

A photograph of two children standing in a forest next to a giant tree with massive green leaves. The tree's leaves are enormous, some reaching up to the top of the frame. The children are standing on a path, looking up at the tree. The background is filled with dense green foliage and ferns.

# Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter March 2017

Sylva's Future Forest

Making money from kindling

Grey squirrels: the options



## SWOG meetings

We have several meetings arranged around the country. Unless otherwise stated they are free. Email [judith@swog.org.uk](mailto:judith@swog.org.uk) for more details.

### 8 April Rogley Wood, Cranbrook, Kent 10 am–3pm

Jim Smith-Wright, Ancient Woodland Restoration Project Officer of the Woodland Trust will lead a walk around Rogley Woods and discuss the management and restoration of plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). It is a free event and lunch will be provided, but places are limited, so please email [judith@swog.org.uk](mailto:judith@swog.org.uk) to reserve your place.

### 13 May horse-logging, High Stoop, County Durham 10.30am–3pm

Karen Moon is the owner of a unique piece of woodland on a windy hill on the edge of the North Pennines AONB, and about 14 miles west of Durham. Her nine acres were formerly owned by the local council and used partly as a picnic site. It is a mixed woodland, with oak, beech and rowan interspersed among a lot of conifer. Karen has organized a horse-logging demonstration in her wood on 13 May. The day will start at 10.30 am and Charlie the horse logger will be present all day, either demonstrating or available with advice and to answer questions.

There is hard standing in the wood for parking and space available for a limited



number of caravans. The Brown Horse Hotel/Pub is close by, either for refreshments or accommodation. If you would like to attend this free event, please email [judith@swog.org](mailto:judith@swog.org)

### 20 May Perivale Wood, Greenford, London

The Selbourne Society, managers of Perivale Wood in north-west London, have kindly agreed to host a meeting at their 11-acre ancient oak woodland, [www.perivalewood.org.uk](http://www.perivalewood.org.uk). It is thought to be one of the first nature reserves in the country, and the wood and has been managed largely by volunteers for over 40 years. More details of this meeting will follow next month.

## Coming up: managing your woodlands for butterflies

A series of meetings will be held in conjunction with Butterfly Conservation to discuss managing woodland for butterflies. Butterflies are in decline throughout the UK and woodland owners can make a significant contribution to their survival.

### 2 July Plattershill Wood, Horsham

### 30 July Coombewell Wood Lamberhurst

Two more meetings are still at the planning stage and we will release the dates as soon as possible.

## Combat disease – plant new trees

The Woodland Trust is urging people across the UK to help protect the countryside from the increasing effects of ash dieback and other tree pests and diseases by applying for one of its new ‘Targeting Tree Disease’ tree packs.

Cases of tree disease are on the increase across the UK and two in particular are currently of interest to tree health specialists: sweet chestnut blight and acute oak decline.

Sweet chestnut blight was first found in Kent in 2011 where it was dealt with effectively, but a small number of cases have recently been confirmed at further sites in Devon, where work is underway to confirm the rate and area of spread.

Acute oak decline has been recorded since 2006, and research into how the condition spreads is ongoing. At present the disease is largely concentrated in central and south-east England.

Ash dieback has now been recorded in over 1,000 locations and has been confirmed in every county across England.

The ‘Targeting Tree Disease’ tree packs contain 45 one to two year old trees from

species carefully selected as the best replacements for trees which will be lost to disease and to strengthen the landscape against other threats.

Applicants can choose three species from oak, wild cherry, silver birch, hornbeam and beech. The packs also include 1.2m protective tubes and stakes and have been subsidised by the Woodland Trust. The charity also offers a wide variety of other tree schemes to the public.

The Trust is aiming to plant 64 million trees by 2025 and all its trees are sourced from locations throughout the UK.

Small woodland owners can buy packs of trees from £49.95. To apply for a pack or find out more about the Woodland Trust’s other tree

planting schemes visit

**[woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant)** before the end of March.

For more information about tree pests and diseases, visit **[forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases](http://forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases)** or **Observatree** and report any potential sightings of ill health in trees to the Forestry Commission via Tree Alert. If you want to learn more about signs and symptoms, visit the new **Plant Health Portal** which provides advice on prevention, reporting and analysing the risks.



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

The deadline for entries in the Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards 2017 is 7 March. Owners and those involved in inspirational woodland Education and Learning Projects in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands, are invited to compete in four woodland categories:

- 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](http://www.rfs.org.uk/awards)** or by emailing EiF co-ordinator David Brackley at **[rfscompetition@btinternet.com](mailto:rfscompetition@btinternet.com)**. Telephone David on 01772 451276.



## Making your woodland pay: from brash to cash



*Christopher Duncan owns a 55-acre woodland near Battle in Sussex. The wood is managed carefully in line with Forestry*

*Commission guidelines to improve the health of the woodland. He tells us about working to make it pay.*

Having purchased our woodland, I set about thinking of ways to make it pay. Its previous owner had prepared and sold logs for firewood so it seemed logical to keep with this activity. After a winter season of log-selling, it occurred to me that we were missing an opportunity to sell kindling. All those who had purchased logs would need something smaller to get the fire going. We were a bit like an artists' materials shop which sold paint but not brushes – both are required to get the job done, so why not sell both?

I investigated all the kindling-making machines which are available. They all seemed pricey. Some needed electricity to power them (we have no supply in the woodland) and nearly all appeared to need wood prepared by way of size or shape in some way, which seemed very labour intensive.

### Brash to cash

Then I happened across an advertisement for a machine named a 'branch logger'. A YouTube video showed the machine taking brash and other such woody trash – the leftovers from felling or extracting trees which we would usually burn to keep the woodland tidy – and bagging it into handy sacks of kindling. It was turning rubbish into cash: the branch logger had my attention!

By good fortune a farmer from up near Goudhurst had a used branch logger machine

for sale. I hastened up there and following a demonstration and a haggle, I agreed to buy it.

Last autumn we put a fair amount of dry rhododendron trash through the machine. After testing the kindling at home we gave a few bags to some of our log customers for them to try. We asked for feedback and also asked them how much they would be willing to pay for our kindling packs. The feedback was comprehensively positive and suggested prices fell in a spectrum of £7.50 to £12 per bag.

Our kindling has been very popular. So much so that we have all but sold out and there are still a couple of months of the firewood season to go.

Powered by our John Deere tractor's PTO, the Urban TR70 branch logger is easy to use, appears to be incredibly strong and tough, requires little by way of maintenance, needs no setting up or adjustment, and bags the product automatically all day.

It takes material up to 40mm diameter and chops it into roughly three-inch-long pieces. Birch tops, sweet chestnut, willow coppice, hazel, alder; thin branches of practically any wood variety can be put through it. Uniquely among kindling machines, it turns zero value woodland / forestry rubbish into a valuable, saleable commodity.

Customers who buy from us no longer have to pay inflated prices at the ironmongers or the





supermarket, and they no longer need to buy firelighters either. Our kindling has been very popular – so much so that we have all but sold out with still a month or so of the firewood season to go.

The branch logger is a great machine and is good value, but it was not cheap. While the raw material it processes costs nothing and there is healthy demand for the product it makes, achieving a return on investment is going to take a while. With this in mind, we are quite keen to explore making the machine available to other SWOG members.

### Life at Duncans Wood

At Duncans Wood we sell chestnut coppice for fencing, gates, and trug making. We prepare and sell firewood logs and kindling and we have seven bee hives producing honey. We will be planting an experimental Manuka tree grove later this year which will hopefully increase the value of the honey, if the bees take to it! Our woodland management plan should yield a fair



tonnage of mill quality oak next year, and with help from Lorraine Bell and her team at Brighton University's Green Growth Platform we are developing a brand new woodfuel product which we hope will, in time, bring in some serious cash. In addition, I am keen to learn about biochar production. As charcoal was produced in our woodland centuries ago (the charcoal platforms can still be seen) it would be lovely to get it going again.

The land owned by Duncans Wood is private and not open to the public. However, such is the beauty of the woods in spring when large

areas are carpeted with wood anemones and bluebells, the company organises supervised visits so that others may enjoy these impressive natural spectacles.

*Details about the Urban Branch Logger are available on this website: **Urban Kovo**.*

*More information about Duncans Wood can be found on the website **wealden-logs**.*

*Contact Christopher direct: [wealdenlogs@gmx.com](mailto:wealdenlogs@gmx.com)*





## Grey squirrel control

*Grey squirrels are rarely regarded as welcome visitors to a woodland. Rod Waterfield of the Woodland Skills Centre in Denbighshire explains how he has dealt with them, and offers some advice and guidance for owners.*

The presence of grey squirrels in woodlands can have a significant impact on the growth of the trees, particularly younger hardwood trees. The squirrels strip the bark from young trees in the spring and early summer when the sap is rising and this prevents the tree from growing



properly. If the bark is removed from the whole circumference of the trunk, then the tree will die from above the area that has been damaged. A large population of grey squirrels also has an impact on small mammals and birds which they attack and, in areas where there are the native red squirrels, the greys pass on the squirrel pox infection – which the greys are resistant to, but which is lethal to the red squirrels.

The Woodland Skills Centre in Denbighshire has suffered from the impact of grey squirrels in its woodlands, with an area of 15-year-old oak and ash completely destroyed where grey squirrels have ring-barked all the oaks so that the leading shoots have died.

The Centre has asked David Brown, the owner of the Bron Haul Woodlands south of Abergele, to run a course in grey squirrel control. David's woodlands are managed to a

very high standard with regular grey squirrel control. Their woodlands are among the best in North Wales and they were awarded a gold medal in 2015 in the Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards, as well as gold medals from the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society in 2016.

In March David Brown will be running a course on controlling grey squirrels using the traps that he has developed. The techniques ensure a high degree of success and ensure humane and legal treatment of the squirrels. The course will run on Saturday 11 March and will be held in Bron Haul woodlands. For further details and booking visit the website [www.woodlandskillscentre.uk](http://www.woodlandskillscentre.uk) or phone 01745 710626.

The Woodland Skills Centre in north-east Wales is part of Social Enterprise Company Warren Woods Ltd and runs a wide range of courses which might be of interest to SWOG members. The Centre has a 50 acre woodland site in the heart of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Centre also has a heritage orchard, wildflower meadow, arboretum, allotments and extensive workshops. Visit their website for more information.

### Dealing with squirrels

There are pest controllers all over the country who can advise woodland owners. Try googling 'grey squirrel control' to find them.

The **UK Squirrel Accord website** contains interesting information about the latest plans for squirrel contraception, while there is a useful list of links on the European Squirrel Initiative website:

**[www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org)**

The Forestry Commission has published a comprehensive leaflet, which details the damage wreaked by grey squirrels and the best methods of trapping and despatching them:

**<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf>**

*Judith gets her wellies muddy helping to plant the Grown in Britain grove in Sylva's Future Forest.*

One of the inspiring things about the revival of Britain's wood culture over the last few years has been the co-operation between the various agencies and charitable groups involved in the business of woodlands and timber. Professionals such as the Forestry Commission work hand-in-hand with of keen, knowledgeable and gifted amateurs, acknowledging that we are all working towards the same end: achieving better management for our existing woodlands and where possible, extending that coverage.

The Sylva Foundations is a charity established to 'help people and trees grow together', and works collaboratively with over 40 woodland organisations. Working with everyone from schoolchildren to forestry professionals, under the leadership of Dr Gabriel Hemery, they are working to integrate trees and timber more deeply into everyday life. Many owners will be aware of Sylva's invaluable **MyForest website**, which helps owners to compile management plans and map their woods.

So an invitation to the Sylva Centre to view the new Future Forest, was one that I couldn't refuse. I should have read the small print more

closely, however, as it turned out that this wasn't just a woodland 'jolly', but a chilly morning of hard work.

### Future forest or small woodland?

In November Sylva launched the **Future Forest**, a scheme to plant a three-hectare field with mixed species to create a forest for the future. The Future Forest houses three main groups of trees: native broadleaves, natives with new genes which have been sourced to match Britain's future climate (warmer and wetter); and exotics such as tulip trees and Japanese red cedar, which may be successful in the future. There will also be coppice plots of hazel, sweet chestnut and robinia, which will produce wood within five years. Plots of 25 trees were available to purchase and have been sponsored by local businesses, schools and other woodland organisations.

Grown in Britain had sponsored a plot of 250 trees and it transpired that we were there to plant them. Gabriel Hemery calls it the Future Forest, but I knew the truth – I was helping to plant a small woodland. On a dank February day it seemed like an ambitious project, but in a couple of years it will be a wonderful sight, fully justifying the hard work of everyone involved.





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

### **Red squirrels find sanctuary in my wood**

Peter Trimming purchased his Lakeland wood with the ambition of encouraging red squirrels. He tells us how things have worked out so far.

### **March Wood, Kent – healing and learning outdoors**

The March Wood project in Kent is using nature to help young people and families with additional needs and adults with mental health issues. Using the woodland for these programmes is transformational and feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive.

### **Leaves in winter– marescence**

Why do some broadleaf trees retain their leaves into winter? Oak and beech trees hang on to their brown and shrivelled leaves and this is known as ‘marescence’

### **Sheffield – the battleground for those who care about trees and woodland**

Sheffield is renowned as ‘the Green City’ and is famous for its 36,000 trees. Recently, however, it has been in the headlines because of the draconian actions of the city council in removing thousands of them.

### **Wood products old and new**

The by-products of the lumber industry in the USA and Canada, fine saw floor and sawdust, are being put to new use by the oil industry. Chemically modified saw flour



can be used to contain oil spills and thus limit the environmental damage.

## **TV**

### **Making charcoal with the Exeter retort**

Alan and Jo Waters are expert charcoal makers with many years experience of this traditional skill from the land they coppice. Here they speak about the benefits of charcoal production using the Exeter Retort, which harnesses the gases produced in charcoal production for use elsewhere. It also produces more charcoal of better quality.





### **The Arb Show**

12–14 May 2017

Westobirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire

[www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show](http://www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show)

### **Weird and Wonderful Wood**

13–14 May 2017

Stowmarket, Suffolk

[www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk/](http://www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk/)

### **The Bushcraft Show**

27–29 May 2017

Beehive Farm, Rosliston, Derbyshire

[www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk](http://www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk)

### **Devon County Show**

18–20 May 2017

Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon

[www.devoncountysshow.co.uk](http://www.devoncountysshow.co.uk)

### **Royal Bath & West Show**

31 May – 3 June 2017

Shepton Mallet, Somerset

[www.bathandwest.com](http://www.bathandwest.com)

### **Weald and Downland Living Museum Show**

17–18 June 2017

Chichester, West Sussex

[www.wealddown.co.uk](http://www.wealddown.co.uk)

### **Royal Highland Show**

2–25 June 2017

Edinburgh, Scotland

<http://royalhighlandshow.org>

### **Great Yorkshire Show**

11–13 July 2017

Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate

[www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk](http://www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk)

### **Royal Welsh Show**

24–27 July 2017

Builth Wells, Wales

[www.rwas.wales](http://www.rwas.wales)

### **New Forest and Hampshire County Show**

25–27 July 2017

Brockenhurst, Hampshire

[www.newforestshow.co.uk](http://www.newforestshow.co.uk)

### **Woodfest Wales**

29–30 July 2017

St Asaph, Denbighshire

[www.woodfestwales.co.uk](http://www.woodfestwales.co.uk)

### **South Downs Show**

19–20 August 2017

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Petersfield, Hampshire

[www.southdownsshow.co.uk](http://www.southdownsshow.co.uk)

### **Wilderness Gathering**

16–20 August

West Knoyle, Wiltshire

[www.wildernessgathering.co.uk](http://www.wildernessgathering.co.uk)

### **Stock Gaylard Oak Fair**

26–27 August 2017

Sturminster Newton, Dorset

[www.stockgaylard.com](http://www.stockgaylard.com)

### **Wychwood Forest Fair**

3 September 2017

Charlbury, Oxfordshire

[www.wychwoodproject.org](http://www.wychwoodproject.org)

### **Confor Woodland Show**

7–8 September 2017

Longleat, Wiltshire

[www.confor.org.uk/about-confor](http://www.confor.org.uk/about-confor)

### **Belmont Woodfest & Country Fair**

9–10 September 2017

Faversham, Kent

[www.belmont-house.org](http://www.belmont-house.org)

### **Bentley Weald Wood Fair**

15–17 September 2017

Lewes, East Sussex

[www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair](http://www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair)

### **Surrey Hills Wood Fair**

30 Sept–1 Oct 2017

Birtley House, Guildford

[www.surreyhills.org/events/](http://www.surreyhills.org/events/)



## Milling in the wood

*Rich Hare reflects on the best methods of extracting useful timber from a woodland.*

*Read a longer version of this on the **SWOG website here**.*

If I look back at the woods I've worked and managed over the last few years a common theme emerges. They all seemed to have valuable timber in them, timber that desperately needs felling and is often in a really awkward place. Even where it is possible to bring in heavy equipment, one of the biggest considerations, particularly in small woodlands is the impact that this would make especially to the woodland floor.

Hauling out big trees, usually to a static sawmill is costly in terms of both time and equipment, not to mention the environmental impact of this on the woodland, so I began to investigate different systems that would allow me to take the sawmill to the trees. This has lots of advantages especially for the smaller-scale operation in small woods where care and precision is much more of a consideration.

There is an assortment of products out there which range from a small jig and guidebar adaption of a standard chainsaw, to a full blown trailer mounted band saw with hydraulic lifting and turning abilities. They each have their place, but all have their pros and cons. I eventually



purchased a swing arm portable mill manufactured in New Zealand by Turbosawmill.

The advantages are:

- Portability – it is light enough for two people to carry.
- Power – it can be powered by an adapted Stihl 120cc chainsaw. The sprocket is replaced with a pulley system connected to a fairly standard car fan belt which runs a driveshaft to the blade.
- Easy field serviceability – it is easy to sharpen.
- Versatility – it will handle logs anything from 6" or so in diameter to large 30 or 40" butts.

Just over two years after buying the machine, I'm very pleased with how it has performed, though I am continually thinking of ways to improve it. Read a longer version of this on the **SWOG website here** or contact Rich for more information: [rich@swog.org.uk](mailto:rich@swog.org.uk)

## 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. View it on the SWOG website here: [www.swog.org.uk/courses](http://www.swog.org.uk/courses)





## Green space designation and woodland owners

Neighbourhood plans are the buzz words in the world of local planning. They are the means by which a village or small town can assert some sort of control over the future of their surroundings, by designating areas of historic or environmental importance, which must be taken into account by developers and planners.

Designating an existing woodland as a parish green space ostensibly seems like a good idea, which will offer the trees protection against development for housing or business, but what does this actually mean for woodland owners?

In the National Planning Policy Framework, the Coalition government passed legislation that allowed local communities 'to earmark for special consideration local 'green space' land - whether its value is in its natural beauty, its historic resonances, its recreational value, its tranquillity or its importance as wildlife habitat.'

But if you are a woodland owner who wants to install a shed, for example, will this be allowed? And does a parish have the power to designate a piece of private land as a parish green space?

The **Open Spaces Society** believes that, 'the National Planning Policy Guidance gives inadequate advice on the designation of LGS [local green spaces]. The definitions of what might constitute LGS are vague. The public is left in the air, without any clear guidance on

how to proceed. There is no nationally-prescribed process and so it is left to local planning authorities to decide how to determine any submissions for LGS.'

The law is equally imprecise about designation. According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the criteria for designation are

(1) Must be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

(2) be demonstrably special to a local community and hold local significance, for

example beauty; historic significance; recreational value [including as a playing field]; tranquility; or richness of its wildlife; and

(3) be local in character and not an extensive tract of land [para.77 of NPPF]

There is no mention of consultation with owners prior to designation.

So while most owners might welcome green space

designation, in practice it might throw another layer of bureaucracy in the way of those who want to install a small shed or any other aspect of permitted development.

Owners are advised to keep an eye on the activities of the parish council local to their woodland and to liaise with them over the matter of green spaces. *We'd be interested to hear your views or experiences of this.*



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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