

A group of people, including a woman in a bright orange jacket and a woman in a dark jacket, are gathered in a lush green forest. They are looking at a large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled bark. The scene is filled with vibrant green foliage and sunlight filtering through the trees.

Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter April 2016

**Choosing a woodland course
The Ancient Tree Forum
Grants – grab them while you can!**

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



In this issue

Events and News	3
Grants for track enhancement	
Forest Live concert dates	
Tortworth Arboretum meeting	
Grants for the High Weald	
• Choosing a woodland course	6
• Ancient Tree Forum	8
• Woodlands Blogs and TV	9
• Woodfairs 2016	10



A number of grants are available to woodland owners in the south-east. If your wood is in the High Weald AONB and you would like some advice, read about how to contact them on page 5. Choosing a woodland course to improve your skills can be a tricky decision: SWOG member Nigel Jennings explains how he fared on a chainsaw course. Please keep your news and stories coming in – we love hearing from you!

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodlands. 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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SWOG COURSE LIST 2016



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

Grants for track enhancement from Woodlands.co.uk

Last month we looked at ride management and the steps you can take to help maintain your tracks and rides as thoroughfares and habitat for wildlife. In shared woodlands, this inevitably means collaborating with neighbouring owners as most often a track or ride will form part of the boundaries.

Owners in the south-east have been able to access a pilot scheme run by Woodlands.co.uk which provides financial help for improvement work to shared rides. We hear from one of the first groups of owners to benefit from this scheme, those at Rogley Wood in Kent. Their enthusiasm for joint working in the management of their rides and indeed their woodland as a whole is evident. Judith Tolley of Pod Wood said,

‘The knowledge that one can make a difference to the diversity of one’s own wood is exciting in itself. Getting together with other owners magnifies the opportunities for the benefit of the woodland as a whole and that’s a really dynamic proposition.’

Annette Isserlis of Herd Wood wrote, ‘The benefits of woodland owners collaborating are many and various. They encourage sharing of

local knowledge, inspiration and camaraderie without infringing one’s individual concept of a why it is a passion to manage a bit of woodland. Thanks to our own ‘mover-and-shaker’ within our own community of woodland-owners, we have got to know each other and receive invitations to view the results of some imaginative and dedicated work, as well as group opportunities for woodland management and grants. It is interesting to compare notes on wildlife, flora and fungi and how to create favourable conditions for them to flourish. There is a plan afoot to utilise heavy horses, which will be more worthwhile if we can all share the work and expense. It appears that there is much diversity of purpose within our particular group, which nevertheless overlaps in areas of expertise and experimentation. Good to be able to call in experts to the advantage of all.’

The best time for mowing is late summer/early autumn, so talk to your neighbours NOW and you should be ready to commission some work later in the year.

Email rich@swog.org.uk to discuss how you can access this fund. Rich can also set up a dedicated discussion group for your wood on the SWOG forum to help owners communicate with each other directly.



Before and after pictures in Rogley Wood.

Forest Live!

Now in its 16th season, Forest Live gigs take place at seven fantastic forest locations. Find out more about the prices and line-ups on the **Forestry Commission Forest Live** website.



Westonbirt Arboretum, Glos 16–19 June
Rudimental (waiting list only); Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only); UB40 with Ali Campbell, Astro & Mickey Virtue; Tom Jones.

Bedgebury Pinetum, Kent 17–18 June
Tom Jones; Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only.)

Sherwood Pines 23–25 June
Jake Bugg; Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Guy Garvey

Dalby Forest, North Yorks 24–26 June
Guy Garvey; John Newman; Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only)

Delamere Forest, Cheshire 1–3 July
Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Simply Red (waiting list); Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list)

Thetford Forest, Suffolk 30 June–1 July
Rudimental; James Bay (*sold out*); Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Simply Red

Cannock Chase Forest, Staffordshire 8–10 July
James Bay (waiting list); Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only)

New Ash Tag app available from the Sylva Foundation

Following the transfer of AshTag to the Sylva Foundation from the University of East Anglia, the app has been updated in readiness for a new season of ash tree tagging in 2016.

We expect that 2016 will witness the greatest spread of this devastating disease. The AshTag app enables anyone to report on ash trees that are tolerant (to some degree) to ash dieback, caused by *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus* – the fungus that causes ash dieback (formerly known as *Chalara fraxinea*).



Sylva are most interested in larger trees but any tree can be surveyed. They are just as keen to learn about diseased trees as healthy trees, and are particularly keen to survey ash trees in every corner of Britain,

because the genetics of ash trees vary across the country. Ideally, the trees selected need to be surveyed every year for at least three years, so that a detailed picture of their health is built up.

Ultimately, trees that appear to have some tolerance to ash dieback will be sampled by taking cuttings, and will enter a programme aiming to breed tolerant trees to secure a future for ash trees in Britain. Sylva are working with partners the Earth Trust and Forest Research in this project, funded by Defra.

Using the AshTag app on your smartphone or tablet in the field makes the survey really simple

The survey consists of five questions and is simple to complete. To take part you can simply set up an account on the website, although using the app will allow you to enter information out in the field. You can download the app for either Android or iPhones, or simply log on to www.ashtag.org/about to tag your ash trees.

SWOG meeting Saturday 23 April, 2pm

Tortworth Arboretum, South Gloucestershire

There are still a few places available for the SWOG at Tortworth Arboretum, a once great and more recently neglected arboretum in Gloucestershire. Not yet open to the public, it is being restored by volunteers, and a superb collection of rare trees is gradually being brought back into management.

Rebecca will show us around the arboretum and talk about her work with community groups, volunteers and local conservation groups.

There is still a great deal of work to be done:

Bec and her team spend a lot of time clearing brambles and rhododendron, so there will be plenty of opportunity for

discussion about many aspects of the work of small woodland owners, as well as the chance to appreciate some magnificent trees and habitat.

Tortworth is not open to the public (although **the website** is). If you would like to attend, please **email judith@swog.org.uk**.



Grants for the High Weald

A new grants programme, Sussex Lund, is being launched by Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing, as a collaboration between their charitable fund, Lund, and Sussex Community Foundation.

It will support small-scale,

practical projects that improve the ecology and landscape of the High Weald. Charities, community groups, schools, churches, councils, farmers, landowners and indeed anyone with a good idea is encouraged to apply for grants of between £500 and £10,000.

Recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the High Weald is an exceptional medieval landscape, with a wealth of wildlife and historic features that provide a strong sense of place, enrich lives and inspire community pride.

‘Sussex Lund is open to anyone who thinks they have a project that will benefit the landscape of the High Weald AONB,’ said Kevin Richmond, Chief Executive of Sussex Community Foundation. ‘We’re looking for green projects that will make practical, tangible improvements to the High Weald and can

inspire wider change.’

Examples might include improvements to habitats such as woods, marshes, meadows and hedgerows; planting trees and orchards; removing non-native tree species; community gardening; greening in and around villages; reducing sign and light pollution; clearing litter and improving rights of way.

Applications are welcome from any organisation or individual for projects which demonstrate a clear improvement to the landscape and public benefit. The project must take place with the High Weald AONB and you can download a map of the area here.

More details, including an application form and full criteria for the grant are available to **download here**. Deadline for applications is Friday 15 April 2016.

The High Weald AONB team will help local owners with grants, management plans and any other aspect of woodland management. Email Woodland Officer Matt Pitts to arrange a consultation visit: matt@highweald.info.

Forthcoming events: Hedgerows Grant Application Clinic, 12 April, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell. Visit the **High Weald AONB website** to learn more.

Choosing a woodland course

So you've acquired a new wood – what next? Until you become really familiar with your piece of forest, and faced with a large plot of land, it is sometimes difficult to see the wood for the trees. New owners are often bombarded with advice, but one of the most sensible is to do nothing drastic for a year. Watch your woodland and see what comes up (or blows down).

Walk around and assess the rides and paths. Get a feel for the whole place.

You might feel that you lack the skills to manage a whole woodland, but help is never far away. There are plenty of sources of advice and guidance, either on the internet, from local specialists and forestry workers, or from national bodies such as the Forestry Commission. Of course, you don't have to do anything, but if, you want to learn how to manage your woodland well, perhaps re-introducing a coppice cycle, clearing some dead trees and encouraging wildlife, then you might want to think about getting some practical advice from qualified professionals.

Sources of advice

Taking a short course in aspects of woodland management or to improve your knowledge or skills is a great idea, too. Felling licences, management plans, chainsaw instruction, grants, wildlife conservation are all topics that local colleges or private professionals can offer training in. The decision over what to do boils down to what you need, what interests you, cost and time.

Initially, you could contact your local Forestry Commission office, which will be a source of excellent advice. FC officers are often willing to visit your wood, although they may be more inclined to come out if you can get together with your woodland neighbours and share the consultation.



If your wood is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) such as the High Weald or the Surrey Hills, try talking to the local woodland officer. They will have detailed local knowledge of the woodland in your area and are likely to know about historic practices, too. Local tree surgeons and contractors are often really helpful and can suggest many practical ideas.

Practical courses

By far the most popular practical training is that involving chainsaws. Most owners possess a chainsaw and it is critical to learn the basics of safe handling. Remember that a course tailored for the home user, without any kind of assessment will be much cheaper than ones that offers certification. If you would rather avoid the throaty roar of power tools, think about learning traditional skills such as hedge-laying or coppicing. Wildlife enthusiasts could learn how to encourage dormice or study tree identification. Green woodworking skills are immensely popular, from spoon carving to pole lathe turning to chair making. If you need some inspiration take a look at the videos and blogs on the Woodlands.co.uk website.

Finding a course provider

There is a comprehensive list of courses reviewed by owners on the SWOG website. Finding something suitable and local is sometimes a challenge, but after the inevitable trip to

Google, try asking friends, local tree surgeons, local further education colleges or posting a query on the SWOG forum or Facebook page. Professional training bodies such as **LANTRA** are an excellent source of information and course listings.

Things to consider when choosing a course

- How many people are taught at once?
- How much of the training is practical and how much time is spent in the classroom?
- Do you receive any kind of qualification?

One owner's experience

SWOG member Nigel Jennings decided on a chainsaw course.

'While I had been managing an orchard and forest garden for many years, I was wary of buying a chainsaw because of the many stories I had heard about accidents. Instead, I had relied upon bow saws for cutting back branches and taking out small trees and bushes. I realised that this could not continue when I made the decision to buy a small woodland. It was time to re-evaluate the chainsaw.

Fortunately, buying through Woodlands.co.uk gave me £300 towards a training course of my choice and it did not take me long to decide that learning the correct and safe way to use a chainsaw was top of the list. Friends put me in touch with David Rossney of Esus Forestry a short drive away near Cranbrook, Kent.

I had decided that I was unlikely to use a chainsaw other than in my own wood and therefore a certificate was not necessary at this stage. I discussed my requirements with David and he was happy for me to join his six-day course for as many days that I felt that I needed. This would give me two days training in maintenance, worksite risk assessment and cross-cutting; followed by up to four days of tree felling to include basic felling methods, dealing with hung-up trees, felling leaning trees, using

Owners' Survey

Owners who have purchased a wood since 2012 have received an email link to a survey from Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG. We are keen to hear how you enjoy your woods, whether you manage them, how often you visit and whether you've undertaken any training. It should only take five minutes to complete, and as a small thank you, we will send on a copy of Living Woods magazine. The deadline is 11 April and the survey can be accessed **here**.



timber lifts, and working in an organised system.

An additional benefit was that I did not need a chainsaw for the course but could try a number of different saws over the six days. This was invaluable in helping me select my own chainsaw subsequently.

While the weather could have been better, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. David was brilliant as an instructor: with only six pupils, there was plenty of time for one-to-ones, and the others were good company.

So I am now the happy owner of a chainsaw that I can operate with confidence, with all the correct safety equipment, and while I still hear tales of mishaps, they no longer hold me back as once they did.'

Ancient Tree Forum

The greatest number of ancient trees in northern Europe is thought to be in Britain, and they are a vital and treasured part of our history and natural and cultural landscape.

The Ancient Tree Forum seeks to secure the long term future of their ecosystems by promoting best management and conservation practice, lobbying governments over their recognition and protection, encouraging research, and increasing people's enjoyment of old trees.

It is the only organisation dedicated to the welfare of ancient and veteran trees and it strives to prevent their loss through development, poor management and acts of God – or man.

A registered charity, the Ancient Tree Forum was founded in 1994 and has succeeded in raising the profile of ancient trees and influencing legislation and policies that impact upon ancient trees.

If you have ancient or veteran trees in your woodland, and want to learn about best practice in their management, the Ancient Tree Forum can provide resources and training. The website



www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk is a great starting point and the source of a number of free leaflets, as well as couple of useful books. The Forum also runs regular meetings and walks and talks around the country. Hannah Solloway, the Development Officer says, 'The real value of the Ancient Tree Forum is that it brings together some of the country's

leading experts on the value and management of ancient and other veteran trees and the species that depend on them. We'd like to encourage any members of the Small Woodland Owners' Group who have ancient or other veteran trees to care for, to get involved, and one of the best ways is to join one of our local groups. We have a number of these around the country, and going to their site meetings is a great way to learn about the value of ancient trees and how best to care for them. If you don't have a local group near you, we also run national events, like our conference in Dorset this summer. Details are on our website, where you can also sign up to our newsletter to find out about national and local events, and training opportunities.'



Woodlands blogs

Click on the titles to be taken to the full blogs or videos on the Woodlands.co.uk website.

Flesh eaters: carnivorous plants

Plants generally acquire all the nutrients they need from the soil. However, a few species have solved adapted to low-value soils by becoming carnivorous and feeding on small arthropods, beetles and insects.

Using a horse to extract timber from woodland

Horse logging almost died out in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, but it was saved by enthusiasts and is now both popular and valuable among woodland owners.

Communitree – connecting people with nature

Angus hears from Danny English, the man behind Communitree, a social enterprise project which reconnects people with nature. On their 12-acre woodland site they run children's

parties, forest camps, bushcraft sessions and other events.

Laying hazel to grow new hazel coppice stools

Hazel is one of the most versatile woodland products. Regularly coppiced, it is used for making walking sticks, thatching pegs, hurdles, or if too big, charcoal. Iain Loasby shows how to lay existing coppice so that it regenerates as a new stool.

Woodlands TV

Tony Titchen's Tortworth Tree Talk

Dendrologist Tony Titchen takes us 'tree gazing' at Tortworth Arboretum – pointing out both native species (such as the Hornbeam) and non-natives, such as the Hickory from Eastern North America.

Horses in the Woodlands

Max Hibbert and his horse Freddie demonstrate how a traditional and ancient method of woodland management can be preferable to modern machinery.

SWA spring and summer events.

Please contact Phil Tidey (philtidey@smallwoods.org.uk) if you are interested in attending. More details are on the **Small Woods website**.



Trust and the Woodland Trust). Restoration of woodland and ground flora.

4 May All day Managing new and established woods for ground flora Bromborough, Merseyside (with Flora Locale).

4 May All day Managing woodlands for wildflowers Guildford (with Flora Locale).

7 May All day Daniel Hayes, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Derbyshire (in partnership with the National Forest).

8 May 2-5pm Tess's Wood, Horsley Woodhouse, Derby Visit to a woodland established in 1990 on a former opencast mine.

15 May 2-5pm Park Wood, Monmouth (in partnership with the Monmouthshire Wildlife

16 May All Day Woodland ground flora in new and established woods. Otley, West Yorkshire (with Flora Locale).

21 May 2-5pm Coed Maes y Pandy, Dolgellau (in partnership with the Woodland Trust).

Restoring the site as a broadleaved woodland
22 May 2-5pm Management of mature Scots pine and larch plantation to encourage regeneration of broadleaf. Middle Lodge Farm, Rugeley, Staffs.

24 May Managing woodlands for diversity Newbury, West Berkshire (with Flora Locale).

1 June Woodland flora introduction and identification Aberfeldy, Perth and Kinross (with Flora Locale).

Woodfairs 2016

We are starting to receive dates for the woodfairs and shows that brighten up the summer. Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be at Woodfest Wales, Westonbirt and Bentley. This list is not exhaustive, so please send us details of your event.

Weird and Wonderful Wood

14–15 May 2016 Haughley Park, Wetherden, Stowmarket, Suffolk

www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

The Bushcraft Show

28–30 May 2016 Beehive Farm Woodland Lakes, Rosliston, Derbyshire

www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk

The Arb Show

3–4 June 2016 Westonbirt Arboretum

www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show

West's Wood Fair

18 & 19 June 2016 East Dean, Chichester, West Sussex

www.westswoodfair.co.uk

Royal Highland Show 2016

23–26 June Edinburgh

royalhighlandshow.org



Woodfest Wales

24–26 June 2016 Caerwys, North Wales

www.woodfestwales.co.uk

Royal Welsh Show

18–21 July 2016 Builth Wells, Powys

www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show

New Forest and Hampshire Show

26–28 July 2016 Brockenhurst, Hampshire

www.newforestshow.co.uk

South Downs Show and Hampshire Woodfair

20–21 August 2016

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Hampshire

www.southdownsshow.co.uk

Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum

27–29 August 2016 Tetbury, Gloucestershire

www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

27–28 August 2016

Sturminster Newton, Dorset

www.stockgaylard.com

Wychwood Forest Fair

4 September 2016 Charlbury, Oxfordshire

www.wychwoodproject.org

APF Exhibition

15–17 September 2016

Ragley Estate, Warwickshire

www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Bentley Weald Woodfair

23–25 September 2016 Lewes, East Sussex

www.bentley.org.uk/events

Surrey Hills Wood Fair

1–2 October 2016 Birtley Estate, Bramley, Surrey

www.surreyhills.org

Peebles Wood Market

22–23 October 2016 Tweed Green &

Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders

www.forest-festival.com/wood-market