

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter February 2016

Ash dieback – some good news?

Forest Charter launch

Coppice season underway



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www.swog.org.uk



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There has been a fair bit of publicity surrounding the launch of the Charter for Trees, Forests and People, a campaign which SWOG firmly supports — read more on page 6. With the signs of spring arriving at least a month early this year, the Peplers' coppice work has been finished not a minute too soon. We hope you enjoy the before and after photos.

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodlands. 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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Picture credits Cover & p 8 Mike Pepler; p 4 Woodland Trust; pp 5 & 10 Woodlands; p 7 Must Farm; p 9 APF Show.

SWOG website and forum

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Follow us on Twitter @_swog



SWOG COURSE LIST MARCH 2015



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. View it on the SWOG website here:

www.swog.org.uk/courses-4

Living Woods relaunch

The popular and well-respected **Living Woods Magazine** has a new editor. Acknowledging the difficulties he has encountered since he was knocked off his bike in Bristol and sustained a brain injury, Nick Gibbs has stepped back from the role but will continue to support the magazine in other ways. We wish him well and welcome the new editor, the appropriately named Nancy Wood. The next issue will appear on 1 March and for subscribers, service should continue as usual. For more information or to subscribe, please visit

www.livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk or email **subs@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk**.



Forestry Commission pie & pint events

There are still places available for the informal briefings from the Forestry Commission to support forestry businesses. They can provide guidance on the latest grant developments (LEADER, LEP, Countryside Productivity etc.);

recruitment and training opportunities; and updates on health and safety.

The Pie & Pint events will be from 6:30pm for a 7pm start until 9pm, taking place in the following locations:

Kent/East Sussex border Tuesday 2 February, Woodlands Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 7PR

Surrey/Sussex border Thursday 4 February, The Kings Head, Church Street, Rudgwick, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 3EB

South-west Hampshire Wednesday 10 February, The Tally Ho, High Street, Broughton, Hampshire SO20 8AA (Please park at Broughton Village Hall, High

Street, Broughton, SO20 8AX)

Berks/Bucks/Oxon Thursday 11 February The Lambert Arms, Aston Rowant, Near Thame, Watlington, Oxfordshire, OX49 5SQ

If you have any questions before these events or to reserve a place please email southeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or ring Jeanette Hawkins on 0300 067 4425.

Other regions

In other regions the set-up is the same, although please note that start times vary.

Cornwall Wednesday 10 February 2016 18.30 - 20.30 Lakeview Country Club, Old Coach Rd, Lanivet, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 5JJ

Wiltshire Wednesday 24 February 2016 18.30 - 20.30 Bath Arms, Clay St, Crockerton, Wiltshire, BA12 8AJ

Yorkshire Thursday 4 February 2016 10.00 - 12.30 & 13.30 - 16.00 Application masterclass. The Smithy, Zetland Estate, Aske Hall, Richmond, North Yorkshire, DL10 5HJ

Northumberland Tuesday 9 February 2016 10.00 - 12.30 & 13.30 - 16.00 Application masterclass

Wallington Hall, National Trust, Cambo, near Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 4AR

A full list and contact details of local area offices is on the FC website:

www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/bee-h-a2mjc7



Small Woods Association spring and summer events. Please contact Phil Tidey (PhilTidey@smallwoods.org.uk) if you are interested in attending. More details are on the **Small Woods website**.

4 May All day Managing new and established woods for ground flora Bromborough, Merseyside (with Flora Locale).

4 May All day Managing woodlands for wildflowers Guildford, Surrey (with Flora Locale).

7 May All day Daniel Hayes, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Derbyshire (in partnership with the National Forest).

8 May 2-5pm Tess's Wood, Horsley Woodhouse, Derby Visit to a woodland

established in 1990 on a former opencast mine. **15 May 2-5pm Park Wood, Monmouth** (in partnership with the Monmouthshire Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust). Restoration of woodland and ground flora.

16 May All Day Woodland ground flora in new and established woods. Otley, West Yorkshire (with Flora Locale).

21 May 2-5pm Coed Maes y Pandy, Dolgellau (in partnership with the Woodland Trust). Restoring the site as a broadleaved woodland

22 May 2-5pm Management of mature Scots pine and larch plantation to encourage regeneration of broadleaf. Middle Lodge Farm, Rugeley, Staffs.

24 May Managing woodlands for diversity Newbury, West Berkshire (with Flora Locale).

1 June Woodland flora introduction and identification Aberfeldy, Perth and Kinross (with Flora Locale).

Forestry Commission titles reissued

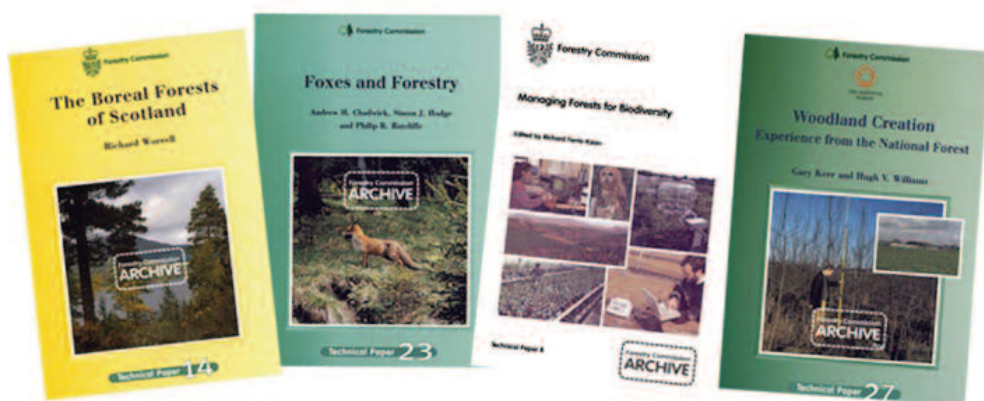
Out-of-print Forestry Commission technical publications are being brought back to life and made available again in an on-line archive.

Over the decades, the FC has produced a large number of informative publications on a wide range of forestry-related subjects, creating a substantial library.

Although many of the key texts have been revised over the years, with contemporary editions available in print and/or online, most of the older titles are now out of print. Those currently available were published in the last 30 years and as Roger Coppock, Head of Corporate and Forestry Support at the commission, explained, 'Much of this older material is still valuable and in demand by students, researchers and professionals

across the forestry and related sectors at home and abroad, but apart from a few hard copies in libraries, it is inaccessible'.

Releasing some of the old material as free digital downloads helps make better use of a wealth of Forestry Commission information and knowledge by making it easily accessible. About 400 titles have been digitised, and will be uploaded in batches over the coming year. The archived publications can be accessed free of charge at www.forestry.gov.uk/publications, by selecting 'Archive' from the Category menu.



Discovery of Bronze Age house at Must Farm, Cambridgeshire

The Must Farm Timber Project is the excavation of a Bronze Age dwelling by archaeologists from the University of Cambridge. Hailed as the 'British Pompeii', this 3,000 year old Bronze Age round house in the Cambridgeshire Fens was partially destroyed by fire and the occupants appear to have left in a hurry. The settlement was built on a wooden platform on piles over a river channel and dates back to the end of the Bronze Age (1000-800 BC). Happily, the piles collapsed into the silty fenland and much of it was preserved, leaving archaeologists an unrivalled snapshot of life in Britain 3,000 years ago.

It is the best-preserved example of Bronze Age life yet discovered, revealing construction techniques, living conditions, perfectly preserved artefacts and clues as to diet and dress. Perhaps of most interest to woodland owners is the use of timber in the building and particularly the techniques used by archaeologists to assess the type of wood used in

construction. Oak or ash can sometimes be identified visually, but anything else must be analysed in a laboratory, so microscopic samples are sent away for assessment.

The archaeologists try to assess whether the wood is coppiced, as this provides another insight into the lifestyle of Bronze Age people. Wood that shows evidence of having been worked – whether it is simply split or cut, or perhaps more elaborately worked – shines light on to the kind of tools available. Other marks, such as beaver tooth marks, or evidence of insect boring, can provide clues about the wider environment of the era.

The building was destroyed in a fire and this was not an uncommon fate for similar structures that have been unearthed elsewhere in Europe. One theory is that they were intentionally burnt down when they had reached the end of their useful life – after about 18 years.

The fascinating Must Farm blog documents new finds and discoveries every week or so.

www.mustfarm.com





Those with long memories will remember that in the years after King John signed Magna Carta in 1215, the English barons quickly took advantage of the succession of his nine-year old son, Henry III in 1216 to push home their advantage and recover more of the natural rights of the king's subjects. In 1217 Henry signed the Charter of the Forest, a critically important document that restored the rights of free men to forage, gather wood and graze their livestock in the royal forests.

To celebrate the Charter's 800th anniversary, the Woodland Trust is leading more than 45 organisations (including SWOG) in calling for a new forest charter for the 21st century. Their message is a simple one: we need to act now before it's too late to celebrate and secure the future of our trees and woodland. Our country's woods and trees are facing unprecedented pressures from development, disease and climate change. They risk being neglected, undervalued and forgotten.

Why do we need a new Charter for Trees, Woods and People?

The facts paint a worrying picture, with changing lifestyles, busy schedules, and increased 'screen-time' meaning that many people today feel disconnected from trees and woodland. In addition,

- The State of Nature report showed that 60% of woodland wildlife species are in decline across the UK
- We are planting fewer trees than in previous years
- Trees and woods are hugely valuable for our health, happiness and our children's development. Research shows that having trees

close to residential areas encourages increased outdoor exercise

Society and government need to stop taking trees for granted and recognise their huge contribution to our lives. Research for the Woodland Trust, by Europe Economics, found that UK woods and trees deliver £270 billion worth of benefits to society. This makes the call for a charter more important than ever before.

Involvement of small woodland owners

Over 72% of English woodland is in private hands and SWOG members form a significant part of that statistic. The charter campaign would love to hear from you! The 21st century charter will be rooted in individuals' stories and memories; it will provide guidance and inspiration to shape government policy; and will seek to enlist Charter Champions who will inspire and rally friends and communities to stand up for trees and woodland. Everyone, whatever their background, can make a



contribution.

The campaign was launched in London in January, with the unveiling of a huge *trompe l'oeil* tree on the paving stones of the South Bank. The intention was to bring the campaign to the attention of city dwellers, and it certainly attracted a lot of interest.

The Charter has a great interactive website that is gradually being filled with stories from people all over the country, who have written about their love of a particular tree, their memories of woody places and their hopes for the future of forestry in Britain.

Charter Champions

The next events are to find charter champions, community leaders who will help to ensure that their community is represented and who will inspire their neighbours to celebrate trees and create a lasting legacy for their community.

The death of dieback?

We have reported before about the scientific efforts to understand and combat *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, or chalara ash dieback. In early January there was a hint of good news, when researchers at the University of York reported that they had made significant progress in identifying the genetic markers which can be used to predict an ash tree's resistance to disease.

The full report can be read here on the **nature.com website**, but in summary, scientists believe that they will be able to predict which trees are resistant to the disease. Having sequenced the genetic code of ash trees to discover which were immune to the disease, researchers used the results to develop a test which predicts a low level of susceptibility to the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. Professor Ian Bancroft, of the Centre for Novel Agricultural Products at the University of York said, 'Tree disease epidemics are a global problem, impacting food security, biodiversity and national economies.

There are more details with dates of the February events around the country here:

treecharter.uk/you-and-your-community.

Beccy Speight, CEO of the Woodland Trust said, 'Our collective ambition is for a charter that puts trees back at the heart of our lives, communities and decision-making where they belong. The charter will provide guidance and inspiration to allow us all to appreciate, preserve and celebrate our trees and woods for what they do for us in so many different ways. Inspired by something that happened 800 years ago, there is no better time than now to shine the spotlight again on the benefits that trees and woods bring to us all today and to future generations.' *The Guardian* has been running regular stories in their weekend editions throughout January: www.theguardian.com/tree-charter.

For more detail, visit **www.treecharter.uk** and if you share a story, let us know too!

'The approach we have used has never previously been used to screen for disease-resistant plants and in principle could be applied to identify disease tolerance in other species of trees that are currently being threatened by a range of tree pests and pathogens.'

In theory, diseased trees could be replaced by those which are resistant to the disease, so perhaps the bleak future of a landscape without ash trees can be avoided.



Winter coppicing

Thanks to Mike and Tracy Pepler for these great pictures of the winter coppicing in Chestnut Coppice. The before and after clearly show the extent of the work.

Mike notes that wood that isn't split won't dry very well, especially if it is birch. The solution for narrow poles is to 'stripe' the wood,

by skimming the chainsaw along the side to remove some bark. If you do this during the snedding/ measuring/ logging stage immediately after felling the tree it doesn't take much time. Cut one strip for wood up to 2" diameter, two strips up to 4", and three stripes above that, until they get thick enough to split.



Leafy young coppice at the end of October 2015.

The same area after Mike and Tracy had cut down the coppice in November and December. It will be interesting to see this area after a season's regrowth.



A sight to warm any woodsman's heart – freshly cut poles seasoning outside in the wood.



To see more of Mike and Tracy's work – and their great photos – visit <http://peplers.blogspot.co.uk>

We are starting to receive dates for the woodfairs and shows that brighten up the summer. Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be at Woodfest Wales, Westonbirt and Bentley. This list is not exhaustive, so please send us details of your event.

Weird and Wonderful Wood

14–15 May 2016 Haughley Park, Wetherden, Stowmarket, Suffolk
www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

The Bushcraft Show

28–30 May 2016 Beehive Farm Woodland Lakes, Rosliston, Derbyshire
www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk

The Arb Show

3–4 June 2016 Westonbirt Arboretum
www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show

West's Wood Fair

18 & 19 June 2016 East Dean, Chichester, West Sussex
www.westswoodfair.co.uk/



Royal Highland Show 2016

23–26 June Edinburgh
royalhighlandshow.org

Woodfest Wales

24–26 June 2016 Caerwys, North Wales
www.woodfestwales.co.uk

Royal Welsh Show

18–21 July 2016 Builth Wells, Powys
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show

New Forest and Hampshire Show

26–28 July 2016 Brockenhurst, Hampshire
www.newforestshow.co.uk

South Downs Show and Hampshire Woodfair

20–21 August 2016
 Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Hampshire
www.southdownsshow.co.uk

Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum

27–29 August 2016 Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

27–28 August 2016
 Sturminster Newton, Dorset
www.stockgaylard.com

Wychwood Forest Fair

4 September 2016 Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

APF Exhibition

15–17 September 2016
 Ragley Estate, Warwickshire
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Bentley Weald Woodfair

23–25 September 2016 Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

Peebles Wood Market

22–23 October 2016 Tweed Green & Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market

Woodlands blogs

Click on the titles to be taken to the full blogs or videos on the Woodlands.co.uk website.

Bowl turning

Beautiful results can be achieved by applying ancient techniques and patience.

Wood finishes

Craftsmen can choose from a variety of waxes and oils to preserve and enhance wood products.



Unigate Wood – part of London’s green lung

Once part of the site of a Unigate dairy Unigate Wood in Streatham was preserved when the dairy was replaced by a large residential development. Volunteers now work with Lambeth Council to preserve the woodland for local amenity.

Spraying – herbicide and pesticide application

Chris reports that a course on pesticide and herbicide spraying is really valuable. If you are serious about tackling a large amount of spraying on your land then the appropriate training is vital. Alternatively, if a particular species is driving you mad in your woodland, then think about getting professional advice to tackle the problem.

The big garden bird watch 2106

The RSPB enlist the help of the nation’s

birdwatchers to carry out an annual census of Britain’s bird population.

Fennel, another umbellifer

Common and sweet fennel are relatives of the carrot in the Apiaceae family. Their yellow flowers provide a striking display for pollinating insects and the seeds are aromatic, with a slightly aniseed flavour.

Dandelions and their sap

In general few plants bloom around the New Year, but dandelion is one of the few that does.

(Interestingly, 612 different species were recorded this year, opposed to 368 last year.) Dandelions are deep rooted, perennial plants which are native to most temperate areas of the Northern Hemisphere.

Our changing wildlife

Reflecting on the work of researchers who have analysed

40 years’ worth of data, Lewis reports that some species have fared better than others.

Woodlands TV

Eating bugs in the woodlands

Woodland Educator Paul Beadle explains the benefits of eating insects – and demonstrates it! Packed with protein, insects and bugs are regarded as an important potential food source by the World Food Organisation. Woodlice, boiled and then lightly fried in oil taste like crispy shrimp, while ants’ eggs are similar to caviar. Go on, try it!

Restoring an arboretum

We hear from Rebecca Cork, who is heading up a conservation project to restore a historically and culturally rich arboretum for community use. The arboretum was first designed and planted in the 19th century and enjoys over 300 rare and champion trees – including one of the most varied collections of oaks in the UK.