

# Small Woodland Owners' Group

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

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## Fungi ID walk

Martin from RSPB led us on a terrific fungi walk in Long Wood (Rod and Heather's). As the weather was so dry and fungi growth was limited, Heather had very diligently walked her whole woodland and found loads of fungi in advance for us to look at, smell and taste!



Here is the inside of a stinkhorn.  
Ugh! For the rest of the photos go to:

[www.peplers.blogspot.com/2009/10/fungi-id-walk.html](http://www.peplers.blogspot.com/2009/10/fungi-id-walk.html)

And of course, lunch!  
It was a terrific day, many thanks to Rod, Heather and Martin, as well as all who came along.



## In the news

The media often ask the staff of [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk) for people to interview about their woodlands.

Anyone willing to be called at some point? Please let me know, it will be much easier for us if we have a ready-made list of people who don't mind being interviewed.

**Email Tracy if you are willing!**

## South East

### Coming up

Early summer walk – plant ID, watch this space

### South East Woodland Archaeology

South East Woodland Archaeology Forum on November 5th at Bedgebury Forest Please contact David Brown for more details.

[david@sewaf.org.uk](mailto:david@sewaf.org.uk)

### BTCV London training courses

[http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/btcv\\_london](http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/btcv_london)

### WoodNet, East Sussex

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

### Wildlife photography

Near Crawley

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

## South West

Reintroducing coppice in Dartmoor

[http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/au\\_suscoppr0909](http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/au_suscoppr0909)

Field studies council

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/>

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## North meetings

14<sup>th</sup> November, 10am – 4pm  
Delamere Forest Park Cheshire.

Meet at 9:30am for a coffee, we aim to finish around 3pm. Any volunteers to bring some biscuits/ muffins or something?

Angus is kindly buying lunch, and there is a cafe nearby for extra refreshments, etc. as needed.

Please bring along: favourite tools, books and resources to share with others, things you have made and anything you want to sell. We plan to go for a walk through the woodland and learn loads from each other, and our friendly forester, David – so bring suitable clothing.

Speakers are: Rodney Waterfield from the woodland skills centre on '*I have a woodland, now what?*' and David the forester will look at chainsaw safety. **You can bring your saw for him to look at if you wish.**

I know that this will be a great day!

You **MUST** book if you want to come along, so I can order lunch. Book by 5<sup>th</sup> Nov please.

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

## Alvecote open days

We are holding an open day on Sunday November 8th. Alvecote Wood is 11 acres of ancient semi-natural mainly oak woodland in North Warwickshire between Polesworth and Tamworth.

We are managing it for wildlife, and for community groups including schools and scouts. We will have guided tours and also a small gift stall with our range of eco-friendly candles, Christmas and greetings cards and calendars. There is relatively limited car parking so it would be good to know if anybody is planning to come. There are full details on our website where you can also find out how to get there.

<http://www.alvecotewood.co.uk/events.php>

## Events North

### SWOG meeting

14<sup>th</sup> Nov, Delamere Forest  
Park, Cheshire

[www.forestry.gov.uk/delamereforestpark](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/delamereforestpark)

Wide choice of courses

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

### Coppice courses in Pembrokeshire

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

### Woodlands.co.uk blogs

Woodland archaeology

Planting a tree

Fungi

Discovering Long Wood

Save our sedge

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

## Scotland

Information needed! Please  
email Tracy with events.



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## What kind of owner are you?

Julie Urquhart from Forest Research has been looking into categorising private woodland owners. I believe she interviewed some SWOG members. Here are some results.

The research confirmed that private woodland owners are motivated by a range of objectives and can be classified into six types:

- Individualists (own 8% of sample woodland): Strong sense of ownership and privacy. Reluctant to engage with public bodies and are against public access; least likely to apply for a woodland management grant.
- Multi-functional owners (37%): Motivated by multiple objectives, including amenity, conservation and financial return, alongside personal enjoyment. Pragmatic and often entrepreneurial; most likely to apply for a grant.
- Private consumers (23%): Extract wood products (wood logs/poles etc.) for own use.
- Conservationists (3%): Maintain woodland as a nature reserve and oppose recreational access.
- Investors (18%): Financially-oriented and likely to carry out timber production or other profit-making activity.
- Amenity owners (11%): Favour public access and public amenity. This group had the highest proportion of women (28.6%).

You can read more of the report and see other research here:

<http://www.swog.org.uk/articles/what-kind-of-owner-are-you/>

Do you agree with the findings?



## Central

**Greenwood Centre**

Coalbrookdale

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

**Malvern Coppicing**

Worcestershire

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

## East Anglia

**BTCV**

East Anglia and countrywide

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

Information needed! Please email Tracy with events.

## Wales

**Woodland Skills Centre,**

Wales

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

**Centre for Alternative Technology**

Machynlleth

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

Woodlands**TV**.co.uk

Art in the woods  
Chainsaw maintenance  
Squirrel recipes  
Planting trees

Woodsplitting - good or bad?





## Charcoal burners' platforms by David

Delving into the history hidden in your woodland

I've now covered the common linear features you are likely to find in and on the edge of a wood. Linear features are those that follow a line, straight or sinuous. These are perhaps easier to define as features – if they continue for more than a few paces, they have probably been put there by man. I will now look at those features that are not linear, in the sense that they don't go anywhere. Some of the more commonly found non-linear features are charcoal burners' platforms and other flattened areas, quarries, and sawpits. Later I will look at botanical evidence, particularly in the way trees have been managed – it's surprising how far back you can go using tree evidence.

You won't find these in every wood, but I would expect to find them in 8 out of 10 woods. So for those whose minds have wandered, they are platforms on which charcoal burners converted wood into charcoal. They are generally circular, though not always so, are between 7 and 10 metres across and are always very flat and level (or they were when they were made). Somewhere in the leaf litter is a layer of black and you should expect to find pieces of charcoal still there. Sometimes the layer of charcoal is quite thick and if animals have disturbed it, you've got half your interpretation done for you. If you aren't finding any charcoal in the middle of the level area, look on the 'downhill' edge; the charcoal burner usually finished by sweeping the fines off the edge of the platform. Of course, it may not be a charcoal burners' platform at all.

You do need to look very carefully to spot these platforms: when they are covered in brambles or bracken they have a tendency to disappear. When they were constructed they were absolutely flat and level, so be prepared for excavations from animal burrows and slippage of soil to have altered their appearance. They were level, I was told, because as soon as you have even the slightest slope, once air gets in on the downhill side it will soon have reduced your charcoal-to-be to a neat pile of ash. If you want to know what the clamps (pile of wood ready to be made into charcoal) looked like and how they were managed, Google 'charcoal burners' and you will find a number of sites with pictures.



The clamps were generally sited near streams because they needed water if the air-exclusion layer dried out and let in air, or right at the end when they were dismantling it, when it could self-ignite. If you find a charcoal burners' platform, it's unlikely it was the only one. The charcoal burners were able to manage two or more, starting one and then the next. Bear in mind that, apart from being close to a source of water, they wouldn't have wanted to cart the wood too far from where it was being felled, so they were generally 20-30 metres apart. Having said that, I have found a series so close together they almost overlapped each other. I can only assume that the platforms which George cut out for his clamps eight years ago were his for when he came back and you ruddy well cut your own platform.

They are often best seen from downhill: when you look up the hill the ground disappears onto the level platform. From above they are not so easy to spot. And if you walk over one you almost certainly won't see it, as I have found in my own wood, where the path crosses a number of them – because you use the path more frequently than the rest of the wood, you just assume it's a nice level bit!

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A word of warning: don't assume that every patch of black soil was a charcoal burners' platform. Someone may have lit a bonfire a few years previously.

But what if you are one of the 2 out of 10 who haven't got one? Well, here are some possible explanations: the wood is secondary woodland (it hasn't always been wooded), the products of the wood were never used for making charcoal (sweet chestnut for fencing and hop poles, hornbeam for brick kilns, to name but two), there isn't a source of water in your wood, and there's probably some more if I can think of them.

Other platforms.

If your platform has no charcoal, you may have to rule out its use for a clamp. Platforms were made for a number of purposes and what yours was used for is down to conjecture. It could have been for a temporary shelter for a wood worker, or somewhere to store materials, or for something else – who knows? But it still needs recording. To record platforms, all you really need to do is plot their position on your map and measure the diameter. Check to see if it's completely circular – they can be oval or rectangular. Even if it wasn't used by a charcoal burner, it adds to the information you have about your wood's history and a possible explanation for its use may emerge later.

David Brown [www.sewaf.org.uk](http://www.sewaf.org.uk)

## Do not disturb?

Guidance concerning the disturbance of badger setts can be a bit confusing. What is disturbance?

Natural England have written an excellent and brief guide on the topic which you may find useful.



### Here is a small part of the summary:

Some examples of activities at or near setts that we do not consider likely to cause disturbance to badgers, and therefore would not normally expect to require a licence, include:

1. Development, or other activities occurring close to badger setts (use of hand tools and/or machinery), where there is no reason to believe that the 'disturbance' will be greater than that which badgers commonly tolerate, and therefore any badger(s) occupying the sett are unlikely to be disturbed;
2. Vegetation removal (including felling small trees or shrubs) over or adjacent to sett.
3. Clearing out of ditches/watercourses using machinery and/or hand tools where badger setts are present.

Persons involved in activities near setts will need to exercise judgement as to whether their action may or may not cause disturbance to badgers.

**N.B. Any activity that will, or is likely to cause one of the other interferences defined in Section 3 (such as damaging a sett tunnel or chamber or obstructing access to a sett entrance) will continue to need to be licensed.**

**Read the rest:**

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/WMLG16\\_tcm6-11814.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/WMLG16_tcm6-11814.pdf)

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## What in the world are we doing – by GOF (Grumpy Old Forester)

If being in woodland or among trees is so good for the body and soul that grant aid has been available as a Health WIG, then working in woodland must be the best job in the world. But of course there are frustrations! What industry is free of them? Who hasn't felt the despair that follows a wind throw in a promising mid rotation crop? Or the despair when a plantation burns? But still we keep on and the regular awarding of the RFS long service medal says it all. People love working in forestry!!

It's the more amazing since we don't really know what we are supposed to be doing. Are we as a nation trying to be self-sufficient in construction timber? Are we leaving that to the big global players and trying instead to grow high value hardwoods for markets that will develop further? Are we aiming to grow short rotation woodfuel harvested by monstrously ravenous machines, which devour whole landscapes in an afternoon? Or are we aiming to create oceans of ecological perfection with a biodiversity to impress the world's worriers?



World circumstances change a lot quicker than the timescale of growing a mature tree, so only a good helping of luck will ensure that the planted tree ends up in its envisaged market. And it may be that a degree of flexibility and the ability to change course to meet new demands is not just a virtue but a necessity.

But one factor that has remained unchanged through the decades is that the economics of forest management need help whatever the objective being pursued. The percentage of our woodland remaining unmanaged is testament to that. And our policy leaders continue to stack cost upon cost with the unintended(?) effect of rendering the economics even worse than before!

Intricately targeted scheme objectives to entice the unwary into co-financing dubious public benefits, certification application and compliance, SBI numbers for grant claims, what will be the next costly regulation? But hurrah, your scheme is finally approved, .... No, that's not the telephone directory it's the EWGS contract, and yes you're right its contents could have been summarised on a couple of sides of A4!



Oh and did you say you are a farmer? And you get £30/acre from your Entry Level Stewardship for doing nothing at all? I see what you mean - EWGS is not very attractive is it? But maybe I'm being over gloomy. Yes of course the Woodland Regeneration Grant enables you to spend an immense amount of money clearing that unproductive and derelict crop and pays grant for its restocking. But you have deer? So the protection cost is going to make the whole experience very expensive?... well yes.

Textbook silviculture can be found in textbooks going back to the last century. The early versions developed in an age where the ratio between operating costs and timber values made the whole



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matter of good silviculture a sound investment in the future. We can't wind back the clock, but since the next 100 years is impossible to predict judging by the changes of the last 100 years, we surely can take comfort from a clarion call – 'back to Basics'!

What are we really trying to do? Surely we want to make a return on the management of our woods and forests. Our management is helping the process of turning solar energy into useful products and locking up carbon. Let's do our utmost to find people to buy and use our products whatever they may be.

To do this let's strive to grow quality trees, which turn into quality products. Clean, knot free timber, straight logs, dry firewood, - whatever it takes to beat the alternative competition. And above all protect our trees and forests! Control the deer numbers and turn them into some of the best food around. Don't take the easy option and protect by guards or fencing and then complain about the cost.



And then there are squirrels. We need a zero tolerance attitude to these creatures, not just amongst ourselves, but within the public at large and government itself. How do we do that? Did I hear you say we need to educate the public? But I heard people saying that 45 years ago and we haven't made any progress have we? There is only one thing that can alter mass opinion and that is leadership. Our leaders reside in Government and Defra headquarters ... is there anybody out there?... I said, "Is there anybody out there...?" No answer came the stern [stern as there was the Stern Report not long ago] reply. Oh well, its back to the mass harvesting of woodfuel and not a mature tree in sight. G.O.F. (Grumpy Old Forester)

**Copied with permission from RFS Quarterly journal**

Want to discuss this article? Go to:

<http://www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=418>

## facebook

The Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) is on facebook. You can also become a swog blog fan and receive feed from the site when new articles go up.

[www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523)



## The value of my woodland – by Sarah

One question that keeps coming up is “How do you make any money out of this place”?

The answer is we don't make a profit out of the woods, and I don't think we can hope to do this. We do have money coming in from a variety of sources: Our business, our friends and family, from the sale of our craft products, from occasional donors, and from Forestry Commission grants. We also hope to recover some money from community groups using the site in future. This does not cover the costs, but it helps to offset some of the costs of running and maintaining the site, and of equipment, seeds and plants to help improve it for wildlife.

In future we will also have (permission permitting) coppiced wood products available, such as beanpoles and pea-sticks for allotments, and possibly willow for living willow garden structures (we may make some for sale ourselves), and additional craft products to sell at Open Days. At present we haven't established a coppice rotation to allow this to happen, but in a few years time this will bring in some money. Firewood seems to be rather a poor option - it takes a lot of effort to dry out and prepare logs for sale and you get almost no money from it, but if we have a surplus after our own use then we wouldn't be averse to selling it.

If we cannot look at the wood as a method of making money, then what is its value? I think it has much more value than the potential of its timber products. This is how I see it...

Most of us spend money every year on a lot of things that we enjoy; buying clothes, going out, various sports and leisure activities, gym memberships, playstations and games, buying music and DVD's, riding motorcycles, driving cars, riding bicycles or horses and many other things. Well, the woods is something we enjoy, so why not spend money on it in the same way? The woods is an important hobby for us, an important enjoyable activity. So from the purely selfish viewpoint, the woods is another hobby that we spend money on to enjoy.



It also helps to keep us fit and healthy and active. We much prefer activities you can do outside to being in a gym (and I am a qualified gym instructor!). Being outside in the fresh air, sun, wind, rain and snow, we keep active and fit with an activity that we can continue to do as we get older. We also have a little space to grow some vegetables and have fresh organic food with zero food-miles. We can do so in a lovely environment that has beauty and peace and interest. That's worth paying for.



These are all pretty selfish benefits. But there are others too. First of all the wildlife itself - trees, birds, insects, spiders, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, flowers, mosses and fungi. All of them can benefit if we can give a little time and money to our woods. Just by owning it we are helping to prevent it being damaged as a habitat by another less sympathetic use of the land (including just leaving it alone). Then we are trying to improve it and add habitats, and we are already seeing the benefit. Now we could just give money to an environmental charity



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and let them do it for us, and we still do this. But there is something of great personal value in being able to get your hands on, do things, and see the wildlife enjoying what you are trying to preserve and improve.


And of course it isn't just us. We want lots of people to benefit. We want people to enjoy the woods on open days, and for children and young people to enjoy the educational and artistic opportunities that the wood has to offer. We would love other people to enjoy the benefit of outdoor activity in the wood that we do ourselves. We would like the local community to feel happy and proud that the local wood is being cared for. And we would like the wood to be there, and full of trees and wildlife, for future generations.

So, if we are asked how we make money out of the wood, the answer would be: "We don't, but we, and hopefully others, get great value from it for the time, money and effort that we put in". The woods is definitely value for money.

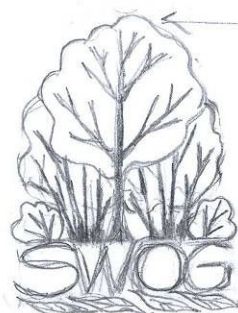
## Small Woodland Owners' Group logo

As you know we are working on a logo for SWOG. Something for mugs and T - shirts. We can simply use the one at the top of the page, or come up with something else. Heather has scribbled some ideas together. What do you think? Do you have any ideas? Get in touch!



small 'wood'  
inside 

lettering in  
twigs?



not quite  
so tall?

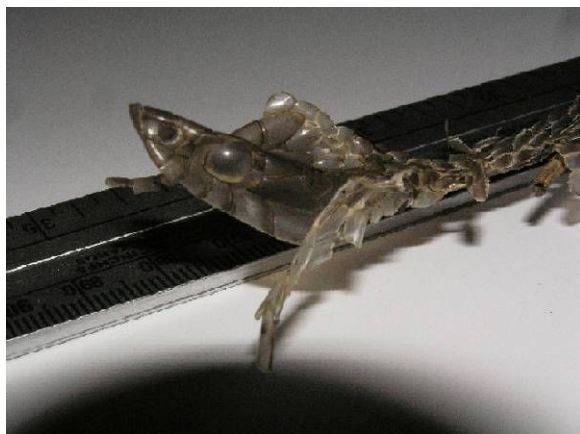
with or without  
leaves along bottom?

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## Snake skin

Greyman and Greylady found this great snakeskin.



## Woodtroll has been experimenting with saws



## October in our woods, what we have been doing.

Coppicing, cooking with a Dutch oven, tidying walkways, buying chickens, brashing, carving a boars head (!?), broke a saw, making benches, felling ash, friends visiting.

What else is going on in our woods?

<http://www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=415>

## Family Forestry photography Make some money!

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

Calling all family photographers-  
Earn money from your wood!

Here at Woodlands co.uk we need pictures to illustrate "Family Forestry". We need these pictures to show the range of things owners and their families enjoy in their woods. The pictures we use must imply "family". It should ideally include more than one person – people of two different generations, for instance, or a man and a woman, or just children.

The activities could include a whole range of obviously forestry work, e.g. clearing, using a bow saw or a chain saw, stacking cut poles, chopping firewood, clearing bracken or undergrowth, planting, weeding young trees, erecting deer fencing, sharpening a saw, mending gates or digging ditches. Or they could include activities appreciating or encouraging nature and bird-watching, studying a fungus or a moss, photographing wild flowers, investigating a hole in the ground, handling a frog. It must be clear in the photo what they are doing!

And they could certainly include having fun: picnics, camp fires, swings, cooking, climbing, playing.

We are ready to pay £10 each for any photos we use in our publicity. And we would like to use lots!

Be sure no one in the picture objects, and send your photos (reduced to under 100kb in the first instance, please, and not more than six per e-mail) to [margaret@woodlands.co.uk](mailto:margaret@woodlands.co.uk). All pictures received will be acknowledged. No person or place will be identified.

All pictures used in any way will be paid for.



**Coppice .co.uk**  
your coppicing resource!