

Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter July 2015

Finding water in woodlands

Green wood-working in Devon

RFS Forestry Awards



Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



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Attending Woodfest Wales is always a treat – like many woodland shows it provides a wonderful demonstration of the versatility and ingenuity that craftsmen and specialist workers bring to timber. Next stop for SWOG is Westonbirt in August.

Thanks to all our contributors this month: to Sharif Adams, Dylan Walker and once again, to John Clark. This month he tells us how to find water in woodlands.

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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.

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SWOG COURSE LIST MARCH 2015



Courses are listed by location. You can search the lists by entering a key word.
Press CTRL F or CMD F (Mac users) and enter the search term.



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

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 with 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

RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards 2015

‘Outstanding’, ‘inspirational’, ‘needs to be seen to be believed’ say judges of this year's winners of the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) Excellence in Forestry Awards. The premier woodland management competition for England and Wales was this year held across Wales. The judges, all experts in their field, were faced with strong entries in all woodland categories.

This year a Woodland Creation category was also held, sponsored by Natural Resources Wales. Ceri Davies NRW Director Knowledge, Strategy & Planning said: ‘We are pleased to recognise the important contribution sustainable woodland management makes to the wider environment.’

They described the Duke of Cornwall Multipurpose Woodlands winner Llewesog Estate, Llanrhaeadr, Denbigh, as demonstrating: ‘outstanding examples of quality broadleaves, including oak, ash and cherry, and equally good conifers.’ Bill Williams, the owner, began managing the wood 50 years ago and this is his second RFS award in 30 years.

Of Small Woodlands winner, Bron Haul, Abergele, the judges said: ‘The energy and enthusiasm had to be seen to be believed and they scored highly for quality of management, suitability of species, maintenance and enhancement of wildlife conservation, landscape



Bill Williams, winner of the Duke of Cornwall Award, is pictured above with a 45-year-old Douglas fir that he planted in the Llewesog Estate, Denbigh.

planning, the education (students and school and community groups visit the woods), and provision of access.’

Full details on each of the winners can be found at www.rfs.org.uk/awards.

Artizans of Wood Roundwood Timber Framing Courses

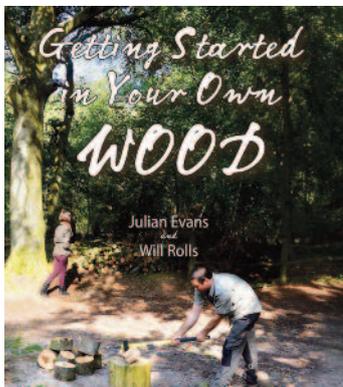
Dylan Walker builds bespoke natural buildings – everything from holiday houses and barns, through to bus shelters. He also runs training courses on ‘live’ projects and the next is at Dangstein Conservancy just outside Rogate in West Sussex on 18–21 September 2015. Participants will work on the construction of a tractor barn, from start to finish – from

choosing suitable wood, to technical considerations. There’s camping available either in the heathland or in the woods, as well as 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.

Getting Started in Your Own Wood



Revised, expanded and updated, Getting Started in your Own Wood is a new edition of Julian Evans’ hugely successful Badgers, Beeches and Blisters, first published in 2006.

Some years ago Julian Evans, a retired professor of forestry and an owner of a small woodland, wrote *Badgers, Beeches and Blisters*, which has been extremely helpful to hundreds of owners, perhaps thousands. This book has now been updated and re-written with new sections on emerging issues. Some of the new material has been written by Will Rolls, author of *The Log Book*, particularly chapters on woodfuel and tree diseases. It’s easy to read and is a guide to looking after and caring for a small woodland.

Julian’s writing was inspired both by his experience in his own small woodland and by his meeting with what he calls ‘a new breed of owner’ who is hands-on, actively engaged in managing the woodland and who actually uses his/her own home-grown timber and firewood. These new owners bring new energy and enthusiasm to their woods and Julian has walked round many of them, discussing practicalities and opportunities – he has also met many owners at the Weald Woodfair held each

September at Bentley in Sussex.

Getting Started in Your Own Wood will also be useful to anyone managing a woodland or to someone who has owned a woodland for many years – it gives guidance on when permission is needed for activities in the woods including planning permission, tree-felling and protected species. As the book says, ‘you are remarkably free to look after your wood how you want to.’

This is the ideal guidebook to read in a woodland itself: with many short sections and illustrations it doesn’t need to be read in one sitting. It is full of practical advice, and there is also an excellent new section about keeping your woodland safe. This covers threats from the elements, animals, and most of all, people. Most serious are the pests and diseases that have invaded our woodlands in recent years, and Will Rolls offers useful explanations and advice about the most common.

The pictures are mostly line drawings by John White and Stephen Evans. This book is rightly described as a ‘high quality book which every new woodland owner should have’. Written by experts committed to the care and stewardship of woodland resources, it provides practical advice and guidance for anyone interested in woodland management.

It is available from Permanent Publications at a special discount for SWOG members. To receive a 25% saving, visit the publisher's link: www.green-shopping.co.uk/getting-started

Dry stone walling course £35 25 and 26 July 2015, Aberdeenshire

Participants will learn the rudiments of dry stone walling whilst building an actual wall. Lunch will be provided and you should bring work boots, gloves, waterproofs and a sun hat. The course will be led by an Instructor from the **Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain** and costs £35. The venue is Touckswood by Bardspark Farm & Stables, Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire AB39 3XB.

To sign up, contact Adrian Scott:
forester@touckswood.co.uk



Blacksmithing course

Ken Hume of the **Oxfordshire Woodland Group** is looking for fellow enthusiasts to join him on an axe-making course in Sweden. Participants have the opportunity to make their 'dream axe' under the expert tuition and guidance of Lars Enander and Ulrika Stridsberg.

Lars and Ulrika are expert blacksmiths, and Lars is the author of *Swedish Blacksmithing*, a book on tool forging. Lars and Ulrika can be

seen in action forging an axe in this video [here](#).

The viability of the course would require that about 10 people attend, with full accommodation and meals being provided.

For an idea of what a blacksmithing course in Sweden is like, take a look at this account: www.dryadbushcraft.co.uk/bushcraft

If you are interested, please contact Ken Hume at the email address trustees@oxfordshirewoodlandgroup.co.uk



Finding water in woodlands

*There is an old survival adage that you can survive three minutes without oxygen, three days without water and three weeks without food. Finding drinkable water, therefore, is one of the principle preoccupations of anyone spending an extended period outdoors. John Clark of **Bowji Bushcamping** explains how to keep hydrated in the woods.*



In your woods you might have a stream or a boggy area. In this and the next article we will explore how to find suitable water sources and how to treat water to make it drinkable.

Water sources

Water can be obtained from the following sources:

- Ground sources, such as river, streams, ponds or lakes; water traps; gypsy and sip wells
- Sea water
- Vegetation, from plants or from water trapped within plants
- Rain, dew and fog

Finding ground sources of water

Using a map An Ordnance Survey map reveals more than just towns and roads. It reveals the shape of the land, the presence of valleys, rivers, bogs and lake. Contours define the lines of equal height around a valley. The presence of springs, wells, rivers and lakes, together, with boggy and marshy areas, are clearly identified.

Understanding the geology of an area

The geology of an area – the soils and rocks – provide clues as to the presence of water, and whether that water will be flowing all year round or just in the wet winter months. Water is

not just present as surface water, but also exists underground. The earth stores vast quantities of water within its structure just below the surface, often known as the water table.

Occasionally this water appears on the surface. This occurs when a softer, porous rock lies above a harder or less porous layer, or is sandwiched between two harder, non-porous layers. Excess groundwater water then ‘issues’ to the surface as a spring or collects and saturates the underlying rock strata to allow wells to be dug and water extracted.

This line on the land is called the ‘spring line’, and you can sometimes see this visibly in the landscape as a pattern of regular small ponds along the valley side (usually highlighted by scrub and vegetation) with a zone of waterlogged ground below it (unless the pond drains to a ditch).

Groundwater that emerges in this manner is fairly good quality, as it has been filtered through the soil and rocks.

Contaminants

A major concern with groundwater comes from landfill, or past/present mining activities, where toxic compounds or heavy metals can be suspended in the water. Surface water is likely to be biologically contaminated by wildlife.

On hillsides, especially after heavy rain, water

can run across the surface of the ground and collect in ditches, taking all the contaminants on the surface of the ground with it. For this reason collecting water during periods of heavy rain requires a little more care, as both surface water movement, and the over-spilling drains of farms, buildings and the local sewage works, can all add contaminants to the water.

Reeds and mosses are natural cleaning agents (as demonstrated by the popular use of reeds for water treatment) and so extracting water from a small well amongst the reeds often yields far better quality water than the streams and ponds on the drier land that surrounds the wet areas.

Water from plants

When plants absorb water from the ground they filter out many impurities, and you can extract clean water from them. Plants transpire water, meaning that water vapour evaporates from the leaves, and this water can be collected. This



process doesn't harm the plant and can be repeated over and over again on different branches, and works relatively

quickly. The best types of plants are those with large, green leaves. Avoid toxic plants!

Select a plant that receives a good amount of sun. The heat from the sun will speed the transpiration process. Choose a branch that has a large number of healthy leaves; give it a shake to dislodge any insects or debris that might be on the branch. Place your plastic bag over it. Tie it tightly to minimise water vapour loss during the process.

Make sure that part of the bag hangs lower than the point where you tied the bag to the branch. Water will collect there. Ideally, put several bags up at once, since one branch doesn't provide enough water to live on.

Water found within plants

Water can be found within plants in a variety of circumstances: It may have collected naturally within a hollow or bowl of a tree. Also some vines can be cut and the water contained within collected. Once again - avoid toxic plants!

Rainwater, dew and fog

Another significant source of water is rain. A clean fly sheet or tarp strung up with the sides raised in the form of a bowl can be used to collect rainwater.

Folding the sheet along the 'long' side creates improvised guttering enabling the easy collection of water into storage containers.

When it first begins to rain allow the tar/fly sheet to be 'washed' before collecting the water. Allow 30 minutes of constant heavy rain in order to wash off the pollutants, dust and bird excrement. Even then, for fixed roofs/gutters, it's advisable to boil the water, as bird faeces often contain harmful bacteria such as salmonella.

At night in the summer and early autumn the ground is often warmer than the air and as water vapour is given off by the soil and plants, it condenses to form water droplets at ground level – dew.

It is possible to suspend a plastic sheet just above the level of the soil to collect the condensing water on the surface of the sheet. Create a gradual incline towards the centre of the sheet so that the water can run down and drip into a container. This can be done by simply placing a small stone in the centre of the sheet.

It's also possible to collect water from thick fog or mist. Use a fine mesh, such as a mosquito net strung perpendicular to the wind direction.

As the fog drifts through the mesh, droplets of water will collect on the fine strands. Periodically 'wring out' the water into a container.

Next month: treating water to drink.

Green woodworking in Devon

Sharif Adams lives off-grid in a 32-acre woodland on the edge of Dartmoor, in a small wooden hut. He is a green wood craftsman, primarily turning wooden bowls, plates and cups on a foot-powered pole lathe and carving wooden spoons.

Sharif sells these items at artisan markets and as commissions to people who are passionate about good food and traditional craft. He runs courses in pole lathe bowl turning and spoon carving, as well as teaching people how to forge bowl turning 'hook-tools'.

'Eating wholesome food from a wooden bowl with a wooden spoon is a pleasure worth repeating at least three times a day,' Sharif says with a smile over a lunch of foraged wild greens gathered from the woodland where he lives, steamed and tossed in garlic butter and heaped on some brown rice. 'It's even better if you have made the bowl and spoon yourself.'

Sharif studied violin making at London Guildhall University and went on to work with an antique furniture restorer near High Wycombe, before discovering the joy of working with freshly felled timber.

'I've always loved spending time in nature and especially woodlands. Violin-making sparked off a love affair with edge tools and wood, but green woodwork brings my love of wood craft and my passion for woodlands together perfectly. Before I take a saw or an axe to a log, I let nature do some work. I have learned to let logs lie in the wood with bark on for a few months or more to 'mellow'. After a period of time the wood is still 'green' but some of the moisture has left the fibres so it takes a better finish from the tool. I don't use sandpaper so this is important. During the mellowing process, fungal threads begin to move through the wood, which create beautiful patterns known as 'spalting'. If I time it right, the spalted wood will make very attractive bowls. If I leave the wood a little too long it can begin to rot. When people ask how long it takes



to make a bowl I often hesitate to answer because I see this process of mellowing the wood as much a part of making the bowl as roughing out the blank with my axe. For this reason I honestly feel that I have only played a very small part in creating the end product. Manipulating the tools is a skill, but the real magic happens silently in the time it takes for the tree to grow, then for the timber to mellow, then for any spalting to occur and finally when I have played my part and put down my tools, nature completes the process because the bowl dries slowly and as it does so it warps slightly, so that the final form is decided by nature, not me. No two bowls are ever exactly the same.'

Sharif is passionate about sharing his love of traditional crafts with others through his courses and workshops. Most of these are run at Steward Community Woodland, an off-grid permaculture project of 14 adults and seven children, on Dartmoor, Devon. He is also able to travel and teach off-site. Contact him via his website, www.sharifadams.co.uk or try [facebook.com/SharifAdamsWoodCraftsman](https://www.facebook.com/SharifAdamsWoodCraftsman).

We would like to organise a SWOG day with Sharif. If you could host a session in your woodland, please get in touch with judith@swog.org.uk

Woodlands TV and Blogs

Cooking roadkill pigeon in the woods

Tribal Ali shows us how to prepare and cook pigeon (with a blackberry sauce) she has found by the side of the road.

Woodland types: wet woodlands

Wet woodland is associated with poorly drained or seasonally flooded areas, and characterised by species such as willow, alder and birch.

Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire

Established in the 1970s, Butser Ancient Farm tests theories about how mankind lived and worked in prehistoric times. They have experimented with grain storage pits, tested building techniques and demonstrate to local children how early Celtic society lived.

Woodland types: birch woodlands

A pioneer species, that is often replaced by oak, beech or others, birch has historically had a number of uses – from firewood, to tool making, various herbal remedies and the sap used to create a fermented drink.

Medieval woodlands: the Magna Carta and the Forest Charter

It is 800 years since Magna Carta was forced upon King John in the leafy glade at



Runnymede, but who remembers the Charter of the Forest which followed in 1217?

The Art of Camping by Matthew de Abaitua

Camping is booming – one in five adults in the UK has been camping or caravanning in the last three years – and Matthew de Abaitua celebrates this by looking at how camping has changed over the last hundred years or so in the UK and USA. A very happy camper himself, he recounts a number of very funny experiences, but most of all, shares his love of the great outdoors.

Woodland types: oak woodlands

Rooted in British history and culture, oak trees are one of the most common native broadleaf trees in the UK.

Forthcoming SWA meetings

Our good friends at the Small Woods Association (SWA) have the following meetings coming up over the next couple of months in the south-east.

- Knowlands Wood (11 July): birds and butterflies – how to attract them.
- Slips Wood (7 Sept): woodland management and beekeeping in woods.
- Barnetts Wood (26 Sept): cutting, splitting and seasoning firewood – one woodlander's view. For more details, contact David Brown, seorganiser@smallwoods.org.uk



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

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.

Woodfairs 2015

Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be at Westonbirt and Bentley. Please send us details of your event.

Blackdown Hills Woodland Fair

4th July Wrangway near Wellington, Somerset
www.woodbiz.co.uk

Woodlands Country Show

11–12 July 2015 Royal Victoria Country Park,
Southampton, Hampshire
www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk

New Forest and Hampshire Show

29–31 July 2015 Brockenhurst, Hampshire
www.newforestshow.co.uk

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 2015
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

Free entry to Bentley Woodfair

One of the highlights of the year is the woodfair at Bentley, where SWOG has a stall decked out with woodland products, various displays and Rich's rocket stoves, which provide a constant supply of tea. The SWOG team is small – just two of us – and we are always really grateful for the support of SWOG members in manning the stall.

If you would like to help out by doing a couple of hours on the stall in return for free entry, please get in touch.

Bentley Weald 20th Anniversary Woodfair

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

Surrey Hills Woodfair

3–4 October 2015 Birtley House, Bramley
www.surreyhills.org

Cranborne Chase Woodfair

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

Peebles Wood Market

24–25 October 2015 Tweed Green &
Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market

