



In the Newsletter this Month

Probably the wettest drought ever—record April rainfall onto hard and dry soil, leading to floods, but no relief of the drought. We have full ponds in our woods for the first time in two years, and puddles on the surface, but the ground is still hard and dry, and it will take a lot more rain to soften up and refill the aquifers. At least at present we don't have to water our young trees, and the alder, in particular, is loving this wet weather in preference to last year's drought-ridden spring.

With outdoor activities limited by the rain and winds, we have attended two conferences this month, both of which are reported here—the Royal Forestry Society Conference at Stoneleigh Park, and the Heartwoods event on Woodland Insurance and Safety at Wyre Forest.

There are also some photos and reports from recent SWOG meetings—these events were very much enjoyed and very valuable to the attendees, so please do support events in your area or beyond!

There is an important survey of woodland owners being carried out by Sylva on behalf of the Independent Forestry Panel. *This survey closes at noon on 7th May* so please do fill it in if you haven't already (see Woodland Owner Survey for Independent Forestry Panel - <http://www.sylva.org.uk/limesurvey/index.php?sid=44516&newtest=Y&lang=en>)

Finally, what do we think about woodland access? Some organisations are pressing the Independent Forestry Panel to recommend that all woodlands should become open to the public, as is the case in Scotland. What does the forum think about this? And how has it worked in practice in Scotland, where open countryside access has been in force for a number of years? I've tried to sum up the discussion, but we're still interested in your views.

Please keep the contributions coming! If you have any photos, please send them in to me.

Sarah Walters (sarah@swog.org.uk)

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Royal Forestry Society/Royal Agricultural Society for England—Conference Report

On Monday 23rd April, the RFS/RASE held the NDC James Memorial Conference at Stoneleigh Park entitled "Valuing and Adding Value to Trees and Woodlands"

On the face of it, this conference seemed more geared towards the forestry and large woodland owner in the business of timber production. But actually, there was a lot in it for the small woodland owner too, not the least because Angus Hanton from woodlands.co.uk was speaking. In fact, there was a lot in it for the small woodland owner, who may be seeking to manage their woodlands for non-timber benefits to themselves, their families and their community. A lot of this conference was about the non-timber benefits of woodlands, how they may be valued and how, in future, they may be paid for. Many of us gain income from events, arts and crafts, public access, community groups and for our environmental stewardship in the form of grants, so this was definitely a conference worth attending.

In an excellent introduction, Nick Brown from Oxford University summed up the change in forestry values from production to amenity, asset and ecosystem. Woodland is coming under pressure first from neglect and second due to other pressures on the land, and this conference was about how we value products from the land, including their amenity and

environmental benefits. First up, we looked at traditional valuation of woodlands for timber production. Mike Townsend from The Woodland Trust started off with a look at the state of the UK woodlands and forests, based upon their recent report, “The State of the UK Forests”, available from <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/Documents/state-of-the-uks-forest-report-4865.pdf>. Many woodlands are in private hands, and it is difficult to know what to plant for maximum timber, ecosystem, amenity and wildlife value, particularly since many of these benefits are not financially supported. Small shelter belts and pieces of woodland are also not supported but may have great value. There is a danger that woodland will get eaten up in the demand for building land. The public value their woodlands but only a small proportion volunteer to help in woodlands, and engagement needs to be at the core of any strategy to improve the value of the UK woodlands.

Then followed John Clegg, from the agents John Clegg and co, talking about how we put a value on woods and woodlands. Valuation of sites is complicated, and sites that have non-timber values, such as public access or a designation for wildlife, often suffer from lower land prices and lower investment value.

Finally, John Farquhar from Rural Development Initiatives looked at whether the push towards use of wood-fuel will revitalise the forestry sector. This was essentially looking at the carbon cost of wood-fuel, and the fact that in future, wood-fuel and logwood production may end up competing – we actually need to increase production of both, as we only produce a small percentage of domestic demand at present. However it is hard to be profitable when supplying woodfuel unless for self-supply.

After coffee, we moved on to the less traditional sector, a session started by Angus Hanton of woodlands.co.uk (pictured below) – building on the information in the recently-published report on why people buy woodlands and what they do with it, Angus took us through his own family background, and how this influenced his desire to help others buy and look after a piece of woodland of their own. Dispelling the notion that family foresters are clueless amateurs, who threaten the livelihood of traditional forestry, and who fail to manage their woodlands, he most eloquently described people who own small woods, and what they do in their woodlands. The report is available on <http://www.woodlands.co.uk/about-us/articles/woodland-owner-survey-report.pdf>. What is clear is that most woodland owners buy for biodiversity and practical conservation, friends and family, camping and firewood, and the vast majority of owners manage their woodland with these in mind.

There are other ways of looking at woodland value too, including the “ecosystem services” that it provides, but what does that mean, and how could it work? Pat Snowdon from the Forestry Commission took us through this, and then there was an excellent presentation from Tom Nisbet from Forest Research on how this can work in practice from a flood alleviation project in Pickering, Yorkshire. Sophie Churchill from the National Forest followed with a lively presentation on how this project has been pulled together to provide a National Forest with benefits that are much wider than simple economic or timber benefits, and which include health, amenity and employment benefits too. The National Forest has increased forest cover in the area from 6% to



Course Directory

Institute of Chartered Foresters

Forthcoming events are on

<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 see upcoming courses for 2012 visit

<http://www2.cat.org.uk/shortcourses/>

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

To see courses for the coming year visit

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/events/courses.aspx>

LILI Courses

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

<http://www.lowimpact.org/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/whats-on>



19%, planted 8 million trees, and has pulled in a lot of new funding sources, allowing support to be given to businesses, and for preservation of individual trees, as well as combining elements of the Stewardship and Forestry Commission schemes, something that may happen under the new Rural Development Programme for England from 2014.

Simon Richmond then dealt with the difficult subject of putting a value on single trees in the urban/parks environment – different models coming up with very different results, which can very greatly influence their management. Then came another wonderful presentation by Joanna Yarrow from Wilder-

ness Wood (<http://www.wildernesswood.co.uk/>). This is a 60 acre woodland in Sussex which has been in her family for two generations, and in which all manner of exciting ways of generating income are explored, while still maintaining the fundamental principle of managing the ecosystem for benefit of wildlife. It is clear that a small woodland like this can not only provide many benefits for education, amenity and recreation, timber and woodland products and wildlife, but also provide employment too. Plenty of ranger-led activities are provided, including over 100 school visits a year, as well as woodland camping, and a visitor centre provides a base for many activities. However it is clear that this has needed a great deal of time, and a great deal of drive and professionalism to achieve. This is definitely an inspirational example of what can be done with not a lot of woodland, at least from the timber-industry perspective.

After lunch, which was extremely tasty, and came with a hip-expanding variety of cakes, we looked at the future. Forest Research were in the spotlight again, this time Richard Jinks from the Alice Holt research institute, talking about climate change, and the research that is going on, not only into the tree species and provenance for a future changed climate in the UK, but also into tree pests and diseases that may become a future threat. He outlined an exciting Europe-wide project in which trees are being trialled in 37 arboreta from the Azores (Portugal) to Scotland for their response to climate change and to climate events such as drought or floods.

We then looked at carbon markets, or more specifically, the money that is available to landowners for woodland creation under the Woodland Carbon Code, with James Hepburn-Scott of Forest Carbon. He took us through what this scheme means, and how it can be applied for and implemented, and this money is available over and above money for woodland creation under Forestry Commission or Stewardship schemes. However there are some important conditions that must be satisfied before you can obtain this funding.

Mike Seville from the Country Landowners Association then pulled things together, looking at what is in it for the owner of woodlands – who pays and who benefits? In particular, who pays for the delivery of amenity and ecosystem benefits, and how can we make it possible for owners of small woodlands to benefit from schemes available into which larger landowners may tap, but smaller landowners may be excluded.

The day then wound up with an analysis from Savills of whether forestry represents a sound financial investment – probably not something we thought of when we bought our woodlands, but something we may benefit from, nonetheless.

Pam Warhurst, Chair of the Forestry Commission, then held a question and answer session which was lively and helpful. It is clear that if the benefits of woodlands and forests are to be realised, both in terms of production but also in terms of amenity, biodiversity and ecosystem services, then these will have to be paid for, and there will need to be a change in the way in which woodlands are valued in future, and the way in which they are supported. Without this, many will continue to be neglected, under-used, and of low value for nature, people and planet. Small woodland owners are important, and can and must be supported to improve woodlands for everybody—this is something for all woodland and tree owners to become engaged in, not just large landowners and timber producers. This conference certainly went a way towards recognising that.

Woodland Liabilities and Insurance: Conference Report



Woodland insurance and liabilities for landowners – doesn't sound the most gripping of subjects, but it is of very great importance, and this one-day event took us through our responsibilities as woodland owners. Organised by Heartwoods, hosted at the Forestry Commission Centre at Wyre Forest, and supported by ConFor, the Country Land and Business Association (CLA),

the Forestry Commission and the National Farmers Union, this conference had an attendance of around 60 delegates. Talking to those who attended, the issue is of interest to everybody from folk like us, with 20-30 acres of woodland, right up to those managing very substantial estates covering large swathes of the country. So we sat with a mixture of small woodland owners, managers, large estate owners and even a Lord, to learn what we need to know, making reference throughout to the recent publication from the National Tree Safety Group: Common Sense Risk Management of Trees.

Responsibilities of having Rights of Way in or near your woodland

It was a great shame that the representative from Lycetts insurance company could not be with us on the day, although his presentation will be sent to us. So the day kicked off instead with the sometimes thorny subject of Rights of Way, presented by Richard Preston from Worcestershire County Council. He went through the law on Rights of Way in a very clear and simple manner. All Public Rights of Way (PROW) are Highways, a term which includes these PROW and roads. PROW come in four flavours: footpaths, bridleways (open to pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians), byways open to all traffic (BOAT) and restricted byways (no mechanical vehicles). Landowners have responsibility for some, but not all PROW management, and this includes stiles and gates, bridges over new ditches, overgrowth (trees) and crops, but the highways authority has responsibility for the rest (waymarks and signs, overgrowth). Waste authority has responsibility for fly-tipping, but owners are often fobbed off! Highways authorities must provide 25% of the cost of replacing stiles and gates, but many offer more. There are two new categories following the Countryside Rights of Way Act – Access Land and Permissive Access – the former are mapped areas of open countryside, the latter is access at the discretion of the landowner. Liabilities vary depending on the categorisation of the land, and the most important liability you must fulfil is “duty of care” – making it important to keep written records of your safety checks. Richard also dealt with trespass and its categories, and stressed the importance of filing a “Section 31 deposit” with the planning authority detailing permissive paths and to prevent trespassers claiming permanent rights if access has been continuous for 20 years. (A good explanation of the Section 31 deposit process and guidance notes are available from Kent County Council on http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/countryside_access/guidance_and_standards/section_31_6_highways_act.aspx)

Common Sense Risk Management of Trees

Justin Mumford was the next speaker, giving a very clear background to the new document, and running through the responsibilities we have as landowners for tree safety. First of all, the risk of being killed by a tree is extremely low – 6 people per year in the

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>

Royal Forestry Society Divisional Events

The programmes for May 2012 can be seen at

<http://www.rfs.org.uk/event/2012/05/01/month/all/all/1>

Bat Conservation Trust

Run a number of training courses. The full brochure is available at <http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/training.html> There are special courses for arborists, on use of bat detectors and bat surveys

UK or 1 in ten million. This risk halves to one in 20 million in the open countryside (away from roads). The background to the review by the National Tree Safety Group was a case *Poll v Bartholomew* in 2006. A motorcyclist rounded a corner and hit a fallen roadside tree and was seriously injured. Finding in his favour, the judge ruled that despite having trees inspected by a tree surgeon, and good written records, the tree surgeon had missed a small bracket fungus on the tree. He also ruled that he was not actually qualified to carry out these inspections, and that new qualifications were needed for roadside inspections. This had a major effect both on the qualifications industry, but also on roadside trees. Many were simply cut down, the costs of inspections and insurance becoming too onerous for landowners. So a review was set up, which reported in January 2012, and this report has been covered in a previous edition of this newsletter.



The guidance restores a lot of common sense to the management of trees, but it is clear that doing nothing is not an option and *everybody who owns trees with which the public might come into contact must read and apply the guidance*. It is principles-based, and strikes a balance between the

risks from and benefits of trees in the landscape, and that the approach should be balanced and proportionate. After considering legal duties, the booklet introduces its main recommendations for action. A tree safety policy should be produced. It should be based upon *zoning of the land* such that areas in much more frequent use, and in particular roads, where collisions may occur at higher speeds with greater consequences, should be treated differently from areas in less frequent use. This should allow landowners to devise an inspection regime, and these *inspections may be informal, formal and detailed*. Crucially, anybody can undertake these inspections including members of the public, contractors and employees, who may make *ad hoc* observations. A landowner may or may not feel able to assess tree safety, and can call in a suitably qualified individual to assess a tree at any time if unsure. In general, the level of expertise relates to obvious defects – branches hanging off, root plates moving, major decay or evidence of disease. The majority of the time, inspections will be *ad hoc*, with formal inspection limited to areas in frequent use, and detailed inspection to high value trees of concern. The frequency of inspection is not stated and it is up to the landowner to decide what is required – for example, along a busy road, you may want to inspect once a year, plus after every storm.

The key message is clear: ignorance is no defence, and doing nothing and hoping for the best is not an option. If the public visit your wood, you are advised to have a tree safety policy and keep records (these can be electronic). These guidelines have yet to be tested by case law, but a clear policy that is reasonable, and good records will make your case much more defensible.

The 'Common Sense Risk Management of Trees' guidance can be downloaded at [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/\\$FILE/FCMS024.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/$FILE/FCMS024.pdf), and a summary for landowners at [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS025.pdf/\\$FILE/FCMS025.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS025.pdf/$FILE/FCMS025.pdf)

The document has been discussed in a previous newsletter <http://www.swog.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/NL-Feb2012-final.pdf> and the article also describes what we have done, and our tree safety policy.

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/>

Bulworthy Project

The Bulworthy project run courses including guided walks, as well as one day introductions to charcoal burning

See <http://www.bulworthyproject.org.uk/>

Kingcombe Environmental Studies Centre

Run a wide range of courses on wildlife, livestock and lifestyle management. See their web site for more information.

<https://www.kingcombe.org/courses/intro.aspx>

Plantlife

A charity dedicated to wildflowers and wild plants, run a programme of educational activities

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/things_to_do/activities/

Safety Aspects of Practical Woodland Management – Responsibilities for Contractors

Graham Taylor (Pryor and Rickett) considered what you need to do if you have contractors working for you in your woodland. Not all small woodland owners employ contractors, but even in our 20 acre woodland, we have had contractors working on site on occasion. Forestry can be a risky business, with 5 times the risk of death of the construction industry (10.4 versus 2.8 per 100,000), and 15 times the risk of all UK industries, and there is a residual risk culture at which the HSE are looking closely. Interestingly, experience and age are not predictors of risk, and accidents are not just among “weekend foresters” such as many small woodland owners.

Before employing contractors, it is important to ensure that you read the HSE Forestry Document published in 2003, and consider what is being done in your woods. Whoever commissions work on site should see that the contractors have the correct certification, insurance, a proper risk assessment for the work to be done (the landowner may be able to add things they hadn't thought of), and check the work to ensure the guidance is being followed. This shows a good level of “duty of care” to your contractors, and other woodland users who may come into contact with them and their work.

Bringing Groups into your Woodland – Alex Argyropulo

Speaking as a landowner who permits Forest Schools to operate in his woodland, Alex provided a lot of useful information for those thinking of inviting groups into the wood. What is clear is that both the landowner and the group leaders have some responsibility for duty of care, negligence, litigation, compensation, insurance and even criminal negligence. This sometimes makes it very difficult to insure these activities. Many block policies have exclusions under the policy, some of which are implicit, so you need to read the policy carefully as they can exclude any activities for which payment is taken, any activities involving children, any regular or frequent users. However a bespoke policy can be very expensive and you need to talk to your insurers so you can be clear what is being done, and what they are covering. Alex managed to get an indemnity from the Council for the local authority group to use the site, in return handing over health and safety responsibilities to the user. This is obviously OK for some groups but not others, and will only cover one specific type of use. You still need to ensure under these circumstances that the site users have done what they say they are going to do in terms of health and safety, and that they are competent to do it, so it isn't a get out. You also need to supply local knowledge. Other groups, including volunteers, may be considered to be either your employees, or contractors, and then your liability, and responsibilities change to those of employer or commissioner of contractors. Managing conflicting activities in the wood and in the surrounding area is also important e.g. telling the users if permission has been given for lamping nearby when there are overnight stays in the wood. I got the feeling from this presentation that insurance can be an issue for woodland owner who wants to invite groups to use their wood: insurance companies often don't understand the concept of wild spaces.

Multi-Purpose Woodland and Tree Safety

Ross Murray gave the final classroom presentation, and what a great summary it was. Ross manages huge estates in Monmouthshire, South Wales and Scotland. Estates are used for logging, access, sporting activities and shooting, by third parties including Forest Schools, and also have major and minor roads, other rights of way and canals crossing them. We may not have 4000ha estates, but many of us are affected by some or all of these issues – in our 20 acres we have a roadside boundary, shooting for vermin control, we do coppicing, we invite third parties in, hold public open days – in other words, estate size doesn't seem to matter. What you need to do is show a clear brief for all people involved: owner, beneficiary, agent, manager, contractor and employee (who could be a volunteer). It is useful, therefore, to have a health and safety policy, a tree safety policy, contractors' terms of engagement, a risk assessment for all activities, and any sporting or commercial activities should be covered by their own licences and insurance,

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust – Forest Schools/Delivering the Curriculum Outdoors, a full range of courses for those working with children in their woods

<http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/files/documents/1258.pdf>

The Sustainability Centre offers lots of courses around the theme of sustainable living. Upcoming courses include Festive Willow Craft and Coppicing.

http://www.sustainability-centre.org/courses_adult.php

Bishops Wood Centre at Stourport on Severn, offer a wide range of courses of interest to woodland owners including bushcrafts, photography, pole lathe and other woodland crafts, as well as offering forest school leader training and CPD

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/education-and-learning/be-healthy/outdoor-education-centres/bishops-wood-centre/training-and-courses.aspx>

British Dragonfly Society run a programme of field visits and educational events.

<http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/diary-field-trips-and-other-bds-events>

and you should see copies of their certificates. I was pleased to see that for this huge estate, the tree safety policy took a side and a half of A4 (the same as ours!). Health and safety policies can be difficult to write (our woodland one is incorporated into our business as a whole), and expensive, and at the end of the session, I agreed to work with Small Woods to see whether we can produce short templates for small woodland owners that can be adapted for local use, making it easier to show “duty of care”.

Outdoor Workshop: Practical Implementation of Risk Management

After lunch, with showers threatening, and finally arriving in style, Mike Seville from the CLA gave the final presentation of the day. We looked at the potential for zoning in the vicinity of the Forestry Commission



Centre and then walked up to the car park to consider trees at the roadside and how we might assess or manage them. We discussed whether you needed to record every tree, or whether a simple walk-by or drive-by inspection would suffice. He also gave us a demonstration of his tools of choice for inspection: a bag, binoculars, a notebook, a hammer (is the tree hollow?) and a screwdriver (is it rotten?). We all agreed we wouldn't do a whole lot to the trees, although some of us might remove a hung-up sycamore branch (away from parking spaces but in the vicinity). And with that the rain came down with a vengeance, and the session ended.

Overall impression

We were reassured that what we are doing, as small woodland owners, is reasonable. A tree safety policy is easy to write, but you need to have one if any members of the public enter or travel past or through your woods, and action should be proportionate to use. You need to have adequate insurance for the activities you carry out. You may need to have a

health and safety policy, and need to manage contractors responsibly, in particular making sure they are qualified to carry out the work, and can work safely. This is not difficult, and doing nothing is not an option. We all need to do something, and record it.

If anybody would like to see our tree safety policy, then it is available on our web site at <http://www.alvecotewood.co.uk/Alvecote%20Wood%20Tree%20Safety%20Policy.pdf>. Please feel free to download it, use it, and adapt it to your own needs.

Universal Woodland Access—a good idea?

The Independent Forestry Panel are still considering submissions from a wide range of organisations and individuals about the future of forestry in England. Scotland has had universal, free access to all of the countryside, including woodlands and farmland, since the Land Reform Act (2003). This gives people universal rights of access in return for responsible behaviour. This includes access for walking, cycling, horse riding and active



Woodcraft School have published their timetable for woodcraft and bushcraft courses

<http://www.woodcraftschool.co.uk/woodcraft-courses.htm>

Acres Wild Woodland have 2012 timetable of woodland and woodcrafts courses available on

<http://www.acreswildwoodlands.co.uk/courses/index.shtml>

Willowcraft and Woodlands is a social enterprise doing woodcrafts and woodland management based in Worcestershire. They run a number of woodland management and woodcraft courses of potential interest to woodland owners including courses on Living Willow structures, coppice management and treebog construction.

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

John Waller, Underwoodsman has an extensive programme of courses available. Lots of green woodworking, coppice management, charcoal making, living willow and introductory blacksmithing. See http://www.underwoodsman.co.uk/html/at_a_glance.html

Shift Bristol are running a year long practical sustainability course as well as a seasonal programme of workshops. See

<http://www.shiftbristol.org.uk/index.html> for further details.

FloraLocale run a wide range of courses of interest to woodland owners www.floralocale.org

pursuits, but excludes access to private gardens, to fields with crops growing (but not the margins of those fields), buildings, and for hunting, shooting and fishing, and grounds that have in the past charged for entrance. In return, people are asked to act responsibly, keep off growing crops, keep their dogs under close control, not to use motorised vehicles (unless disabled), respect privacy and respond to reasonable requests from the landowners so that they may manage their land (<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B621366.pdf>).

Despite a very large increase in access to the countryside in England and Wales obtained under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), which extended open access to common land, moorland, heathland, mountains and downs, and improved coastline access, a number of organisations feel that this is insufficient, and would like this level of access widened to include all woodlands, whether they are large or small, and whether they are in public or private ownership, and to include access for cycling as well as walking and horse riding. After some correspondence with the Cycle Touring Club on this issue, I asked the forum what their views were, and whether any members in Scotland could tell us what their experience had been since access was widened in Scotland. The CTC submission to the Forestry Panel is on http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/1109_CTC%28CPalmer%29_Forestry_Panel_con.pdf and the Ramblers Association on <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer/News/Ramblers-tells-forestry-panelhave+a+heart+of-access-as-well-as-a-heart-of-oak>



Briefly, the argument for greater access is that if people are allowed to learn about the countryside and experience it, they will respect it, and protect it to a greater extent than if the majority of countryside is closed to them, and therefore not available for them to enjoy, experience, respect and protect. This is an interesting and valid argument, but the circumstances in Scotland (with the exception of the Central Belt) and England and Wales are quite different,

England in particular being much more urbanised, and therefore having a very large population who are unfamiliar with the countryside. There are also many more people who would access the countryside, and thus who may have an impact upon it. The argument against greater access is that people do not always obey the code, often are unaware of the damage they may be doing or their impact on nature, and in small, isolated fragments of habitat, this can have a significant, or even devastating effect on wildlife, as well as infringe on privacy, and make it harder for owners to manage their site, or use it for commercial activities.

So what do we think? Here are some of our contributions to the debate...

“I think universal access would be a terrible idea, although I'm sceptical it will happen as the farmers are a powerful lobby. Do you have any links to statements by the CTC and Ramblers advocating universal access so we can see how the word it?”

“... The press tend to exaggerate and overlook caveats and exceptions. ...our woodland is quite remote from roads/carparks but has a public footpath along one side. It isn't fenced and we don't mind walkers, but it's ancient coppice with much undisturbed ground flora on clay, so we certainly don't want horse riders and have a strictly no horses notice (after all it's not a bridleway). There are stables nearby and the riders do seem to respect this.”

“I would object on the basis that a significant part of my woodland is 'working', in the sense that I store cut and drying timber, ready for burning. When I have previously left stacked timber in that part of the woodland close to the public highway and footpath, it has been stolen. (Two 4WD with trailers - so not spur of the moment). Public access to

Courses from The Mammal Society – a wide variety of courses, at various venues and dates. 2012 dates now announced.

<http://tinyurl.com/69l76s7>

Courses in forthcoming months include mammal identification and radio tracking.

Dorset Centre for Rural Skills

Run a range of courses of interest to woodland owners including hurdle-making and green woodworking.

<http://www.dorsetruralskills.co.uk/courses.htm>

Cotswolds Rural Skills Courses

Include grassland management and drystone walling. Details on.

<http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/?page=cotswolds-rural-skills>

Acorn Ecology in Exeter run a range of courses including a Phase 1 habitat survey course, and courses on surveying and handling bats, otters, water voles, dormice and other protected species

www.acornecology.co.uk

Forest Garden Show-elstrode

Practical woodland courses and yurt camping. Upcoming courses include green woodworking, hurdle-making, beekeeping for adults and children.

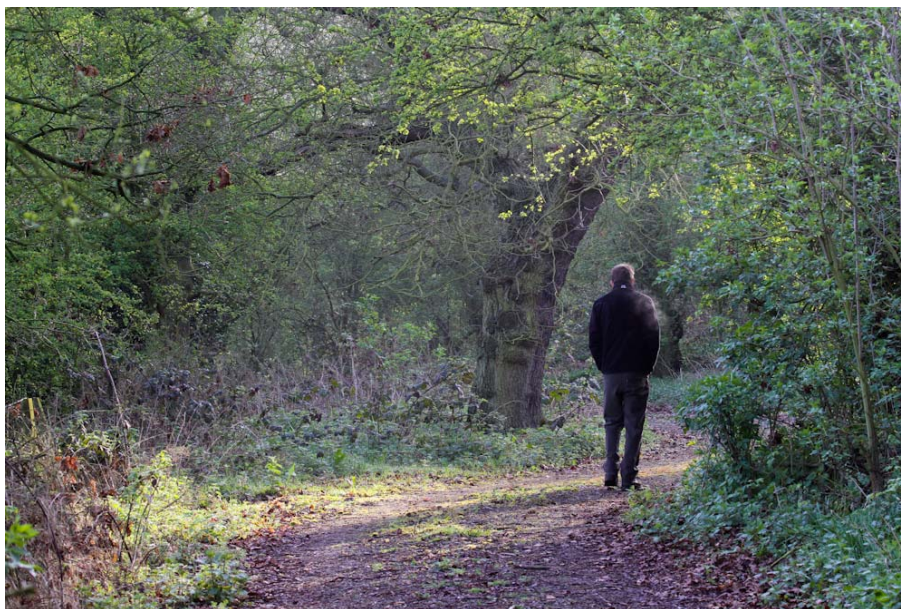
www.forestgarden.info

the entire woodland would probably lead to further thefts, especially as wood becomes a more valuable resource as the price of fuel increases. ... there are significant differences, certainly between Scotland and the more densely populated areas of England. I assume that woodland in areas close to the central belt in Scotland would face similar issues to urban England. One of the main reasons I bought the woodland was to ensure its privacy, as when it was for sale there were applications for 'leisure activities', such as paint-balling, which might have meant people traipsing through the wood immediately behind the house. If public access does come about, am I going to be compensated for loss of amenity?"

I'm lucky with the 0.9 hectare plot that has traditional orchard on the edge of a meadow setting and mature hedgerow trees and recently planted specimen trees (female black poplars and experimental elms) and a couple of clumps of native broadleaf species for future coppice and some planting rows between the fruit trees for veg and nursery stock, that I can tick various boxes in the wide areas of agriculture and horticulture, but am exempted from some obligations because I'm under 1 hectare. I have an old track (public footpath) along one boundary and another near-by that makes for a pleasant circular walk along the English / Welsh Border and River Dee. There are three types of visitor:

1. Passers by (interested or otherwise) that glance over the gate / hedges / fence.
2. People who wander through (despite no public access), but are respectful to the surroundings and cause no problems or damage.
3. People who deliberately walk through and cause damage by ignorance or wilfully, or engage in illegal or anti-social activities.

There is no easy answer to the latter, but to create an open public access right, without an existing long held cultural respect for land use, habitat and owners and managers is misguided. I'm more surprised by adults who try to 'justify' their access and activities than wayward children and teenagers. The children and teenagers have some sense of doing something wrong compared to (for example on my plot) a middle aged woman kicking a football for 2 loose dogs amongst recently planted young trees... She was surprised somebody 'owned' the land and presumed I got grants and therefore she was entitled to enjoy it.



On another plot, 'militant' ramblers were doing footpath walks because of a perception of obstruction in the area, these were from far off and managed to get lost from one path and were a bit snotty when caught peering around outbuilding and stables, ironically there was a 'local' footpath group in the area who make the effort to engage with landowners and help out with keeping stiles in order and ensuring the council maintain way-marks every few years - positive engagement and some common ground. A 'challenging' approach (from both sides of the fence) will result in difficult and conflicting stand points.

I'm reminded of a farmer friend from near Kendal who had a tractor turn and field gateway along a narrow road and scenic hillside - he met with a car and picnic parked up, table, chairs the lot when he tried to turn into his blocked gateway with tractor and baler. There was a difficult period of stalemate from an arrogant middle-aged couple. Unofficially, he managed to obtain their name and address from the car reg number, but it was some weeks before he was passing through Carnforth and able to park in their gateway with his Missus, the sandwiches and a flask - they were a little less than understanding of the situation, but explaining why he was there and "be bloody thankful it was too far for the tractor and baler" meant they were probably a bit more thoughtful about parking in field gateways..."

"Scotland has a very different history of access, and has never had the same concept of trespass as England. Labour's "right to roam" law in Scotland merely formalised these rights and prohibited landowners from interfering

with them without a good, short-term, reason.

However, they're having to row back on this with bylaws following abuses in the Loch Lomond national park created around the same time:

http://www.scotsman.com/scotland-on-sunday/scotland/ban_drives_blot_from_lomond_landscape_1_2002416

"Stringent new laws in one of Scotland's tourism hot spots have brought a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Loch Lomond's status as an international tourism destination was being threatened by hordes of unruly young "wild campers", who regularly left behind mounds of rubbish, abandoned tents and even burned-out vehicles. Some groups were even using chainsaws to cut down trees for firewood in what is a protected national park. ...

Anti-social behaviour has been a major and growing problem for the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (NPA) since its inception nine years ago. The trend has been particularly pronounced on the loch's eastern shores, where vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour became common in lochside communities ... Despite the apparent success, some park users are questioning the true effectiveness of the bylaws, pointing out that anti-social behaviour is moving to other areas of the park."

This year they're stepping up police patrols to try to enforce these bylaws: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-17630936>"

A few people wondered if small woodland owners could re-define their woodland as a garden, thus precluding access. This depends on the definition of a garden, which clearly differs between England and Wales, and Scotland.

"A "garden" is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as an "enclosed piece of ground devoted to the cultivation of flowers, fruit or vegetables". It is also described as a parcel belonging to a house which passes on with sale.

The Forestry Commission concedes that a garden could compromise woodland as well.

Judges sitting in the High Court decided that the OED definition was "too narrow" and should take into consideration the trend for wild gardens and meadow areas. Lord Justice Moses said the key to what constituted a garden was the "relationship between the owner and the land and the history and character of the land and space".

It was argued that the overgrown parts of land could not be "garden" because it had run wild more than 30 years ago." But, from the Scottish code...



"Some larger houses are surrounded by quite large areas of land referred to as the policies" of the house. These are usually areas of grassland, parkland or woodland. Here, too,

you will need to make a judgement in the light of the particular circumstances. Parts of the policies may be intensively managed for the domestic enjoyment of the house and include lawns, flowerbeds, paths, seats, sheds, water features and summerhouses. Access rights would not extend to these intensively managed areas. The wider, less intensively

managed parts of the policies, such as grassland and woodlands, whether enclosed or not, would not be classed as a garden and so access rights can be exercised. In these areas

of grassland, parkland or woodland, you can also exercise access rights along driveways, except where the ground becomes a garden, and pass by gatehouses and other buildings."

For what it's worth, we allow people to access our woodlands (which have never had a right of way) by means of Open Days, by opening for one evening a week during summer, and we also hold educational events, camps, and courses there. A few people don't respect this, and come in to poach and steal, but by and large, the visitors respect us, and stick to the opening times. For a woodland that is primarily for nature, this gives wildlife the priority it needs, but access to local people and children so they can learn about wildlife and woodlands too.

With many thanks to Wrekin, jennysmate, MartinD, bellhurst, meadowcapse and charcoal for their contributions to this debate. If you'd like to add your views, please visit the forum.

News for small woodland owners

New Natural England Catalogue aids access to publications

Natural England have produced an online catalogue to aid access to their publications including their stewardship scheme guidance, but a whole lot of other useful documents besides, even if your woodland is not funded under a stewardship scheme

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>

Downloadable ladybird ID sheet

A new, downloadable ladybird identification sheet has been produced, which should prove very useful in identifying these iconic insects

[http://www.ladybird-survey.org/downloads/Ladybird%20descriptions Info%20pack 2006 v.1.3.pdf](http://www.ladybird-survey.org/downloads/Ladybird%20descriptions%20pack%202006%20v.1.3.pdf)



Asia Longhorn Beetle outbreak in Kent

An outbreak of Asia Longhorn Beetle has been confirmed in Paddock Wood in Kent. The invested zone covers an area of 8ha (including all trees within 100m of a tree known to be infected) and eradication work is underway. More information is available on the Forestry Commission web site, and on the Sylva Foundation blog. Woodland owners are asked to be vigilant for signs of disease, and to report any suspected infestation to FERA as soon as possible.

<http://www.sylva.org.uk/blog/asian-longhorn-beetle-outbreak-in-kent/> and <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/EA5D9DF2A78EA261802579E60038AAEB>

Forestry Commission Forest Explorer App—now for Android

This app, reviewed in its iOS incarnation for a previous newsletter, is now available for Android as well as iOS, and it is free of charge. A fully bilingual app is also available from FC Wales, for iOS and Android.

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/D225EDA875A397BF802579E900538AE9>

Disadvantaged groups learn woodland skills in Wales

A Forestry Commission woodland on the Gower Peninsula is being used to teach people from disadvantaged groups new woodland skills. These skills include coppicing, bushcraft, woodland flora and fauna identification, green woodwork and map-reading, and the participants can gain an OCN qualification. - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/4908F8D03AD6688E802579D000356965>

New report details timber volumes in the UK

It is likely that we are producing more timber than we thought in the UK—this can only be good news! The standing coniferous volume is higher than previously thought, according to the most recent census of standing coniferous woodland. Scotland has more standing coniferous volume than England and Wales combined.

Although sitka spruce comprises more than half of the volume, the second largest volume is our native Scots pine. Inventories of hardwood are ongoing and will be pub-

The Field Studies Council run a wide range of courses for individuals, families and professionals at their centres around the UK. Courses of interest to woodland owners include tree identification, woodland management and woodland ecology, and wildlife surveying and recording techniques. See their web site for details of all courses

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

AJS Crafts

Offer a wide range of courses covering many different woodland-related crafts. Upcoming are courses on spoon making, charcoal burning, willow basketry and sweet chestnut gates and hurdles.

<http://www.ajscrafts.co.uk/courses/CourseList.aspx>

DWWP offer a range of woodland activity and traditional woodcraft courses in Yorkshire

<http://www.dwwp.co.uk/Woodland%20Skills.asp>

Coastal Survival and Bushcraft Courses

Available from the Coastal Survival School in North West Wales. Courses include 1-day, 2-day and 5-day survival skills courses for individuals and families. See web site for more details.

<http://www.coastalsurvival.com/>

Permaculture Courses from Patrick Whitefield, including how to read the landscape

<http://www.patrickwhitefield.co.uk/reading-the-landscape-info.htm>

lished in 2013.

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/3EBC262C1F7EAB58802579D00039E668> and the inventory reports are available on <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8RBP67>

Most of England now in drought

Most of England has now been declared in drought, with the Midlands and South West added to previously designated drought areas. This comes despite the wettest April since records began. The main problem is that the rain falling in the spring and summer does not replenish ground-water supplies upon which drinking water supply depends, and which remain exceptionally low in many parts of the UK.

This is because it mainly evaporates, is used by growing crops directly, or runs off the hard, dry ground, straight into rivers (which don't form a large proportion of our drinking water supply). Our own ground is still very hard underneath the puddles.

The latest water reports can be viewed at the Environment Agency web site on <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/33995.aspx>

Woodland Owner Survey for Independent Forestry Panel

I mentioned this in the introduction to this newsletter, but please *do take part in this survey*. It doesn't take 45 minutes as stated, more like 10 minutes. The *survey closes for participation on 12th May*, so please have your say before it is too late - <http://www.sylva.org.uk/limesurvey/index.php?sid=44516&newtest=Y&lang=en>

2% of British Larch trees felled due to *P. ramorum*

Phytophthora ramorum is having a significant impact on larch trees in the UK, in particular in Wales, where larch is a major component of plantations. 2% doesn't sound a lot, but this represents a very large number of trees that have been felled due to this infection.

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2012/04/23/deadly-tree-disease-destroying-swathes-of-welsh-woodland-91466-30814101/>

Clinton Devon Estates new video

Clinton Devon Estates have produced a new video about consequences of *P ramorum* which is free, and definitely worth a watch

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32DHyTVV2_o

We need more heathland as well as more woodlands – a plea from the RSPB

In many areas there is tension between the need to plant more woodland, and connect woodland habitats, and to preserve heathland, a rapidly-declining habitat. Lowland heath, in particular, is under treat pressure. Read the article by the RSPB <http://saveourwoods.co.uk/get-involved/national-campaigns/more-woodland-and-more-heathland-please-by-the-rspb/>

Trees improve mental health in housing association tenants

An interesting paper by Adam Winson highlights the benefits of urban trees, and trees in the build environment, and is worth a read, particularly if you are trying to persuade your council to plant more trees.

Moelyci Environmental Training Centre offer a wide variety of courses of interest to woodland owners, including courses on Phase 1 habitat surveys, national vegetation classification and wildlife surveys. <http://www.moelyci.org> for further information.

Monkton Wyld Court in Dorset offer a wide range of courses in sustainable living. See <http://www.monktonwyldcourt.co.uk/> for more information.

BTCV London are running courses on woodland management and coppicing.

<http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level4/19/level>

They also run a wide range of other courses on wildlife and conservation including practical and certificated training.

Woodlandskills.com Based in Sussex, they offer a variety of courses in the field of woodland living, survival and traditional wood crafts.

Abbots Living Wood offers a range of green woodworking courses

http://www.living-wood.co.uk/2011_course_dates.html

First Responder Course from Emergency Life Support Team—as reviewed by Tracy and Mike. Learn first aid in the outdoor environment and get HSE accreditation as a First Aider too.

<Http://www.elst.co.uk>

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Trees-people-and-the-buit-environment_Winson.pdf/\\$FILE/Trees-people-and-the-buit-environment_Winson.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Trees-people-and-the-buit-environment_Winson.pdf/$FILE/Trees-people-and-the-buit-environment_Winson.pdf)

Good Farmers Plant Trees!

In a new report from Woodland Trust and Harper Adams College, farmers are made aware of the benefits of planting trees on their land. Shelter belts and other stands of trees can help with crop yields and drought management. <http://www.woodlandtrust.presscentre.com/News-Releases/Good-farmers-plant-trees-a66.aspx> . The full report is at <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/campaigning/our-views-and-policy/agriculture/Documents/Managing%20the%20Drought%20-%20Harper%20Adams%20Report.pdf>

Battle to save two endangered woodland wildflowers in Wales

Bastard balm and spreading bellflower are two huge priorities for conservation in Wales. Among the most threatened plants in Wales, they occur in small, isolated patches of woodland and hedgebanks, but are very vulnerable because many woodlands are neglected, and no longer coppiced. Coppicing brings in the light these plants require to thrive, together with the disturbance it needs to germinate.

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/about_us/news_press/when_you_cant_see_the_wood_for_the_trees/

Wildflowers Count – a survey from Plantlife of wildflowers in your area

The wildflower charity, Plantlife, are asking for volunteers to undertake a wildflower survey in your area. You don't need to be a wildflower expert, as the majority of flowers they have chosen are easy to recognise, and you even get a free guide, so you can identify them correctly. If you still aren't sure, send in a photo, and they will help you with identification. I can vouch for the guide-book being very good, and Plantlife are quite willing for you to survey your within your woods, provided you can manage a 1km walk. Or club together with neighbouring woods and farmland to survey the local area. The survey includes both woodland, grassland and wayside flowers, so please help if you can.

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/things_to_do/wildflowers_count/



FC Scotland acquires two new woodlands

Two woods totalling 36ha in area have been acquired by FC Scotland to provide community benefits and allow more people to enjoy the benefits of woodlands. The woods will be brought into management, rhododendron cleared, and new paths and entrances created.

Forthcoming Courses and Events

Wilderness First Responder Course

Tracy and Mike Pepler are hosting a Wilderness First Responder course in their woodland again in July. This course was run in March and very well received by the participants, and is well worth it, as you never know when you might need first aid skills.

<http://peplers.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/wilderness-first-responder-july-2012.html>

Here is a review of the course from March, written by jellybean on the SWOG Forum:-

Prompted to attend a first aid course by the realisation that I haven't injured myself or anyone else for ages, therefore some sort of accident is surely due to pass my way soon, I signed up for a course that had a reduction in price for SWOG members and had the added benefit of being tailored to, and taught in, the great outdoors. Less chance

of falling asleep in a stuffy classroom whilst discussing a potentially fatal encounter with a photocopier, and more chance of dealing with gunshot /chainsaw /bitten by a badger type injuries.

A friendly and relaxed team greeted us on the Saturday morning In a coppice woodland just north of Hastings, and after the usual introductions, 10 of us settled down to some practical advice from ex fireman and hospital resuscitation operative Andy Sullivan as he explained the principles and pitfalls of trying to keep someone comfortable and alive. As He spoke to us I realised just how much I didn't know. Things change too, what were hard and fast rules in days gone by have been swept away in a tide of new discoveries. In addition, it dawned on me we rarely have any equipment on us when walking, or just out and about and the smallest first aid kit with the right stuff in it can make a huge difference. We were encouraged to ask questions which Andy answered concisely and honestly. at no time did I feel I was being lectured at and as a person with a low boredom threshold the day flew by.

On the second day the rain set in and turned our patch of woodland into a slippery mudbath. Undaunted, Andy's team set up a series of live situations where we got to practice our skills in 2 teams of five. This is where it got really interesting, because suddenly we were thrown into rather distressing situations with some very good acting from 4 different people all professionally made up with cuts, bruises, ashen faced and passing out, even knowing it was make believe, the chaos and panic of trying to remember what to do was quite some memorable lesson.

Andy Sullivan and his team have worked hard to create as real an experience as is possible, and with their combined professional skills and experience they provided us with a valuable lesson I hope I will never have to use, but at the same time never forget. For the trolls who criticize, lets hope you never need help. Well worth the money.

Free Courses for Landowners in Kent

Camilla Blackburn, Living Landscape Officer at Kent Wildlife Trust has sent us details of some free training courses for landowners. The training for the courses will be provided by Neil Coombs, the senior Land Management Adviser at Kent Wildlife Trust.

Details of the courses are as follows:

Management of Small Woodlands

16th May – Sandling, Maidstone and Bredhurst Woods – 10am to 3.30pm

Management of Chalk Grassland

12th June – Kemsing, near Sevenoaks and Kemsing Nature Reserve – 10am to 3.30pm

Management of Small Pastures

27th July – Tyland Barn, near Maidstone and a local farm. 10am to 3.30pm



There will also be a presentation from Sam Page (Bumblebee Conservation Trust) at this workshop.

For further information about these courses and to book, please could you contact Tania Avard or Camilla on 01622 662012 or email tania.avard@kentwildlife.org.uk or camilla.blackburn@kentwildlife.org.uk.

Charcoal-burning workshop

Juliette Butler, Wildlife Training Workshops Officer with the The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire has sent us details of a charcoal burning workshop at Grafham Water in May.

For more details download the flyer <http://www.swog.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Poster-for-Charcoal-Burning.pdf>

Yarner Woods Spring Woodland Festival

Yarner Woods is a nature reserve on Dartmoor owned by Natural England and SWOG members, the Bulworthy Project, are doing a charcoal demonstration at Yarner Woods Spring Woodland Festival. Someone else is going to be making chestnut palings. There is a load of other stuff happening. It promises to be an enjoyable day. It is on

26th May 2012.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/nnr/events/southwest/2012-05-26-dart.aspx>

Charcoal Making Courses from The Bulworthy Project

As well as a demonstration at the Yarner Woods fair, The Bulworthy Project offer charcoal-burning courses throughout the year. For more details, please see <http://www.bulworthyproject.org.uk/courses.html>

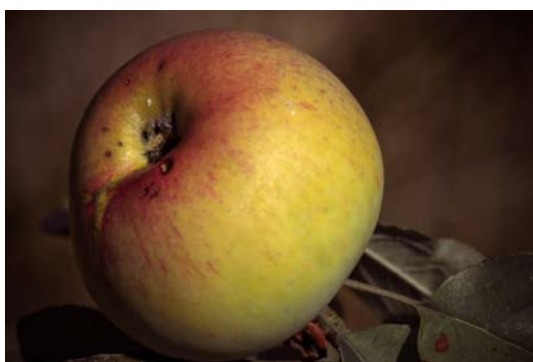
The Species Recovery Trust

Formerly known as the Endangered Species Conservation Trust, this organisation offers a wide range of conservation-related courses, including wildflowers, trees, grasses and sedges identification courses. For more details, please see <http://www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk/Events.html>

Want to Grow Your Own?

The Local Food Network are running grower training, so you can make the most of your garden and allotment. Based in the Sutton/Carshalton/Wallington area of South London, these courses are worth checking out.

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



Tree Disease Events from Heartwoods

Editor's Note: If you live in the Midlands or North Wales, these are worth checking out! If you are going, we'll be there too!

Heartwoods invites you to a workshop to find out about the latest research in how to manage this urgent problem. You will learn how to recognise a variety of tree diseases and how to manage them to reduce losses, and contact and prevent their spread.

A leading professional from Forest Research will be looking at current concerns and future threats, covering, oak declines, *Phytophthora* diseases, red-band needle blight, bleeding cankers, and likely new diseases that may arrive in the UK.

FERA will be providing a detailed insight into what we have learned from the impact of *Phytophthora ramorum* in the South-West and Wales and what the implications are for the West Midlands. The workshop includes indoor presentations followed by tours of local woodlands to see trees and plants where disease is now evident.

These one day events will be run in two locations within the West Midlands:

23rd May 2012: Mortimer Park, Kingsland, Herefordshire HR6 9SB

24th May 2012: The Chalet Pavilion, Carding Mill Valley, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6JG 9.30am—3.00pm

Event costs £10.00 (which includes lunch and refreshments) and is aimed at those employed within the woodland industry and woodland owners within the West Midlands region. To book your place please contact the Heartwoods office on **01952 435860** or alternatively email info@heartwoods.co.uk

Greenwood Centre

The Greenwood Centre offers a wide range of woodland management and wood craft courses the whole year round. Based in Shropshire.

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

Black Country Living Landscape –

courses including wild-flower plug planting and rustic fence-building
http://www.bcll.org.uk/whats_happening/events.html

The Bulworthy Project

These SWOG members offer a range of courses to suit your own needs on the subject of charcoal burning.

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

Greenwood Days

Offer courses to public and corporate groups on green woodworking and a wide range of creative arts in Leicestershire

<http://www.greenwood-days.co.uk/>

Woodland Skills Centre

Courses in coppice and greenwood crafts- Woodland management, basket-making, Chair-making, timber-frame building, Wood carving, coracles, oak swill baskets, Make and use pole-lathe and shave-horse, Charcoal, home chain-saw, hedge-laying. Bushcraft courses and Family Holidays.

www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk or 01745710626

Mark Fisher Art

Woodland-based art days for all abilities

www.markfisherart.co.uk

Reports from recent SWOG Meetings

Alvecote Wood—28th April

For the second year in a row we welcomed SWOG to our lovely woods in North Warwickshire. Well, we would have done, except for the weather! Unfortunately we had all but one attendee pull out at the last moment.

We carried on with the meeting, nonetheless, on a very cold day, and were very grateful for our tractor shed and the shelter it afforded. Gina Rowe, Director of Living Landscapes for Warwickshire Wildlife Trust was the speaker, and it was lovely to see the way in which this concept is being approached in Warwickshire, identifying potential habitats, potential areas which could be linked, looking at how those links can be achieved and how it can be funded.



We were pleased that Andy's wood, in South Warwickshire, was very similar to our own, and therefore when we took a walk round, to see what we have done, it was evident that our experience, and sharing it, was of value to somebody not quite so far along the line. Gina was also delighted to see what progress had been made with Betty's Wood, our 9 acre woodland and meadow creation project.

It was very cold, but we learned a lot. In particular we have promised to visit Andy's wood, and have also identified and started to progress a local wildlife cluster of sites which could form the basis for a future Nature Improvement Area or Local Nature Partnership. We already have a draft document, and a possible venue for a future meeting to take it forward. Result!

Plenty of tea was drunk and cake eaten. Hopefully next time the weather will be better and attendance will be greater!

SWOG Meeting at Clan Wood—14th April

When my wife Shirley and I met Julian Evans, Alistair and Margaret Hanton in October 2011 at a Small Woods Owners Group (SWOG) meeting, we thought it would be nice a idea if we were to hold a similar event in our own Clan Wood, which forms part of Hyden Wood near Clanfield.

Alistair and Margaret are Directors of Ownwood Ltd, and their son, Angus, originally purchased all of Hyden Wood before selling some parcels of woodland to people like ourselves who wished to own their woodland.

Hyden Wood is one of a range of woodlands now in the South Downs National Park between East Meon and Clanfield, and has views towards the South Coast and the Isle of Wight.

Clan Wood slopes gently to the south and is on clay with flint over chalk. It is approximately 3.6ha (9 acres) and is made up of beech, oak, hazel, ash and some mixed broadleaves. The west side consists of a grass valley which in the past was used as a shooting ride. The remaining is Ancient Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW) coppice which we wish to restore in the coming years.

On the 14th April, eighteen people gathered at Dead Woman's Gate in Hyden Wood for an informative day which was led by Julian Evans and Matthew Woodcock from the Forestry Commission. Julian was the Chief Research Officer for the Forestry Commission for many years and is the author of *Badgers, Beeches and Blisters*.

Although some of the group drove to the meeting through heavy rain when we all arrived at Dead Woman's Gate it was dry although the sky was grey and overcast, and remained that way throughout the day.

Due to the mild winter the spring flowers were starting to show themselves although they were not as advanced as last year. The group were able to see a profusion of primroses in the valley, and bluebells in the woods although these were not quite in full flower. Sprinkled between these flowers were wood anemones, lords and ladies, violets, common twayblade and the first of the early purple orchids.

After introducing ourselves to each other, the group walked to the valley which encloses Clan Wood on the west side.

The first topic in the programme was coppicing with standards and this was led by Julian. Those who had brought

handsaws were put to work on some of the coppice stools. From these stools Julian selected hazel whips and showed the group how to cut the whip and bend it so that it can be layered to the ground.

The group were then asked to select standards they would retain, bearing in mind that the management plan aims to provide 70 to 80% exposure to light. When it was determined how few would be retained it provoked a discussion within the group; some felt that to remove this amount of timber would be excessive; but it was accepted that to achieve good quality hazel coppice this number of trees must be removed. In conclusion it was agreed that the owner must decide which and how many trees to remove as he undertakes the work, and measure that against the objectives in the management plan.



This led nicely to the second part of the morning concerning Woodland Management Plans. I gave a brief explanation of the current plan and our objectives. Our aim is to bring the first coupe back to 70% coppice with standards, but only now can we appreciate the physical requirement needed to achieve this, even with the help of contractors who undertake the chain saw work.

To date we have done the clearing, pruning and coppicing, whilst the work to thin and fell trees has been carried out by the contractor.

At this point Matthew gave an overview to the group on how to compile and apply for Management plans and grants. This included the need to apply for a Felling licence if you are going to remove more than five cubic metre of timber from site. He also emphasised that before making any application to the Forestry Commission the owner must ensure that the land is registered, without this it will be impossible to make any progress.

After lunch the meeting moved on to the types of protection available for woodlands. Within Clan wood there is an area which had been coppiced and fenced to prevent entry by deer and rabbit. It was agreed this was of a good standard, as it had also provided for the fencing material to extend approximately one foot on to the track to prevent entry at the base of the fence. The group also took the opportunity to compare this fencing with another Hyden Wood owner's deer and rabbit fencing which had been installed within the past year. Again this fencing was considered to be of a high standard.

Tree shelters were the next means of protection to be considered. Julian gave the meeting a fascinating explanation of the origin of the plastic tree shelter and its merits in encouraging growth for small saplings.



The next aspect to consider was the control of grey squirrels. The methods shown to the group ranged from Warfarin bait through to metal traps. Julian could not emphasise enough, that if you use the latter type of trapping method, twenty four hour surveillance is essential and the dispatch of squirrels must always be handled in a humane manner.

For the final topic of the day Matthew was asked to update the group on the diseases which are causing considerable concern to woodland owners. The one with which we are all familiar is the phytophthora disease which uses rhododendron as a host and which affects nearby trees especially larch. Matthew confirmed that wherever possible this plant should be cut down and the branches and

roots burnt. He also said that in recent weeks the Forestry Commission has announced the first outbreak of Asian Longhorn beetle in Kent. In addition he gave an update on the larch infection which was first seen in the South West of England and again in South Wales in 2010. Finally, in order to control the spread of disease he advocated that we adopt a clean boot policy. This consists of washing down and removing excess mud from boots and where appropriate disinfecting them when moving from one woodland to another.

At the end of the day all the members who came to the meeting said how informative they had found the programme and a vote of thanks was given to all concerned for organising the day and in particular to Julian and Matthew for giving up their Saturday and providing us with an interesting and practical day on woodland management.

Forthcoming SWOG Events

Note from Tracy

If you do book a place, please actually turn up! We have rather a large number of 'no shows' at meetings which is very disheartening for those running them and means that others might have been able to go in your place.

SWOG Meeting – Ferriby Wood, Yorkshire, 27th May 2012

Mike is kindly offering to host a meeting at his woodland on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds. Parking is available for 6 or 7 cars so make sure you book with Tracy. Mike says it's an easy walk or he will ferry people with his Land Rover. Please bring a mug and packed lunch, there will be a fire and trivet for those who want to cook.



Suggested topics for discussion include:

- thinning of young beech
- healthy market for ashpoles
- coppicing/market for products
- new rainwater system
- ride cutting regime
- flora/fauna diversification

Tracy will be sending out full instructions nearer the time so please email her if you are interested in attending tracy@woodlands.co.uk

SWOG Meeting Rainham, Kent, 17th June 2012

Andy has offered us a SWOG meeting with a difference! This one involves his Alpaca farm (and lots of newly planted trees) There will also be a guided walk by Peter from Butterfly Conservation and a short talk from a bee-breeder. More details to follow, please keep the date free in your diary!



SWOG Meeting at the Bulworthy Project—Date TBC probably August 11th

Pete and Anna at the Bulworthy project have kindly offered to host a meeting at their site in Devon. Full details to follow, but it is likely to be in August possibly the 11th, to register an interest, please email tracy@woodlands.co.uk

This would be a great meeting to attend if you're interested in Charcoal making, check out their website for more details of the project www.bulworthyproject.org.uk

Woodfairs in 2012

Woodfairs are underway, so here are the dates for your diaries. More information is available on [woodfairs.co.uk](http://www.woodfairs.co.uk)

Woodfairs in Scotland

Royal Highland Show

Edinburgh

21st - 24th June 2012

<http://www.royalhighlandshow.org/visitors/tickets>

Peebles Wood Market

21st and 22nd October 2012

Tweed Valley

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

Woodfairs in Wales

Dates for 2012 yet to be confirmed, please check [woodfairs.co.uk](http://www.woodfairs.co.uk) for more information.

Woodfairs in England

Live crafts and festival of woods

Nr Reading, Berkshire

Variety of dates through the year.

http://www.livecraftslimited.co.uk/live_crafts.html

Silk wood fair

5th - 7th May 2012

Venue - Westonbirt Arboretum, Tetbury Gloucestershire, GL8 8QS

www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt

Weird and Wonderful Wood

12th and 13th May 2012

Haughley Park, Wetherden, Nr Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3JY.

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

Devon county show

17th - 19th May 2012

Westpoint, Exeter

<http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk/home>

Horse logging demonstration

27th May 2012

Scottish borders TBC

<http://www.bordersfestivalhorse.org/>

Roydon Woods Woodfair

Hampshire

27th May 2012

<http://www.hwt.org.uk/events.php/1836/roydon-woods-woodfair-and-local-produce-market>



Blackdown Hills Woodfair

7th July 2012

Park Farm near Wellington

<http://www.woodbiz.co.uk/freepage.asp?ID=9>

Great Yorkshire show

Harrogate

10th - 12th July 2012

<http://www.greatyorkshireshow.com/html/home/>

South Downs Woodfair

21st and 22nd July 2012

Queen Elizabeth Country park, South Downs National Park

<http://www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk/woodfair.html>

New Forest and Hampshire County Show

Brockenhurst, Hampshire

24th - 26th July 2012

<http://www.newforestshow.co.uk/index.htm>

National Forest Woodfair

26 and 27 August 2012

Beacon Hill Country Park, Leicestershire

<http://www.leics.gov.uk/woodfair>

Stock Gaylard Estate Oak Fair

Near Sturminster Newton, Dorset

Saturday 25th August 2012

<http://www.stockgaylard.com/oak-fair/oak-fair-at-stock-gaylard.html>

Festival of the Tree, Westonbirt

Treefest

25th - 27th August 2012

Venue - Westonbirt Arboretum, Tetbury Gloucestershire, GL8 8QS

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt>

Woodworks

1st and 2nd September 2012

Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park

Marston Mortaine

Bedfordshire

MK43 0PR

<http://www.marstonvale.org/woodworks/>

Lincolnshire Firewood fair and auction

Revesby Estate, Lincolnshire

2nd September 2012

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

Wychwood Forest Fair

Sunday 2nd September 2012

<http://www.wychwoodproject.org/wps/wcm/connect/occ/Wychwood/Events/Forest+Fair/>

APF 2012

Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire
13th - 15th Sept 2012

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

Wild about Wood

15th and 16th September 2012

Castle Howard Arboretum Trust, Kew

<http://www.wildaboutwood.org/>

Bentley Weald woodfair

21st - 23rd September 2012

Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum, Halland, near
Lewes, East Sussex

BN8 5AF

<http://www.bentley.org.uk/#/woodfair/4525168793>

Derbyshire County Council Woodland Festival

22nd and 23rd September 2012

Elvaston Castle Country Park, Borrowash Road, El-



vaston, Derby. DE72 3EP

10am - 5pm

08 456 058 058

countrysideservice@derbyshire.gov.uk

Ickworth House Suffolk, woodfair

6th and 7th October 2012

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ickworth>

On the blogs at woodlands.co.uk and woodlandsTV

These are the latest blogs from Woodlands.co.uk and videos on woodlandsTV. Please have a look and comment upon them, as they make very interesting reading.

Renewable energy from solar energy and woodfuel ~ by Angus

Angus looks at the economics and the energy equations of producing your own energy with domestic solar panels and woodfuel—interesting reading.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/practical-guides/renewable-energy-from-solar-energy-and-woodfuel/>

Bluebells and boars ~ by Lewis

Some people love them, some hate them, but wild boar are here to stay in our woodlands. But what is the effect on other wildlife, and on the woodland flora? Another interesting read!

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/flora-and-fauna/bluebells-and-boars/>



My wood – part two ~ by Matt M

The first part appeared last month, now you can read episode two of Matt's lovely personal account of woodland ownership.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/my-wood-part-two/>

What's been happening to Scottish Forestry? Tilhill tell all. ~ by Angus

Is this relevant to small woodland owners? Angus says "For those principally interested in small woodlands, Tilhill's report is interesting in showing that many of the same factors that affect commercial forestry are driving the market in small woodlands – demand for woodfuel, amenity, timber land as a safe haven and negative real interest rates."

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-economics/whats-been-happening-to-scottish-forestry-tilhill-tell-all/>

Monterey Pine – *Pinus radiata* ~ by Chris

Find out about this non-native pine that is thriving in coastal parts of the UK thanks to its resistance to salt spray.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-economics/monterey-pine-pinus-radiata/>

The pasqueflower : *Pulsatilla vulgaris* ~ by Lewis

A beautiful flower, in the same family as the buttercup, it occurs in the South and West of the UK. Read more about it here, along with some wonderful photos.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/flora-and-fauna/the-pasqueflower-pulsatilla-vulgaris/>

Small Woods Association – a nunnery or a hothouse? ~ by Angus

The Small Woods Association is well known to many of us, who are members of it, and who have attended training events run by them. Here Angus looks at the way they have embraced Social Forestry, and the benefits that brings to many otherwise disenfranchised members of society.



<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/community-woodland-use/small-woods-association-a-nunnery-or-a-hothouse/>

Cutting a Tenon using a crosscut saw ~ by WoodlandsTV

The first part of a two-part video on how to make a Tenon joint. This one using a crosscut saw.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2012/03/cutting-a-tenon-using-a-crosscut-saw/>

Cutting a Tenon using a circular saw ~ by WoodlandsTV

And the second part, looking at cutting a Tenon using a circular saw.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2012/04/cutting-a-tenon-using-a-circular-saw/>

Building a wooden bridge in woodlands ~ by mikepepler

A bridge built by volunteers, using timber from the woodland, and which is capable of taking the weight of a vehicle—a great timelapse sequence from Mike.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2012/04/building-a-wooden-bridge-in-woodlands/>

Late availability...

Toby Allen has some places left on a cleft fencing course.

We still have some places left on the cleft fencing course I am running for the Small Woods Association on May 26-27th. Course will be of interest to anyone wanting to make fences from trees and improve their fencing skills to a professional level. We will look at harvesting, planning a fence and budgeting materials, grading, cleaving with wedges and froes. Then how to install fences properly, with tips and tricks about making rustic work look neat.

The venue is Brookhouse Farm in Herefordshire and one of our harvesting sites up the road.

For more information contact me (Toby Allen 07811852704) to book a place contact the Small Woods Association.

Contributions Welcome!

We very much value your contributions to the SWOG Newsletter—please keep them coming!

We would love to have more of your photos, book reviews, equipment reviews, tales of days spent in your woodlands, reviews of courses or meetings you have attended, and creative writing too. Do you run events in your own woods? Tell us about them, and we can advertise them in the SWOG Newsletter, and report your experiences too. It is your newsletter, so please tell us what you would like to see. Please send contributions to sarah@swog.org.uk. Thank you.



On the SWOG Forum

Newsletter - May 2012

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

Contact us:-

Web site:

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tracy@woodlands.co.uk

www.swog.org.uk

It has been another busy month on the forum. Please feel free to join the forum, and join in the discussions. Here is a flavor of the most recent threads.

There was some discussion around the wilderness first responder course that Tracy is offering in her woods—almost unanimously positive. Don't miss it—it's running again in July! See the forum for details.

Woodbodger told us about a wet day in his woods—we've had a few wet days this month! Can you tell us what you do on a wet day?

Mikepepler asked our opinions of a log trolley—have a look at the video and see what you think.

Singlefin asked how he could get water in a stream running through his land tested for quality and safety. So far, no financially viable answer has been forthcoming. Can you help?

Docsquid asked about rights of access to woodlands and opinions about universal access. The results of this are in this newsletter, but please do contribute your views and experience too.

Mbgeloam, peterrandall, woodman and sparrowhatch forestry joined the forum to a warm welcome. We really do like hearing from people!

Twybill expressed some concerns about the availability of a roundup-plug that is designed to kill trees. This triggered some debate. Some members were delighted to find something that could deal with the problem of very invasive trees, such as aspen, as well as rhododendron. However there was also the concern that it made it easy for non-authorized individuals to kill trees. Have you had any experience with this method? And what do you think—should a simple method of killing trees be widely available?

Delta2 asked for a woodland to rent for servicemen with PTSD in the Kent/East Sussex area, and got a lot of responses. It is clear that the forum is successfully putting people who need woodland in touch with people who can offer it, and that can only be a good thing. Please do keep the

requests, and the offers, coming.

Both asked whether it was possible to start the dream for £10k or less. Again, quite a debate, particularly since the dream was situated in Kent. The value of woodlands obviously varies enormously, and the point was made the guide prices at auction seldom reflect the money that the parcel of land went for. It also depends what you want the land for—chilling out in a small plot as part of a larger woodland may be OK, but other uses may need larger wooded areas with sporting rights. Can you contribute to the debate?

Austino asked about truffles. Have any of us got them or seen them in our woods? So far, no positive sightings other than in Knightsbridge! Do you have any in your woods? How do you go about finding them? **Meadowcops** is planning to plant a few impregnated trees to see if he can grow some—have any of you done this in the past, and what were the results? We'd love to hear!

