



**Small Woodland Owners' Group**  
**Newsletter September 2015**

**Friends in high places –  
tree-climbing for woodland owners**

**Who's been down in the woods  
today?**

**Harcourt Arboretum**

# Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



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It's woodfair season for SWOG! Rich enjoyed meeting owners at Westonbirt Treefest and we're looking forward to seeing more of you at the Bentley Woodfair in Sussex later this month. In the meantime, sit back and enjoy Freddie During's account of his tree-climbing course. Those that prefer to keep their feet on the ground might be interested in a day out at the Harcourt Arboretum in Oxford – thanks to Teresa and Bernie for details of their trip.

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**Picture credits:** Cover, pp 5 & 9 The University of Oxford Botanic Garden; pp 3, 5 & 10 Woodlands.co.uk; pp 4 Coed Cymru; pp 6–7; F During; pp 8 J Wells

### SWOG website and forum

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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.

Follow us on Twitter @\_swog



## SWOG COURSE LIST MARCH 2015



## SWOG Course Listings

We are often asked to recommend courses and have a list of those undertaken by owners on our website. Many new woodland owners study woodland-related topics ranging from basket-weaving, green woodworking or pole lathe turning, to chainsaw tuition and woodland management. The reviews provide a short resumé of each course, noting how effective participants found it, and whether

they would recommend it to others.

We regularly update this list of valuable comments, which is a database searchable by area or course topic. We hope it will be useful to anyone searching for help and guidance in choosing a woodland course. View it on the SWOG website here: [www.swog.org.uk](http://www.swog.org.uk)

## Observatree

Sadly, there is no sign that the various pests and diseases that afflict British trees are going away, but we can all keep them under surveillance and help to control them.



*Galls on a lime leaf.*

The Observatree project employs 'citizen scientists', trained volunteers recruited by the Woodland Trust who survey trees and test them for disease or pestilential damage. The public are key to the project and play a vital role in reporting suspect problems. Everyone can participate in what Observatree refer to as a 'UK tree health early warning system'. If you are concerned about a particular tree, the **Observatree website** explains what steps to take to report it and has a comprehensive and well illustrated guide to the most serious threats to trees in the UK.

The most recent blog, 'No sting in the tale', is from a volunteer who spotted Chestnut Wasp Gall in a local tree. If you are interested in helping out, or simply want to learn more, visit the website: [www.observatree.org.uk](http://www.observatree.org.uk)

## SWOG meeting, near Catterick 10am-1pm 12 September 2015

There are still a few places available for the meeting on Saturday 12 September at Kiplin Wood near Catterick in North Yorkshire. It will be held in two neighbouring woods, which were once part of the Kiplin Hall estate, and are slightly different. One has a mix of broadleaf and conifer and is geared towards amenity ownership; the other, with its mix of coppice

## The value in wood

### National Wood Fuel Conference 2015 15 October Epsom Downs Racecourse

Opportunities for growth and funding for the wood fuel industry will be under the spotlight at this year's National Wood Fuel Conference on 15 October. It's a great chance for small woodland owners to learn more about generating some sort of income from timber.

Organised by Surrey Hills Enterprises in association with Grown in Britain and the CLA, the one-day conference will provide a comprehensive overview of the industry, ideal for those looking to generate income from wood, understand more about growth opportunities through renewable energy or sustain a business in the wood fuel supply chain.

For more information or to book a place at the conference or exhibition space, please call Surrey Hills Enterprises on 01483 661151 or visit [www.woodfuelconference.co.uk](http://www.woodfuelconference.co.uk).



and standards, is a valuable source of wood fuel. It promises to be a SWOG meeting full of interesting discussion.

Ben Scotting of Rural Development Initiatives will be on hand to answer any questions and talk about Planting on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWs) and Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) issues.

If you would like to attend, please email [judith@swog.org.uk](mailto:judith@swog.org.uk) as soon as possible

### David Jenkins 1952–2015

It is with great sadness that Coed Cymru has announced the death of their director, David Jenkins on 11 August 2015. Coed Cymru is the public sector partnership and charity dedicated to Welsh broadleaf woodlands.

A key figure in the Welsh woodland, timber and farming sector, David was the Director of Coed Cymru for 27 years. He was, in the words of one woodland owner, ‘the dynamo who started to get neglected Welsh woodlands back into production. His energy seemed boundless’. He will be remembered primarily for his role in championing native woodland and bringing innovative ideas into public policy and mainstream practice. He facilitated and initiated significant advances across both the agricultural and the timber technology industries, a testament to the passion, skill, knowledge and integrity he brought to his work, and his ability to inspire and share his enthusiasm with others.

His vision remained remarkably consistent and a considerable amount of what is good in



current natural resource management policy and practice in Wales owes something to David. He knew his country better than most and championed its culture and language. He believed strongly in Wales, that it should follow its own policies, nurture its own thriving industries and have the confidence to hold itself up on the international stage.

David embraced the ethos of public service, working for a greater good over and above personal return or recognition. Shortly before his death he expressed a wish for no tributes or memorials. But his work will continue, enacted through the many people he inspired and the policies he helped to form.

The landscape of Wales changed for the better during his lifetime and that is a legacy few of us could help to achieve. *(With thanks to Coed Cymru.)*



#### Forthcoming SWA meetings

- Slips Wood (7 Sept): woodland management and beekeeping in woods.
- Barnetts Wood (26 Sept): cutting, splitting and seasoning firewood – one woodlander’s view.

Contact [seorganiser@smallwoods.org.uk](mailto:seorganiser@smallwoods.org.uk) for more details.

The SWA also runs a rolling programme of reduced rate chainsaw courses in Plumpton

College’s woods at Flimwell, East Sussex.

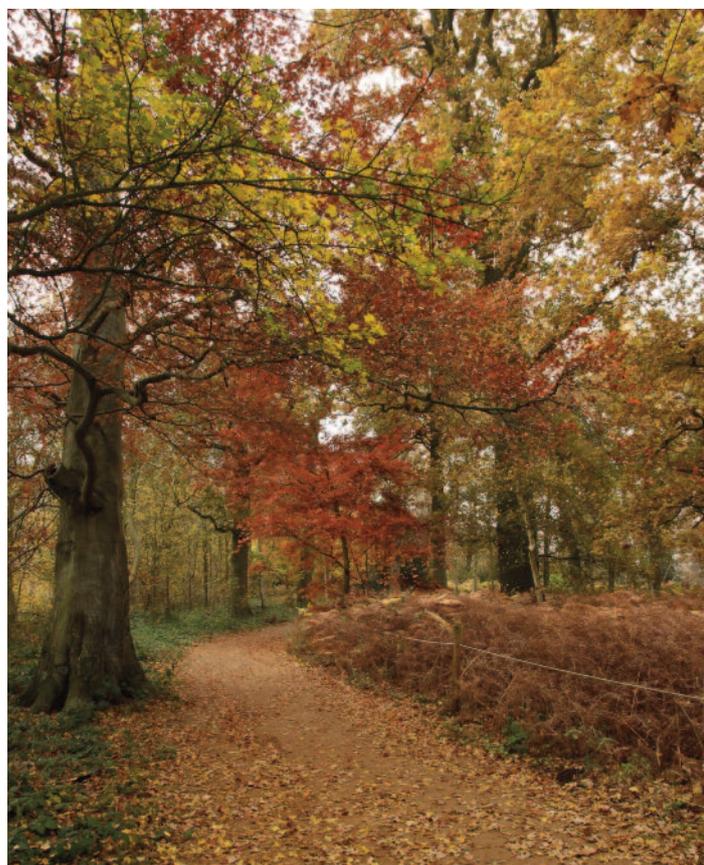
They are setting up a scheme so that members can find out who their local woodland owners are so they can help each other, visit woods and socialize. Woodland archaeology surveys are also available free of charge.

If you’re one of those SWOG members who have allowed their membership of the SWA to lapse, then why not re-join? David Brown, the Southeast Co-ordinator sends out a regular newsletter full of reports and useful contacts. David himself regularly visits members’ woods and is a mine of information. Email him or take a look at the website, [smallwoods.org.uk](http://smallwoods.org.uk) for more details.

*Never have the opinions of woodland owners been so highly sought-after. There are currently at least two surveys online: one seeks to explore owners' opinions about tree resilience in the face of climate change; the other how the Forestry Commission can help owners and agents to manage woodland effectively.*

### **‘Making woodlands work’**

Woodland owners play an important role in helping to grow and expand woodland in Britain. The Forestry Commission (in conjunction with Grown in Britain) wants to help owners to make woodlands work through effective management. This is the chance for owners to help the FC understand how they can support owners by accessing woodland grants, creating effective management plans and turning woodland into a profitable asset. The survey is **here** and runs until 14 September – make your views known!



*Photo copyright The University of Oxford Botanic Garden*

### **‘Resilience in woodlands’ Survey exploring adaptation to environmental change**

The British Woodlands Survey 2015 on Resilience is supported by a wide number of partners, with funding provided by the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust. It is hosted and co-ordinated by the Sylva Foundation and the deadline is 15 September 2015. SWOG members are warmly urged to take part.

Environmental change may mean any change or disturbance of the environment caused by human influences and/or natural ecological processes. As such, the survey will be exploring climate change, pests, pathogens, flooding, wind and fire, and will be seeking to explore how resilient our forests are to change. The information gathered will be used by organisations, policy makers and researchers to help improve the resilience of the nation's forests. The results will inform the government's National Adaptation Programme.

Take the survey at: [www.sylva.org.uk/bws](http://www.sylva.org.uk/bws)

### **Resilient Woodlands: Meeting the Challenge 1 October 2015, Birmingham**

Places are still available for this conference which is hosted by the Royal Forestry Society in partnership with the Woodland Trust.

What are the key challenges for woods and woodland owners in the 21st century? How can we make woods and wooded landscapes both ecologically and financially resilient?

Dr Gabriel Hemery of the Sylva Foundation, who will be speaking at the conference, said, ‘Everyone one of us should be taking deliberate action to ensure the resilience of our woodlands. This should ensure that they not only survive change, but ‘bounce back better’.

Find out more and book your place here: [www.rfs.org.uk/events/2015/october/rfs-annual-conference-2015/](http://www.rfs.org.uk/events/2015/october/rfs-annual-conference-2015/)

## Friends in high places – tree-climbing for woodland owners

*SWOG member Freddie During completed a three-day recreational tree climbing course with Goodleaf Tree Climbing on the Isle of Wight and heartily recommends it.*

New Zealander Paul McCathie lives on the Isle of Wight, where he runs Goodleaf Tree Climbing with his wife, Abigail Fox. Paul is a very competent climber and a great teacher. We climbed in a beautiful park with some wonderful trees.

We had to do a climbing assessment as the final test on the last day from scratch as you would do if you climb in the woodland. This was absolutely wonderful and Paul helped me after the course to buy equipment at discounted rates.

I have done three climbs in our woodland since the course and it gives a brand-new perspective to the trees. Instead of trying to assess if a branch 25 meters up in the air is dangerous, I can now climb up and inspect it from arm's length. Bird nesting boxes and bat boxes can be fixed safely with ease in any tree at any height. I can also ensure I don't have bats roosting in a tree before I fell it. It is also just great fun sitting in the canopy of a tree and watching wildlife passing by. I will definitely buy a tree boat/ hammock to rig up in the canopy and just spend some time there. It is extremely safe and very rewarding to climb.

In practical terms, the course is likely to save me money in the future as I won't need to get an arborist out every time I need visual inspection of a tree canopy branch.

I can recommend this course with confidence. **Goodleaf Tree Climbing** also offers a taster course for a few hours if you just want to see if climbing is for you.

Paul trained as an Arborist at WINTEC,



New Zealand, and graduated as Student of the Year in 2001. After working as a climbing arborist in New Zealand, Australia and England, Paul set up Goodleaf in 2005. He is a Senior Instructor with the Global Organisation of Tree Climbers. He is also a freelance instructor and assessor for tree climbing and aerial tree rescue for LANTRA Awards, UK.

The course is LANTRA approved and teaches participants to:

- Understand the legislation relating to recreational tree climbing
- Identify personal protective equipment relevant to work positioning systems
- Tie, dress and set a range of tree-climbing knots
- Identify hazards and manage associated risks
- Carry out visual tree inspections
- Carry out pre-use inspection of tree climbing equipment
- Choose appropriate anchor points
- Use appropriate techniques for safe ascent and descent
- Remove lightweight branches with hand tools
- carry out aerial rescue
- Tree biology
- Rigging a hammock in the tree canopy.

## Friends in high places – tree-climbing for woodland owners

Those of us that remember scrambling up trees as children may be surprised that these days, there's a bit more to it. Actually, if you have become more risk-averse with the passing years, not to mention slightly less nimble than when you were a ten-year-old, the introduction of ropes, helmets and slings may come as something of a relief. Arborists put safety first and for armchair climbers there are many useful websites to give you a flavour of what to expect.

Perhaps the most sobering is the HSE website: [www.hse.gov.uk/treework](http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework), which provides a timely reminder of the dangers inherent in many aspects of forestry work. There are helpful links to good practice guidelines, including training and personal protective clothing (PPE).

Several dedicated arborists have posted instructive climbing videos, blogs and



illustrations which cover every aspect of professional tree-climbing, from knots and ropes, to ascent techniques. Take a look at the Climbing arborist, [www.climbingarborist.com](http://www.climbingarborist.com).

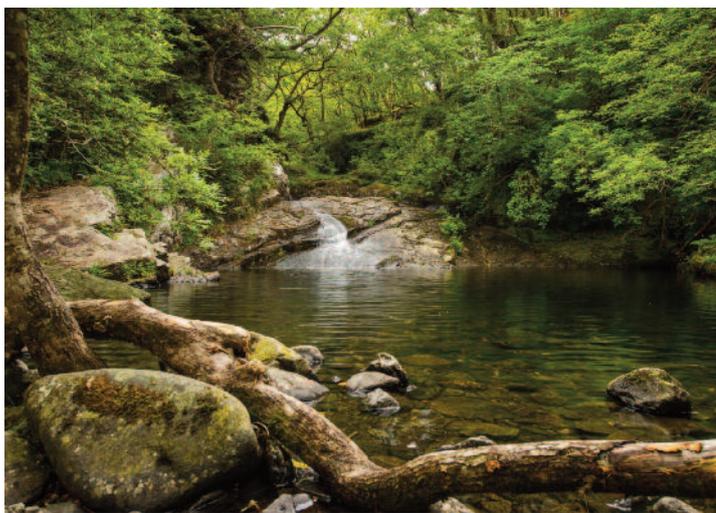
The Big Tree Climbing Company [www.bigtreeclimbing.co.uk](http://www.bigtreeclimbing.co.uk) offers recreational tree climbing events in parks and forests around the country, including at a number of National Trust properties.



### Woodland Trust – Say Trees photo competition winners

Evidence from the SWOG Facebook page proves (as if proof were needed) that we love taking pictures of the woods. The Woodland Trust have harnessed the nation's photographic talent and more than 1,500 people entered their 'Say Trees' Competition this year. The winners were announced in August, with Ann-Marie Marshall of Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex taking first prize for her photo of a walk around Hallin Fell by Lake Ullswater (left). Pictured below left is Bolder Ford bridge near Brockenhurst in the New Forest, taken by runner up Lucy Dennison of Lyndhurst, Hants.

Beccy Speight, Woodland Trust Chief Executive, said: 'The best way for people to really value trees and woods is to experience them first hand. Over 1,500 people have taken the time to share a special moment outdoors and I hope they will continue to visit our beautiful native woodland, which we do so much to preserve.' More details are on the website [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk).



## Who's been down in the woods today?

*Many thanks to John Wells for sending in these excellent shots from his trail cam, as well as some really impressive examples of his leatherwork.*

John has just acquired two acres of mixed woodland in Norfolk and says he is having great fun finding out what's there.

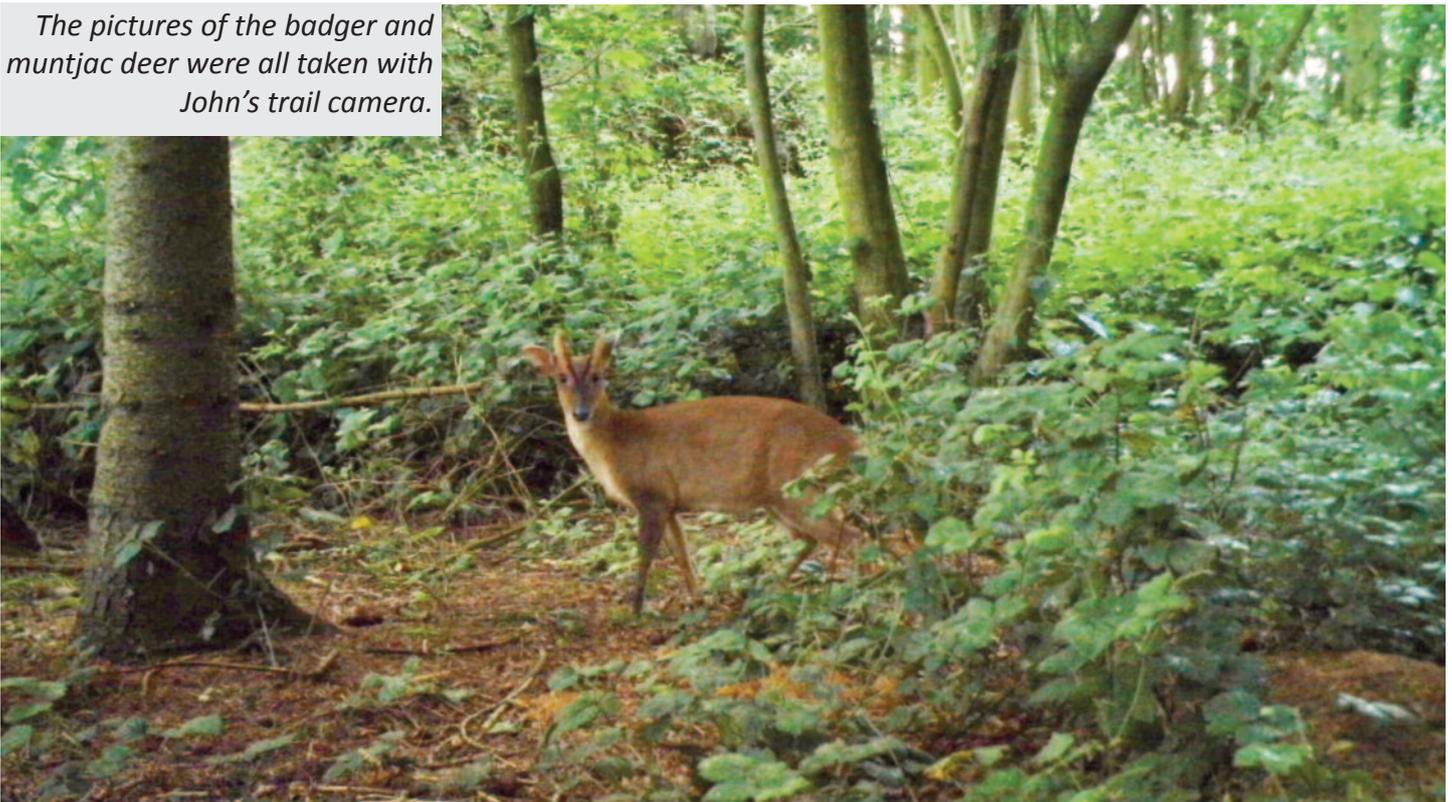
'I have installed a couple of Ltl Acorn trail cameras, to capture any passing wildlife. Thanks to help received from Ron Bury, of

[www.ronburyswildlife.com](http://www.ronburyswildlife.com), one of them is connected to the mobile phone network and sends an image to me via email if it is triggered, as well as recording photos and some video to a memory card.

'Apart from overhauling a couple of Husqvarna chainsaws purchased from a well known auction site, I have also been trying a bit of leathercraft and hand stitching to make a tool belt, to carry my bits and pieces.'



*The pictures of the badger and muntjac deer were all taken with John's trail camera.*



*Teresa and Bernie are well known in SWOG circles for their fondness for travel. On a day trip from home, they visited Harcourt Arboretum, near Oxford.*

Harcourt Arboretum, which is part of the University of Oxford Botanic Garden, comprises a formal arboretum, meadows and woodland, all in an easily visitable size. I saw lots of regeneration of hazel in the coppice area, one of the areas reached by nicely laid out tracks.

The arboretum sells its own charcoal. There is an oak barn built by volunteers using on-site timber, a great place to hide if the rains come. This may in future be used for green wood-working activities.

There is a huge collection of plants which are not only grown for their amenity or structural value, but are also used for plant identification, education, conservation, horticultural or ethnobotanic research. The arboretum has a diverse and rich history, not only in the landscape, but in the continued development of botany as a science. The University Botanic Garden is the oldest in the country at 394 years old, with Harcourt Arboretum dating back to 1835. Archbishop Harcourt instructed one of the main exponents of the picturesque landscape movement, William Sawrey Gilpin, to lay out a Pinetum. Gilpin achieved this in the years following 1835, using many of the newly introduced conifers from the west coast of America.

With every area of the arboretum, each season brings its highlights. In the native woodland areas the year starts with snowdrops, wood anemones and bluebells. In the summer it is vibrant with an array of native



*Photo copyright The University of Oxford Botanic Garden*

plants and wildlife. Autumn eases into winter with a warming array of yellows, oranges, reds and gold. The native woodland areas range from new plantings in Palmer's Leys, where almost 14,000 native trees were planted in early 2008. In the working coppice woodland, birch is cut for plant supports and charcoal is produced; in the bluebell woodland mature oak and ash grow old gracefully, providing valuable habitat for a wide range

of flora and fauna. The conservation of areas such as bluebell woodland is especially critical, as up to 90% of ancient woodland in the country has been destroyed. 18th and 19th century plantings of native oak, lime and ash, with naturalised exotics such as sweet chestnut and beech, complete the native woodland areas, meaning that woodlands such as these are becoming a highly prized example of conservation in action.

Red Kites are abundant in the local area and the wood supports nesting pairs. The usual difficulty with deer is an issue, with Muntjac and Roe present; several of our grey bushy-tailed friends were also scampering around the trees.

The Meadows is home to the stunning common spotted orchid and more than 50 other kinds of plants. This area is all about biodiversity, alive with colourful flowers,

buzzing with insects, birds and animals. The local bee-keeping group is in situ and the bee population benefits from the diversity of flowers available.

*Harcourt Arboretum is open throughout the year. Details are on the website:*

[www.harcourt-arboretum.ox.ac.uk](http://www.harcourt-arboretum.ox.ac.uk)



### Woodlands Blogs

#### Plant defences and toxins

Chris explains how plants protect themselves against predators with bristles, spikes and toxins. Used for centuries in folk remedies, many plants must be viewed and used with caution.

#### Modern tents and woodland camping

The phrase 'sleeping under canvas' is something of an anachronism now that the majority of tents are lightweight structures made from nylon. Whether your preference is for ancient, modern or even tepee, nothing can beat camping in your own wood.

#### Woodland Gardening

The book *Woodland Gardening* suggests how it is possible to create a woodland garden in a relatively small area, utilising the stable soil and natural recycling of nutrients and materials.

#### Woodland therapy and outdoor counselling

Therapist Mark Wood explains why he has taken his practice outside. He offers a 'talking therapy' in woodlands, an environment that many clients find less intimidating and more relaxing than a traditional office.

#### A woodland summerhouse part 3: a green roof

Anita's summerhouse acquires a beautiful green roof, with careful planting in a mix of compost and perlite on top of the wooden roof.



#### Bumblebees and climate change

Lewis discusses the impact of global warming on bumblebee populations.

### Woodlands TV

#### Cooking accidental meat in the woodland



Tribal Ali cooks up a feast: popcorn with the blackbird that accidentally crashed against her newly polished windows, making sure nothing goes to waste.

#### Working with Woodland Volunteers

Rebecca Cork combines her expertise and enthusiasm for woodland conservation with her skills as an enabler of community – as a group of volunteers work together to restore a culturally and historically significant arboretum. The aim of the project is to provide a vibrant, safe, well-managed outdoor learning space for educational and inspirational events and ongoing collaborative involvement, encouraging engagement with nature and a sense of ownership along the way.

#### Woodlands for Women

Three skilled group facilitators are running an innovative woodland-based project to support women in recovery from drug and alcohol dependency. All reveal their own love of the outdoors and describe the positive impact being in the woods is having on the wider group of women involved.

**Bentley Woodfair**

18–20 September 2015,  
9.30–5pm, Lewes, East Sussex  
[www.bentley.org.uk/events](http://www.bentley.org.uk/events)

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, children's activities, lumberjacking, there is plenty of local food and a great atmosphere.

**Entry prices on the gate are:**

Adults: £14

Senior/Students: £12

Children 5–15: £10

Family (2 adults/up to 3 children): £47

If you can get **10 or more** friends and family together, email [woodfair@bentley.org.uk](mailto:woodfair@bentley.org.uk), for a group rate – adult tickets are £10. Finally, for those who need two days at the show, a two-day pass is available, with day two at half price.

20th  
Anniversary

**BENTLEY  
WOODFAIR**

18th–20th September 2015

9.30am — 5.00pm

- Traditional woodland crafts
- Working horses
- Lumberjack display team
- Xtreme falconry
- Forestry machinery & equipment
- Basketry
- Wood turning
- Chainsaw sculpture
- Old fashioned funfair
- Children's activities
- Have a go archery
- Specialist talks
- Local food and refreshments
- Over 150 exhibitors

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



Woodlands and SWOG have stalls and we would be delighted to see you. If you have anything from your woodland that we could display, such as coppiced products, honey, examples of green woodworking, please get in touch. There is **FREE ENTRY** (as well as tea and cake) available to volunteers who could help us on the stand during the weekend. Please email [judith@swog.org.uk](mailto:judith@swog.org.uk) for more details.

**Events 2015****Wychwood Forest Fair**

6 September 2015 Charlbury, Oxfordshire  
[www.wychwoodproject.org](http://www.wychwoodproject.org)

**Confor Woodland Show 2015**

10–11 September 2015  
Longleat Estate, Wiltshire [www.confor.org.uk](http://www.confor.org.uk)

**European Woodworking Show**

12–13 September 2015, Cressing Temple Barns,  
Essex [www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu](http://www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu)

**Chiltern Woodlands Conference**

9 October 2015 Ashley Green, Bucks  
[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

**Surrey Hills Woodfair**

3–4 October 2015 [www.surreyhills.org](http://www.surreyhills.org)

**Cranborne Chase Woodfair**

3–4 October 2015, Fordingbridge, Hampshire  
[www.woodfair.org.uk](http://www.woodfair.org.uk)

**Peebles Wood Market**

24–25 October 2015  
[www.forest-festival.com/wood-market](http://www.forest-festival.com/wood-market)