



MoleMatters Issue 29
October 2011

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price held at £90.00**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

A huge thank you to everybody who responded to my plea last month for submissions for inclusion in this newsletter.

I've had so many that I can't justify including them all in this issue. I shall use your contributions in future issues.

Keep on sending your thoughts, reactions, opinions, ideas, pictures etc. I look forward to hearing from you.

The MoleMatters

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

Guild's training course – price held at £90.00.

Accreditation Academy is still free!

In these days of increasing inflation and difficulty of getting a pound to stick in your pocket, it is with some pride that The Guild is able to announce that our training course in traditional molecatching skills is to remain at £90.00 for the time being. How? Simple really – The Guild does not exist to make a profit; it exists solely to support traditional molecatching skills, molecatchers and the welfare of the mole.

Our training course is open to both professional and amateur molecatchers and members and non members alike.

Access to our Accreditation Academy is still **free** for full members (along with **free advertising space** on our website amongst other things). If you are a professional member, your position on our web pages (Find a Molecatcher) for your area depends on your level of accreditation – a fact well worthwhile considering. How about devoting a few winter evenings to upping your knowledge of the mole and your accreditation level?

Becoming a full member of The Guild doesn't cost a packet – a donation of a minimum of £20.00 to our chosen charity – The Make-a-Wish Foundation (UK) which grants wishes to children and young people aged between 3 and 17 living with life threatening illnesses. Find out more by visiting their website www.make-a-wish.org.uk/



With Christmas around the corner, perhaps you could do yourself and the children the charity helps some good by becoming a full member of The Guild. Details can be found at <http://www.guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk>

This month, we had a long letter, partly about our training course. We make no apologies for publishing it in full (A Compendium! - below) as its author muses on many aspects of the mole catcher's lot.



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.

HELP REQUIRED BY MOLECATCHERS

Can you help to answer this molecatchers' question?

Trapline traps

I was just wondering about the benefits of the trapline traps. I have not used them, but [I am] sure they would have their use in certain situations. What do you or other trappers think? Comments please.

I was a bit disappointed you didn't have a stand at the East Midlands game fair. I was positive you would have been there. [I] looked in the index but no Guild, I was looking forward to meeting you. [I] travelled 2-5 hours with a couple more mole catchers. Still not to worry maybe next year eh?

Regards the vicar.

I can help with part of your question - The Guild was not represented at the East Midlands Game Fair because, being an organisation that handles no money nor, obviously, makes any profit, we rely entirely on local full professional members to represent us whenever they are able. Perhaps next year (if you are a full member) you might like to take a stand at the fair to promote your services and The Guild at the same time. (Ed.)

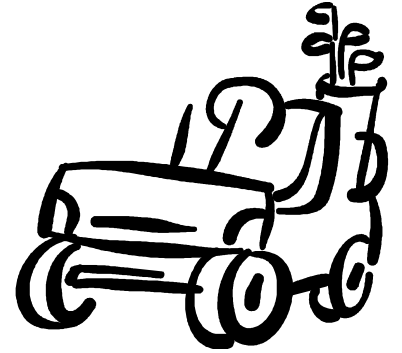
A compendium!

Letter/article by Alf Belch

I would like to take this opportunity to give some positive feedback about the mole catchers' training course I attended in March this year.

I have always been successful at catching moles and was smug enough to think I would learn nothing of any practical use from the course and simply wanted to meet and talk to fellow mole catchers. However, Jeff Nicholls' tips and advice changed the way I go about my business now.

I do most of my mole catching on golf courses and in hotel grounds and prior to the course I used to use a converted golf trolley laden with a border spade, far too many traps and a stack of floor tiles that I used to use to cover my trap sites.



I now venture out with a colourful rucksack which contains the few traps I actually need, a Japanese trowel, a runner, moist wipes and a bottle of anti-bacterial gel to clean up when I have finished and I use my probe as a walking stick - what a difference! Thanks Jeff, you have changed my working life.

I have just heard that I have achieved 100% success with the Level 3 accreditation test. I decided that I would not place an advert on the website until I reached level 3, this was just a personal thing to motivate myself to complete the test, so now I can let people know I am available to catch their moles.

Last evening I saw part of a story on BBC TV News about moles, complete with film showing 3 moles nose to tail in a cut away tunnel, I suspect they were Jeff Nicholls' domesticated moles!! I saw only a fraction of the item but enough to understand they were saying that because of the warm spring, worms and therefore moles have thrived and the need for mole catchers has increased substantially. Unfortunately, that is not my impression of the situation in Kent where I work.

This spring was not only warm but was dry; in fact we had drought conditions throughout the whole of April and the first few weeks of June.



The ground was rock hard at a time when the mole would have been expecting frequent showers to keep the soil moist and worms active. I do believe that the moles in Kent had a torrid time which must have adversely affected the young moles' survival rate, or maybe it is just the case in my part of Kent.

Nevertheless, I have been busy on the golf courses keeping damage to a minimum, I have good working relationships with the head green keepers I deal with, they text me as soon as they see a mole hill and within 24 hours I have caught the mole, dispersed the mole hills and made good any damage

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Shortage of work

This is probably a silly question, but I'll ask it anyway. I'm having trouble getting work, word of mouth doesn't seem to work, and I don't particularly want to go knocking on doors.

Advertising can be expensive, so has anyone got any advice.

Thanks.
Mel



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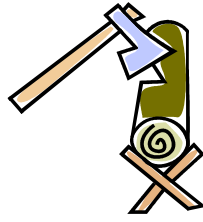
I need a bit of advice on the make of traps you would recommend. I think my first batch of traps may have come from Procter? And had brilliant results.

However my second batch, (I don't remember the make) had very disappointing results. Maybe a design fault? So I thought I would consult the experts and not make another mistake. Thanks in anticipation, best wishes

Mark

caused, but I'm only dealing with about half the number of the moles as I did last year.

Sorry I can't help with any information on curing mole pelts, I hand all my moles in to the green keepers/hotel groundsmen. There have been times when I have had to insist that they take them from me, it's a bit of a waste but at least I can never be accused of pulling a fast one by 'catching' the same mole numerous times.



Three week ago I caught a mole that had a large blond patch on its belly. I'm not normally superstitious but I found myself thanking my lucky stars that it wasn't blond all over! Later that day I was chopping wood and nearly cut my thumb off with careless use of my hatchet, a 6 hour wait in A&E for the wound to be stitched gave me plenty of time to ponder on whether there is a sliding scale of penalties for catching a mole with varying amounts of blond or white fur!

Happy catching.

Video of moles

This link was sent in by Ian of Control 2 Conserve Pest Control - Cheshire.
Found 10/10/11

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15237042>

Interesting video of moles - we wonder whether this is what Alf saw. (See above). It has to be said that The Guild does NOT IN ANY WAY endorse the use of gas. Just to be clear!

Marzipan mole!

Ian (above) had a birthday recently (How old! Do we hear strains of "Happy Birthday to you"? His (obviously) loving wife baked him this! Lucky man! Is she taking commissions?





Tip of the Month By Mumble

Moleskins - I told you I would keep you updated.

OK, so the advice I have received so far only gets me a little way along the road to my making a true mole skin waistcoat for myself.

On the plus side, I am obviously not the only person interested in reviving this skill and thanks to all who have contributed so far.

Mike wrote "I have caught more than enough moles over the years to make at least 2 suits and would love to find out how to cure the skins etc!"

And Sally said "I am in possession of an old advert for a manufacturing furrier asking for skins at the rate of two shillings a dozen. In its instructions it states "Put no salt, alum or chemical preservatives on the skins" and that they should be air dried."

That leaves me wondering what is to stop the pelt decaying when it gets wet. Perhaps the guys who cure rabbit skins might have the answer – I shall investigate.

Talking of investigation, I am reminded of a small town garden that I was called out to some time ago.

Got something to say/show/discuss?

This is the email address you need:

molematters@guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

Scams

Your response to last month's article "Honest advertising – Honest dealings" – You had a lot to say!



From Mark Clark

The mole-catcher with a mole in his pocket, I cannot really fathom this one.

When undertaking a job I will trap until completion that means no more mole-hills or mole sign for a good few weeks (hopefully months).

Turning up with a mole in your pocket will not stop the mole activity, hence dissatisfied client and a permanently lost customer.

Making a living from mole-catching depends on your client base forever expanding, retaining all your previous customers and receiving more work through your mole-trapping expertise and reputation. One should be working to become a local mole-catching legend not a rural rogue.

Well said! (Ed.)



From Bryn Wall

Hi Just read your little article on the no mole - no fee scam and I'd be very interested how anyone makes any money on this scheme if they don't charge a set-up fee

When I see a £10 per mole claim I wonder how this can work, my window cleaner charges more than £10!

I don't use this charging scheme, I charge a set rate for UP TO four visits which is variable depending on distance travelled, after that I charge at a set price per visit...which again can vary depending on distance travelled. All this is clearly explained to the customer, over the phone usually, before work commences and usually before I make an initial visit.



In the garden, there was some evidence of mole activity – one mole hill to be precise situated absolutely in the corner of the plot. This corner was bounded by a panel fence and then, outside the fence, a pavement and a road.

I probed the fence line (inside and out) and I probed everywhere else that I could think of probing. I couldn't find anything anywhere and, peeking over the other fences, I was unable to see any mole activity in the neighbouring patches; although I noticed some evidence of mole movement in a garden over the road. I later approached the owners of this property to offer my services – they declined.



Eventually, after a few visits to see the single molehill just increasing in size but no evidence of new or other activity, I was beginning to lose the will to live. I don't like being beaten at what I do so I resorted to my trusty spade in order to understand what I was up against.

You won't believe it but on excavating the, by now, very large molehill and following the almost vertical tunnel, I found the open end of a 75mm empty plastic conduit pipe! The clever little chap had been using the conduit as a waste disposal 'chute' for works elsewhere (could it have been on the property over the road?).

As the conduit was firmly embedded in the sub

From Mike Szymanski

Dear fellow molecatchers,

I have received the latest newsletter and sat here in total astonishment at the article about the frozen mole !!!

I have seen and experienced some strange things in my time; I was a Police Officer for 30 years! This one certainly takes the biscuit as to how low anyone can stoop - I mean come on, molecatching.....it's an art and a skill borne by years of experience and should never ever be allowed to fall into the hands of some low life con artist.

I have to say even given my somewhat cynical outlook; this one has to rank amongst the lowest of the low!

As for how I conduct my business, I am what some might call a recreational molecatcher, I live in a rural environment and we have a lot of moles here as you can imagine. I work part time as a gardener but am to all intents and purposes retired and devote my time to managing gardens and various silage fields owned by the local farmer who calls on me for my molecatching services as and when required. I catch moles for him as a favour and this is returned by him supplying me with hay for our horse in winter and therefore no money changes hands - as such. It works for us, I catch lots of moles and he is happy that his silage isn't contaminated.

I am an avid reader of your newsletters and always but always adhere to the code and conduct expected of a molecatcher. I have a huge respect for moles and in fact admire greatly how they go about their lives quietly and usually unobtrusively, it's just when they become a nuisance that I will step in and deal with them.

I am sure that a lot of members will feel the same way... molecatching is what I would describe as bordering on sacred, however many ordinary folk scoff and the mere thought of it - I am continually surprised at how people react when I tell them what I do in my spare time.

Thanks for reading this and thanks for allowing me to get it off my chest so to speak. Keep up the good work; you will always have a loyal member in me!

Mike, we think you summed up precisely our reaction to hearing about these scammers and, judging by our postbag, the reaction of most of our members – Keep up the good work everybody. (Ed.)



structure of the pavement, I had nowhere to go with my usual Duffus or half barrel trap.

Thanks!

More thinks – allied to an increasingly disbelieving client!



A bit of research online showed me the way forward – this is where the tip comes in – think lateral and never assume that you know anything at all.

My investigations showed me that in several countries on the continent of Europe, the mole is trapped as it tries to bung up an open tunnel. The principle of operation is simple – open a tunnel, the mole detects a weakness in its defences and reflexively bungs up the dangerous, predator entrance.

The trap design is different to allow for the free passage of soil past the mumble pin which is not operated by pressure along the line of the tunnel but instead is triggered by lateral pressure as the mole pushes past.

Told you! Lateral thinking!

A pair of traps ordered, delivered, tested for strength, “snap”, body catch area and the ability to produce a quick clean kill. Trap set and dressed in to allow some passage of air, light and moisture into the tunnel - job done.

From Russell Goodbourn, Pest B Off, Sussex



I have been mole catching domestic premises for several years now. I did one of Brian's courses up in Northumberland of all places (bit of a trek from Sussex) but wonderful place to visit.

To date I have only attempted domestic and never farm. I think my technique is improving, as my success rate is certainly improving.

Mole catching forms part of my other pest control, but it one area that I enjoy, as it gets you outside. My one problem is the pricing, and I can see it is often under discussion.

At first I was just doing it by the mole, as that seemed what most people were doing, but then that had to be tapered or is was too expensive for the customer, or it was too cheap for me to be worth it.

I note your fraudulent person in the newsletter. I go the other way and always leave the mole with them, but even then I worry that they might think the worst, so I say that the "job" involves no more hills. After all at the end of the day, they are only interested in having no more hills; they are not interested in numbers of moles.

I had a customer the other day watch me so closely at every stage while I was laying the traps, that I think in future if that happens again I will charge a tuition fee and sell him some traps instead!!



www.guildofbritishmolecatchers.co.uk

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