are horizontal or follow the run of the ground. Each row of stone is smaller than the row below. Stones are laid with the longest face running inwards into the hedge, and are pitched (laid vertically) unless the stone is better laid on the flat or herringbone. Rows of stone are staggered (as in bricklaying). Each overlap is more than one-quarter of the running length of the stone. Pitched and herringbone courses interlock stone-to-notch with the row of stones below.

Every stone fits together with the stones alongside and with the rows below and above, with no gaps. All stones are laid in contact stone-to-stone with no fill or turf between. All stones are load-bearing, and laid so as to be incapable of individual extraction.

Trigging (wedging a stone with a small one) is kept to a minimum, at the back only and no stone is trigged twice. Hard stone, and not fill, is used for trigging.

A row of projecting stones may be laid below the top course as coping stones to deter sheep or deer. No other stones protrude outside the line of the hedge face.

In the absence of coping stones, the top two courses are pitched or laid Jack-and-Jill (herringbone) as done locally.

Coursed rows of dressed stones.

In Cornish hedging, use of the hammer is usually limited to occasionally knocking off an awkward projection to make a stone fit better. For high-specification Cornish hedge frontages and other exhibition work, the hammer may be used to give each stone a neat rectangular look (the width of each stone less than its height).

Randomised rows of undressed stone.

Only where random coursing has been specified in writing are the rows of stone laid other than in straight, horizontal lines. The stone is sorted sufficiently and laid so that the assorted sizes are evenly distributed and the average size of the stones diminishes towards the top of the hedge. The stones of all shapes and sizes are laid neatly interlocking, with no gap larger than a tennis ball, and not more than two gaps as big as this allowed to occur in any 6m run of hedge. The two top rows are pitched or herringbone. Greenstone ('elvan') and similar very hard rocks may not form suitable pieces for this so the top two rows are built using well-sorted smaller lumps of stone.

Fill.

Sufficient fill is dumped along the hedge centre for each layer of not more than 100mm (4"), then dragged by hand to the back of each stone and well rammed. Hard compaction is essential. The fill contains less than one-tenth of stones exceeding 25mm (1") with the stonier part of the fill being left in the middle and well rammed. No fill is placed between courses or allowed to prevent stone-to-stone contact.

Rabbit deterrent.

A layer of plastic-covered galvanised wire netting may be laid on the rab across the hedge top under the top course of stone. The wire must not protrude from the hedge face.

Topping off

Fill top is domed so the centre height above the top row of stone is one-third of the width of the hedge top.

Extra turf may be taken from foot of hedge, or (with the landowner's consent) nearby scrub, 150mm (6") thick, and placed securely on hedge top. The turf is beaten down to consolidate, and is covered with soil leaving a 150mm (6") strip of grass each side. Some hedgers place the turf grass-side down, especially if thorns or trees are planted on the hedge top. In repairing gaps, any nearby thorn growth is layered across gap before turf is put on.

Planting.

If the top of the hedge is planted with hawthorn and/or blackthorn, the plants are 30/40cm (12"/16") tall, transplanted 1+1 or pot-grown, and planted 400mm (16") apart in one row through the turf in winter, then pruned to 200mm (8"). Plants of native origin and local provenance are used if available.

Clearing up

To encourage wildlife, small pieces of turf the size of a golf ball are rammed into crevices every third row upwards and the same distance apart along the length of the new work.

Remaining fill and soil is levelled off and the site left tidy.

NOTES (not part of the Code):-

1. This Code is available on the Guild's website www.cornishhedges.com

2. A list of payment rates under grant-aided schemes is provided by Defra, Palace Building, Quay St., Truro or on www.defra.gov.uk

The curved batter acts like an arch on its side, the weight tightens the stones and stops the hedge sides from bulging out and falling down.

