

# QUICK SETUP GUIDE FOR THE AUSTRIAN SCYTHER

This guide is intended as a quick reference and aide memoire.

To get the most from your scythe we strongly recommend you attend a Scythe Course and read the book “Learn to Scythe” by Steve Tomlin.



A digital version of this setup guide is available on our website:

## SCYTHER COURSES

[www.scythecymru.co.uk/product-category/scythe-courses](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/product-category/scythe-courses)

[www.scytheassociation.org/courses/](http://www.scytheassociation.org/courses/)

## JOIN THE SCYTHER ASSOCIATION

[www.scytheassociation.org](http://www.scytheassociation.org)



## BOOKS

Learn to Scythe by Steve Tomlin

Managing Grassland with a Scythe by Simon Fairlie

## Instructional Videos & Web Pages

There are a lot of videos and information out there, of varying quality! The following videos and weblinks show good techniques.

## SCYTHER CYMRU SCYTHING GUIDES

Contains an ever increasing resource of information on setting up and using your scythe, plus land management and hand hay making.

[www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guides/](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guides/)

Also a pdf version of this leaflet with clickable links.

[www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/scythe-quick-set-up-guide/](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/scythe-quick-set-up-guide/)

## USEFUL YOUTUBE CHANNELS

Scythe Cymru

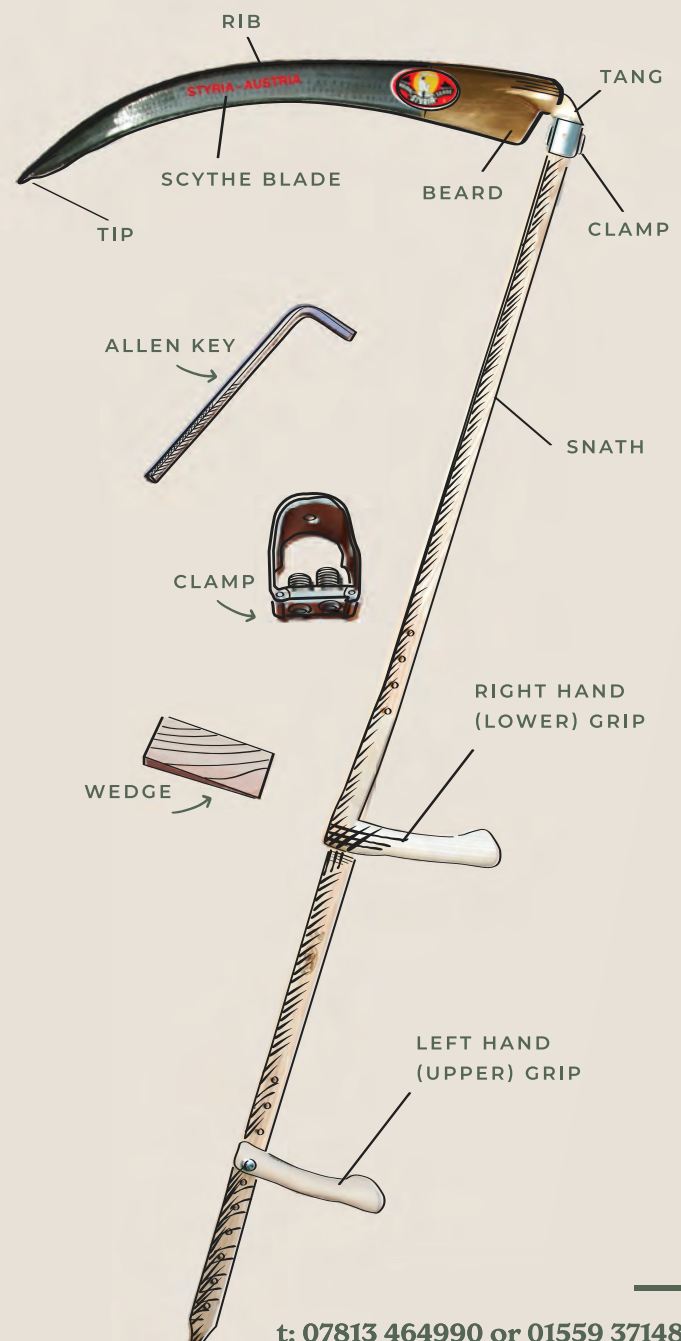
[www.youtube.com/@scythecymru/videos](http://www.youtube.com/@scythecymru/videos)

Using a Peening Jig

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEqAmrc4H3k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEqAmrc4H3k)

One Scythe Revolution

[www.youtube.com/@BotanAnderson/videos](http://www.youtube.com/@BotanAnderson/videos)



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e: [info@scythecymru.co.uk](mailto:info@scythecymru.co.uk)

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# TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEW BLADE

## BEFORE FIRST USE

**Clean the lacquer off the edge of the blade (bevel) to prevent it clogging the sharpening stone.**

- Place the blade on a flat surface.
- Using a rubberised sanding block ("Garryflex") or a piece of emery cloth (60-80 grit), clean the lacquer off the 4mm bevel at the edge of the blade, on both the front and the back.

## AFTER EVERY USE

Wash and dry your blade before putting it away. This prevents the accumulation of dirt and discourages rust formation.

Using a rag and water, wash down the blade to remove any vegetation and sap sticking to the surface. After washing, use a dry cloth to thoroughly dry the blade.

If storing your blade for a length of time, you can optionally apply a coat of olive oil or other non-drying oil to the surface.



## SAFETY

Be careful of the sharp edge when cleaning and handling the blade.



# SETTING UP YOUR NEW SCYTHE

## 01. POSITION AND ATTACH THE HAND GRIPS

**The following will give you a good first approximation. Adjust as necessary to get a good ergonomic mowing position.**

### LOWER GRIP

- Place the bottom end of the snath on the ground next to you.
- Hold the handle of the grip level with your greater trochanter (the point where the leg rotates at the hip when lifting the knee) and offer up the other end of the grip to the snath. **(Fig 1)**
- Note the hole in the snath that the end of the grip falls nearest to. **(Fig 1)**
- Remove the bolt and washer from the end of the grip. Keep the washer on the bolt.
- Thread the bolt through the required hole from the smooth side of the snath to the ridged side.
- Fix the bolt back into the grip, making sure the carriage bolt inside the grip is correctly aligned. Tighten the bolt using a 10mm spanner.
- The ridges on the end of the grip will align with the ridges on the snath to hold it secure and prevent twisting.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

### UPPER GRIP

- Place your elbow on the **outer end** of the now fixed lower grip and reach up towards the top of the snath.
- Position the upper grip at the hole nearest to, or slightly above your finger tips. Note which hole you will be fitting the grip into. **(Fig. 2)**
- Remove the nut and washer from the bolt.
- Leave the bolt in the grip.
- Thread the bolt through the required hole from the ridged side of the snath to the smooth.
- Replace the washer and nut and tighten using a 10mm spanner.
- The ridges on the grip and the snath will align as before.
- Tighten the nut sufficiently that the end of the bolt is drawn slightly into the wood of the grip.

### CHECK THE POSITION OF THE GRIPS

**BEFORE ATTACHING THE BLADE -** Hold the snath horizontally and try to put the grips either side of your shoulders. If the grips are correctly placed they should slip easily either side. If they are too tight, adjust the top grip as necessary.

## 02. ATTACH AND ADJUST THE SCYTHE BLADE

**Loosen the grub screws in the clamp. Hold the snath in front of you with the metal plate facing towards you.**

Using the left hand, hold the clamp and the top of the snath as shown in the picture.

Pick up the blade with your right hand, gripping it by the back rib to keep your fingers away from the edge.

Slide the tang into the clamp. Then slide both the tang and clamp down onto the snath until the tang lug engages in the hole in the metal plate.

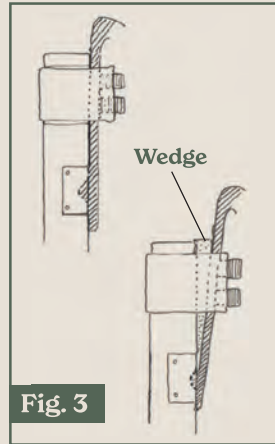
The top edge of the clamp should sit about 2-5mm below the end of the snath. Tighten the grub screws until they just hold the blade, ready for checking the lay and hafting angle.

### CHECK & ADJUST THE LAY

**Hold the scythe in a relaxed mowing position. When the back of the blade is on the ground the cutting edge should be about ¼ inch above the ground.**

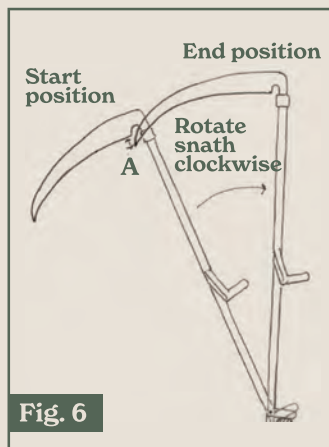
If the cutting edge is too low, place a wedge between the blade tang and the snath to adjust the lay of the blade.

For more information on the lay, see [www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/scythe-blade-angles/](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/scythe-blade-angles/)



### CHECK THE HAFTING ANGLE

**Place the upper grip on the knee, with the scythe pointing straight in front of you. Mark the position where the beard of the blade lies on the ground.**



Using your knee as a pivot point rotate the scythe clockwise, until the tip of the blade is in line with where the beard was.

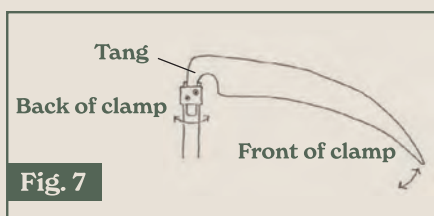
The difference between the start position of the beard of the blade and the end position of the tip of the blade is a measure of the hafting angle (see A).

As a rule, the tip of the blade should fall 3-5cm inside of the beard, depending on blade being used.

### ADJUST THE HAFTING ANGLE

**Slightly loosen the grub screws and move the tang in the clamp. To open (increase) the hafting angle, move the tang towards the back of the clamp. To close (decrease) the hafting angle, move the tang towards the front of the clamp.**

Once the hafting angle is correctly set, fully tighten the grub screws so the blade will not move in use.



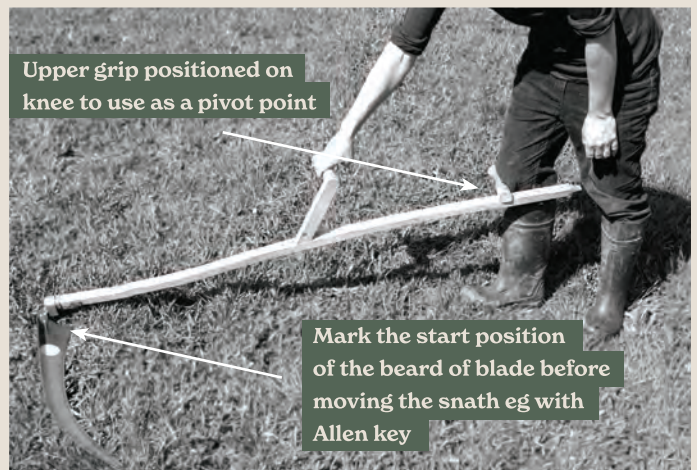
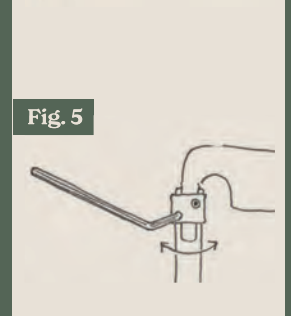
For a video on how to attach the blade see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=guRoJBNYtm0&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guRoJBNYtm0&t=2s)

## SAFETY !

Using the allen key with the long part engaged in the grub screw keeps your fingers away from the blade. **Use it in this safe position as much as possible (Fig 4)**



Use allen key in this position (Fig 5) to get the extra leverage needed for initial loosening or final tightening of grub screws only. When doing so, keep the long handle on the opposite side of the snath from blade.



For more help with hafting angles, see [www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/scythe-blade-angles-hafting/](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/scythe-blade-angles-hafting/)

**NOTE:** Check the hafting angle is correctly set and the grub screws are tight BEFORE EVERY USE.

A loose blade or a v open hafting angle (especially in combination with a blunt blade and forceful mowing) puts excess stress on the clamp, blade and snath and can lead to damage or breakages.

# HOLDING THE SCYTHER AND MOWING

Stand with your feet level and facing the direction you will mow in. Hold the scythe in front of you with the back of the blade on the ground. Your hands should be about level and close to the body.

## THE BASIC MOWING STROKE

- Start with the tip of the blade in line with your right foot (**Fig 9**). Move the blade in a semi-circle in front of you (**Fig 10**) until the tip reaches about 10 o'clock (**Fig 11**). Return the blade back along the same arc.
- Keep the snath close into the body throughout the movement.
- Practice the basic mowing shape on short grass so you can clearly see how the blade moves.
- A part-arc can be used for trimming eg paths etc.

For more information on mowing with a scythe and videos, see [www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/holding-the-scythe-and-mowing/](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/holding-the-scythe-and-mowing/)

**NOTE:** Do not lift the blade off the ground at the start and end of the stroke. This can lead to a “golf swing” style of mowing, which is less efficient at cutting grass and is more likely to damage your scythe and strain your body.

Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



# SHARPENING (HONING) WITH A STONE

Whenever you are mowing carry the stone on your belt in the stone holder, half-filled with water.

- Use a bunch of mown grass to carefully wipe debris from the blade.
- With the snath in your left hand, kneel, lowering the scythe with you. Place tip of the blade on the ground (**Fig 12**). (See link below for alternatives to kneeling.)
- Using the **narrow edge** of the stone and short, overlapping strokes, hone one side of the blade at a time until you are confident with the angles required (**Fig 13**).
- First hone the cutting edge of the top of the blade. As a guide for the correct angle to use the stone at, place the tip on the rib and lay the stone down to meet the edge. Hold this angle as you move the stone (**Fig 14**).
- Then hone the back of the blade to remove the burr pushed over by the first pass of the stone. Hold the stone parallel with the tang. Look carefully to ensure it fully contacts the edge (**Fig 15**).

For more information on sharpening, see: [www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/sharpening-scythe-honing-stone](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/sharpening-scythe-honing-stone)

# PEENING

Peening is used to periodically reshape the edge of the blade so that it can hold a sharp cutting edge. It is a necessary part of the maintenance of your blade.

It's time to peen when the mower has to sharpen more often, the blade is not holding its edge so well and mowing is becoming harder work. For more information on peening, see: [www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/peening](http://www.scythecymru.co.uk/scything-guide/peening)

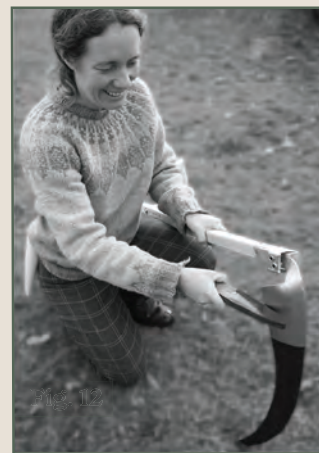
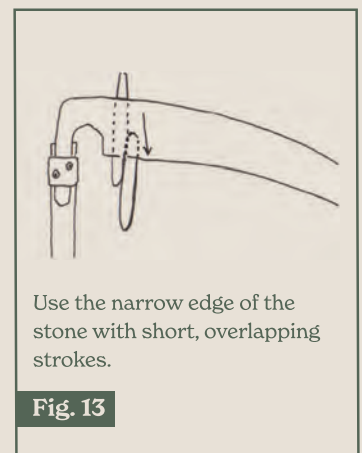
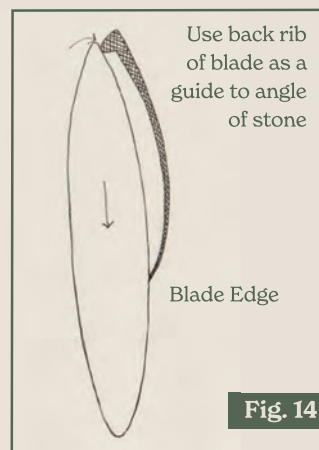


Fig. 12



Use the narrow edge of the stone with short, overlapping strokes.

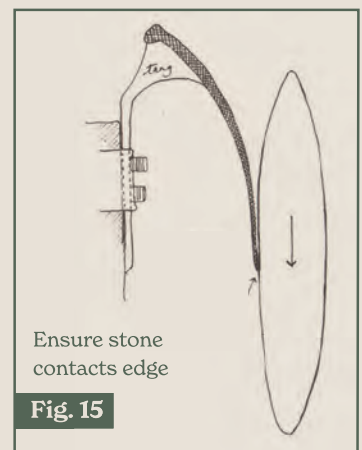
Fig. 13



Use back rib of blade as a guide to angle of stone

Blade Edge

Fig. 14



Ensure stone contacts edge

Fig. 15

**NOTE:** Hone your blade frequently whilst mowing to maintain sharpness. Aim to sharpen every five minutes or less. The short time spent sharpening is easily saved in the increased ease of mowing.