

Before the courses are started it is suggested that a layer of back-filling is applied. This will prevent the tops of the courses from penetrating between the batten, and also give a neater finish inside.

Showing the reed-holder in position beside the ladder, ready for the first course to be started.

The bond is cut with a small knife which is kept handy for this purpose.



Approximately half the bunch is gathered in the left arm.

After passing the reed to the right arm it is pitched several times on the roof to bring all the butts level.

By reversing the position the bunch is laid right on the corner to start the course.

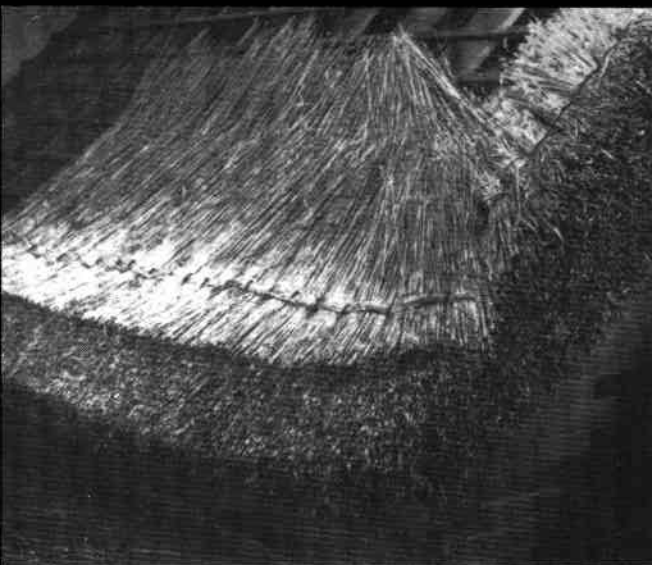
Combed wheat reed

Whilst still retaining pressure from the left arm, the palm of the other hand is used to dress the butts into an approximate position.

The work is lightly secured with several strands of reed pegged down with iron hooks. This is known as the temporary sway and will be removed later.

The leggett is used to dress the work to the required shape, whilst each upward drive helps to tighten the face.



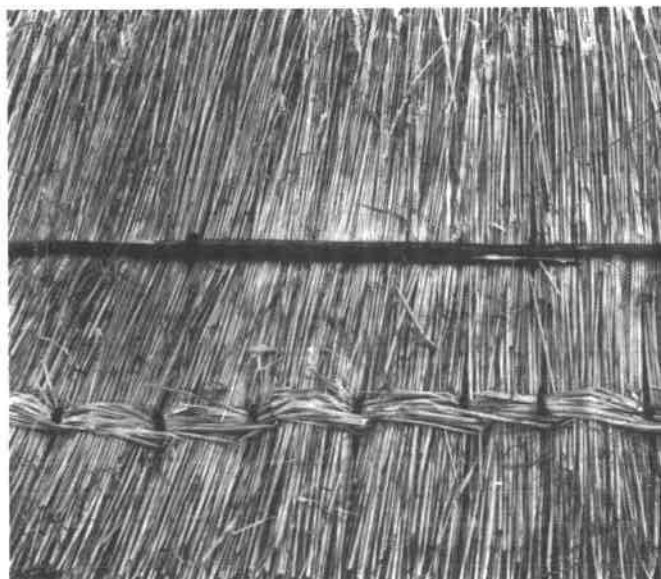
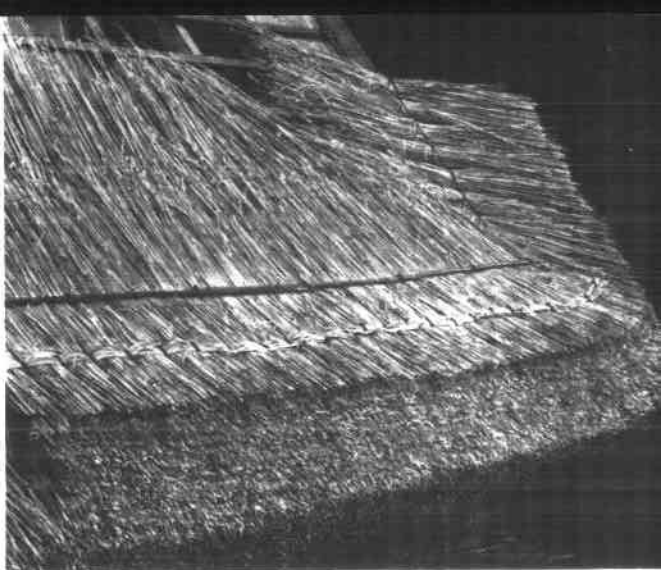


A portion of the first course is laid and may now be fixed with a permanent sway.

The hazel sway is laid across the course and the needle is used to locate the rafter.

After twisting the needle square, an iron hook is inserted in the gap and driven into the rafter. This method of fixing is common to all types of thatching.

Combed wheat reed



The first course is fixed with a sway, and a generous lip at the top of the course is left to merge with the next course.

The illustration shows the method used to join two sways at their thin ends, each sway being secured with two hooks.

In comparison, when two sways are being joined at their large ends, a neater junction is made if the ends are halved together and fixed under one hook.

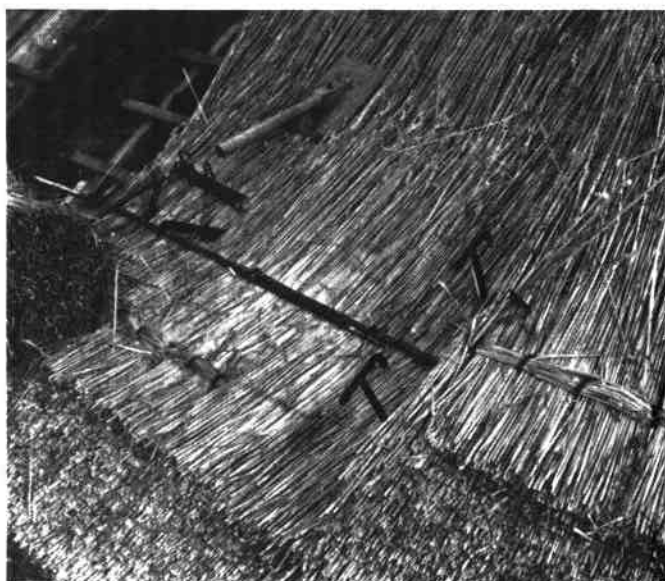


Combed wheat reed

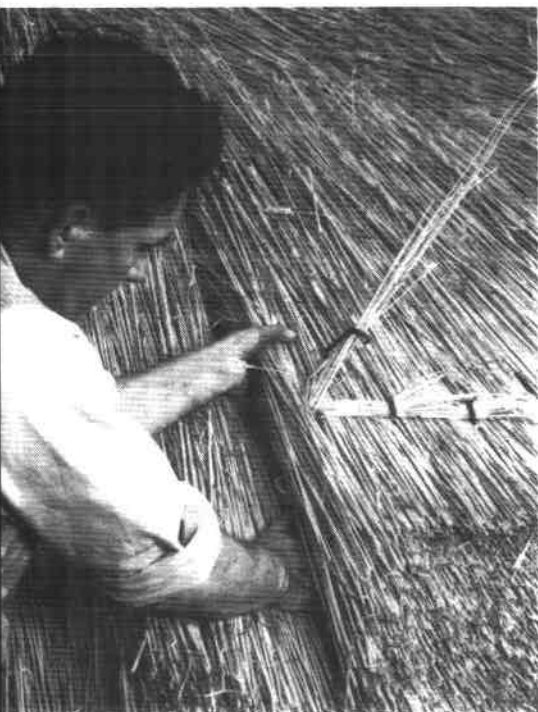
With the sway fixed, further dressing with the leggett will tighten the face of the reed.

The second course, which is held with a temporary sway, is started from the barge. The temporary sway on the previous course is cut through with the small knife.

A portion of the reed sway is removed and more reed may now be laid.



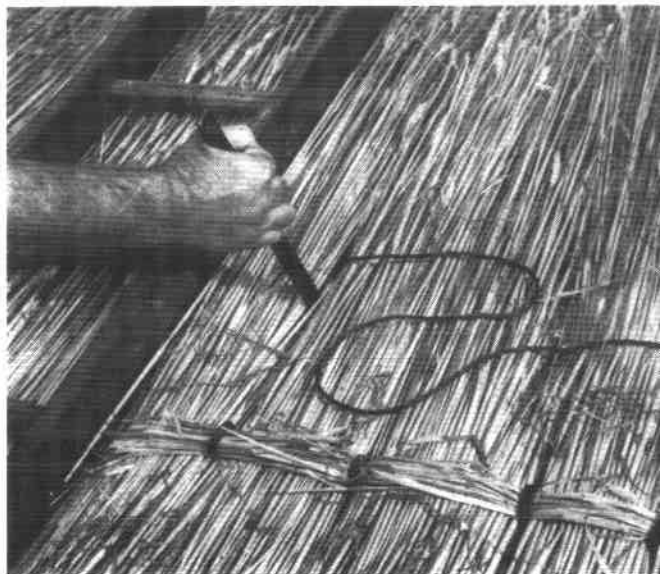
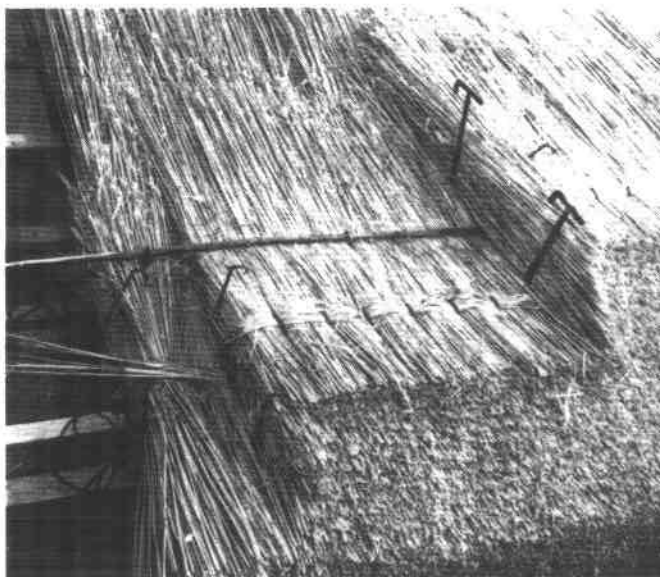
Combed wheat reed



It is most important that a good join is made each time a bunch is laid. This is done by raising the edge of the course with the left hand and then working the nearest reed to it well down to the bottom of the course.

The second course is carried a stage further and it will be seen how the needles keep a square, tight edge to the course.

An alternative method of fixing the reed is now shown. Although this method is slower and involves having an assistant inside the roof, it has the advantage of being cheaper when compared with the method using iron hooks and sways. The needle threaded with tarred cord is inserted through the reed to a point below the batten. The cord is then removed by the assistant.

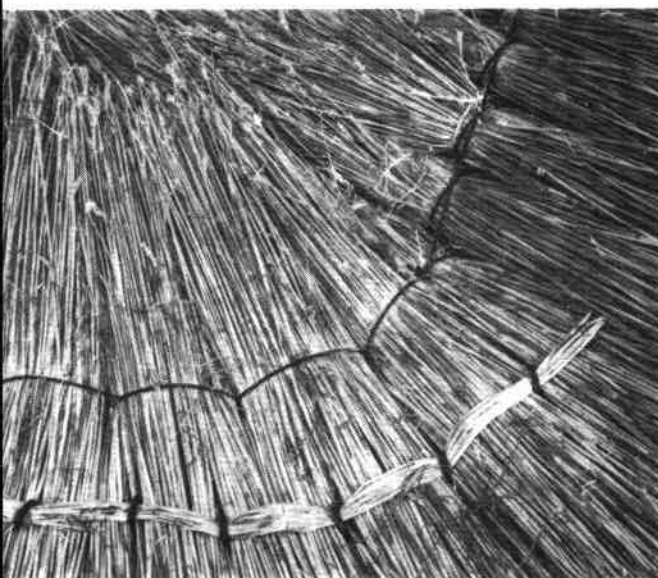


Combed wheat reed

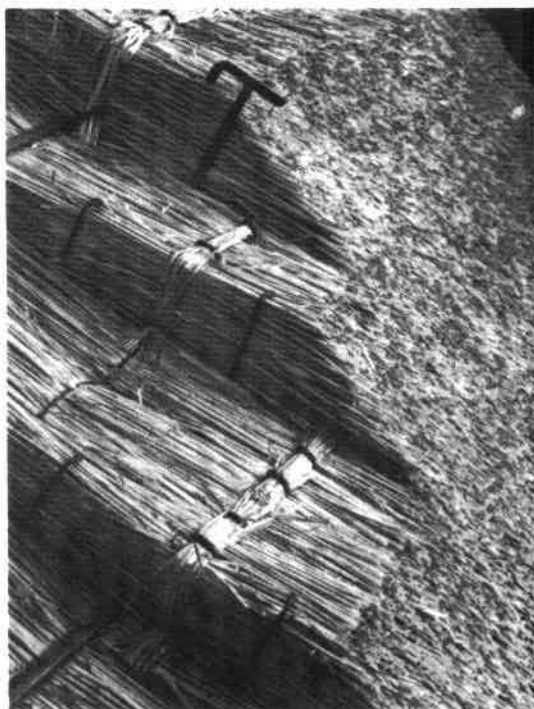


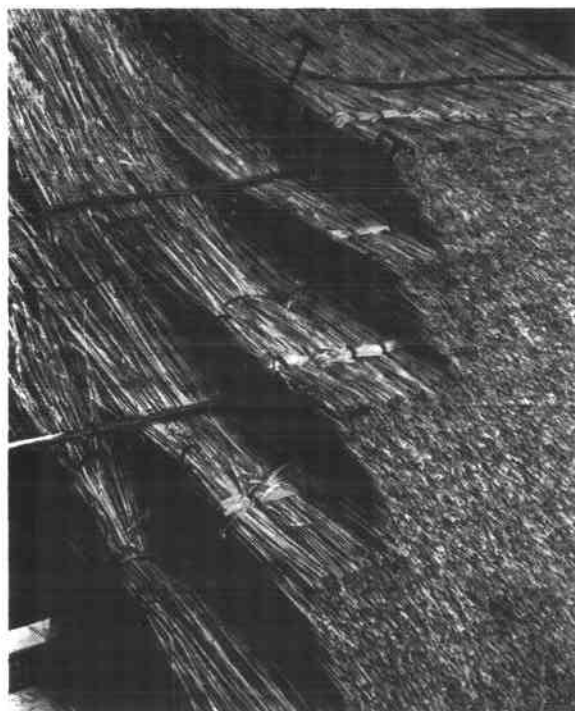
The needle is inserted again, this time above the batten, whereupon the assistant re-threads it with cord. The needle is withdrawn bringing the cord through on the outside. Each stitch is pulled tightly and the procedure is repeated.

This method is preferred by some thatchers, because each stitch grips the reed firmly in bunches and the hazel sway is dispensed with. This stitching method is only possible with open rafters.



This illustration gives an impression of the courses with their permanent fixing and temporary reed sways.





It is better that the courses (or setts) are staggered, to obviate the joints occurring in one line.

Approaching the eaves-chimney the wadds turn slightly towards the corner. The wadd next to the brickwork is fixed separately and is set at an angle to allow for cutting.

All the eaves-wadds are tied in up to the chimney.



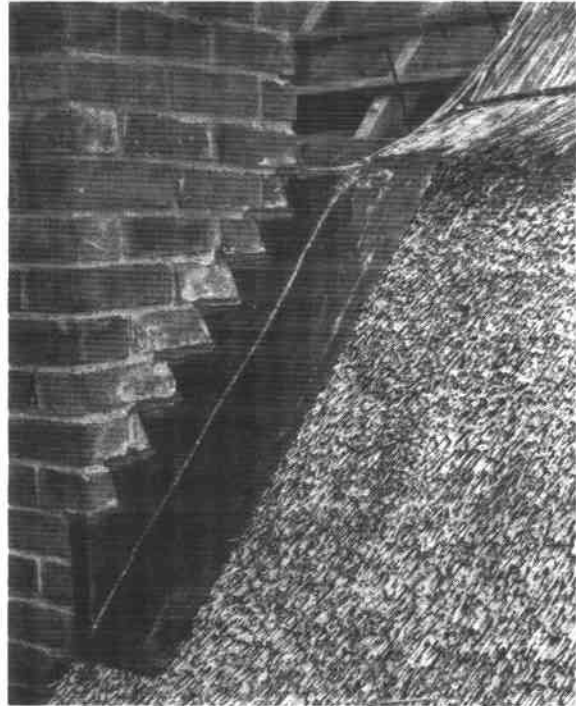
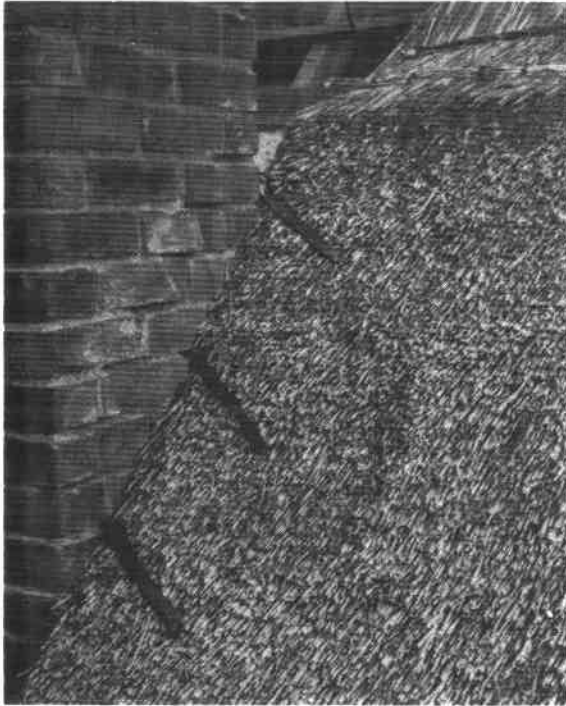
Combed wheat reed

The first, or brow-course, is started against the chimney. Again the reed turns towards the corner.

The first course is completed and swayed down.

The second course is carried through to the chimney and is secured with a hazel sway. The sharp line formed in the angle of the eave is the approximate cutting-line.

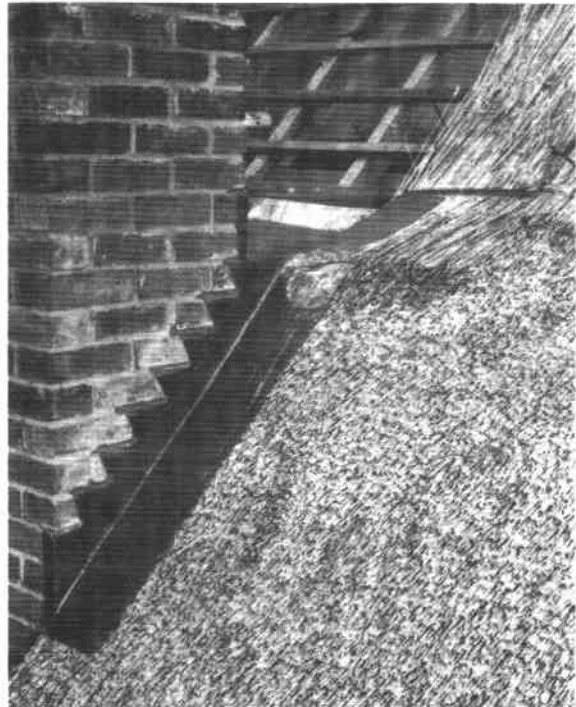


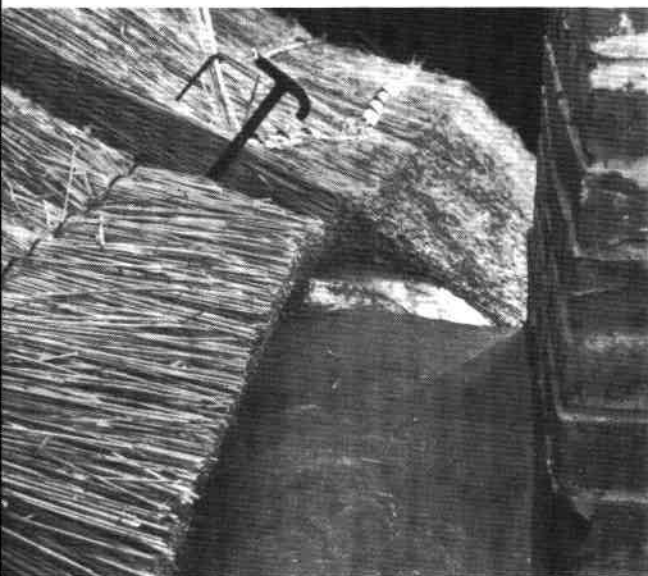
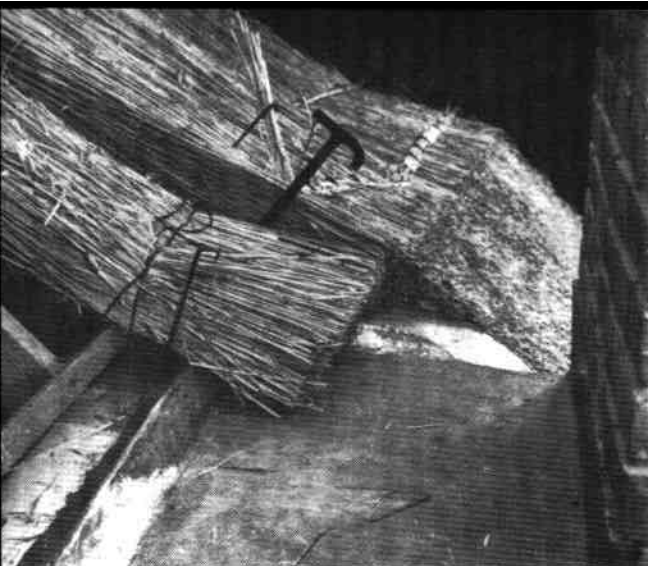
Combed wheat reed

Having completed the courses to a point level with the platform behind the chimney-stack, preparation is made for the lead stepped-flashing, by fixing the lead straps.

Before any more reed is laid, the lead-work must be carried out, as part of the lead is covered by the thatch. The stepped-flashing is fitted and the ends of the lead straps are turned over.

The lead gutter behind the chimney-stack is now fitted and, as will be seen from the illustration, the end is dressed on the reed where it overlaps and is in line with the side-flashing.





Thatching is now continued by tying in the wadds to form a short eave behind the chimney. A tilting fillet is fixed at the appropriate distance from the first batten to which the wadds are tied. The lead may be carried up as far as this batten if desired.

All the eaves-wadds are tied in to the full width of the chimney.

A small brow-course is laid on the eaves-wadds and the whole is secured with a sway.

Combed wheat reed

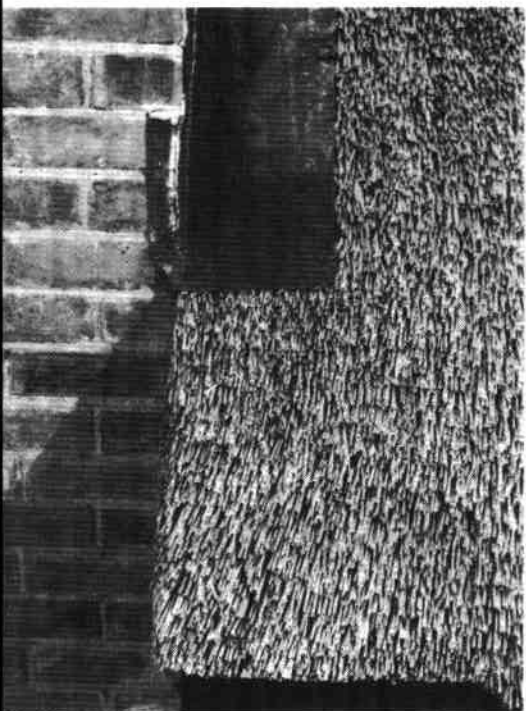


The eaves-hook is used to cut the cheek in line with the angle of the brickwork.

Exerting pressure with the left arm, the hook is again used to cut the eave horizontally, following which the work is trimmed with a pair of shears to straighten the edges.

The two cheeks are cut and trimmed.





A firm solid corner has been obtained by turning the reed towards the cutting-line.

Approaching the valley, the eaves-wadds gradually turn towards the angle of the valley-board, whilst the wadd in the actual valley angle is tied in separately to ensure its correct position.

More wadds are tied in and the valley angle is turned.



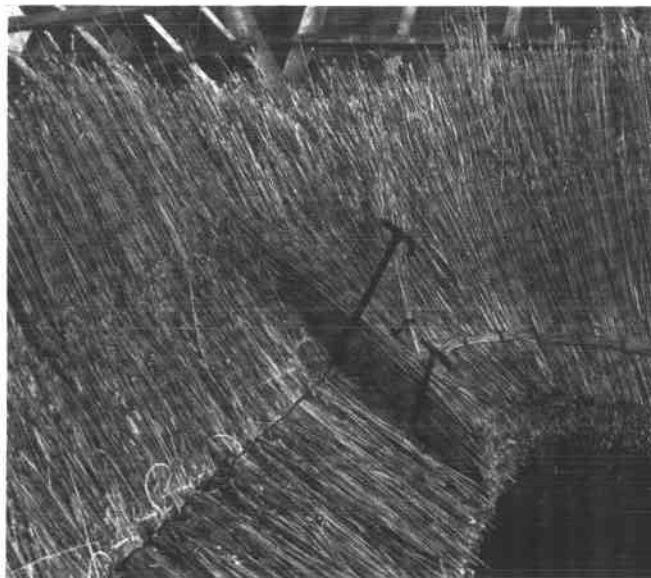
Combed wheat reed



At this stage a packing layer may be laid within the area indicated by the two needles. The object of this is to take the sharp angle out of the valley and to increase the pitch of the courses.

The work of laying the first course now proceeds round the valley, after the back-filling has been placed behind the eaves-wadds.

The first course turning the valley, and the importance of keeping the reed in line with the eaves-wadds, is shown.



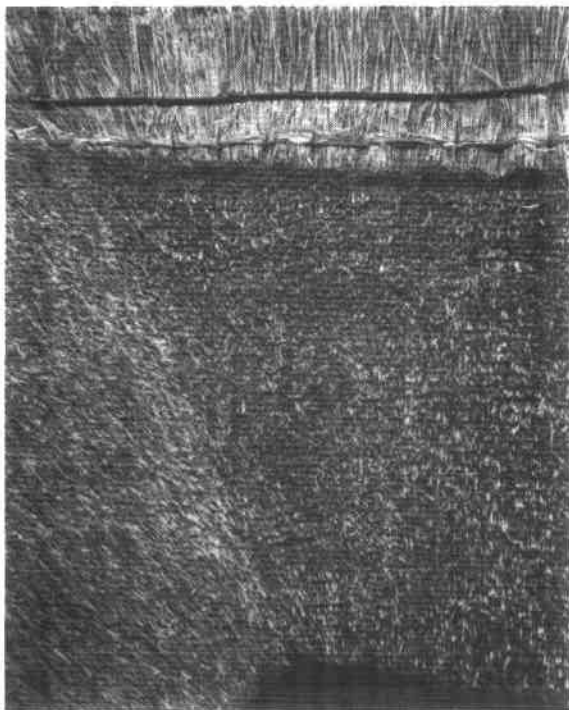


The first course is carried through and the hazel sway is fixed. The joint in the valley angle is made by inserting one sway below the other.

The second course now approaches the valley. Gradually turning towards the angle, the reed is kept in line with the previous course.

Continuing the second course, a bunch is laid in the valley. Light pressure is applied with the left hand, the other hand being used to palm the bunch into position before the temporary sway is fixed.

Combed wheat reed

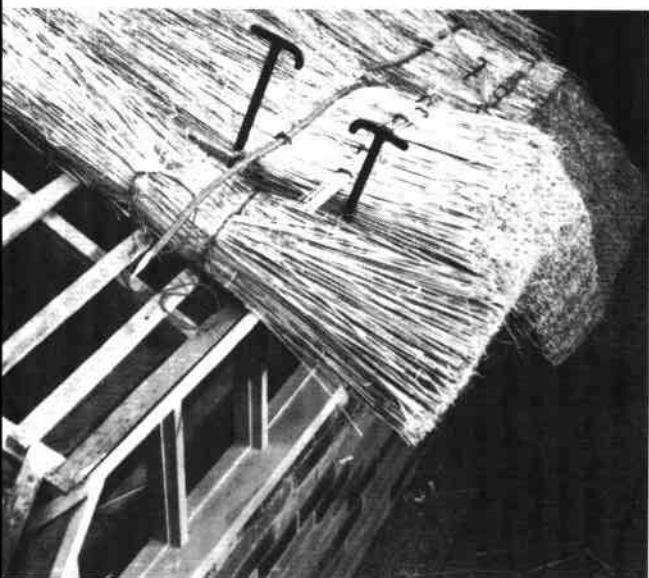


With the second course completed in the valley, the third course follows. This is one of the places where the small leggett is useful for dressing and shaping the valley.

The third course is laid and swayed down and the partially swept valley takes shape. The water is distributed over as wide an area as possible at this point.

Windows vary in shape and size and in the position they occur in the roof. They can make or mar the general appearance and a little careful thought when planning produces a combination of character and maximum source of light. The window illustrated is simple in every way, but it does produce a very pleasant undulating thatch-line.





The eaves wadds are tied in over the window, where they continue to follow the vertical direction of the rafters.

Next the brow or first course sweeps over the window and the previously loose sway is fixed down.

As the first course sweeps over the window the position of the sway is seen in relation to the eaves.

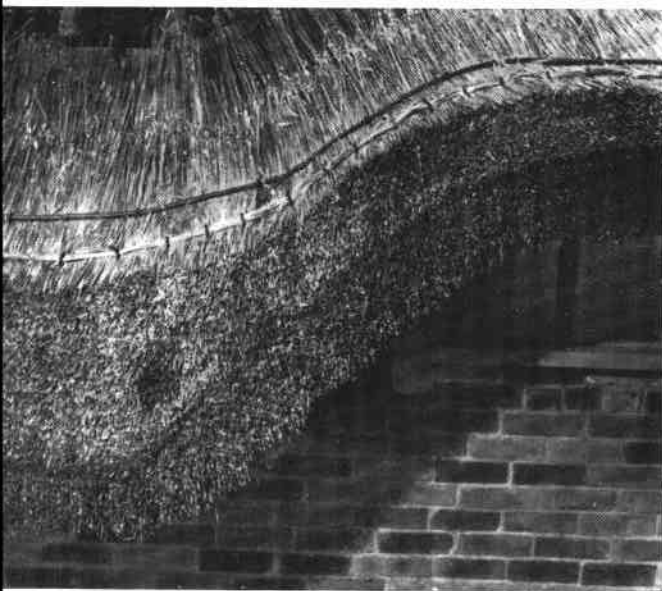
Combed wheat reed

Work resumes on the lower eave-line and the eaves-wadds are tied in from left to right.

All the eaves-wadds are tied in and the back-filling is laid.

As the second course approaches the window it is faded out at its own level to allow for the rise caused by the window structure.





The same process occurs on the left-hand side of the window where, after the brow-course has been laid, the second course is started from the point of gradation.

This second course is dressed in and the two sways merge together as one.

The third course sweeps right over the window, as do all the succeeding courses. The surface of the work gradually levels itself out before the ridge-line is reached.



Combed wheat reed

Cutting the eaves is usually carried out at a later stage of the work, unless of course light is obscured or windows are prevented from being opened. Starting in the centre of the window the eaves-hook is used, working from left to right.

Half the window area is cut out and trimmed into line with the shears.

Working again from the centre of the window the eaves cutting is completed, proceeding from right to left.





This pleasant overhang gives ample protection to the window as well as affording maximum daylight.

The full sweep of the window is seen. Two or more such windows side by side would form a most pleasing architectural feature.

Another type of window is one which occurs in the roof. This means that provision must be made in its construction to allow for a 12" (300 mm) thickness of thatch to be carried through in front of it. The sill should be ploughed and the lead apron fixed before thatching commences. Eaves-wadds are tied in against the windows.





A brow-course is carried through and swayed down.

The area in front of the window begins to fill up after the second course is laid. Rather than cut off the tops of the course they may be twisted in to form a solid knuckle.

A portion of reed is taken in both hands and is bent at the appropriate level.

The top portion is then twisted inwards and the knuckle pressed home.

