

MoleMatters Issue 27
August 2011

IN THIS ISSUE

Over Five Thousand
pounds raised to date

Underground

Mole price wars
The £ 3.00 mole!

Tip of the month
By Mumble

Welsh mole matters (and
other matters)

Look after our Logo

Letters

Oddity

Membership matters

EDITOR'S NOTE

For reasons beyond my understanding, this issue appears to major on money. It wasn't planned that way – it just happened.

Last minute note: Sorry this newsletter is a bit late – we have been having email problems. The webmaster says that next month we might be sending from a dedicated supplier so keep an eye out for

The MoleMatters

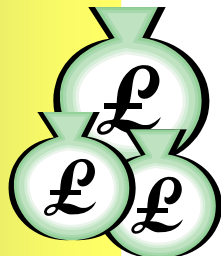
Newsletter of the Guild of British Molecatchers
Committed to traditional molecatching skills and welfare of the mole

Over Five Thousand Pounds raised by our members – THANK YOU!



Guild of British Molecatchers once again wishes to express thanks for the kind support that our full members have shown in their open-handed donations to the Guild's chosen charity – The Make-a-Wish Foundation (UK).

The total sum raised has just passed the £5000 mark WHICH HAS BEEN INCREASED BY GIFTAIDING to over £6000! This amazing and compassionate support helps the charity to grant magical wishes to children and young people fighting life-threatening illnesses. It is this benevolent display by our members that fuels those working on behalf of the Guild of British Molecatchers to strive to achieve more.

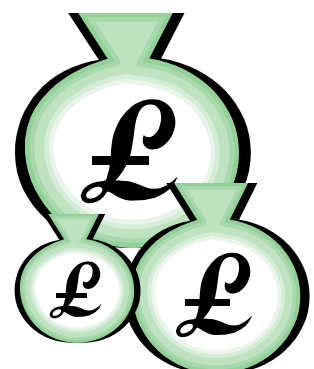


Non profit making, run by volunteers and handling no money from its inception, the Guild of British Molecatchers is determined to remain outside commercial concerns; existing solely to make every effort and take every step to enable it to give support, information and assistance to its members in every way possible.

The Guild is always open to constructive ideas to enhance what we do and we welcome member's comments, ideas and suggestions. We have achieved what we have to date by the efforts of molecatchers everywhere; volunteers providing the skills they already possess (and some they have learned) to create and run the GBM. Without the support of these people we would not have a Guild of British Molecatchers.



You too can become a part of, and contribute to, our forward momentum by offering to help. We welcome further support however small - regional representative posts, MoleMatters newsletter editor, social co-ordinator (we hope to arrange social meetings) and assistance for our new 'underground' junior section to name but a few. There is certainly a lot happening so please don't sit back – take an interest in what you already do for a living and with just a small input you could make a huge difference to the future of traditional mole catching.



the email (check your spam folder) and keep checking the Guild's website for updates.

SOMETHING TO SAY?

The MoleMatters team would love to hear from anybody who has something to relate in these pages – to submit content (pictures, tall tales, letters, articles, comments on articles previously published or simply your musings) for consideration for inclusion, please [contact us](#)



SERIOUS ABOUT PEST CONTROL

Procter Pest-Stop supports the Guild and supplies traps (at very competitive rates) to Guild members. Find contact details on our website.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

A report by the membership secretary

Dear Fellow "WANTERS"

On a serious note, can we please remember that the website etc is done on a voluntary basis within a busy workload!

Regular checks on the website would keep everybody updated on what's going on concerning memberships and so on.

It is nice to get some feed back from members. As membership secretary I would also like to see social get-togethers of members at, maybe, country shows etc. Forward planning would allow us to put any dates into the MoleMatters newsletter.

UNDERGROUND

Membership for minor molers

Do you have a younger molecatcher in the family?

A son or daughter who helps you with your work. Are they a budding future mole? Then why not ask them to join the GBM? It's FREE to under 16's.

It has to be said that the majority of molecatchers are ... well let's say they've been around awhile. Yes, there are those of you who will be a little younger but it is not generally a young person's first choice of occupation; not in this world of plastic chips and rubber phones. What got you into mole catching? Are you part of a new generation? Did you see an opportunity or is it just another pest, one of many that you control?



The future of traditional mole catching like so many country skills lies in the younger generation and The Guild of British Molecatchers recognises this. We aim to help younger people out there find an interest in mole catching. The Guild is pleased to offer support to the next generation and will dedicate a special web section to younger members called 'underground' and the junior members 'miners' – (couldn't resist!)

Advice and assistance will be available to these new younger members and the chance to work on accreditation will also be available.

Keep an eye out for developments at [Underground at the Guild](#)

Look after our Logo

It is occasionally brought to our attention that there are molecatchers out there who display the Guild's Logo without being paid up members of the Guild. Sometimes this is a genuine mistake (a member having forgotten to renew membership for example) but often it is simply people being dishonest and trying to get something for nothing by benefiting from all that the Guild stands for.



Cowboys masquerading as professionals in this way are extremely bad for both the business *and* the reputation of bona fide Guild members in whose areas they operate.

We expend a fair amount of energy in trying to keep on top of this issue but we could do with a little local help. If you spot our Logo displayed by somebody who is not an accredited full member (it's easy to check by looking at our website for their name on the appropriate area page) please let us know, in strict confidence – your name will not be used in our investigation, by emailing logo@theguildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

On a lighter note, I would like your feed back on possibly organizing a nude Molecatchers/supporters calendar - to raise money for the Make-a-Wish Foundation. If interested, please e-mail me. calendar@guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

Keep the Practice.



Have you read the new Health & Safety advice page on the Guild's website? Follow the link from the home page.

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Welsh mole matters (and other matters)

By Mark Payne – Wales area representative & senior area representative

Hello everyone.

I am still trying to promote the Guild at every opportunity down here in Wales. I would like to say that my phone rings non-stop with calls from our Welsh members but it does not. So here is an invitation to you all - if you fancy a pint and a chat please pick up the phone, I would like to hear from you all.

I have made some good friends here at the Guild and we work hard keeping it going BUT (and this is a big BUT) it's the same small bunch of people doing all the work. This is your Guild so let's see some commitment please - anything would be nice. We have a new MoleMatters which could be bursting with news and information. It does not have to be all about moles. Come on Reps give us a hand. It's too easy to say I am too busy to do it. We are busy too.

Things have been a bit slow over the last month mole wise but since we have had a nice drop of rain my phone is ringing again. I have travelled far and wide to places I wouldn't normally consider - so there is still a need for us MOLE CATCHERS.

And, a word of caution, do not under price yourselves; remember our motto.

If you fancy a bit of reading as the nights close in, try Jeff Nicholls' new book, A YEAR OF WANTING, you will learn a lot from it - a good read and worth the money.

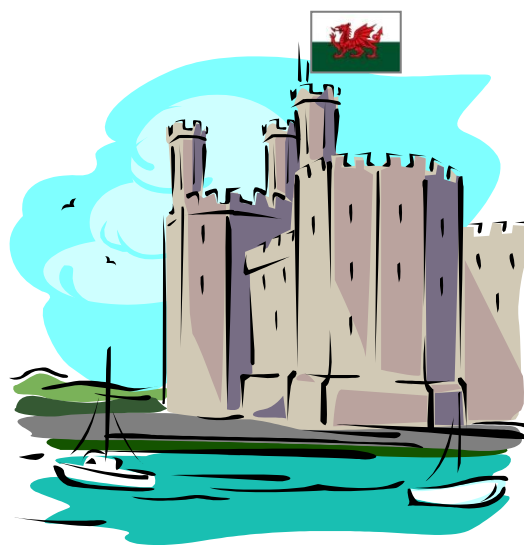
Anyway that's me done for this month. Please remember I am always on the end of my mobile if you cannot get me on the land line so let's have that pint. If anyone has any ideas for a Christmas get together let us know.

Happy Moleing.

Mark's email and other contact details: 01495 245246 / 07824 997881 paynet1@sky.com

Oddity!

One of our members came across a Facebook page for a **Mole Catching Analyst** the other day. No details are shown. Any suggestions what this person might actually do??????? – See for yourself by visiting <http://www.facebook.com/pages/mole-catching-analyst/149208795139707>



SEE WHAT IT IS

Mole Price Wars – The £ 3.00 Mole

By John Noblett – President of The Guild of British Molecatchers

Any molecatchers who regularly carry out mole control for farmers cannot have failed to notice how competition is now forcing down the per mole rate.

After the banning of strychnine in 2006 price per mole rates were a lot higher. I think this was mainly due to the modest numbers of molecatchers about and many of these molecatchers struggling to catch sufficient numbers per day to ensure it provided a satisfactory wage per day if this was their only form of income. Even then, if you could catch 25 plus moles each and every day for a week on a farmers land at £10.00 per mole, it would be very difficult to justify the £1250 bill for 5 days work.

Nowadays £10.00 per mole is still a figure quoted for farm mole control, but usually in the context of how expensive it is, or that such a molecatcher is trying to charge that rate. Farmers now know they can get the work carried out for far less. This is due to the many people, who due to the state of our economy and high levels of unemployment are now offering to catch moles at much cheaper rates.

This is of concern for the full time professional molecatchers who have to compete with this new part-time, molecatcher. A professional full time molecatcher has overheads and costs to cover, liability insurance, income tax, national insurance, etc, but these new wannabe molecatchers generally have no such costs and are forcing the prices down, and often working for cash only!

I regularly attend agricultural shows and meet many farmers and other show visitors who often eventually admit to being local molecatchers. Talk always centres on which trap is the best and the cost per mole.

My findings and conclusions from these discussions are that farmers want a reliable and effective molecatcher at reasonable rates, and that many of these local molecatchers actually know they are not charging enough, especially those charging £3.00 per mole, but are frightened of losing their local farmers business by charging more

Molecatchers charging £3 to £4 per mole are only working on the assumption that there are enough moles to be caught each day to make it worth their while either as daily wage or supplementary income top up. Farmers are generally happy with this arrangement as they know even if the mole catcher is exceptional at catching moles, 50 moles a day is only going to cost them between £150 and £200 and that it is generally not sustainable each and everyday for long on one farm.

What farmers do not like is where a mole catcher starts a job and only does one day and then packs up and leaves, because the molecatcher has realised that they are not going to catch enough moles per day to make it worth their while. The moles may be spread out over many hundreds of acres and it is not feasible to carry out this work on foot, or simply there are only a few moles to be caught.

Y E T ?

It is a space that you could be filling with your thoughts, ideas and stories.

Tip of the Month By Mumble

Mooching around wondering what I was going to write about this month and feeling not really inspired by anything (probably the result of having just returned from holiday) my attention was drawn to the letter from Charles [Letters - below right] so I thought I would add my tuppence worth.

Charles, this is a big, BIG, BIG issue - what to charge. It is a question asked everywhere as everyone wants to undercut the competition but still make a living.

What charge you make to domestic clients depends

Farmers are not happy either when the molecatcher will not come back to mop up any remaining moles a few days later. To catch half a dozen moles at £3.00 per mole, neither would I.

Often farmers ask me if I can come and trap one particular field that has been trapped by someone else, but there are a few moles remaining. I will do it because I have a pricing structure that allows me to be competitive and make it worthwhile to me when catching both large and small numbers of moles. And this is the important aspect for a professional full time farm molecatcher to consider, a pricing structure that works for you and the landowners.

Farmers are used to paying other contractors £20.00 plus per hour, so if you can offer an effective service there is no reason why a molecatcher cannot be regarded as any other contractor the farmer uses each year. Obviously you have to be able to catch moles quickly and easily. Resetting many traps that have been plugged and doing the work on foot will not allow you to compete with the £3.00 a mole guys.

So you need a lot of experience and knowledge on molecatching to begin with and to invest in equipment that allows you cover huge acreages of land very quickly, the quad bike. Many molecatchers unless they already have access to a quad bike would be reluctant to spend the £3k to £4k required to purchase a road legal quad bike and trailer. It would not be seen as a worthwhile outlay for just a few months work in the winter and spring, but you could end up mole catching virtually all year round for farmers once they eventually realise how effective you are.

Over the years I have experimented with various pricing structures for farm mole control work, to take into account the increasing numbers of moles that it is possible to catch each day by utilising new work methods and other aids. A sliding scale of charges per mole caught was one structure, but farmers tended only to remember and wanted to pay the lower rate regardless of the number of moles caught.

Currently I use an hourly rate irrespective of the number of moles caught per hour so long as at least two moles are caught. Otherwise I charge a realistic per mole rate. This system allows me to be very competitive on pricing with the undercover molecatchers and when catching 6 or 7 moles per hour I am often cheaper. But it also makes it viable for me to turn up just to catch a few farm moles, on a farm either I or someone else has previously worked on.

I personally do not think the £3.00 per mole situation will disappear any time soon in the near future and may even get worse as more people try to supplement incomes with a bit of molecatching. It's not hard to catch a few moles, but to be very good at the job is something else and requires considerable, skills, knowledge, and resources.

Personally I enjoy the competition as it keeps me on my toes and constantly looking for new ways to improve efficiency.

Email your thoughts and comments on this article for possible publication to: molematters@guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

Letters

mainly on the area you work in. Cost of living differs enormously from area to area - look at the price of beer - in the North, under £2 a pint; in the South, you need an overdraft to get a draught!

Do a bit of research; look at the charges comparative services make. For instance, what do pest control companies charge for removing rats? Like you, they will make two or three visits to clear a problem so consider charging somewhere in the same region.

Similarly, look at wasp nest removal – I doubt that you will find anybody to do it for less than about £30 (and often considerably more) and it can take as little time as 15 minutes on site!

So, if this is a tip (and not a well rehearsed rant) I urge you not to under charge for your skill - no one else does (or would) if they want to make a living and stay in business.

Yes, you will lose some jobs to the under-cutters but by charging a fair fee, which might include a cost for your time and travelling plus a fixed per mole rate or rates (depending on numbers) and a no mole, no charge undertaking; you won't be out of pocket when you do work.

What is more, you won't resent time spent cultivating your customers by answering their questions and providing a prompt, informative and courteous service – get this right and word of mouth will do the rest.

How much to charge?

From Charles Henderson

I thought I would make a brief response to the article posted on line by John Noblett, The aims of the Guild of Molecatchers. (Read the article referred to at <http://www.guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk/aims-of-the-guild.html> and also see John's article above. Ed.)

Firstly I am a full member and have got as far as Level 2 and am planning to tackle Level 3 this autumn. I have been a 'molecatcher' for almost 5 years. My 'day job' is a gardener working in a large 15 acre rural garden. When I started there I spent some time clearing molehills when the penny dropped



that rather than waste time clearing the hills why not tackle the moles. At around this time I joined the Guild and began to educate myself more about moles and catching. Self taught and working carefully I have kept on top of the problem in the garden.

The neighbouring farmer having noted my success asked whether I would tackle the moles in his silage fields as his regular mole catcher was retiring. I invested in extra traps and had considerable success in clearing his fields. I was very fortunate in inheriting a rate per mole from the previous molecatcher. Result - a happy farmer and a happy molecatcher as I realised I could offer a professional service.

So I am the opposite of the example used in the article - ie I am more than happy with agricultural clients - I can offer a professional service at a reasonable cost. But I am struggling to know what to charge 'private/domestic' clients. I have several but I feel that I am probably undercharging, when I take into account time and travel. If the guild could supply ideas or guidance on what is a reasonable rate then that would be very helpful.



Email your thoughts and comments on this letter for possible publication to: molematters@guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

www.guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

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To contact the MoleMatters editorial team email molematters@guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk
