

Small Woodland Owners' Group

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July 2009

Food for Free! (Well, nearly)

Elderflower cordial and champagne

By Marilyn



Elderflower cordial

1 unwaxed lemon – grate rind & slice fruit
35g (1oz) citric acid
(available from chemists or home brew suppliers)
900g (2 lb) white sugar
10-12 fresh elderflower heads
750ml (1¼ pts) boiling water

Makes 750ml

Put sugar in a large bowl and pour over boiling water. Stir to dissolve.

Add lemon, citric acid & flower heads, stir again.

Cover bowl with cling film, leave 24 hours to infuse, stirring occasionally.

Strain the syrup through a muslin or kitchen paper, pour into sterilised bottles or freeze as ice cubes. The cordial will keep in the fridge for up to 6 months.

Elderflower Champagne

3 large sprays elderflowers
1 sliced lemon
1½ lb sugar
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
8 pints cold water

Put all ingredients in a stainless bowl or plastic bucket. Cover & leave for 24 hours. Strain into strong bottles and leave in a cool place for 2 weeks. Use within 2 – 4 weeks – take care when opening, as it is very fizzy.

Events South East

SWOG SE meeting

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

Informal woodland visit

1 August 2009
Nick's wood near Lewes
See website for details
<http://www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=306>
Email tracy@woodlands.co.uk

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

Tools for felling
Choosing a tree to fell
Working with a hung up tree
And more...

Meet Professor Julian Evans

A chance to have the guru of the woods visit your woodland and answer all your questions! Is your wood in the SE? Contact Tracy if you are interested.



Wales WoodFest

Woodlands.co.uk and the Small Woodland Owners Group enjoyed having a tent at Woodfest in North Wales this year.



The weather was rather Welsh like on Saturday, but loads of people braved the rain and it was so good to meet a few SWOG members.



Really worth a visit! See chainsaw carvers make these amazing statues, ogle over tractors and tools, watch bodgers and crafts people make amazing things, and meet all kinds of interesting people. See more photos on the SWOG website.

<http://www.swog.org.uk/events/woodfest-wales/>

Free book!

Doing a Local Community Biodiversity Audit:
a handbook for community groups in Wales

Science Shops Wales has produced a handbook which gives step by step guidance on setting up and running a community biodiversity audit. It is written mainly for people who are not professional naturalists or ecologists, although we hope it will interest people from all sorts of backgrounds. It includes ideas on ways to get people interested, tips for running a successful event, how to get funding, how to find some expert help and some suggestions for taking action using the results.

In the appendices, on the CD in the back of the published version of the handbook or downloadable PDF file, you will find examples of most of the documents and forms needed as well as a database for recording results.

Further information on the handbook is available here:
<http://www.scienceshops.wales.org.uk/SSWorkPubmainPubBIOD.html>

Events Wales

Make a shave horse
11th/12th July

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

Identifying butterflies
23rd July

www.moelyci.org

Wanted

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

Woodlands.co.uk blogs

Woodland courses
Tree felling

And much, much more!

www.woodlands.co.uk/blog

More information on events needed, please contact Tracy if you know of any!



Badger skull on show at Wood Fest

Would you like to be our representative on the Bridgend Biodiversity partnership? Email me if you are interested.
tracy@woodlands.co.uk

North and Wales meetings

We finally have meetings booked for those who do not live in the SE!

10th October, County Durham, here:

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

14th November, (tbc) Delamere Forest Park, Cheshire

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/delamereforestpark>

I realise that neither of these are in Wales. The locations of our meetings are based on where people live (not necessarily where the woods are), and are only for main meetings. We would love to have smaller, local and woodland based meetings all around the country. If you would like to offer to host a small gathering, please get in touch.

Let me know if you would like to attend one of these gatherings, so I can plan it in more detail - suggest topics too!

What woodland owners did in June.

Life in the woods is never quiet!

Protecting regrowth, school visits, track repair, photography, wildlife watching, plant ID, sorting timber piles, filling in paperwork, installing rainwater catching facilities, thinning birch, build a loo.. and BBQ's, family and friends visiting, camping and sitting!

And one person did all this!

"OK, I spent 4 days in my New wood last week and did the following.....

Made an entrance, gate etc, dug a trench to drain the ride, dug a drain to help, made a woodland toilet, with brash screen, cleared a parking area, created two brash hedges for wildlife, made a bird table, prepared an area for camping, cleared an area for a woodland millions pond, built a mini bridge over a stream, opened up a ride, started rhododendron extinction

Isn't it fun? "

Events North

Great Yorkshire show

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

Come along and meet us. If you did not get a leaflet about this in the post, contact me.

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

Woodfuel moisture meters

SWOG photo competition

Solar showers

Wood food guide

Social forestry

Glingbobs and tootflits!

www.livingwoods.wordpress.com

The ghost of workers past. By David

Delving into the history hidden in your woodland

This is the first of a series of short articles in which I hope to de-mystify some aspects of woodland archaeology. To many people, archaeology means 'excavating holes with little trowels' and 'Time Team'. But the first thing I should point out is that digging holes is one of the last things archaeologists do; they have a look at the 'humps and bumps' first, and that's what we'll be doing.



My intention is to help you, as a woodland owner, find out as much as you can about the history of your bit of woodland: its owners, the uses made of the wood, whether it has always been woodland, what was growing there before the present crop, whether it was part of a larger estate, whether it had tracks running through it, and quite a lot more. It's surprising what you can learn from the trees, the ground flora and the topography – what's there in front of you.

I don't want to put you off doing anything in your wood in case you damage the archaeology. Clearly we don't want to let a digger driver loose to level off all the banks and fill in the holes, but there's no reason why we can't plant on woodbanks, just like anywhere else. After all, it's because the trees have been there up till now with their roots keeping the soil where it is that we've got such a rich archaeological heritage in our woodlands at present.



No special equipment is necessary to undertake a survey, but a fair dollop of your time will have to be committed. But don't worry – you'll find it all becomes quite addictive and you won't notice the passage of time, though your partner may! And it's not just adults who can get involved, there's scope for kids to do their bit as well.

I manage a small wood near Heathfield (with lots of archaeology in it) so I hope I will be talking your sort of language. I'm asked by owners to help with the archaeology in their woods, so my experience is becoming fairly varied; my interest in woodland archaeology is quite recent, so I'm learning all the time.

So, where do you start?

It's either at the local archive centre searching for documents or in the wood itself looking for evidence on the ground. You could start with either one or the other. Professional archaeologists (and I'm not one, though I'm going to be talking quite a bit as though I am!) are keen you start at the record office. I don't because I think that if you find something there on paper which suggests you should be seeing a feature on the ground, then you'll go back to the wood and your imagination will do the rest whether it's there or not. And another reason right now is that summer isn't when you want to be indoors.

I start by looking to see what's on the ground. And this is quite tricky. What you've got to do is work out which bumps and depressions are man made and which are natural. Unfortunately, summer is probably not the best time to be looking because the brambles, bracken and undergrowth generally is doing its best to hide what's underneath. But if you've had the wood for a while you'll be getting used to the flat bits, or the bumpy bits, even though you don't know what they may represent. The question of whether they are natural or man made comes with experience, but I'm going to give you some help next month. One rarely finds all the features in the first survey – once your eye is in you'll re-visit some minor bumps long after you think you've finished.

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You are going to need a large-scale map printed out on a sheet of A4 paper to do your recording on. You don't need to be able to find your way round a computer but it can help. The scale is up to you; I use 1:6250. Anything higher than 1:10000 is really too small for recording small features. The map is also going to need grid lines drawn every 100m, so the kilometre square on OS maps should be divided into tenths. To get 1:6250 I take an OS map of 1:25000 and increase the linear size by 4. I scan it and then multiply the width and height measurements by four. Copyright on maps means you are not permitted to copy OS maps less than 50 years old for commercial use, but you are allowed to make a single copy for your own personal use.

I will look at finding, identifying and recording features next.

David Brown

david at sewaf.org.uk

Management of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

in the High Weald & South Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Woodlands in the High Weald and South Downs AONB's are an extremely important resource for a variety of reasons, from timber production and employment to carbon sequestration and landscape.

A large proportion of the woodland in these areas is classed as 'ancient' and is particularly special. The High Weald and South Downs both contain nationally important concentrations of ancient woodland, which gives us, as foresters and landowners, a vital role in managing this resource for the future.

Many of these ancient woodlands have had plantations of non-native species established on them in recent history. Since establishment a number of these plantations have not received regular forest management for a variety of reasons, such as poor markets, difficult access and fragmented ownership. These sites would often benefit from management intervention in order to improve the woodland in terms of timber, wildlife, amenity, game management etc.

It is these unmanaged plantations that we are targeting through this project. By engaging with owners who are not currently managing their plantations we hope to encourage active management that will enhance the woodland resource. We hope to be the first point of contact for owners and provide support and assistance in the form of advice, management planning and access to the enhanced grants available from the Forestry Commission. The aim will be to pass these owners onto established local forestry agents and contractors to implement the management.

We will not be targeting sites where the owner has an existing forest manager or agent unless invited to give assistance by the manager/agent. Your help in identifying relevant sites and contacting owners would be much appreciated. We are also keen to locate suitable demonstration sites in both areas, particularly where PAWS are being managed under continuous cover forestry (CCF) techniques or alongside objectives such as game management, timber production and squirrel control. Please contact: Andrew Wright, Forestry & Woodland Restoration Advisor, High Weald & South Downs AONB's

Tel: 01580 879 964

Mob: 07920 478 895

Email: a.wright@highweald.org

Andrew has an honours degree in Forestry from Bangor University, prior to this role he was a Woodland Officer with FC for 6 years in Surrey/Hants and then SE Wales. He has also worked for the Woodland Trust and a private forestry consultancy in the past.

An introduction to caterpillars By Phil

Eggs

Come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours and sometimes hundreds are laid because the predation rate at all stages is very high, often 99 or 100%. Food plants are selected by sight, smell and touch.

Most caterpillars in the UK have many segments to their bodies, have 16 legs, and are harmless. Some of the very hairy ones have irritant hairs but caterpillars of the Brown Tail Moth, which is sometimes abundant in coastal areas, are extremely irritant and can cause a serious rash. Generally caterpillars are interesting, can be tiny or huge, boring or spectacular. The larger ones can eat huge quantities of leaves and defoliate branches or even whole trees.



Legs

Most of them have 6 true legs like the adult butterfly or moth plus 8 claspers with strong suckers to cling on in windy conditions plus two anal claspers making 16 in all. In the geometridae family of moths the centre 8 claspers are missing and they walk by looping along in a so-called 'inchworm' fashion. These are often very small and there can be so many thousands up in a large tree that you can hear and feel their waste, called frass, raining down in tiny black specs. After hatching they often eat their eggshells and then go on to eat leaves, sometimes one specific type only, but many caterpillars are called polyphageous which means they eat a variety of leaf types. Some bore into stems of plants or trees; some will even eat one another if they get too close.

Eyes (Ocelli)

Three pairs of small eyes are situated down near the mouthparts, very unlike the large compound eyes and often excellent eyesight of the adult insect.

Breathing

Is through holes called spiracles, generally nine pairs, along both sides of the body and often identifiable by coloured rings.

Skin

Theirs cannot stretch like ours does so they have to discard and renew it as they grow. These changes are called 'instars' and most caterpillars go through about 5 of them.

Chrysalis (pupa)

Most, if not all, caterpillars make silk either to hang from in the trees, to make a pad to cling to when changing their skin, or to wrap round them when they change into a chrysalis. When changing into a chrysalis they stop feeding for a few days and hide in a rolled up leaf, in a crevice in tree bark, in leaf litter on the ground, or underground in a chamber which they create by wriggling around and then line it with silk. Some discard their hairs and stick them to a cocoon of silk surrounding them. Many of the butterfly caterpillars simply hang from pad of silk by cling on to it with 'cremasters' ; tiny hooks at their rear end. Others fix themselves upright but with the addition of a girdle of silk around the middle. After the brief rest the fully grown caterpillar skin finally splits and the chrysalis wriggles out and dries hard, showing some signs of the wings and eyes and other parts of the adult insect on its surface. During the pupation period, generally from about 10 days but often over the winter months, organising cells move around the soft gel inside the hard case and finish the construction of the adult insect. Then the hard skin splits and the adult (imago) butterfly or moth emerges, often having to employ a softening technique to break out of its cocoon.



The emerged insect, which has small crumpled wings, then hangs downwards and pumps blood into its wings to enlarge and straighten them. When they are fully formed they dry stiff and the insect can fly.

Butterflies and Moths are the only insects that have four stages in their life cycle, egg, larva, pupa, imago, compared with the usual three for other insects.



News from the woods

Track repair by Gary

I managed to rope a few unsuspecting friends into coming for some 'free camping' ahem...



'Free' meant grabbing a shovel to shift somewhere between 10 and 12 tons of quarry scalpings to help with our boggy track. They were still pretty happy despite the decidedly Welsh weather!!!

Better weather was experienced by all over the next few days though, and it was actually quite nice. I think the best part was seeing our resident bats flying at dusk over the fire pit clearing hoovering up flies as they went!

More photos of the track and repair on the website....



A new pond

David and Elizabeth have been working on a new pond. David mentions that ponds need planning permission.



Composting toilets by Peter and Angela

We have build a chestnut framework bolted together to make a strong & portable stand that accommodates a proper toilet seat. A 2' hole is then dug in an oval clearing I have created, and the toilet placed over it. Covering any deposits with a bare covering of soil and burning the loo paper as this, (surprisingly) doesn't break down well, due to impregnated chemicals and otherwise leaves a soggy mess. This technique will allow the same area to be re-used only 5 weeks later, as it breaks down so well. By having an oval area you just dig another hole, move your portable stand over it and use until you have to dig another and rotate around. I am told you can actually grow vegetables over (human) manured ground although root vegetables apparently are not recommended but runner beans have been tried.



What are you doing in your woodland?
Email Tracy and tell us!

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.

Family Forestry

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

www.familyforestry.co.uk



If you go down to the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise

If you go with Patrick Roper, that is! He will change your views.

By Nick

Having managed a 75-acre wood for nearly thirty years and having seen the wildlife benefits of coppicing overstood hornbeam at first hand, it was with some trepidation that I joined some fifteen others on a course about managing woodlands for biodiversity. I already knew something of Dr Patrick Roper's robust views about the conventional wisdom. I was to find out more. Patrick is a consultant ecologist, a naturalist extraordinaire. He is an expert on insects and plants and on woodlands and the Wild Service Tree and a million other aspects of wildlife. It became a game on the course to catch him out with some plant or insect question. He nearly always won the game. The more arcane the question, the more likely he would answer with an ace such as "funny you should ask – I wrote a paper about that once."

The course covered four Saturdays, spread over four months, each day beginning with a talk of some three hours. After that we had some field study in the woodland adjoining the Flimwell Woodland Enterprise Centre where the course took place. The talks were interspersed with anecdotes to illustrate a point and I cannot recall a moment when anyone was wishing for the end.

What did we learn? Not to take anything for granted. Ancient woodland indicators are often suspect. Coppicing may have its place in the panoply of management techniques but is no panacea. Dead wood, broken trees, uprooted trees – these all have huge value for wildlife. Plant if you must but sparingly; and native species, preferably from local sources. Water is of great value, even water-filled ruts.

Let the light into your wood somehow; consider blowing up or winching down or ring-barking as alternatives to coppicing.



Oh yes, and when using a net to get a closer look at an insect, putting your head inside the net works for Patrick.

You can read more from Patrick on his blog,

<http://ramblingsofanaturalist.blogspot.com/>

To discuss coppicing, for produce and biodiversity, go to...



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.

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Courses and information

Charcoal making



Learn how to make charcoal on a one day course. You will learn about the history and tradition of charcoal making, and use different types of kiln to produce the charcoal. You will also learn how to source kilns and market your charcoal for sale. The kilns used on this course are small scale, ideal for producing your own charcoal in the woods, farm or garden.

The next course is on **Friday 17 July** 10am – 4pm at Netherfield, near Battle, East Sussex. The course fee is £50. If you work in farming, forestry or production horticulture in the South East, you may be eligible for a subsidised fee of £15 – please enquire when booking.

To book your place telephone Plumpton College at Netherfield on 01424 775615. To find out about other craft and woodland courses see www.thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk and www.woodnet.org.uk

Glynllifon college, chainsaw courses

LANTRA Chainsaw Maintenance and Cross Cutting
2 days Training
£200 p person
NPTC Assessment CS30
(Optional) £105



LANTRA Chainsaw Maintenance, Cross Cutting and Felling Small Trees
5 days Training
£450 p person
NPTC Assessment CS30/CS31 (Optional)
£200

See the swog website for more details.

Call Eleri Bee on 01286 830 261 for a booking form.

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