

# Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter July 2014



# Small Woodland Owners' Group

[www.swog.org.uk](http://www.swog.org.uk)



Summer is well and truly here and we're looking forward to seeing many of you at the Westonbirt and Bentley woodfairs over the next couple of months. If you can help out on the SWOG stall by displaying woodland products, please get in touch.

In the meantime, enjoy the newsletter and please keep sending in the photos and accounts of your woodland activities.

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodland. The company Woodlands.co.uk sponsors the group, so membership is completely free and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated. SWOG is open to anyone interested in the management or the enjoyment of woodland.

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## SWOG website and forum

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## In this issue

- **Events and News** 3
  - WIG scheme
  - Plant response to climate change
- **SWOG Forum** 5
- **You are now the proud owner of a small woodland!** 6
- **Brede High Woods - book review** 8
- **Growing your business** 10
- **Woodlands blogs and TV** 12
- **Woodfair listing and help** 12, 13

## SWOG COURSE LIST APRIL 2014



## SWOG Course Listings

Anyone who buys a wood from Woodlands.co.uk is given £300 towards a woodland course to help towards owners' enjoyment and knowledge. These courses can encompass anything from basket-weaving, green woodworking or pole lathe turning, to chainsaw tuition and woodland management. Buyers are asked to write a short resumé of their course, noting how effective they

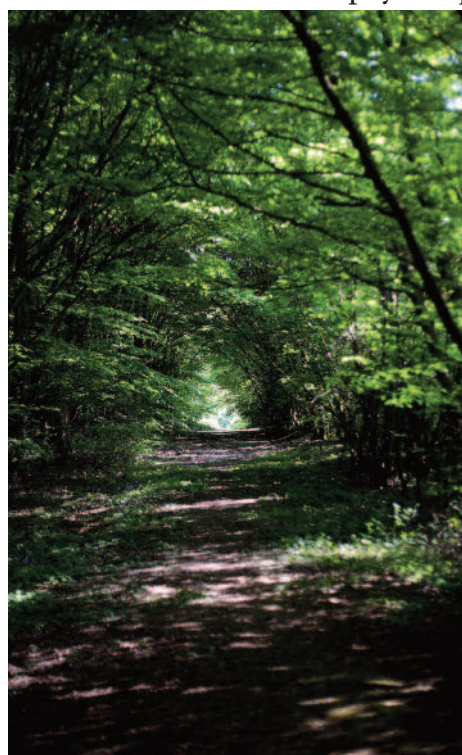
found it, and whether they would recommend it to others.

We are gradually incorporating all these valuable comments into a database listing which can be searched by area or course topic. We hope it will be useful to anyone searching for help and guidance in choosing a woodland course. Technological gremlins have bedevilled progress, but version two is now on the SWOG website here: [www.swog.org.uk/courses-4](http://www.swog.org.uk/courses-4)

## Woodland Improvement Grant scheme extended – apply now!

The Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) has been extended and is open for applications – but only until the end of September this year. So, if you have any roads schemes in mind get your applications in as soon as possible.

The Woodfuel WIG funds access projects which will enable the sustainable extraction of timber from woodland where it is currently inaccessible. It can also pay for professional



support measuring and marketing timber from under-managed compartments.

The current grant covers up to 60% of the cost of work and can be used to fund development on every type of forest road, from quad bike tracks, to haul

roads for 44-tonne timber wagons, and everything in between. Funded work could include the installation of new roads, loading bays or entrance gates, or repairs to faults along access routes, such as damaged bridges and drainage repair.

The timescale for the application process is as follows:

- End of September 2014 – all grant applications must be submitted.
- End of December 2014 – contracts must be signed.
- End of September 2015 – all work must be completed and claimed for.

Previous grants handed out include £9,600 to



improve access roads to a woodland area; £7,500 for the construction of long haul extraction tracks, loading bays and bridge repairs; and £50,000 for the creation of access tracks to a previously unmanageable area of land.

### Grants for small woodland owners

Although many of these grants are taken up by larger producers, small woodland owners are also eligible. Several owners of woods smaller than 10 acres have benefited from the scheme. One neglected Chiltern 10-acre woodland has been brought back into management, and full details of the work and costs are here. A small ASNW wood in Devon, with difficult access and rare wildlife is now functioning as a renewable firewood concern thanks to guidance and a grant. Read more about it here.

To read more about these and other grants awarded by the Woodfuel WIG scheme and to see a useful videos which provide more details about eligibility, visit the Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant hub page here.

To find out more about getting a Woodfuel Woodland Improvement Grant, email [mike.furness@ngagesolutions.co.uk](mailto:mike.furness@ngagesolutions.co.uk) or phone Mike on 01494 568970. The grant is delivered on behalf of the Forestry Commission by Ngage Solutions across the south-east, south-west and the county of Cumbria, and direct from the FC elsewhere.

## South Downs Wood Fair and Country Crafts Show

**July 12th & 13th 10am–5pm Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Nr Petersfield PO8 8QE**

Now in its fourth year, the South Downs Wood Fair and Country Show, held in the glorious parkland at the foot of Butser Hill, has a mix of bushcraft, heavy horses, falconry, re-enactments, chainsaw carving, ferret racing, a craft marquee, amusements, music, refreshments, trade stands, have-a-go areas and much more.

Admission: adults: £8.00/seniors: £7.00

Accompanied under 16s free.

Parking is free. To find out more visit the website: [www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk/south](http://www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk/south)



## Plant responses to climate change

A study led by the University of Cambridge using data collected by the Woodland Trust and published in the Royal Society Journal<sup>1</sup> has found that plants and trees in the UK are responding to climate change by either moving range north or flowering earlier. However, a number of species appear to show no response, which may suggest an inability to adapt to change. The data recorded by members of the public for the Woodland Trust's Nature's Calendar project, combined with records dating back over 250 years, highlight how 293 species have responded to an increase in temperatures across the UK. 38 perennial species studied, including rowan and hawthorn, appear not to



be tracking changes in the climate.

### Reactions to temperature change

Species whose flowering dates are most responsive to

temperature show least change in their geographic range. The Rue-leaved Saxifrage has advanced its flowering dates by 11 days over the last 50 years, consequently its range has not moved north (it actually moved 0.07 degrees south). In contrast, the flowering dates of the Blue Fleabane, commonly found in south-east England, has advanced its flowering by only three days over the same time period, its range moving 0.13 degrees of latitude north instead.

Dr Kate Lewthwaite, Nature's Calendar project manager, said: "This paper highlights how important records provided by members of the public to the Woodland Trust are in identifying long term trends in the natural environment."

### Changes in flowering date/latitude for six common UK species

- Bluebell: 5 days earlier/0.074 degrees north
- Holly: 16 days earlier/0.084 degrees north
- Oxeye daisy: 11 days earlier/0.047 degrees north
- Wood anemone: 2 days earlier/0.041 degrees north
- Lesser celandine: No change/0.112 degrees north
- Bramble: 15 days earlier/0.094 degrees north

*Spending time in the woods means enjoying the natural environment, and when you're outside for long enough, there is, inevitably a call of nature.*

Forum members have revived the ever-popular subject of woodland loos or tree bogs here. Construction is a carefully-planned process and there has been much discussion over how to allow waste matter to break down in a harmless and inoffensive manner.

**Wendlespanwick** has constructed a traditional hut-like structure over bales of hay, while **Tarrel** is building a rather larger loo with a clear corrugated roof, useful for both admiring the treetop canopy and collecting rainwater. His loo uses four fir trees as natural supports, and when asked what would happen over time as the trees grow, remarked, 'Well, I suppose that will be one of life's little excitements!'. Finally, **Rich** has shown off his elegant woodland loo with a view, complete with handrail – but no door, so users can continue to enjoy the great outdoors.

### Sorting out the mess

**Outeredge** wondered what to do with the large piles of conifer brash and slim limbs left behind after felling operations in his wood. He asked how quickly it would break down and how useful it is as a wildlife habitat. **Meadowcopse** had seen Sitka spruce soften and break down only after 12 years or so, and **Oldclaypaws** noted that pine resin delays its decomposition, and that the needles form an acid compost. Suggestions ranged from stacking the larger pieces for use as firewood, turning the twiggy stuff into faggots, burning some just to clear it, and finally, using it as a deadwood hedge.

### Damp ground and soggy tracks

The perennial problem of soggy tracks has been under discussion. **Dredger99** has installed some grass paver membrane along his track, but it is pricey and he wondered what other woodland owners do. **Davetb** suggested using old bricks (often freely available from builders' skips) to fill the ruts. **Wendlespanwick** resorts to snow chains up a particularly steep and muddy track. **The Barrowers** reported that he had just fixed his track with a delivery of MOT type 1 aggregate, ruefully commenting that a ton really doesn't go very far.

*Thanks to Wendlespanwick, Tarrel and Rich for the pictures.*



*Wendlespanwick's new loo.*



*Tarrel's loo is supported by four fir trees.*



*Rich has opted for a fine handrail and an open aspect.*

## You are now the proud owner of a small woodland!

*Keen-eyed followers of the Forum will know that Smojo has been trying to buy a wood for some time and he has been taking advice from SWOG members.*

There have been some really useful threads about the best location, costs, rules and regulations, planning advice – no stone has been left unturned in the quest for information. In mid-June a loud, if virtual cheer went into the ether when we heard that Smojo's dream had come true and he is now the proud owner of 7 acres of woodland near Doncaster.

A self-confessed newcomer to the world of woodland ownership, Smojo has brought out the best in the more experienced woodland owners on the forum, who have been incredibly helpful with advice, and Smojo has responded in kind:

'Thanks for all the encouragement folks. I've been like a cat on a hot tin roof waiting for it to complete – grinning like a Cheshire cat now! First job when I get there is to put my woodland



name board up and stake my claim. Make a cuppa, sit a watch the birds. Then just have a right good wander round again and see what's going on. Pull a few brambles and pick the odd bits of leftover litter just to feel that I've started. Probably take some vid of a walk around and post it for folks to look at. I'll be in heaven.'

### **It's what I've wanted most of my life**

'When I went to view it the first time I had huge doubts about the whole thing. After wandering about for half an hour I sat on a log and drank my flask of coffee and just watched and listened. It had a hugely calming effect and I understood what people have been saying about owning a wood. I wanted it there and then and although it isn't the best location for me, I could have it and start to enjoy it this year and it's now that I need it.'

Once the final paperwork had been signed, Smojo started a list of what he thought he might need for his wood – and fellow forum members were not slow to chip in. Some 50 posts later, he had compiled a comprehensive list of essentials – interestingly, cake and tea featured almost as prominently as chainsaws. So here, for the sake of argument, is a beginner's list of



## You are now the proud owner of a small woodland!

woodland kit – everyone will have a different opinion on this, so please let us know what's missing or what seems superfluous. Why take a kelly kettle, for example, when you can set off from home with a couple of thermos flasks? We have a grab box of our essentials which we throw into the car when needed – the only snag is remembering to keep the supplies of matches, firelighters and, inevitably, tea and coffee topped up. And why did no one mention sausages and a frying pan?



### Essential

- First aid kit
- brushcutter
- two stoke oil and fuel
- decent bushcrafter-style knife
- bow saw (if you haven't a chainsaw yet)
- pocket pruning saw
- axes (or at least one)
- wheelbarrow
- billhook
- big mallet (for driving in stakes – can make one out of a log – *see June newsletter*)
- kettle or billy can and firelighting method (matches, lighter or firesteel, etc)
- stainless steel mugs (double walled)
- brew stuff – tea, coffee etc
- 5 gallon clean water container
- strong boots, gloves, goggles, ear defenders, PPE etc
- mobile phone
- sharpening stones/files
- rope, strong twine
- logging tongs

### Good to have

- Chainsaw (probably essential, but not necessary to own it) and oil and fuel
- wide rake
- tarp or basha for making a shelter for wet weather
- Canterbury hoe (for those pesky bramble roots)
- machete
- bush hook for clearing undergrowth
- soft wire and pliers
- Deet or insect repellent
- felling wedges
- felling bar/lever
- soft wire and pliers
- camping stove (if you want convenience and can't wait to get a fire going)
- folding stool or chair

If you would like to read the whole thread, click here to visit the SWOG forum.  
[www.swog.org.uk/forum//viewtopic.php?f=32&t=1919&p=12108#p12108](http://www.swog.org.uk/forum//viewtopic.php?f=32&t=1919&p=12108#p12108)



## Brede High Woods – book review

*Heather Martin reviews Brede High Woods*  
The history and wildlife of a High Weald wood  
by Patrick Roper.

This book is essentially a guide to the 262 hectare site owned and managed by the Woodland Trust in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has been written by Patrick Roper, a professional ecologist whose life for the last 50 years or more has been inextricably linked with Brede High Woods through work, leisure and even for recuperative benefits following personal injury.

He describes eloquently and concisely in 13 chapters everything a visitor would like or need to know about the many diverse habitats encompassed within the boundary ranging from ancient woodland, small open fields and heath, to areas once farmed then planted over with both conifer and broadleaved trees. Starting with an explanation of the geography and geology followed by the history of the Trust's second largest site in England, the author moves on to an assessment of the different types of habitat then details in separate chapters the interesting, varied, occasionally rare trees, ground flora, insect and animal life. Seasonal

*Common hornbeam in Brede High Wood. (Courtesy Woodland Trust)*



highlights, suggested walking routes and a very comprehensive bibliography bring the work to a conclusion.

What lifts *Brede High Woods* out of the category of a basic guidebook is Patrick Roper's innate enthusiasm and inquisitiveness combined with an expert's knowledge of the subject that weaves its way through the text from start to finish. Personal anecdotes, tips, comments, beliefs and snippets of advice add richness to the descriptive passages making them of interest to even those who might never visit this particular place and helps the reader to understand the unique characteristics that typify woodland across the High Weald region of southern England.

32 pages of beautiful photographs assist in building a mental image of Brede High Woods but I personally would have liked to see more of the views and natural life that make this specific site so special, such as the sphagnum moss beds and rare insects.

Also, although there is an excellent map covering pages 2-3, I would have appreciated a fold-out version to negate the necessity of continually turning back to the beginning to locate features mentioned. However in order to keep the cost of the book down to a very reasonable £9.99, this kind of addition is probably not an option.

Where I think the volume could be of real value to those who own and manage woodland regardless of its location or composition is as a template for use towards developing a structured management plan – albeit in a significantly abbreviated form! This would not only lead to a deeper understanding of the land but also provide the legacy of an important historical record for future

reference when the world we live in is indisputably subject to rapid change. To quote the author, 'I sometimes wonder what Brede High Woods will be like in the future. Within 50 years or so I believe a book like this will have only historic interest and the rate of change in wildlife I have seen in the last 50 years will be just as great and probably greater.'

The sheer joy Dr. Roper experiences walking through the woods whatever the season or weather has obviously never diminished over time, which I'm sure anyone who regularly takes this form of exercise in a much loved outdoor space can empathise with, but to be able to travel through that environment with an enhanced knowledge of it can only add to the

pleasure. *Brede High Woods* is a fascinating read that will hopefully inspire others to delve beneath the surface and discover what makes their own woods such intriguing and individual places.

### Visiting

Brede High Wood, a stunning mosaic of ancient and secondary woodland, open heathland and acid grassland, is located on the north-east shore of Powdermill Reservoir in East Sussex, in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has a rich history and a diverse range of wildlife. Directions and how to visit are available on the Woodland Trust website here: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting)

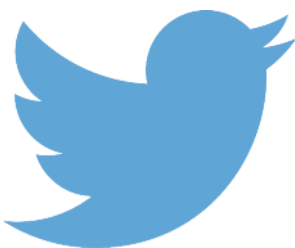
### Brede High Woods by Patrick Roper

184 pp 210x148 mm. Published by the Woodland Trust, price £9.99 plus £2.00 postage and packing (2nd class ).

To order, send a cheque for £11.99 to:

Brede Book, Sussex School of Archaeology Ltd, Unit 12, Mays Farm, Selmeston, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6TS or to make an online transfer call us on 01323 811785.

[www.sussexarchaeology.org/#!publications/ccxt](http://www.sussexarchaeology.org/#!publications/ccxt)



### Social media for woodland owners

Do you leave tweeting to the birds, or have you embraced all that 21st century technology has to

offer by way of virtual communication?

While no one has yet invented an app for chopping and stacking wood, and woodland owners are pretty much reliant on techniques that are almost as old as time, the internet is a hugely valuable resource for sharing information, expertise, and sourcing the best offers on chainsaws.

Many SWOG members run websites or Facebook pages to keep in touch with their woodland neighbours or to post blogs on their activities. The SWOG forum is another valuable

resource, which enables members to share problems, successes and experience, and mull over all manner of woodland-related topics.

There is also a Facebook page – search for Small Woodland Owners Group – which is open to anyone and hosts some great photos of woodland activities.

We know there are some wonderful websites and blogs out there and would love to link to them via the SWOG website. As some people are saying north of the border, we're better together, and the SWOG community is a superb source of support and advice. Although we have a number of links to websites belonging to woodland owners, the list could do with an update. So if you would like to share your blog, website or tweets with us, email [judith@swog.org.uk](mailto:judith@swog.org.uk), or follow @\_swog on Twitter.

## Growing your business

*Like many skilled woodland workers, Rich Hare is confident of his practical talents, but wanted to learn how to improve his profits. He has attended a course run by the Small Woods Association and the Southdowns National Park Authority, intended for small businesses in the coppice sector of the region.*

The three-day, 'Grow your Business' course was held at the Sustainability Centre in the heart of the Hampshire downs. It was attended by about a dozen coppice workers and small woodland owners who had either been working in the sector, or aspired to work in it. Their aim: to turn a love of their workplace and vocation into a profitable and sustainable enterprise. The course was part classroom-based, part practical and part site visits.

### Valuing your work

Conroy Williams took the classroom theory part of the course. He has years of experience of running small businesses and social enterprises

and now specialises in helping small businesses to succeed and grow through his website, [wsxenterprise.co.uk](http://wsxenterprise.co.uk)

He covered fundamental subjects, such as

- Identifying your typical customer – how to find them,

*Cleft coppiced chestnut lathes for sale at English Woodlands Timber.*



and emphasising the importance of modern technology and social media.

- Costs – consideration of all costs of the business, both, fixed and variable.
- Pricing – how to price your product or service to ensure you make a profit

These are all valuable lessons. It was generally agreed that coppice workers and craftsmen can sometimes be guilty of undervaluing their time and experience when arriving at a price for their product.

Alongside the formal classroom sessions, delegates also took time to make some coppice products with Darren and Les, local coppice workers and craftsmen who specialise in hazel hurdles, thatching spars, oak shingles and framing pegs. This gave an opportunity for attendees to see at first hand the processes involved from cutting to finished product, and to quiz them on their business models.

### Practical experience

The last day was set aside for site visits. First up was Alan Waters of Wildwood Coppice products. Alan has spent a lifetime in the sector and specialises in charcoal production, pimps for kindling and artisan bakeries as well as riverbank faggots. He is passionate about his products and it shows, although he did emphasise the need for combining this passion with a lot of hard work.





*Alan Waters demonstrates his 'Exeter' retort charcoal kiln.*

At the other end of the market, a visit to the saw mill yard of English Woodland Timber showed attendees a successful timber milling and marketing business which was established in 1942. Although they do stock a selection of local handmade products, a lot of their business has gone online and now customers can search and select individual boards from their comprehensive website. This company has grown through a dedication to customer care and by embracing modern technology.

The last visit of the day was to Ben Law's Prickly Nut Wood. Ben has been making a living from his chestnut coppice in Lodsworth for many years. After beautifully crafting his own house from its produce, Ben has completed many more round wood timber framing projects. He now trains apprentices, runs courses and is a prolific author of books on the subject. However, he has not lost touch with his main love, the care and guardianship of his woods.

Finally, back at the  
*Ben Law introduces his coppice  
extraction equipment.*

Sustainability Centre, everyone was given a chance to present their ideas and what they had learnt from the course. The feedback was good and everyone found the three days very useful. We often hear the expression, 'a wood that pays is a wood that stays,' and courses like this go a long way to illustrate just this. Many thanks go to the Small Woods Association and Southdowns National Park who subsidised the course and made it a very affordable and worthwhile event for workers in the sector.



Visit [Woodlands.co.uk/blog](http://Woodlands.co.uk/blog) or click on the title to read the full blog.

### Solar panels in woodlands and fields

Solar panels are a valuable source of renewable energy, but their installation in fields and woodlands can be controversial. Angus explores the pros and cons for the environment and biodiversity.

### Tree growing in Tuscany

Visitors to Tuscany do not automatically think of trees, but Chris explains how the area around Pistoia is perfect for nurturing young trees.

### Bees and butterflies, nectar and nectaries

Chris discusses how plants produce nectar to attract pollinators such as bees.

### Know your bumblebees

Bumblebees are not all the same – there are eight common species in Britain and spotting them is not always straightforward. However, Chris has found an app to make the task easier.



### Woodlands TV

Woodlands TV ([www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/)) is a fantastic archive, with a video on every conceivable subject relating to forestry: woodworking, practical guides, crafts, survival skills, conservation and much more.

### Lords and ladies

Professor Anthony Moore of the University of Sussex tells us about the Arum Lily (*Arum maculatum*), also known as ‘Knights & Ladies’; ‘Soldiers & Sailors’; ‘Stallions & mares’, which is a source of his specialism, the AOX protein.

### Fire by bowdrill in the woodlands

David Pentland explains the method of lighting a fire using the friction of a bowdrill with elements found in the woodlands.

### Making bark baskets

Expert naturalist John Rhyder shares his passion for bushcraft by demonstrating how to weave bark baskets – how best to select, cut and prepare the wood, as well as the weaving techniques.

### Woodfair help needed!



The SWOG team are looking forward to attending the woodfairs at Westonbirt and Bentley later this year. Last year we met lots of members and enjoyed chatting to you all. We would like to show visitors what woodland owners do with their woodland, whether it be wildlife conservation, camping, green

woodworking, or simply getting together with woodland neighbours and friends to brew up and enjoy a cup of tea.

We would love some displays of the products of green woodworking, or perhaps a few items you have made with timber from your woods, such as willow hurdles, carved items or even boot racks (a popular seller last year!) Perhaps you produce home-made jams or honey? Sadly, space is too tight to demonstrate chainsaw skills!

If you are able to help us man the stall for an hour or so we might be able to express our gratitude with a free ticket for entry. If you would like to help please get in touch with Judith or Rich – email addresses on page 2.



*This is not an exhaustive list, so if you know of any others, please let us know!*

*Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be exhibiting at Woodfest Wales, Treefest and Bentley.*

### **South Downs Woodfair**

12–13 July 2014 Horndean, Petersfield, Hampshire  
[www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk](http://www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk)

### **New Forest and Hampshire Show**

29–31 July 2014 Brockenhurst, Hampshire  
[www.newforestshow.co.uk](http://www.newforestshow.co.uk)

### **Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum**

23–25 August 2014 Tetbury, Gloucestershire  
[www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

### **Stock Gaylard Oak Fair**

23–24 August 2014  
Sturminster Newton, Dorset

[www.stockgaylard.com/oak-fair](http://www.stockgaylard.com/oak-fair)

### **National Forest Woodfair**

25 August 2014 Beacon Hill Country Park, Leicestershire  
[www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)

### **Wychwood Forest Fair**

7 September 2014 Charlbury, Oxfordshire  
[www.wychwoodproject.org](http://www.wychwoodproject.org)

### **Lincolnshire Firewood Fair**

7 September 2014, Revesby Estate  
[www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk](http://www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk)

### **APF Wood Show**

18–20 September 2014  
Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire  
[www.apfexhibition.co.uk](http://www.apfexhibition.co.uk)

### **Chilterns Countryside and Food Festival**

14 September 2014  
Ashridge Estate, Hertfordshire  
[www.chilternsaonb.org/](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/)

### **Bentley Weald Woodfair**

26–28 September 2014 Lewes, East Sussex  
[www.bentley.org.uk/events](http://www.bentley.org.uk/events)

### **Enchanted Forest**

3–26 October 2014, Perthshire  
[www.enchantedforest.org.uk](http://www.enchantedforest.org.uk)

### **Surrey Hills Woodfair 2014**

4–5 October 2014 Birtley House, Bramley  
[www.surreyhills.org](http://www.surreyhills.org)

### **Tweed Valley Forest Festival 2014**

24 October–2 November 2014, Scotland  
[www.forest-festival.com](http://www.forest-festival.com)

