

Small Woodland Owners' Group

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Welcome to the rest of the country!

A big welcome to the South West, East Anglia, Central, and Scotland members to SWOG. We look forward to meeting you and hearing from you on the discussion forum on the website.

SWOG update

The Small Woodland Owners' Group started almost two years ago, so I thought it was time for a progress report. We have nearly 800 contacts across the country, including woodland owners, agencies and environmental organisations. We have had seven formal meetings, covering topics like butterflies, bats, dormice, planning, fungi and tools, and more informal meetings of members! We have walked in each others' woods and enjoyed sharing our knowledge and questions. Members have been on TV and in newspapers, Smallwoods and Living Woods magazines.

Most importantly of all, we are enjoying caring for our woods!



In the news

The media often ask the staff of woodlands.co.uk for people to interview about their woodlands.

Anyone willing to be called at some point? Please let me know, it will be much easier for us if we have a ready-made list of people who don't mind being interviewed.

Email Tracy if you are willing!



Mike Pepler being interviewed by Tom Heap for Costing the Earth

South East

Coming up

Early summer walk – plant ID, watch this space

4th Dec.

Tackling **rhododendron** can be an enormous problem. If you have a woodland in the High Weald you might like to attend this seminar:

<http://www.swog.org.uk/events/tackling-rhodo-in-the-high-weald-by-andrew/>

South West

Reintroducing coppice in Dartmoor

http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/au_suscoppr0909

Field studies council

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/>

Royal Forestry Society woodland competition is now open to those in the see. See www.rfs.org.uk for more information

Grant advice

The Royal Forestry Society has updated their advice and information on woodland and tree grants.

<http://www.rfs.org.uk/about/grants-for-trees>

Small Woodland Owners' Group

SWOG meeting Delamere

21 people came along to the SWOG meeting in Delamere woods in November. It was a super day, despite the rain and wind!

The first thing we did was to go for a long walk around the lake, led by forester David Scott. It is a beautiful setting for lots of tree talk. We learned about the different conifers, the history of oak and had discussions on all kinds of topics from insurance to tree planting.



Once the rain started we scurried back to the room for lunch and a discussion led by Rod Waterfield from the Woodland Skills Centre on woodland management.

After this, David spoke on chainsaw safety and equipment, before we headed homewards.

You can read more detail on their talks on our website.

<http://www.swog.org.uk/events/swog-meetings-delamere/>

Make money from your photos!

Woodlands.co.uk are on the look out for photos of people involved in Family Forestry. (people doing stuff in woods!) Send photos to Margaret@woodlands.co.uk. £10 for every photo used.

Events North SWOG meeting

27th March 2010

The Woodsmith's workshop:
Beamish Museum,
Co Durham

<http://www.woodsmithstore.co.uk/shop>

Wide choice of courses
www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

**Coppice courses in
Pembrokeshire**
www.coppicewoodcollege.co.uk

Woodlands.co.uk blogs
Woodland archaeology
Planting a tree
Fungi
Discovering Long Wood
Save our sedge

www.woodlands.co.uk/blog

Scotland

Information needed! Please
email Tracy with events.

Woodlands**TV**.co.uk

Art in the woods
Chainsaw maintenance
Squirrel recipes
Planting trees

Alvecote open day – by Phil

My wife, Karen and I, as well as other SWOG members went to Sarah Walters' open day at wood at Alvecote in Warwickshire on Sunday and had a very enjoyable and informative time.



Sarah showed us some of her key fobs she has made from the off cuts of pruning. She also had Christmas cards using pictures taken in the woods on a frosty morning and calendars using pictures she has taken in the wood during the year.

Stephen then took us and about 12 other people on a guided walk through the wood explaining how they have improved and created new habitats by creating a series of ponds that are linked together. The old Oak trees are an amazing sight, full of incredible features, nooks crannies and hollows.

It's an amazing wood with an incredible amount of light in it. It's very impressive the amount of work that Sarah and Stephen have carried out and the difference it has made in the last two years.

Karen and I are both looking forward to a return visit on an open day next year.

Keep up to date with Alvecote wood through their blog.

<http://docsquid.blogspot.com/>



Central

Greenwood Centre
Coalbrookdale
www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk

Malvern Coppicing
For a list of new courses
see our website:
or
Worcestershire
www.malverncoppicing.co.uk

East Anglia

BTCV
East Anglia and countrywide
www.btcv.org.uk

Information needed! Please email Tracy with events.

Wales

Woodland Skills Centre,
Wales
www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

**Centre for Alternative
Technology**
Machynlleth
www.cat.org.uk



Saw Pits by David

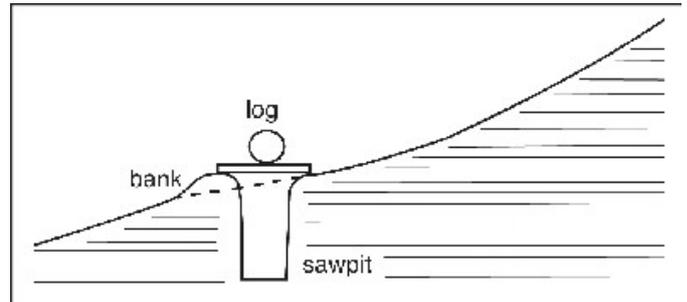
Delving into the history hidden in your woodland

These are often very difficult to spot, so I won't spend too long describing them. They are not as ubiquitous as charcoal burners' platforms, and many were situated at wood yards, rather than within woodland.

A sawpit was a hole dug in the ground, probably about 6 foot deep and between 12 and 15 foot long and about 4 foot wide. It was where a log could be cut into planks (rip sawn) using one of those two-handed saws with enormous teeth you often see hanging on the wall in pubs. The hole was sufficiently deep for a man to stand and pull one end of the saw down, while the other sawman was standing on top of the log pulling the saw up and keeping a straight line.

Typically, what's left of the sawpit now is a slight depression with a bank on one side. Sometimes the hole is quite deep and the bank quite pronounced.

From the dimensions above you may have realised that the hole was longer than it was wide. The sawpit will have been aligned so that the long side was at right angles to the direction of the slope. And the soil from the hole made into a bank on the downhill side. Rarely will you find sawpits at the top of a hill (although I think I've just found two in just such a position) – they are usually towards the bottom of a slope so that least effort was required to get the log to it. They can be situated near trackways, a position that would have facilitated removal of the finished product, but many are not.



There are often small depressions in woodland and sawpits are particularly difficult for an expert to interpret, so I'm not expecting you to be able to say you've got one on the basis of my description here. To be more certain, you should get someone with some knowledge to have a look at it – and even then he or she may well say 'Well, it might be ...'.

When it comes to recording it, all you have to do is to measure its approximate length and width and roughly how deep the depression is and how high the bank is. If you can get its position accurately, so much the better, and an idea of its

orientation in degrees if you have a magnetic compass. It should look as though the hole was once rectangular – if it is looking more curved than straight, you could be looking at something else. Don't forget, it's always important to record it if you think it's man made, than to work out what it was used for.

That can come later – finding it was the most valuable thing you could do.



SWOG logo

Your last chance to comment on Heathers latest sketch, see:

<http://www.swog.org.uk/news/swog-logo/>

Combines all the ideas talked about on the forum and uses the colours from woodlands.co.uk. What do you think?

Are your trees native?

Join in the debate!

<http://www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=463>

Free events at Brede High Woods, Sussex

Guided woodland archaeology walk with David Brown Saturday **December 12th 10.30am - 12.30pm**. Meet at the old wood yard entrance (opposite Ellenwhorne Lane).

The event is free to attend but will book up very quickly. To book you place email learning@woodlandtrust.org.uk or for more information call 08452935734.

Christmas guided wildlife walk at Brede High Woods **with Patrick Roper Saturday December 20th 10am - 12.30pm**. Meet at the old wood yard entrance (opposite Ellenwhorne Lane).

Come and join us in the woods at Christmas to explore the changes of the seasons and the responses of the woodland species. The event is free but has limited numbers so please book early. To book you place email learning@woodlandtrust.org.uk or for more information call 08452935734.

For more info on Brede High Woods visit our new mini-site where you'll be able to find out more about the wood's history, ecology and more: <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/wood/brede-high-woods>

Community woodlands projects

One of the main aims at Woodlands.co.uk is to get more people into woodlands, including groups who can't afford to buy their own wood. Woodlands.co.uk have woods in various parts of the country that they are making available to use. They already have people who use their woods for bush craft courses, social forestry, woodlands management demonstrations, off-road horse riding organisations, orienteering and coppicing.

You can see more on the website: www.woodlands.co.uk/community-woodlands

A new project starting in a woodland in Hampshire involves two young men, and a lot of energy! Andy Noble from Natures Craft and John Hayward of Landrock survival will soon be running courses in Lords Wood. You can see more on their website.

<http://lordswoods.blogspot.com>

Principles of survival – by John

Protection

Protect yourself from the Initial Situation
Protect yourself from further danger
Protect yourself from the elements.

So, the initial situation....

There are two schools of thought here, fight or flight , stay or run. For the majority of permissive situations (i.e. you're not being hunted by a gang of rabid eastern European special forces), I am firmly in the "stay" camp. There are exceptions though that I'll go in to later.

What the 'situation' always gives you is a means of being identified and located. If you're caught in a flood, rescuers are not going to look to the drier areas first. If you've crashed in a plane, chances are that it was carrying a transponder, locating the position. As I said, there are exceptions. If 'life as we know it' is about to change / has changed then I'm outta here. More on that at another time.

Protect from further danger....

First aid training is key, as is fitness - mental and physical. To use the flood example again, if you're going to be climbing to high ground, you need to be able to carry yourself and your equipment while probably dragging / pushing a loved one. You may have to wade through flowing waters. Mental strength above physical is always key though. If you put took bones or muscle tissue and put them under stress-testing you would see that they are INCREDIBLY strong. They will take a huge amount of force - it's the mind that often is weaker.

You will need to be able to apply basic first aid to yourself and those around you. Get yourself to a basic first aid lesson run by St John's Ambulance (or St Andrew's Ambulance in Scotland, I think). I believe that all children should be taught first aid in school anyway but that's another rant.

Protect from the elements....

You NEED shelter. It's up on the list with water and food. Without shelter you will deteriorate rapidly and perish. Shelter could be sitting with your back to a tree in a rainstorm or building yourself a log cabin - I'd suggest we're thinking about something in between. Learn how to make improvised shelters from the wreckage around you. You need to know what insulates and what conducts heat. Know how to make waterproof coverings from the local flora and fauna.

Don't go building a huge shelter if it's just for you, regardless of how much space you think you need - you make it big enough to fit your body and that's it. Small shelters are easier to warm with body heat.

Speaking of heat, fire is very important (although not the be all and end all). Being able to light and maintain a fire, suitable to the situation, is a life saver. Fire brings you the ability to warm yourself, purify water, cook your food, provide a beacon for location, and more than all of that, bring morale.

Interested? Then come along on one of John's courses. See <http://lordswoods.blogspot.com/> for details.





News from the woods

- What were we doing in October?
- Making wreaths and reindeer, a woodland sauna and an oven.
- Making stakes for tree planting and a sand filter!
- Woodtroll has made a ladder and banister. See all the photos on our website

<http://www.swog.org.uk/articles/adding-value-to-woodland-products-by-stephen>



Combwell project – Kent

Many owners of Combwell woods in Kent are working together with Kent High Weald Partnership, English Nature and the Forestry commission to improve the management of this SSSI woodland.

KHWP has been granted funding to hold workshops for people who involved with working in Combwell woods. There have so far been talks by English Nature, the Forestry Commission, KHWP, the Cultural Landscape Officer and Woodlands.co.uk. Plus some damn fine homemade soup for lunch (many thanks to Julian of KHWP). So far the practical focus seems to be on Rhododendron control, that is

a big problem in these woods, and the landscape officer is looking at the historical features within the woods. However this is really just the start of a more longer term goal for the management of these woods.

Needless to say this is a very exciting time for all who are involved in Combwell woods.

Look out for lichen

Open Air Laboratories, a community-based science project, is asking gardeners and nature watchers to record the different types of lichen growing on local trees, as part of a project to monitor air quality around Britain. Lichens are known to be particularly sensitive to prevailing air quality.

Data gathered as part of this survey will be analysed by a team from Imperial College, London, the British Lichen Society, and the Natural History Museum. To participate in the survey, download the details from www.airsurvey.org.

Planet earth online has some fascinating articles- here are 2 of them

Beetles tell us more about woodland archaeology

<http://planetearth.nerc.ac.uk/news/story.aspx?id=608>

The success criteria for male blue tits

<http://planetearth.nerc.ac.uk/news/story.aspx?id=607>

facebook

www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523

The Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) is on facebook. You can also become a swog blog fan and receive feed from the site when new articles go up.