

# GREEN

The magazine for National Grid grantors

SUMMER 2013

nationalgrid

## From village green to Lords

The farmer keeping the clunk of leather on willow alive

# The high priest

Heard the one about the Catholic missionary, deep-sea diver and grantor with their heads in the clouds?

PLUS: Tackling triffids • Mixing work with pleasure • It's a (sheep)dog's life • Win: Big discounts on fine dining

# WELCOME TO GRIDLINE

We're reviewing **the way we work** to create a **leaner, more streamlined** operation

**T**he way National Grid works with you, our customers and grantors, is very much in the spotlight now, with energy regulator Ofgem making sure we provide the best possible service at the best price.



plants are a major headache for many landowners and National Grid workers, so we've identified the main culprits for you to root out.

We also take a fascinating look into the life of sheepdog breeder and

trainer Shaun Richards, and discover what makes the perfect pupil.

Several of the stories in this edition came from grantors who contacted us, so make sure you let us know about your business, and we'll be in touch.

**Dawn McCarroll**  
Editor, Gridline

Just like every business in the current economic climate, we are reviewing the way we work to create a leaner, more streamlined operation, with satisfied customers at its core.

The changes will create a National Grid fit for the 21st century, with the future of energy generation and a new era of customers playing a part in and benefiting from its success.

There's a little more on this in the early pages of this magazine, which once again celebrates the incredible diversity of our grantor family.

This edition pays a timely visit to the grantor who is helping to uphold one of England's finest summer traditions - the whack of leather on willow.

We've also got our head in the clouds with a grantor whose land is shared, surprisingly, by pylons and a runway for his booming microlight business.

It's also the time of year when invasive

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## National Grid's Land and Development Group

The Land and Development Group is responsible for acquiring all rights and permissions from statutory authorities and landowners needed to install, operate and maintain National Grid's electricity and gas transmission networks. The Group acts as the main interface for landowners who have gas and electricity equipment installed on their land. Your local contacts are listed below.

### ELECTRICITY AND GAS

- ➔ North-west and Scotland 0161 776 0706
- ➔ South-east 01268 642 091
- ➔ South-west 01452 316 059
- ➔ East 0113 290 8235.

### WAYLEAVE PAYMENTS

- ➔ For information on wayleave payments, telephone the payments helpline on 0800 389 5113.

### CHANGE OF DETAILS

- ➔ To inform National Grid of changes in ownership or contact details, telephone 0800 389 5113 for electric and 01926 654 844 for gas, or email [grantorservices@nationalgrid.com](mailto:grantorservices@nationalgrid.com).

### ELECTRICITY EMERGENCY

- ➔ Emergency calls to report pylon damage to National Grid can be made on 0800 404 090. Note the pylon's number - found just below the property plate - to help crews locate it.

### ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

- ➔ For information on electric and magnetic fields, call the EMF information line on 08457 023 270 (local call rate). Website: [www.emfs.info](http://www.emfs.info).

### GAS EMERGENCY

- ➔ 0800 111 999.

### DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

- ➔ Before carrying out any work in the vicinity of gas pipelines, overhead power lines or underground electric cables, you should contact Plant Protection on 0800 688 588 so that searches can be made to determine the exact position of any National Grid assets.

### CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- ➔ Write to Land & Development, National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6DA. Or email [ld.customercomments@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:ld.customercomments@uk.ngrid.com).



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The reader who took this shot heralding the arrival of spring is buzzing round the shops with £150 worth of vouchers to spend.



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## Competition winner

Congratulations to Richard Wain from Leek in Staffordshire, the winner of last issue's grantor competition, who will be enjoying a touch of old-style luxury with a classic country house break. Richard said: "It's my 50th birthday soon and this is an excellent way to celebrate it."

## The super six

SIX COMMUNITY PROJECTS are the first recipients of funding from National Grid's Bringing Energy to Life scheme.

The programme invests in communities that may be affected by National Grid's vital work to ensure people remain connected to safe and reliable energy supplies.

Among the six projects being supported with donations of between £1,500 and £2,000 are the redevelopment of a coastal park and the provision of new play facilities for under-fives on Hoo Peninsula in north Kent.

Community organisations and charities were invited to apply for the investment funds and the applications were evaluated by an

advisory panel made up from members of the community.

National Grid Grain LNG project manager Damian Heylen said: "By working with and listening to local people, we were able to ensure that the communities took part in choosing the successful projects."

The programme complements and builds on other community investments made by National Grid, totalling around £7 million in the UK alone in 2012.

### Bringing energy to life

Investing in communities



The Bringing Energy to Life initiative supports local communities



The cars have a top speed of 15mph and can be easily dismantled and rebuilt

## Vroom for manoeuvre

MORE THAN 800 CHILDREN from nine schools are taking part in an initiative to build electric cars, ahead of a green Grand Prix.

As part of the Middlesbrough Electric Car project, sponsored by National Grid, each school receives a flat-pack Formula Goblin car and the equipment needed to assemble it for a race-off at Teesside Autodrome.

The project aims to promote the practical application of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills to children, by linking education, industry and community through inspirational engineering projects.

National Grid is currently refurbishing sections of overhead power line in the north-east.

## Gas holders make way

NATIONAL GRID HAS BEEN granted planning permission to demolish four gas holders near Battersea power station to redevelop the area for homes, shops, offices and leisure space.

The original works closed in 1970 after the discovery of North Sea gas. The holders have since been used to store natural gas, but were decommissioned last year. Improvements to the gas network mean that gas can today be stored in the pipe system itself, and other sources have been developed to provide the 'within day' gas that used to come from the holders.

### For more information...



... on this scheme, visit [www.batterseagasholders.com/](http://www.batterseagasholders.com/)



Hands-on science for youngsters at this summer's county shows

# Look and learn

YOUNGSTERS AND THEIR families will gain a fascinating insight into the wonders of electricity by visiting the National Grid stand at four county shows this summer.

Hair-raising experiments with an electrostatic generator, plasma balls and a human light bulb experiment will be among the hands-on activities.

Instructors from Mad Science will bring scientific principles to life in a fun way for children aged between 5 and 11. Each 30-minute performance will be repeated throughout the day.

"We've opted for this new

format to our county show programme to showcase how National Grid is at the heart of the government's drive to connect new sources of sustainable energy and to stimulate an interest in where energy comes from," said Steve Knight Gregson, regional external affairs manager.

"The idea is to give the

youngsters an appreciation of what happens behind the scenes when they flick a switch on.

"It's an exciting time to enter engineering and, as a company, we believe it's important to raise awareness about the contribution that science, technology and engineering make to everyday life."

Visitors to the stand will be able to find out about National Grid projects happening in their area and meet members of the National Grid team.



## Dates for the diary

- The Great Yorkshire Show 9-11 July
- The Oswestry Show 3 August
- The Anglesey Show 13-14 August
- The Westmorland Show 12 September

## When the going gets tough...

SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE Land and Development team completed a gruelling trek to the summit of Mount Snowdon. For four of the team, the Snowdon climb was just for starters. They scaled the Welsh peak as part of their training preparations for the Oxfam TrailTrekker, a 100km overnight walk in the Yorkshire Dales that they took part in just weeks ago.

Pictured left to right are: (back row) Steven Hesketh, Ian McKenna, Charlie Webber, David Knowles; (front row) Bob Tute, James Dean, Michael Dutton, Andrew Welfre (not National Grid)



Repairs are being carried out to 345 pylons on a 116km transmission line



## Project watch

### Refurbishment powers ahead

**WHAT?** National Grid is investing £30 million in upgrading a power line across Cumbria and Lancashire.

New conductors are being fitted, and steelwork repaired and renewed on the 345 pylons of the 116km transmission line, which runs from Harker, near Carlisle, to the Old Hutton substation, near Kendal, and then on to Quernmore in Lancashire.

In preparing for the overhead line work, National Grid has liaised with the Environment Agency, Natural England and local authorities.

**WHY?** The project is necessary to keep the lines

in good working order, and will also enable National Grid to increase the efficiency of the line when a project to install new equipment at Old Hutton substation is completed.

**WHEN?** The project started in March and is due for completion in December 2013.

### For more information...



... on this project, contact freephone 0800 389 7235



One-minute interview



**Wilson Holmes, land manager for the east region**

**BACKGROUND:** I joined National Grid in 1991 as a wayleave officer, after working in the same position for the North Eastern Electricity Board.

**CURRENT FOCUS:** Managing a team of land officers and surveyors in negotiating land rights.

**LEISURE INTERESTS:** Fishing is my main hobby and I also follow Formula 1. And, being a Geordie, I support Newcastle United.

**MOST LIKELY TO SAY:** It is what it is.

**MOST IMPORTANT LESSON IN LIFE:** Never give up.

**DREAM JOB:** A gamekeeper on a southern chalk stream. It's idyllic and you can talk to people all day about fishing.

**IDEAL DINNER GUEST:** Robson Green, a Geordie who loves fishing and knows how to enjoy himself.

**MOST PRIZED POSSESSION:** An old fishing rod I caught my biggest fish on, a 19lb pike.

**IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME:** I would love to have known my grandfather on my mother's side, George Wilson, who my family say I am most like. He loved the outdoors and enjoyed life to the full.

**GUILTY PLEASURE:** I like Wham!'s music and especially George Michael, who is a great songwriter.



James Dean climbed high to raise funds, along with colleagues (above)

# The high life

LAND OFFICER JAMES DEAN was among nine National Grid employees to take on the daunting challenge of climbing an 80-foot pylon to raise £2,200 in sponsorship for the Prince's Trust.

James (pictured above, far left) said: "It has given me a much greater appreciation and respect for the work our engineers do, day-in, day-out.

"Despite some slightly wobbly knees at the top, the climb was thoroughly enjoyable, although there's no danger of me giving up the day job just yet!"

The climb took place at

National Grid's Eaking Training Centre, in Nottinghamshire, and the total raised was matched by National Grid.

John Tyler, training manager, said: "Only our trained, qualified engineers are normally allowed to climb pylons, but we made an exception for this event because it was completely safe for everyone taking part."

The pylon climbed is specifically for training and is not live. All the volunteers received full safety training, were

fitted with a safety harness and wore protective clothing. They were also accompanied and supervised by experienced, fully qualified trainers.

National Grid has set a target of raising £10,000 for the Prince's Trust Million Makers project.

## For more information...



... on the project go to [www.ngmillionmakers.co.uk](http://www.ngmillionmakers.co.uk)

# Customers to the fore in watchdog review

NATIONAL GRID'S CUSTOMER service is set to become more efficient after a new industry regulation came into force.

The RIIO (Revenue = Incentives + Innovations + Outputs) framework was introduced by energy regulator Ofgem on 1 April 2013 and will set price controls to ensure customers get fair value for money.

This means that engineers will spend less time on your land,

working more efficiently to maintain high standards.

National Grid falls under RIIO's umbrella because the gas and electricity networks are natural monopolies.

The framework offers incentives to companies that innovate and run their networks to better meet the needs of network users, while supporting the delivery of sustainable, low-carbon networks.

John Greasley, performance manager - Electricity Transmission, said: "In developing RIIO, Ofgem undertook extensive consultations with National Grid's customers and stakeholders to find out what was important to them.

"As RIIO is an eight-year deal, we can take a longer-term perspective on investment - meaning continuing our relationships with grantors is as important as ever."

# New jetty deal set to move off-road

NATIONAL GRID HAS SIGNED a groundbreaking 20-year partnership agreement to share a jetty with a major energy firm.

The partnership will help cut carbon emissions by using EDF Energy's Roll-on Roll-off (ro-ro) jetty at Cottam power station on the River Trent.

The agreement paves the way for 300-tonne replacement transformers to be shipped via the Humber Estuary and the rivers Ouse and Trent to the jetty.

After disembarking on a self-propelled modular trailer, they switch to road transport for a short onward journey.

## Heavy risks

Previously, these abnormal loads faced a challenging 80-mile road trip, with inevitable impacts on local communities and disruption to road networks. Alternatively, they could travel by barge to Staythorpe power station, near Newark, where National Grid has a heavy lifting platform.

But lifting heavy loads has inherent safety risks, and the crane cannot operate in bad weather.



Abnormal loads, such as transformers and gas turbines (pictured), are ideally suited to river transportation



Moreover, the components for a 1,000-tonne crane need to be trucked to the site each time, including a 100-tonne crane to assemble the larger machine.

"Transformers at a number of substations in the Trent Valley are due to be replaced over the next decade," said Nigel Taylor, senior land officer for National Grid (left).

"Having 24/7 access to the Cottam ro-ro provides added assurance that these system-

critical parts will be delivered to schedule."

Steve Hoad, EDF Energy's head of compliance and oversight at Cottam, said: "This project has been an excellent example of companies within the industry adopting best practice and working together. The use of barges also supports the government's aspiration to shift more freight from roads to waterways as a more sustainable form of transport."



Wildlife first, that's the message of a new National Grid planner

## Field force walks on wild side with planner

A NEW WILDLIFE PLANNER has been put together to protect birds and animals, and reduce disruption to their natural habitats.

The planner has been distributed to National Grid field force employees, and contains tips and guidance to consider when they're working in areas where wildlife might be found.

The seasonal calendar has information about when our furry and feathered friends are most

likely to cause problems on projects, what can be done to help them and any legal restrictions that are in place.

### Awareness

A number of species, including badgers, birds and water voles, are mentioned in the planner, which raises awareness of the dangers even a small project can pose to wildlife.

The Environmental Operations team, who introduced the

planner, hope it will improve efficiency and make a huge difference to the smooth progress of jobs.

Christopher Cleveland, environmental operations manager, said: "The wildlife calendar shows that, with careful planning and basic awareness of what species are doing all year round, we can work safely alongside all species.

"We are proud of our contribution to protect wildlife."

# HOWZAT FOR HENRY

**I**n the living room of Henry and Mandy Marriott's farmhouse rests a cricket bat in a plastic cover that has yet to be wielded in anger.

The bat, hewn from the willow that grows on their farm, was a gift from the firm that cut and graded it and it's the couple's dream that one day their progeny stride out to swing it outside off-stump.

Years of farming mean Henry takes his role in the process from meadow to Melbourne Cricket Ground with a pinch of salt. The traditional combinable crop farmer admits it takes a visit from a fan of the gentleman's game to remind him of the miracle that's taken place.

## Tradition

From his Warwickshire riverside meadow sapling to, potentially, the hands of one of the world's finest cricketers in an Ashes Test match, is an evolution he doesn't give much thought to.

"You take it for granted, but when people point it out I suppose there is something incredible about it," he said.

"It was wonderful to get the bat made from the willow we'd supplied. It shows that there is a very worthwhile end product and somehow it made it all quite real."

With a sweep of his arm, grantor Henry points to the three separate meadows where around 70 willow trees are in various stages of maturity.

It's a sideline for Henry, who moved into farming in 1966, the willow harvest representing a small but useful addition to the business since the 70s.

"When we started, we said that if it paid for our holidays we'd be happy, but it has done far better than that," he said.

Not only that, but Henry is, with only a little prompting, quite proud that the 'bolt-on' is helping to keep the best of British traditions, the thwack of leather on willow, alive.

"I've got no idea who eventually uses our willow, but it's really rather quaint to think that what we grow here ends up being used in games as far afield as India and Pakistan, or even in the Ashes," he said.

He knows that for a fact - the Subcontinent is one of his Essex-based client's most prominent markets. And his

He doesn't know whether the wood from his **willow trees** has ended up in the hands of any **cricketing greats**, but it's a nice thought for grantor Henry Marriott



Henry with the top-grade bat carved from one of his willows

treasured bat - cut by JS Wright and Sons and made by Hunt's County - is the favoured weapon of Aussie Ashes legend Shane Warne, England great Geoff Boycott and former Pakistan skipper Imran Khan.

Tree fellers from the firm, the world's largest and oldest established company supplying English willow, visit the Marriotts to cut the 65ft tall and 20-inch wide mature trees, before replanting for the future.

## Enrich the landscape

Besides planting more than 11,000 trees of all kinds, Henry has switched to organic on two thirds of his land and the farm boasts a biodiversity field. The farm's high water table and low-lying landscape, a long boundary or two from Royal Leamington Spa, are ideal for willows, which grow two inches in diameter and six feet in height each year.

As well as giving Henry and his wife a comfortable windfall, the trees enrich the landscape with their subtle blue-green foliage. Henry said: "It's very easy to grow. The willow comes in unrooted sets, about 20 inches long and thick as a fork handle, which you push into the ground.

"You have to make sure the side shoots don't grow and in 14 years they are ready for cutting. Then the replanting process has to begin again before three years to ensure you can keep your licence."

The process sees the JS Wright team take the 20ft long, light and springy trunks away and hew them into triangular

pieces of willow, from which bats are carved to delight batsmen worldwide.

And Henry would be bowled over if a future Marriott willow hits the winning runs in this year's Ashes.

## For more information...



... on the next stage of the process, visit [www.cricketbatwillow.com](http://www.cricketbatwillow.com)



"When we started, we said that if it paid for our holidays we'd be happy, but it has done far better than that"



## Making the grades

- The master bat maker lays out the willow according to size before each cleft is shaped into a blade.
- The blade has both ends waxed to prevent splitting and is air-dried to the required moisture content.
- The clefts are graded into categories, from wood suitable for the cheapest bat to that destined for the finest players.
- Each blade is then dispatched to the bat maker dependent on quality, from the best money can buy grade 1 with a clean knot-free playing area, down to grade 4.
- The main differences in the grade are the varying degrees of brown wood and butterfly stain, as well as the number of blemishes or knots on the bat.
- Trees can be cut in 10 years, but 12 to 18 years give a wider grain, with 25 years or more a narrower grain. A narrow grain bat plays quicker, but will not have a long life.

# ALIEN INVASION



More than 100 years after **Victorian botanists** returned with **exotic specimens** from distant parts of the **British Empire**, the plants are becoming a **serious nuisance**

**I**n the 1950s, *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham caused a sensation with its alarming vision of an invasion of fast-growing plants. Today you could be forgiven for thinking that reality has caught up with science fiction.

Unlike the triffids, non-native invasive plants are not able to walk, but three plants in particular - Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam - have spread to such an extent that they are problematic in many parts of the country.

All three were originally imported by Victorian collectors as exotic ornamental specimens, but later escaped into the British countryside.

Unchecked by pests or diseases, they spread easily, outcompete native plants and create an increased flood risk by clogging drainage systems.

Japanese knotweed can spread from a tiny fragment, and can even grow through cracks in concrete. The bill for clearing the London 2012 site of this weed alone amounted to £70 million.

Giant hogweed is a significant health risk due to its phototoxic sap, while the rampant Himalayan balsam is reportedly

## Japanese knotweed

▶▶**THE PLANT:** Imported from Japan in the 1820s, it quickly escaped and is now widespread along roadsides, railways, riverbanks, and in and around derelict buildings. A strong clump-forming perennial, it produces bamboo-like stems over 12 feet tall and clusters of creamy flowers from August to October.

▶▶**THE PROBLEM:** Growing by up to a metre a month, it can regenerate from fingernail-size portions of plant. It can penetrate tarmac and fissures in concrete.

▶▶**HOW IT SPREADS:** The plant reproduces from its rhizomes (creeping underground stems), which extend 22 feet from the original plant and can be more than 6 feet deep. If disturbed, dormant rhizome segments can regrow up to 20 years later.

▶▶**THE SOLUTION:** Starting in late summer, herbicidal treatments should continue for three years or more. If working to tight deadlines, developers have little choice but to dig the plant out - an expensive and laborious process. Plant materials can be burned or buried at depth on site (using a root barrier membrane), or sent to landfill.



spreading at a rate of 645km<sup>2</sup> each year in the UK.

All three are among nearly 40 invasive non-native plants listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to allow their spread into the wild. It is not an offence to have them on your land and there is no specific legal requirement to control them.

The Environment Protection Act 1990, meanwhile, stipulates that any soil removed from a site contaminated by Japanese knotweed or giant hogweed is a 'controlled waste', which must be disposed of at a licensed landfill and buried to a minimum depth of five metres.

### Biological controls

Non-native invasive species (plant and animal) are considered to be the second biggest threat to biodiversity worldwide, costing the UK economy £1.7 billion a year.

Reacting to growing concerns, in 2008 the UK government announced a new preventative strategy for dealing with non-native invasive species.

It is believed that climate change could result in some established weeds spreading further, while others could begin to be a problem if temperature rises create better growing conditions.

On a more optimistic note, it is hoped to develop biological controls similar to those in the plant's native territories.

A five-year trial by CABI Bioscience, together with a new body, the Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) who are driving its implementation, is currently focusing on whether a tiny 2mm-long jumping bug, which feeds on the sap of Japanese knotweed, could reduce the plant's ability to grow and spread. Watch this space.

### Giant hogweed

➤➤**THE PLANT:** Introduced in the early 19th century from its native Caucasus Mountains, it occurs on riverbanks, waste ground, railway lines and roads, as well as in rough pastures. Large clusters of white flowers are formed on hollow stems from May to July, reaching a height of up to 20 feet.

➤➤**THE PROBLEM:** Coming into contact with the sap of giant hogweed can cause skin to blister when exposed to sunlight. Dense colonies shade out native plants and grasses. After winter die back, riverbanks are bare of vegetation and vulnerable to erosion.

➤➤**HOW IT SPREADS:** Each plant produces up to 50,000 seeds that are easily dispersed by water, or by vehicles, footwear or in soil that contains seeds. The seeds remain viable for up to 15 years.

➤➤**THE SOLUTION:** Persistent cutting of the stems or digging up the plant about 3 inches below ground level prevents flowering and seed production. Complete eradication of the weed in river settings can only be achieved by controlling all sources of infestation upstream. Chemical treatment in April or May is also effective.

## Local heroes



Sally Davies is invasives project officer for Bollin Environmental Action and Conservation (BEACON) group in Cheshire. The action group was established to

combat the spread of non-native invasive plants in the River Bollin catchment area.

“We’re part of a wider network of action groups throughout the country at river catchment level, surveying and monitoring the spread of invasives, carrying out education and awareness-raising activities, and encouraging local people to get involved,” she explained.

“A key focus is to map the spread of Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed (pictured) to discover the extent of the problem. I also talk to local landowners about the role land management and farming can play in controlling invasive species.

“We hold regular ‘balsam bashing’ action days, and some volunteers also tackle giant hogweed.”

## Getting the job done

James Cooke works as an ecologist with National Grid project teams refurbishing overhead power lines in the north of England.



“The presence of non-native invasive plants is detected during so-called Phase 1 habitat surveys, which take place before any works start,” he said.

“Where possible, we will avoid an area of infestation altogether, using fencing and warning signs as physical barriers. Strict control measures are also put in place to prevent seeds or plant fragments being moved around the works site, or off site.

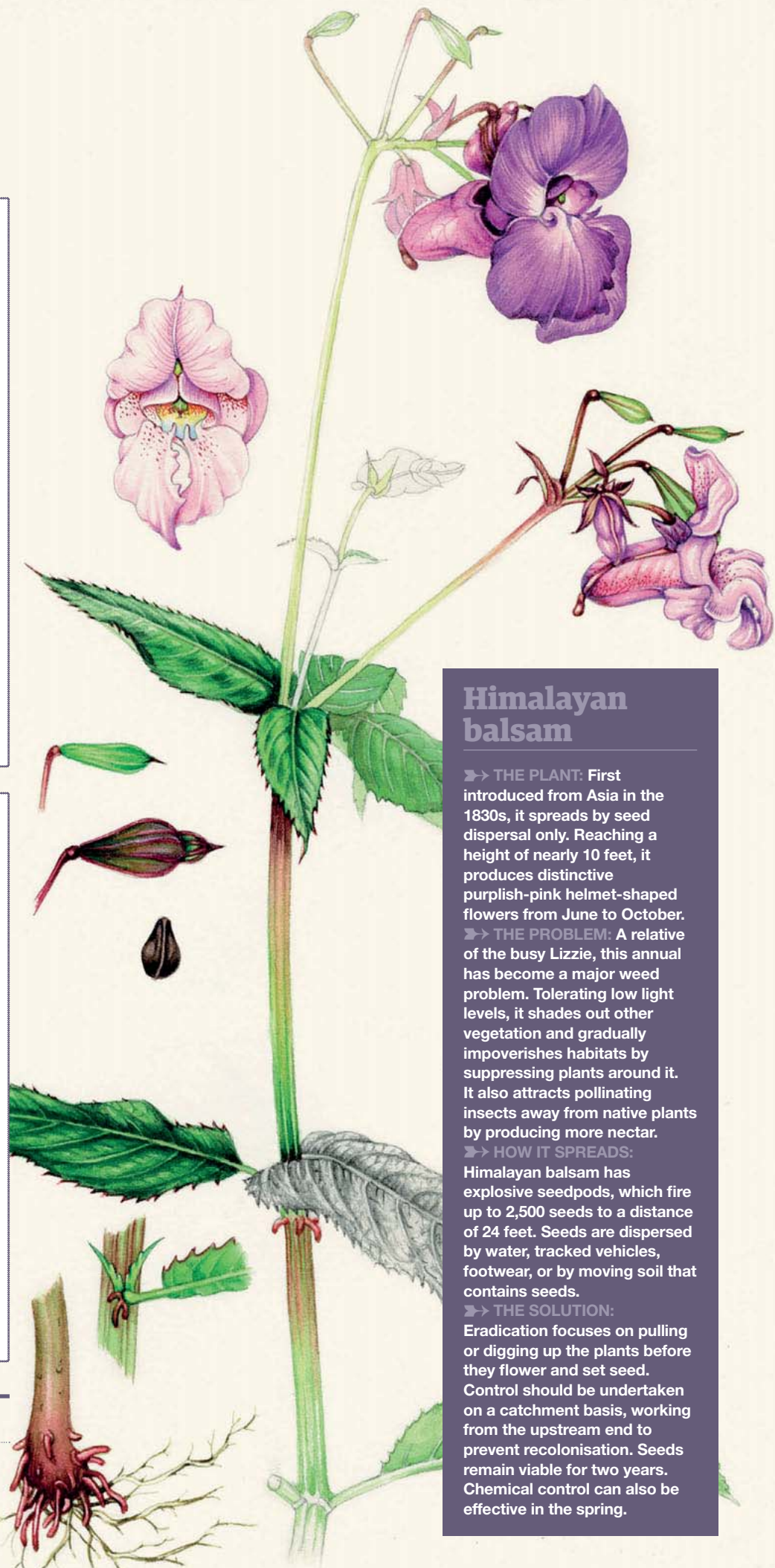
“In some cases, for example, where Japanese knotweed is found directly under a pylon that must be accessed, we need to be more proactive.

“The aim would be to remove the dead vegetation after the plants have died back or, if there is time, to treat the area with herbicide. Ground sheeting can also be laid to help prevent regrowth during the works.”

## For more information...



... go to the website of the Non-native Species Secretariat (NNS) at <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/home/index.cfm>



## Himalayan balsam

➤➤ **THE PLANT:** First introduced from Asia in the 1830s, it spreads by seed dispersal only. Reaching a height of nearly 10 feet, it produces distinctive purplish-pink helmet-shaped flowers from June to October.

➤➤ **THE PROBLEM:** A relative of the busy Lizzie, this annual has become a major weed problem. Tolerating low light levels, it shades out other vegetation and gradually impoverishes habitats by suppressing plants around it. It also attracts pollinating insects away from native plants by producing more nectar.

➤➤ **HOW IT SPREADS:** Himalayan balsam has explosive seedpods, which fire up to 2,500 seeds to a distance of 24 feet. Seeds are dispersed by water, tracked vehicles, footwear, or by moving soil that contains seeds.

➤➤ **THE SOLUTION:** Eradication focuses on pulling or digging up the plants before they flower and set seed. Control should be undertaken on a catchment basis, working from the upstream end to prevent recolonisation. Seeds remain viable for two years. Chemical control can also be effective in the spring.

# BUSINESS OR PLEASURE?

Roger and Sue Page aren't too sure these days, since they turned their **hobby** into a **thriving business**

**D**ecades of rising with the lark and the legacy of foot-and-mouth disease were the catalysts for Roger and Sue Page's life-changing decision.

The grantors, both 70 this year, faced a choice of continuing to breed and fatten calves on their 100 acres in Hampshire or following their dream.

So instead of driving horses as a hobby, they turned their passion into a business and, since the turn of the century, their Grayswood Carriages venture has never looked back.

Roger, the British Driving Society's Hampshire area commissioner, and a qualified instructor and examiner, wishes he had made the switch far sooner.

"We had been quite happy breeding calves, but it meant a lot of very early starts and when you get to a certain age, that's not really what you want," he said.

"We found that carriage driving was becoming increasingly important in our lives, so we took the obvious next step and went the whole hog."

## Taking it slowly, but surely

Starting slowly with a small livery element to the business, they began with weddings, proms and anniversaries, as well as training customers' horses how to drive.

Roger said: "We realised quickly that there was a demand, and we sold the cattle and focused solely on our pleasure."

Grayswood Carriage Driving Centre, just south of Winchester, is now a recognised British Driving Society exam centre and licensed livery yard, with a small team of qualified instructors.

The centre has around 30 horses in livery, most owned by people looking to make the transition from riding to driving.

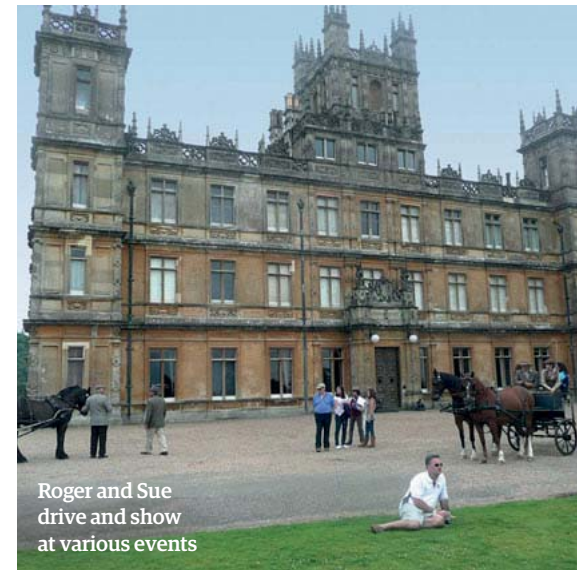
"They are very different skills, but carriage driving gives people who may have had an accident with horses or who reach a certain age, the opportunity to continue their relationship with horses," said Roger.

The Pages' firm, whose carriage driving expertise featured in an episode of Howard's Way, is going from strength to strength.

Roger (pictured right) said: "Carriage driving is enjoying a



The horses and carriages are perfect for weddings



Roger and Sue drive and show at various events

"Now we are doing what we truly love, it doesn't feel like work. We will carry on... into our 80s"

major resurgence at the moment, so it definitely looks like we made the right decision. It's proof that business and pleasure can mix.

"Now we are doing what we truly love, it doesn't feel like work. We're pretty confident we will carry on doing it into our 80s."



## For more information...



... visit [http://lowhill.grayswoodcarriages.com/about\\_us.html](http://lowhill.grayswoodcarriages.com/about_us.html)



# ONE MAN AND HIS DO

**Grantor** Shaun Richards is the country's **top sheepdog breeder and trainer** and of his collies for a then **world-record price** at auction... his best sale since he started



The sheepdogs start their training at around 10 months old, and while Shaun shows them affection, he never gives them treats for doing well

**M**archup Midge, an 18-month-old Border collie bitch, sold for an astonishing £8,400 to Suffolk-based shepherd Eddie Thornalley in October last year. The price was a world record for a sheepdog at auction until the mark was raised again to £9,240 by another breeder in May this year.

Midge might have cost the equivalent of a small car, but shepherds like Eddie know that when they buy a dog from Shaun Richards they are also buying the skills and know-how he has instilled in the animal.

And, as an old saying goes, 'there's no good flock without a good shepherd and there's no good shepherd without a good dog'.

For Shaun, last October was the latest triumph in a journey that began 34 years ago when, as a boy of 12, he was given a sheepdog 'for luck' by a farmer who had sold the family some sheep.

"I started breeding and training from that first dog and I only ever wanted to be a shepherd," he said.

"When I was 14 I was told I had too many dogs and should sell three of them. I walked the five miles to the sale at Cliviger because dad didn't want them in his new Land Rover. I made £350 for the bitch and £200 each for the two dogs - a lot of money for a young lad.

"Dad knew it would be a cash transaction, so he made sure he was there to pick me up!" he laughed.

After leaving school at 16, Shaun worked away as a contract shepherd in Cumbria. One day he was working in a field when a passing farmer offered to pay £500 for his dog. My boss at the time said 'no dog, no job', but I knew I could quickly train up another," said Shaun.

Four years ago, he decided to make breeding and training top sheepdogs his major focus rather than

"I'm not in this for a quick sale - a working dog should be for life and it's a responsibility that I take very seriously"

farming. Today Shaun shares his home at Watson Laithe Farm, Hapton, on the edge of the South Pennine Moors, with wife Jackie and their children, Abbie and Bradley. They have 20 acres of land, crossed by high-voltage power lines, and their farmhouse dates back to the 17th century.

### High hopes

Some of the dogs that Shaun trains and sells are bred on the farm. His five-year-old breeding bitch, Meg (pictured left with Shaun), has produced a string of pups that have achieved good prices at auction.

The pups start serious work with the training flock of Hebridean sheep when they are about 10 months old. When they start obedience training, the dogs are worked on a 60-foot chord, which is removed when they respond to basic commands such as 'stand', 'walk on', 'come by' (go left), 'away' (go right) and 'that'll do' (come back).

Along with the commands, Shaun gradually introduces whistles, which are easier for the dog to understand at greater distances.

"You know you're almost there when you can stop and recall a dog," he said. "Another milestone is when it can drive sheep away because the dog's natural instinct is to bring the sheep back to you."

Shaun also regularly buys in young dogs from established breeders, typically at 10 to 12 months old. ➔



# GS

last year sold one at the age of 12



"I can't train a dog that hasn't got the herding instinct and a lot of that is in the genes," he said.

Midge came from particularly good breeding stock. The sire was the 2008 World Sheep Dog Trials champion, and Shaun has purchased and trained five other dogs from the same litter. He has high hopes for Midge's younger brother Roy.

### Eye contact

Only about 4 out of 10 dogs make it to the top flight as a sheepdog. Those that don't make the grade are sold as pets, or for trialling, obedience or agility competitions. That said, there are very few dogs that Shaun can't train.

Recently a farmer sold him a dog he couldn't do anything with. "For various reasons dogs and owners sometimes don't click," said Shaun. "But after just a week in training, she's already looking a good prospect, and from costing me £200, she will probably fetch about £2,000 at auction now."

Shaun looks for a dog that has an instinctive desire to receive approval, is totally focused on the sheep and uses eye contact to move a flock rather than aggression.

He strokes his dogs and shows affection, but never gives them treats. "Working with the sheep is the only reward they need, and the sooner you introduce them to the

### It's all in the eyes

- The herding instinct of the Border collie is a modified form of predatory behaviour.
- The dog's hunting instincts have been harnessed by selective breeding over many hundreds of years to manage sheep, not prey on them.
- Known as a 'header' breed, the instinct of a Border collie is to gather and hold livestock, heading off any animal that attempts to leave the group.
- The sheep are held by the strength of the dog's eye, enabling it to move them quietly and calmly.
- Often the dog will clap or crouch down to face sheep, with its belly close to the ground in a characteristic predatory look.
- It's natural for Border collies to want to herd anything that moves, whether it is sheep, ducks, chickens, cars or children!

discipline of working, the better."

When their training is complete, Shaun says his charges are like 16-year-old school-leavers - they've got the basics and are ready to go out and gain experience in a working environment. "At 12 months they can still bond with their new master, and learn new commands," he added.

When it comes to showing his dogs to a prospective owner, he will always say if he thinks a particular dog isn't right for that person.

"And if a dog isn't doing a job for them in six months' time, I'll swap it for another. I'm not in this for a quick sale - a working dog should be for life and it's a responsibility that I take very seriously," he said.



The pups begin work with a training flock of Hebridean sheep. Shaun knows what to look for in a dog and understands the importance of pairing the right dog with a new owner

### In numbers

**£8,400** Shaun Richard's world-record sale price for a sheepdog at auction

### For more information...



... email Shaun at [richards-s5@sky.com](mailto:richards-s5@sky.com), or visit the International Sheep Dog Society (ISDS) website at [www.isds.org.uk](http://www.isds.org.uk)





Sites are risk assessed (above); the environment is protected during works, for example, by using ground protection (left)



# ENERGY FIX

Maintaining **22,000km of the nation's power lines** requires a lot of planning and resources, as well as a **close co-operation** between National Grid and its grantors. **Here's how it's done**

## **1** Troubleshooting

Routine foot patrols and helicopter inspections identify faults or other problems that need rectification. Factors noted include damaged conductors or insulators, trees that infringe minimum safety clearances and damaged anti-climbing devices.

## **2** Prioritising the workload

The Condition Monitoring department in Warwick collate and feed the reports back to regional area field support engineers. Jobs are prioritised according to the severity of the defect, with precedence given to cases involving system-critical power lines. If circuits need to be switched off to complete the repair, an 'outage' will be scheduled.

## **3** Sizing up the task

Overhead power lines are serviced by Operation teams around the country. About a month prior to carrying out repairs, a site visit will be made to review access with the land officer, and to risk assess the site.

As well as manpower and resource requirements, it will detail all the steps needed to eliminate electricity-related risks to the men doing the job, and any site-specific risks.

## **4** Contacting the grantor

At least seven days' notice is given to the grantor before any work begins (usually more). If vehicle access is required, a National Grid land officer will agree access routes with the grantor and advise if any route preparation or temporary tracking is needed to protect the ground.

The officer will check with the grantor if any livestock will be in the affected area, whether there are invasive plants or protected species that need special measures, or if planned farming activities, such as harvesting or crop spraying, could impact the works.

The information gathered is provided to the team in the form of a map showing the agreed access route to be used, plus notes detailing farming hazards that may be encountered and where to obtain keys for locked gates.

## **5** Work starts

Safety is given the highest priority at all times. For example, full PPE is worn in an outer work area around the pylons, while all work above always stops when anybody enters the inner protection zone.

National Grid takes its environmental responsibilities seriously and will consider using ground protection or lighter vehicles in ecologically sensitive areas, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). This might include the use of temporary tracking or using all-terrain vehicles with low-impact tyres.

## **6** Follow-up

On completion of the work, the land officer will discuss and agree with the grantor (or their agent) the extent of ground reinstatement and crop damage that has arisen, and will negotiate a compensation claim accordingly.

# FREE AS A BIRD

Friendship and **adrenalin-fuelled** fun... the reasons why **three blokes** who should be getting ready to **claim their bus passes** simply refuse to grow old



(l to r) Chris Childs, John Kitchen, and Chris and Karen Draper

**A** Catholic priest, a disillusioned deep-sea diver and an eccentric inventor walk into a barn...

It sounds like the opening line of a joke, but, although there's plenty of light-hearted banter between this trio, their quest for adrenalin is serious stuff.

The barn in question is an aircraft hanger that is the beating tea-making and design heart of Medway Microlights. Landowner Chris Draper's joke-a-minute style belies a technical engineering brain capable of building the best microlights in the world at the site on the Isle of Grain in Kent.

For the uninitiated, a microlight has been described in the media as 'a deckchair with a lawnmower engine and wings' - a moniker that rankles with instructor and examiner Chris Childs.

"The top models have 1.4-litre engines, hit 100mph and take two people, so they're pretty good deckchairs. It's just lazy journalism, but it annoys us," said the former diver.

After take-off at 45mph, the finely tuned hang-gliders are totally at the mercy of the elements, with the slightest

gust of wind shifting the 30-foot wingspan to prompt a reaction from the pilot.

"That's the beauty of microlights. You are completely at one with the elements. It's far more instinctive than simply sitting in a fixed-wing plane with instruments telling you what to do. That's just boring, but this is real flying where you read the wind and work your way out of turbulence," said John Kitchen.

Part-time priest John, now in his 60s, turned to microlights a decade ago after a career of missionary work and volunteering with the homeless in London started to get him down.

Popey, as he's known to the team, explained: "It's addictive. You can be thrown about up there like you're in a washing machine, but if I don't go up for a week or two, I really need my fix.

"I broke my back when one of the people I was instructing took us into a nosedive as we landed, but in reality it's safe, unless you come down in the sea or hit a tree."

Chris and John form the mainstay of grantor Chris's team at one of the most easterly points of England, flanked by the North Sea, Rochester Castle, Grain Power Station and Thamesport container port.

National Grid pylons and a railway line make the 420-metre-long runway particularly challenging for new visitors, but people continue to come.

Aeronautical engineer Chris said: "I bought the land about 30 years ago because no one wants an airstrip near

their homes, and this place was so remote.

"When I started, microlights were just for experts and people in the know. Now we get people having trial flights all the time."

The beauty of microlighting, insist the 60-something adrenalin seekers, is that it's not a rich man's hobby. The average 'three-wheel trike' costs around £15,000, with recruits able to pass the first of their annual Pilot In Command exams after £5,000 worth of training.

From then on the sky's the limit.



Grantor Chris Draper is an engineering genius

**For more information...**



... on Medway Microlights visit <http://www.ravenmad.co.uk/>



Chris and John reach heights of 10,000 feet and have flown 360 miles in eight hours to Poitiers in France. "Not bad for a deckchair with a lawnmower engine," said Chris

### **It's a fact**

- The remote location of Medway Microlights is just a few miles from Mussel Manor on the Isle of Sheppey, widely hailed as the birthplace of British aviation.
- The first British aerodrome was built at Mussel Manor in 1909 and was later home to the Aero Club of the United Kingdom. Pioneers like the Wright brothers and Short brothers flew their inaugural flights from here.
- Frenchman General Resnier became the first microlight pilot in 1806 when, at the age of 77, he launched himself from the ramparts of Angoulême, 250 feet above the River Charente.
- Around 150 years later, on 4 July 1969, a more successful demonstration of microlighting took place when Bill Bennett glided for a long time around the Statue of Liberty and landed at its foot.
- German pilots broke the microlight speed record at 165mph and then a distance-without-landing record of 645 miles in the 1990s.

# Lastword

Your chance to enter two great competitions

## Contact Gridline



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email: [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com)

If you do something different on your land, have diversified or have a story to tell, let Gridline know and your success will be shared with 35,000 other grantors. Think of it as free PR! Email [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com) or call Gridline on 01926 656 325.

## WIN! Two Gourmet Society cards

IF EATING OUT IS A LUXURY YOU can't afford too regularly, winning a tasty Gourmet Society card will have your mouth watering.

The dining membership card gives you up to 50% off menu prices at more than 6,000 restaurants nationwide, including some of the favourite independent and chain diners, such as Loch Fyne, Prezzo and La Tasca.

That means your favourite dish could be in front of you for a bargain price just by flashing your card.

To see the full range of places where a Gourmet Society card is valid, and to read about featured restaurants to inspire you, take a look at [www.gourmetsociety.co.uk](http://www.gourmetsociety.co.uk).

For your chance to win one of two cards, simply answer the following question.



**Q** How many acres of land does sheepdog breeder and trainer Shaun Richards' Watson

Laithe Farm in Hapton cover?

Send your answer to Gridline Gourmet Competition, 23-25 Waterloo Place,

Warwick Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5LA.

**The closing date for entries is 2 August 2013.**



## Photo competition

SallyAnn Rose, from Northwich in Cheshire, got us buzzing with this photo of a bee pollinating a flower. She said: "I couldn't be happier to win."



## A SHOPPING SPREE AT JOHN LEWIS

What would you buy if you were armed with £150 to spend in John Lewis?

If that has got you thinking, then enter Gridline's photo competition on the theme of 'summer snaps', to make your daydreams a reality.

Send in your photo to Gridline Photo Competition, 23-25 Waterloo Place, Warwick Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5LA, or you can email it to [gridline@uk.ngrid.com](mailto:gridline@uk.ngrid.com).

Closing date is 2 August 2013.

### COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

**GOURMET SOCIETY CARD:** The two winners will be the first entrants selected at random who correctly identify the answer (to be featured in the next edition) and who are National Grid grantors at the time of the draw. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Gridline reserves the right to change the prize without prior notice. The prize is not transferable and cannot be exchanged for cash. The closing date is 2 August 2013.

**PHOTO:** The winning image will be the one judged to be the most visually appealing, original and relevant to the theme and will feature in the next edition. The winner must be a National Grid grantor at the time of the draw. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Gridline reserves the right to change the prize without prior notice. The prize is not transferable and cannot be exchanged for cash. The closing date is 2 August 2013. Prints cannot be returned.

**nationalgrid**