



Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter November 2014

Woodland grants 2015

**Fun, fuel and fear in the woods:
a new owner's first year**

Ancient woodland under threat

Make a bat box



The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness has arrived, and with it all manner of fungi. See page 11 to learn more about identification. Kerry Caldock, has written an enthusiastic account of her first year in her wood, and for halloween, Rich makes a bat box.

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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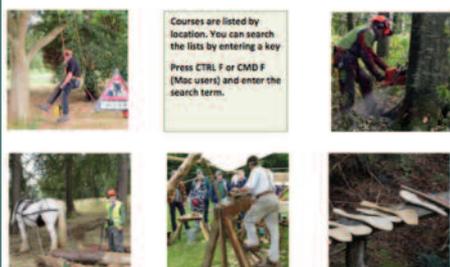
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SWOG COURSE LIST APRIL 2014



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. View it on the SWOG website here:

www.swog.org.uk/courses-4

Woodland grants 2015

The next round of grants for forestry equipment is due to be announced soon. If anyone is thinking about taking the management of their woodland a stage further, it might be that a piece of equipment bought with the help of a grant would make a difference in the project's viability. Firewood processors, extraction equipment, and mobile mills are all bits of kit which can make a huge difference to the amount of wood you can process.

The new Rural Development Programme opens in 2015 and will probably include support for:

- Timber harvesting, extraction and primary processing equipment (woodfuel and timber)
- Storage to dry woodfuel
- Venison processing
- Training
- Business support
- Co-operation, collaboration and advisory services

To demonstrate how grants under the Rural Development Programme have helped forestry contractors and woodfuel businesses grow, Forestry Commission England are promoting a series of free events. Matthew Woodcock, Partnership and Expertise Manager is looking at various models for supporting collaborative ventures. Even if you consider your woodland too small to purchase a piece of kit on your own, think about pooling resources with your woodland neighbours. Email: matthew.woodcock@forestry.gsi.gov.uk for more information.

The events will give attendees the chance to speak to those who have been through the funding process. To register call Amy or Jude at Lantern (who are co-ordinating the programme) on 07502 985921 or email them at events@lantern.uk.com. The full list is below, or see the website

www.lantern.uk.com/#!events/cmpy for further details.

Funding events

Essex Wednesday 5th Nov 2014

Only a few places left!
Moat Wood, Stisted, Nr Braintree.



West Sussex Friday 7th November 2014

Balcombe Estate, Stonehall, Balcombe, Haywards Heath.

Buckinghamshire Tuesday 18th November 2014

HG Matthews, Chesham Brickworks, Bellingdon, Chesham.

Cambridgeshire Friday 21st November 2014

Chopsticks, New Gant Farm, Swaffham Prior.

North York Wednesday 26th November 2014

Farmoor Forest Services, Swithinthwaite, North Yorks.

Hampshire Thursday 27th November 2014

Brockwood Park Farm, Bramdean, Alresford, Hampshire.

Gloucestershire Tuesday 2nd December 2014

Guiting Manor Farms, Nr Cheltenham.

Dorset Wednesday 3rd December 2014

Travellers Rest Farm, Durweston, Blandford Forum.

Cheshire Friday 5th December 2014

Anderton Boat Lift, Lift Lane, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6FW.

Exmoor Thursday 18th December 2014

Kitchen Wood, North Molton Estate, Exmoor.

Cumbria Wednesday 21st January 2015

The Yard, Halecat Estate, Witherslack.

Squirrels – better red or dead?

An article in *The Sunday Times* on October 19 highlighted the Prince of Wales' plans to cull grey squirrels to help protect red squirrels. The Science and Environment Editor, Jonathan Leake, also noted the damage grey squirrels cause to broadleaf woodlands.

Royal Forestry Society Chief Executive Simon Lloyd, said: 'Discussions about grey squirrels often focus solely on the important case to protect native red squirrels and the plight of British woodlands does not get mentioned. However, if the UK is to protect the health of its woods and trees the issue of grey squirrel damage must be addressed at the same time.'

He adds: 'We know from our recent Squirrel Survey that woodland owners regard grey squirrels as the biggest danger facing broadleaved woodlands. There is evidence that some landowners are being put off planting broadleaves because they fear that too many will fall victim to grey squirrels. If too many trees fail, and fewer are planted, then the future of the UK's broadleaf woodlands is threatened - and that is a matter of concern to all who love our woodlands.'

The RFS is among a number of conservation and forestry organisations calling for effective and targeted controls in areas where grey squirrels are detrimental to existing and new woodland planting. The RFS also wants to see more research into grey squirrel behaviours, humane control methods and to encourage planting of a wider range of species to help make British woodlands a less tasty and inviting place for grey squirrels to thrive.

RFS former Management Chair Andrew Woods told *The Sunday Times* grey squirrels were particularly damaging for young oak and beech. 'They have learnt to strip the bark from almost all our native broadleaf trees so that in many areas there are no longer any juvenile oaks. They reach the age of 10 to 15 years and then get attacked and die.'



Views of woodland owners

Coincidentally, the subject has also been exercising the SWOG forum members, where there has been healthy debate about the pros and cons of culling squirrels, as well as the means used to do so. In his day job, Dexter's Shed is a pest controller so has considerable experience of dealing with the pesky critters. He has described the various methods and answered several queries about humane methods and the use of traps vs guns. Read all about it here: www.swog.org.uk/forum

A number of forum members backed up the words of the RFS. Andy M wrote, 'I have a Scots Pine in my garden which was planted in the early 1820s and we have tried to grow several replacements from its seed to preserve the genetic stock. There were about half a dozen, about 25 ft tall. Each one has had its growing tip eaten out and all are now multi-stemmed and useless as specimens for the next 150 years. Squirrels are by far the most likely culprit. Many woodlands around here have worries over good specimens with similar damage and only those with stringent squirrel control are hopeful of having fine upstanding single stem trees in 100-200 years time.'



Grown in Britain Week 2014

In the second week of October Grown in Britain week brought together a wide variety of people at a series of events held around the country. I represented SWOG at the House of Lords, and met representatives from timber processors, construction companies, manufacturers and smaller scale concerns, as well as colleagues from the Small Woods Association and the Royal Forestry Society.

Grown in Britain has three aims:

1. Stimulate the demand for British timber.
2. Increase the amount of woodland under management.
3. Encourage all of us to embrace a woodland culture.

Everyone was full of enthusiasm for the aim of improving knowledge of a woodland culture

and I hope that we will soon be able to involve SWOG members with events shared with other organisations. It was really encouraging that large companies such as BAM and Stihl are looking for ways to support small woodland owners. Now, the cynical among you may think that conglomerates are motivated by profit as well as altruism, but none of them are forced to support the GIB initiative – they are doing so out of a sense of corporate responsibility and because they support the vision of connecting users of timber to the forests and woodlands in which it is grown.

SWOG members can get involved and it would be really useful to hear suggestions from you. Could you host a sponsored training event in your woodland? Would you like help from volunteers with some work or management in your wood? Would you just like to attend a training event? Let us know!



Forest Education Network



The Forest Education Network

Set up in April 2012, the Forest Education Network (FEN) is the successor body to the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) in England. FEN builds on the valuable work of FEI and seeks to engage more young people in forest and woodland environments.

For small woodland owners, it is a useful resource of ideas and contacts and it is well worth taking a look at the website, www.lotc.org.uk/fen.

FEN has a wide remit to promote a whole range of learning experiences, from forest floor to shop floor, and to raise awareness of forests and woodlands as great places to learn. Direct experiences in woodlands give powerful links to understanding more about the important role of trees and woodlands in our world, the social and

environmental benefits they can bring as well as links to our forest industry, careers and our growing wood culture. FEN brings diverse members together to promote the sharing of good practice and supports those that are helping in this vital role – whether as teachers, facilitators, activity leaders, woodland owners or those working in the industry who have a passion for trees, woodland and forests. Our membership is growing and now has over 350 individual members, 28 local groups and another 150 or so interested individuals and organisations. Members receive a regular FEN Members Bulletin and can submit news items, events, case studies and resources onto the webpages for thousands to see. If you would like to join our growing network please get in touch with fen@lotc.org.uk.

Fun, fuel and fear in the woods: a new owner's first year

Kerry Caldock took ownership of Steward Wood in Devon in the summer of 2013. This is her account of what they've been up to.

The paperwork completed, my savings depleted – the wood was mine. Sitting on a damp log, watching the smoke from the Kelly kettle drift between the trunks of venerable oaks and lofty ash, I could not dispel a sense of unreality and believe that I really owned this ancient natural wonderland. An urgent need to make tangible and come to terms with ownership saw me foolishly stumbling about in the undergrowth for the first few visits, desperately trying to catalogue every tree, herb, grass and shrub.

Lost time in the woods

After a few visits, I began to notice a phenomenon that has persisted to this day and suggests a wisdom available in nature that makes a mockery of my early frenetic efforts to 'acquire information' about the wood. I would set off to complete some task or find a particular plant and find myself diverted by a spectacular beefsteak fungus, a hornets' nest, a spirally twisted hazel formed by honeysuckle or a nest of black pearls (insect eggs) in the bark of a dead oak. Eventually I would find myself back at my fire/camp ground and on locating a watch, would find that hours had passed. I have come to accept this as part of the wood's gift now, and know that when I go there I seem to be living in a different time zone.

Although not a pyromaniac, firelighting, tea-making and cooking over an open fire have proved one of the greatest woodland pleasures for me. A Lapsang Souchong with added twig and smoky bits is unsurpassable and a Dutch oven has been the source of remarkably good stews. I have a new respect for our ancestors who managed to light fires with flint and tinder in all weathers. A reasonably experienced fire setter myself, I really struggled to get the kettle



going after days of rain. Following bouts of swearing and a sooty face, I resorted to a waxed pine cone to get my damp twigs going and a decent cup of tea.

Lone camping

After a few weeks, the days were lengthening, the temperatures rising and it was time for me to try out my first lone camp in the wood. I am not by nature a nervous or fearful soul and I was surprised by the reaction of others to my intention. There is no doubt that woods and forests at night bring out deep and ancient fears in people that are hard to support in rational terms – the response from friends could be summed up as 'What, alone? You must be mad'. The lack of a phone signal compounded matters.

I admit, there were some distinctly hairy moments. I had picked a night that was dry, but with thick cloud cover. Consequently, the wood was utterly black, with no night vision at all and torchlight was swallowed by the velvety depths. There are many deer tracks running through the wood and some large red deer congregate at an area of wet clay to the back of the wood. In the small hours, I think there was some deer movement and when a hoof stepped upon and broke a stick it sounded like a shot ringing through the night! Holly leaves falling and hitting the tent mimicked objects that weighed kilos, not grams. Owls hooted and something

Fun, fuel and fear in the woods: a new owner's first year

else screeched – after some heart pounding moments, my imagination settled and I began to experience the small sounds against the background of vast silence as sheer magic. I have since stayed there often.

I won't for a moment pretend that my nights in the wood have been particularly comfortable, but they have included a night in a hammock on which I saw the ground beneath me scattered with 'stars' (turned out to be bioluminescent fungi on wood fragments), a night with the moon so bright I could walk about the wood as though it were day, and a night when small hooves approached my tent so near that their owner could only have been feet away.

I was never frightened again after that first camp until I decided to bring my Collie (Pip) with me for an overnight stay. Poor Pip, he clearly didn't know what his boundaries were and what he was supposed to be guarding. Every little sound - of which there were plenty - set him off into a frenzy of terrified barking as he vacillated between charging into the tent and charging out after the 'invader'. There was no chance of sleep and his fearful response was setting me on edge. In the end I had to walk down the hill to get a phone signal and call my husband to pick up the dog and take him home



in disgrace! He has since redeemed himself and become a more confident denizen of the woods.

Using the wood

The camping season over, and with rain and cold weather setting in, I wondered if I would find myself going less often to the wood (about a 40 minute drive). Happily not. My husband Toby and I bought ourselves a wood burning stove. I bought a new chainsaw. Many years ago I had been taught to use a chainsaw by an elderly farm labourer in Walea who, after nearly 60 years of

felling, cutting and chopping, still had all his digits, and thus must have known a thing or two. I did an excellent one-day course for people who were already using a



chainsaw but would benefit from tips, safety reminders and new skills (including a handy, only slightly wonky, five-minute chainsaw stool). We found ourselves going almost weekly to the wood: trees had fallen in the autumn gales and we found ways to cut and haul our logs and wheelbarrow them down to the car. These trips always involved fires, tea, packed lunches and lots of simply 'hanging out in the wood' between logging sessions. The dog became so at home that bribes had to be applied to get him out of the camp and back in the car. There was something very satisfying about supplying all our fuel needs for the whole winter, and given that the whole operation was about sawing, logging, barrowing and muscle, we didn't need gym membership either.

Eighteen months in to being a wood owner and it is the best and most rewarding purchase I have ever made.

Hopwas Wood – ancient woodland under threat

In October, 50 hectares (124 acres) of ancient woodland near Tamworth, Staffordshire, was proposed as a new site option for inclusion in the county's Minerals Local Plan as the preferred site to extract 9 million tonnes of sand and gravel over a 13 year period.

*The **Woodland Trust** have called it the worst threat to an ancient woodland they have ever seen and have vowed to fight this proposal.*

Sarah Walters, a near neighbour, has taken up the fight against this threat.

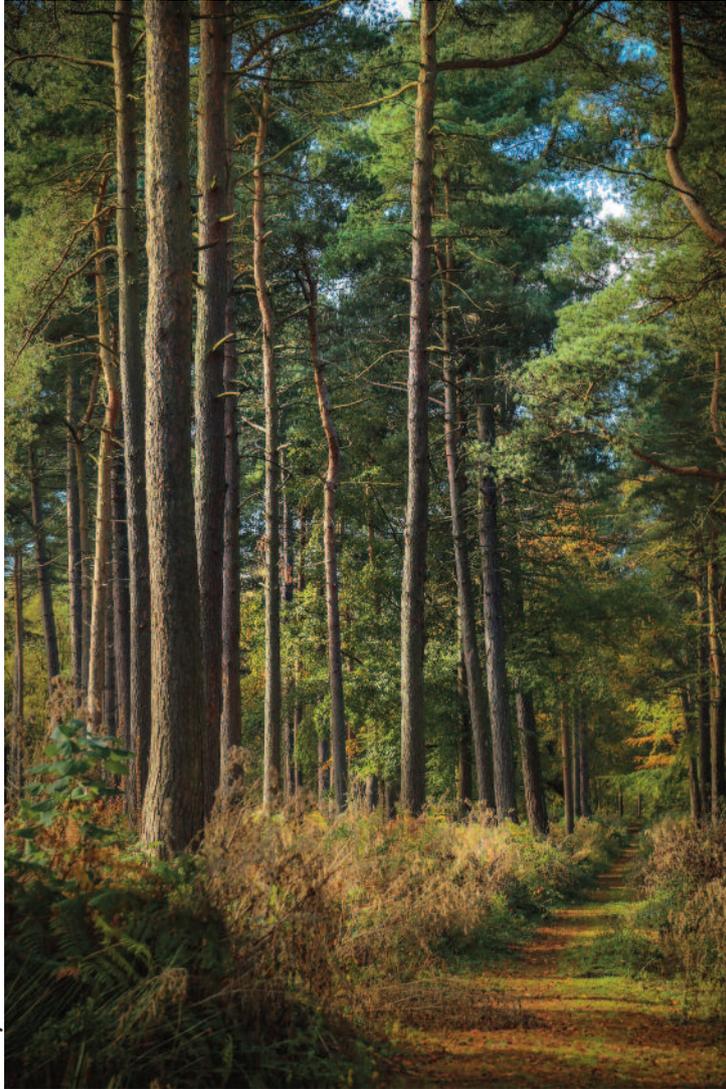
I am not entirely sure what is difficult to understand about the word 'irreplaceable' when applied to ancient woodland. But here we have another ancient woodland under threat.

If you look at the Tamworth area on DEFRA's **MAGIC mapping system**, you will see that there is precious little ancient woodland. Tiny fragments remain, of which the largest is Hopwas Woods, part of which is ancient woodland and part of which is ancient re-planted woodland or PAWS.

This woodland is part-owned by the Ministry of Defence, and part by Lafarge Tarmac. Access is via public bridleways, and the woods have been and continue to be enjoyed by a large number of local residents for walking, running, training, mountain biking, dog-walking and wildlife-watching.

But now there is a threat thanks to

Staffordshire County Council's review of the Minerals Core Strategy and Local Minerals Plan. Following a consultation in April 2014, which had already identified reserves of sand and gravel sufficient to meet statutory requirements, contributions were invited from developers for additional sites for sand and gravel extraction. These include a proposal by Lafarge Tarmac to destroy a large proportion of



Hopwas Woods for quarrying. Virtually all of the proposed affected area is ancient woodland or PAWS, despite the developer claiming that this designation affects only half the proposed site.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) clearly states that 'planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits

of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss'.

So what we have is a proposal for extraction of sand and gravel that is not actually needed, from an important ancient woodland site, that is widely valued and used by the local community, that is home to important wildlife including European Protected Species (otters).

But more than that, it will rip out the heart of a wildlife and local community with knock-

on effects for wildlife in the whole area. Lose Hopwas Woods and we lose far more than the woods alone – we lose an absolutely vital link in the local wildlife community.

And there are the people. People who grew up walking in the woods, enjoying the public rights of way therein. People who learned to love nature by spending time in the woods as children. People who enjoy walking, running, mountain biking, horse riding and other activities in the woods. People who connect with the local landscape, appreciate it, care for it, and who have taken it to their hearts.

The local community did not take this lightly. In 24 hours, a new **Facebook page, Save Hopwas Woods**, got almost 7,000 followers. The Friends of Hopwas Woods have issued a document detailing the plans and how you can object. The Woodland Trust have also thrown their weight behind this campaign to bring it to national attention.

Ancient woodland is irreplaceable, and this campaign must succeed. The plan to tear up this ancient woodland is all about profit. It is about taking away a resource from local wildlife and community and putting it in the hands of developers..

This article first appeared on the **Saveourwoods website** – thanks to Hen and Sarah Walters for permission to reproduce it.



In a surprising, but welcome twist, just four days after Sarah wrote this, Lafarge withdrew their plans for quarrying the woodland, saying ‘Following dialogue with stakeholders and partners we have asked Staffordshire County Council to withdraw the Hopwas Woods proposal from the Minerals Local Plan. We pride ourselves on working in harmony with local communities and want to do so at Hopwas’. Hopwas is relieved for now.



Austin Brady, Woodland Trust Director of Conservation, said: ‘Ancient woods like Hopwas are nationally important and to destroy them would wipe

out hundreds, if not thousands of years’ worth of ecology, history and beauty that can never be replaced.

‘Protection for ancient woodland is currently weak and despite assurances from Government that this habitat is protected, a loophole remains in planning policy that puts it at severe risk. So far, more than 50,000 people have joined our

call for stronger legislation to safeguard ancient woodland in the face of ever increasing development threats – it’s time for Government to start listening.’

Over the last decade the Woodland Trust has contested the cases of more than 1,000 woods under threat of development. There are currently more than 400 ancient woods threatened across the UK.

SWOG members who own ancient or PAWS woods are playing a really valuable part in the preservation of irreplaceable habitat and woodland heritage.

Make a bat box

Rich's halloween treat: how to make a simple batbox. A quick and easy project, ideal for kids wondering what to do with themselves at half term and ideal for bats who will no doubt appreciate their efforts!

Creating habitat for wildlife is one of the biggest reasons many of us own woods. Older woods with plenty of deadfall usually have lots of nooks and crannies where bats can creep in and make a roost. Newer woods or plantations might not have such a varied structure and a few strategically placed bat boxes may help encourage bats into your wood. Whatever type of wood you have, it's a great idea to give a helping hand, make some bat boxes and encourage bats into your woodland.



You can use most types of wood: rough sawn and untreated is best – don't use anything treated with chemicals. I had some bits of chestnut left over after doing some milling so I cobbled these together, I also added some grooves to make it easier for the bats to get a grip when they roost.

It can be fixed together with galvanised nails, and try to make it as weather-proof as possible – bats like stay warm and dry like the rest of us. Leave a gap at the bottom for them to crawl in of about 15–20mm. Make sure the roof is flush with the back board before nailing into place.

Nail your box up high, in a sunny, sheltered position. Once it's there you shouldn't disturb it, in fact you will need a special license to open it. You can get more information including details about bats and the law from www.bats.org.uk or call the 'Bat Line'! 0845 1300 228

Woodlands blogs

Elvaston Wood Fayre, Derbyshire, September 2014

Didgeridoo maker Stuart Murdoch demonstrates his craft at Elvaston Wood Fayre and explains why these kind of events are so vital in keeping woodland crafts alive.

Taking up a Green Woodworking course at York Wood Crafts

Paul Morton writes about a green woodworking course he did with his 11-year old son Thomas.

Catching moths in your woodland

Angus is fascinated by Heather and Rodney's custom-made moth catching box, which has enabled them to identify over 350 moths.

500 years and counting

Chris explains how ancient or veteran trees are classified, and notes how they can support a rich variety of wildlife.



Woodlands TV

Traditional bows

Naturalist John Rhyder describes the processes behind the design of longbows and flatbows used by different cultures and communities.

Identifying poisonous mushrooms in the woods

Forager Fraser Simpson explains how to identify the ammonite mushrooms – interesting, occasionally beautiful, but always the most deadly fungi in the UK.

How to string a bow

John Rhyder explains how to string a bow using artificial fibre.

