



THE GUILD OF CORNISH HEDGERS

TWO - DAY COURSE

LEARNING HOW TO

REPAIR CORNISH HEDGES

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Why bother to repair?

Cornwall's hedges are unique, some date from prehistoric times when Cornwall's pattern of landscape became established. About half of our hedges border a public right-of-way and are seen by most people every day. Many Cornish hedges screen eyesores and traffic noise, and all give excellent defence against flooding.

Cornish hedges provide a wide variety of habitats for wildlife. Across Cornwall hedges include the characteristics and species of flower-meadows, woodlands, scrub and wood margins, heathland, wetland, rocky outcrops, sand dunes and sea cliffs.

For farmers, hedges keep livestock in the fields, provide shelter and prevent run-off and soil erosion. For lucky householders a Cornish hedge brings beauty and friendly wildlife into their gardens, an ancient monument in their keeping or a traditional new frontage to their property.

These hedges stand for millennia, but do not just look after themselves for ever. Most of them have been repaired and rebuilt by generations of Cornish hedgers, farmers and road-men. Sadly, when the older man dies, too often the skill dies with him.

If hedges are allowed to deteriorate too far, it becomes a risk that in the end they may be seen as a nuisance and cleared away. With them goes Cornwall's historic record, its landscape character, its wildlife and the vital shelter and flood protection Cornish hedges give to the community. They are a heritage and an amenity that must be appreciated and maintained.

Is it for you?

A good Cornish hedge will stand for over a hundred years before it begins to need repair, but most of Cornwall's hedges being at least many hundreds of years old may be in need of care. They are likely to have been neglected in the past fifty years as hedging skills declined, and may be showing bulges, holes and gaps in the stonework. The modern flail type of hedge trimmer has done untold damage to the hedge structure and its wildlife.

Newly built hedges, especially on contract jobs, are likely to have been built to a poor standard and often begin to collapse quite soon after completion.

If you have inherited or bought a house with an old garden or some acres of redundant farmland you may find that the hedges are in a poor state of repair. Or perhaps the garden hedge of your

newly-built house or barn conversion is already giving trouble. You may feel you cannot afford the services of a craftsman hedger, or you may be attracted to the idea of maintaining your hedges yourself, and feel you will enjoy the work. Maybe you are a young farmer with no older family member able to pass on the knowledge. Or you might be a volunteer who would like to be part of a community project to adopt and restore a dilapidated hedge in need of loving care to bring back its flowers and wildlife diversity. Then for all of these requirements, this 2-day course is for you!

Just be aware that hedging involves lifting stones from roughly the weight of a bag of sugar to considerably more, and a good deal of bending. If you have arthritic hands or a bad back you may find the work too difficult.

What you will learn on the course.

Cornish hedging is a skilled craft and cannot be learnt in two days. What we will teach you on this short course is the basic handling of stone and use of the necessary tools, the hedging hammer and the long-handled Cornish shovel. We will show how to clear the gap in the hedge ready for repair, and how to choose your stone. You will learn how to use your eye to select the right shape of stone to fit into the row, and how to place the stones in accordance with the existing hedge and consolidate the fill. Finally you will top off your mended hedge with earth and turf for a neat, secure and wildlife-friendly finish. Having completed the course you will be able to practice and improve your skill in your own time.

Preparing for attending the course.

Before attending the course you are recommended to go to The Cornish Hedges Library on the website at www.cornishhedges.co.uk Please read the paper entitled "Repairing Cornish Hedges and Stone Hedges", also The Code of Good Practice for Cornish Hedges, and the Health and Safety Risk Assessment Guidance.

Cornish hedging is normally safe and injury-free as long as sensible care is taken in lifting and handling the stones. Before attending the course please equip yourself with steel-toed boots and safety goggles to protect your eyes as you may need to chip stones with the hammer to make them sit comfortably in their place. Wind-and-shower-proof clothing is recommended. Be prepared to bring your lunch and something to drink, as you will spend the day working outdoors.

Tools are not provided. You will need to bring with you a long-handled Cornish shovel and a heavy hammer such as a club hammer.

Our courses are acclaimed as being always both instructive and enjoyable, but if you should have any problem, worry or complaint please take this immediately to the Stewards. They are there to help you.



An everyday traditional repair in a Cornish hedge.

How to apply for the course.

For more information and to apply to attend a 2-day course, please call the Guild's Stewards on 01736 788 816 or go to the Guild's website at www.cornishhedges.org.uk

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