

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter March 2016

Meeting at Tortworth Arboretum

Managing tracks and rides

Sharing your wood

Tree health updates



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www.swog.org.uk



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The combination of wet weather and hard work over the winter months often means that tracks become muddy. Fortunately, Rich has some good advice on how to keep them well maintained. If you would like a chance to chat with fellow woodland owners, sign up for our meeting in April at Tortworth Arboretum, which promises to be a great afternoon.

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 & pp 5 & 9 Woodlands; p 2 SWOG; p3 Tortworth Forest Centre; p 6 Forestry Commission; p 7 M Pepler; p 8 Gather Outdoors; p 10 APF Show.

SWOG website and forum

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SWOG COURSE LIST MARCH 2015



Courses are listed by location. You can search the lists by entering a key word.
Press CTRL-F or CMD-F (Mac users) and enter the search term.



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

SWOG meeting 2pm Saturday 23 April, Tortworth Arboretum, South Gloucestershire

We are planning a SWOG meeting with a difference in April. Instead of visiting a member's wood, we are offering members the chance to visit Tortworth Arboretum, a once great and more recently neglected arboretum in Gloucestershire. Not yet open to the public, it is being restored by volunteers, and a superb collection of rare trees is gradually being brought back into management.

Tortworth Arboretum is a 20-acre site near Wootton-under-Edge, which was once owned by the Ducie family and forms part of the original Tortworth Estate.

From the time he inherited the estate in 1853, the third Earl of Ducie, Henry John Moreton, complemented the existing ancient trees by planting new and exotic species brought back to England by the great Victorian plant hunters. By the time of his death in 1921 at the age of 95, Tortworth rivalled the collection at Westonbirt Arboretum just 30 miles away.



The arboretum's collection of over 300 rare and champion trees hosts an amazing and unusual ecosystem including wild flowers, deer, bats, butterflies and dragonflies, as well as many bird types.

It has suffered from serious neglect in recent decades, but the new owners, Woodlands.co.uk, have offered the Tortworth Forest Centre a unique opportunity to restore and open it for education, wellbeing and enjoyment. The team at the Forest Centre, led by Rebecca Cork, is working with volunteers to gradually clear the undergrowth, create paths and make the arboretum sustainable.

SWOG meeting 23 April 2016 2pm–5pm

Bec will show us around the arboretum and talk about her work with community groups, volunteers and local conservation groups.

There is still a great deal of work to be done: Bec and her team spend a lot of time clearing brambles and rhododendron, so there will be plenty of opportunity for discussion about many aspects of the work of small woodland owners, as well as the chance to appreciate some magnificent trees and habitat.

Tortworth is not open to the public (although **the website** is) and places on this free visit are limited. If you would like to attend, please **email judith@swog.org.uk**.

One of Tortworth's champion trees, L Cedrus deodara 'Robusta' Himalayan Deodar Cedar Pinaceae

Tree health and Chalara advice updated

In the light of recent work and developments, the Forestry Commission has issued two new leaflets and **updated the information on its website** concerning the management of ash trees infected by ash dieback.

There is currently no cure for Chalara, and no clear method for stopping its spread. Therefore the aim of management should be to slow the spread and lessen the impact of the disease. The leaflet and guidance provides advice for



woodland owners on what to do if you have infected trees, or if you suspect infection.

Research continues into breeding disease-resistance ash trees, but it will be several years before disease-resistant stock is available.

Phoney peach disease

Meanwhile, another pathogen threatens olive trees, woody shrubs and other broadleaf species such as horse chestnut, oak and maple. *Xylella fastidiosa* (also known as 'phony peach disease') is present in France and Spain but has not yet crossed the Channel. Scientists at first thought it could not survive in the cooler climate of the UK, but another more hardy strain has developed. It infects the host by invading the plant or tree's water-conducting system and symptoms include wilting, diebacks, stunted growth and leaf scorching. It can be hard to spot because the symptoms, especially on horse chestnut, plane or elm, are similar to those from other pathogens. More information is available from the **Forestry Commission here**.

RFS seeks views on UK Woodland Assurance Standard revisions

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is consulting with its members as it prepares to feedback on the Government's final consultation on the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) Fourth Edition. The standard certifies that woods are managed responsibly and sustainably and that there is a 'chain of custody' in place. The revised Fourth Edition is due to be released in the autumn. It is a voluntary scheme and it is a woodland owner's decision whether to participate. Some owners have raised concerns, saying that the standard is complex, extensive and duplicative.

The RFS is asking members whether they feel concerns over complexity, cost and effectiveness of the Standard have been adequately addressed

and whether they feel they benefit from certifying woodlands they own and manage. UKWAS acknowledges that small woodland owners face particular challenges in trying to meet the standard and offers concessions for them, such as less rigorous documentation requirements.

Members have been asked to respond to the RFS on three key questions about the revised Standard by 11 March 2016. Their responses will inform the RFS feedback to the UKWAS Steering Committee.

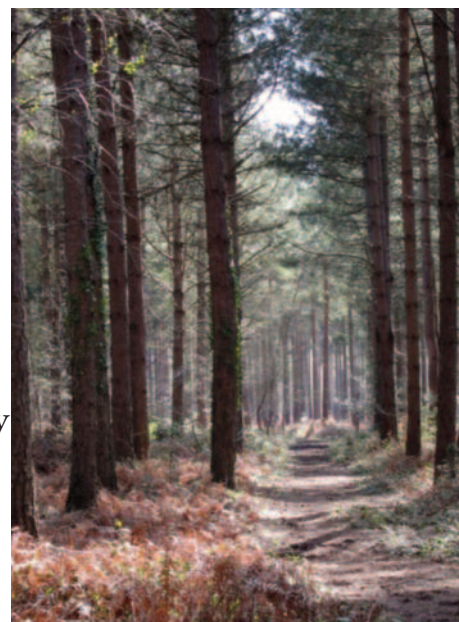
The consultation period runs from 15th February to 16th March 2016. Details on the Consultation paper are available on the **UKWAS website here**.

Email your comments to membership@rfs.org.uk and the RFS will pass them on to the UKWAS Steering Committee.

'Wrong type of trees' in Europe increased global warming

The journal *Science* reports the rather startling news that 'not all forestry contributes to climate change mitigation'. For most of the past 250 years it seems that Europe's managed forests have been a net source of carbon, contributing to climate warming rather than mitigating it. A team of scientists has reconstructed the history of forest management in Europe in the context of a land-atmosphere model and believe that replacing broadleaved species with conifer is the main reason for the negative impact on the climate.

Over the past 150 years foresters tended to plant faster-growing, more commercially valuable conifers such as Scots pine and Norway spruce. Managing woodland by regularly removing trees also releases carbon otherwise stored in litter, dead wood, and soil carbon pools. While reforestation is generally regarded as a good thing because of tree's ability to absorb carbon, conifer woodlands



are generally darker than broadleaf forests and absorb more solar radiation. In this period, Europe warmed by 0.12 degrees. Of course, the burning of fossil fuels has contributed far more to the problem, but researchers believe that the conifer woodlands of Europe have also made a significant contribution.

It seems that human interference in managing woodland is less effective than allowing trees to regenerate naturally. The authors of the report suggest that we should look carefully at the types of trees we are planting and the way in which forests are managed. This reinforces the advice woodland owners have already received from several national bodies regarding planting resilient woodlands which will cope with the perceived effects of climate change. However, as Dr Kim Naudts, points out that 'We shouldn't put our hopes on forests to mitigate what is an emission problem'.

So woodland owners who have been removing conifer from their woods and replant with broadleaf trees have been absolutely right: they're restoring their woodland and saving the planet.



Biosecurity advice

The Forestry Commission has issued a simple and useful set of guidelines to minimise the transference of soil and organic matter between sites.

Pests and pathogens can be spread via infected plant material, dirty footwear, tools or vehicles, so it is vital to wash or scrub your kit on leaving a woodland site, especially if it is an area known to be infected. Biosecurity is important when working in any forest or

woodland, or when entering any land or premises where there is a risk of spreading tree pests and diseases (eg, where timber is stored or processed).

The FC offers advice on the most effective disinfectants for cleaning kit such as chainsaws and ropes, and how to clean boots properly. They advise cleaning everything when leaving a site, and again when you set out the following day. Make sure vehicle footwells are clear of mud and leaf litter, too.

You can even take a short online course in biosecurity. To read the full guidance and download leaflets, visit the **Forestry Commission website**.

Managing tracks and rides

Most small woodland owners approach their woods via a shared track and there are many good reasons to think carefully about the tracks and rides in your woodland and how you use them. What is best for its function of carrying vehicles and loads? How can you ensure its longevity? What about its use as a wildlife habitat? Richard Hare outlines some of the options.

Tracks are like the arteries of your wood. They are conduits for you and your tools to perform 'life-giving' woodland management tasks, opening up previously dark and lifeless areas by coppicing or mowing glades and rides. They provide a means for you to remove firewood and other coppice products all of which contributes to the viability and sustainability of the wood... a 'living wood'. They also provide valuable habitat for butterflies, insects and a number of small mammals such as dormice.

Tracks inevitably degrade over time, sometimes becoming overgrown, wet or muddy. Scrub and plants may invade across the edges. Crucially, rides need to be well drained, so wherever possible, keep ditches and culvert clear of leaves and silt. Getting to know your neighbours and jointly managing shared rides will be beneficial to you all, as well as to the woodland as a whole.

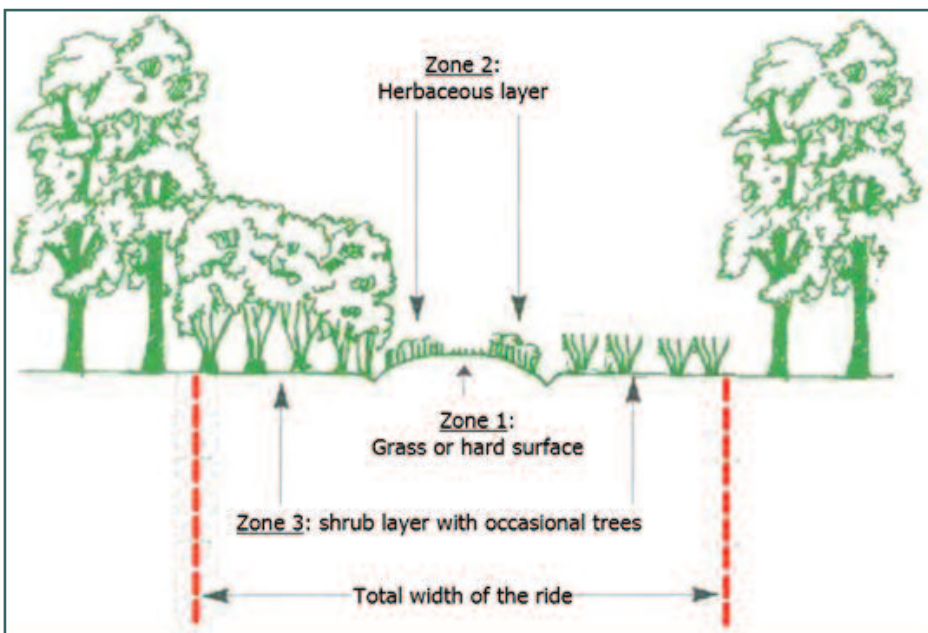


Diagram courtesy of the Forestry Commission.

Improving wet and muddy tracks

If your wood suffers from dark wet and muddy tracks, one of the best things you can do to help dry it out is to coppice or fell the shading trees to the edge. Most advice states that one-and-a-half tree lengths is sufficient, but this will obviously depend a bit on the size of your wood. In smaller woodlands less than this may be more appropriate. East-west rides benefit from longer hours of sunlight, but in a small woodland you will most likely be working with the existing topography and neighbouring owners.

Management zones

The management of the ride can be broadly divided into zones.

- Zone 1 in the centre – stone or a grassy track
- Zone 2 herbaceous layer 3 or 4 metres out from the centre
- Zone 3 up to 10 or 15 metres from the track with occasional larger trees

If you can achieve this style of management, the track itself will improve, but critically, the three zones also offer greater habitat diversity.

These zones will often overlap and preferably be mown or flailed or coppiced on increasingly longer intervals the further away from the centre of the ride. The grassy herbaceous zone could be mowed on an annual or biannual rotation, ideally at the end of the summer, and the outer shrub zone coppiced every 8 or 10 years before it gives way to the high forest canopy of the main woodland.

Managing tracks for wildlife

Each zone should offer a variety of structure and habitat at different stages of regeneration, which will provide the optimum conditions for increasing biodiversity. These ride and

woodland edges can provide more biodiversity than the whole of the rest of the woodland. Maximising their effect by including scallops and meanders in the rides will also provide a greater interest and diffuse the effects of the prevailing wind.

As an example, one of the woods I manage has a high voltage power line running through it. Although the power line is quite unsightly, it does mean that the local electricity supplier is obliged to cut the ride before the trees reach within a certain height of the wires. This has provided a wonderful habitat for many insects, birds and butterflies, at the same time keeping the ride open and dry, and providing the perfect conditions for seasoning firewood. Interestingly, this ride also is a fantastic nursery for self-seeded oak. The warmth and light in this area is much more favourable for their regeneration than the heavily shaded canopy of the main wood. The birch and bramble protect and draw up the young oak saplings. This is a win-win situation and the young trees in this area are a great source as the successors of the 100-year-old specimens I am thinning deeper in the wood. (If I can get there before the chainsaws of the electricity generating board!)

At the same time, I've opened up an adjoining enclosed ride to about a tree and a half's length and taken the opportunity to introduce some hawthorn and blackthorn saplings into the shrub zone which is mostly dominated by sweet chestnut. I'm looking forward to seeing what else comes up, as the ground has not seen the light since 1993.

Track maintenance pilot scheme

Woodlands.co.uk have been piloting a project in the South East, aimed at helping woodland



owners collaborate over their ride maintenance. They could make a plan together, perhaps to widen the rides to let more light in, or to improve the surface of the ride. Or it could be simply hiring someone with a flail to come in and cut the vegetation on the sides of the track, or a mower for the grass. It would have to depend on local conditions. Rich, who wrote this article, would be happy to meet a group of owners who share the use of a track and discuss what might be done, and how Woodlands might help. Contact rich@swog.org.uk

Resources

Download the excellent Forestry Commission leaflet, **Managing woodland open space for wildlife** which has clear diagrams to explain the theory of management zones.

Visit the Woodlands.co.uk website to download a chapter from **Managing your woodland for wildlife specifically about ride management**. There is also good practical advice on **making the most of your stoned track**.

The Forestry Commission also have a couple of really useful videos on the subject:

The wildlife benefits of ride management in woodland

The benefits of managing woodland using rides

Sharing a wood

Sharing a wood

The road to woodland ownership is a path well travelled, but everyone's journey is different. Some search for years for the perfect wood, biding their time until the right wood comes up for sale at an affordable price. For others, the realisation of a long-held dream can seem unattainable.

Woodland is not cheap, but there are a number of ways of making it more affordable.

Perhaps the most obvious is to share the cost with friends or family. As with all joint ventures, the secret is to be clear about aims and expectations from the outset. What do you want to use the wood for? Will you want to be alone without your fellow owners some of the time? Is one of you a would-be lumberjack, and if so is everyone happy about using power tools to chop down trees? Does it matter if a fellow owner really does not want to participate in any work to maintain the woodland? What will happen if one owner wishes to withdraw and wants their money back?

None of these are insurmountable obstacles and one company thinks it might be able to ease the path to shared ownership.

Gather Outdoors was established in 2015 and takes a social approach to helping people enjoy the outdoors. They plan to make shared ownership of woodlands less of a fringe pursuit and help more people find their own leafy space to get away from it all. The founder, Tim Frenneaux, explains the company's aims.

'The business didn't start out as forestry agents. They started selling canoes: amazing canoes that unfold from the size of a suitcase to a fully sized rigid kayak. The Oru Kayak was designed in San Francisco and was launched via the crowd-funding website Kickstarter.

Gather Outdoors focuses on equipment that



provides the perfect balance of design and utility, so stocking the kayaks was an obvious choice. But the £1000+ price tag is a barrier to many. So whilst thinking how to make the kayaks affordable, they decided to steal an idea from the burgeoning sharing economy and sell kayaks to groups of people to share, rather than own outright. Why pay for the downtime? They called their scheme 'Crew Buy', and it has expanded to include camping stoves, Tentsile tree tents, Dutch ovens, Coleman Events shelters, Poler Stuff tents and other camping gear. The range on offer is growing as the Gather community expands. For those fortunate enough to afford the full price, there's nothing to stop people buying something to own outright.

Share your experiences

'Gather', as the name implies, is a socially minded business. Which meant that when the community asked to extend Crew Buy to woodlands, it was the obvious thing to do. Gather Outdoors want to tell the stories of people who have been there and experienced the upsides and the downsides of sharing woodlands.'

If you have any experience of sharing, good or bad, please get in touch with Tim Frenneaux, via tim@gatheroutdoors.co.uk, or on the SWOG forum [here](#). Do visit their website www.gatheroutdoors.co.uk

Woodlands blogs

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

Snighow Wood – research, viewing and purchase

Wildlife enthusiast Peter Trimmings recounts how he came upon Snighow Wood in the Lake District and, after careful consideration, decided to buy it.

Turning blanks

Stuart explains how he produces blanks for his wood-turning business by cutting each log into three pieces.



New uses for wood-derived materials

Scientists at Cellutech in Sweden have developed a cellulose-based material that could replace oil / petroleum derived

products, such as polystyrene. Mixed with a foaming agent, Cellufoam, it is light and strong with considerable shock-absorbing properties. It also biodegrades far more quickly than petroleum-based products.

General maintenance of a strimmer/brushcutter

Those of a technical bent might like to service their brushcutter or strimmer. Stuart provides a step-by-step guide.

The Force awakens in the Forest of Dean

'I didn't think there was this much green in the whole galaxy'. Angus goes to see a blockbuster movie and muses upon the use of woodland and the natural world in *Star Wars*.

Woodlands TV

Building a bodger's den in the woodlands

Traditional Craftsman Ben Chester builds a Bodger's Den and explains about the art of building with what's available in your woodland.

SWA 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 (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).

Events 2016

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