



Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter August 2015

Why own a wood?

Treating water in woodlands

Defining your borders: hedging

Discounted entry to Bentley

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



In this issue

Events and News	3
Bentley Woodfair	
SWOG meeting in September	
Resilience in woodlands survey	
Roundwood timber framing	
• Why own a woodland?	6
• Treating water in woodlands	8
• Defining your borders: hedging	10
• Woodland blogs and TV	11
• Woodfair listing	11



Natural regeneration, courtesy of Network Rail.

We're very grateful to the SWOG members who have been kind enough to send in pictures and stories from their woods – please keep them coming. Thanks to George Smith who tells us why he brought a wood and to Andy Malleson who has shared his hedging tips. Finally, John Clark explains how to purify water in the wild.

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SWOG website and forum

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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



SWOG COURSE LIST MARCH 2015



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

Bentley Woodfair

18–20 September 2015,
9.30-5pm, Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

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, children's activities, lumberjacking, there is plenty of local food and a great atmosphere.

Entry prices on the gate are:

Adults: £14

Senior/Students: £12

Children 5-15: £10

Family (2 adults/up to 3 children): £47

Early bird discounts are available until the end of August via the website [here](#). Alternatively, if you can get **10 or more** friends and family together, email woodfair@bentley.org.uk, for a group rate – adult tickets are £10. Finally, for those who need two days at the show, a two-day



20th Anniversary

BENTLEY WOODFAIR

18th—20th September 2015
9.30am — 5.00pm

- Traditional woodland crafts
- Working horses
- Lumberjack display team
- Xtreme falconry
- Forestry machinery & equipment
- Basketry
- Wood turning
- Chainsaw sculpture
- Old fashioned funfair
- Children's activities
- Have a go archery
- Specialist talks
- Local food and refreshments
- Over 150 exhibitors

www.bentley.org.uk

pass is available, with day two at half price.

Woodlands and SWOG have stalls and we would be delighted to see you. If you have anything from your woodland that we could display, such as coppiced products, honey, examples of green woodworking, please get in touch. There is **FREE ENTRY** (as well as tea and cake) available to volunteers who could help us on the stand during the weekend. Please email judith@swog.org.uk for more details.

SWOG Meeting, near Catterick 10am-1pm 12 September 2015

Following the popular meeting in Yorkshire in March, we can look forward to another on Saturday 12 September. Two SWOG families have kindly agreed to jointly host a meeting in their woods near Catterick in North Yorkshire. These two woods, which were once part of the Kiplin Hall estate, are slightly different. One has a mix of broadleaf and conifer and is geared towards amenity ownership; the other, with its

mix of coppice and standards, is a valuable source of wood fuel. It promises to be a SWOG meeting full of interesting discussion.

Ben Scotting of Rural Development Initiatives will be on hand to answer any questions and talk about (Planting on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWs) and Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) issues.

More details will be available nearer the time, but if you would like to attend, please email Judith@swog.org.uk

Resilience in woodlands

Survey exploring adaptation to environmental change

A national survey running during the summer of 2015, is aiming to assess the awareness of woodland owners, managers, agents and forestry professionals and their actions in adapting to environmental change. SWOG members are warmly urged to take part.

The British Woodlands Survey 2015 on Resilience is supported by a wide number of partners, with funding provided by the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust. It is hosted and co-ordinated by the Sylva Foundation. The survey, will be live from 31 July until 15 September 2015.

Environmental change may mean any change or disturbance of the environment caused by human influences and/or natural ecological processes. As such, the survey will be exploring climate change, pests, pathogens, flooding, wind and fire, and will be seeking to explore how resilient our forests are to change. The information gathered will be used by organisations, policy makers and researchers to help improve the resilience of the nation's forests. The results will inform the government's National Adaptation Programme.

Take the survey at: www.sylva.org.uk/bws

Resilient Woodlands: Meeting the Challenge 1 October 2015, Birmingham

This is a one-off opportunity to listen to and debate with speakers from a broad spectrum of woodland interests. The conference, being held in partnership with the Woodland Trust and with the support of the NDG James Memorial Conference Fund, brings together academics, conservationists, scientists, economists and forestry leaders.

What are the key challenges for woods and woodland owners in the 21st century? How can we make woods and wooded landscapes both ecologically and financially resilient? What does this mean in terms of policy and practice?

Dr Gabriel Hemery of the Sylva Foundation, who will be speaking at the conference, said, 'Everyone one of us should be taking deliberate action to ensure the resilience of our woodlands. This should ensure that they not only survive change, but 'bounce back better'.

It promises to be a really interesting day conference. Confirmed speakers include Professor Rob MacKenzie, of the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR); Stephen Trotter, Director of the Wildlife Trusts; Mike Townsend of the Woodland Trust; and Jonathan Spencer of the Forestry Commission.

Find out more and book your place here: www.rfs.org.uk/events/2015/october/rfs-annual-conference-2015/

How a roundwood timber framing course could change your life

Seven years ago, Dylan Walker of Artizans of Wood went on Ben Law's timber framing course. With a background in the 'traditional' construction industry he never dreamed that one day he'd be running courses himself and sharing his passion for roundwood timber.

Artizans of Wood grew out of that moment – via a lot of learning and volunteering on sustainable building projects along the way. They build bespoke natural buildings – everything from holiday houses and barns, through to bus shelters. They've built benches and cupboards and even an art installation! Dylan says, 'Everything we create lets the natural beauty of the wood take centre stage. When it comes to our courses, we're aware people's effort is as valuable as the materials we use, so we work on live projects rather than trial pieces.'

'In September we'll be building a tractor barn at Dangstein Conservancy, a not-for-profit conservancy that guides the care and use of woodland and heathland for the sustainable, shared benefit of community groups, families, individuals and organisations.

'At the end of the four-day course, we want you to be able to use your new skills so we'll cover everything from the ground up!'

We'll start by discussing suitable species, how



to grow poles suitable for roundwood timber framing and how to visually grade them. De-barking the poles for the barn is next and we'll look at different methods and felling times. Then we'll learn about framing beds, laying out poles, scribing joints and cutting/chiselling them out. We'll cover foundation design and different types of frames, as well as many other technical aspects of building with timber in the round.'

Camping is available at Dangstein Conservancy just outside Rogate in West Sussex, either in the heathland or in the woods. There is a compost toilet and basic shower facilities.

We offer a **5% discount** to SWOG members. To find out more, call us on 01730 815885 or visit www.artizansofwood.co.uk.

Rich Hare has recently completed a course with Dylan. Read about it on the SWOG website here: www.swog.org.uk/articles/

Forthcoming SWA meetings

- Slips Wood (7 Sept): woodland management and beekeeping in woods.
- Barnetts Wood (26 Sept): cutting, splitting and seasoning firewood – one woodlander's view. Contact seorganiser@smallwoods.org.uk for more details.

The SWA also runs a rolling programme of reduced rate chainsaw courses in Plumpton College's woods at Flimwell, East Sussex.

They are setting up a scheme so that members can find out who their local woodland owners



are so they can help each other, visit woods and socialize. Woodland archaeology surveys are also available free of charge.

If you're one of those SWOG members who have allowed their membership of the SWA to lapse, then why not re-join? Take a look at the website, smallwoods.org.uk for more details.'

Why own a woodland?

People buy woodlands for a wide variety of reasons. In a recent survey 'leisure, tranquillity and nature conservation' were by far the most common reasons given – and that includes George Smith, who tells us about his wood in south-east England.

I was approaching my mid-fifties and considering options for early retirement. The mortgage was paid, we had financed our daughters through university and I had no desire to buy a holiday home or spend my retirement sitting on a foreign beach. My hobbies included motorcycling and sailing – neither of which my wife enjoyed. I wanted an active and interesting project which would involve my wife and benefit our children and grandchildren.

As a teenager I had spent summers on the small sheep-farming island of Ramsey, which is off the coast of St David's, South Wales. It is now a RSPB sanctuary. Forty years on, I still retained the boyhood dream of one day owning a small remote island but, in reality, it wasn't a practical proposition. Nevertheless, one cold wet Sunday afternoon, I casually researched the internet for UK islands for sale. This was my introduction to the fact individuals could buy

small woodlands. Not as grand as owning an island, but a very practical alternative – and there were woodlands for sale in my part of the country.

Finding a wood

For the next few weeks Woodlands.co.uk became my most visited website. My wife viewed my new interest with caution and didn't share my enthusiasm. However, after several weekend visits to view woodlands, her interest grew, and finally we purchased a woodland just south of Petworth, West Sussex.

I had no previous knowledge of woodland management and appreciated the assistance given by the local representative from Woodlands.co.uk. As part of the purchase package I received free first year membership of the Small Woods Association (SWA), which included an excellent Information pack, various woodland books and access to the association's useful website. Through the SWA I subsequently attended various courses on woodland management and chainsaw use.

My wood, which consists mainly of beech, sweet chestnut coppice, red cedar and larch, is situated within the South Downs National Park



and is part of larger woodland. Initially progress was slow – but I was building for the future and acquiring an ever-expanding stock of equipment. I continued in full-time employment and was only able to visit infrequently and when the weather was good to undertake general maintenance. The purchase of a second-hand Land Rover Defender meant I could visit in all weathers. This is when the woodland really became a place for family and friends to relax and enjoy ourselves.

A couple of years ago I finally decided to retire. I cancelled my subscriptions to various professional institutions, unsubscribed to LinkedIn, shredded my contacts book and mothballed my suits! By coincidence, the adjoining wood came on the market – so now I own a 22-acre woodland.

Woodland habits

I now visit my woodland all through the year on a regular basis. On weekdays I usually undertake maintenance and improvement work, sometimes with a friend in exchange for a free load of logs, and reserve the weekend visits for relaxing with family and friends. Woodland birthday parties have become a family institution and are much loved by the grandchildren. During the summer, weekend camps and BBQs have become a favourite with the whole family.

Membership of the Small Woods Association has continued to be of benefit and has helped increase my woodland knowledge. David Brown is the SWA south-east coordinator and an experienced woodland archaeologist. He is available to visit members' woodlands to undertake surveys and/or give advice. He also

organises events, which are a useful opportunity to meet other members and gain useful tips. So convinced am I about the benefits of membership that, in my retirement, I am now a Trustee on the Board of the Small Woods Association (www.smallwoods.org.uk).

Previous occupants

Researching the history of our woodland has been an enjoyable extra. It is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as part of a much larger estate having: '8 villagers, 3 small holders and 2 slaves. The tenant-in chief being the Earl

Roger of Shrewsbury.' In the 15th century it was inherited by John Goring, who built the first manor house on the site.

In 1944, in preparation for D-Day, our woodland was used as a holding camp for American soldiers, specifically the US Army 461st Signal Construction Battalion. One large beech tree is inscribed 'USA RULE 1944.' The battalion was subsequently involved in the Battle of the Bulge.

In the County Records Office I have recently found portrait photographs taken in April and May 1944, with the names and rank of 32 American soldiers. The insignia on their uniforms link them with the battalion. One photograph is of a named master sergeant and through internet research I believe I have identified him from his 2009 obituary. I have emailed his family in America and await a reply.

Our woodland has become an integral part of family life. It gives my wife and me great pleasure to see our five young grandchildren exploring and enjoying the freedom of the woodland which, in due course, will be handed onto them.



Treating water in woodlands

Last month, John Clark described how to find water in woodlands. This month he discusses the treatment of safe drinking water.

Ground water in very rural and moorland areas is usually of good quality, and is unlikely to require treatment. In prolonged hot weather, or after heavy rain however, there is a greater likelihood of micro-organism contamination in the water.

In the mountains, unless you have a dead animal up stream, surface water can be drunk without ill effect. In lowland areas, however, especially where farming causes nutrients or animal wastes to run into the water, the amount of microscopic wildlife means that the water will have to be treated.

Water contamination can be simply divided into three categories: particulates, biological (bacteria, viruses, parasites, etc) and chemicals and heavy metals.

Water treatment

There are five standard methods of water treatment as follows.

Straining

Passing water through a strainer will remove larger particulates. This is generally the first (sometimes only) stage of water treatment.

A strainer can be as simple as an article of clothing, e.g. a cotton shirt. Alternatively, there are products on the market (e.g. Millbank bag) designed specifically for this purpose.



Boiling

It is good practice with almost all naturally occurring water sources to filter, first for particulates, and then boil.

Contrary to

popular belief it is not necessary to boil for long – a rolling boil for a minute should be sufficient to kill harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites.

Boiling is labour-intensive and requires a lot of fuel. It is impracticable when using camping stoves which require gas or other forms of man-made fuel, and is best done over an open wood fire.

Distillation

Occasionally it is difficult to find clear, silt-free water. Even if treated brown, tannin-rich water from peat bogs may irritate the stomach, so it is not an ideal source of water.

In the absence of filtration, the simplest way to clean it is to distil the water. This will also lower the level of any agricultural toxins like nitrates, volatile oils and solvents from drains, and even heavy metals from mineral workings. This method will produce drinking water from salt water too.

Distilling water involves boiling it to produce steam, and then exposing it to a cold surface to cool, condense and collect the fresh water. This technique is also energy-intensive.

Ideally, you would use a proper condenser and plumb it onto the spout of a kettle. However, it is possible to achieve the desired effect using two camping saucepans and a saucepan lid (see the diagram).

1. Put a large saucepan (with a curved lid) on top of a fire or stove and fill it a quarter full with contaminated water.
2. Inside of this float a smaller saucepan. When the water begins to boil, place the lid of the saucepan upside down on the top and fill it full of cold water. You can use dirty water for cooling, but take care not to get any in the small saucepan. At intervals, replace the water in the lid in order to keep the steam condensing.
3. As the water boils, the steam driven off hits the saucepan lid and cools to produce sterile, boiled water which, by a process of distillation,

has also had its sediment and a large amount of its pollution load removed. The distilled water runs down the lid to the centre and drips into the small saucepan. Any solvents and/or petrol/light oil in the water will also be removed as the lid is too hot for them to condense properly.

High-efficiency filtration

Modern filtration systems are an effective way of removing both particulates and biological organisms. There are two main types: those that require pumping water through the filter, and those that are gravity fed.

These units come in a range of sizes from small individual filters, to large filtration systems suitable for a base camp or large group.

Filters will clog up with repeated use, so spares are required for extended use. Not all filters are effective for viruses – check manufacturers' details.

It is possible to make a filter by using a combination of grass or moss and charcoal from the fire. Charcoal is an excellent filtration substrate, effective on biological organisms and some chemical compounds.



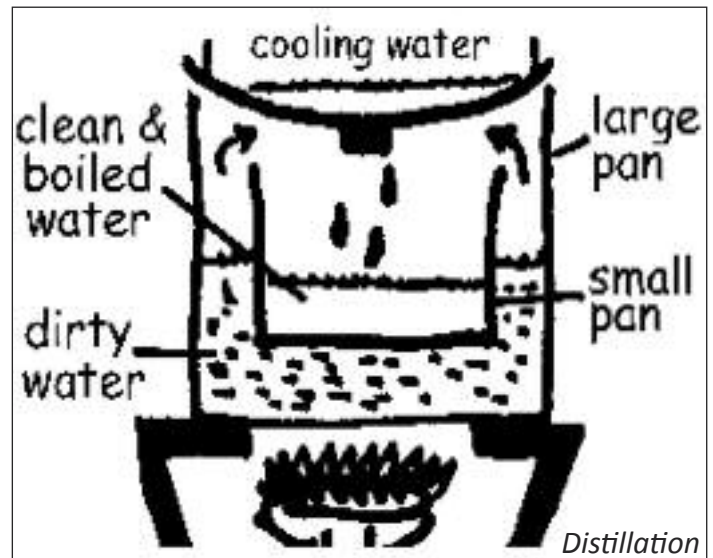
Chemical treatment

For outdoors or expeditions the commonest forms of chemical water treatment are iodine or chlorine-based powder or liquid solution. Care needs to be taken with these treatments. Check with manufacturers for medical conditions that are contra-indicated.

Keeping water fresh

Finally, once you have water you need to keep it fresh. The simplest way is just to drink it soon after treatment. However, if you need to keep some in reserve for a two or three days you'll need to store it carefully.

Keep it sealed in containers. Try to avoid



clear containers as they allow light in which will encourage any residual bacteria or algae in the water to grow. It must also be kept as cool as possible. Keep the containers in the shade or put them in a fast-flowing stream – slow or still water risks the possibility of contamination.

A simple alternative, which is useful in static camps, is to bury the container in the ground, perhaps in a box or larger container. Even in the tropics, the ground temperature a foot or two beneath the surface varies very little during the heat of the day, making it an ideal place to store food and water.

The final option, more suited to mobile or short-lived camps, is to find a shady place to put the water containers where the breeze can move over them (e.g., under a hedge, in bushes or under some large rocks) and throw a damp towel over the top of the containers. As the breeze moves over the towel, the evaporating water will cool the containers.

Avoiding cross-contamination

Finally, avoid contamination of good water with untreated water. Never use drinking bottles to collect untreated water – use a separate container.

At base camp it is common to use differently coloured jerry cans: black for untreated water and green for treated.

*John Clark shares more tips via his website and bushcraft weekends at **Bowji Bushcraft**.*

Creating a new hedge

Andy Mallison, owner of a Buckinghamshire woodland, explains how he marked out his borders efficiently and reasonably cheaply. Fencing can be very expensive and when we acquired our woodland, over ten years ago, it occurred to me that the easiest boundary solution would be hedges. Our woodland has three main boundaries. One is alongside a wide ride, the second borders an arable field with a ditch and public footpath down the side. The third abuts a pasture which is fenced and normally occupied by sheep.



I started to create a hedge alongside the arable meadow first. After talking to my neighbour, we agreed he would clear out the ditch and I would do the hedging work. It took several

years to complete the hedge. It has been made mainly from saplings which were already growing along the boundary. The use of friends and family, however, helped to speed up work.



We ran several hedging weekends during the winter, when friends came to stay and we fed them in return for their labour. They learned the secrets of hedge laying, got to wield a bill hook and keep a fire going. So the whole exercise was educational as well as being a great deal of fun. At least one of those who took part will be using the expertise gained to lay hedges on their own land.

The beauty of creating a hedge where none previously existed is that it is relatively inexpensive if there are sufficient existing saplings. I have to admit to feeling particularly proud when I view the new hedge, but, of course I still have two more woodland edges to attend to. A woodsman's work is never done.



Woodlands Blogs

Dead hedging: wildlife friendly and people guiding

Angus discusses dead hedges, those piles of branches and twigs arranged to form a barrier, and which are increasingly used as a way to dispose of the material that arises from thinning or clearing operations in woodlands.

Woodland types : coniferous plantations

Coniferous plantations form dark, regular, blocks of almost uniform colour and the majority of trees in coniferous plantations are introduced species. Chris write about their history, composition and value.



Becky Speight, Woodland Trust chief, outlines her new vision

'I would hate us to be just a lobbying organisation'. Becky Speight explains that as well as protecting woodland, the Woodland Trust also restores sites of ancient woodland and

creates new woods, often with the help of a volunteer army.

The big butterfly and moth count 2015

Lewis explains how to take part in the **Big Butterfly Count 2015**, which is being run by Butterfly Conservation.

If you go down to the woods today . . .

Uncovering and restoring a neglected arboretum, part of the Tortworth Estate near Bristol, is a joy for one forester.

Woodlands TV

Taxidermy in the woodlands

Tribal Ali undresses a magpie, shows how to preserve its plumage and displays amazing creations with birds' feathers.

How to make elderflower cordial

Kate Harden enthusiastically takes us through the various stages of making elderflower cordial, following a favourite recipe from childhood. She also carefully decorates an elderflower cake.

Woodfairs 2015

South Downs Show and Hampshire Woodfair

15–16 August 2015 Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Hampshire
www.southdownsshow.co.uk

Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum

29–31 August 2015 Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

29–30 August, Sturminster Newton, Dorset
www.stockgaylard.com

National Forest Woodfair

31 August 2015 Beacon Hill Country Park, Leicestershire
www.nationalforest.org

Wychwood Forest Fair

6 September 2015 Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

Confor Woodland Show 2015

10–11 September 2015
Longleat Estate, Wiltshire www.confor.org.uk

European Woodworking Show

12–13 September 2015, Cressing Temple Barns, Essex
www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu

Bentley Weald 20th Anniversary Woodfair

18–20 September 2015 Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

Surrey Hills Woodfair

3–4 October 2015 www.surreyhills.org

Cranborne Chase Woodfair

3–4 October 2015, Fordingbridge, Hampshire
www.woodfair.org.uk

Peebles Wood Market

24–25 October 2015
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market