

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter May 2016



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www.swog.org.uk



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April proved to be blustery, showery and cold, but it didn't stop us from having a great afternoon at Tortworth, when fortunately the sun shone and showed off the arboretum to great advantage.

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Woodlands survey on ownership. The response was fantastic and if you'd like to be involved in a larger project with the University of Leicester, take a look at page 3.

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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SWOG website and forum

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SWOG COURSE LIST 2016



Courses are listed by location. You can search the lists by entering a key word.
Press CTRL F for 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

Families and children in small woodlands

Professor Darren Smith of the University of Leicester is leading a team which is carrying out research into the key motives and aspirations of small woodland owner in the UK. The project will focus on the ways that families, children, and individuals consume and shape their woodland spaces, and interact with nature and wildlife, the surrounding environments, and other woodland owners and organisations.

They will explore the different ways in which small woodlands can enhance health and well-being, and positively re-people and re-generate the woodlands of the UK. The project will also investigate the ways in which woodland owners manage their wood and work with other organisations to address ecological factors.

They are seeking 20 interviewees who are small woodland owners to participate in the pilot research project, which will then lead to the

submission of a large grant application to extend the research. We are hoping that the interviewees will actively support the research team in producing and designing the important questions and issues for the larger research grant application. The findings from the pilot project will be written-up and shared with the relevant interested parties.

This is a great chance to shape a significant academic project. If you would like to participate, please email Professor Smith: D.P.Smith@lboro.ac.uk.



London Tree Week

From 28 May–5 June London Tree Week will celebrate and explore London's trees and woodlands with a series of special events.

The Forest Charter team have organised a free



exhibition of **Tree Stories of London** in City Hall (31 May–10 June), and an evening of inspiring talks on 31st May hosted by Norton Rose – Talking Trees.

The **Wandering Tree** trompe l'oeil artwork will appear on Southbank by City Hall on 31 May, and near Moorgate, hosted by Simmons-Simmons on Friday 3 June.

The full list of activities is [here](#) and includes:

- Walk or cycle the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Trail
- Walk in the woods events from the Tree Council
- Explore the City of London Tree Trail
- Hunt London's Elm Trees
- Visit Thames Chase woodlands in Havering.

WoodWords™ 2016

Saturday 14th May, 6:00 - 9:00pm

Sylva Wood Centre, Long Wittenham, Oxon

Trees, and the wood that comes from them, are part of all our lives. WoodWords™ brings together four authors – Gabriel Hemery, Rob Penn, Richard Fortey and Paul Sellers – who are passionate about trees, wood, and the process of turning it into beautiful and functional things. At this inaugural WoodWords™ literary evening they will tell the stories behind their latest books – splinters and all.

This unique event takes place in the Sylva Wood Centre - an exciting new hive of creativity in wood that brings fine furniture and industrial



use of wood together. Dress down, enjoy drinks amongst the sawdust and wood chips at The Wood Bar, admire the incredible creativity of our resident designer-makers and be inspired.

Tickets are £15 each with all proceeds going to the charitable work of the Sylva Foundation.

For more information, details of the authors and to buy tickets visit the Sylva website sylva.org.uk/woodwords

Bluebells – foreign invaders or native species?

Despite the unseasonably chilly weather, the signs of spring are bursting out all around us and a low haze of indigo blue hovers over woodland floors around the country.

A healthy crop of bluebells is a good sign of an ancient woodland, but are your bluebells native, or foreign invaders?

Native bluebells have a more intense hue and are strongly scented, but they are threatened by loss of woodland habitat. Spanish bluebells were introduced to Britain in the 17th century and have been a common garden plant for decades. They were first recorded in the wild in 1909. Hardy and vigorous they have cross-bred with the native species, so our countryside is now populated with three main types – native bluebells, Spanish and a hybrid.

Plantlife, the organisation devoted to protecting and promoting wild flowers, plants and fungi, has published a useful guide which can be downloaded here: www.plantlife.org.uk. It explains the differences between the three types of bluebells and provides guidance on introducing and nurturing native bluebells. There is also information about how to root out the foreign invaders.



Reaching for the sky



Woodland owners who wrestle with the problems of how or whether to get planning permission for a small woodland shelter, might like to take inspiration from the latest developments in building technology. Researchers from the University of Cambridge are working with architects and planners in London on the viability of timber buildings some 80 stories high. The main advantage of using timber is that, unlike concrete and steel, it is a renewable resource. Currently, the world's tallest timber building is a 14-storey apartment block in Bergen, Norway, but the engineering challenges of building something that would rival the Shard in height are clearly monumental. The full article is available here:

www.cam.ac.uk. *The Guardian* has also written about the viability of using cross laminated timber, or CLT as a key component in construction. Read **the article here**.

In the meantime, those in search of guidance regarding more modest structures could consult our **guidance on sheds** on the SWOG website, or this **article and video** on the Woodlands.co.uk site.

Forest Live!

Now in its 16th season, Forest Live gigs take place at seven fantastic forest locations. Find out more about the prices and line-ups on the **Forestry Commission Forest Live** website.



Westonbirt Arboretum, Glos 16–19 June
Rudimental (waiting list only); Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only); UB40 with Ali Campbell, Astro & Mickey Virtue; Tom Jones.

Bedgebury Pinetum, Kent 17–18 June
Tom Jones; Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only.)

Sherwood Pines 23–25 June
Jake Bugg; Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Guy Garvey

Dalby Forest, North Yorks 24–26 June
Guy Garvey; John Newman; Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only)

Delamere Forest, Cheshire 1–3 July
Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Simply Red (waiting list); Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list)

Thetford Forest, Suffolk 30 June–1 July
Rudimental; James Bay (*sold out*); Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Simply Red

Cannock Chase Forest, Staffordshire 8–10 July
James Bay (waiting list); Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott; Kaiser Chiefs (waiting list only)

SWOG meeting at Tortworth Arboretum

Tortworth Arboretum is the woodland equivalent of Sleeping Beauty's castle – there are dozens of magnificent trees, some ancient, some exotic, some champion – which have been hidden for decades and are now being exposed by the hard work of volunteers under the leadership of Rebecca Cork and Jacob Stow. The 20-acre site is in the grounds of a hotel, but the arboretum is closed to the general public, so SWOG was delighted to take up Bec's kind offer of hosting a meeting.

Formerly a grand country estate, the arboretum was planted and landscaped in the latter half of the 19th century by the Earl of Ducie, who liked to compete in the collection of exotic tree and plant species with his neighbours the Holford family, the owners of Westonbirt, a short distance away. Westonbirt flourished and was taken over by the Forestry Commission, but Tortworth suffered a more chequered life during the 20th century. As Bec says, Tortworth, with more than 300 species of tree, is a national treasure and she wants to restore it for future

generations.

Jacob Stow talked us through the history of Tortworth and as he led us around, explained how the arboretum is managed today. Jacob and Bec recruit volunteers who meet every month, and armed only with hand tools, have been cutting back the undergrowth and giving light to the trees and understorey.

The value of the work of the volunteers at Tortworth is two-fold. First, they are obviously making a huge difference to the revival of a wonderful arboretum, by freeing up the trees from the strangling embrace of rhododendrons, bamboo and brambles. Second, some of the volunteers are recruited from an organisation that works with recovering addicts, and according to Bec, they are transformed by the experience of working in the woods. It often gives them a purpose that may have been lacking in their lives.

On a sunny spring day, the effects of their hard work were immediately obvious. A year ago, the area we were gathered in was a maze of



SWOG meeting at Tortworth Arboretum

brambles. Today, it has been completely cleared and bluebells, primrose and celandine cover the ground. Jacob led us up to the redwood grove, of six giant sequoia, now about 100 feet high, mere babies if compared to their venerable cousins back home in California. On the edge of the arboretum are some magnificent ancient oaks, reminders that the estate was a deer park in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Paths have been hacked through the undergrowth and Tortworth's 'Top 20' trees have been tagged. Jacob showed us mature hickories, Hungarian oak, Black walnut, Himalayan birch, monkey puzzle, acers, poplars, as well as oaks, ash, sweet chestnut, cherry and a magnificent corkscrew hazel, aka 'Harry Lauder's walking stick'. The knowledgeable tree spotters among us noted even more. Tortworth has a long history and some of the more unusual items uncovered include Word War Two-vintage wheel chairs, relics of the Royal Navy's occupancy.

We had a great afternoon, thanks to Jake's excellent tour and wide-ranging knowledge. It was great to see such a good turn-out of SWOG members and let's hope we can repeat the experience another time.

For those that would like to know more about Tortworth or even play a part as a volunteer, take a look at the website:

tortwortharboretum.org.



The Tortworth Chestnut

Hungry for more, Bernie and Theresa went down the road to investigate the legendary Tortworth Chestnut.

After a great visit to the Arboretum, we took advantage of good weather, to explore the local area including the Church of St Leonard's in Tortworth Village. We were pleasantly surprised that upon turning the door handle on this parish church, it was open (open every day during day light).

Sir Robert Ducie, Lord Mayor of London, purchased the Tortworth estate, which included the church in 1631. The church itself dates back to between 1460 and 1490, but the oldest tombs are those of the 16th century Throckmorton family. There are two memorials, both dedicated to Thomas, one of whom died in 1568 and the other in 1607. The latter memorial, an alabaster reclining effigy, was probably carved by Garret Johnson, who also sculpted Shakespeare's portrait bust in Stratford-on-Avon. The stained glass above the tombs likely dates back to 1472, when Lady Alicia De Veel was lady of the manor. She was rumoured to have been one of the King's three mistresses. The font, with its Jacobean cover, is Norman. The tower houses six bells and has nice gargoyles.

The church has a booklet available for 50p called 'A guide to Trees around Tortworth Church'. It details the tulip tree and linden tree/silver-leafed lime in the surrounding fields. In the church yard is an American hickory (*Carya Laciniosa*, or Big Shell Bark). It bears nuts which American frontiersmen once used to line their jerkins as protection against Native Indian arrows and were used to make flour.

The famed 'Tortworth Chestnut' – one of the oldest trees in the country – may be found in the field to the right as you approach the church from the road. This venerable old sentinel – a Spanish Sweet Chestnut now surrounded by palings to stop people climbing on it or breaking off branches (the palings had fallen



down when we visited) – is reputed to be 1,200 years old, starting from a nut in about 800AD. Although it has been spoken of as boundary tree of the manor in the reign of John (1199–1216), i.e. 800 years ago, in truth no one really knows its age. But this ancient tree is still thriving with branches taking root all around and new life still sprouting from its ancient trunk each spring. It is nearly a woodland in its own right. It is surrounded by wild garlic which is abundant in the local area.

It is one of Fifty Great British Trees selected in 2002 to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee and has a plaque to this award.

In the church yard there are fine examples of Cedar of Lebanon, yews and a Cretan maple. Recently planted trees are Black Walnut planted in 1996, Turkish hazel and *Cornus Kousa* ('Chinensis' or Dogwood). All well worth a visit. Sat Nav GL12 8HF.



Woodlands blogs

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

The curious question of how artists change our perception of woodlands

Until 15 May, Dulwich Picture Gallery is running an exhibition of the works of Nikolai Astrup (1880-1928), a Norwegian artist who spent most of his life in rural Norway. His paintings are the scenes he saw everyday, some of the same view, of trees, mountains and lakes. His colourful paintings make landscapes come alive and his legacy was to profoundly affect how Norwegians see their country.

Woodlands, forests and ecosystems

Chris discusses the multiple roles of woodlands and forests in preserving and enhancing our ecosystems.

Trusted to play in the woodlands, and to take some risks

At March Wood in Kent, young miscreants who have been given a referral order by the courts are trained in bushcraft, campfire cooking and woodland skills. Afterwards, they go back to the city and carry out volunteer work. It's a programme that seems to work: 'People love the freedom the woods give them', Karen explains. 'Vulnerable individuals are under no pressure to behave and they are able to be children again – something many young people have little opportunity for'.

Poor pollination and pesticides

Dr Dara Stanley has been looking at the effects of neonicotinoid pesticides on the 'efficiency' of bumblebee pollination of apples. In tests, she has discovered that those bees exposed to the pesticides collected less pollen and visited plants less frequently than those not exposed to it. The apple flowers visited by the exposed bees developed apples that were harvested later and



contained a third less seeds.

Finding antiques in woodlands

Ever the optimist, Angus thinks he's struck lucky when he unearths an old bottle in a woodland. He discovers that it's over 100 years old and although it's not worth much, his fondness for woodland scavenging remains undimmed.

TV

Identifying wildflowers in the woodland

It's spring and Sabrina, aged 12, talks us through 12 varieties of wildflowers – and she knows which are best to eat.



Woodfairs 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

Surrey Hills Wood Fair

1–2 October 2016 Birtley Estate, Bramley, Surrey

www.surreyhills.org

Peebles Wood Market

22–23 October 2016 Tweed Green &

Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders