

# Don't Sit on the Fence

Roland Taylor sits on the fence, hedges his bets, and looks at the alternatives for creating barriers and boundaries.

Fencing is likely to be a low priority on the list of course management tasks for most clubs and the subject only gets attention when it really becomes necessary. It is however, an important means to protecting property and land. Fencing and other types of barriers primarily have two roles, to keep intruders, including livestock, out or keep the latter in. However, there is a third aspect that is worth taking into account. For some clubs, especially those set in parkland, it can provide an overall aesthetic quality to the landscape, especially when in the vicinity of the clubhouse or hotel.

## Security Fencing

When considering fencing the first thing that comes to mind is security and with the considerable investment that clubs now have in equipment this is a top priority.

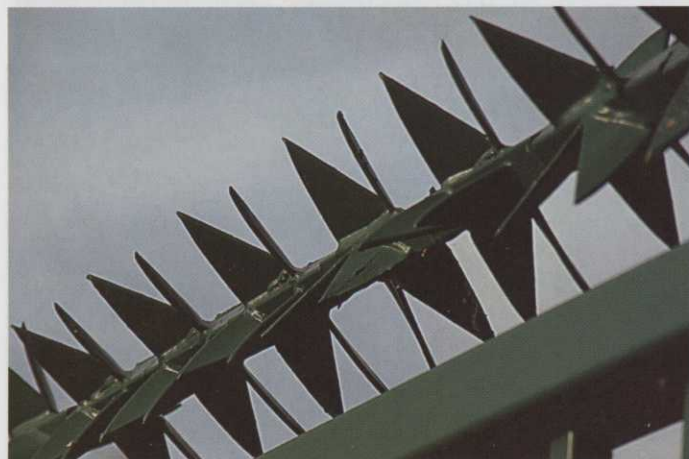
There is a wide choice of security fencing available and careful consideration should be given to what are the aims and priorities and whether planning permission is required. The height of any fencing should be appropriate to the risk and the location of the site. As a general guide security fencing for industrial estates needs to be at least 2.4 metres high.

The question then is what system to use? Welded mesh and steel palisades are considered the best. The palisade style is the most common as it is strong and easy to erect. There are various tops available, with triple pointed ones being the most common, especially where high security is the key issue. For safety reasons these should not be used on fencing below 1.8 metres.

Welded mesh panels are an alternative. They have the advantage of giving great surveillance, but should be made from a mesh small enough not to allow finger or tow holds. Another choice is solid steel panels.

All security fencing needs to be mounted on steel posts set in reinforced concrete. As an extra deterrent the top of the fencing can be fitted with barbed or razor wire. Another alternative is revolving spikes.

These consist of a series of metal spikes that, when touched, revolve, thus eliminating the possibility of someone gaining a foothold and in the



Rotating spikes on top of fencing make it virtually impossible to climb over.



A hedge that has been correctly laid forms an impenetrable barrier and when the new growth appears is an attractive feature.

process suffering considerable discomfort and possible injury. They act as a formidable barrier and deterrent.

If thieves are persistently visiting the premises, then electric fencing might be a consideration. It is legal, providing it is installed by a specialist, but should be only used in extreme cases. Both technical and legal advice must be sought before going ahead.

When considering fencing the most likely type to spring to mind is chain link. From a security aspect this is a non-starter but is very useful as a boundary marker. Chain link is constructed from steel wire woven into a mesh, which can be bought in various grades and sizes. There is a choice of either galvanised or PVC coated. Like security fencing it should be mounted on concrete or steel posts. These can be cranked at the top to take barbed wire.

All security fencing and chain link is unattractive but this can be overcome with a little forethought. Obviously the reason it has been installed is to deter intruders, so nothing should be done to detract from this role. However, some soft vegetative climbing shrubs could be used to soften the image and, if thorny varieties are included, will also add to the protective screen. However they need to be sited so as not to act as cover for an intruder.

## Wooden Fencing

Nationwide the most popular fencing found in the countryside is post and rail. This system, while pretty mundane, can, if built correctly, add attractiveness to the landscape, especially in parkland, with a backdrop of trees. Alternatively, if the fence is painted white it can add to and set off an entrance to a course.

When it comes to erecting post and rail fencing there are a number of key issues that need to be considered so that it looks good when completed. One of the most important aspects is the post alignment, which must be straight. This is time consuming but the end result is rewarding. Once the proposed line of post has been established and markers sited it is time to put in the post. There are two ways of doing this either, by digging holes or by driving them in. The later is fast and the posts firmer. This system is favoured

by fencing contractors who generally use specialist equipment. It is possible to drive the posts into the ground with a sledgehammer, but there is considerable risk of damaging the tops.

The fencing contractor contacted had a Bryce Suma Powershift ram, which was modified to his own specifications. The machine aligned each post to ensure the flat surfaces were identical, so that there was no twist when the rails were applied. Each post was driven exactly three foot straight into the ground, taking into account terrain and contours.

If holes are going to be dug then there are plenty of earth augers on the market that make the job faster than the older method of using spade, pickaxe and crowbar. Earth augers come with a variety of attachments to either fit a tractor and skidster or as one or two manned self-contained machines.

Once a series of posts are in place it is then time to fit the rails. For post and nailed fencing, where there is no chance of people climbing on them, the general rule is to fit rails that are 1.8m long, 38mm thick and 87mm deep, these conform to a British Standard (BS 1722-7 1999).

Where the fence is going to be used to support rabbit netting a lighter version of rails such as 30mm wide and 75mm deep are more suitable. Standard patterns are usually available off the shelf but you can have them made to specific requirements at a cost. Post and rails must be treated and with today's methods this ensures long life.

To fit the rails to the posts the contractor we spoke to used special galvanised ring shanked nails, which were driven in place with a compressor gun. He averaged 100 metres of fencing per day.

An alternative method of fitting rails is to set them into mortises in the post. While this produces a stronger attachment to the rails it is more costly and time consuming to erect.

Where strained wired fencing is being used the most important factor is the straining posts, as these take all the loading. The posts between these strainers only support the wire at the correct height.

A facility for re-tensioning the wire should always be part of the design. As a general rule of thumb straining posts for a wire fence need to be approximately 11.7 metres high and at least 7.5cm in diameter and set at a depth of at least 60cm in the ground.

Terrain is very rarely flat so the hummocks and dips have to be taken into account if the fence line is to remain straight. Likewise soil conditions vary considerably, so if bedrock is encountered the depth of the post will be affected and it may be necessary for them to be set in concrete.

Rabbits cause considerable damage and where they are highly active some control fencing can be advantageous. Hexagon mesh is recommended by the Forestry Commission and there is a British Standard (BS 10223) for this netting. If this is being purchased it is important to check that the distance between the widest parallels is no more than 3cm.

When installing it, it must be bent in the direction the rabbits are coming from and held down by wire or covered with turf sods. The height of the actual fence, once the bottom has been covered over, should be at least 900



**A ram is the fastest way to accurately sink posts at a consistent depth with level face for the rails.**

mm. Wire supports are suggested to ensure that there is no sagging. Any slack in the fence will defeat the objective of the exercise. Rabbit fencing needs to be regularly checked to ensure it continues to be effective.

## Hedges

While hedges are generally cut only once a year their effectiveness as strong barriers can be improved considerably by being laid. This can also add to their attractiveness. Hedge laying is a craft dating back to the 1700's.

Its aim is to create an ongoing barrier, which is difficult for both humans and animals to penetrate. There are a number of hedge styles throughout the country and each of these are designed to meet a range of criteria including plants, altitude, wind and snow.

The governing body is the National Hedge Laying Society and they provide a list of contractors as well as offering training days throughout the country for beginners who wish to take up the craft.

With more clubs considering environmental issues and conservation areas a well-laid hedge might be worth considering for some selected sites.

Details can be obtained from Bruce May (Sec NHLS), "Way Post", Vines Cross, East Sussex. TN21 9EG Tel: 01959565678. Information on registered contractors, countrywide, is available on [www.hedgelaying.org](http://www.hedgelaying.org).

There is a possibility that a grant maybe available for some types of fencing so it is well worth contacting your local Department of Environment Food and Rural affairs (DEFRA) centre to check out this possibility.

## Recycled Materials

Traditionally wood has been used to make products such as boardwalks and fencing. However there are alternatives to this material that will eradicate the disadvantages associated with wood, including ongoing maintenance, treatment and lifespan.

Recycled plastic is becoming a useful substitute for wood fencing. Recycled plastic fencing includes post and rail, birdmouth and picket and patch. This particular material can offer many benefits compared to wood. Recycled plastic is both extremely durable and also vandal resistant.

Due to the surface texture, the product is more resistant to graffiti and more resilient to other forms of vandalism. Plastic is also less flammable and UV resistant, meaning little or no colour loss or sunlight damage occurring with the material.

When it comes to fencing some clubs will have the advantage of being part of a large estate with its own forestry or estate management department who take care of these requirements. Most clubs will not have this luxury, so either they have to do the work in-house or employ a contractor. In the later case it is worth shopping around as like any industry there are good and bad operators.

Third party recommendations and viewing their work will, in general, be sufficient to gauge good workmanship.

If it has to be done in-house then hiring the right equipment will help to eliminate hassle and speed-up the operation considerably. There are plenty of companies out there who can supply this type of machinery on hire.

Well-built fences will give years of trouble free maintenance so it is important to get it right from the start.



**This one man earth auger takes the hard work of making post holes.**



**The tops of security fencing posts come in a range of style, this one is called the trident.**