

# Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter December 2016

Win a coppice course!

The Wood Register

Friends of Cotgrave Forest

Festive freebies



# Small Woodland Owners' Group

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



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*Thanks to Bob the Bodger for this photograph of this hedge laid in Midland Bullock style*

It's been a funny old year in many ways, and we're sure many readers are grateful for the chance to escape to the woods – surely a constant in a changing world. We hope you'll take part in our photography competition and the chance to win some great prizes. Thank you everyone who has contributed to SWOG this year and a very Merry Christmas and peaceful new year to all of you.

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

[rich@swog.org.uk](mailto:rich@swog.org.uk)

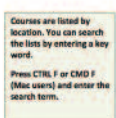
### SWOG co-ordinator and newsletter editor

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## SWOG COURSE LIST 2016



## 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](http://www.swog.org.uk/courses)

## 'Say trees' – SWOG's big picture competition

Having spoken to many members and seen some of the wonderful photographs posted on our Facebook page or emailed in to us, we know that photography is one of the most popular woodland pastimes.

We'd like to see the best pictures of your family and friends enjoying time in the woods. Show off your wood's best side, and make sure you include people in the shot: climbing, running, hiding, strimming, chopping, eating, sleeping, making a fire, or just smiling. Don't forget to say 'trees'.

There will be a prize for the best photograph: Phil Hopkinson of **Malvern Coppicing** has kindly donated a place on one of his two-day coppice course in Worcestershire. There are two runners' up prizes: a subscription to Living Woods Magazine and a Storm Kettle.

Entries close on 17 January 2017. The competition will be judged by the distinguished photographer Graham Wood,



formerly of *The Times*. A full list of the **terms and conditions** is on the SWOG website, but

the basic guidance is as follows:

- Please submit your images via email to [judith@swog.org.uk](mailto:judith@swog.org.uk). Label the email Big picture and include your contact details, and a brief description of the photo.
- Make sure your photograph is between 1Mb and 5MB in size.
- We can't consider photos that have been published elsewhere or won another competition.
- All images submitted must be the work of the individual submitting them.
- We reserve the right to use all submitted photos – on our website, on social media and in published literature.
- Photos remain copyright of the photographer.

So if you go down to the woods today, don't forget your camera (or smartphone) and send us your best shots.



**WIN**  
Two-day  
coppice course  
Storm Kettle  
Living Woods  
magazine  
subscription

### Ravenshill Wood Courses 2017 Malvern Coppicing, Worcestershire

Phil Hopkinson has been working Ravenshill Wood in Worcestershire since 1999. A firm believer in sustainable woodland management, he offers tuition in coppicing and traditional woodland management for small groups or individuals.

All courses are held at Ravenshill Reserve, Alfrick, Worcestershire, a 50-acre privately owned nature reserve. It has a patchwork of diverse habitat including many indicator species of ancient semi-natural woodland, with both deciduous and various conifer species. Prices include lunch and an open fire!

A full list of courses is on the website: [www.malverncoppicing.co.uk](http://www.malverncoppicing.co.uk) or you can contact Phil: [info@malverncoppicing.co.uk](mailto:info@malverncoppicing.co.uk), or phone on 01684 574865 or 07443 520040.

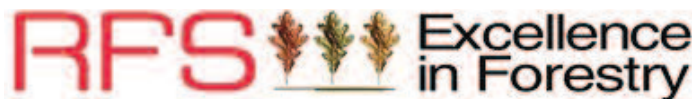
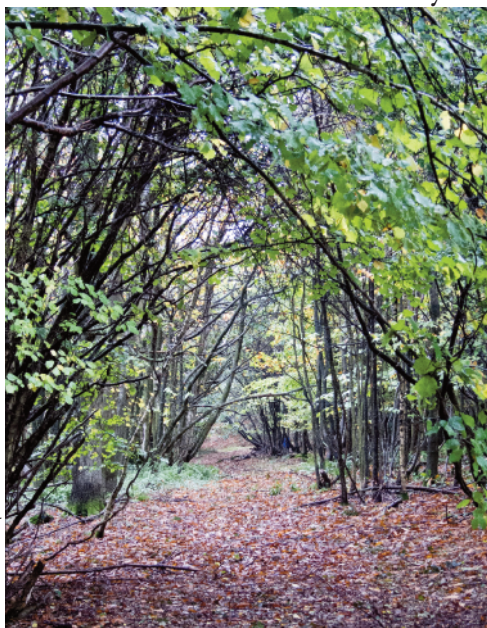


## Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry 2017 East of England

The prestigious Excellence in Forestry Awards will be an opportunity for woodland owners in Eastern England and the Midlands to showcase the value they bring to local economies and communities.

As the awards return to Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands, the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is calling for entries from woodlands large and small and from those involved in inspirational woodland Education and Learning Projects.

RFS Awards Co-ordinator David Brackley said: 'Well managed woodlands contribute to the rural economy, landscapes and biodiversity, and the well being of rural and urban communities. These awards recognise the efforts of the many landowners and managers whose commitment and dedication to high standards of woodland management is contributing to the



public benefit and inspiring others to learn from their example.

'We are also looking to recognise the very best in inspirational Educational and Learning Projects which help increase awareness, understanding and skills related to trees, woodlands and forests.'

The four woodland categories reflect the modern day challenges, both economic and

environmental, faced by woodlands today.

- Duke of Cornwall Resilient Multipurpose Forestry
- Silviculture
- Small and Farm Woodlands
- Urban and Community woodlands

Further information and Entry Forms are available via the Award links at

**[www.rfs.org.uk/awards/rfs-excellence](http://www.rfs.org.uk/awards/rfs-excellence)** or by emailing EiF co-ordinator David Brackley at

[rfscompetition@btinternet.com](mailto:rfscompetition@btinternet.com). Telephone David on 01772 451276. Entries close on 7 March 2017. Case studies featuring previous winners are available at on the **RFS website**.

## RFS new member mentor scheme

New woodland owners who may not yet feel ready to enter the RFS awards, may prefer to join in with the RFS mentor scheme which was launched earlier this year. New members of the RFS can request a free introductory visit to receive informal guidance on getting started with management of your wood. A mentor will be appointed – an RFS member with appropriate qualifications and experience – who will visit your wood and provide verbal guidance to help you better understand your wood and

management options. This visit is provided on a voluntary, goodwill basis on behalf of the RFS.

You are eligible for this scheme if

- you purchased or inherited your wood within 12 months of joining the RFS as a member
- you do not have an existing relationship with a professional woodland agent/manager
- your wood is around 3 hectares or more (7.4 acres) and is in England. In some cases the RFS will make exceptions to this criterion at its own discretion – please enquire.

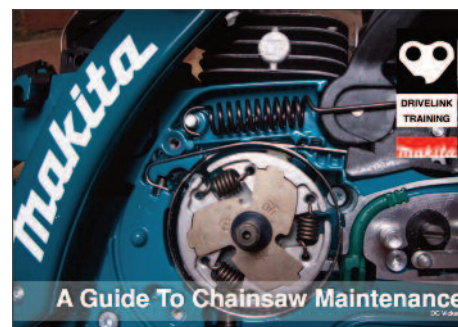
To find out more email:

[membership@rfs.org.uk](mailto:membership@rfs.org.uk) or call 01295 678624.

*Christmas is a time for giving, and a number of institutions have made available useful information and downloads which are ideal for small woodland owners.*

### Makita chainsaw maintenance guide

Aimed at those new to chainsaw use, Makita's **A Guide to Chainsaw Maintenance** is written by City & Guilds NPTC trainer and assessor, D C Vickers. At 131 pages and including detailed photographs, it covers all the routine maintenance tasks for chainsaw operators. There is also useful health and safety advice.



### Leaf magazine from the Forest Charter

Many SWOG members will have seen the excellent *Leaf!* magazine produced by Common Ground on behalf of the Forest Charter campaign. Published quarterly, *Leaf!* draws on folklore, natural science, literature and tree tales to celebrate the cultural and practical relationship between trees and communities. *Leaf!* is available on the **Common Ground website here**.

### Santa-approved Christmas trees

The Forestry Commission are not actually offering free Christmas trees, but they do give away a free conifer sapling with every purchase. Marketed as '100% Santa-approved trees', the trees sold by the FC are grown in a sustainable manner and are available from sites around the country, or you can order them online for delivery to your front door – accompanied by the sapling to nurture for the rest of the year.

To learn more and view a map of the sale locations, visit the **[www.forestry.gov.uk/christmas](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/christmas)**. There's also a seasonal page of tips and tricks for tree maintenance and making natural decorations: **[www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/)**



### Tree Dressing packs

To celebrate National Tree Week (26 November–4 December) and Tree Dressing Day on 3 December, the Forest Charter team have issued a **free downloadable tree dressing pack**. Tree Dressing Day is based on many old customs from all over the world and at different times of the year. It is a chance for the whole community to gather and celebrate the leafy friends we all have in common. It's also a chance for communities to reflect on the social and cultural history of their local area, and the part that trees have played within it. More information about tree dressing traditions is available **here**.

## Friends of Cotgrave Forest

**Cotgrave Forest**, just south of Nottingham, is a small woodland in an area of the country where woodlands are comparatively rare. The forest incorporates both private woodlands and areas of public access and it is highly valued as a habitat for a number of rarer species of butterflies, birds and other wildlife. With a good mix of both conifers and deciduous trees, it represents a scarce habitat in south Nottinghamshire where most woods are plantations with very limited flora and fauna. It has also been identified as a 'focal area' through the biodiversity opportunity mapping work carried out by Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group.

Ben Driver of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has been driving forward a project to encourage owners and interested parties to work together to improve the woodland's habitat and connections for wildlife at a landscape scale.

### Working in partnership

SWOG members in Cotgrave are relatively recent owners and have supported the project

enthusiastically. A minor problem with local vandals and ravers initially prompted the owners to get together, and they have continued to co-operate and support Ben's project.

In November Ben ran a workshop in Cotgrave that enabled the owners to meet each other, as well as representatives from Butterfly Conservation, Nottingham Trent University, and Rushcliffe Borough Council. It was an excellent opportunity for the owners to share information and ideas, and to think about activities such as wildlife recording, helping each other with management activities and to talk about issues of collective interest, such as access and security. Everyone agreed that it was a really useful meeting and it seems to have established links that we hope will last for many years.



*A knotgrass caterpillar in Cotgrave Forest*



## Forging connections between owners and woodsmen

*Rich Hare reports on putting owners in touch with forestry workers and contractors.*

Over the spring and summer I've been busy visiting woods in the south-east to advise on improvements owners can make to their rides. It's been part of pilot scheme funded by Woodlands.co.uk, who are keen to maintain the utility of the rides for owners and increase the habitat for wildlife, which in turn improves the biodiversity of the woodland. It has been a great success in many ways. Not only has it brought neighbouring owners together to collaborate, but it has also introduced coppice workers and other contractors to several groups of owners. In the process, they have shared a lot of their knowledge and experience in woodland management with the owners and of course, benefited from the work they have undertaken themselves.

With this in mind, owners in the south-east might be interested in the **Wood Register**, an



excellent resource which was instigated by the Sussex and Surrey Coppice Group. Alan Sage, one of the committee members, who was instrumental in setting it up explains more:

'If you like to see your wood actively managed by a professional woodsman, take a look at the **Wood Register web site**, which lists dozens of woodsmen and coppice workers and aims to put them in touch with owners in search of help in their woodland.

If you can't find a local woodsmen listed, register your woodland online and wait for the enquiries to come in. It's a completely free service provided by the Sussex & Surrey Coppice Group and it doesn't matter if your wood is 1 acre or 100,000 acres in size. Many woodsmen and coppice workers need lots of different pole sizes and species of wood in various quantities. Some are looking for continuous management, whilst others are happy to do a 'one-off' cut.'

The Wood Register currently covers the south-east area (Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Kent, London, etc) but might be expanded in the future. Please do feel free to contact Alan Sage via [enquiries@thewoodregister.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@thewoodregister.co.uk) if you require any further information about this free facility.

Alan will shortly be putting together a more in-depth guide which will cover contracts, terms, access, storage etc. – all the things which need to be considered before going ahead with engaging a professional woodland contractor.



## Book review: Portrait of a Woodland

With the rise of the internet, decent coffee table books, richly illustrated guides to the natural world (or anything else for that matter) have gone into decline. We can look everything up on our computers these days and download glorious photographs to enhance our knowledge and understanding. This is all very well, but it is a shame to neglect some of the wonderful books that already line our shelves or are still available for sale. *Portrait of a Woodland - Biodiversity in 400 acres* was written by Charlotte de la Bedoyère, a true woodland enthusiast, in 2004. It is still available from the publishers, Search Press, or can be picked up for a snip from Abe Books, the online second hand book store. It would make a great Christmas present.

The author owns 40 acres of Sussex countryside, a house surrounded by a diverse woodland. What is especially interesting is that the land use has changed over the centuries and the woodland now has distinct parts. There's two sections of ancient woodland, a stand of young trees planted after the great storm of 1987, a conifer plantation and an 80-year-old self generated wood on former farmland. So the author has managed each section in the same way as owners of small woods do – by adapting good forestry practice to fit the age of the trees and the woodland landscape.

The author purchased the house and woodlands in the late 1970s and really became serious about managing the woodland after the hurricane of 1987, when so many trees were felled. Her property was surveyed a couple of years later and 250 species of trees, shrubs and plants were recorded, an astonishing number which left the author hungry for more details about the biodiversity on her doorstep.

The book discusses the history of her wood, and then examines the 11 areas within it in greater detail and with wonderful large photographs. About two-thirds of the book examines the woodland's biodiversity. Charlotte has noted every species of flora and fauna found within her 40 acres, with both Latin and common names and a great many are illustrated, making this a really useful gazetteer.

Over the years, she has taken advice from many experts and organisations, from the local wildlife trust to the Forestry Commission, via the Sussex Lichen Recording Group and the county archives.

However, the author often followed her best instincts and is unapologetic about her sometimes unscientific and idiosyncratic methods. She makes interesting comments, for example, about deer, having observed that they seem to attack planted saplings, but leave naturally seeded trees alone. Her experience has led her to believe that self-seeded trees are more resistant to pests and predators than planted

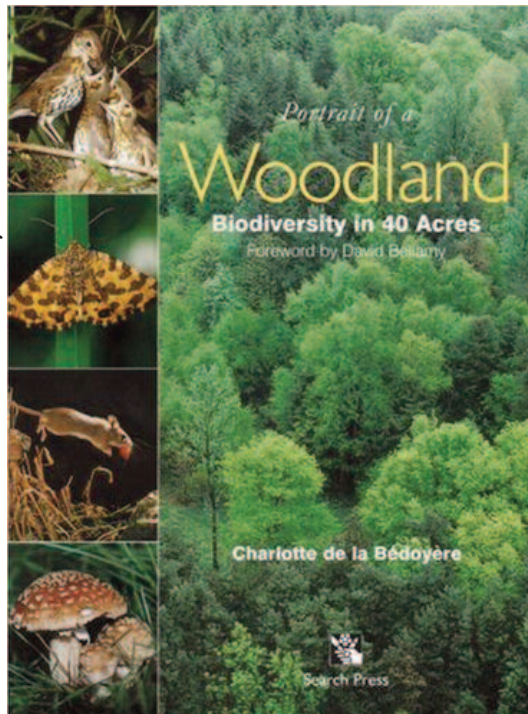
specimens. She believes in letting nature take its course, and realised early on that if the soil was healthy, everything else should flourish too.

*Portrait of a Woodland* is a clear and very readable tome that adds up to a comprehensive description and survey of a varied woodland. More than that, it is an account of a lifetime's labour of love. For owners of small woodlands, there are some useful lessons to learn and much to admire in one woman's dedication to a small patch of Sussex woodland.

*Portrait of a Woodland: Biodiversity in 40 acres* by Charlotte de la Bedoyère

Publisher: Search Press

216x292 mm 176 pages





### Forestry Statistics 2016

The National Statistics on Forestry produced by the Forestry Commission were released in September and can be read in more detail on the **Forestry Commission website here**.

The headlines are that:

- The area of woodland in the UK at 31 March 2016 is estimated to be 3.16 million hectares. This represents 13% of the total land area in the UK, 10% in England, 15% in Wales, 18% in Scotland and 8% in Northern Ireland.
- 73% of British woodland is held privately. 27% is owned by the Forestry Commission (in England or Wales, Natural Resources Wales or the Forest Service (in Northern Ireland).
- 6,000 hectares of new woodland were created in the UK in 2015–16, mostly broadleaved species.
- 14,000 hectares of woodland restocking were reported in the UK in 2015–16, mostly with conifers.
- A total of 186 sites were served with a Statutory Plant Health Notice in 2015–16, requiring a total of 1.8 thousand hectares of woodland to be felled.

### Woodland creation

The current rate of woodland creation in England means the Government will be seven years late in hitting its 11 million trees target, according to forestry trade body Confor.

The target of planting 11 million trees in the 2015–20 parliamentary term has been repeated regularly by successive Cabinet ministers but the latest Forestry Commission statistics show just 1.35 million trees have been planted since the Conservative Government came to office in the

### Making woodlands pay

The forestry sector must be prepared to challenge conventional thinking if it is to make woodlands pay, was the message from the conference organised by the Royal Forestry Society and CONFOR in November.

Although much of the conference was aimed at commercial forestry operations, many of the messages are relevant to small woodland owners.

Owners were urged to be open-minded about tree breeding and consider that modern techniques could have a big part to play. Steve Lee of Forest Research described the cost and complexity of ‘the long, slow process of tree breeding.’ He said good trees were a product of both their environment and genetics and it was time-consuming, expensive and challenging to separate out the genetic element.

Gary Kerr, Principal Silviculturalist with Forest Research, said ‘reducing risk through diversity’ was a high priority for forest resilience. He also urged woodland owners to look at different approaches to ‘the great’ sitka spruce.

The speakers’ presentations are available to view on the **RFS website here**.

May 2015 election – an average of 75,166 trees per month.

‘At that rate, it will take 12.2 years, taking us into late summer 2027, before the target is hit,’ said Confor’s Chief Executive Stuart Goodall. ‘This simply isn’t good enough and much more needs to be done.’

The statistics relate to woodland that is held in public hands, but given that so much is in private ownership, it would be interesting to know how much has been planted by other owners.

## Woodlands blogs and TV

*Click on the titles to be taken to the full blogs or videos on the [Woodlands.co.uk](http://Woodlands.co.uk) website.*

### TV

#### Skinning a rabbit

Michael White, forager and wild food expert, demonstrates how to efficiently skin and prepare a rabbit he has caught himself. Michael also points out what to look for to ensure the animal is safe to eat, details the various cuts of meat and provides top tips on how best to cook rabbit – all the while showing his obvious respect for this sustainable wild food resource.

### Blogs

#### Hedgerow Loss

Much has been written about hedgerow loss and Lewis explains how they have been protected by law since 1997.

#### Hedgerow scramblers and climbers

Roses, honeysuckle and brambles are just a few of the climbers that populate many hedgerows. If you've ever wondered why bindweed is so successful, it's because it grows anti-clockwise, in opposition to its hedgerow honeysuckle host, which twists clockwise.

#### The benefits of trees in the urban landscape

Trees are very effective at removing particulate pollution from the air, and provide a useful barrier to protect local residents from air-borne pollution. They also provide shade and are often useful for migrating birds.

#### An autumnal bee– the ivy bee *Colletes hederæ*

A species of mining bee, the ivy bee was only recognised as a distinct species in 1993. It is the last of the solitary bees to emerge and may remain flying as late as November.



#### National Tree Week 2016

Tree Week runs from 26 November to 4 December and its aim is to encourage the planting of trees. There are also community events around the country, ranging from tree planting events to walks in the parks. More details are [here](#).

#### More productive forestry trees

Since the 1960s, selective breeding has ensured that commercial conifer crops have become about 25% more productive. Dr Steve Lee explains that broadleaved varieties did not benefit in the same way. DNA screening now enables foresters to use the strongest possible seeds and the team is also working on breeding disease-resistant strains.

