



Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter November 2015

A heroic Grown in Britain week

Resilient woodlands

**From Graceland to woodlands—
trees in the news**

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



In this issue

Events and News	3
Heroic GIB week	
SWOG meeting, Kiplin Wood	
Tree ID course	
• Wilderness Wood – book review	5
• Batsford Arboretum	6
• Resilient Woodland Conference	7
• Woodland blogs and TV	8
• TV and radio	9

We've definitely entered the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, but the trees are looking fabulous. Resilient woodlands are a major topic of discussion and we have a report from the Resilient Woodland Conference. For those that want a bit of inspiration about long-term planning, take a look at Heather's review of *Thirty Years in Wilderness Wood*. Thanks, as ever, to all our contributors.

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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

A heroic Grown in Britain week 2015

The third **Grown in Britain** week continued the campaign's valuable work in celebrating the value of timber and woodland products, as well as widening public knowledge of the need to procure timber from local sources.

The Environment Secretary Elizabeth Truss announced that UK timber production has increased by a third since 2008, to 12 million tonnes. With over 40,000 people employed in the forestry and timber industry, the latest statistics show that 58% of woodland in England is under active management, up from 53% in 2013.

The GIB campaign can be really proud of its achievement in bringing together a diverse group of timber producers, manufacturers, foresters, NGOs and woodland owners, both small and large. CEO Dougal Driver said, 'Over 250 thousand hectares and millions of tonnes of licensed Grown in Britain timber is working its way into the marketplace, thanks to the ambitions of UK construction and retailers who are backing homegrown timber and our great British forests.'

'By increasing the demand for British timber destined for use by local people and businesses, real innovation is starting to add value to the supply chains, replacing imports and helping many of our woodlands to thrive.'

Small woodlands – all grown in Britain

GIB is not just for owners and managers of large forests who market their timber commercially. Active woodland management has a vital role in adding value, encouraging biodiversity and meeting climate change targets. Small woodland owners are encouraged to take part and follow the example of Alvecote Wood. SWOG members Sarah Walters and Stephen Briggs were awarded the first GIB accreditation in 2014 for their work in their 20-acre woodland.

Two Royal Forestry Society woodlands, Battram Wood in the National Forest and



Dougal Driver (right) and RFS Chief Executive Simon Lloyd join volunteers in Hockeridge and Pancake Woods. (Photo courtesy Colin Drake, Chiltern Society.)

Hockeridge and Pancake Wood on the Bucks/Herts borders near Chesham, were awarded GIB accreditation in October, recognition that they are managed in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard for sustainable woodland management in the UK.

Woodland heroes

Finally, the '**Woodland Heroes**' campaign was launched, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of getting Britain's woodlands back into management. Backed by Stihl, the campaign will showcase studies of a cross-section of people involved in working with and caring for woods, trees and wood products, from foresters to furniture designers to small woodland owners. If you have a story, contact enquiries@growninbritain.org or follow the campaign on Twitter #GiBwoodlandhero.

SWOG meeting Kiplin Woods

It was wet and windy, but a hardy group of 14 SWOG members (and two dogs) rallied near Catterick to visit two adjoining woods.

Ben Scotting of Rural Development Initiative, a familiar face to members in the north of England, was on hand to answer all the questions the members threw at him. With several new owners attending, Ben's advice was invaluable, but he also explained the differences between the two woods on show. Calvert Wood is mixed broadleaf with, in the words of its owner, neglected coppice. It is also on the Priority Habitat Inventory. Next door, in Great Sikes Wood, the trees are by and large straighter and have more potential value as a timber crop. Both woods were once part of the Kiplin Estate and Ben discussed various management options. Everyone who attended said how good it was to chat with other woodland owners. Thanks to Nick and Sally of Calvert Wood and Margs and Terry of Great Sikes Wood for hosting the meeting, and to Ben for his expertise.



AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Native tree and shrub identification course, Stokenchurch, Bucks, 6 November

A one day course on identifying native trees and shrubs, using late autumn leaves, fruits, nuts and berries as clues.

Led by John Morris of the Chiltern

Woodlands Project, who has over 30 years experience of working in local woodlands.

This enjoyable day starts at 10am for a 2.5 hour guided walk around ancient Bottom Wood near Stokenchurch. Collect samples, take photos and discuss what you find. Then the group will return to nearby Radnage Village Hall for lunch (bring your own) and to identify collected items using books provided. The day will finish with a presentation by John on trees and shrubs found in the Chilterns.

Handouts and teas/coffees in the afternoon will be provided. Cost: £20 per head. Register here: www.chilternsaonb.org/calendar

Fly tipping in the forest

New woodland owners are often swept away with the thrill of owning their own space and are enchanted by the wildlife and the potential to do exactly what they want. What few of us think about until it happens is the problem of fly tipping. If your woodland is near a main road, you may not be surprised by new statistics from the Woodland Trust, who report that their costs for dealing with fly tipping have risen by 22% in the past year.

Some of the most startling case studies

include an incident at Gorse Covert Mounds, Cheshire, where waste from a cannabis farm was dumped just days after volunteers cleared other fly tipped waste. Meanwhile, Miltonrigg Woods near Brampton had various items left including furniture, beds, a chair, mattress, dog basket, Christmas tree and decorations.

So what do you do? In the first instance report the problem to your local council. The Gov.uk website also has useful advice [here](#) and if you really want to get angry, read the full report [here](#).

Thirty Years in Wilderness Wood

How a family brought new life to an old wood,
Chris Yarrow ISBN 978 1784624 934 £16.95

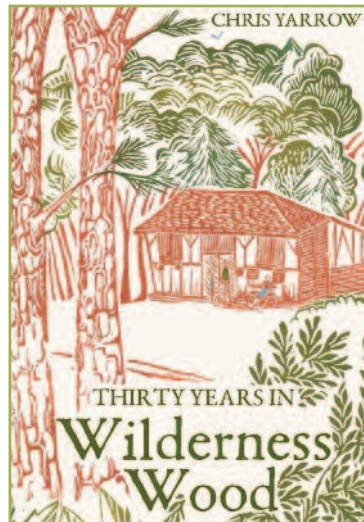
In 1980 after several years of searching for the 'right place', Chris Yarrow made a successful bid for 24 hectares of East Sussex woodland at an auction in Uckfield. Over the next 30 years Wilderness Wood would become the place where he with his wife Anne and their two children built a house, set up a successful business and lived a sustainable lifestyle. The plan was to create a working woodland that welcomed the public as paying visitors, not only to enjoy the mapped walks and organised activities on offer, but also to see how every last scrap of harvested trees could be utilised, much of it processed and sold on site. After a nice cup of tea and a slice of cake in the purpose-built barn, the visitors could return home, their car boots full of pea sticks, logs or even rustic garden furniture they had purchased, hopefully spreading the word to friends and relations.

This book is by no means merely a description enlivened by amusing anecdotes of how Chris and Anne bought, developed and managed their woodland with its associated business before selling it only recently to another family. It is a really honest, thought-provoking appraisal, entertainingly written, giving it an appeal to a wide audience, whether familiar with woodland management or not.

A site of even-aged chestnut coppice and fairly young pine plantations on acid and infertile soil without any special archaeological features, endangered flora or fauna or precious ancient trees, was slowly transformed into a thriving, productive, award-winning woodland park. Even though the author is a chartered forester by profession with a masters' degree in Forest Recreation, there is little technical terminology in the text – a useful glossary of

forestry 'jargon' is included at the back of the book. Chris Yarrow is candid about their mistakes, the lessons learned along the way, the compromises that had to be made and generous with advice for others. There is a very interesting chapter towards the end entitled 'Money Matters!'

What made this book such an intriguing and enjoyable read was that the character of this obviously irrepresible, hard-working, strongly opinionated man is evident throughout the text – short phrases, a few well-chosen words, a concise side-swipe or two bring to life some of the officials, local inhabitants and visitors who disagreed with the author or behaved in a way



he found incomprehensible. He describes himself as 'too cussed and impatient to work for others', 'not well suited to face-to-face dealings with the public', or on another occasion admits that his 'academic training was no foundation for managing staff'. Agree with some of his ideas or not, his vision, sense of purpose and boundless energy to put it all into practice, have to be admired. Chris and Anne obviously

make a formidable yet complimentary team, who managed the amazing feat of making a small Sussex woodland pay, while successfully educating and entertaining visitors of all ages, training employees and carrying out forestry work to ensure that a revived Wilderness Wood continues to thrive into the future.

In an era when we constantly hear criticism regarding the high percentage of our ancient semi-natural woodland languishing neglected lack of management, the inspiring story of Wilderness Wood proves what can be possible but the drive, dedication and level of expertise required to redress the situation, maybe partly explains just why the current state of affairs exists.

Heather Martin

Batsford Arboretum

In search of inspiration for new planting in their own wood, Bernie and Theresa visited Batsford Arboretum in Gloucestershire.

We took a leisurely walk around the arboretum and photographed the two *Sorbus Tormunalis* Wild Service Trees, a British natural that we do not have in our woods in Sussex but plan to add. One was an older specimen huddled in amongst a yew tree and the other a much younger one. Service trees, also known as checker trees, are often found in ancient woodland and look especially fine in autumn with their red berries and coppery leaves.

The 56-acre arboretum at Batsford is home to one of the largest private tree collections in the country, providing something of interest throughout the year and famed for trees which originate in Japan and China. There is a lovely view down to Batsford House, and St Marys Church on the boundary, is also worth a visit.

The arboretum has a Japanese theme with a Japanese rest house, a Buddha and a Hermit's Cave formed from the local Cotswold stone. Apparently the Hermit had gone to the town for more rice on the day we visited.

A garden centre and cafe support Batsford's



charitable status. An on-site wood turner has a work shop which demonstrates skills that equate to some excellent sale items.

The collection includes a number of 'Red Data' species which are extinct in the wild, as well as several UK champion trees, famed for their size. There are some large giant redwoods, oaks and a magnificent beech, with a three-arm spread and more around. Observers thought I was hugging the tree. Maybe I was, so what!

The arboretum is managed by the Batsford Foundation, a charity set up by the 2nd Lord Dulverton in 1983 to promote education, conservation and research into gardens, arboreta and historic landscapes.

There is a family connection to the Mitford sisters, who lived at Batsford in the 1920s. They were infamous in the middle years of the twentieth century for their eccentricities, beauty and varied political leanings.

A fascinating past.

The arboretum has a fascinating history, much of which is reflected in the planting and design you see today. The collections at Batsford cover a wide range of plants from around the world, with over 2,850 labelled specimens.

Entrance is £7.95 with concessions available. Batsford Arboretum and Garden Centre, Batsford, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire GL56 9QB (If you're using SATNAV to get there, use the code GL56 9AD.)

www.batsarb.co.uk



The National Motorcycle Museum is not perhaps the most obvious venue for a conference about woodlands, but it played host to a really interesting day of discussion about resilient woodlands. The Royal Forestry Society joined forces with the Woodland Trust to organise this landmark conference

Pests, pathogens, diseases and climate change threaten British woodlands in an unprecedented way. We are all aware of the problems caused by ash die back and phytothoptera, but how many of us have seriously considered how our changing climate might affect native woodland species?

Eleven speakers, all leading experts, addressed different aspects of meeting the challenge of resilient woodlands.

Graham Taylor, a senior partner in Pryor and Rickett Silviculture, discussed economic sustainability and resilience – how to manage woodlands profitably in the light of changing conditions. He stressed the importance of woodland owners getting professional help (as well he might, given the nature of his business) and remarked that NGOs should combine their conservation aims with sustainable and profitable timber management.

Stephen Trotter, CEO of the Wildlife Trusts, explained how even subtle changes in woodland biodiversity can reveal evidence of climate change. He remarked on the growing disconnect between many people and the natural environment, and put in a plea for more trees in the right places.

Dr Gabriel Hemery shared the results of Sylva's British Woodland Resilience survey, in which nine out of ten owners reported noticing at least one impact of climate change.

Taking the long view

Jonathan Spencer, Head of Planning and Environment for Forest Enterprise, England has the job of co-ordinating forest planning throughout England. He has to consider the effects of climate change on both the economic and ecological aspects of forestry. It's a very wide brief and because of this, he took the long view in considering forest resilience. His presentation took us back millions of years and covered the last 20 ice ages and inter-glacial periods that formed Britain and Europe. He noted that the

tree species which survived over the millennia shared certain characteristics, and foresters should consider these when introducing new planting today. Good genetic variation, species diversity, fecundity, natural vegetative regeneration and good interaction with other tree species and other organisms all play their part in ensuring the survival of the fittest.

It was a thought-provoking day. One forgets that housing development can also promote the introduction of new tree planting, for example. And all

the talk of introducing different species, perhaps from southern Europe, is a direct challenge to those who favour using locally-sourced seed to plant disease-free native trees.

The conference attracted a wide group of people from across the forestry industry and woodland world – owners, managers, conservationists, professional foresters and timber producers. Despite the differing viewpoints, one common consensus seemed to emerge: no one can predict the future and we need diversity of species, size and age in our woodlands to ensure resilience against the slings and arrows of an unknown future.



Woodlands Blogs

Monitoring and improving the health of our trees

Chris reports that several academic institutions are monitoring different aspects of tree health, and are working to address the challenges posed by climate change and pests and diseases.

Preparing for action

Many woodlands are used by community groups such as scouts and guides, but less common is use by disaster training teams. DART – Disaster Arborist Response team International (DART) is a volunteer humanitarian aid response team which specialises in removing obstructive trees. This in turn enables other aid agencies to carry out their work more effectively.

The life cycle of an oak tree

The BBC recently screened **Oak Tree: Nature's Greatest Survivor**, a fascinating documentary



which studied one ancient oak for a year. The programme is still available **here on iPlayer** for a short time, but if you miss it, this blog gives a flavour of the remarkable research.

Solar cookers for days when you don't want to light a campfire

Solar stoves are unlikely to replace a traditional camping fire, but they are a useful and less smokey alternative. The sun's rays are concentrated on a cylinder which is surrounded by a vacuum tube. To make it work well you need to point the device towards the sun and radiant energy is the key.

(www.slicksolarstove.com/)

Woodland types – scrub

Scrub is not woodland per se, but it is often found where woodland starts or ends; or where woodland might develop (e.g. on an abandoned field). Once scrub is established, a canopy may begin to form and close over. If this happens, the original vegetation may be shaded out and different species may come in, including tree species e.g. ash / sycamore (as the scrub canopy becomes taller and thinner); thus a woodland may ultimately develop.

What are resilient woodlands?

Making woods resilient has become the latest fashion in forestry and in this context resilience means the ability to resist both disease and climate change.

Woodlands TV

Building classic oak barns

The Classic Barn Company team share their passion for producing beautiful oak-framed garages, produced from traditional timber.

Game shooting in the woodlands

Guns, beaters, picker-uppers – a day out with a woodland shoot.

TV and radio

Maybe it's the legacy of this year's glorious autumn display, but woodlands and timber-related stories have been peppering our screens and airwaves over the last month or so. We've rounded them up and the links are in bold.

During Grown in Britain Week, **BBC Radio 4's Farming Day** featured several forestry stories, including one programme recorded in Alvecote Wood, which belongs to SWOG members Sarah Walters and Stephen Briggs.

Farming Today podcasts

19 October: **Forestry** - a discussion about the forestry industry in the UK.

20 October: **Ash die back** – Dr Ann Edwards of the John Innes centre discusses research into chalara-resistant ash species (10.23 minutes in).

21 October: **Biofuels** – wood as fuel (first item). Is it a carbon-neutral source of energy?

23 October: **Forestry careers** and training the forestry skills needed to manage a small wood (5.49 minutes in). Also, importing wood fuel for use in the Drax power station in Yorkshire –

is this huge demand damaging American forests? (9.30 minutes in).

24 October: **Alvecote Wood** Sarah Walters and Stephen Briggs talk about the extensive work they have undertaken in their 20-acre wood, bringing it back into management and creating a wildlife haven.

Quercus quizzes

In a further celebration of all things autumnal, the Radio 4 **Natural Histories** page has a wonderful **leaf quiz** to test viewers' ability to identify fallen leaves. For the extra confident (or those with a bit more spare time), there is a similar one on **butterflies here**.

From Graceland to woodland

Finally, in between Priscilla Presley's promotional chatter about some of Elvis's finest work, **The One Show** ran an informed piece about the critical need to increase the amount of productive woodland in the UK. If you missed it, it is also on iPlayer here until the end of the month (about 2.55 minutes in).

From left to right, Sally Challoner (BBC Radio 4 producer), Vernon from BBC Radio 4, Ian Dudley (Chairman of the RFS Trustees), Stephen Briggs (Owner, Alvecote Wood) and Charlotte Smith (Presenter, BBC Radio 4).

