

Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter September 2014



Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



The newsletter is packed with news of meetings and conferences for woodland owners, and we're looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Bentley Woodfair, where we will have new SWOG polo shirts for sale.



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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In this issue

- **Events and News** 3
 - Small Woods AGM
 - National Wood Fuel Conference
 - Win a woodland!
 - What will fill the gap left by ash?
 - British Woodlands Survey
 - Navigators in the woods
- **A croft original - a Hebridean woodland** 8
- **Woodlands blogs and TV** 10
- **Bentley Woodfair offer** 11
- **Woodfair listing and help** 12

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

**Small Woods Association
AGM and Skills Sharing
Day 13 September 2014
Flimwell, East Sussex**



Our good friends in the Small Woods Association (SWA) are holding their AGM alongside a very comprehensive programme of speakers, workshops and demonstrations on 13 September at the Woodland Enterprise Centre at Flimwell.

SWOG members are warmly invited to take advantage of the discounted rate of £48 for the day, which includes lunch and refreshments. (Members of the SWA pay £42.) If you would like to attend, please download the form from the SWOG website [here](#) and email it to Phil Tidey, the Membership Services Manager philtidey@smallwoods.org.uk

The programme includes:

9.15 am Arrive, tea/coffee

10 am Welcome and brief introduction – Mike Bentley, Small Woods CEO

10.05 am Alison Field (South-East Regional Director, Forestry Commission) Alison will look at the future for the Forestry Commission and

woodlands in the south-east in the light of changes to grants, tree diseases and climate change.

11.00 am Small Woods Annual General Meeting

12 Noon Tim Rowlands (Future Trees Trust) will talk about the work of the Future Trees Trust in maximising the benefits of broadleaved woodland by promoting the benefits of improved planting stock for timber production.

1.00 pm lunch

2 pm Workshop sessions, each running three times to maximise opportunities to attend.

- A Mike Bentley – Timber marketing
 - B Graeme McVittie – Woodland management – problems and solutions
 - C Richard Ely – Chestnut hurdles/pole lathe
 - D Matt Beech – Tool sharpening
 - E David Hooton (Deer Initiative) – Deer basics: how do you know you have got them, and what can you do about it
 - F Vince Thurkettle (author of *The Wood Fire Handbook*) – Logs: production, storage and use
- 5.30pm Foresters' Question Time
6.15pm Finish

**Emergency Life Support Courses –
discount for SWOG members**

Carl from Emergency Life Support Team (ELST) as been in touch with news of not just interesting courses, but potentially life-saving ones. They are offering SWOG members the following discounts:

1 Day £75.00 discount price £65

2 Day £140.00 discount £120

Visit their website at www.elst.co.uk to see current course dates. SWOG members can just contact them via contact@elst.co.uk to confirm the date, and then pay on the day.

More details of the courses and testimonials can be found here: www.elst.co.uk/wilderness-first-aid-courses.

Emergency Life Support Team teach a wide variety of survival and first aid courses which fulfil the needs of all the outdoor national governing bodies. One of the most popular is the Wilderness First Aid Course, which has variations run over one, two or three days.

Unlike most other first aid courses, this is not classroom-based, but is set outdoors in the same environment that you're likely to encounter emergency situations.

Learning basic first aid skills can and does save people's lives. You will learn skills and techniques to deal with emergencies such as bleeds, fractures, burns, heart attacks, and more.

These skills are equally important in both the home and the outdoor environment, and are taught in a casual, fun and informative way.

National Wood Fuel Conference 17 October 2014, Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking, Surrey

The National Wood Fuel Conference is a focal point in the calendar for policymakers, producers, woodland owners and buyers.

Sponsored by Forestry Commission England and LC Energy, this event is a must for anybody looking to generate

income from wood, understand more about growth opportunities through renewable energy or sustain a business in the wood fuel market.

Taking place as a culminating event in Grown in Britain week and chaired by Grown in Britain Chief Executive, Dougal Driver, the event has attracted the attention of Westminster and a DECC minister is expected to attend.

Launching new CIBSE Guidance on Biomass Systems, busting myths around the Sustainability Criteria and addressing such questions as 'How Much Wood?' the event is organised by Surrey Hills Enterprise and will be lively, provocative and educational for anybody



interested in woodland management or working in the wood fuel sector.

The event will also focus on opportunities for landowners and growers, with Tom Beeley the CLA's renewables advisor taking the stage.

Tickets are available now with an early bird booking discount available.

Normal price £95 per delegate, £85 for a limited time only!

Download the full agenda [here](#). For further information please contact Carrie White, Surrey Hills Enterprises Development Manager on; 01483 899556 or email carrie.white@surreyhillsesterprises.co.uk

Oxfordshire Woodlands Grants

The Oxfordshire Woodland Group has secured a substantial annual charitable grant to enable it to offer financial assistance to individuals engaged in active woodland management in Oxfordshire and the adjacent southern home counties.

They are offering to part-fund course fees for applicants based in north Hampshire, West Berkshire and South Oxfordshire to develop practical woodland and related skills.

These can range from green woodworking to specialist woodland skills, such as hedge-laying, and from tree felling to chainsaw certification.

They hope to be able to encourage and

promote local woodland working groups that can provide a range of skills to woodland owners to help kick-start the management of small and/or undermanaged Oxfordshire woodlands.

They do not currently plan to provide finance for major capital equipment investment, but are prepared to consider the purchase of tools and equipment by the Group which can be rented for use by fully paid up group members of long standing.

For more information please visit the Oxfordshire woodland forum post [here](#), or contact Ken Hume, Executive Trustee, via the website, oxfordshirewoodlandgroup.co.uk.

Win a woodland with Dorset Cereals!

Dorset Cereals and Woodlands.co.uk have joined forces to enable one lucky breakfast eater the opportunity to win a woodland. The promotion will run from the middle of September. Six million Dorset Cereal packets of muesli, porridge, and granola will contain a unique code. Visit the Dorset Cereals website (www.dorsetcereals.co.uk), enter the code and cross your fingers!



APF International Forestry Exhibition, 18, 19, 20 September Ragley Estate, Warwickshire

The UK's largest forestry, woodland, trees and timber show features everything wood related – from seed to sawmill. 260 exhibitors and 20,000 visitors are expected over the three days. Sponsored by Confor, it is aimed primarily at woodland professionals, but small woodland owners are likely to find it really interesting, with much to be learned and many opportunities to try out tools and equipment.

There will be world class, competitions, including

- Husqvarna World 25m Poleclimbing Championships
- European Chainsaw Carving Championships
- Horse Logging
- World Log to Leg Polelathe Championships
- UK Forwarder Driving Championships
- World 'Log to leg' pole lathe turning championship

The exhibition features a 2,040m demonstration circuit where machines are shown working in a realistic setting. With exhibitors on both sides of the circuit, that is over 2½ miles of working machinery. About £30 million pounds of machinery will be on show.



Three Bears in a Boat – the 2012 winning chainsaw sculpture by Will Lees.

An extensive woodland crafts area will have displays of charcoal-making, hazel hurdles, oak swill baskets, willow-weaving, coracle-making, bowl-turning, steam-bending, clog-making, dug-out canoes, Windsor chair-making, Sussex trugs, polelathe turning, and elf whittling!

For more information and to book tickets, visit the website www.apfexhibition.co.uk.



What will fill the gap left by ash?

At the Chiltern Woodland Conference, forestry consultant Dr Terry Mabbett reported on his study of Hadley Chase Wood, Enfield. It is a



72-hectare ancient woodland site in which ash predominates and is managed for public use – there is no timber extraction. Records show that in 1702, the main

species were oak, ash, beech, hornbeam and English elm. Two hundred years on, the mix remains the same, although sycamore has replaced the elm. The trees are mature and there is good regeneration from beech. With the gradual spread of chalara across the country, foresters have debated which species will naturally regenerate to take over the spaces left by diseased ash trees.

Dr Mabbett has taken one area of the wood 75m sq in which old ash and sycamore, approximately 150—175 years old, grow side by side. He has noted that the trees originally grew close together and that many self-seeded ash fail to thrive in comparison with the sycamore. The standards (those with a trunk circumference in excess of 40cm) comprised 58% ash, 17% sycamore and 8% oak, interspersed with beech, hawthorn and holly.

In the understory of trees under 40 cm in circumference, however, sycamore predominates. It seems that ash has difficulty in progressing past the seedling stage and there is a distinct scarcity of larger young ash trees in comparison with sycamore. Interestingly, ash dominate by number, but the sycamores are more mature, and have been cut back to create coppice, so they are thriving.

Dr Mabbett has concluded that the ash struggle to compete with the sycamore and in this wood, it is likely that sycamore will become the dominant species. Given chalara's propensity to kill younger trees, he wonders whether it is worth clearing ash from the understory in order to slow the spread of the disease from young trees to the more mature specimens.

British Woodlands Survey 2014 – take part!

The national British Woodlands Survey focuses on ancient woodland, planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and restoration. Following on from British Woodlands 2012, this latest survey, conducted by the Sylva Foundation, is exploring current management and attitudes towards ancient woodland and PAWS.

The findings will support a Heritage Lottery Fund outreach project, for owners and managers of ancient woodland or PAWS. The project is offering advice and site assessments from locally based Project Officers in ten areas of the UK at no charge to landowners and managers.

The survey is open to all woodland owners and managers. The survey will take only 20 minutes to complete, and will be live throughout September. There is also information provided at the end of the survey on how to identify ancient woodland and PAWS, and contact details for the local Project Officers providing expert advice to owners and managers should you wish to enquire about a visit.

To take part in the survey, please visit www.sylva.org.uk/survey/ZPA – your responses will be much appreciated and contribute towards shaping future support to woodland owners.

The SWOG forum regularly receives requests from individuals or groups hoping to use a bit of woodland for their activities, be it bushcraft, archery, shooting or even wedding ceremonies.

Youth groups are always in search of suitable places to work. Steve Michaels of the UK Navigators organisation has been in touch to ask whether any woodland owners in Devon could help out.

UK Navigators (www.uknavigators.org) is a youth group similar in outlook to the Scouting Association, but lacking some of the ceremonial formalities. The organisation began just three years ago in the USA, and Steve founded the first UK branch in Devon in January this year. New groups are popping up across the country from Devon to Yorkshire.

Children of all ages are welcome to join this well structured group, which is run entirely by volunteers. They aim to get young people outdoors to teach them new skills and help them build self-confidence and leadership skills. Children are encouraged to try new activities which will help them develop into good citizens who respect their communities and countryside.

‘Our children love getting outdoors doing all the traditional scouty things, plus lots more. We have found that a child can almost change

personality when they are able to play outside and learn things in a new way. We have seen children reluctant to leave their mothers’ sides who grow in confidence so that they can climb to the top of a 60ft climbing wall within months, and this is a great reward for our adult volunteers.



‘The group is run completely by volunteers and is made up of both girls and boys aged between 4 and 11, although we cater for all children up to 18. It is financed through donations and subscriptions (for those that are able). We teach them all sorts of things, from learning about wild foods, bush craft and survival skills, to wildlife and communications, in a fun and informative way.’

‘A lot of our activities are based around our communities, and in return for a donation we always try to give something back. For example, we were recently given money to buy tents, so in return the young people went litter-picking around the local village, filling up over 66 bags of rubbish in just a few hours.’

If you would like to learn more about the Navigators and feel you could offer them some space in your wood, please get in touch with the group leader steve.michaels@uknavigators.org.



A croft original – a Hebridean woodland

Bryan Macpherson has recently joined SWOG. As he explains, he is planting a woodland on a Hebridean Croft that he is hoping will thrive in challenging circumstances.

At 71 acres, I have a feeling that my land won't really be regarded as 'small', and having only seven (yes, seven) trees over a foot tall, it's not really a woodland either. But I do own it, am utterly determined to create a woodland there over the coming years, and have found many of the threads on the SWOG forum incredibly useful.

The land in question is a croft in the Outer Hebrides. The entire croft extends to 440 acres, but in 1999 around 100 acres were set aside for the Millennium Forest for Scotland Project. The first planting in 2002 failed completely (mainly because deer can swim – don't ask!) and, in 2006, the area was reduced to the current 71 acres. A second planting thereafter also failed (unless you take a 'glass half-full' mentality to extremes and are satisfied with the seven trees



The eastern boundary of the woodland. A little embarrassing that there are more trees outside the deer fence than there are inside!

that survived). I became the tenant of the land around five years ago, and took ownership in 2012 – an incredibly proud moment for me, as my family had lived on that piece of land from as far back as the 18th century until 1952. My first priorities were to make management of the livestock more straightforward. Most of the land is an uninhabited island, so nothing is really straightforward as such. But, that having been achieved, I turned my attention to the 'forest'.

Over the course of this year, I've made the deer fence secure and begun planting. So far, I've put in around 600 willows, 100 downy birch, 100 alder and 100 Scots pine. One further positive is that there are no rabbits at all in the area, and I don't think there's much in the way of voles either. I assume the birds of prey have this one covered, mainly eagles. In all honesty, I'm really just experimenting at this stage. My knowledge of trees prior to this really can't be understated – I could recognise the plastic ones that my presents were under when I was a kid, but that's about it. Being raised in the Outer Hebrides, you're naturally as familiar with trees as you are with skyscrapers, double-decker buses and multi-storey car parks – basically they're all

An Alder planted this summer. Early days, but of all the species planted, Alder is certainly the one that's doing the best so far.



A croft original – a Hebridean woodland



The remains of a blackhouse in the woodland - probably mid 1800s. In the distance (on the left of the picture) is the island from where Bonnie Prince Charlie made his escape 'over the sea to Skye' in 1746.

tall things that live somewhere else!

To my surprise, and delight, I've found that around 1000 rowan trees planted previously which I thought had been grazed to death over the past eight years have actually survived. They've appeared again since the fence was secured and, although they average only around 5cm in height, it looks like they're going to make it after all.

Progress will be slow. Planting a tree involves carrying it quarter of a mile from the nearest road, rowing 100 yards and then carrying it another three-quarters of a mile to the fenced area. From experience, I now

know that I can only do 150 at a time this way before my sciatic nerve tells me that's enough.

And there's a good reason why there's few trees

here – I've learnt that peaty soil, regular 50mph+ winds carrying salty air off the Atlantic, and very little natural shelter are not conditions conducive to tree

growth. But it's a learning curve I'm enjoying. I've gone from ignorance and disinterest on the subject of trees to near-obsession. I even have various trees growing in window ledges around the house just so I can observe and learn how they develop day-to-day!

Being raised in the Outer Hebrides, you're naturally as familiar with trees as you are with skyscrapers, double-decker buses and multi-storey car parks.

Bryan is trying to plant several species of tree, but he knows that holly will survive, having found this specimen tucked in amongst the heather.



Visit Woodlands.co.uk/blog or click on the title to read the full blog.

How we turned our woodland into an education centre and place to stay

Leigh recounts how he turned his neglected Welsh woodland into a sustainable and profitable business.

Filming your woodland with a drone

Angus gets a bird's eye view of the woods without leaving the ground. Click on the video link to see just how much fun he had!

Accidental conservation – secret woods and sacred groves

While many owners work to conserve their own woodlands, large tracts of forest and grassland have been preserved almost by accident as a by-product of other activities

The Harcourt Arboretum

Lewis visits the Harcourt Arboretum in Oxford, home of an astonishing array of exotic and native tree species.

Woodlands TV

Click on the link above to visit the Woodlands tv web page.

A sawmill at work

A fascinating film about the team at English sawmills, who use sustainable English hardwoods. We hear how they track their stocks



Planting wildflowers in your woodland

Useful tips on successfully planting wildflowers in a newly established woodland.

Creating a wildflower area

How to assess soil and the condition of the land before planting wildflowers.

Wild parsnip

Chris writes about wild parsnip, the yellow-flowered relative of the edible parsnip which often inhabits rough ground and provides a valuable food source for many insects.

of oak, ash, chestnut and more, and see the different processes involved in producing wood fit for furniture design – air-drying, kiln-drying and cutting.

Ancient woodland flora: the stale seedbed technique

Liz Hawthorne explains the importance of native meadows and grasses to insect life and biodiversity and describes how to successfully cultivate a wild flowers meadow.

Foraging for wild food

Naturalist John Rhyder takes a walk along the woodland track where he works, identifying different plants along the way and giving us information about their uses, where and when they grow and how best to eat them.

Bentley Woodfair – 35% discount on tickets ordered in advance!

The 19th Bentley Woodfair will be held on 26th, 27th and 28th September, in the beautiful Bentley Estate, near Lewes in East Sussex. Visitors will enjoy access to the Motor Museum, Wildfowl Reserve and Miniature Railway, as well as all the fabulous woodfair attractions.

Woodfair is a celebration of woodlands, forestry, timber, trees, woodcrafts, and much more. The whole site holds two fields of stands, exhibits and displays, as well as an amazing woodland full of demonstrations and activities.

Bentley Woodfair started in 1996 and continues to support local rural businesses and crafts, while educating and entertaining families.

With demonstrations of machinery, tree climbing, childrens activities, lots of local food and a beer tent, there is always a really great atmosphere.

Woodlands.co.uk will have a stall, as will SWOG, and we will be delighted to see as many of you as possible. If you would like to help out, or have woodland products you would like to exhibit, please let Judith or Rich know.

SWOG members can take advantage of a generous discount by buying their tickets in



advance. Email your details to woodfair@bentley.org.uk with the reference SWOG14 in the subject line. Please include your name, address, number of tickets required and phone number if you want to pay by card over the phone. Cathy Cordery will get in touch to arrange payment and post tickets to you. Alternatively, you can send your details with a check to Cathy at Bentley Estate, Harveys Lane, Halland, Nr Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5AF.

Prices are adults £10, children aged 5–15 £5. *Please note that this offer will only apply to tickets purchased in advance – they will be £14 and £10, respectively on the gate.*

Full details of the event can be seen here: www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair/4575405571



Woodfairs



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

Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG look forward to seeing you at Bentley.

Wychwood Forest Fair

7 September 2014 Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

Lincolnshire Firewood Fair

7 September 2014, Revesby Estate
www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk

Chilterns Countryside and Food Festival

14 September 2014
Ashridge Estate, Herts, www.chilternsaonb.org

APF Wood Show

18–20 September 2014

Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Bentley Weald Woodfair

26–28 September 2014 Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

Enchanted Forest

3–26 October 2014, Perthshire
www.enchantedforest.org.uk

Surrey Hills Woodfair 2014

4–5 October 2014 Birtley House, Bramley
www.surreyhills.org

Tweed Valley Forest Festival 2014

24 October–2 November 2014, Scotland
www.forest-festival.com

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.