

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter August 2014



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www.swog.org.uk



Bargains abound this month, with discount tickets available for both the National Forest Woodfair on 25 August and the Bentley Woodfair on 26-28 September. It's also Big Butterfly Count month and Nick Lear has written a very timely account of the butterflies in his East Sussex wood. The Grown in Britain campaign flourishes, and SWOG members are among the first accreditations.

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.

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SWOG website and forum

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In this issue

- **Events and News** 3
 - Woodfair discounts
 - Community engagement - a new guide
 - Online woodfuel survey
 - Chiltern Woodland Conference
- **Grown in Britain licences** 8
 - Alvecote Wood
- **Butterflies at Barcombe** 10
 - Big Butterfly Count 11
- **Woodlands blogs and TV** 12
- **Woodfair listing and help** 12, 13

SWOG COURSE LIST APRIL 2014



SWOG Course Listings

Anyone who buys a wood from Woodlands.co.uk is given £300 towards a woodland course to help towards owners' enjoyment and knowledge. These courses can encompass anything from basket-weaving, green woodworking or pole lathe turning, to chainsaw tuition and woodland management. Buyers are asked to write a short resumé of their course, noting how effective they

found it, and whether they would recommend it to others.

We are gradually incorporating all these valuable comments into a database listing which can be searched by area or course topic. We hope it will be useful to anyone searching for help and guidance in choosing a woodland course. Technological gremlins have bedevilled progress, but version two is now on the SWOG website here: www.swog.org.uk/courses-4

Bentley Woodfair – 35% discount on tickets ordered in advance!

The 19th Bentley Woodfair will be held on 26th, 27th and 28th September, in the beautiful Bentley Estate, near Lewes in East Sussex. Visitors will enjoy access to the Motor Museum, Wildfowl Reserve and Miniature Railway, as well as all the fabulous woodfair attractions.

Woodfair is a celebration of woodlands, forestry, timber, trees, woodcrafts, and much more. The whole site holds two fields of stands, exhibits and displays, as well as an amazing woodland full of demonstrations and activities.

Bentley Woodfair started in 1996 and continues to support local rural businesses and crafts, while educating and entertaining families.

With demonstrations of machinery, tree climbing, childrens activities, lots of local food and a beer tent, there is always a really great atmosphere.

Woodlands.co.uk will have a stall, as will SWOG, and we will be delighted to see as many of you as possible. If you would like to help out, or have woodland products you would like to exhibit, please let Judith or Rich know.

SWOG members can take advantage of a generous discount by buying their tickets in



advance. Email your details to woodfair@bentley.org.uk with the reference SWOG14 in the subject line. Please include your name, address, number of tickets required and phone number if you want to pay by card over the phone. Cathy Cordery will get in touch to arrange payment and post tickets to you. Alternatively, you can send your details with a check to Cathy at Bentley Estate, Harveys Lane, Halland, Nr Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5AF.

Prices are adults £10, children aged 5–15 £5. *Please note that this offer will only apply to tickets purchased in advance – they will be £14 and £10, respectively on the gate.*

Full details of the event can be seen here: www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair/4575405571



Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum Saturday 23–Monday 25 August 2014

A world of wooden wonders, expert carvers, live local music and a host of exhibitors (including SWOG) join



Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum this year.

Traditional woodcraft and woodland skills, falconry, axe carving and racing, and

delicious food producers will also entertain.

Treefest has developed from Westonbirt's Festival of the Tree (which incorporated the Sculptree carvings and charity auction). Now carving, family activities, woodcraft and exhibitors are all included in the one event.

The popular tree carving element of the Festival of the Tree continues at Treefest, with big carving taking place across the Bank Holiday weekend.

For details about times and prices, visit www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-6xclux

Rich will be there with his rocket stove, so stop by the Woodlands.co.uk/SWOG stand for a cup of tea!

10th Anniversary National Forest Wood Fair 25 August 2014

On Monday 25 August 2014 the stage will be set at Beacon Hill Country Park, near Woodhouse Eaves in Leicestershire, for the tenth anniversary National Forest Wood Fair. The Fair has been a regular feature of the summer calendar since 2005, and is now established as the top regional event celebrating the National Forest and everything to do with trees, timber and woodland.

With a full programme of demonstrations,

'have a go' wood craft sessions and children's fun and games, this popular event attracts visitors from all over the country, and over 100 exhibitors and demonstrators. Visitors can enjoy the Forest Food Festival, see the experts at work in woodworking masterclasses and soak up the view from the stunning Beacon Hill Country Park in Leicestershire.

Book in advance for a 20% discount on the gate prices – enjoy a family day out for £20. For more information, visit the website: www.nationalforestwoodfair.co.uk



The sound of chainsaws and work in your woods

When two or three woodland folk are gathered together, the talk turns, sooner or later, to chainsaws in some guise or another. Woodland managers often comment that the general public associate the noise of a chainsaw, and the subsequent felling of a tree as a bad thing, especially in public places. Many have found rather abrupt (and often plain rude) notes pinned to tree stumps, bemoaning the loss of a much-loved tree. The public perception is often that trees must be preserved at all costs and it is sometimes difficult to make clear that trees can be felled or trimmed for sound reasons of woodland management, for public safety or for the health or age of the tree.

Community engagement

As part of the Good Woods project, the Sylva Foundation have issued a new guide, poster and leaflet which woodland owners and managers

can use to alert the public to works in their wood. Undertaking stakeholder engagement when developing a woodland management plan is a requirement under the UK Forestry Standard. Whether or not your woodland is accessible to the public, good practice woodland management will involve engagement with stakeholders. Being proactive about informing local people promotes good relations, and may lead to offers of volunteer help. The new guide, *Stakeholder and Community Engagement – A guide for woodland owners and managers in England*, has been updated to reflect changes to the UK Forestry Standard and other developments in forestry and technology. The guide provides suggestions and guidance to help you relate your woodland plans to the wider community.

This comprehensive and informative booklet, along with an A3 poster and a leaflet, can be downloaded from the Sylva website sylva.org.uk/myforest/communities

Woodland management


Woodland management ensures that our woods are worked and cared for in a way that helps provide us with many benefits, while making sure they stay healthy and continue to thrive in the future.

Recreation and learning
cycling, horse riding, mountain biking, walking, jogging, playing, learning, shooting

Landscape and scenery
landscape character, scenery, sense of place, shelter, viewpoints

History and heritage
history, heritage, charcoal pits, saw pits, boundaries

Products and materials
timber for building, furniture and fencing, wood for heating, food products



Skilled jobs
planting trees, coppicing, felling, rides and paths, wood workers

Wildlife
habitats and homes, birds, butterflies, fungi, insects, mammals, moths, plants

Natural services
clean air and water, flood protection, carbon storage, climate change protection

Woods for the future
helping people and nature adapt to a changing climate, protecting trees from diseases



www.sylva.org.uk/communities



BioRegional



Wanted – northern neighbours



SWOG's Facebook presence seems to have taken off in the past couple of months and it

is wonderful to see such a wide variety of photos, comments and woodland experiences.

Both here and on the SWOG forum there has been a call for meetings or get togethers in the north of England. Historically, there have been fewer members in the north, but I am pleased to say that numbers are increasing. I am always delighted to organise woodland meetings, but first, I need a wood! If you would like to meet the neighbours or host a meeting,

get in touch with judith@swog.org.uk

Hosting a meeting in your wood is very easy and need not be a formal occasion. Owners often just like to get together to have a chat about what has and hasn't worked for them in their woods. A short walk, a chat and maybe a cup of tea is a great way to share ideas and experiences, both good and bad.

Woodland courses in the north

Bill Oaks, who works the Dell and Judson Copse in Tyne and Wear, began the discussion. He runs green woodworking courses and has two coming up this month.

9 August -Mallet and stool-making

16 August Using a pole lathe

Visit his website, www.thedellatcoalburns.co.uk/ for more information.

Woodfuel survey

In December we reported on Nottingham PhD student Jeremy Rison, who is carrying out research into the changes that are taking place in British woodlands caused by the growing use of firewood. Jeremy has now produced a survey in order to gather data about the impact of the woodfuel market on woodland management.

Topics explored in the survey include practical aspects of woodfuel production and the wider issues facing woodland owners and managers who look after the countryside. The University wants to broaden its sources of information and your reply to this survey will greatly help the research. Many owners and managers of large and small woodlands across the country are already involved with the study.

It takes approximately 15 minutes to complete and does not have to be completed in one sitting. All responses will remain anonymous. The results should yield some really interesting data on the impact that the growing demand for woodfuel is having on woodland management. The link to the survey is: www.survey.bris.ac.uk/nottingham/woodfuel/



The Chiltern Woodlands Conservation Project is celebrating its silver jubilee and the annual Conference on 1 July was, as always, a stimulating and interesting event. Speakers included Martin Hugi from the Woodland Trust, who spoke about ancient woodland restoration, and John Clegg, who was enlightening on the subject of how owners can prepare their woodland for sale. Finally, the subject of woodland pests provoked animated, not to say deadly discussion, for the local squirrel population. More on these subjects later in the year.

The importance of ancient woods

Martin Hugi, ancient woodland restoration project manager at the Woodland Trust, gave a presentation about PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites) restoration. Ancient woodland is defined as that which can be dated to at least 1600 in England – a date when mapping became reasonably reliable.

He explained that the relatively undisturbed soils and ecosystems of ancient woodlands provide a rich terrestrial wildlife habitat. They are a niche for specialist species, including 232 which are endangered. The diversity below ground is extraordinary, with fungi, invertebrates and bacteria underpinning the rich biodiversity above ground.

More immediately visible, the lumps and bumps of an ancient woodland, are often indicative of historic earthworks, ditches, or pre-industrial workings, and provide important evidence of land use across the centuries.

Ancient woodland is valuable on so many levels and is of course, irreplaceable. It covers only 2% of the UK – but in the Chilterns it makes up 13%. Before the 1980s, ancient woodland was not valued for its ecosystem and much was cleared in the aftermath of the Second World War, to be replaced by conifer plantations.

Martin pointed out that conifer planting is



useful in the right places, but conifer species have an adverse impact on ancient sites. Light levels decline, the soil becomes more acid from the pine needles and biodiversity is consequently poor.

Martin works to change the direction of the PAWS towards a predominately site-native broadleaved composition. These woodlands often contain remnants of ancient woodland that can be strengthened and enhanced, and he uses historic maps to assess what used to be on the site, both arboreal and archeological. Martin first carries out an assessment and recommends a five-year cycle for a management plan, advocating a gradual approach. He tries to encourage good broadleaf regeneration, but the level of conifer cover is obviously the primary threat to this.

The second stage is to gradually transform the woodland composition from conifer to broadleaf, perhaps by carrying out a commercial thinning operation. Again, a cautious approach is necessary, as it is important not to inflict too much light too quickly on the woodland. Surrounding broadleaf trees very quickly reap the benefit of additional light, but it is important to assess the impact of your actions – take stock and enjoy the trees!

The Woodland Trust has published a guide to PAWS restoration, which can be downloaded here: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/PAWS.pdf

Grown in Britain licences Alvecote Wood

Alvecote Wood awarded Grown in Britain accreditation

Congratulations to SWOG members Sarah Walters and Stephen Briggs, owners of Alvecote Wood, who have won the prestigious Royal Forestry Society award for England's Best Small Woodland in the RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards.

Sarah and Stephen have transformed Alvecote Wood from a neglected 11-acre site to a thriving, healthy woodland. They purchased an adjoining field in 2010 and have planted an additional 6,500 trees, and a wildflower meadow across a further six acres in what is now Betty's Wood. With the addition of 11 ponds, the site is a haven for wildlife, and biodiversity has noticeably increased under their ownership.

It's an impressive list of achievements, but when Sarah and Stephen talk about it, they are remarkably matter of fact, making it all sound, if not easy, then at least just something that they had to do.

'It's even better than I expected'

On 22 July they added another accolade, when Alvecote became one of the first small woods to be awarded a Grown in Britain Forest Licence.

A view across the ponds of Betty's Wood.



Douglass Driver of Grown in Britain presents Sarah and Stephen with their licence.

To celebrate, a small group of representatives from Grown in Britain, the Forestry Commission, the Small Woodlands Association, Save Our Woods, Confor, SWOG and BAM were invited to Alvecote to tour the wood and to hear Sarah and Stephen talk about what they had done. Douglass Driver, Chief Executive of Grown in Britain explained how impressed he was with their woodland. 'I was expecting it to be good after the RFS award, he said, 'but it's even better than I expected. They have worked incredibly hard to meet the Grown in Britain standard and we are delighted to present the licence to Alvecote.'

Managing Alvecote

Alvecote is managed with several aims in mind: to ensure the long term sustainability of the woodland, to increase biodiversity, to produce viable products for sale, and to engage and involve the community.

The original part of the wood houses about

150 oak standards, with areas of over-stood coppice, and when they first took over, what Sarah called industrial quantities of brambles. They quickly realised that they would need more than just a few hand tools to deal with them and invested in professional equipment. This is probably where Sarah and Stephen stand out – even though they were novice woodland managers, they have consistently adopted a professional approach, and it has paid off handsomely. They have undertaken training in everything from chainsaw techniques to forest school co-ordination, and have sought out professional advice from well-qualified sources, such as the Forestry Commission and the wildlife trusts. And, as they said, when an experienced person has told them to do something, they did it! They are now able to produce and dry firewood, invite community groups such as the local scouts in to camp, sell hay and green woodworked products and run photography courses.

Sarah has written about their experiences for the *RFS Quarterly Journal of Forestry*, which can be viewed here:

www.alvecotewood.co.uk/. She said, ‘This is a milestone moment as we look to increase public understanding that woodland management is good for biodiversity and the health of our woodlands.’

Grown in Britain and small woodlands

Only 54% of British woodland is actively managed, and the Grown in Britain campaign, which began in earnest last autumn, intends to raise that figure. A larger percentage of sustainably managed woodland, will in turn increase the supply of British timber destined

for use by local people and businesses. Whether it’s to heat our homes, in the construction of new buildings, or for retailers to create wood products that shape our everyday lives, we can source a great deal more timber from home, rather than abroad if woodland is managed more efficiently. The Grown in Britain campaign is good for the environment, for people, for wildlife, and for our local economies.

For woodland owners who want to sell timber or other woodland produce, a Grown in Britain licence and the right to use the logo

reassures customers that the items they are purchasing are from a sustainably managed, British source. It differentiates your products and gives your customers more choice and the opportunity to ‘buy British’ and support local industry and economies.

For those of us who do not sell products, supporting the campaign is also vital. It will help decrease reliance on imported timber, and encourage investment in British woodlands. You may not think that your own small wood can be a viable producer, but it may be worth

chatting to your woodland neighbours to discuss the possibilities of working together.

One further point. Some people in the world of professional woodland management unfairly regard small woodland owners as dilettantes with no interest in sustainable forestry. This is a harsh and generalised judgement, but perhaps involvement in a campaign like this is a chance to prove them wrong.

Woodland owners interested in Grown in Britain accreditation should visit the website, a great source of advice and information, www.growninbritain.org/get-involved/licence/



Enjoying the shade of Alvecote's oaks.

Butterflies at Barcombe

Nick Lear has managed the 75-acre Knowlands Wood in East Sussex since the 1970s. Forty years ago, it was a dark wood which had been neglected since 1945, so Nick set about re-coppicing and has noticed a dramatic change in the wildlife in his woodland. Thanks to Nick for the wonderful pictures and words.

Knowlands Wood can fairly be described as ancient hornbeam coppice with oak standards, although hornbeam comprises less than half the timber and more than 20 species of native broadleaf tree are found in it.

July is butterfly time. Before, when the rides were narrow and overhung and all was dark and gloomy, there seemed to be none at all. When we began coppicing in the eighties, white admirals arrived, lots and lots. I had never seen one before. Silver-washed fritillaries arrived the following July. Both are species of woodland glades, specialists.

Managing woodland for wildlife

If you have diverse species of tree and shrub, let in lots of light and have some water nearby, if possible. These seem to me to be the key to a wildlife-friendly wood. I have learnt that the more light you allow into your wood, the more the wildlife will benefit, especially butterflies and other insects.

In dappled shade, speckled woods dart up to investigate (or attack) anything that moves, even



Silver-washed fritillary.

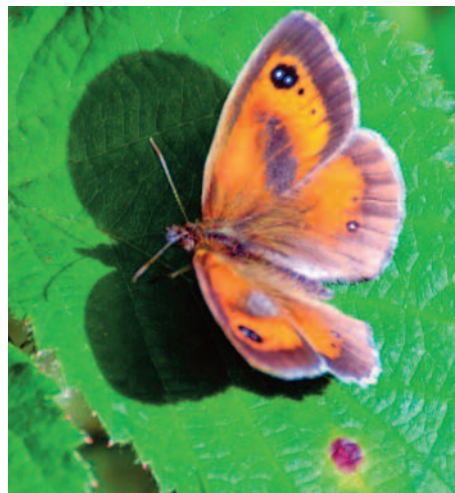
a butterfly twice the size. Purple hairstreaks are most often confined to the area around the tops of the oaks. The males are most active in the late evening (between seven and eight, when the sun is still on the tree tops), by which time other species have tucked themselves up in bed. Take binoculars for a good look. Very rarely, one of these little gems comes down to the woodland floor.

In a grassy clearing (once a gamekeeper's field) you can see such species as meadow brown, which may not be much to look at but makes up for that in numbers), gatekeeper, green-veined white, large skipper and the occasional marbled white. Red admiral, small tortoiseshell, comma – these will surprise you here and there as you wander and wonder.

And I haven't mentioned the so-called



White admiral.



Gatekeeper.



Meadow brown.

'cabbage whites' – properly known as the large and small white, both so full of energy so that they never seem to alight for the camera. You must be patient. In the past week I have photographed each of the above-mentioned species (except the purple hairstreak) here in the wood and on land hard alongside. It's great fun getting to know the butterflies on your wood. People always came to enjoy the bluebells, but over the years we allowed gradually more access and now they come at all times of year. We do not advertise and there is no close car-parking so the numbers are manageable.



Speckled wood butterflies can be aggressive.



Small white.



Green-veined white.



Big Butterfly Count 19 July–10 August

The Big Butterfly Count is a nationwide survey aimed at helping us assess the health of our

environment. It was launched in 2010 and has rapidly become the world's biggest survey of butterflies. Over 46,000 people took part in 2013, counting 830,000 individual butterflies and day-flying moths across the UK.

Butterflies react very quickly to changes in their environment which makes them excellent biodiversity indicators. Butterfly declines are an early warning for other wildlife losses.

The count will also assist us in identifying trends in species that will help us plan how to protect butterflies from extinction, as well as understand the effect of climate change on wildlife.

Simply count butterflies for 15 minutes during bright (preferably sunny) weather. We have chosen this time of year because most butterflies are at the adult stage of their lifecycle, so are more likely to be seen. Records are welcome from anywhere: from parks, school grounds and gardens, to fields, forests and woodlands. Smartphone apps for Android and iPhone are also available to help you, so enjoy the summer butterfly display!

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

A wooden summerhouse – design and construction

Anita describes how she and her family have built a summerhouse using salvaged wood – grand designs eat you heart out!

Why camping in your own wood is special

Angus goes free-range camping and enjoys a memorable experience away from it all.

Big butterfly count

Lewis explains how we can all take part in this year's Big Butterfly Count.

Froe mallet making

Chris wants to make wooden shingles and realises that he needs a mallet. He learns how to make a wooden one for use with his new froe.

Metal detectors and woodlands

Ned Scanlon describes the thrill of finding historic artefacts with his metal detector. Currently exploring a wood near Bath, he writes

about researching the area and obtaining permission from landowners.

Woodlands TV

Click on the link above to visit the Woodlands tv web page.

Animal tracking from prints

John Rhyder explains how to identify the tracks of different animals that call the woods home and shows his collection of inked animal prints.

Raising tomorrow's ancient woodland

Rosalind Forbes Adams embarks on a project to create an ancient woodland from scratch, with the help of botanist Lin Hawthorn. Wildflower seeds and grasses are incorporated by a process of soil inversion.

Tracking animals from scat

Naturalist John Rhyder explains that being able to identify animal droppings in the wild is vital in tracking them. Size, shape, smell, location and

consistency of droppings are all clues to help inform the tracker.



Woodfair help needed!



The SWOG team are looking forward to attending the woodfairs at Westonbirt and Bentley later this year. Last year we met lots of members and enjoyed chatting to you all. We would like to show visitors what woodland owners do with their woodland, whether it be wildlife conservation, camping, green

woodworking, or simply getting together with woodland neighbours and friends to brew up and enjoy a cup of tea.

We would love some displays of the products of green woodworking, or perhaps a few items you have made with timber from your woods, such as willow hurdles, carved items or even boot racks (a popular seller last year!) Perhaps you produce home-made jams or honey? Sadly, space is too tight to demonstrate chainsaw skills!

If you are able to help us man the stall for an hour or so we might be able to express our gratitude with a free ticket for entry. If you would like to help please get in touch with Judith or Rich – email addresses on page 2.



This is not an exhaustive list, so if you know of any others, please let us know!

Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be exhibiting at Treefest, Westonbirt Arboretum and Bentley.

Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum

23–25 August 2014 Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

23–24 August 2014
Sturminster Newton, Dorset
www.stockgaylard.com/oak-fair

National Forest Woodfair

25 August 2014 Beacon Hill Country Park,
Leicestershire www.nationalforest.org

Wychwood Forest Fair

7 September 2014 Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

Lincolnshire Firewood Fair

7 September 2014, Revesby Estate
www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk

APF Wood Show

18–20 September 2014
Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Chilterns Countryside and Food Festival

14 September 2014
Ashridge Estate, Hertfordshire
www.chilternsaonb.org/

Bentley Weald Woodfair

26–28 September 2014 Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

Enchanted Forest

3–26 October 2014, Perthshire
www.enchantedforest.org.uk

Surrey Hills Woodfair 2014

4–5 October 2014 Birtley
House, Bramley
www.surreyhills.org

Tweed Valley Forest Festival 2014

24 October–2 November
2014, Scotland
www.forest-festival.com

