

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk

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June 2009

Planning in woodlands

Problem or opportunity?

SWOG meeting 11th July, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex. 9:30 – 12:30.

For woodland owners

Planning is mostly about 'development'.

Woodlands are generally well protected by planning policy, so the amount of development that may be allowed within them is closely controlled. However, in recent years, the public's interest in woodlands has grown significantly, particularly for leisure and recreational use. This itself raises questions of policy. The workshop will look broadly at:

- The planning regime as it presently relates to woodlands
- Other relevant codes that influence what can and cannot be done
- How your local planning department thinks and works!
- Decisions digest
- Problems and opportunities
- Trends and the future

The Authorities' vision for woodlands may well be to keep them much as they are. What is your vision?

So that the talk can be tailored to address specific concerns, it would be helpful if you could email Tracy in advance with a brief description of any particular issues or concerns that you may have. Her address is tracy@woodlands.co.uk

Nicholas Ide is a Planning Consultant with Batcheller Thacker who have offices in Tunbridge Wells, Battle and Haywards Heath. For four years, he has headed up the Planning and Development Department. Prior to that, he acquired over 25 years' Local Government experience with about half of that time as a Surrey based Chief Planning Officer. If you wish to talk to Nicholas prior to the event, please feel free to call him on 01892 509285.

Book your place with Tracy by 25th June please.

Events South East

SWOG SE meeting

11th July, 9:30am – 4pm
Morning on planning,
afternoon on other stuff!
WEC Flimwell, E Sussex

Moth trapping and ID

Saturday 17th July
(corrected date!)
9pm – 12 midnight
Woodland near Rye

Fungi ID walk

Sunday 27th September
Woodland near Northiam

Bentley Woodfair

18th – 20th Sept.

WoodlandsTV.co.uk

Tree bogs

Interviews with SWOG members

Soil testing

Butchering a deer

Tree thinning

And more...

Inside this issue

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Mosses and liverworts in Wales

“Semi-natural broadleaf woodlands are often very rich in mosses and liverworts - growing on trees, on the ground, and on rock outcrops. New plantations, especially of conifers are usually less rich.

Wales is fortunate in having some particularly fine broadleaf woods, particularly concentrated in North-west Wales. These are usually damp, and relatively free of pollution and disturbance by man.

The mosses and liverworts to be found depend to some extent on the nature of the soil and underlying geology (which will also be reflected in other plants, including the trees). Thus, an ash-dominated woodland on a soil rich in calcium and with a neutral or basic pH will have a somewhat different range of species to an acidic, nutrient-poor upland oakwood. “

This is from the interesting website, <http://home.clara.net/adhale/bryos/woodland.htm> which outlines many of the mosses and liverworts in Wales, with photos and information on location.

Heather has written a great deal about mosses in her woodland diary: *Mosses are simple green land plants, which thrive in moist shaded places. They have leaves and a stem but no roots, usually being attached to the ground by delicate colourless or brown threads called rhizoids. The growth habits of the mosses in Long Wood are either erect, often with unbranched stems and described as acrocarpous, or pleurocarpous meaning they are prostrate with short lateral branches. Mosses have leaves in spirals or sometimes two flat rows. In many the leaves are only one cell thick. The plant contains the male (antheridia) and female (archegonia) sexual structures and requires water for the male cells to migrate to the archegonium. After fertilisation the egg develops into a sporecontaining capsule on a stalk called a seta. The capsule sheds spores as a fine dust and this then develops into new plants.*

You can read the rest of this here: www.woodlands.co.uk/owning-a-wood/discovering-longwood/January.pdf

Events Wales

Wales Biodiversity week June

Events coming up
<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/woodlands/events/>

Wood Fest

North Wales Wood Fair
5-7 June

If your wood's in Wales, Tracy has sent you a letter about it; please contact her if you didn't get it
www.woodfestwales.co.uk/north

Charcoal making course 9th June

<http://www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk/>

Wanted

Butterfly recorders in Wales, if you can help contact Katie
survey@butterfly-conservation.org

Woodlands.co.uk blogs

Woodfair list
Orienteering
Common plant guide

And much, much more!

www.woodlands.co.uk/blog



Butterfly Conservation walk

During May we had a butterfly ID and information day in woods near Rye. This was led by Steve Wheatley of Butterfly Conservation (BC). There are BC groups all over the country, well worth getting in touch with your local representative.

We started with Steve giving us a talk about butterflies, and why identifying them and keeping centralised records is important. He needs lots of people like us to note down what we see and send records to him periodically, so that they can keep track of species numbers and use the information in scientific research and also in planning permission issues and other stuff like that. He also gave us some tips on how to ID butterflies, including the differences between the various white species, and using knowledge on which months the butterflies can be seen to help narrow down the choices. We took a walk along the wayleave and also along our wildlife corridor, stopping at various points to talk about what we were seeing. Mike and I had coppiced along an old ride last winter to let more light into the wood and to encourage butterflies and birds. There is a lot of honeysuckle in this section and we are pleased to see so many butterflies and birds using their new road! (You can see more about our woodland in our blog, www.peplers.blogspot.com) There was patchy cloud, so it wasn't a perfect day for butterfly spotting, but we still saw quite a few, as well as a beautiful adder!

It was a brilliant time to relax and chatter and find out loads more information. Anyone else like to hold an event in their woods? Please get in touch with me.



Events North

Great Yorkshire show

www.woodlands.co.uk/about-us/woodfairs.php

Come along and meet us.

More information to follow.

Please email me your postal address if you own woods in the North.

Courses, events and products

www.yorkshirehurdles.com

Scottish Native woods

Courses, events, volunteering

www.scottishnativewoods.org.uk

Woodland Survival crafts

www.woodlandssurvivalcrafts.com

Woodland management advice

www.cumbriawoodlands.co.uk

Yorwoods

Supporting forestry in Yorkshire

www.yorwoods.org.uk

Details of events and courses needed, please email Tracy with information

Living Woods Magazine

Articles include

Eating squirrel

Firewood moisture

History of woodlands.co.uk

The PR of forestry

Living in a yurt

Safer chainsawing

www.livingwoods.wordpress.com

My woodland in Wales, by Martin

Definitely right place, at the right time and did the right thing. If you cannot tell so far in that brief introduction - I consider the wood purchased in May 2000 to be a great place, a fantastic hobby and a truly great adventure. The initial recce 'felt good' - Mid Wales, quiet, accessible, damp and with positive imagination, a source of endless adventures.

A second visit to the wood was arranged with a mate - his words still haunt - "*remember in the Predator film - it's like after the bomb has gone off*". A small gotcha - The wood wasn't actually a wood, it was 6 months before. In between, BSW had clear felled the acres and what was left were neat brush rows, stumps and pine needle compost.

"See it as it will be", "hmmm" was the cautious response. The long and the short- the tender offer was submitted and the confirming phone call was received. The paper work came weeks later confirming the detail - including the Forestry Commission replanting conditions - to be planted up by June 2002. Phew!!!



More wood visits - some reading up - "*Look around the site at existing trees and plant those*" was the general advice. Still unsure I "purchased" a consultant who came, looked and did a report. Bolstered by his advice and the offer by Coed Cymru to fill in the Woodland Grant Scheme forms had me well on the way to getting the site planted up. The site was wet - in places very wet - in fact so wet I was able to push a 5 ft metal bar into the ground. The abundance of cotton grass gives the game away to those able to recognise indicator species - peat and fairly deep peat at that.

Nothing I had read up to that point made an issue of peat - just another soil type - acidic - not ideal for the majority of species, though Sitka thrive.

A 360 10-ton tracked digger was hired with a driver to clean out the existing ditches. He arrived on the Saturday with his digger and set about the task - a week later - I saw the evidence of his fraught week. The digger had got stuck to the extent another digger was brought to site to pull / push / cajole the stuck one out. Eventually free, the legacy hole in the ground can still be found. The digger left, leaving spotless ditches, a rank odour and the water logged land drying out.

The idea of a couple of ponds had been playing on my mind so with the land dryer than it was, a different contractor was found to dig out two ponds. The driver was a 'tidy' bloke (Welsh slang), seemed to enjoy the challenge and came up with some ideas on pond shapes and the way to do it (without getting stuck either!).

Another week passed and "wow", some ponds! With summer 2001 on its way out, there was some tree planting to be done. Various tree nurseries were contacted. A good offer meant that that all the

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trees were to be planted and supplied by a well known nursery. December 2001 - men arrived, trees arrived (some hours later) and after 5 days the site was planted up. Roll on spring 2002.

Species chosen - Sessile Oak, Rowan and Downy Birch - why? The Birch and Rowan were to be seen around the site already. From the reading done - both high in wildlife value plus Birch is a good firewood and Rowan, well; the berries look great in autumn!

Sessile Oak was chosen as a long shot at producing some meaningful timber added to which, on the hills next to the wood they were thriving. The Forestry Commission were happy with the species plus I was aiming not to use coniferous species.



The site is two-thirds flat with one third sloping and does not readily show its altitude of 1000 ft above sea level, owning the surrounding green pastured hills. The reason the land is flat came to light when the ponds were dug - beneath a varying depth of peat is clay. The heavy grey glutinous smooth clay acts as an impermeable layer, which, over many years, growing and decomposing vegetation had evened out the land to give this 'flat' look to the land.

The beginning of any summer is an exciting time - with a mixture of elation and depression depending on the state of the trees. Some of the trees were thriving, some were surviving and some dying. In theory, in June 2002, the wood was done and in the main, it was. Since that time there has been a predictable "to-do list" for the seasons. Summer - find the trees, cut brambles, spray and mark out the failed ones, autumn and winter - plant new trees.

Between the direct tree-related work there is always a trickle of small jobs and projects, from fencing and track repairs to installing nest boxes.

Morale varies with the weather, often raised when using the Kelly Kettle to boil water for coffee.

The weeds, soft rush and brambles certainly have done well over the years and a timely reminder from the Forestry Commission confirmed I was losing a battle. Trees were getting overwhelmed - with the decomposing vegetation smothering the "oh so slow" growing oaks in the winters.

A different approach to tree planting was taken. Up to that point protective spirals had not been used namely because there were no rabbits and my expectancy was that the trees would 'take' quickly owing the moist area. In reality, weed competition and voles are currently my challenges. Hindsight is great and I would be the first to admit I should have used them from the beginning. Finding the trees is so much easier, Voles are being deterred and there is a strange sense of neatness seeing rows of tree spirals.

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I keep coming back to the geology of the site, as there is little uniformity to the wood as it stands today. In places the wood looks like a young wood should and reached the 'jungle' stage. Yet in other places - the Oaks are alive but are barely a foot in height after seven years. I am incredulous to the fact that within yards of these stunted trees are other Oaks, which have attained a height of four feet. The birch regeneration in areas, seeded from neighbouring Downy birch, has been prolific. The last conifer crop I guess must have had Douglas fir, as this too has been prolific. I am thankful for the regeneration as it saved me a lot of work and to the uninitiated people think I have planted.

I am now at the stage where thinning the regeneration is on the "to-do list" for next winter. This regeneration is at its best on the dryer peat and in some areas there is still enough wetness for sphagnum moss to continue to grow (an acre or so). The Internet has come along way since I bought the wood and the articles on conservation of peat habitat have increased too. The current knowledge seems to be the peat habitat is declining, taking with it the unique ecosystem and the ability to lock away CO₂. This leaves me several choices - neither is a definite right or definite wrong: leave the peat area as it is - currently degrading with trees growing around the dryer fringes, or maybe cut down all the trees around the sphagnum area, block up the ditches and try to restore in order to enlarge and make viable. Both have their merits - some might say don't worry, in the grand scheme - the area is not that big to make a difference - other may say every little helps.

Despite being taught that every good story has a beginning, middle and an end, I don't feel there is an end. The wood carries on, nature at its best and nature at its worst, with me, the owner, trying to manage with my knowledge and my lack of knowledge. The adventure continues and hindsight will continue to give the best answers.

Discussions on the SWOG forum

Economics of managing conifer woodland

Involving children and schools

Wild woods

Tree preservation orders

Chainsaws

Firepits

Changing the wood name

Coppice and tax issues

Heather

Tree thinning

Come and join in with the discussion on the forum, a great place to meet others and chat about what interests you.

www.swog.org.uk



News from the woods

Fly tipping problems by Sam

I have a problem with people dumping rubbish illegally along the track through my piece of woodland. This has been mainly farmyard rubbish such as tractor tyres and empty plastic containers. The tyres are perhaps the worst problem because you have to pay to get them disposed of properly. I actually buried a couple of them using a mini digger that I hired to excavate a track in the woods. I'm sure that somebody will tell me that this is ecologically unsound but these things are huge and will take a lot of time and energy to move to a proper disposal centre. In my experience the local council are not very helpful. They will consider setting up a camera to try to catch offenders but don't offer any help in trying to move the rubbish. My advice to anybody else suffering this problem is to look carefully at the rubbish for signs of where it comes from. Recently 5 large plastic chemical drums on pallets were left on the lane.



One of the drums still had the label of the original supplier. I phoned that company and from a tracking number on the drum were able to locate the local company that had bought these drums. The supplier then put some pressure on the local company and they collected the drums and removed them. I think that what happens here is that a man with a large van gets paid for removal and disposal of rubbish. He dumps the rubbish and keeps the disposal fee for himself. But if the companies / farms then have to pay to get the rubbish

moved again then the man with the van will lose that business in future.

I could tell you more about the large metal items that mysteriously arrive in my wood and then disappear a few weeks later (presumably when the thieves have found a dealer prepared to buy them for their scrap value). However I don't want to be spreading too much doom and gloom about some of the baggage that comes with owning a piece of woodland. So I'll finish by saying that bluebells and foxgloves are flourishing this spring along the tracks that I have cut through the thick bracken and this helps to make the effort I put into cutting the tracks all seem worthwhile."

Anyone else have this problem? Do you have any advice to share? Please add comments on the discussion forum.

www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=254&replies=1#post-1167

Other news

Graeme says: Enjoying the woods is an understatement! Learning more each year and friends love it too!

Trish says: We have recorded peacocks, lots of large white, pearl fritillaries and on Sunday one spotted brown wood butterfly. The peacocks love to sun themselves on the roofs of the beehives. There is a buzzard hanging around the newly coppiced chestnut and for the first time the woods are full of bird song and bats at twilight.

There are so many bumble bees of various sorts who seem to love my little forest garden patch. It is just so great to see the rewards of all our hard work over the last 12 months.

And all the early flowering purple orchids are in amongst the wild garlic and plenty yellow archangel. Pity they all finish off along with the bluebells pretty shortly. I live to get up to the woods each weekend, away from my crazy job in London.



Chestnut Palings by Toby

Here is a picture of Aly using our paling machine.



It's ready for public events; if anyone wants to book us (or buy cleft chestnut fencing), get in touch. We love it and it always gets a lot of interest. I got it last year, then spent a few weeks freeing up the chain and cogs as it was completely seized. It was made by Drake and Fletcher in Kent maybe about 40-50 years ago, though I'd love some more information.

Normally it would run on rails along the workshop floor but I made mobile rails and wire spools to take it around to show people. It is a joy to use and takes about 30 minutes to make a roll. We'll be taking it round a few shows, steam galas and events this summer. Including the Weald Wood Fair, which will be a homecoming for this piece of coppice history as I live in Herefordshire.

I'm thinking of getting some replicas made up so small scale woodlanders can make their own paling without having to fork out for an automatic one, (anyone interested?) it would be great to see these walkalongs in use again.

Contact Toby Allen

Say it with Wood, Woodland services.

Felling, Extraction, Mobile sawmilling.

Chestnut Fencing sold and fitted.

Based in Herefordshire.

07811852704

smelltheflowers2004@yahoo.co.uk

www.freewebs.com/say-it-with-wood

From Rainbow Wood

"This weekend we had the great thrill of seeing a jay in Rainbow Wood. We have occasionally seen them when we've been on holiday in Cornwall, but to see a jay so near home was wonderful.

We also have lots of damselflies with their bright blue iridescent bodies in stark contrast to the vivid green of the leaves of this year's spring growth. The family of blue tits nesting in our bird box have successfully fledged this weekend, too. We didn't actually see them go, but we are pleased to have been able to provide a home for at least one family of these beautiful birds.

Last week we also discovered that we have a crab apple tree, and it's fruiting. That'll provide lots of apples for winter birds that stay in the wood.

On a slightly more disturbing note, we had someone 'visit' on Saturday night and vandalise one of the ash trees by carving a rather stupid face into the bark. They also left us their discarded food wrappers and drinks bottle. We don't mind uninvited visitors provided they respect the space we have created and respect the trees and wildlife. The last job of the weekend was to walk the perimeter to check for wind damaged trees and overhanging branches. All was well."

You can read more from Rainbow wood

www.wallisthecat.blogspot.com

What are you doing in your woodland?

Email Tracy and tell us!

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership

The partnership provides advice, training and practical support for those enhancing the Medway Valley.

They have support for grants, biodiversity and invasive species.

See their website for more details,

www.medwayvalley.org

And a list of walks and events is on the SWOG website.

www.swog.org.uk/events/meetings-walks-and-newsletters

Local Wildlife Trusts also offer a range of information, advice and walks. The South and West Wales group have sent some information on their events, also available using the above link.



A web-site is currently under construction and further details will be provided soon but any queries in the meantime should be addressed to: David Brown at sewoodarchforum@googlemail.com

Chainsaw Courses

I am collecting recommendations for chainsaw courses across the country. Recommendations so far can be found on the www.coppice.co.uk forum- training section. Please get in touch if you can recommend other trainers.



Coppice .co.uk
your coppicing resource!

Many woodlands in the UK have historically been managed as coppice, yielding high productivity and benefiting biodiversity. In recent decades the management of coppice woodland has declined due to mechanisation, conifer plantations and cheap imports of timber. But now, as more people focus on sustainable wood production, sourcing local produce and promoting biodiversity, the interest in coppicing as a woodland management method is rising again. With the recent trend of buying woodland, there are now many new woodland owners who are keen to manage their land effectively and with consideration for the environment, but do not yet have the skills and experience to do so.

Coppice.co.uk provides an on-line resource for coppicing information, and is useful for new owners and experienced woodland managers alike. Information has been contributed by coppice workers and foresters, covering the cultivation of sweet chestnut and hazel coppices, and more tree species are being added through 2009.

Come and visit the website and join in the live discussion and share your questions and experience with other woodland owners and managers. Feedback on the website and contributions to be published can be sent to tracy@woodlands.co.uk

www.coppice.co.uk

Family Forestry

As woodland owners we are all involved in Family Forestry. Take a look at this new site

www.familyforestry.co.uk



Courses and information

Ancient tree hunt

“An ancient tree is one that makes you go ‘wow, it’s huge, fatter than any other tree like that round here’. It will be really fat, but probably not that tall, as like old people they shrink down with age. Like people, trees grow and age at different rates depending on where they are and what happens to them during their lifetime.”

Do you have any ancient trees in your wood? Take a look at the website and you **must** look at the picture of the bicycle tree!

www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk

Adverts

Dan Watson woodland skills and products- Yorkshire

Dan offers a range of training in traditional crafts for individuals or groups. If you would like to try your hand at new crafts or develop your skills in an attractive woodland setting why not try one of this year’s programmed courses or enquire about tailor-made training?

Dan has many years’ experience in greenwood skills. He has demonstrated at shows across the country and undertaken tuition with a wide range of participants. He also works with guest tutors who are proficient in their specific subjects.

Courses can be tailored to specific requirements.

www.dwwp.co.uk

Courses

WoodNet, East Sussex
www.woodnet.co.uk

Malvern Coppicing,
Worcestershire
www.malverncoppicing.co.uk

BTCV
Countrywide
www.btcv.org.uk

Greenwood Centre
Coalbrookdale
www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk

Wildlife photography
Near Crawley
www.davidplummerimages.co.uk

Woodland Skills Centre, Wales
www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

Centre for Alternative Technology
Machynlleth
www.cat.org.uk

Small woods association
www.smallwoods.org.uk

facebook

The Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) is also on facebook. Come and join us, post photos and videos and share with others.

www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523