



Long straw barn in Frognore in the Meon Valley, re-thatched 17 years ago

Alton Herald

13 Market Square, Alton, Hants GU34 1HD
Advertising: 01420 82819
Editorial: 01420 82326
Fax: 01420 541018
Tele Ads: 01252 899299
Subscription/Circulation: 01252 899234
email: alton.herald@tindlenews.co.uk
Website: www.altonherald.com

Proprietor: Sir Ray Tindle CBE DL FCS FCIAB
Managing Director: Karen Sheppard

EDITORIAL

Editorial Manager: Tony Short
Chief Reporter: Moira Howells
Sub-editor: Charlie Whiting
Sports Editor: Carl Overt

ADVERTISING

Sales Manager: Tina Lemon
Alton Representative: Alex Gardiner

DISTRIBUTION

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DOUBLE CROSSWORD No 10,947

ACROSS

1. Play a visit to 100 - that's the lot (4)
2. Continuously being extended (2,7,9)
3. No temporary status (8)
10. Uncommon in the interior areas (4)
12. Made his way to get married without purpose (6)
14. Sounds like a vehicle to kill (6)
15. Swinderman putting up defensible railings? (6)
17. Modernise to give a flying environment? (7-8)
18. Volcano features in street-name (4)
19. Keeps up with its brethren (8)
21. Its terms may well be inoperative (6,4)
22. Get rid of this shack! (4,6)

DOWN

2. Friendly greetings implying none inferior (3,4,7)
3. Grass featured in the rib bit of legislation (8)
4. A drive which is not monotonous (6)
5. Clearly marked steps for acting? (6)
6. Help to stir the fire in the corner (8)
7. She holds nothing but half a pair of footwear (6)
8. Clearing up the litter (4)
11. The correct viewpoint at a square corner (5-6)
12. The outcome of... (6)
13. ...changes in Northern Ireland (6)
14. Where one letter serves for another? (6)
20. Snobbish tunes? (4)

QUICK CROSSWORD - answers also fit larger grid

ACROSS

1. Wealthy (4)
2. Fervid (10)
3. Cloudy (8)
4. Rains (4)
5. Firm (6)
6. Astral (6)
7. Slenderer (6)
8. Composite (6)
9. Brave man (4)
10. Furtive (8)
21. Recompense (6,4)
22. DOWN

2. Unavoidable (6)
3. Let it stand (4)
4. Let it stand (4)
11. Move steadily (16)
14. Psalm (4)
4. Relevance (6)
5. Diminishes (13)

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE 10,946

Across: 7 Users; 8 Contact; 9 Topside; 10 Geddit; 12 Distribute; 15 Second-hand; 18 Dream; 19 Bottled; 21 Down: 1 Attached; 2 Trick; 3 Down: 1 Nutcase; 2 Peeps; 3 Asst; 4 Screws; 5 Inaction; 6 Noofit; 11 Dress sense; 13 Ignominily; 14 Screens; 16 Hunter; 17 Absat; 20 Toze.

Cross: 7 Torso; 8 Eminent; 9 Ancient; 10 Thor; 12 Torment; 15 Expatriated; 18 Trail; 19 Shelter; 21 Dresser; 22 Starm; Down: 1 Attachment; 2 Trick; 3 Down: 4 Mentor; 5 Distance; 6 Refrain; 11 Well-sprung; 13 Outcast; 14 Aquaria; 16 Abused; 17 Willing; 20 Elze.

By Mo Farrell

In his 22 years as a thatcher, 39-year-old Simon Richards from Alton has worked on more than 100 homes in Hampshire and further afield. His skills have been needed across Europe - in Norway where he was asked to thatch display housing for an African Awareness Week and in Germany where he took on his largest project to date, a hotel in Rostock. He has thatched a replica of a dream cottage for a Daily Mail competition at the Hampton Court Flower Show and has featured in Channel 4's *Grand Designs*.

He has worked on houses for Ernie Eels, the South African professional golfer, the rock band Yes, and Rebecca Knight, one of the Opera Babes. He also re-thatched one of the most striking properties in Venmor, Isle of Wight, and Robert Burns home in Scotland.

Thatching, constructing roofs from straw and grasses, is one of the oldest surviving building crafts, perhaps going back as far as 5000.

Almost every county in the UK has thatched properties but the south of England is particularly well endowed with them. However, overall numbers nationwide have fallen considerably from one million in 1800 to about 35,000 in 1960. Today there are about 24,000 listed thatched buildings as well as a fashion for newbuild thatched properties, offering enough to keep the 1,500 thatchers in work.

Traditionally, materials available locally were used, such as reed, sedge, flag, broom, grass, heather and straw, and although thatching was generally regarded as the poor man's roofing material, churches and great houses were not occasionally thatched, notably Pevensey Castle in Sussex.

Improved transport and mechanisation spell the decline of the thatching industry - the growth of the railways meant that tiles and slates could be used more widely and the introduction of combine harvesters in agriculture made wheat straw unusable for thatching.

Wheat straw was commonly used in the south and West Country, known as long straw or combed wheat reed, the material is now less prevalent and difficult to find in the East Anglian thatching material, now dominated, and is grown specifically for the thatching industry.

Creating an ornamental straw peacock

Perceived by most thatchers as the Rolls Royce of thatch, some 30 per cent of new thatches are constructed using wheat reed. Even so, Simon is sceptical

Simon cutting an ornamental ridge using shears

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The same barn two years ago

The same barn two years ago

Working under difficult conditions

Working under difficult conditions

After preparing a building for re-thatching

After preparing a building for re-thatching

Hampton Court reconstruction

Hampton Court reconstruction

The owners are the custodians

The owners are the custodians

Simon says

Simon says

Simon cutting a peacock's head

Simon cutting a peacock's head

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