

# Small Woodland Owners' Group

To aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British Woodland  
[www.woodlands.co.uk/swog](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/swog)

## Newsletter August 2008

All SWOG events are free of charge unless otherwise stated.  
The Small Woodland Owners Group is co-supported and sponsored by Woodlands.co.uk

Contact [tracy@woodlands.co.uk](mailto:tracy@woodlands.co.uk)  
07930 589 508

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## WoodFair discount

I hope by now you have received your letter to allow you discounted entry to the WoodFair at Bentley Motor Museum. Don't forget to bring the letter with you as without it you will have to pay full price. It is a great day out – and please come and say hello to us on the Woodlands.co.uk stand, or the WoodNet stand. We hope to meet you at lunchtime too, meet at the Woodlands tent. (Free fudge!!)

Thanks

[tracy@woodlands.co.uk](mailto:tracy@woodlands.co.uk)

## Notes from the last SWOG meeting

Alan Sage has written up some notes for us on Management planning for our woodlands.  
You can read the notes on our website, in the articles section

[www.woodlands.co.uk/swog](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/swog)

# SWOG Meeting

Our next meeting is on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008  
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex.

We plan to have a couple of short talks in the morning, followed by group discussion / practical session in the afternoon.

Please send requests and suggestions to me. Suggestions so far:

- Tree inspection for safety.
- Building toilets
- Tool sharpening
- Finding contacts for work and machinery
- Planning and felling applications
- Dead wood
- Ponds.

There is also a request for us to bring our best tools and five tips each.  
Start preparing!

[tracy@woodlands.co.uk](mailto:tracy@woodlands.co.uk)

## The SWOG skills register is still growing

Bob says:

We are woodland managers but based down in North Cornwall and can offer advice on many aspects of woodland management and development. Possibly more usefully though, we specialise in the design and construction of bespoke dry composting toilets and have built many, mainly in woodlands, sooner or later most people get fed up of doing the walk of shame with a spade! Alongside this we work with most types of timber buildings from woodsheds to cabins and are more than happy to offer free advice to forum users.

See [www.woodlands.co.uk/swog](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/swog) to contact Bob  
and to find more people offering their skills.

## Discussion from the Website Roadside Trees

[www.woodlands.co.uk/swog](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/swog)

(Please note, these are opinions and information from individuals and are not legal advice. Please check all information)

### Roadside Trees

**Martin asked:** My wood has a boundary with a minor road. I have a couple of legal questions. If one of the trees rooted on my plot falls into the road and takes out the BT line for example, am I responsible? If one of the branches that overhang the boundary breaks off and takes down the BT is that my responsibility too? Any thoughts?

**Tracy:** I met a BT engineer in Rye, and grilled him... he told me:

If a tree is old, dangerous, hanging over a line and it falls on the line, the landowner will be charged for the work

If it uproots in a storm, BT will do the clearing and fixing free of charge.

If you want to deal with the trees before they fall, you need to get someone in to do it and pay them (not BT). This would mean a tree surgeon/ climber and all the insurance and equipment.

If while the tree expert is dealing with it and it goes wrong and breaks the line, the landowner has to pay.

Hope that makes sense.

BT no longer deal with the problem in advance- they don't have tree teams anymore.

**Richard Scholfield** (from woodlands.co.uk) We should be aware of any underground pipes and cables crossing our woodland. These will have been brought to our attention through searches when purchased.

### Overhead

First check to see if any overhead lines on or fronting your land are electricity or telephone. Electricity lines. The regional transmission companies manage their overhead lines, in the Southeast it seems to be EDF Networks their main contact no. is: 0845 601 4516.

<http://www.edfenergy.com/products-services/networks/about-networks/index.shtml> They will keep their lines clear but if you have a line with trees near or leaning on them phone and they will come and clear the lines. Obviously don't touch a tree leaning on a power line the cables have no insulation! Maintaining clear lines is their responsibility but they will ask permission when doing routine clearing. Make sure their contractors do a tidy job!

### Telephone

BT look after their own lines, after a fashion. BT do not do routine clearing but take the view that if the lines are still up and have no faults then they are left to look after themselves weaving through the treetops. If a tree falls on a telephone line causing a fault or wears through the insulation then they will send out their telephone engineers with a tree contractor and do the repairs and any tree clearing, all at their cost.

If you have a tree, which, for some other reason, you want to fell next to a telephone line, then contact BT and they will come and drop the line while you fell. To contact the relevant department take the numbers on the nearest poles, find the nearest phone number (to help them locate your site) and call faults. They will put you through to the relevant department.

Some roadside trees will be Highways responsibility. In 20 years we've never been asked to contribute to any line clearance!

**Greyman:**

Of course the insurance company that you will have for your public liability insurance with will probably think differently. You should also understand that if your trees fall onto the highway and the council come and clear it up you will be billed for it - there is a case rumbling around at the moment mentioned else where on the forum that discusses this. We think this will come under statutory charges and will not be covered by standard insurance policies but that may be open to discussion.

I am concerned that throughout this forum very few people are concerned about their woodland insurance as they should be. Even at it's basic level the RAP insurance does cover you for third party damages but does stipulate you must look after your trees. If you know that works carried out on your land may have made the remaining trees susceptible to weather conditions etc you should be doing something about it. Even on a moral standpoint would you really say that someone else should pick up the bill if one of your trees falls on a car, horse rider etc, etc?

Would you like to contribute to this discussion, ask questions or read more as it develops? Then take a look at the forum, [www.woodlands.co.uk/swog](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/swog)

## Insurance

**Duncan says:**

I made a claim via RAP, which is now in dispute. RAP are a 'group policy holder' - they deal with a Broker (Willis in Dundee) and the insurance company is Royal & Sun Alliance. My circumstance was that a healthy mature chestnut on my boundary which fell in a storm across the A26 where it blocked the road for a while. E Sussex CC charged me over £500 to clear it from the road. Hence I claimed.

Willis sent out a loss adjuster (Agrical) to inspect on site, and his report confirmed it was a healthy tree. The dispute is now between the Council who believe they are legally entitled to bill me, and Willis (broker) who's first view is that because the tree was healthy its was not my fault, and therefore there the Council has no claim against me. If the tree were diseased or dead, it implies they would pay up because I would be liable and the Council could demonstrate my negligence; here I would be covered!! In other words, "don't manage your trees and you're insured: Manage your trees and you're not covered".

A bird told me that the problem with my claim is with ref. to another claim for £quarter-million, where a similar principle in causing dispute - where a 'healthy branch' fell on a car in a storm and caused either a serious injury or a death: and they are suing the wood owner. I think Insurance MUST cover healthy trees to make any sense!! I have asked the broker to reconsider their position and pay up on well-managed trees causing a problem, which is the basis of the RAP advice. Any other advice out there?

## Greyman

I have decided to post the reply we had in an email from Willis. The words are copied straight from the email and not transcribed:

"The cover you have under this policy is for your Public Liability as the owner of the growing timber on your land. In other words if a 3rd party suffers a loss, on your land, due to your negligence as the owner of the growing timber then cover would attach.

Yours friends, family or volunteers are not covered for Public Liability.

There is also no cover for your Public Liability should you undertake maintenance work.

The policy with RAP is a simple bog standard PL policy and the premium reflects this.

Unfortunately there are no add ons to the cover available."

I think this tells us everything we need to know about the level of cover.

As for risk assessments I think you need to be very careful what you write and how you write it - I do have a little knowledge in this area- If you do not employ more than 4 people (we don't employ anyone) you do not have to have written Risk Assessments - you just have to show that you have assessed the hazards (what can harm) and quantified the risks (how likely is it to happen.) Obviously it is in ones interest to have some proof of the fact you have considered the hazards and risks for the tasks and activities you carry out in your woods. You also need to 'consider special cases'- do the people carrying out the tasks have the required training and knowledge and capabilities; consider ages - will there be young persons involved; will special tools and machines used. As you can see there is care needed in what you consider. I do not set myself up as a source or authority in all things H&S, just suggest that people look at what they do, who they let help them and any contingency plans they have for incidents and emergencies.

Be Safe

The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act ([www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.pdf)) covers this with guidance on what is required. Page 4 gives examples of who could be considered Employees and then goes on to give examples of those who might not be considered Employees. The caveat on this is that if in doubt you should seek legal advice - the general get out for grey areas.

**This is obviously a topic that has us all interested and something important that we need to continue to look into. Please keep an eye on the forum (website) for up to date information.**

## Netherfield centre courses

[www.thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk](http://www.thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk)

6th & 7th October (tbc)	Stock Fencing (2 days)	£120
Friday 10th October	Charcoal Making	£60
Friday 17th October	Besom Broom making (half day)	£40
3rd & 4th November (tbc)	Post & Rail Fencing (2 days)	£120
Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	Hedge Laying	£60
Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> November	Hedge Laying	£60
Friday 6th February	Hedge Laying	£60
Friday 13th February	Hedge Laying	£60
Friday 6th March	Trug Making	£60

## Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex

Date	Course	Cost	Description
26/09/08	WoodNet Producer Group	Free of charge	Supporting one another in adding value to wood, e.g. charcoal making, firewood, fencing, stakes, timber construction. Information on grants, marketing and more. Open to any contractors, landowners or buyers interested in developing the group.
28/09/08	Growing Edible Woodland Fungi	£30	Learn everything you need to know to start growing edible woodland mushrooms in your woodland, garden or allotment for pleasure or profit. Workshop Leader: Richard Mansfield Clark, of the Rustic Mushroom Company, with expert mycologist, Adrian Ogden.
04/10/08	Fungi ID walk	£20	Join Bryan Bullen for a walk in the woods, and learn to identify the principal fungi groups present at this time of year as well as the individual species names of the more common mushrooms and toadstools. Although not intended as a foray for collecting edibles, advice will be given on what is safe and what is poisonous, as well as the place of fungi in the ecology of woodland
18/10/08	Wood Products – storage, seasoning and marketing	£30	Learn about wood types and their uses; find out which lengths are useful for cut coppice, how to store your wood and which markets you could sell to. Tim Saunders from Rother Forestry will guide you through the process from cutting, to storage and sales.
22/11/08	Woodland Archaeology	£30	Learn to identify archaeological features that have been protected by the presence of woodland. Understand why woodlands are not recognised as very important archaeological landscapes. Suitable for general interest, woodland owners, foresters, coppice cutters, woodland managers, people involved in community woodlands etc.
05/12/08	Make a rustic bird table	£75	Choose the correct wood for a bird table, harvest your own tree and make a bird table to take home, with the expert guidance of John Waller
14 <sup>th</sup> March, 25 <sup>th</sup> April, 9 <sup>th</sup> May, 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2009	Managing woodland for Biodiversity	Apprx £60 per day	Patrick Roper, consultant Ecologist, is developing a 4 day course, including woodland types, flora, fauna and management planning. Please email me if you are interested in knowing more. Price to be confirmed
Date to be confirmed when we have 11 people	Forestry First Aid Please register interest.	Approx £70	This training is suitable for private individuals (e.g. woodland owners working in their own woodland) and commercial foresters, coppice cutters, woodland managers, arborists, etc. The H&SE 1-day Appointed Person First Aid Certificate is valid for three years.

Contact Tracy for more information and a booking form

[training@woodnet.org.uk](mailto:training@woodnet.org.uk)

or phone 07930 589 508

[www.woodnet.org.uk](http://www.woodnet.org.uk)

Please note that due to rising costs and reduced funding, our course prices will need to increase next year.



## Other courses

BTCV are running coppicing courses in the autumn, in East Sussex, West Sussex and Hampshire.

They also do courses on Tree ID, Tree planting and care, pond creation and using tools.

<http://www2.btcv.org.uk>

The Sustainability Centre in West Sussex has got courses on: domestic chainsaw use, practical coppicing and more. Have a look on the SWOG website for more, or on their site:

<http://www.earthworks-trust.com/>

## Chainsaw courses

### Chainsaw users refreshers course

John asks:

I am trying to get together a group of four people for a one day chainsaw retraining course as required for BTCV public liability insurance. Participants should already have a chainsaw license with NPTC CS30 and CS31b. The course will cost £85 per person and will be held in New England Wood, Cuckfield, on a date to be arranged between participants and the trainer.

If you are interested, please contact me by email: [j\\_pilkington363@btinternet.com](mailto:j_pilkington363@btinternet.com), or by telephone on 01444 482166.

### Felling Small Trees: Chainsaw Course

Three SWOG members did a course with David Rossney – well worth it! We learned how to maintain, sharpen and clean a saw and about safety gear. We then went into the woods and were taught logging, making a stool (!) and how to safely fell small trees. Although this course comes with a LANTRA qualification, it is assessed by the trainer, which takes some of the stress out of the course. If you are interested in chainsaw training, contact me, (Tracy) or David Rossney ([esusforestry@btinternet.com](mailto:esusforestry@btinternet.com))



Stools made by Mike with a chainsaw

# Kent FREE Trees Scheme Twenty five trees for free!

If you live within the boroughs of Sevenoaks, Dartford, Gravesham, London Borough of Bexley, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling, Swale, Tunbridge Wells or the districts of Canterbury and Thanet then all you have to do is apply.



The deadline for applications is 31st October.  
For further information and an application form please call  
Kent County Council on 08458 247 600

[www.kent.gov.uk/environment/our-environment/natural-environment/kent-free-trees-scheme.htm](http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment/our-environment/natural-environment/kent-free-trees-scheme.htm)





## Sheds in woods

A report by the Small Woodland Owners' Group (SWOG)

Many of the woodland owners who came to the first SWOG meeting, on March 29 2008 at Flimwell, emphasised the value of a shed for looking after and enjoying woods.

Some, however, had difficulty with planning permission. This is in spite of the exemption, subject to certain conditions, from the need for consent for buildings used for forestry purposes.

So, at the second SWOG meeting, on July 19 at Plumpton, owners completed a questionnaire telling us why they would like a shed or, if they already had one, the benefits they had found.

We can now report on the analysis of these questionnaires, as follows:

- We had responses for 14 woods without sheds and for 13 woods already with sheds. The woods are mostly between 5 and 14 acres in area.
- Confirming the discussion at Flimwell, the questionnaires reflect a unanimous view in favour of sheds (in one case interpreted as underground secure storage).
- The prime use for a shed is storage. All 27 respondents quoted forestry tools and materials; all but three quoted camping kit, tables, chairs, kettles, etc; nine quoted things to help children with woodland activities; one owner quoted green woodworking tools
- Apart from storage, a shed is seen as useful for shelter from the weather by 60% of owners.
- Twelve respondents gave the collection of rainwater from the roof of the shed for washing as a benefit.
- These uses can enhance the enjoyment and satisfaction from a wood by, for instance:
- Enabling children to learn more about nature from reference books kept in the shed (ten respondents) and get more out of playing in the woods, with ropes, ladders, etc, available (nine respondents)
- Facilitating study of bio-diversity; sculpting in wood; as a hide for bird watching, for tree seed propagation and keeping reference literature on trees and wildlife.
- Encouraging friends to come along for a day to do some conservation work (16 respondents). One respondent said: "People have fallen in love with visiting the wood because the shed is available, particularly at times of bad weather, and when children want some sleep/retreat time without being out in the open. With the small stove and some paraffin and candle lights, the shelter it provides has turned many a washout day into a memorable and simulating visit."
- Another respondent said: "To be able to erect a shed, even if the size is restricted, without needing to go through planning application etc, would make managing a small woodland so much easier"
- Several environmental benefits of sheds are identified by owners, including:

- The use of a smaller car (a third of respondents);
- Travel to the wood by bike or train (a third of respondents, plus one who would walk to the wood from home);
- Fewer car journeys, because easier camping facilitates staying for more than a day at a time (over half of respondents)
- More than half of owners said that a shed can reduce track damage, by lightening the laden weight of their car and by making it possible to leave the car at the roadside when tracks are muddy.
- Most owners had found, or could find, somewhere in their woods where a shed would be invisible from any road or public footpath.
- Everyone with a shed, or wanting one, favoured careful siting to minimise any environmental impact, and to deter intruders. To support sheds all owners used or plan to use rows of bricks, large stones, oak or chestnut logs, or sleepers, rather than laying concrete foundations, so that no permanent mark is left on the landscape. One respondent suggested a design resembling an iron age round house.
- A wooden shed, either prefabricated or, as several people suggested, made from timber from the wood itself, was favoured. Some want or have a steel container, painted green, though one believed that anything built in a wood should be built as much as possible from produce of their own wood.
- As to size of shed: about half of the existing ones are quite small (6 ft by 4 ft) and about half are around 8 ft by 18 ft. The size most wanted for woods without sheds is 10 ft by 12 ft

The last word, summarising the gist of comments, might be this, from an owner wanting a 6 ft by 8 ft prefabricated shed, supported on oak or chestnut logs: "At present, I leave what I can of little value inside the oil drum that I use for burning. A shed would be luxury indeed."

SWOG sees this survey as confirming the need to take up with the authorities the case for allowing owners sheds to look after and enjoy their woods.

Keep up to date with SWOG activities and more discussion and articles on our website

[www.woodlands.co.uk/swog](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/swog)

and please let me know if you would like to be removed from this mailing list.

Tracy