

Small Woodland Owners' Group

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2014



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A very happy new year to all SWOG members. The January issue has come together during the windswept days that characterised Christmas 2013 and is a little shorter than usual. However, members have been as generous as ever with their contributions and we hope that this sets the pace for 2014.

We are always delighted to hear from SWOG members – please keep your stories and comments rolling in.

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodland. The company Woodlands.co.uk sponsors the group, so membership is completely free and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated. SWOG is open to anyone interested in the management or the enjoyment of woodland.

Follow us on Twitter @_swog

Newsletter January 2014

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PAWS for thought

SWOG member and former Chief Executive Officer at the Royal Forestry Society, Dr John Jackson, has written a thoughtful article on PAWS woodlands (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites) for the December issue of *Forestry Journal*. John attended a workshop run by Natural England, the Woodland Trust and Forest Enterprise England in the Wyre Forest. It was aimed at raising awareness about PAWS in the private forestry sector, and to flag up the forthcoming Woodland Trust push on PAWS funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

John discusses the changing attitudes to PAWS and ASNW (Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland) sites during the second half of the 20th century, as well as the lessons that have

been learnt from differing management techniques. The encouragement of broadleaves to the detriment of conifers, for example, is one viewpoint that is changing. Small woodland owners face many options – whether to restore their PAWS woodland to its former glory and how to do so, or, if have they have passed the point of no return, perhaps to retain/plant some conifers as a ‘cash crop’. How should owners cope with the challenges of pests, diseases and the sheer cost of restoring a woodland? As John comments, ‘PAWS restoration is a long haul; deciding when it has been achieved will be polemic’.

To read the full article, visit the Forestry Journal website, www.forestryjournal.co.uk. If you have any further questions, contact John via email: condorito7549@hotmail.com.

Woodland Trust reports on potential damage of HS2

SWOG members will be all too aware of the threats posed to woodlands throughout the country by development. Government plans for HS2, the high speed rail link between London, Birmingham and north-west England, are controversial and, according to the Woodland Trust, the assessment of the environmental impact is woefully inaccurate. The Trust has examined the government’s Environmental Statement published in November and notes

- 43 ancient woods are threatened with loss or damage on Phase 1 alone
- A further 24 threatened woods could also be ancient
- HS2 Ltd still propose to ‘mitigate’ for ancient woodland loss but this is impossible – measures are a salvage operation at best, and unproven
- The impact on wildlife due to loss of habitat could be severe and HS2 Ltd is unable to give details of how proposed mitigation measures will work

- The 50,000-page document does not contain a complete map of route, utilities and construction areas, and no indication of when this will be available
- The figures don’t add up – inconsistent or missing data, plus discrepancies makes it impossible to confirm the total area of ancient woodland to be lost.

To read more about the issues, visit the Woodland Trust’s website [here](http://www.woodlandtrust.co.uk).



*Ancient wild pear tree, South Cubbington
©F. Wilmot/Woodland Trust*

Silvifuture

The RFS has joined a partnership supporting SilviFuture, an online database to promote and share knowledge about less common timber tree species growing in real forestry conditions.



A *Wellingtonia*, or *Giant Sequoia* flourishing thousands of miles from its original home in California.

It is also backing a UK-wide drive to encourage woodland owners to share information about slightly unusual species via the SilviFuture site, many of which have been growing, almost forgotten, amongst more popular trees in woodlands around the country.

SilviFuture has been established to promote and share knowledge about novel forest species across Britain. It is a tool for forest owners, managers and those with an interest in timber.

The database will be continually updated and can be searched by species or location to allow those thinking of planting new species to fully evaluate the options and for researchers to see how species are growing across a range of locations.

It is currently possible to find and share information on the silviculture of over 70 tree species, many of which are less well-known or tested in Britain, and may prove more resilient to a changing climate and provide valuable products for future markets.

Visit the website, www.silvifuture.org.uk.



High Weald Woodland Archaeology Walk,
Fore Wood RSPB Reserve,
Saturday 25 January 2014
10:30–12:30,
Crowhurst, East Sussex

Join landscape archaeologist
Vivienne Blandford, for a walk

around Fore Wood nature reserve. She will be using the latest LiDar technology to uncover the hidden history under the trees. The images show up shapes in the ground – pales and warrens, furnaces and hammer ponds and charcoal hearths – and they provide a great starting point for an archaeological survey. This is a free event. To register, follow this link:
www.eventbrite.co.uk/

Living Woods Magazine

Living Woods magazine renewals – new year offer

SWOG members who purchased their wood from Woodlands.co.uk, receive a subscription to *Living Woods* magazine during their first year of woodland ownership. *Living Woods* is offering SWOG members a 10% discount on renewals. Members will have two weeks to take up the offer after they receive their renewal letter.

Living Woods is packed with advice and interesting articles. Visit their website www.living-woods.com

History of box woodlands

The Chilterns Conservation Board launched the Chilterns Box Woodland Project in January 2013 to research, conserve and celebrate the area's box wood heritage. The history of box trees in the Chilterns is now online.

There are only three officially recognised native box woodlands in the UK – Box Hill in Surrey, Boxwell in Gloucestershire and the largest, on the Chiltern escarpment at Ellesborough near Great Kimble in Buckinghamshire. In a small number of historic places in the Chilterns, ancient box woodland exists as remnants of a habitat that was once more extensive. In these box woodlands, rare lichens and insects have established niches over the centuries.

Box trees were harvested and used mainly to make functional items, such as tools or boxes, or decorative pieces such as furniture inlay or chess pieces.

Ancient box trees are historic features in themselves, persisting for centuries in some



locations in the Chilterns. Places where old box trees are growing are rich with history – churchyards, designed parkland and gardens, and ancient woodland sites,

You can learn more about the project on the Chilterns AONB website [here](#).

Woodlands for Climate Change Award

There is still time to register for the Woodlands for Climate Change Award 2014. The award has been introduced alongside the existing Excellence in Forestry categories to promote the importance, of managing woods for resilience to pests, disease and climate change. It will reward planting that uses more diverse native and novel



tree species to ensure Britain continues to produce quality timber.

The Woodlands for Climate Change Award is free to enter and open to all woodlands throughout England where tree plantings over the past five years, both new and restocking, are creating sites that should be resilient to the predicted challenges of climate change and pests and diseases.

There are prizes of £1,000 and £500. Entries must be received by 31 March 2014.

Woodlands must be no less than 5 hectares in size (although this could include several smaller compartments or mixed restocking and new planting). For further details and an entry form, please go to www.rfs.org.uk/involved/woodland. You can email Trefor Thompson at atrfscpetition@boyns.net or call him on 01824 704230.

SWOG BOGS

A west country woodland loo

Tim Gibbs and Jane Bellworthy purchased Braggar Wood at Portsmouth Arms, near Barnstaple about nine months ago. They have sent in a short account of their woodland activities during 2013

As woodland virgins, we haven't rushed into doing too many forestry things yet, other than removing huge amounts of laurel and rhododendrons from the area of the stream that runs through our wood.

The one significant thing we did do, however, was decide to build a composting toilet. We read up as much as we could on the subject – and there was lots of it, most of which was confusing and inconsistent! Having considered and discarded much of this information, we made our own decisions and set about a design that made sense to us.

As the toilet was not going to be extensively used, we did not need a receiver that could be

quickly changed, so the base was the bottom half of a 200-litre plastic chemical drum. This was fitted with an 18-mm plywood sheet, to which the seat was attached. A 35mm vent pipe was added, which reached down to the bottom of the container and was perforated with numerous holes to aid air circulation.

A little soil was put into the bottom of the container, followed by a 25mm layer of sawdust and a small amount of peat – both of which had been sun dried.

We then faced what proved to be the most time-consuming bit of the project – constructing the shelter. Perhaps if we were starting again we would do something simpler, but at least it combines the two most important features: it's well ventilated and weather-proof, keeping the inside dry.

Once commissioned, the toilet rule was one scoop of sawdust for a wee and one of peat for a

poo. To our amazement, it has so far worked perfectly. We checked it recently after five months use and it is about 20% full and completely lacking any unpleasant smell, so we are feeling very pleased with ourselves. However, we remain a little unsure as to why it's working so well. Could it be the bugs for the soil doing their work and the peat, being almost pure carbon, acting an air purifier?

We would love to hear about others' experiences, but in the meantime, the photos show the four stages of our project.

Thanks to Tim and Jane for sending in their pictures.





A woodland loo to be proud of. Tim and Jane used a variety of parts to make a sturdy, weatherproof toilet.



Abbotts Living Wood

A range of green woodworking courses.
www.living-wood.co.uk

Acorn Ecology in Exeter

A range of courses including a Phase 1 habitat survey course, and courses on surveying and handling protected species. They also run online ecology courses.
www.acornecology.co.uk

Acres Wild Woodland

2013 timetable of woodland and woodcrafts courses available. www.acreswildwoodlands.co.uk

AJS Crafts

A wide range of courses covering many different crafts, such as spoon-making, charcoal-burning, willow basketry and sweet chestnut gates and hurdles.
www.ajscrafts.co.uk

Bat Conservation Trust

The full brochure of courses is available at www.bats.org.uk



Bishops Wood Centre, Stourport-on-Severn

A wide range of courses of interest to woodland owners, including bushcrafts, photography, pole lathe and other woodland crafts, as well as forest school leader training and CPD.
www.worcestershire.gov.uk

Brighton Permaculture Trust

Courses include pruning old fruit trees, introduction to permaculture and building with straw bales.
www.brightonpermaculture.org.uk

British Dragonfly Society

The society runs a programme of field visits and educational events.
www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

A large range of courses for woodland owners.
www.tcv.org.uk

Bulworthy Project

A multitude of courses, including guided walks, as well as one-day introductions to charcoal burning.
www.bulworthyproject.org.uk/

Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

To see upcoming courses for 2013 visit.
www.cat.org.uk

Coastal Survival and Bushcraft Courses

Available from the Coastal Survival School in north-west Wales. Courses include 1-day, 2-day and 5-day survival skills courses for individuals and families.
www.coastalsurvival.com

Cotswolds Rural Skills Courses

Grassland management and drystone walling.
www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk

Dorset Centre for Rural Skills

Courses include hurdlemaking and green woodworking.
www.dorsetruralskills.co.uk/courses.htm

DWWP

A range of woodland activity and traditional woodcraft courses in Yorkshire. www.dwwp.co.uk

Mark Fisher Art

Woodland-based art days for all abilities.
www.markfisherart.co.uk

FloraLocale

A wide range of courses of interest to woodland owners.
www.floralocale.org

Forest Garden Shovelstrode

Practical woodland courses and yurt camping.
 Upcoming courses include green wood-working, hurdle-making, beekeeping for adults and children.
www.floralocale.org

The Field Studies Council

Courses of interest to woodland owners include tree identification, woodland management and woodland ecology; and wildlife surveying and recording techniques. www.field-studies-council.org

First Responder Course

Emergency Life Support Team—as reviewed by Tracy and Mike. Learn first aid in the outdoor environment and get HSE accreditation as a First Aider. Based in Kent/Sussex. www.elst.co.uk

Greenwood Centre

Run by Smallwoods, the Greenwood Centre offers a wide range of woodland management and woodcraft courses the whole year round. Based in Shropshire.
www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk

Greenwood Days

Offers courses to public and corporate groups on green woodworking and a wide range of creative arts in Leicestershire. www.greenwood-days.co.uk

Institute of Chartered Foresters

Forthcoming events are on
www.charteredforesters.org

Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

A wide range of courses, some of which are of interest to woodland owners. www.ieem.net

Kingcombe Environmental Studies Centre

Courses on wildlife, livestock and lifestyle management.
www.kingcombe.org

Ben Law

Runs a wide range of woodland management and woodcraft courses in Sussex. www.ben-law.co.uk

Low Impact Living Initiative (LILI) Courses

For the full range of courses from the Low Impact Living Initiative, please see www.lowimpact.org

**Malvern Coppicing**

Phil Hopkinson offers practical coppicing courses
www.malverncoppicing.co.uk

The Mammal Society

A wide variety of courses, at various venues and dates. 2013 dates now announced.
www.mammal.org.uk

Moelyci Environmental Training Centre

Welsh environmental centre that offers a wide variety of courses, including Phase 1 habitat surveys, national vegetation classification and wildlife surveys.
www.moelyci.org

Monkton Wyld Court in Dorset

Courses in sustainable living.
www.monktonwyldcourt.co.uk

Plantlife

Wildflowers and wild plants, as well as a programme of educational activities www.plantlife.org.uk

Royal Forestry Society Divisional Events

The programmes for 2013 can be seen at www.rfs.org.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

To see courses for the coming year, visit
www.rspb.org.uk

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

An experienced provider of training in practical conservation and environmental education, plus other courses for 2013

www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/page/training-courses

The Sustainability Centre

Lots of courses around the theme of sustainable living, including green woodworking, permaculture and bushcraft. www.sustainability-centre.org

John Waller, Underwoodsman

An extensive programme of courses available: green woodworking, coppice management, charcoal making, living willow and introductory blacksmithing.

www.underwoodsman.co.uk/

Patrick Whitefield Associates

Permaculture courses, including how to read the landscape. www.patrickwhitefield.co.uk

Wildlife Trusts

All 47 UK Wildlife Trusts run events of potential interest to woodland owners. For further details please see www.wildlifetrusts.org/whats-on

Woodcraft School

Timetable for woodcraft and bushcraft courses
www.woodcraftschool.co.uk/

Willowcraft and Woodlands

A social enterprise doing woodcrafts and woodland management based in Worcestershire. They run a number of courses of potential interest, including living willow structures, coppice management and treebog construction. www.willowcraftandwoodlands.co.uk/

Woodlandskills.com

Based in Sussex, they offer a variety of courses in the field of woodland living, survival and traditional wood crafts. www.woodlandskills.com

Yorwoods

Courses for woodland owners and managers in the Yorkshire area www.yorwoods.org.uk

Woodland Skills Centre

Courses in coppice and greenwood crafts, woodland management, basket-making, chair-making, timber-frame building, wood-carving, coracles, oak swill baskets, Make and use pole-lathe and shave-horse, charcoal, home chain-saw, hedge-laying. Denbighshire
<http://www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk>

Woodland work or woodland worker?

We are contacted several times a month by people who would like to work in a wood, either to improve their skills, to learn from others, or just for the sheer joy of being outdoors. Some simply want to see what being a woodland owner entails. At the same time, woodland owners often need a bit of muscle to help with big jobs in their own woods, so we wondered whether it might be worth having a column within the newsletter where you could either offer your services, or advertise for help.

Email Judith or Rich and we will try to put people in touch with each other.

The **Oxfordshire Woodland Group** is in search of carpenters, both experienced and inexperienced, to work on a timber-framed building. Click on the link below for more details oxfordshirewoodlandgroup.co.uk



Visit woodlands.co.uk/blog or click on the title to read the full blog.

God's Trees – trees and wood in the Bible

Angus reviews Professor Julian Evans' new book, *God's Trees*, about the trees of the biblical lands and the symbolism and practical uses of trees and wood in the Bible.

Gateposts

Metal, stone, wood – a consideration of the most long-lasting materials best suited to the environment.

Stick and flick – a solution to dog mess in woodlands?

Disposing of dog mess in the great outdoors remains problematic. The 'stick and flick' solution is at least better than leaving plastic bags in bushes.

Woodlands TV

Follow the links on the titles to see the latest videos, or visit www.woodlands.co.uk/tv

Planting Christmas trees

Join the Wilderness Wood Team at their Christmas tree plantation in East Sussex. They explain how they planted and cared for their 5000 Christmas trees so they will be ready for the festive season.

O Christmas tree

Here we watch sculptor Johnny Woodford as he selects and cuts down specifically grown evergreen trees on his managed woodland. We then see Johnny delivering them to various locations ready to be dressed as festive trees for Christmas and catch sight of some of his carved wooden decorations.

Shooting fairies in the woodland

Fabulous fairy costumes for real people, photographed in the woods.

Oliver Rackham and the woodland owner

Hope muses upon the importance of Oliver Rackham's work as 'one of the really outstanding botanical writers of our times' and his contribution to issues confronting woodland owners.

An enchanted Christmas

Chris visits the amazing light displays at Westonbirt Arboretum during December.

Creating a sustainable Christmas

Reduce, re-use, and recycle wrapping paper to save out trees.

3D printing in wood, insects and clay

3D printing technology is gradually changing to allow the use of more natural materials.

Fire sculpture

Sculptor Johnny Woodford decides he needs a creative tidy-up on his woodland and, using a chainsaw, creates wonderful wooden sculptures using storm timber and discarded bark ready to burn on a carefully constructed community bonfire. Whilst designing and building, Johnny shares his quiet passion for working with wood.

