

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter June 2016

What owners do with their woodlands . . .and what SWOG can do for owners

Ash dieback – how to help fight it

Inside an ancient oak

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www.swog.org.uk



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With the start of summer in calendar if not meteorological terms, there is a great deal going on. We're looking forward to going to Woodfest Wales at the end of the month and hope to see you there.

Take a look at how SWOG can help woodland owners and if your wood is in the south-east why not take advantage of the free track improvement offer?

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



Courses are listed by location. You can search the lists by entering a key word.



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

What do owners do with their woods?

More than 170 owners who had owned their woods for five years or less responded to the recent survey by Woodlands.co.uk about what owners do with their woodlands. Their replies have provided a fascinating snapshot into the habits of woodland owners. The full report can be downloaded from the **Woodlands website here**.

It will probably be no surprise to SWOG members to learn that woodland owners are active managers of their woodlands – more than half have cleared open spaces in their woods, or plan to do so. Two-thirds of owners plant trees and over half coppice their wood and improve their tracks.

Owners enjoy the work they do in their woods, many referring to it as an ‘outdoor gym’. In practical terms, owning a woodland can improve fitness and provide a ready supply of firewood. Seeing the impact of one’s hard work is also very satisfying.

Many people buy woodlands without much or indeed any experience of land management. More than two-thirds of owners have taught themselves about owning and managing their

wood from books or browsing the internet. Advice from professional organisations such as the Forestry Commission or local wildlife trusts is also important. Courses were a useful source of knowledge for 40% of owners, with chainsaw training being the most popular.

Wildlife is really important to owners, with two-thirds working to create wildlife havens within their woods or putting up bird boxes. Owners value the opportunity to observe wildlife and to learn more about the behaviour of animals, birds and insects as the seasons change.

What is striking about this report is the great feeling of satisfaction that owners derive from woodland ownership. Owners regard themselves as guardians of their patch of

woodland and many feel rejuvenated by their visits. They value the peace and tranquility, which for many is a contrast to their busy daily lives. Many love sharing the woodland with their families and friends, especially enjoying the opportunities for their children and grandchildren to run around and learn more about nature.

Thanks to everyone who replied to the survey - we hope you continue to enjoy your woods!

‘We feel a sense of great satisfaction and achievement. The peace and quiet, the privilege that one feels to be so close to nature as it changes from season to season and year to year.’





APF Show 15-17 September 2016

APF celebrates its 21st birthday at the Ragley Estate, Alcester in Warwickshire in September. It not only showcases the very latest machines and technology being used in the industry, but also displays traditional woodland crafts and horse logging.

It is the leading exhibition for the forestry, woodland, arboriculture, wood fuel and utility sectors in the UK. Covering a large site, it is a great day out for anyone interested in woodlands and forestry, whether they are professionals or small-scale owners. While the average small woodland owner may not need a forester's forwarder for the bulk extraction of timber, the range of vehicles, from steam-driven saw mills to the latest arboricultural machinery,

is jaw-dropping. All the main manufacturers of woodland kit are on hand with advice and opportunities to try out (and buy!) chainsaws, protective gear, shredders, and all manner of timber-related kit.

There are pole-climbing and chainsaw-carving displays, as well as the chance to try out more traditional crafts.

Representatives from every area of the British forestry and timber sector will be present, from the Forestry Commission to SWOG.

The seminar programme features leading figures in the industry speaking on topical issues of the day including plant health, technology, safety and training, wood fuel and wood processing.

We are delighted to be attending for the first time and hope to see many of you there. The Ragley Estate is located just south of Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire.

Tickets are £20 on the gate. Advance tickets are discounted to £18 and groups of ten or more pay £16 each. They are available via the **APF website here**.



Wondering what to do about ash dieback?

Future Trees Trust is a founding partner of the Living Ash Project, a five-year, Defra-funded project to find ash trees showing some resilience to ash dieback disease. They are asking for the help of woodland owners in monitoring healthy trees

A unique project is hoping to stem the tide of the ash dieback disease by encouraging people to help in finding the solution. Although millions of trees are at risk from the disease, the Living Ash Project, one of several research projects into ash's resilience to dieback, is aiming to find tolerant native ash trees from which to breed the next generation of healthy trees.

The Living Ash Project is a consortium of specialists including environmental charities Earth Trust, Sylva Foundation and Future Trees Trust, and the Forestry Commission's research agency Forest Research.

The £1.2M project, funded by Defra, is the only ash dieback project to use 'citizen science' to help in gathering information. Members of the public are encouraged to obtain a special aluminium tag to fix to an ash tree and submit basic details about the tree on-line, together with a photo.



The project needs to identify healthy trees, especially in areas where other ash trees are succumbing to ash dieback. As spring advances and leaves begin to appear, now is

the perfect time to identify the signs of ash dieback – wilting growth and possibly even bark lesions.



How owners can help

The Living Ash Project urgently needs your help to identify tolerant trees. It is thought that 1% of our ash trees will show a good level of tolerance to ash dieback. The Living Ash Project needs to find at least 400 of these from across the UK to create the next generation of healthy trees. Ash tags are available free of charge from the Living Ash Project by visiting their website www.livingashproject.org.uk

Defra's Chief Plant Health Officer, Professor Nicola Spence, said 'Defra is very pleased to be able to support this important project. Not many people may know that 46 species of plants and animals can only live on ash trees, so it's not only the trees we will be saving.'

Living Ash Project's lead Dr Jo Clark said, 'We really need the help of the public to find healthy ash trees across the country. We're asking anyone that spends time in the countryside and cares about our woodlands to keep their eyes open for healthy trees in areas of ash dieback and if they spot a healthy tree, report it on the project website.'

Support for owners



SWOG exists to support woodland owners and to share knowledge of trees and woodlands with anyone who is interested. We do this in several ways.

Putting owners in touch

If you are struggling to contact your woodland neighbours, **email Judith**, who can put you in touch with them. We take members' privacy very seriously and only share contact details with the owners' permission.

SWOG Forum

The SWOG forum is a public board and can be browsed without any need for registration, but signing up with a username and password opens up many useful features such as the ability to post questions and pictures, private messaging, and subscriptions to particular threads or forums. You can choose to have the software alert you by email when a particular message or forum has received a posting or reply. **Browse it here**, or **email Rich** to register.

Group messaging

Individual owners within a larger woodland who would like to chat about shared projects might find our new forum group facility a useful device.

This is a special 'closed' forum which is invisible to the rest of the forum members or general public. It's useful if you want discuss issues like security and tool storage or just want to banter amongst 'known' friends, away from the public glare.

Conversations neatly presented in a forum format are sometimes easier to follow than endless round robin emails with long threads. You could also open up membership of the group to trusted people who use your wood, such as coppice workers or dog walkers who could provide an extra pair of eyes and ears to tell you what's going on in in your absence.

Email Rich, to set up a private group for your woodland area.

Meetings – a new opportunity

When two or three SWOG members are gathered together, the result is a great deal of interesting conversation. Everyone comes away feeling that they've had a good time, and more importantly, learnt something. SWOG meetings can be as simple as a walk through your woods, showing what you've done and explaining your plans. Or we can organize a speaker to entertain the troops and give professional advice on any aspect of woodlands or wildlife.

We can offer **£100 to owners** who host a meeting, to assist with costs (usually no more than petrol and perhaps the cost of tea and coffee). There needs to be space for parking for up to ten or so cars, but that is really the only practical requirement. We would love to organise more meetings all over the country, but need your help – or your woodlands – to do so. Please get in touch if you would like to join in.

Tracks: free help for south-east owners

As you walk down the shared track to your own wood, are you travelling along a shady green tube, or is it a bright sunlit strip? Does the track under your feet squelch, while all around is dry and dusty? Are you captivated by the butterflies and the bird song, or is it still and silent?

Perhaps the difference is the way the shared track is being treated. Every year, the trees along its edge, and the shrubs and plants on the verges, grow larger and taller, and reduce the space. They cut off the light, but what can a single owner do on a long shared track?

For owners in the south-east, who bought from Woodlands, help is at hand. The owners in Rogley Wood were one of the first groups to take up Woodlands' offer of track improvement work. Judith Tolley has been kind enough to send us this feedback.

“The ride widening along by Pod wood has encouraged new growth of wild angelica and birds are flooding in. We have sighted female black caps and siskins now coming into the wood and onto the feeder. The coppice area is fully green with marsh marigolds and what I think will be flag Iris growing along the side of the re-routed stream. There are thousands of floxgloves which will look spectacular.”

“What a wonderful improvement the cutting



and clearing work has made to the rides! Light is now flooding into that area and some of the coppice stools are already sending up new shoots. The work this year has also helped me shape my future plan and I have identified several pines that are choking the coppice and would be best removed. The challenge will be how to move and make best use of the pine timber.”

If you would like to improve your track contact Rich Hare who will visit your wood and discuss with you and other owners how the track could be improved. He will organise the work and Woodlands will pay for it. That's it - there's no catch!

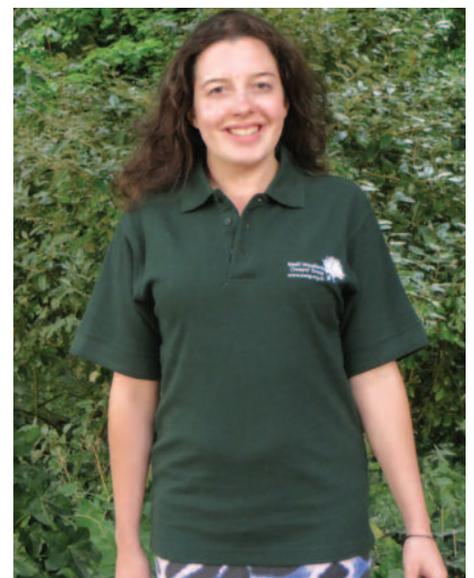
This is a pilot scheme, for this year only, available to owners in the south-east.

Contact Rich Hare for more details.

SWOG T-Shirts – don't miss them!

We have a number of SWOG polo shirts for sale at cost price – especially for those who like a large size (42-44" chest). They are good quality, hard-wearing poly-cotton unisex shirts with the SWOG logo on the left breast. They would make great gifts (possibly in time for fathers' day, given the stock of large sizes!) We also have a few smalls and mediums, but supplies are limited.

Until 20 June, we can offer them at cost, for just £5 each to include postage and packing. If you would like to snap up this incredible bargain, email judith@swog.org.uk



Ancient woodland restoration

Helping owners in the Sussex Weald restore PAWS woodlands

Jim Smith-Wright, the Woodland Trust's Ancient Woodland Restoration Officer for the Low Weald, has written to us with news of an important initiative in the Sussex Weald, aimed at helping land owners restore plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) back to ancient woodlands. If you have further comments or questions, please contact him directly.

We have already lost the vast majority of our ancient woodland: just two per cent, and falling, of our landscape is now covered by it. What remains is often compromised, either by direct damage, or by more subtle changes. In many cases this has included the replacement of some or all of the native broadleaved canopy with plantation trees, usually conifers, or rhododendron and other invasive species overtaking the understorey. In some areas such

as the Weald, plantations can also include broadleaves such as sweet chestnut, which can dominate woodland and reduce its value for wildlife.

However there is hope! The Woodland Trust, with funding from the Heritage Lottery fund and private donors, is running an ambitious project in the Weald area. We are offering free advice and guidance to help private landowners around the country bring these woodlands back towards a more natural state, through a gradual process of restoration. This can also provide a valuable timber crop and other wood products.

If you would like more information on this exciting project, or own some plantation on ancient woodland within the Weald area, and would like some advice on how to restore it, please contact Jim via email:

jimsmith-wright@woodlandtrust.org.uk
or phone 07768 506664.

Adding value to small woodlands with portable saw-milling

Demonstration day 18 June 2016, Lower Vert Woods Park Lane, Laughton, BN8 6BP

Vert Woods, in association, with the Woodland Trust, will be hosting a demonstration day looking at the use of portable saw mills to make

woodland management easier and more affordable.

With thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, this **free event** will examine in detail a range of portable 'milling' systems, and how they can be used to make woodland management and restoration easier and more affordable. These

range from the chainsaw driven 'Alaskan' frame costing a few hundred pounds, to several larger systems costing several thousand, which are available to hire. We'll be exploring how to make a range of products, including planks, benches and posts. The practicalities and costs will be explained, as well as the health and safety issues.

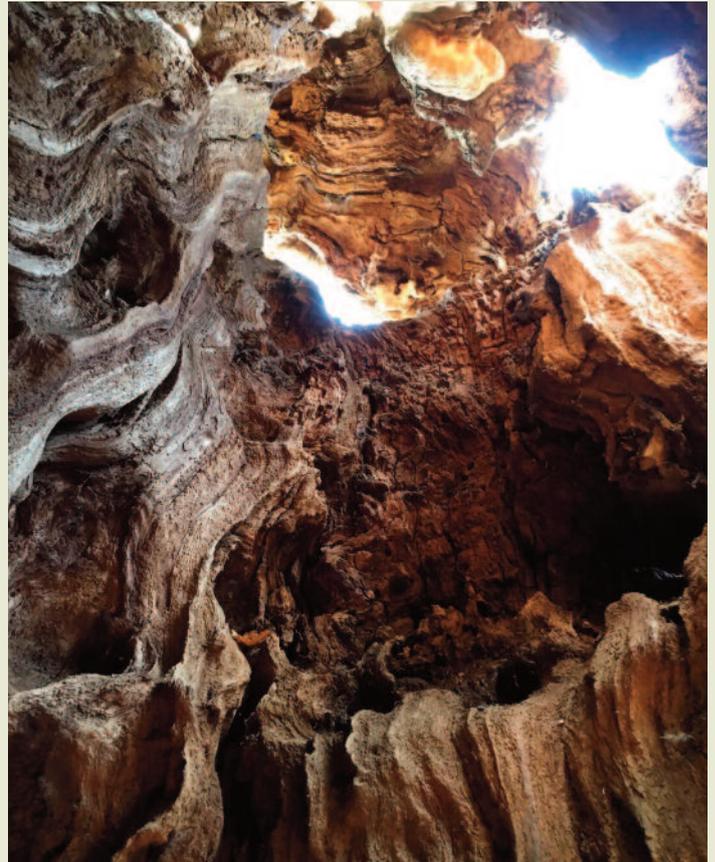
For further information and to book please visit the **Eventbrite booking page**.



Many of us have been transfixed by the knarled interior of an ancient oak, and no doubt cricked our necks while trying to get a good look inside. Eight-year old Loris was just the right size to scramble inside a particularly fine specimen in Sherwood Forest while clutching his Dad's camera. His mother sent us the picture and Loris himself wrote this account.

I climbed inside a really old oak tree. Then I looked up the trunk of the tree and it looked so cool I had to take a photo of it. Next my dad gave me his phone to take the picture, then I took the photo. Meanwhile, we went home and my mum and dad saw the picture and said "What's this picture?" I said "That's the one I took in the tree, why did you ask?" My mum said "It's amazing Loris". And that's the story of me going inside the tree.

Loris Rosse, age 8



Woodfest Wales

24-26 June

The best woodfair in North Wales bar none is happening between 24 and 26 June this year near Caerwys, Flintshire on the North Wales coast.

SWOG will be there on the Woodlands stall, so do drop by and say hello if you're in the area.

It's a great day out for all the family, with plenty of wood-related crafts and displays, as well as a funfair and the fabulous Woodfest Rocks live music in the evening. Chainsaw carving, pole-climbing and the famous Welsh axemen will be entertaining the crowds, and there is a huge variety of timber and craft stalls and displays.

More details are on the website www.woodfestwales.co.uk. Tickets purchased in advance are £12 for adults and £2 for children, as opposed to £13 on the gate. Two-day and three-day passes are also available. **Click here to purchase tickets.**

Westonbirt Treetop Walkway

We'll be going to Treefest at Westonbirt in August, but in the meantime, why not visit the new Treetop Walkway which has recently been opened and provides a bird's eye view of the arboretum.

A 300-metre long walkway, which is accessible to visitors of all fitness levels, it rises on a gentle incline to a height of 13 metres and is constructed from larch and Douglas fir.



Woodlands blogs

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

TV

Painting your caravan in the woodlands

Why do all caravans have to be white? Artist Kako transforms a bland old caravan into a gorgeous scarlet wagon. Watch it and be inspired!



Blogs

Heart of Wales – A vision of a sustainable future for mid-Wales

Chris Colley describes the challenges of ensuring a sustainable future for mid-Wales. The Calon Cymru Network is a Community Interest Company (CIC) that is committed to encouraging sustainable rural regeneration. The vision is to create a linear forest market garden along the whole length of it, and create spaces for One Planet Development houses and communities along the way, together with a cycle and walking path.

Have we moved into ‘the human epoch’?

Lewis muses upon the human impact on our ancient planet, notably the detrimental effect of waste plastic on the environment.

Woodland biosecurity

Chris Colley discusses the best way to limit the spread of woodland diseases – exercise effective biosecurity, which may be as simple as shaking the mud from your boots when you leave your wood.

Refuges for wildlife

Lizards, reptiles and small mammals can benefit from the grotty old tyres that are often dumped in woodland. They make useful habitat and provide protection from predators.

Warming conifers

The dark coniferous forests planted to provide fast-growing softwoods appear to have contributed to global warming.

How to grow a better tree

Lewis discusses some surprising discoveries made as a result of the 1987 hurricane. It provided an opportunity to examine tree root systems in detail and has allowed arborists to alter their planting and nurturing practices.



Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be at Woodfest Wales, Westonbirt, APF and Bentley. This list is not exhaustive, so please send us details of your event.

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
www.surreyhills.org

Peebles Wood Market

22–23 October 2016 Tweed Green &
Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market

Royal Forestry Society Conference

1 November 2016 Making Woodlands Pay
www.rfs.org.uk/events

