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### In the Newsletter this Month

Whether you love Christmas or dislike the commercialism surrounding it, Christmas is on the way, and this is a bumper Christmas edition of the Newsletter to give you plenty to read in those long winter evenings. The weather has certainly turned Christmassy already, thwarting our own attempt to plant a hedgerow boundary to our newly-acquired field this last weekend.

There is better news from other woodland owners in this edition, though, with the final installment in the birth of Willoughby Wood series. There are also reports from SWOG meetings in Camarthenshire and Ross-on-Wye, and a tribute to another favourite tree.

Jill Swan has reviewed two excellent books for us this month: *The Woodlanders and Tales from the Woods*—not too late to get these on your Christmas wish-list if you like the sound of them.

There is a lot of news too from the Royal Forestry Society including news of a new award for small woodlands—just the sort of woods that many of us own and manage. It is definitely worth joining the RFS, who produce a journal (*Quarterly Journal of Forestry*), a news magazine, and regular e-mail updates of their activities. They also hold meetings on a regional and national basis—an ideal platform for networking and learning.

This newsletter also provides the second in our photography series: this time concentrating on getting exposure right, something that can prove difficult in the winter with low light combined with snow and frost. If you are getting a new camera for Christmas, this might be a good time to try some of the tips in this article.

Finally we have a couple of articles about woodlands and Christmas traditions: holly, ivy, robins, yule logs, Christmas trees, wassailing and mistletoe. Something to make you think while you enjoy your woodlands this Christmas. And on that note, I'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Sarah Walters (sarah@swog.org.uk)

### Photography Basics: Exposure

This is the second in a series of articles on photography: the first article last month dealt with artistic aspects of photography including composition, and the elements that make a successful image – taking the right picture. This is about the technical aspects of capturing that image – taking the picture right, and the first thing we are going to consider is exposure.

Once you have composed your image, it is important to get the right balance between light and dark. Whatever type of camera you have, images are formed as a result of letting light onto a sensitive material: in a film camera, that is film, in a digital camera it is the sensor. Too little light, and you will lose detail in the shadows, too much light and you will lose detail in the highlights. You can compensate for these to some extent by processing, but it is always better to get the exposure right initially.

Most cameras have a form of automatic or programmed exposure. Automatic exposure tends to select “middling” settings for everything and may produce rather bland images – learning to control this gives you greater creative possibilities. There are also a number of situations when the automatic exposure of your camera is fooled and will select an incorrect exposure.

The exposure that you need is a function of three things:

1. **The aperture of the lens** – how much light is let in through a diaphragm in the lens that acts a bit like the iris of the eye – this is sometimes referred to as the “f-stop”.

2. **The shutter speed** – how long the shutter is held open to let in light to the sensor or film.

3. **The sensitivity of the sensor or film** – how much light is required to produce the desired effect on the sensor or film – the ISO setting

Difficult conditions under which automatic exposure may not work correctly include

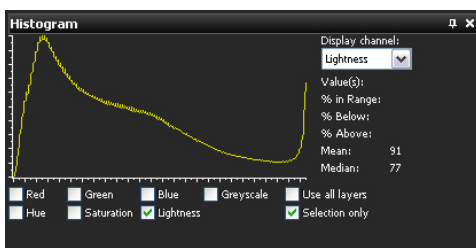
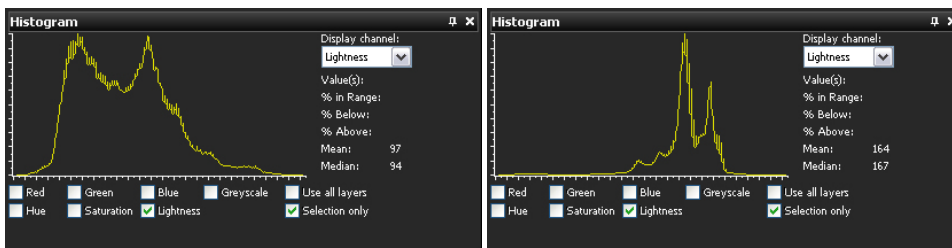
1. **High contrast** - particularly snowy conditions, water, or bright sunshine with deep shadow.
2. **Black or white subject** – the camera will try to average this out, making a black subject appear too bright, or a white subject appear too dark. Black and white cats, dogs or birds are particularly challenging.
3. **Dappled shade**, particularly among trees
4. **Very bright highlights** e.g. bright sunshine
5. **Backlit or side-lit subjects** – we often like this lighting because it adds interest to the image, but it is then hard to get the exposure right.

### Checking your exposure

Digital cameras always let you preview your images, so you can check whether your exposure is right and adjust it if needed.

There are a number of ways you can do this:-

1. Just **looking at the screen** is a good start – see which areas are bright and which ones are dark. Do the bright areas look washed-out? If so, the image is probably over-exposed. Do the dark areas look too dark? If so, the image is probably under-exposed. Can you see detail in the light areas? If not, it is over-exposed. And in the shade? If it looks black or “blocked” it is probably under-exposed. True white should look white, and true black should look black – if they don’t the camera has probably got it a bit wrong.
2. If your camera allows it, use the **histogram**. Almost all digital SLR cameras have this facility and increasing numbers of compact digital cameras also have it. The histogram produces a graph of the number of pixels in your image with particular light values, ranging from pure black to pure white. You may have a bias towards the light or dark ends; that is OK. What you are looking for is the majority of values to be somewhere in the middle, tapering off towards the ends, but not quite touching them. The examples below show good exposure, over exposure and under exposure.



Both the images above are well exposed. The first has a wider range of values than the second, but neither have peaks at either end of the range.

The image on the left is over-exposed – there is a peak towards the right hand end. The image may look OK – there may be a lot of pure white in the image – but you need to be sure that is the case, or the highlights will have little detail when you come to view the image.



### Course Directory

#### Field Studies Council

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

#### Institute of Chartered Foresters

<http://www.charteredforesters.org/default.asp?page=33>

#### British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

A large range of courses for woodland owners

For *BTCV Short Courses*

<http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level3/536/level>

For *BTCV long courses*

<http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level3/561/level>

#### Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

To download the short course brochure visit

[http://www2.cat.org.uk/shortcourses/CAT\\_Short\\_courses\\_2010.pdf](http://www2.cat.org.uk/shortcourses/CAT_Short_courses_2010.pdf)

#### Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

To download the short course brochure, please visit

[http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Programme\\_tcm\\_9-245883.pdf](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Programme_tcm_9-245883.pdf)

#### LILI Courses

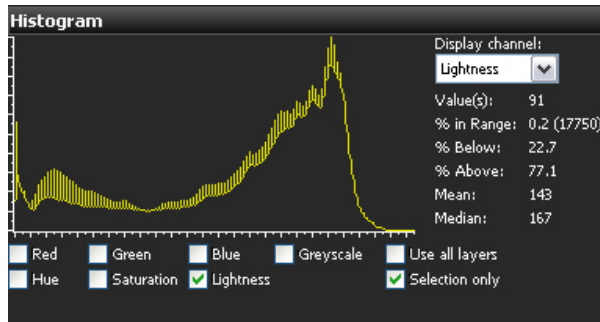
For the full range of courses from the Low Impact Living Initiative, please see

[http://www.lowimpact.org/venues\\_all\\_courses.htm](http://www.lowimpact.org/venues_all_courses.htm)

#### Wildlife Trusts

All 47 UK Wildlife Trusts run events of potential interest to woodland owners. For further details please see

<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/index.php?section=events:autumn>



The image on the right is under-exposed: there is a peak towards the left hand end. The shadows here may lack detail and appear as black silhouettes.

### Correcting Exposure

You may have identified that your image is over or under exposed, so what do you do about it? Exposure can be corrected in a number of ways.

1. **Exposure locking** – half press and hold. Most digital cameras have a “half-press and hold” function. This allows you to place the main subject off-centre. You can then point the camera slightly away from the subject, so you can compose your image using the “rule of thirds”, but still have the subject correctly exposed. You can also use this to fool the camera meter: for example, if you want the exposure to be correct on a bright area, with the darker areas in silhouette, then aim the camera at a bright area *at the correct distance so your image is in focus* and then half press. Then recompose your image and take your picture. Depending on the way light metering works in your camera, this can be a way of fooling it into taking the exposure you want.

2. **Metering options.** Automatic exposure uses a light meter within the camera to determine how much light to let in. Most cameras use a combination of average light over the whole frame, giving additional weighting to the centre area of the frame. Some cameras allow you to control how much weighting is given to the centre. You may be able to select a very narrow area – this is useful if you are trying to take a picture of, for example, a bright flower against a dark green background. This function is frequently available on compact cameras – you just need to read the manual or flip through the menus to see what you can do!



3. **Exposure compensation.** This is the most common way of adjusting exposure. Many cameras have an exposure compensation function: this means you can essentially adjust the sensitivity of the light meter, to make it under or over expose your images. Adjustment is usually made in 1/3 stops. You don't need to know how this works – just that you can make exposure higher (+) or lower (-). Somewhere on the menu system, or even as a button on your camera, you will probably see an icon that looks like +/- : this will be your exposure compensation button. There are very few cameras these days without it – even my mobile phone has it – you just need to look. If, for example, you are going to take a series of images of something that is back-lit, you might find the subject looks too much like a silhouette: if this is not the effect you want, you need to increase the exposure. You could try taking images + 1/3, + 2/3 and +1 stop to see if it improves the appearance of the subject. On the other hand, if you are taking images in dappled light and shade in the woodland, the meter frequently over-exposes these images, in an effort to get an average. You may want to under-expose by - 1/3, - 2/3 and -1 stop to see which ones best capture the feeling of light and shade in your wood. In the pictures above right, the first one was over-exposed by 1 1/3 stops to get an ethereal white quality to the blossom and to prevent the shadows from dominating, while the single apple blossom image was under-exposed by 1 stop to preserve the detail in the white areas on the petals.



4. **Exposure bracketing.** It is OK fiddling around with this if you have time to recompose your image, and take lots of shots, but supposing you are not going to get a second chance? Exposure bracketing is then the way to go. Again, many, although not all, cameras have this available. It allows you to take three images in quick succession, one of which will be under, one over and one correctly exposed. You can decide how much over and under exposure you want, and some cameras also let you adjust the “normally” exposed one to slightly over or under exposed to begin with. You will either see “Bracketing” as a menu option, or alternatively an icon that looks a bit like this:-

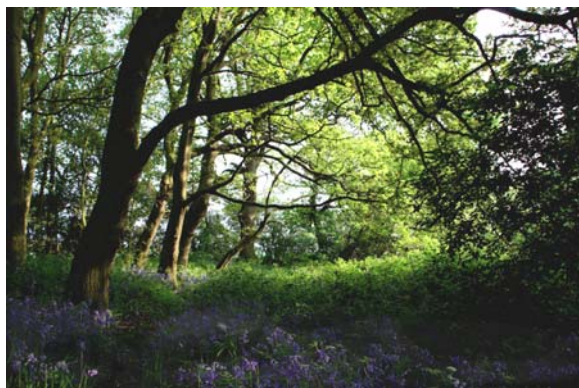
| | |  
 -|||+

Have a look at your camera manual, or flick through the menus and see if this is available. If it is, and you will only get one chance at your pictures, try using it and see if it helps. Remember to take three images each time!

### 5. Post processing

a. **Dodge and burn.** You may just have to accept that your image will have bits that look over or under exposed, particularly





if there is a very wide range of brightness and darkness within your picture. Many photographic editing software packages allow you to use the “dodge” and “burn” functions to attempt to correct this. This can also be used on film in the dark-room, although it is applied differently. Dodging means you are producing the effect of less light on your print: on film we used to hold up bits of cardboard over the image generated by the enlarger so that bit of the image was less exposed on the print, and appeared lighter than it would normally do. Digitally, this is

usually done by applying a “brush” to your image to lighten it. Burning does the opposite: it gives the effect of darkening and bringing out detail in the lighter areas of your image. You can use this, for example, to enhance the detail in the sky, so you can see the clouds and blue sky more clearly, while retaining detail in your woods or trees that may have been correctly exposed at the expense of the sky. The only free software I know that will do this is The Gimp (<http://www.gimp.org/>). Adobe Photoshop Elements is reasonably low price and will allow this, as will Corel Paintshop Photo Pro, which you can get free for a trial period. The bluebells in the image above left were made lighter using the dodge function.

**b. HDR merge.** Paintshop Photo Pro and full versions of Adobe Photoshop (CS4 and CS5) will also allow you to merge three or more identical frames that have been bracketed as above so you get the correctly exposed bits of each image. So, for example, you can get a dramatic sky, and a correctly exposed foreground, even if the sky is much brighter than the foreground. The image on the right was produced using this technique.



### Exercises

Try going out to take pictures in your wood. Try the various methods of adjusting exposure on your camera. Try to take a picture that needs

1. Exposure Compensation
2. Exposure Bracketing
3. Different metering options e.g. centre-weighted or spot metering

Find these functions on your camera and take several pictures of the same shot – one using the exposure as metered by your camera, and the others using over or under exposure, or different metering options. Learning to move away from auto exposure every time will really make a difference to your photography!

## Woods, Trees and Christmas Traditions

Think about Christmas and what comes to mind? Well, of course there are presents and lots of indulgent food. But many of the other things associated with Christmas have strong roots in the woods, and the trees and creatures that inhabit the woods: Christmas trees, Yule logs, the holly and ivy, robins, wrens, and mistletoe.

Many of these traditions also date from way back before the time of Christianity, the Midwinter festival forming part of many cultures across the world, including the Pagan festival of Yule celebrated on the Winter Solstice, as well as the Roman festival of Saturnalia and the feast of the birth of Mithras. Indeed, many pre-historic monuments including standing stones and Neolithic and Iron Age tombs are aligned to be illuminated by the midwinter sun. It is not surprising, therefore, that a festival built around the cycle of the sun should also incorporate other elements of the solar cycle, particularly those of the plants and animals of the wildwood around at the time these traditions were born.

### Course Directory

**The Greenwood Centre** offer a range of courses of interest to woodland owners

<http://www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk/WoodlandCourses.htm>

**Phil Hopkinson of Malvern Coppicing** offers practical coppicing courses

<http://www.malverncoppicing.co.uk/>

**Yorwoods** offer courses for woodland owners and managers in the Yorkshire area

<http://www.yorwoods.org.uk/training>

**Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management**

offer a wide range of courses, some of which are of interest to woodland owners

<http://www.ieem.net/otherevents.asp>

**The Sustainability Centre**

offers lots of courses around the theme of sustainable living.

<http://www.sustainability-centre.org/index.php>

**Royal Forestry Society Divisional Events** The

programmes for November and December can be seen at

<http://www.rfs.org.uk/event/2010/11/01/month/all/all/1>

The Midwinter festival was adopted for Christmas as a time to celebrate the birth of Christ. However it was originally a feast to mark the darkest days of winter, to celebrate survival as the days start to lengthen.

### Yule Logs

This is one of the most ancient traditions, now most often celebrated as a chocolate cake (a French innovation), rather than a real log. It is known to have been associated with midwinter in Egypt and the Sumerian culture. In Pagan culture it was a large log brought into the house and burnt on the hearth. Traditionally this should be either taken from your own land, or given to you by a friend. The log is usually oak or ash but may be birch or holly. The log is kept burning on a hearth or fireplace for the whole 12 days of Christmas, or in some traditions, kept glowing for the whole year, and the largest remaining piece is then saved to light the Yule log of next year. The ashes were often scattered to offer protection against lightning strikes.

Eventually, when hearths became smaller, so did the Yule log – a smaller log was decorated and became a holder for lit candles. In France, it was replaced by a *buche de Noel* – the chocolate Yule log familiar to us today.

### Christmas Trees

Thought by many to be a Victorian innovation, Christmas Trees have more ancient roots. Druids used evergreen branches in their Midwinter Solstice rituals, and the outside of homes were decorated with branches from evergreen trees. But even further back, Old Testament prophets condemned the practice of bringing a tree into the house to celebrate midwinter solstice. Pagans did not cut down trees to bring them into the house, as this was destructive of nature, but used clippings and branches, and decorated trees outdoors. Evergreen trees were used as they symbolised the hope of the coming spring.

The practice of bringing in a tree and decorating it became widespread in Mediaeval Germanic cultures, but was frowned upon in Puritan England and America, until popularised by German-born Prince Albert in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and by German immigrants to North America.

### Mistletoe

Mistletoe was venerated by both Viking and Celtic Pagan religions, as a plant that will grow and thrive on dormant trees in the depth of winter. It was thought to have many magical and medicinal properties, including fertility, as well as being a plant of peace. It was collected by Druids during both midsummer and midwinter festivals to decorate the home, and as a symbol of life and fertility, and to protect the house against witches and poisons. Mistletoe was considered to be doubly magical if found growing on an oak tree. It was also a Druidic tradition that people with disagreements should meet under a bunch of mistletoe to lay down their arms and sort out their differences in peace.

In Norse legend, the berries are alleged to be white because after the Viking God Baldur was killed by his brother with a mistletoe spear his mother Frigga cried until the red berries turned white and he was brought back to life. Thereafter, when a couple passed under the mistletoe, they were expected to kiss in celebration of his resurrection and a symbol of peace. Kissing under the mistletoe is also associated with the fertility properties of the plant and that is the more likely reason behind our current tradition.

Mistletoe was banned from Christian ceremony because of its pagan origins for many centuries, but eventually has become more accepted due to its association with peace and mediation, and is now part of that tradition again.

### Holly

Holly was associated with both the Pagan midwinter ritual and the Roman feast of Saturnalia, being the plant of Saturn. Holly was one of the native evergreens used to decorate homes at the Pagan midwinter festival, as well as being used by druids in their celebration of that festival. Holly was special to the druids because it is at its best at midwinter, with green leaves and red berries. Holly wood was thought to protect against wild animals, and holly trees thought to ward off



### Ben Law

Runs a wide range of woodland management and woodcraft courses in Sussex

<http://www.ben-law.co.uk/education.html>

### Brighton Permaculture Trust

Run a number of courses of potential interest including courses on pruning old fruit trees, introduction to permaculture and building with straw bales.

<http://www.brightonpermaculture.org.uk/>

### Losehill Hall

This beautiful centre in the Peak District runs residential courses for professionals working in countryside and environment management. This includes courses on managing paths and public rights of way, and habitat creation and restoration.

[http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/professional\\_courses brochure\\_2010-12.pdf](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/professional_courses brochure_2010-12.pdf)

### Kingcombe Environmental Studies Centre

Is running a course on the history and ecology of woodlands on 22-24th April 2011

<http://www.kingcombe.org/courses/Details/256>

witches.

There is a deeper myth associated with holly around the midwinter festival: that of the Holly King and the Oak King. The lore goes that there is a perpetual battle between the polar forces of the year, the Holly King representing winter and the Oak King representing summer. The Holly King rules over the waning part of the year from Midsummer (or some versions say Samhain – Halloween) to Yule, when the Oak King becomes dominant as the days lengthen to Midsummer.

With the suppression of mistletoe by the early Christian Church, holly became the accepted plant of Christmas, the green symbolising eternal life and the red the blood of Christ and the thorns the crown of thorns. So despite being rooted in pagan tradition, holly is accepted decoration in churches today.

### Ivy

In tradition, ivy is seen as a female plant, in contrast to the male holly – the ivy goddess carried life through the winter with holly as her god. As an evergreen it was used to decorate pagan homes, but also to symbolise eternal life in the Christian tradition, particularly because of its habit of thriving on dead trees – it was thought to carry the soul of the dead tree.

Inevitably, ivy with its female connotations became a symbol of fertility, good luck and fidelity, and was often associated with weddings as well as Christmas, where it is used to form a wreath with holly, mixing the male and female plants, both symbolising eternal life but also the pagan wheel of the year.



### Wassailing

Based on an Old English term, meaning *to your health*, (effectively “Cheers!” in Old English!), the wassail was originally a cup passed round to be shared among groups of friends. At Christmas, groups of friends would take a wassail cup with a suitably fortifying beverage to houses of friends to distribute good cheer and good health. However it also has another meaning: that of the blessing of apple trees, traditionally carried out on Twelfth Night and forming the end of the Yuletide or Christmas festival.



Traditions vary in different parts of England, but usually involve the selection of the strongest tree in the orchard, whose roots are blessed with cider and among whose branches a wassail cake is placed as an offering to the tree spirits for a fruitful harvest. In addition, kettles are beaten, horns blown and guns fired to ward off evil spirits, and a wassail song is sung. Traditional dances (“Morris” dances, or Ox dances) are carried out to ensure a good harvest.

### Robins and Wrens

There are various myths around the red breast of the robin relating to the crucifixion: the red colour either comes from the blood of Christ as the robin tried to comfort him, or from the bird’s own blood as he tried to peck away the crown of thorns. The robin is friendly, inquisitive and loved by people, and has thus come to be a symbol of good, associated with the Christian tradition, and appearing as a favourite on Christmas cards. However robins were a sacred bird before Christianity – the robin was sacred to Thor, the God of Thunder, in Norse mythology.

The Robin is also associated with the Oak King who, at midwinter, catches and kills the Holly King, represented by the wren, thereby giving the Robin both a sinister but also positive association as a bird of the waxing year.

Robins and wrens are linked in Pagan mythology too: the wren was a bird of prophecy to the Druids. In Celtic languages the name for Druid and Wren is either the same or very similar. A tiny bird with a loud voice that



### Developing Your Skills Courses from Berks, Bucks, Oxon Wildlife Trust

A range of courses aimed at developing personal skills, very helpful for the woodland owner.

<http://www.bbwt.org.uk/content.asp?did=23622&level2id=5876&depth=1&rootid=5843>

#### **Badger Survey**

Saturday 18 December 2010, 10.30 am – 2.30 pm  
Dancers End Nature Reserve, nr Tring, Bucks

#### **Hedge Laying**

Saturday 15 January 2011, 10 am – 4 pm  
Sydlings Cope Nature Reserve, nr Oxford, Oxon

#### **Coppicing**

Saturday 12 February 2010, 9.30 am – 4 pm  
Warburg Nature Reserve, nr. Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

#### **Charcoal Burning**

Saturday 9 April 2011, 9.30 am – 4.30 pm  
Warburg Nature Reserve, nr. Henley-on-Thames, Oxon.

### Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust are running six-part bird identification courses in spring of 2011 starting on 19th March.

There is also a course on heating your home with wood on 11th December 2010 and 12th March 2011.

A course on Winter Tree Identification takes place on 29th January 2011.

See <http://www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org/events/> for details of these and other courses



flew on the back of an eagle higher than any other bird, hunting was only allowed on St Stephen's Day (26<sup>th</sup> December). To the Romans, the wren was the king of the birds, and killing one at mid-winter saw out the old and brought in the new.

Christmas traditions have deep historic roots that are linked with the cycle of the seasons, the wheel of life, and many of these roots are based in the woods inhabited by trees and creatures with symbolic meaning. Midwinter in the woods always seems to be a magical time, and it is easy to see how myths, legends and beliefs have sprung up around them. I hope you enjoy your Christmas and can spend some time at midwinter in your own woods.

## Woodland in Winter and the Yule-tide by Huw Woodman

*Huw is editor of Bushcraft Magazine (<http://www.bushcraft-magazine.co.uk/>) and this article is used with his permission. It was first published on The Cottage Smallholder blog at <http://tinyurl.com/32tlelb>. Visit [cottagesmallholder.com](http://cottagesmallholder.com) for more great articles on self-sufficiency in a small space, as well as an online bookstore and self-sufficiency shop.*

There's something deliciously pagan about woodland in winter. It calls to me and I answer in a very deep-rooted way. There's an invisible golden thread that connects me to the pre-Christian world and when it tugs me I have to go.

Today, we are preparing for Yule on the farm and on the Bushcraft Magazine. This fabulously old, pre-Christian festival is deep in the culture of many northern peoples; Celts, Lapps, Vikings, Britons and Teutons, have all celebrated this magical day in the year. Even the Romans had a mid-winter festival called Saturnalia.

Yule is of course the shortest day in the year and in the northern hemisphere is around 21/22 December. For pagans it is a fire festival and fires are lit to keep the darkness of the dark half of the year at bay, for on this day forwards, the daylight will only grow stronger. Fires help encourage the return of the sun and the light half of the year.

I love the magic of entering a wood and I do so with a sort of reverence. The hunter-gatherer in me is strong and I stop, look and listen. I stay very still, for it is then that I see most: the strong limbs of the trees without a leaf canopy and the wildlife; and I hear most: the wind in the trees and the rustling in the undergrowth.

We are in our wood today to do the Yule logging – to gather our winter firing. We drag deadfalls from the tops of trees – branches that have died and remain jammed in the canopy. These are effectively air-dried and they burn well. I always think of the old feudal right of gathering “by hook or by crook” when I do this. We add to the occasion with a woodland fire and some damson gin, made a few months earlier.

Every year we choose a Yule log. Choosing a Yule log is a very personal thing; pagans will tell you that the log chooses you. Walk around for a bit – take your time and one will take your fancy. The picture here is of Sam, my eldest son holding this year's log which was borne [home](#) and will be lit at Yule with the remains of last year's log (kept in the barn).

The Yule fires should be nurtured and enjoyed. Try a poker in the fire and when cherry



Photo: Sam holding the Yule log

### Courses from Coppice-wood College

**Hedge laying—4 days starting Monday 14th February 2011 (Fee £160)**

We will teach you traditional hedgelaying using hand tools. Learn how to use a bill hook – the iron age tool that is still the best for the job today.

**Garden Structure Weaving—Sat 17th April for one day £25**

Learn the basic techniques and complete your own garden plant support to take home.

**Make your own Shave-horse- 3 days from Sat 30th April (£160)**

Make your own shave-horse workbench to take home with you. All materials and tools supplied.

The shave horse is an ingenious device for working hands free on various greenwood work pieces.

**Green woodworking-4 days starting Monday 14th March (£160)**

This is a craft course which demonstrates how to use wood rather than timber bought from the sawmill. You will learn how to split and shape green wood using special tools, a cleaving break and shave horse. The understanding of the basic skills can then lead to simple furniture making or producing your own gate or carving a spoon.



Photo: Sam with a brace of pheasant

red, plunge it into a cup of cider –lots of theatre and a great taste! These fires are for stories too – Icelandic sagas, Norse legends and Beowulf.

The Yule brings other gifts as well and if we are lucky, a couple of pheasant will fall to the gun and will grace our festive table. The other picture is Sam holding a brace of cock pheasant that he shot in the wood and will hang ready for plucking and roasting. We saw more but let them go, for we are pot shooters; we value the food and only take what we need – that way our wild larder is always full.

We also gather armfuls of greenery for the house: bay, yew and holly; remember, only female holly has berries.

One last thing: After the logging, when the Land Rover is full, we turn for the last time and honour the woodland gods. We cup our hands and yell at the tops of our voices: “YOoooooooooL” two or three times. It’s immensely satisfying and I always feel that older pagan deities briefly wake at the sound and smile before returning to their winter slumbers.

Huw Woodman is the consultant editor of [The Bushcraft Magazine](#). A subscription to this quarterly (just £14.00) would make a great Christmas present for any country lover. Bushcraft Magazine is based in Kent, and they also run courses: for details check out their web site.

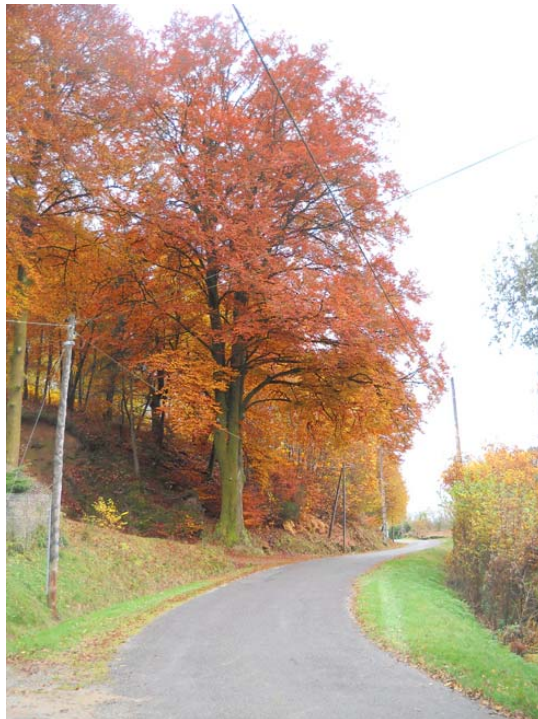
Read more: [The Cottage Smallholder » Guest spot: Woodland in Winter and the Yuletide by Huw Woodman](#) <http://www.cottagesmallholder.com/guest-spot-woodland-in->

## My Favourite Tree by Michael Ashby

This is a photo of one of my many favourite trees. It is just along the road from our house which is 25 miles NE of Limoges in SW France. The photo was taken just last week when the beech was still in it's full autumn glory.

To my young boy's this has always been Piglets House (Winnie the Pooh). I still am in awe of this tree even though I have passed it thousands of time during the dozen or so years that I have lived here.

Fortunately it stands on one of my many parcels of woodland so storms permitting, it should still be there for everyone’s enjoyment for a long time to come. The ironic thing is of course is that these days a tree would not be allowed to grow to this size so close to the road and utility wires. It would have been felled or lopped long ago to restrict it's size. I think that because it is in such a quiet location it has been overlooked.



### Woodworks Courses at the Greenwood Centre

<http://www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk/FundedCourses.htm>

Woodworks III is a Lantra funded programme offering reduced price training to those employed in land-based industries within the West Midlands. For eligible individuals the price is reduced by up to £300.

To be eligible for funding you must work in the West Midlands and be engaged in forestry or be farmers with woodland on your holding. Courses included hedge-laying, coppicing, small woodland management, coppice products, pole-lathe turning, social forestry, hurdle-making, ride management, charcoal-making, woodland monitoring and evaluation and sustainable woodland management.

Courses from The Mammal Society – a wide variety of courses, at various venues and dates. 2011 dates now announced.

[http://www.mammal.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_virtuemart&page=shop.browse&category\\_id=9&Itemid=219&vmcchk=1&Itemid=219](http://www.mammal.org.uk/index.php?option=com_virtuemart&page=shop.browse&category_id=9&Itemid=219&vmcchk=1&Itemid=219)

Courses in forthcoming months include mammal identification, dormouse ecology and conservation, badger ecology, survey and recording techniques and radio tracking.



## Book Review: The Woodlanders

### The Woodlanders: New life in Britain's Forests

Editor: Ian Edwards

Contributors: Sam Bridgewater, Heather Kiernan, Fiona Martynoga & Fay Young- ISBN-13: 978-1-887354-69-1 published by Saraband, Available from Amazon (<http://tinyurl.com/364vc83>), featured on woodlands.co.uk blog (<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/events-places/celebrate-woodlands-an-invitation/>)

One cannot fail to be impressed by this high quality, 320 page book that has landed on my desk. A heavy, hardback book measuring some 8x10 inches, it carries accolades from Hilary Benn, Nick Gibbs and John Paul Flintoff. It is richly illustrated throughout with sumptuous colour photographs. The Woodlanders was printed in the UK using 100% vegetable based inks on Amber graphic chlorine free paper from well managed and renewed forests in association with Reforesting Scotland.

Editor Ian Edwards has divided the book into 5 parts. Aiming at the people who love, aspire to, or already own a wood. To quote directly from the text: "This book will provide them (new Woodlanders) with ideas, answers and inspiration to help them as stewards of their own precious patch of our natural Heritage. it is for every one who is sharing in some way the huge resurgence of woodland activity, from planting trees to choosing to fill their home with objects of beauty and utility that come from native timbers"

The first section also sets the scene for the story of British woodlands, with a history starting from the neglect that arose after the second world war to the present day concerns about climate change.

Part 2 looks in some depth at the renaissance of timber building, embracing modern construction methods as well as revisiting traditional styles countrywide, its good to see how far we have come, and to meet some of the inspirational and innovative designers producers and architects who are bring wood back to the cutting edge of twenty first century building with integrity and jaw dropping style.

The other chapters within this part deal with community enterprise focussing on local schools, businesses and groups work together in a unique way to construct a community in the woods. The reader meets people who teach in, learn in, and build these enterprises and hear their stories.

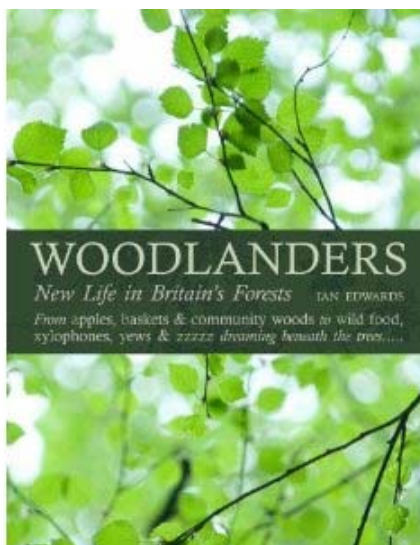
It also looks at the issues surrounding composting toilets, carpentry, willow structures plus more personal constructions. The growing popularity of Yurts, roundhouses and treehouses is also documented.

Part 3 introduces the reader to edible woodland produce, with a code of conduct for foraging tips and good images of edible plants and fungi, recipes for wine and venison amongst other things, and has chapters on dyeing, herbal products, and medicinal products. Basket weaving, willow sculptures, coffins, swill baskets, furniture, turning, even boat building is examined. The lengthy subject of Firewood is also well documented.

Part 4 explores woods as artistic inspiration, featuring stunning images and passages by Carry Akroyd, It visits a theatre development storytelling in the woods in Wales. It looks at the history of wood engraving, and has chapters on nature writing, poetry, storytelling, songwriting and music.

Part 5 brings us back to earth with the more practical subjects of management, stewardship, coppice, greenwood working and tales from people who have planted their own woodlands and started community woodland projects.

Peppered throughout this excellent and diverse book are portraits of native British trees with a



**1 day course at Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex on thursday 9th December 2010.**

Learn how to get the best value from your timber trees - for sale or your own use. Tim Saunders from Rother Forestry will show you how to identify trees that will be good for furniture, veneer, construction timber, and other uses, tell you how to harvest, mill and store the timber and how to market and sell it. The course will show you how to set up and use a mobile saw mill and how to engage contractors. A must for anyone managing trees and woodland and for those wishing to select and use timber for furniture, construction and other purposes.

Tim's courses always get excellent feedback. Course is run by Woodnet and Plumpton College at Flimwell. Price £80. If you work in forestry or farming in the south east you may be eligible for a subsidised price of £24 - please enquire when booking. Telephone 01273 892052 to book your place or email [pd@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:pd@plumpton.ac.uk) Further info is on [www.woodnet.org.uk/events](http://www.woodnet.org.uk/events)

Heavy Horses at Childer Wood

Offer courses in horse logging and woodland management

<http://www.heavyhorses.net/Pages/horse%20logging%20courses.htm>

photograph and history of the species, its past and present uses by man, some folklore, and Latin name, giving the reader a refreshing little break between chapters.

Whilst this book cannot fully explore every aspect of its myriad subjects, it covers many more than one could imagine and I have not by any means visited them all leaving plenty of delights for the reader to discover. If you enjoy the structure of Ben Law's books, then you will love this too. Like dipping into your favourite cook book, this worthy and well researched book from Saraband publishing is an inspiration, a guide, and a manual for anyone who wants to further their interest in The great British woodland. Enjoy this insight into the people who are making woods really work, a survey of a positive and vibrant movement to support the resurgence of a Sylvan culture

Jill Swan

## Book Review: Tales from the Woods

**Tales from the Woods by Felix Dennis**

EBURY PRESS. 2010

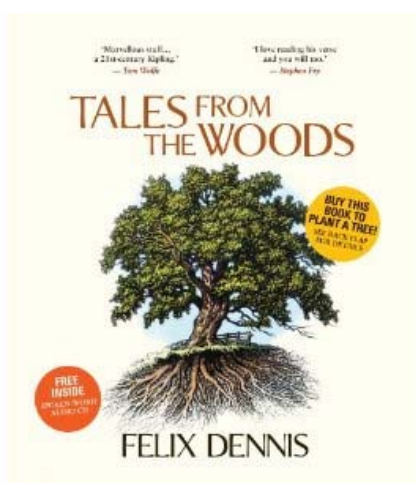
Printed and bound in the UK. ISBN 9780091937676 Available from Amazon (<http://tinyurl.com/3adr923>)

What makes the Poetry of a millionaire who owns a publishing house so special? Surely, anyone with upwards of £7000000 can publish whatever he wishes? and what does *he* know, this self confessed Maverick, South London boy, womanizer, ex druggie, co founder of OZ magazine, launcher of one of the most successful media brands in the world, and my personal favourite claim to notoriety, the first man to say the C word on live television? He says himself he is mad, bad and dangerous to know. It does not sound like the perfect recipe for Poetry, I was rather expecting to open the pages of this smallish (19x22cm,95 pages) collection to find some Yoko Ono /Tracy Emin style pretentious art house rap.

Dennis's tale goes something like this- Mr Dennis had a life threatening illness and took up poetry in 2001 as recuperation. He bought land, and (here's the good bit swoggers,) he plants over 100,000 native broadleaf saplings every year. The forest of Arden in Warwickshire is the main beneficiary of these prolific sylvan attentions and there are many websites that cover the re-growth in detail, so no need to go on. He spends 4 hours a day studying and writing verse with a resulting 1000 poems to his name to date.

This is a high quality publication, in hardback, with every conceivable extra. An embossed dust jacket with shiny bits, stunning colour and fly-leaves, depicting Spring at the beginning of the book and Autumn at the end. Traditional woodblock style illustrations throughout by Bill Sanderson. Look out for the sticker promising the browser that if they purchase the book, a tree will be planted the following year in the UK, guaranteed by the Tree Council and the Author. If that was not enough to satisfy a book lover, a free CD in a specially made pocket in the back cover for those who would like to hear the man himself giving tongue to his creations. I'm sure many of us feel there is a poem inside us, struggling to emerge. Especially when we are struck dumb by some previously unnoticed beauty in the woods, or experience a new thought inspired by being alone amongst the trees and their long held secrets. Verbal ramblings and twitterings all crossed out and scribbled upon with arrows and indecipherable scrawl all over them sit patiently in well thumbled pocket notebooks left in glove compartments and the bottom of bags to be unearthed, re-typed in some artistic font and unleashed onto the world, or maybe a Facebook page. Sadly for most of us, its never to be.

Mr Dennis on the other hand, has worked hard at this book, and he has thought hard too. He has produced a remarkable collection, putting into poetry what many can only identify as fleeting emotion. There are 53 poems in this book, almost all illustrated, all in a traditional rhyming style and accolades from such luminaries as Tom Woolfe, "Marvellous stuff, a 21st century Kipling" Sir



### Biocensus

Biocensus run courses of interest to woodland owners at their centre in Gloucestershire and will shortly be running courses in the Lake District. These courses include

Wildlife and the Law: An Introduction to UK Wildlife Legislation

An Introduction to Badger Ecology and Management

An Introduction to Bat Ecology and Management

An Introduction to Wildlife Population Monitoring

Phase One Habitat Survey: The Basics and Beyond

The Identification of Common Grassland Plants

Bat identification using Bat Detectors

For further information please see <http://www.biocensus.co.uk/training.asp>

### Warwickshire College

Moreton Morrell Centre

Four week course on Wildlife & Habitat Management starting in Jan 2011

[http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/courses/search\\_results/course\\_details.aspx?Id=13416](http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/courses/search_results/course_details.aspx?Id=13416)

Four week course on Woodland Management starting March 2011

[http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/courses/search\\_results/course\\_details.aspx?Id=11832](http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/courses/search_results/course_details.aspx?Id=11832)

Paul McCartney... "his poetry sings like a summer breeze through the fairground..." Further, there is to consider the not inconsiderable task of rendering the whole lot on to a CD.

As one would expect, a book of woodland poems has a special place in our SWOG hearts, and I for one feel a tiny bit richer for having read this and may even do as suggested by Pauline Buchanan Black in the foreword and read it under a tree. Dennis writes about individual trees, the Insects living on those trees, landscape, blossom, grass and birds feature quite highly, but he also fearlessly tackles less poetic subjects such as TB, ownership of land, and the urban tree, caged and paved, abused by man.

My favorite poem today is this one:

### **I have wasted the day.**

by Felix Dennis

I have wasted the day in the fields and the lanes  
 I have trampled in the leaves and the mud;  
 I have dined upon air and scrumped me a pear  
 And an apple the colour of blood.  
 Though my fingers are purple from blackberry stains  
 Though my hair is a tangle of straw;  
 Though my jacket was torn upon bramble and thorn  
 It was worth it for all that I saw.  
 It was worth all the aches it was worth all the pains--  
 I have rambled and scrambled and raced;  
 And my stick was mislaid where I dozed in the shade,  
 And I waded in brooks and neglected my books,  
 And I startled a hare (and the taste of that pear!)  
 what waste what a glorious waste !



So there you have it poetry lovers, and indeed nature lovers will surely enjoy this lyrical collection and for small woodland owners it is probably a must on the Christmas list. If giving your hard earned £9.99 to a multi millionaire causes you a twinge of pain, be soothed by the fact that there will be a tree somewhere in Warwickshire with your name on it, to use poetic licence!

Jill Swan

## **The Birth of Willoughby Woods: Part Three—Activities and Surveys**

*Robert and Dorothy Mansfield share the birth of their new woodland with us: Here is part three of their story.*

It was always our intention that the woodland should remain private and not be open to the public. However we have welcomed those who want to monitor various aspects of its development, and others who have enthusiastically established bird boxes or conducted research on the site, more of that later.

It was therefore with some alarm that we received, through the post, several photographs of a family enjoying a picnic on the seat near the pond, especially as the site of the bench is well hidden from view and can only be found by walking through the meadow, into the wood and taking a route around the water.

The family in question had heard of our venture and as they knew the people in whose memory it was planted, thought it was wonderful that we had created the "park" for all to enjoy! At that point we felt it was prudent to notify the public even though access has always been behind closed gates. Now there is a delightful oak sign spelling out that it is Private Woodland. The notice is on the padlocked entrance so there can be no confusion.

Local ornithologists were enthusiastic and monthly bird surveys have been conducted as well as an overnight newt count. Although the latter researchers had travelled a considerable distance they found nothing of interest and no amphibians, so the Environment Agency was asked for advice. About five or six years ago there had





been an environmental calamity in the field. It involved a contractor washing out chemicals which eventually reached the pond via underground drainage channels. It seems that the ecological balance will re-establish itself.

The bird population is interesting; about six weeks ago an adult and two young buzzards were spotted circling over the newly planted area, and about a hundred yards from the site our own owl box in a mature ash tree was home to four young barn owls this year and three owlets last year. The adults were kept busy hunting to feed the brood. The fledglings were ringed by the owl wing of British Trust for Ornithology before they left the nest, while the mature birds are still frequently seen hunting over the new site.

We needed to know how many saplings had not survived and felt the best time for this investigation was the end of September before the young deciduous trees lost their leaves when it would be more difficult to identify the losses. However much we loved the high temperatures of early summer, the trees suffered. Before that, there were the coldest temperatures for years during and after planting, then we had a drought with no rain at all for weeks and months; that combined with very high temperatures means that some of the young saplings suffered. It was noticeable how some young trees have no roots; they had withered and died at an early stage. Armed with coloured string we were able to mark those that had not survived, and discovered about 9% (around 380) would need replacing. We were fortunate in finding about 50 new saplings from various sources – all with a local provenance – and have used these as replacements. As ash grows really well in the village we will be looking to include plenty of these with the remainder as they can be easily coppiced.

Finally we decided to take over the total management of the project when we realised how expensive a site visit was and that was without any active management being done on that occasion! We had the equipment but felt that more time would be needed, this has not proved to be the case and the rides are clearly defined but we have allowed some short grass growth between the trees to ensure that the owls will find some vertebrates and small mammals when hunting.

Two more newsworthy events have taken place, the first being the acquisition of a two year old piebald pony. He is lively but scatty and was bought with the intention of using him for logging. A novice handler and an unbroken horse do not make a good combination! He has a companion, an elderly sedate female as company but that did very little to improve the relationship between horse and handler. Now he (the horse, not the handler) is on his holidays being schooled by an experienced horseman. When he returns it is hoped that we can begin to drive him. Although the wood is only on the other side of the road, over the small river, taking across tools and equipment requires something larger than a wheelbarrow and it is a pity if we always have to use a petrol or diesel assisted means of transport. We hope Coronation Bobby will fulfil the need.

Finally we have harvested some larch from around the pond.

The trees were dead and in danger of falling into the water so it was good to fell them and use the heat from them to warm the house. Needless to say these had been growing for years and were dead. They are not part of the new planting. The wood burners in the house give such a lovely heat and the largest one is attached to the heating system so when it is working, the oil heating is not required. Of course one of us has been warmed twice, once when cutting the wood and once when burning it.



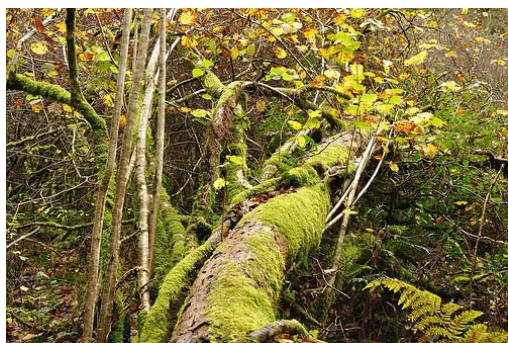
## SWOG Meeting Report: 6th November 2010, Camarthenshire

*Chris Colley reports on his first SWOG Meeting in Camarthenshire. Pictures by Chris Colley and Elaine Lavender.*

On a recent bright Saturday morning I had my SWOG initiation. As a new member I had never been on a SWOG visit, and I really didn't know what to expect. As it happened neither had the hosts, Malcolm and Joan Stamp, or many of the other dozen or so people who came along, so we all learnt about it as we went along.

Despite being Wales and November, the weather was kind to us. The welcome coffee was, indeed very welcome, before we set off for the woods. Malcolm gave each of us a copy of the Land Registry map of





their woods, so we would always know where we were. Malcolm and Joan are blessed with owning some 30 acres of woodland just a few yards down a lane from their house. I can only dream of such convenience: my woodland is 30 miles from where I live, and spending time there – travelling in a 40 year-old Land Rover - is a bit of an expedition.

Malcolm and Joan's woodland is spread along the Afon Sien, and two of its tributaries. They have named different areas of their wood, and while most are self evident, like Riverwood, we were interested to find ourselves walking through the Left Bank towards America! There is, of course, a story behind the name, resulting from it being the furthest flung part of the woodland, and being a bit of a trek to get

there.

We started off over a bridge and through a meadow by the Afon Sein, while Malcolm talked about the work they were doing to improve the woodland. We were shown a couple of places where some wonderful pools had been created in the river by the simple expedient of dropping a tree across.



Malcolm had thought to bring a couple of torches so the braver members of the party could explore 'The Cave' an old exploratory lead mine. I decided to enjoy the sun while a few members of the group made their way through the narrow entrance, and around (or was that over) a water filled shaft of unknown depth in the floor of the cave.

Some of the track was quite steep, and Malcolm had prepared for our visit by putting up some rope handrails, which made the ascent very straightforward. Having reached the end of the woodland that ran alongside the river, it was time for lunch, and we returned to the house for a wonderful homemade carrot and coriander soup and French bread.



The afternoon trip through the other leg of the wood brought us round to the 'summer house' that featured in the newsletter advertising this visit. Malcolm then demonstrated how easy it was to produce useful timber within the wood using the Logosol Timberjig chainsaw mill.

The day was rounded off with tea and delicious home made cake. I would like to thank Malcolm and Joan for their wonderful hospitality. I thoroughly enjoyed the day, and I am sure that this won't be my last SWOG visit.

## SWOG Meeting Report: Ross-on-Wye

*Paul and Andrea Knifton report on their Woodland Walk that they organised for SWOG at Ross-on-Wye. Photos are provided by Nigel Lavender*

I enjoyed our woodland walk at Deep Dean immensely, and I am sure everyone else did too. The day was overcast, cold, but rain free. 14 of us left the comfort of the campfire and moved slowly off into the mature part of the woods, where we admired the tall beeches and birches, moving into the neighbouring sweet chestnut plantation, which sparked much debate and exchanges of management strategies. Chris Johnson was our guest speaker, a working forester and secretary of the Herefordshire section of the Royal Forestry Society. He is a really excellent speaker, and with his wealth of knowledge and experience with trees and forestry management, was able to answer our questions, point out aspects of the wood we probably would have missed, and illuminate aspects of tree management that we might not have been aware of. He certainly gave me a few good ideas on how to make the most of this chestnut plantation, and how to gradually thin, and leave standards. With many stops we slowly wandered through the bottom half of the





woods, which is mostly self-seeded birch, ash, hazel, yew with planted beech and cherry, all of which has to be thinned out, with glade creation, and re-planting of some different varieties. In the next few years I hope to create some areas where I can plant some exotic conifers, and put in some absentees like small leaved lime, wild service, field maple etc.

After lunch, around the fire, with warming of feet and lots of chat, we explored to top part of the woods, again mostly tightly packed ash, beech and hazel, all quite young.

It was such a pleasure to welcome everyone to our woods, Andrea and I had such a marvelous day and hope everyone else did too. Certainly Chris Johnson was a star, and it was because of his input, along with everyone else's enthusiasm that made the day such a success.



## Forthcoming SWOG Meetings

### December 12th 2010 at Rusper, Near Crawley

Have a walk with Sussex Wildlife Trust and David Plummer in these gorgeous woodlands. Find out about SWL projects that are running with woodlands.co.uk community woodland scheme, and see the famous Scrag Copse owned by David Plummer and as seen on the One Show! Topics will include trees, winter tree ID and winter birds. (and even some soup!)

Contact [tracy@woodlands.co.uk](mailto:tracy@woodlands.co.uk) if you would like to come along.



### April 16th 2011 at Knowlands Wood, East Sussex

Come and join us for a walk in Nick's woodland in April. Watch the SWOG web site for further details in due course.

### May 8th 2011 at Alvecote Wood, North Warwickshire

Visit this 11 acre ancient oak woodland with a brand new 9 acre extension planted this winter. Hopefully there will be a great display of bluebells for you to see, as well as a guest speaker, Alister Yeomans from the Sylva Foundation who will talk about the My Forest woodland inventory toolkit. There will also be a woodland walk to see how these tools might be applied in a practical setting. You can also see how this woodland is being managed for wildlife and community groups, and see the fledgeling extension, Betty's Wood, planted this winter in an adjacent field.

For further details of all these meetings, see [www.swog.org.uk/swog-events](http://www.swog.org.uk/swog-events)





## News for Small Woodland Owners

### Royal Forestry Society

Membership of the RFS brings with it a number of benefits, including the Quarterly Journal of Forestry, a twice-yearly "Tree News" publication and access to a fortnightly e-newsletter. There are also divisional and national meetings, an annual study tour in the UK, grants and awards for budding and experienced foresters alike, and access to courses. Membership costs £50 a year for individuals, and you can join online at [www.rfs.org.uk/join/join-online](http://www.rfs.org.uk/join/join-online)

### RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards 2011—Woodlands.co.uk sponsors Small Woodlands award

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) has announced three-year deals with two major new sponsors for its Excellence in Forestry Awards. [Tubex](http://www.tubex.co.uk) - specialists in shelter development - is sponsoring the RFS Silviculture Award and [woodlands.co.uk](http://www.woodlands.co.uk) is sponsoring a new category for Small Woodlands which incorporates the previous 'Farm Woodlands' category.

RFS Chief Executive John Jackson said: "The Excellence in Forestry Awards reward and highlight good forestry and woodland practice across the country. There are many good stories to tell. The support of two major players for these categories highlights how important the whole supply chain is in a seed-to-saw industry which continues to face challenging times. With increasing threats of exotic pests and diseases, the need for good forestry practice is an important message for all woodlands, whatever their size or primary purpose."

In 2011 the Excellence in Forestry Awards are being held in the East of England and East Midlands Regions - Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex – and the Greater London Boroughs north of the River Thames. In 2012 they move to the South West and to Wales in 2013. There are five categories – the Duke of Cornwall Multipurpose Award, Silviculture, Community Forestry, Small Woodlands and a Schools Award. Deadline for entries is March 8.

The Small Woodlands Award is open to woodland in a single discreet block or in neighbouring small units up to a total of 20ha. There is no minimum size. Angus Hanton, Director of [woodlands.co.uk](http://www.woodlands.co.uk), says: "We are excited by the recent blossoming of activity in small woodlands and by the new approaches to woodland management that we are seeing. Small Woodlands are vitally important for biodiversity and are getting new people interested in forestry." For further details and entry forms visit [www.rfs.org.uk](http://www.rfs.org.uk) and follow the 'Get involved links' or email [rfscompetition@boyns.net](mailto:rfscompetition@boyns.net) or call RFS on 01442 822028

### The Fate of UK Forestry

The big sell-off of the public forests is being facilitated by a bill currently before the House of Lords which can be viewed at [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/025/11025.ii.html](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/025/11025.ii.html). This includes clauses which gives the Secretary of State substantial powers over the Forestry Commissioners in relation to (among other things) the disposal and management of forests in England.

The RFS Newsletter has drawn attention to an interesting debate in The Guardian newspaper around the subject of the big sell-off. 'Selling England's woodlands will not be easy', by John Vidal, 5 November, sets out 13 questions that need to be addressed when considering what will be the fate of the forest estate.

[www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2010/nov/05/government-sell-england-woodland](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2010/nov/05/government-sell-england-woodland)

A letter from Caroline Spelman MP, the Environment Secretary, in *The Guardian* (12 November) entitled 'Setting the record straight on the sale of England's woodlands' is also worth a read:

[www.guardian.co.uk/environment/cif-green/2010/nov/12/england-woodland-sale-caroline-spelman](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/cif-green/2010/nov/12/england-woodland-sale-caroline-spelman).

### New Grants for Woodland Creation and Woodfuel

Despite the uncertainty about the future of the Forestry Commission, various funds and schemes are still offering financial



assistance for tree-planting and care: As part of the Forestry and Flooding initiative, the Forestry Commission can offer a new additional contribution (AC) to existing Woodland Creation Grants (WCGs). The AC funding is £2000 per hectare, on top of the WCG (£1800/ha), and is applicable for new broadleaved woodland in certain target areas. To find out if your project may be eligible, check the map at [www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infid-7f4j4r](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infid-7f4j4r).

The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) still has funding available until March 2014, and the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme will also continue until 2014, with additional funds on offer to meet a growing demand. Further details are at [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk).

From April 2011 there will be a new Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant, directed at unmanaged woods for access-improvement projects; it could cover up to 60% of actual costs. In addition, the government has confirmed its commitment to the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), which will pay end users for every unit of renewable heat they produce. The scheme will go live on 1 June 2011, though it will be 20% less than planned. Keep an eye on [www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk) for updates.

### Forestry Commission Publication: Forestry Facts and Figures

This new publication gives the latest data on the state of the UK woodlands and forests. It includes wooded area (broadleaf and conifer), rates of planting and re-stocking, woodland bird numbers, visitors to woodland, and the production of timber and timber products. Planting rates continued to decline in 2010, a fact that must be of concern, given the low proportion of the UK land area given over to woodland and forests in the first place.

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcfs210.pdf/\\$FILE/fcfs210.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcfs210.pdf/$FILE/fcfs210.pdf)

### OPAL Biodiversity Survey

The Natural History Museum are looking for volunteers to undertake surveys of hedgerows for biodiversity. A full support pack is available to help you get started at this, and results can be submitted online. There are a lot of resources to help children get involved in this scheme.

[www.opalexplornature.org/BiodiversitySurvey](http://www.opalexplornature.org/BiodiversitySurvey)



### Making Space for Nature

Professor Lawton's report "Making Space for Nature", published in September 2010, makes interesting reading and is particularly relevant at a time where large numbers of new owners may be taking over areas of the UK's woodlands and forests. It is also of potential interest to small woodland owners working with other adjacent land-owners to create larger areas for wildlife conservation. The fragmentation of wildlife conservation efforts is of particular concern and five approaches are recommended to remedy this

- (i) Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management.
- (ii) Increase the size of current wildlife sites.
- (iii) Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through 'stepping stones'.

(iv) Create new sites.

(v) Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites.

The full report is long, but makes interesting if at times worrying reading.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

### Coppicewood College

countrychannel.tv have made a short film about Coppicewood College

It's viewable online and can be seen at:

<http://www.countrychannel.tv/player.php?channel=countrychannel&program=299936>

### RSPB Safeguarding Species

The RSPB have issued a list of the 40 bird species at highest risk in the UK and a report detailing case studies and a strategy to help endangered birds recover: [http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/safeguardingspecies\\_tcm9-261583.pdf](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/safeguardingspecies_tcm9-261583.pdf)

## A Week in the Woods—New Course from Phil Hopkinson

I am running a course called "A week in the woods" from Monday 3rd to 7th January based around my woodland workshop at Ravenshill Wood at Alfrick in Worcestershire. This is a 100 acre woodland, of which 50 acres are a privately owned nature reserve. The week covers many aspects of woodland management traditionally undertaken by coppice workers. It starts out by looking at the coppice coupes that have been cut over the last 10 years. It progresses to assessing the woodland and marking out the coupes.

All aspects of practical coppicing are covered including material selection and converting it into hedging stakes and binders laying and garden products such as bean poles and pea sticks. A small part of the week will include traditional woodland improvement work such as building dry hedges to protect against deer and path improvement work. There will be a session led by a local naturalist, Dr Simon Roberts on winter tree ID. These are always very interesting as Simon is always pointing out interesting woodland birds.

A cooked mid-day meal and hot drinks are all included in the price which is £150 for the week. This is an ideal opportunity for anyone considering undertaking woodland management as a profession to gain some hands on practical experience in a fantastic setting.

## On the Blogs at woodlands.co.uk...

### Why and how should you prune your woodland trees *by Angus*

Pruning can add quality to trees and improve appearance. Here is a practical guide on how to do it.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/practical-guides/why-and-how-should-you-prune-your-woodland-trees/>

### Owning Regis Wood *by Tony and Valerie Hutley*

A story of how Tony and Valerie bought their wood and are now enjoying the experience.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/owning-regis-wood/>

### Horse Logging *by Angus*

Horse-logging is less damaging and more practical for woodland owners. David and Karen talk about the services they can offer as horse-loggers.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/horse-logging-less-damaging-and-more-practical-for-woodland-owners/>

### A Weekend at the Woodland Skills Centre *by Jenny and John*

Jenny and John describe their experience on a two-day green woodworking course making a three-legged stool

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/working-with-wood/a-weekend-at-the-woodland-skills-centre/>

### MyForest—a service for woodland owners *by Gabriel Hemery*

MyForest is a service that helps small woodland owners map their woods, manage their woods and market the pro-

duce. Alister will be demonstrating the tools in theory and practice at Alvecote Wood for the SWOG meeting on 8th May 2011—come along and find out more!

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/trees/myforest-a-service-for-woodland-owners/>

### Woodland Filming *by Rhys*

Rhys is a film-maker and woodlands.co.uk helped him to find a wood for a film location.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/woodland-filming/>

### Ancient Woodland *by Chris*

An introduction to ancient woodland and its characteristic plants.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/wildlife/ancient-woodland/>

### Making Wooden Animals in your Woodland *by Angus*

Fun for all ages—how to make simple wooden animals in your woodland.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/making-wooden-animals-in-your-woodland/>





## Newsletter - Christmas and New Year Edition 2010/11

### About SWOG

The Small Woodland Owner's group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British Woodland. As Woodlands.co.uk is sponsoring the group there will be no annual fee for members, and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated.

Anyone can join in, (you do not need to own a woodland) just send Tracy your details (name, address, email) to be put on the list. We will not pass your information to anyone else.

Please do join with us and share your wealth of knowledge and experience with others, as well as your joys and moans. We have members from all over the country. We are also on Facebook if you like to communicate that way! See [www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523)

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## Small Woodland Owners' Group Forum

### On the forum...

**Thieves** reared their ugly heads on the forum this month with several members reporting their experiences of pilfering and break-ins. Some relatively extreme measures were considered to deter them, along with some more practical and legal ones!

**Television** - it seems we would rather enjoy our woods than enjoy Strictly Come X-Factor Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here Brother! Yes indeed!

**The Great British Elm Experiment** has attracted some SWOG members to take part. This experiment is looking into varieties of Elm resistant to Dutch Elm disease. Trees are pot grown and expensive, but a few members have signed up. It will be interesting to see how this experiment develops.

**The Boar Research Project** in the Forest of Dean has also signed up a member to monitor wild boar in his wood—we will be following this thread with interest.

**Christmas presents** made from wood came up in discussion after a well-known department

store were seen to be selling simple turned wood vases for quite a lot of money. A new income stream for us, perhaps...?

**Feeding the birds** is a topic of importance now the weather has turned decidedly wintry. Buying bird seed from well-known chains can prove extremely expensive, particularly in industrial quantities needed to keep woodland birds alive during a harsh winter. Some cheaper suggestions were made—if you have any, please let us know.

**Tree Preservation Orders**—there is currently a consultation being undertaken on procedures surrounding TPO's and in particular their revocation. Some SWOG members have already had their say—don't forget to have your say on the forum, and respond to the consultation. It seems that some members have already found issues with the proposals.

*Please let us know what you think about these and other topics on the forum. Please also write something for us about "My Favourite Tree".*

### On the Web..

#### Latest videos at Woodlands.tv Managing Woodland for Fuel and Diversity

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2010/10/managing-woodland-for-fuel-and-diversity/>

#### Seasoning, Cutting and Transporting Firewood

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2010/10/seasoning-cutting-transporting-firewood/>

#### Making Kindling from Logs using a Froe

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2010/11/making-kindling-from-logs-using-a-froe/>

#### Flint-knapping in Woodlands

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2010/11/flint-knapping-in-woodlands/>

#### Stone-Age Bows and Woodland Archaeology

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2010/11/stone-age-bows-and-woodland-archaeology/>

#### From Woodfairs.co.uk

The dates for some of the big woodfairs in

2011 are now on the web site—get them in your diary now!

**Devon County Show**—19th-21st May 2011

**Naturefest**—28th-30th May 2011, Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum, Lewes, East Sussex

**Great Yorkshire Show**, Harrogate—12-14th July 2011

**Stock Gaylard Estate Oak Fair** near Sturminster Newton, Dorset, 27th August 2011

**Bentley Woodfair**—16th to 18th September at Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum, Lewes, East Sussex

**South West Woodland Show**—9th September 2011, Longleat Estate, Warminster, Wiltshire

**Festival of the Tree, Westonbirt Arboretum**, Tetbury, Glos, 26th to 29th August 2011

**Cranborne Chase Woodfair**—October 2011

**Royal Highland Show**, Edinburgh, June 23rd to 26th 2011

**Woodfest Wales**, June 3rd to 5th 2011, St Asaph

*More dates will be added soon!*