

Mowing Press Release

Hawthorn Heavy Horses (HHH) are a small land management company in Essex owned by Matt and Claudia Waller who use rare breed Suffolk Punch horses as their primary source of power. The use of horses can result in less noise, pollution, poaching and compaction on the ground in comparison to machinery, and in many instances can work just as quickly, especially in steep or wet locations. The use of horses is also ideal where a landowner is trying to minimise disruption to local people or wildlife, and can also be a tool for engaging local people who would otherwise find machinery a barrier.

HHH have been working in partnership with Chelmsford Borough Council and Writtle College for 2 years. Together they run the Hylands Horses project at the Hylands Estate, providing horse powered land management and visitor services on the 570acre parkland and the newly refurbished Grade 2 listed house and adjoining Stables Visitor Centre.

One of the items bought specifically for the project was a set of Dennis gang mowers, which was purchased from R T Machinery Ltd after invaluable consultation with them on the best approach. The Dennis mowers were chosen as they are adaptable, ground driven, easily transported and of a size that is ideal to be pulled behind a pair of horses. In addition they operate at a comfortable speed for the horses, allowing them to work efficiently at a fast walk or slow trot, increasing their productivity. It has been used at Hylands Park for mowing paths through Hay Meadows and the management of amenity areas. Initially it was towed behind a pair of horses attached to a basic hitch cart allowing for the operator to be seated and the work shared between the two horses, making it an efficient and effective tool.

In 2010 Hawthorn Heavy Horses began work with Thurrock Council to help manage Hangman's Wood & Deneholes. The site is a SSSI and contains the remains of medieval chalk mines, providing the most important underground hibernation site for bats in Essex. In addition the site has 3ha of semi-natural habitat in which bats can feed which is a relict fragment of ancient woodland. There are 1.6km of paths and rides on the site that had previously been cut with a tractor and mower. Thurrock Council engaged with Hawthorn Heavy Horses in a search to find a more sensitive approach.

HHH worked with Doug Joiner of Heavy Horses in Herefordshire to adapt a timber arch to enable the attachment of the Dennis gang mowers to a single horse. This allows a highly mobile unit where horse, mowers and shafts can be transported to site in a single trailer. The operator walks alongside the horse wide of the mowers and this allows for close monitoring of the ground ahead and the operation of the machinery. To date it has provided very pleasing results, and has received very positive feedback from the public and client.

During the winter HHH and the horses concentrate on timber extraction from woodlands, accessing sites that would be too dense or sensitive to drive machinery. In the Summer in addition to the mowing the business diversifies and the horses undertake harrowing and bracken rolling, in addition to providing visitor services such as demonstrations at shows and carriage rides at Hylands.

For more information please visit:

www.hawthornheavyhorses.co.uk

www.hylandshorses.co.uk

www.chelmsford.gov.uk/hylands

www.rtmachinery.co.uk

www.dennisuk.com

www.thurrock.gov.uk

www.heavyhorses.net