



In the Newsletter this Month

A new year, and a new co-ordinator for SWOG. After the amazing work that Tracy has done over the last five years, we bid a warm welcome to Judith Millidge, who will be taking over her role in organizing meetings, networking, membership, organizing walks and all the other key tasks that make SWOG happen. If you want to organize a meeting in your woods, or a walk through your woods, or to join SWOG, then get in touch with Judith. Sarah carries on editing the newsletter, and Rich carries on editing the web site.

Sarah attended a conference in December 2012 to discuss woodlands from the perspective of the small woodland owner. Taking a bottom-up, rather than top-down approach, this conference was attended by the many who completed the British Woodlands Survey in 2012. A full report is in this month's newsletter. Andy Hunt has also written a really interesting article taking a permaculture perspective on rhododendron control—definitely worth a read.

There is a lot of news to catch up with, after a two month break. We are eagerly anticipating the Government response to the Independent Forestry Panel report at the end of January, but in the meantime, there are plenty of other things happening to get your thinking. We also have an increasing number of events being notified for 2013—courses, conferences and meetings. We have listed as many of these as possible so you can get the dates into your diaries.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, we are always on the look-out for photos, poems, reports from your woods, reports of meetings or courses that you have attended, and book reviews. HAPPY NEW YEAR to everybody—let's hope it is a good one.

If you have any stories from your woodland, please send them to us at sarah@swog.org.uk. If you have any enquiries about SWOG please contact Judith@swog.org.uk and if you have anything for the web site, please contact rich@swog.org.uk

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Meet Judith, the new SWOG co-ordinator



Judith Millidge is taking over as SWOG co-ordinator. Here she tells the SWOG Newsletter a bit about herself, and her woods. Please bid her a warm welcome!

I am delighted to be joining the SWOG team and have been overwhelmed by the very kind welcome from everyone. Tracy, in particular, has been VERY keen to pass everything on. She has done a fantastic job establishing SWOG and building up contacts with owners and outside agencies and I hope I can maintain her high standards.

I'm a freelance editor and writer most of the time, but our family's wood on the border of Buckinghamshire and south Northamptonshire provides an excellent lure away from the computer. As we all know, wood warms you at least three times, and I find that shifting

logs is also excellent aerobic exercise for the desk-bound!

Owning a small wood has been both a privilege and a pleasure over the past six years. It has also been a learning experience, as we have discovered a little about woodland management and a great deal about the previously untapped outdoor skills of friends and family. Part of Gayhurst Wood, our wood is a mixed broadleaf and conifer and was once owned (very briefly) by Sir Francis Drake, a fact which I love.

I'm keen to meet as many woodland owners as possible and if you have any ideas for meetings, talks, courses or would like to arrange a walk in your woods for other SWOG members, please email me at Judith@swog.org.uk

British Woodlands Conference—December 2012



British Woodlands 2012 was organised by the Sylva Foundation, and held at the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Oxford. The aim was to hear voices from owners of small woodlands – the people on the ground who own or manage the smaller woods that form the majority of woodland in England. It was also the first opportunity to hear some of the first results to come out of the British Woodlands 2012 survey which was sent out to as many small woodland owners as possible during 2012, and backed by an impressive array of organisations, including the Sylva Foundation, Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Woodland Trust, Royal Forestry Society, Institute of Chartered Foresters, Country Landowners and Business Association and Confor among others.

After an introduction from **Professor Nicholas Harberd**, Sibthorpian Professor of Plant Sciences, who told us about the University of Oxford's own Ragley Wood, and Gabriel Hemery from the Sylva Foundation, **Dr Gill Petrokofsky** introduced the survey and its preliminary data. The survey was completed by over 2000 owners, representing 20% of UK woodlands, with an average of 90 acres. The survey was based upon previous surveys repeated since 1962 by **Dr Derek Nicholls**, from the University of Cambridge, so he was able to show dramatic longitudinal data representing larger estates and showing a dramatic decline in profitability of woodland. In 1962 over 50% were profitable, by 2012 under 10% were profitable – a worrying trend, particularly if the vision of the Independent Panel on Forestry in England's recommendations of developing a woodland culture are to be realised.

Alistair Yeomans from the Sylva Foundation then explored the idea of what a woodland culture means – culture is a fusion of awareness, appreciation and activity. He also introduced the new programme from the Sylva Foundation of having a Ward Forester. This is a forestry professional who oversees management for a group of local woodlands. It is a way of working collaboratively, accessing expertise in planning and management, working more efficiently by working across sites, and at the same time having collective access to markets for products which in individual woodlands may be too small in volume to be interesting to buyers. (<http://wardforester.co.uk/>). At present it is operating in Devon, but will be rolled out to other sites in future. He also highlighted a useful app from Natural Environment Research Council called mySoil – a map of all soil types in the UK (<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/press/releases/2012/13-soil.asp>) – an invaluable tool for

Course Directory

Institute of Chartered Foresters

Forthcoming events are on

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

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 2013 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>

planning management of woodlands, and creation of new ones.

Mike Townsend from the Woodland Trust then gave an overview of some more of the survey data in a very clear and succinct presentation. The responses were clearly biased towards the South and East of England, and the median date of acquisition of the woodland was 1990, with some held in the family for centuries, but the majority acquired late in the 20th Century. The main aim of woodland ownership was personal pleasure, followed by conservation, biodiversity and timber production. Making money was low down on the list, maybe reflecting the reality of the current market for woodland products. 10% of owners manage for public access, but this is seen as a problem for many. Nevertheless, given the large proportion managing for conservation and biodiversity, the public good and benefits of woodlands in the wider sense are being delivered by a large number of private woodland owners of their own free will and at their own cost. Communication was also discussed – woodland owners are now consulting a wide range of sources for information about woodland management, including books, magazines and the internet, as well as traditional sources of advice such as forestry officers. There is a need to channel information via a wide range of methods of delivery, and many owners valued free, proactive advice ahead of access to money via grant schemes.

James Ogilvie from the Forestry Commission in Scotland talked about community forestry. Scotland differs from England and Wales in that 45% of woodland is owned by the Forestry Commission, and about 1% of woodland is classed as community woodland. This is financed largely by grants and charities, rather than by sales of products. He talked us through the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill in Scotland, which will make it easier for communities to acquire land for both forestry and woodland crofting.

Rob Penn, whose recent BBC4 series *Tales from the Wild Wood* was a big success, then talked about the public reaction to his series. The most positive reactions came to the animals, the pigs and horse logging in particular, as well as to the more nostalgic aspects of woodland management, such as charcoal burning and production of beanpoles. The most negative reactions came to the difficult topic of squirrel control, and to the mountain bikers, despite the former being essential and advocated by almost every adviser who came to his wood, and the latter being a good source of income and very low impact on the wood as a whole. Overall the series was well received, with twice the expected viewership and four times the expected positive comments, suggesting that people are keen to learn about woodlands. The reaction to the series highlights the issues woodland owners may have in managing their woods, making money from the woods, and communicating the need for this to the public, who hold a nostalgic view of what woodland should be, and what should be done there. See <http://www.robpenn.net/> for more information.



Dr David Boshier from the Earth Trust and University of Oxford then looked at genetic resilience in a very interesting and topical presentation, given the current situation with *Chalara fraxinea*. The key to coping with both the exponential increase in tree diseases and pests seen since the 1960's as well as the issue of climate change is to build resilience and genetic capacity into our tree populations. It is about getting the right species for the site and purpose, and within that, the right provenance within species. Breeding for resilience and diversity takes longer than for arable crops, and this is best achieved by out-crossing rather than cloning. Using local seed seems intuitive, but can actually result in very low genetic diversity, particularly where seed sources are few and close together e.g. on restoration sites. Paradise Wood is a research wood in Oxford used for genetic trials, and a wide range of studies have been carried out at this wood looking at phenology (e.g. leaf flushing, seed chilling requirements). Early leaf flushing in ash can lead to frost damage, and this varies hugely depending on provenance, with Eastern European trees particularly susceptible. They have also examined growth rhythms – *Chalara* resistance is higher for those trees showing early leaf senescence in Spring. Cross-pollinated seed shows much higher diversity than self-pollinated seed. The Future Trees Trust is promoting improved and qualified seed for future production of good trees that are resilient, as well as functional (e.g. good timber form). There are more details on the Fraxigen project web page at <http://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/fraxigen/>

Christine Read from Natural England then presented further results from the Survey, looking at grants and barriers to management. Woodlands are of disproportionate importance to biodiversity, constituting about 10% area of England but over 20% of BAP listed species. The public are aware of this, with 80% saying woodlands are important for wildlife and 60% wanting to do more for wildlife themselves. The UK Forestry Standard has a wide remit that includes a wide range of management activities for wildlife and biodiversity (protected habitats and species, varied structure, diversity of species, open space, deadwood, biosecurity, more and better connected woodland, dealing with deer browsing, grey squirrels and invasive species). Responders were confused about climate change, with few knowing what to do, although half trying to do something around the areas of either mitigation or building in resilience. Only 35% of responders were receiving grants for management or creation or capital works. Those who had applied liked the pre-application advice received, the prompt payment, the application process. However the payment rates, on-going advice and monitoring of outcomes were rated less highly. The biggest barriers to grant uptake were the off-putting bureaucracy and lack of information.



Nick Brown from the University of Oxford then gave a very interesting talk about whether we can manage woodlands proactively for environmental and ecological benefits, in a very thought-provoking session. First of all, he defined woodland management as *“caring for woodland in ways that help to provide many benefits whilst making sure it stays healthy and thrives into the future”*. This can clearly encompass a wide variety of purposes, and doing nothing is a management option provided it is arrived at by an active decision. Only 7% of woodlands surveyed have a management plan, and the majority of owners are disengaged from forestry organisations and are unaware of or do not take up the available grants. There is pressure to plant trees for mitigation of global warming, but many questions remain about how best to do this, and where do the new trees go, given the competition with food and biomass crops? Most new trees since 1948 have grown outside woodland sites – along infrastructure, in urban areas, around buildings, in gardens, and so planting

more in these areas is one option – in and around cities, in floodplains, on brownfield sites, for rehabilitation of land, for erosion prevention etc. He also mentioned the new conservation paradigm that is emerging – rather than doing conservation of single or few species on reserved sites, we need robust, diverse and resilient communities serving social and environmental needs. We need to think more about this robustness, diversity and connectedness. There has been a real decline in professional forestry, which needs to be addressed – Forest Research is internationally recognised but funding has been cut, in particular for field trials taking basic science through to practice.

Sarah Walters from Alvecote Wood then gave a talk about managing their 20 acre woodland for wildlife and community groups. She talked about the issues that had confronted them when they bought 11 acres of ancient woodland in 2007, supplemented by a 9 acre field for woodland creation in 2010. She looked at the work that had to be done in overcoming many years of grazing, over-fertility, and under-management to create a diversity of habitats, as well as the project to link the woodlands to other sites to produce a robust, diverse and resilient wildlife corridor. The latter included establishment of a new 9 acre wildlife site incorporating mixed and wet woodland, ponds, hedgerows and wildflower

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

<http://smallwoods.org.uk/courses-events/courses-calendar/>

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 February 2013 can be seen at

<http://www.rfs.org.uk/event/2013/02/01/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>

meadows. She also talked about how the site is being developed for use by community groups, establishing public access through open days, open evenings and public events, and how a wide range of products and activities are being developed to produce some income, as well as the support received from other organisations and individuals, including grant support from the Forestry Commission. See www.alvecotewood.co.uk for more information.

Alistair Yeomans of the Sylva Foundation then deputised for Mike Seville, and talked about Markets and Forestry. Only 50% of owners in the survey had sold wood products, the majority firewood or roundwood, and there is a clear need to develop markets for this, perhaps by tapping into the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme, and timber marketing websites such as Logshed and Timber Auctions. Owners had also sold a wide range of services including shooting, recreation and tourism, courses and use for film sets. There is the potential to bring in funding from the Woodland Carbon Code on sites where planting is feasible, as well as tapping in to Biodiversity Offsetting via the Environment Bank – where habitat is created in one place to offset damage at another.

Peter Long of the University of Oxford then led us through a new tool being developed to assist owners in making decisions about their woods, called the Local Ecological Footprinting Tool. This is an IT project that draws together freely-available data from satellite databases to produce a street map, land cover classes, Ecoregions, species records, and a biodiversity score. It also brings in biodiversity turnover, presence of protected species, habitat fragmentation, presence of migratory species, vegetation resilience and wetland connectivity scores. At present this data is only available at 300 metre resolution, so not terribly helpful in smaller woods, but there are plans to increase to 30 metre resolution. It is in early stages, and there are clearly some issues with the data (given that puffins were apparently recorded in a wood in Oxfordshire!), but has potential to inform decisions about how to manage land, and where biodiversity and connectivity could be best improved. See <http://www.biodiversity.ox.ac.uk/LEFT> for more information.



John Deakin, the head forester for the Crown Estate at Windsor Great Park told us the story of how timber can be produced and used, even within a SSSI, and be incorporated into the management plan, and used for local projects. He gave the example of the stunning Savill Building and the proposed new pavilion at Virginia Water.

The final speaker was **Jim Matthews** who is a farmer in the Chilterns. His entertaining talk showed just how a small farm woodland can be managed to provide a wide range of services. First of all, he told us about the brickworks that they own and manage, producing heritage bricks for restoration projects. He talked us through how the fuel bill had been reduced by careful use of wood that was sustainably harvested from not only his farm, but a network of woodlands nearby, for the drying of bricks and firing of kilns. This has led to diversification into selling woodfuel stoves and boilers, and has changed what was an unused liability (90 acres of unmanaged woodland) into an asset and a thriving business, as well as engaging other woodlands in the nearby community – a fine mod-

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. <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/



el for the future expansion of wood-based industries, and how small woodlands can link together to produce benefits for owners, business and local communities alike. See <http://www.hgmatthews.com/> for an example of what they do.

Overall, this was an extremely interesting and engaging conference. Unlike many conferences, this was targeted at small woodlands, and so we felt at home there, and the issues being discussed felt very relevant to us. It is clear the survey has highlighted many of these issues, and can help to inform future woodland policy, and in particular the way in which forestry organisations communicate with, engage with and help owners, as well as the way in which markets can develop and be used to support owners with small quantities of produce. The way the conference linked basic research with policy and through this to the people on the ground who are out there, doing stuff in their woodlands was very well managed. There is potential for a further follow-up survey in 2014, and we left the day hopeful that things would be taken forward to the benefit of all woodland owners, and via them to the environment, biodiversity, wildlife and the general public good.

More information on the British Woodlands Conference is on the Sylva Foundation web site, including the presentations from all of the speakers—http://www.sylva.org.uk/forestryhorizons/research_bw2012_conference.php

Videos—Help, locations, expertise needed

Woodlands.co.uk are looking for help in producing the next generation of videos for their web site, and need your help.

First of all, ideas are needed. Do you have a particular subject you would like to see covered? Do you have a particular passion? Are you an expert in any particular area? Let us know! Nothing is too dull—wildlife, toadstools, green woodworking, constructing shelters, woodland skills, photography, other woodland crafts, how to apply for grants—anything! Just let us know what you would like to see, and we'll try and figure out how to make it into an interesting video.

We also need presenters: if you have expertise, and are willing to share it, then get in touch. There is a team of professional film-makers available, so you don't have to worry about the technical aspects of making a video, just conveying your knowledge to help educate the woodland community. No video would be longer than 5 minutes, so we aren't looking for a lecture, just some brief pointers on how to do it.

Finally we need locations: could you offer up your wood as a location for filming? If you can, then please get in touch.

If you are able to help with any of this, please contact Patricia Ockenden at patricia@woodlands.co.uk



Invasive Rhododendron—A Permaculture Approach—Andy Hunt



Andy Hunt has written a fantastic blog taking a completely different viewpoint to rhododendron and the urge to eradicate it from woodlands at all cost. Using a permaculture approach, the value of the rhododendron is assessed and maximised whilst not compromising the value of the woodland as a whole. Please visit Andy's blog on <http://ourgreencottage.wordpress.com/2013/01/24/invasive-rhododendron-in-woodlands-a-permaculture-approach/>

Introduced to Britain by the Victorians, Rhododendron has become a very popular garden plant. Unfortunately however, one particular strain, *rhododendron ponticum*, has become invasive in British woodlands.

The plant tends to crowd out all other species, diminishing biodiversity and destroying the ecosystems which normally thrive in woodlands. They prevent light from reaching the woodland floor and can grow as tall as trees, the weight of their entangled branches even pulling trees down.

Many different approaches to controlling rhododendron have been tried throughout the UK. One approach is herbicide, in particular glyphosate weedkiller, which is injected into the rhododendron stems after drilling or sprayed onto young foliage. This approach is extremely expensive and leaves glyphosate residues in the soil. It also leaves a forest of dead rhododendron plants which in itself doesn't necessarily result in the restoration of woodland ecosystems.

There is the 'lever and mulch' method, which aims to kill rhododendron without the use of herbicide. This method can be effective but is very labour-intensive and again does not let light in to the woodland floor for ecosystems to regenerate. Using machinery to shred and crush rhododendron has a similar result, and is very energy-intensive.

Valley Wood has just such an invasive rhododendron problem. But the more time I spend there, and the more I work with the landscape and the existing ecosystem, the less satisfied I have become with these traditional approaches to rhododendron control. I started wondering what a Permaculture approach to the rhododendron problem might look like.

The basic premise of traditional control methods is that rhododendron is an invasive alien and must be killed, uprooted, cleared completely from the site and surrounding areas in order to allow the indigenous woodland ecosystem to regenerate. Although some of the neighbouring woodland plots have had this treatment, the rhododendron has come back again, and it very soon became obvious to me that this kind of approach just could not work at Valley Wood.

So I started to do some research to learn more about rhododendron. Since it was so plentiful and tenacious, I wondered if a Permaculture approach would allow me to turn a problem into a benefit and begin to view it as a crop of some kind.

Rhododendron was originally introduced into some woodlands because it is a very dense, evergreen shrub, which meant that it provided excellent cover for game birds. Now, this property of course has not gone away, so I immediately realised that one good thing about my woodland is that there is ample cover for birds all year round. Many insects can be found on the rhododendron too – every time I work at clearing some of it, there is always a Robin following me around picking insects off the cut





stems. It's actually quite enjoyable to have some company while I work – I feel like the Robin is working with me, and getting his dinner at the same time. Some of the rhododendron plants are so huge and dense that it can feel quite magical walking around underneath them, like being in some kind of weird twisted fairytale forest.

So, the birds like it. And as it happens, so do the bees! Around May to June, when the rhododendron is in flower, there is an amazing display of huge purple flowers which provide large quantities of food for bees and other pollinating insects. This isn't necessarily good for humans – honey made from bees which have been feeding on rhododendron flowers is actually poisonous and can make you quite ill! But for a couple of months at least,

bees will be glad of the display. With the changing climate, I have even seen some rhododendron plants flowering in the autumn, winter and spring.

Another property of rhododendron is that it makes excellent firewood – even when it is green. It is a fast-growing hardwood with a very high calorific content, and the stems of larger plants are so thick that they can easily be sawn up into logs which are perfect for either an open fire or a wood burning stove. I have taken rhododendron logs home to burn in my woodburner during the winter, but a particularly good use for the rhododendron firewood is on-site, where I need to keep warm during the winter when I am there working. Burning rhododendron means that I can generate firewood as I am clearing the rhododendron from the woodland, meaning that I don't have to have a big stack of it seasoning and I don't have to cut down broadleaved trees and season them for use as firewood on-site, I can leave them standing and growing. So rhododendron has become my staple firewood, leaving the trees for better purposes.

The smaller twigs and branches I tie into bundles with string, and one bundle makes a perfect firelighter. The dry twigs catch light incredibly easily, and the rush of heat is plenty to get bigger logs and branches burning. So butchering and using the different parts of the plant gives me everything I need to keep warm when I am working at the woodland. One of the principles of Permaculture is that everything has its place in the system – and the system at Valley Wood includes me, the woodland manager, and rhododendron to provide firewood to keep me warm. The rhododendron has gone from being an alien species which requires total eradication (impossible and a huge ongoing effort) to being a fast-growing hardwood wood fuel which keeps me warm even as I clear it to let light through to the woodland floor. A Permaculture approach where nothing is wasted, and everything has a function.

Even having found a place for rhododendron in the Valley Wood Permaculture system, there is far too much of it, and large areas need to be cleared to allow the woodland to regenerate. Once I've started cutting into an area of rhododendron, what is left looks very barren and bleak, as can be seen from these photos:-

In the photo right, you can see the normal woodland floor ecosystem in the foreground which has regenerated after rhododendron clearance – lush with moss, ferns, foxgloves and all manner of other plants and fungi. The newly cleared area in the background is barren, although there are seeds lying dormant in the ground. I sometimes assist the regeneration by sowing a mix of woodland flower seeds onto cleared areas.





In the area above, one effect of the huge rhododendron plants was that there were many trees which had grown very tall and spindly instead of bushing out, as they grew towards the light competing with the rhododendron. When I cut the rhododendron down, the weight of the branches pulled down many of these trees. But I found that what I had ended up with was a lovely collection of long, straight poles, perfect for shelter building! So I cut the fallen trees off at the base and used them. With sunlight now coming through to the woodland floor, the cut stumps will start to grow again, giving an area of hardwood coppice. In the photo above, you can see some of the tall, pole-like trees still standing in the background.

Whilst cutting rhododendron stems for firewood, occasionally I would come across one which was nice and straight, or curved in quite an interesting way. I started to wonder whether they would make good walking sticks. A few years back I bought a set of whittling knives, so I thought I would have a go at making a few rhododendron staffs.

I found the wood very pleasant to work with, the bark has an almost reddish tinge and the wood underneath it is lovely and white. There is a lot of quartz in the rock at Valley Wood, so I easily found small quartz crystals with which to adorn the new staffs. I found that I really enjoy making them. Apparently rhododendron wood has the property of protecting the staff owner from enemies! I have already sold one of these staffs and hope to sell more as my staff-making improves. And rhododendron wood seems to be an excellent, strong wood for walking sticks!



One of the ways which rhododendron spreads is when heavy branches bend down and touch the soil, and the branch puts out new roots at the point of contact. Like other hardwoods, rhododendron can be propagated from cuttings, but rhododendron is particularly easy to get to root.

There are a few places in the woodland where I have wanted some kind of screen to obscure the view of the campsite and shelter, or the forest garden. I did wonder about buying a couple of hundred hawthorn whips and planting them to make hedges. This seemed like quite a laborious and expensive option, the hedge would not really be tall enough for a couple of years at least and in the winter it would not serve as a screen as all of the leaves would fall.

Whilst cutting rhododendron, I noticed that after I had separated out the main stems for firewood, I was left with a big pile of branches of three or four nodes, which were very bushy and green – perfect hedging material, in fact. So I decided to take advantage of rhododendron's easy rooting property, and simply took all of the cut branches and pushed the ends into the ground along the track above the campsite, forming a very dense, very instant and completely free-of-charge hedge!

Again, using the discarded parts of the harvested rhododendron plant in this way means that nothing is wasted and everything has a use – Permaculture in action.

There are even more uses for rhododendron – the leafy stems can be harvested and sold to companies providing



foliage for florists. There are a couple of reports which make very interesting reading regarding generating an income from rhododendron:- [Profit from Rhododendron](#) and [Rhododendron Foliage Harvesting](#).

My aim with Valley Wood is to eventually clear most of the rhododendron from the woodland, allowing the woodland ecosystem to regenerate. But in the process I will benefit from firewood logs, kindling, poles for building, free hedging and the rhododendron plants I leave in place will provide cover for birds and screens. I think that the Permaculture approach to rhododendron control says that although the plant has come to Britain as an invasive alien species, it is here to stay and must find its place in a balanced system. Left to

its own devices in the wild, it will upset the ecosystem balance, but as part of a managed Permaculture system with humans included, it has a place as a productive plant which is kept under control by regular harvesting for its products, with no need for the damaging use of herbicides or energy-intensive industrial clearing efforts.

If you have any experience with rhododendron, or any comments on this article, please do get in touch. We are often told to eradicate it, but it seems everything has its place. What do you think? Write to sarah@swog.org.uk



A few random pictures from our woods in the winter—including skiing!



News for small woodland owners

HSE Notice – Danger of Carbon Monoxide Release from Stored Wood Pellets

A warning has been issued by the Health and Safety Executive to those who manufacture and/or store wood pellets for boilers after deaths in Europe among workers entering buildings where pellets are stored. Carbon monoxide is produced in rooms by auto-oxidation of pellets in enclosed storage spaces. Full information is given on the HSE web site at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/safetybulletins/co-wood-pellets.htm?ebul=gd-woodworking&cr=2/jan13>

Late Lessons from Early Warnings



A new report has been published by the European Environment Agency in January 2013. This follows up a 2001 report looking at how we have responded to early warnings of environmental hazards, how systems have failed (or succeeded), and how we can better use the precautionary principle. A wide range of case studies are included, ranging from mobile phones, Chernobyl and Fukushima to ecosystems in general, bees and neonicotinoid pesticides, and global

warming. It examines both how we missed warnings that were valid, and responded to warnings that subsequently turned out not to be hazardous, and takes a long-term view, dating right back to the days of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and beyond. The report is VERY big, available as a summary and separate chapters as pdf, and as a Kindle and Adobe e-book. See <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/late-lessons-2>

A related report - Impacts of Invasive Alien Species in Europe – was published in December 2012. Alien invasive species are one of the case studies addressed in the main report. Alien invasive species can have very significant impacts on woodlands, as many of us know from our battles with rhododendron and muntjac deer, among others. See <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/impacts-of-invasive-alien-species>

Ecosystem Services—a First Report

Natural England have released the first report evaluating up-land ecosystem services pilot schemes. Ecosystem services are those benefits deriving from natural systems, such as woodlands, for which we do not currently pay. Services can include flood control, water purification, timber supply and recreation. This report looks at the first pilot schemes in the South West, Lake District and Pennines—see <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4084624>



Staffordshire Wildlife Trust – Forest Schools/Delivering the Curriculum Outdoors, a full range of courses for those working with children in their woods, plus other courses for 2012

<http://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/page/training-courses>

The Sustainability Centre offers lots of courses around the theme of sustainable living. Upcoming courses include Green Woodworking, Permaculture and Bushcraft.

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/bishops-wood-centre.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>

Stewardship Scheme handbooks now online

New handbooks for Entry Level Stewardship (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/2798159>) and Higher Level Stewardship (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/2827091>) are now available from the Natural England web site. If you have land in stewardship schemes, it is worth taking a look at these updated handbooks.

First genetic data of Chalara fungus in UK made publicly-available to help research

In a new application of crowdsourcing, the genetic data of the *Chalara* ash dieback fungus in the UK is being placed online to help researchers. The web site, OpenAshDieback is at <http://oadb.tsl.ac.uk/> and explanatory articles are available from the BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-20719507> and The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/dec/14/ash-dieback-scientists-crowdsourcing-fungus>

New disease of plane trees widespread in City of London

A new disease is threatening London Plane trees. The *Massaria* ascomycete fungus has been discovered to be widespread, with 40% of susceptible trees infected in new survey by the Arboricultural Association. See <http://www.trees.org.uk/aa/news/Sacs-in-the-City-120.html> for more information.

New Practice Note from Forestry Commission: Managing Public Safety around Harvesting Sites

If the public have access to your woods, or to paths or roads running alongside your woods, then you need to read this note to ensure that you follow guidelines for public safety when you are harvesting wood.

The Forestry Commission say “*This Practice Note provides guidance to help landowners, forest managers and forestry practitioners manage public safety on harvesting sites. Forest operations are high-risk activities, and the management issues involved in harvesting and hauling timber while maintaining public access to forests and woodlands can be complex. There are a number of tasks that have to be undertaken – both during planning and while carrying out operations – to ensure that people’s health and safety is not put at risk. This Note sets out the different roles and responsibilities for managing public safety to ensure that activities on and around harvesting worksites are co-ordinated and the right tasks are carried out by the right people. It provides information and advice on suitable control measures and illustrates good practice through the use of scenarios.*” See—<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/publications.nsf/searchpub/?SearchView&Query=%28FCPN019%29&SearchOrder=4&SearchMax=0&SearchWV=TRUE&SearchThesaurus=TRUE>



New eBook for UK Forestry Standard

An eBook summary of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) Requirements and Guidelines for use on mobile devices has been launched by the Forestry Commission. The application provides a summary checklist of UKFS Requirements and Guidelines for

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

general forestry practice and each of the following elements of sustainable forest management: Biodiversity, Climate change, Historic environment, Landscape, People, Soil, and Water. It is, in effect, Chapters 5 and 6, 'UKFS Requirements' and 'UKFS Guidelines', of the UKFS document.

The eBook has initially been made available in standard 'ePub' format, readable by iOS and Android devices, and a Kindle version will be available soon. Go to <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/publications> and search for UKFS as the link given in the press release doesn't lead to the eBook. Or go directly to [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/PDF/FCFC001.ePub/\\$FILE/FCFC001.ePub](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/PDF/FCFC001.ePub/$FILE/FCFC001.ePub) which will download the book to your mobile device or computer.

National Forestry Inventory – Report on Broadleaves and Ash

New report from FC available providing and inventory and maps of coverage of broad-leaved woodland in the UK, with particular focus on ash. There are detailed maps and tables of standing timber coverage and volume for different areas, as well as the age profiles of the trees for the common broadleaved species. This report builds on the previous inventory of coniferous trees, published in 2011. Report is free from the FC web site. [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/NFI_Prelim_BL_Ash_Estimates.pdf/\\$FILE/NFI_Prelim_BL_Ash_Estimates.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/NFI_Prelim_BL_Ash_Estimates.pdf/$FILE/NFI_Prelim_BL_Ash_Estimates.pdf)

New Director of FC England from Finance/Consultancy background

The newly-appointed Director of the Forestry Commission in England has been introduced by the Forestry Commission. *"Ian Gambles, previously Director of National Infrastructure at the Planning Inspectorate, has experience from both the public and private sectors, including HM Treasury and as a management consultant. Ian's 12 years in consultancy were focused principally on developing and implementing strategy within the public sector. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants."* <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/AllByUNID/AB515690B83C6A4080257AF50030DAB2>



Read Oliver Rackham on Ash Dieback – from Smallwoods

<http://smallwoods.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/AshDisease-Oliver-Rackham-Nov-2012.doc> - this is a Word document of an article that appeared in Smallwoods magazine in January 2013.

Closing date for RFS Excellence in Forestry awards is rapidly approaching!

The Small Woodlands category is sponsored by woodlands.co.uk, and the closing date is 4th March. If you own a woodland in the West Midlands and North West Forestry Commission Region, and would like to enter, now is the time to get your forms completed. <http://www.rfs.org.uk/involved/RFS-Excellence-in-Forestry-Awards-overview>

Views needed by 4th February

Triennial review of Environment Agency and Natural England is being conducted joint-

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. They also run online ecology courses.

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

ly. If you would like to contribute to the discussion, you need to do so by 4th February. Please see <http://www.defra.gov.uk/review-ea-ne/>

Charities afraid to challenge public policy for fear of retribution

A recent article in The Guardian drew attention to the fact that the independence of charities, and their ability to act as advocates for their causes, is being undermined by their increasing reliance on public sector funding and contracts. Although this is about charities involved in lobby against poverty, it has implications for charities involved in woodlands and nature conservation too - the original article is at <http://t.co/uESoqMdN> and the original report by the Baring Foundation is at <http://www.independencepanel.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Independence-Under-Threat-The-Voluntary-Sector-in-2013-WebVersion12.pdf>

DEFRA Myth-Busters

If you are wondering about some of the stuff you read online – DEFRA have a myth-busters section in which you can explore their point of view about topical environmental issues. Although you may not always agree with them, it is a useful perspective on their thinking, and provides balance for some press articles. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/category/news/myths/>

Import restrictions and tracking for all trees now in force

If you want, or need, to import trees for planting schemes, then new regulations are now in force to ensure that all saplings across the EU can be tracked to reduce the likelihood of inadvertently spreading tree diseases. Nurseries are working to ensure that native seed is grown locally, but there may be instances where trees are being imported, for example, to introduce cultivars resistant to climate change. The DEFRA news release says, “*Tighter controls on the import of native species of trees have been announced today by Environment Secretary Owen Paterson as the latest action to guard against tree pests and diseases.*”

The new regulations to track the import of oak, ash, sweet chestnut and plane trees from countries within the EU come into force tomorrow. This will allow plant health inspectors to target their inspections and to track saplings if there are any suspicions that they carry a pest or disease”

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2013/01/16/protect-trees-disease/>

New online scheme for single farm payments under CAP

A new online scheme for single payments under the Common Agricultural Policy is now up and running. It will apply to all payments made under the single farm payment scheme that come under the remit of the CAP and will thus include Forestry Commission grants. If you are in receipt of a grant, you are going to be asked to use this system to obtain your payments.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2013/01/22/quicker-easier-farm-payments/>

Funding secured for National Wildlife Crime Unit

The NWCU will continue after funding was secured, it was announced on 23rd January. The unit had been under consideration for withdrawal of funding, but its work battling wildlife crime will now continue. The Unit is



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/diary.htm>

based in Livingston, in Scotland, and covers both Domestic and International wildlife crime. For more information see <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2013/01/23/wildlife-crime-fight-continues/>

The Big Spawn Count is Back

Help is needed to record the number of clumps of spawn in your ponds at home or at your woods. The Pond Conservation Trust is asking for your help again this year with their survey. For more information, and to record results see <http://www.pondconservation.org.uk/bigponddip/BigSpawncount>



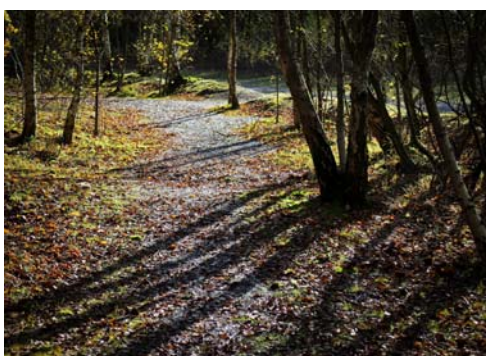
Monitor of Engagement with Natural Environment

A new report from Natural England presents the results of a survey showing how different social groups engage with the natural environment. There are significant differences in the way in which deprived urban communities, black and minority ethnic communities, the elderly and those with disabilities and long term illnesses engage with the natural environment. This includes differences in frequencies of visits, places visited, activities undertaken and perceived barriers. Woodland visits are particularly infrequent among black and minority ethnic and deprived urban social groups. <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4646400>

High Speed Rail Route 2 to Manchester and Leeds Announced

The second phase of HS2 comprising the Y route from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds has been announced on Monday 28th January.

The proposed route to Leeds will cut through 11 ancient woodlands and 23 Biodiversity Action Plan sites, and will impact many more. In addition, it will cut right through the National Forest on its way to Nottingham.



Phase 2 West (Manchester) will directly affect 6 ancient woodlands and 12 BAP sites. Phase 2 East (Leeds) will directly affect 11 ancient woodlands and 23 BAP sites, as well as passing through a SSSI outside Tamworth. The whole scheme will directly affect 17 ancient woodlands, and 35 BAP sites, and indirectly affect many others by disturbance during construction, and severance of wildlife corridors. Alvecote Wood, owned by Sarah (editor of this newsletter) is one of the sites that will be indirectly affected, being only a few hundred yards from the construction, and part of a wider landscape-scale conservation project with an adjacent country park and SSSI that is on the HS2 route (pictured above).

The plans are now available on the DFT web site at <https://www.gov.uk/hs2-phase-two-initial-preferred-route-plan-and-profile-maps>. If you own a woodland that will be directly or indirectly affected by either the Leeds or Manchester route we would love to hear your views.

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.

<http://www.woodlandskills.com/#/courses/4530829941>

Abbots Living Wood offers a range of green woodworking courses

http://www.living-wood.co.uk/green_wood_work_courses.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>

Courses and Events

Tree Diseases – Threats to Urban Trees

This free one-day workshop will take place at Myerscough College, 6th Feb <http://www.trees.org.uk/aa/documents/training/FC-PD-EventFlyer-A4.pdf> and <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-93YD48>

CONFOR 2013 at Longleat 12/13 September

If you went to APF last year, you'll enjoy CONFOR this year – suitable for small woodland owners, farm woodland owners, woodland professionals and people with an interest in woodlands and the countryside. <http://www.confor.org.uk/NewsAndEvents/Default.aspx?pid=174>

Mammal Society Spring Conference

University of Exeter, Sat/Sun 20/21st April - see <http://www.mammal.org.uk/conference>

Advance notice - Plant Health Event in the West Midlands

Heartwoods are arranging a Biosecurity event in Shropshire/ Herefordshire, on the 24 April 2013. The event will take a broad look at plant health, pests and diseases, latest research and practice. More details will follow in subsequent newsletters, but this is a diary date for you.

Open Day at the new RFS HQ, on Tuesday 16th April

The RFS is opening a new HQ near Banbury and to celebrate, RFS members are invited to attend an Open Day on **Tuesday 16th April 2013**. If you are interested please contact Karen Jones on karen.jones@rfs.org.uk

Sussex Wildlife Trust – Wildlife Courses for Everybody

Lots of fantastic courses coming up in Sussex this year – the courses for March are outlined below. These include raptors, amphibians, bryophytes, nature photography, geology and landscape and the brown hare. See http://www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/events/courses_diary/page00003.htm and flip through the diary for more interesting courses during the year.

Green Corridor – Environmental Education for 16-25's

Green Corridor offer a range of courses including skills in horticulture and work-based environmental management and conservation. They are based in West Sussex, and offer courses that lead to recognised qualifications. See <http://www.greencorridor.org.uk/get-qualifications>

Species Recovery Trust

Offering a range of courses in 2013 starting in May in the South of England, including identification of grasses, flowers, lichens, birds and native British Trees. See <http://www.speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk/Training%20Courses%202013.html>

Bat Conservation

Lots of courses relating to bat surveying, bat identification, and bat ecology for foresters, arborists and amateur enthusiasts. Download their brochure from <http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/training.html>

Courses at the Woodland Skills Centre

Rodney writes "The Woodland Skills Centre in north-east Wales runs a programme of over 60 courses a year. These include woodland management, home chain-saw, coppice and greenwood crafts and a range of traditional crafts including basket-making, spoon

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 Bulworth Project

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

<http://www.bulworthproject.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

carving, wood carving, timber-frame building, making a long bow, making rakes, willow animal sculpture, Welsh frame baskets, coracles, hedge-laying, charcoal burning, making and using a shave-horse and pole-lathe, bee-keeping, making a bushcraft knife and a range of bushcraft courses.

The Centre is run by a not-for-profit Social Enterprise company and is based in 50 acres of woodland in the Clwydian range AONB. There is free camping and, for 2013, the new timber-frame, timber clad, sheepswool insulated, wood-heated Education Centre will have been completed and is available for use by course members with the use of kitchen, w.c. and shower. “

To see details of all the courses look at <http://www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk/>

Courses in Kent from AJS

Based in Ashford in Kent, and courses run at Godinton House and Sparkes Gill Wood. More details on <http://www.ajscrafts.co.uk/courses/CourseList.aspx>

Willow Cultivation – 16th February

Living Willow Chairs – 23rd February

Hedgelaying – 2/3rd March

Coracles – 9/10th March

Hedgerow Basketry 16/17 and 23/24th March

Shrink Pots 30th March

Fan Birds 31st March

Wattle Hurdles 20th April

Bird ID from FSC

Loads of courses on bird ID including interesting course on ID by sound and sight, April 5-7, Flatford Mill Centre.

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/individuals-and-families/natural-history/birds-and-other-animals/birds.aspx>

Tree ID and woodland management courses from FSC

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/individuals-and-families/natural-history/flowers-and-other-plants/trees.aspx>

General Habitats and Conservation Courses from FSC

Includes permaculture, woodland management, Phase One Habitat Surveys, Habitat Creation - <http://www.field-studies-council.org/individuals-and-families/natural-history/habitats-and-conservation/general.aspx>

Courses from Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

Lots of courses coming up, including courses on Ecological Impact Assessment in January and February at centres in Bristol and London – see <http://www.icem.net/events>

Management services for small woodland owners.

Bodfari Environmental is a small family business based in north-east Wales but covering parts of north-west England as well, which specializes in working in small woodlands.

They can carry out a wide range of work : tree planting, hedge creation, hedge laying, thinning, tree felling, tree surgery, fences, gates, stiles, pond creation and woodland structures.

They also offer free advisory visits when time allows. Their website is www.bodfari-environmental.co.uk or contact at enquiries@bodfari-environmental.co.uk

One-Day Permaculture Workshop in Stepney

Still a few places left for the course on Saturday 23rd February - http://stepneycityfarm.org/?page_id=35

Courses calendar from Smallwoods

Lots of relevant and useful courses held at the Greenwood Centre run by Smallwoods. These include coppicing, pole lathe turning, forest schools courses, hurdle-making, chair-making and others. <http://smallwoods.org.uk/courses-events/courses-calendar/>

Mammal ID Courses from Mammal Society

8th - 10th March 2013	Flatford Mill, Suffolk, CO 7UL
12th - 14th April 2013	Juniper Hall, Surrey, RH5 6DA
10th - 12th May 2013	Derrygonnelly, Fermanagh, BT93 6HW
21st - 23rd June 2013	Kindrogan, Perthshire, PH10 7PG
2nd - 4th August 2013	Nettlecombe, Somerset, TA4 4HT
30th Aug - 1st Sept 2013	Holt Hall, Norfolk, NR25 6RT

<http://www.mammal.org.uk/MID> and other courses at <http://www.mammal.org.uk/training#courses>

Alvecote Wood Courses

Includes introductory photography workshops, wildlife, insect and macro photography workshops, and family bushcraft days and short courses to be run by GetOutOfTheClassroom.com. There is also a programme of monthly public open days, and weekly public open evenings through the spring to autumn months.

See <http://www.alvecotewood.co.uk/2013EventsProgramV1.pdf>



New training course offers insight into Forest Landscape Design

FC Scotland is offering a new classroom-based course to people involved in woodland management. It will explore the principles of forest landscape design (as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) Guidelines 'Forests and Landscape'). The informal two day, classroom based course is aimed primarily at forest managers and their advisers, but will also be useful for anyone with a more general interest in understanding how forest landscape design can effectively integrate forests into the wide range of upland landscapes. It is intended to run them at locations throughout Scotland during 2013. There will be a non-refundable registration fee of £40 towards setting up costs. Course reference materials are free to view and [download](#) from the FCS web-site. For further information please contact Nicholas Shepherd. Email: nicholas.shepherd@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Greenwood Days—Open Day and Forthcoming Courses

Greenwood Days at Spring Wood near Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire, will be holding their open day on 9th April this year. Come along and see the woods, and demonstrations from the course leaders. You can also try your hand at green wood-working, and get a feel for the courses that are on offer. Last year's open day was excellent, as were the green woodworking courses, so it is a great opportunity to come along, have a go, and decide which courses you would like to attend.

The first courses for the new year will be Charcoal Making (20-21st April), Greenwood Experience (20-21st April), and Willow Sculpture (25-26th April). Further courses will include furniture-making, coracle-making, longbow-making and many others.

For more details, please see www.greenwooddays.co.uk

On the blogs at woodlands.co.uk and on the web

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.

What's happening in the market for commercial woodlands? ~ by Angus

Angus looks at a report from Tilhill, that details which woodlands are being sold, by whom and for how much.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-economics/whats-happening-in-the-market-for-commercial-woodlands/>

Social Forestry in Glede Wood ~ by Helen Jones

Helen reports on a social forestry scheme in Shropshire reaching out to people from minority ethnic communities and people with mental health problems. This is the final report, as the woods are going to be sold, and they will move on to another location.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/social-forestry-in-glede-wood-2/>

Ground beetles – Carabids declining! ~ by Chris

Ground beetles are declining in numbers, and yet they are a vitally important part of the woodland ecosystem, acting as general predators, helping to control pests, and eating seeds of common weeds, as well as forming a vital part of the diet of woodland birds.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/flora-and-fauna/ground-beetles-carabids-declining/>

Doing more in woodlands – Mark Walton and his “shared assets” project ~ by Angus

Mark talks about how communities who want to manage woodlands can be brought together with landowners who have woodlands that need management.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/doing-more-in-woodlands-mark-walton-and-his-shared-assets-project/>

Making model trees and woodlands in tabletop battles. ~ by Oliver

How do you make realistic woodlands and trees for tabletop games and other applications?

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/making-model-trees-and-woodlands-in-tabletop-battles/>

Bracken Control ~ by Nick Burton

A subject dear to many hearts, how do we keep bracken under control after the banning of a herbicide used for this purpose? Horse-logging businesses can be used in

summer for bracken-bashing instead!

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-economics/bracken-control/>

2012 – a rather wet year. ~ by Lewis

Lewis looks at the strange weather we suffered in 2012, and its effect on woodlands. Which species liked the rain, and which were the losers?

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-economics/2012-a-rather-wet-year/>

A School in the Forest? ~ by Lily Horseman

Lily talks about Forest Schools, a scheme that helps children to learn in a natural environment, providing an opportunity to learn and explore nature, and develop new skills. What do Forest Schools do, and how can you become involved?



<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/a-school-in-the-forest/>

Wooden gutters, shingles and downpipes ~ by Peter

How can wood be used for roofing a building, and for guttering and drainage? Have a look and see.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/practical-guides/wooden-gutters-shingles-and-downpipes/>

To dredge or not to dredge? Woodland ponds ~ by Angus

If you have a pond filling up with silt, what should you do? Dredging may improve quality, provide opportunities to reprofile and put in silt traps, or it may be better to allow one pond to fill in and build another new one instead. Angus blogs about how to go about it (includes a video).

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/practical-guides/to-dredge-or-not-to-dredge-woodland-ponds/>

Newsletter - February 2013

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 Judith 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

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On the SWOG Forum

Lots of new members have joined the forum since the last newsletter in December 2012. Welcome to **wayne** from Holmfirth, **Markand Jay** from Leicester, **ratcatcher** from Essex, **sebbo** from East Sussex, **MartinB** from Derbyshire, **Justin** who has just bought a wood in Devon, **MattF** from North East Derbyshire, **Sylvan** from Gatwick, **ericmark**, a photographer from Wales. Just goes to prove that membership really is countrywide.

Brown asked about the availability of, and bureaucracy surrounding grants for woodland planning and creation. Do you have any experience to share?

Splodger asked for examples of dead-hedges that people have created—there are some wonderful photos on this thread, definitely worth a visit.

MatreCycle asked what we have been doing in the woods this month. Lots, apparently. Coppicing, dead-hedging, pollarding, thinning, photography and being ill seemed to feature.

Oldclaypaws posted a video of woodmice in our wildlife section—definitely worth a view on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7RWyrQx-XA&list=UU7RUv18S4bB5K1WUmXzxmdA&index=1>

Squirrels and how to deal with them featured again this month, with **Brown** asking for advice on how to manage the damage they are causing.

Rich asked for identification of a nest and poo, and in the absence of Chris Packham from our group, we did a fine job of identifying a woodmouse nest.

Ratcatcher also posted some fox footage on the wildlife section—again, worth a look.

Neil wanted help identifying the cause of dieback on some of his conifers—lots of suggestions, the most plausible being

weather damage.

Pithillquarry wanted some advice about evergreen ground cover to plant in a restored fly-tipped site—any suggestions?

The weather and flooding featured in more than one topic on the General section of the forum—how have you been affected? Do you have any photos?

Oldclaypaws introduced Junior—possibly the cutest puppy ever—or do you have any cuter pictures?

Oldclaypaws also shared some amazing photos of creative firewood stacks—these are works of art, as well as practical.

Ratcatcher started a discussion on air rifles—if you have experience, please contribute to the forum.

SteveMedlock reported the theft of the top of a mature conifer as a Christmas tree, and the discussion moved on to locks and cameras to prevent recurrence. And **oldclaypaws** reported the theft of a log trolley.

Oldclaypaws posted some helpful information about planning guidelines for buildings in a forestry setting on the planning thread.

Catweazle asked about capital gains tax on a woodland sale—do you have any experience of paying this, and how to value land and timber?

Oldclaypaws asked what to do with a large number of tree stumps he has in his woods—leave alone, sell as valuable resource, keep as habitat?

Ratcatcher posted photos of his log-burning stoves—which led to more photos. What is your installation like?

Ratcatcher also asked what searches need to be done when buying woodland. What do you think?

Next Newsletter: March 2013

Contributions for the March Newsletter need to be with me by 25th February 2013. Everything is welcome: reviews, news from your woods, activities, courses, meetings, photos. Send to sarah@swog.org.uk