

A photograph of two young children sitting on a wooden treehouse platform high up in a large, leafless tree. The tree's branches are intricate and spread out against a clear blue sky. The children are looking towards the camera. The treehouse has a wooden ladder leading up to it. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter May 2017

Woodland awards 2017

PAWS restoration workshop

Making rustic ash chairs

SWOG meetings

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

WANTED: woodlands for more butterfly meetings! We would like to hold a couple of meetings in woodlands in East Kent or on the Surrey/Hampshire border and would love to hear from owners willing to offer their woodlands for a meeting.



Summer meetings: 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

**23 July Longlands Wood (part of Tottington Wood)
near Small Dole**

30 July Coombewell Wood Lamberhurst

The meetings will be led by well known butterfly experts Neil Hulme and Steve Wheatley, who will explain in detail which species can be encouraged in each location and exactly what woodland owners can do to help. Please email judith@swog.org.uk if you would like to attend.

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

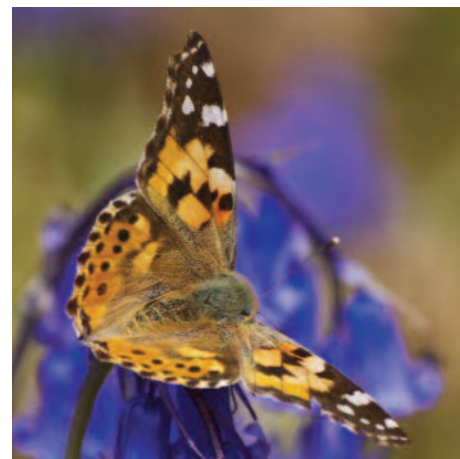
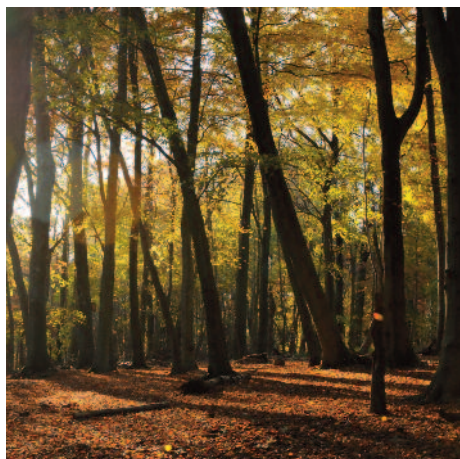
Karen Moon is the owner of a unique piece of woodland on a windy hill on the edge of the North Pennines AONB, and about 14 miles west of Durham. Her nine acres were formerly owned by the local council and used partly as a picnic site. It is a mixed woodland, with oak, beech and rowan interspersed with 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.uk

20 May Perivale Wood, Greenford, West 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. It is thought to be one of the first nature reserves in the country, and the wood has been managed largely by volunteers for over 40 years. There will be a woodland walk and a talk from the volunteers about management techniques.





*Woodlands.co.uk is celebrating the best that the woodland world has to offer with the launch of the new annual **Woodlands Awards**.*

They are a celebration of all the hard work, skills, expert knowledge, initiative, innovation and dedication that are applied to woodlands up and down the country day after day, year after year – and which so often goes unsung.

Fourteen new awards will recognise innovation, enterprise, hard work, talent and woodland wit. We want to see the best blogs, websites and photographs; hear about the most useful tools, buildings and contractors; read recommendations of the best course providers, forest schools and community woodlands. Tell us about your favourite woodland book of the year or trade stand.

This is the first awards scheme that recognises the endeavour of individuals, both amateur and professional. It also recognises the vital support of organisations and businesses to woodland owners, workers and enthusiasts.

Some awards (such as the Woodland Photography Award) will depend on individuals submitting their own entries. Others (such as Woodland Courses) will depend on personal recommendations. Others still (such as Woodland Blogs) will depend on a mixture of these.

The deadline for all submissions is 31 July 2017.

A panel of judges will draw up shortlists of the best entries, and then award the prizes. The prizes will consist of an award certificate and recognition, plus for some (but not all) categories a selected woodland book and woodland hand tool. Learn more on the website:

www.woodlands.co.uk/awards/woodlands-awards-2017

There is a category for everyone, whatever their interest or involvement in woods and forests.

Awards for individuals

- Woodland Blogs
- Small Woodland Websites
- Woodland Photography
- Woodland Buildings/Shelters
- Woodland Tool Recommendations
- Woodland Water Projects
- Whole Wood Owners' Coordinators

Awards for enterprises

- Woodland Contractors
- Forest Schools
- Woodland Courses
- Community Woods
- Woodfair Trade Stands
- Woodland Books of the Year
- Regional and National Woodland Organisations



Flora Locale courses summer 2017

The Flora locale training programme is created for people involved in the design, management and restoration of wild plants and landscapes for biodiversity. Each event is led by an individual with practical experience and provides an informal

opportunity for participants to learn from an expert and each other.

- All events must be booked in advance
- Fees are £100 p/p per event (£75 p/p for employees/volunteers of charities parish councils, students and those not economically active), unless otherwise stated
- For more information and to book, visit the website, www.floralocale.org

Woodland ground flora in new and established woods

Monday 22 May Otley, West Yorkshire

The morning will be spent in the mature woodlands of Chevin Forest Park LNR, identifying plants and understanding the ecology of ground flora species. This will be followed by a visit to nearby Gallows Hill Nature Area where a series of techniques are being trialled for woodland ground flora introduction and diversification.

Managing woodlands to improve biodiversity and sustainability

Wednesday 12 July, Wetherby, Yorkshire

A course designed for those considering buying a wood, woodland owners and those who want to promote woodland biodiversity. The site visits will offer an opportunity to see habitat management in a 35-acre, semi-ancient broadleaf woodland and a recently naturally regenerated woodland.

Managing woodlands for pollinators and sustainability

Wednesday 19 July, Chippenham, Wiltshire

A course for woodland owners and managers who want to manage their woods while promoting biodiversity. We will look at the structure and characteristics of small woods; examine woodland types; consider wildlife monitoring and assessment; discuss management systems and consider ways to promote biodiversity. On site we will look at

practical examples of woodland products and sustainability and discuss public use and access in private and community woodlands.

Using horses to manage woodland sites

Date tbc, Ironbridge, Shropshire

See how to reduce the impact of forest working on existing crops, coppiced stools and areas of regeneration, and how horses can be effective through the full range of woodland operations. A demonstration of working with horses will include an opportunity to try it for yourself.

Managing ancient woodland for ground flora

Wednesday 10 May, High Wycombe, Bucks

Pigotts Wood is an interesting ancient beech wood with wild cherry, hornbeam and holly among other tree species, in the Chilterns AONB.

Managing veteran trees

Wednesday 18 October, Burnham Beeches

Ancient and veteran trees are irreplaceable parts of our living heritage and it is important to manage sensitively. An introductory day for owners and managers.

Woodland flora introduction and identification

Tuesday 30 May, Aberfeldy, Perthshire

A visit to Grandtully Old Castle Wood, ancient woodland by the River Tay near Aberfeldy, followed by a birch wood in nearby Upper Park.

It was months in the planning, and it turned out that early April was an excellent time to hold a joint SWOG and Woodland Trust, PAWS (plantation on ancient woodland sites) restoration workshop. Provision of a hog-roast lunch by the Woodland Trust set a new high in SWOG catering, which the rest of us can only dream of. (A smaller meeting in Buckinghamshire on the same day had to manage with shortbread.)

The spring flowers were in abundance and the weather perfect for the meeting held at Rogley Wood in the High Weald AONB.

It was attended by owners of the wood as well as other SWOG and Woodland Trust members. The Woodland Trust have been working for some years to explain the value of PAWS and ASNW (ancient semi-natural woodland) woodlands to owners, and to encourage them to manage their woods sensitively to aid ancient woodland recovery.

The session covered the basic of how to



identify ancient woodland by looking at the plant indicator species – bluebells, for example, or the presence of large old tree stumps. Jim offered advice on how to manage a woodland to assist in the restoration of native broadleaf species. A key factor is the maintenance of dappled light, which allows ground flora to flourish and in turn will help to create a nutrient-rich eco-system.

The owners who attended were really positive in their feedback.

‘It helped me make informed decisions about what we might take out next winter and what to plan in the schedule of works’.

‘It gave me a lot of inspiration as to how we might develop our own woodland without compromising the environment.’

Many thanks go to Jim Smith Wright of the Woodland Trust and his volunteer, Daniel, for bringing their expertise to the group and covering the subject so thoroughly. Thanks also go to Tim Saunders of the Forestry Commission who talked about management plans, grants and licenses and to all the owners at Rogley who welcomed the group into their woods.

More general advice and a useful booklet about PAWS restoration is available from the **Woodland Trust** [here](#).

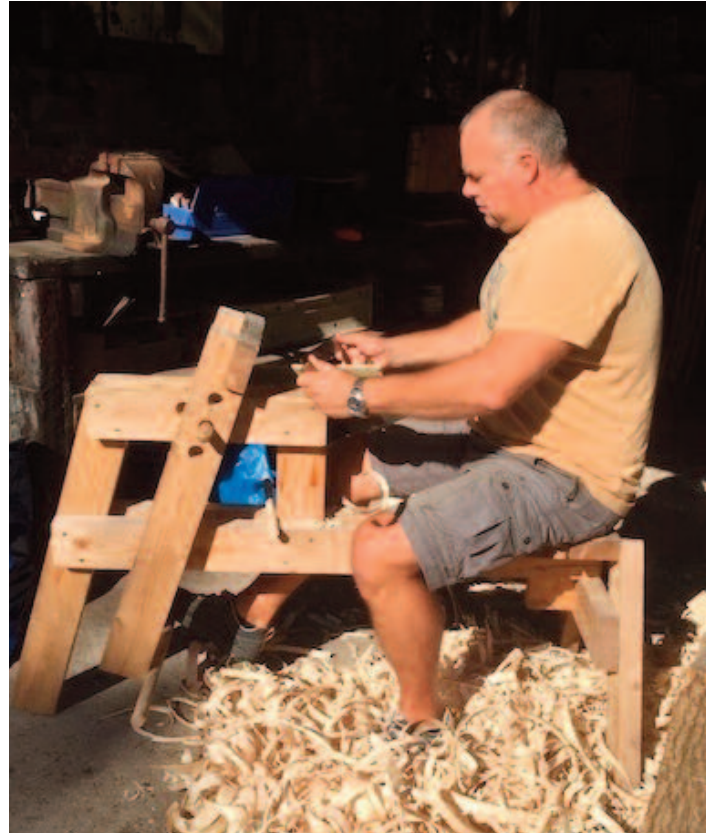


A labour of love: making rustic ash chairs

Like many craftsmen, Mark Griffin spent a lifetime in a conventional career before devoting himself full time to what was 'just' a hobby. A retired firefighter in south Oxfordshire, Mark now makes distinctive chairs from ash, working from a barn near Didcot.

Although he had always enjoyed making things from wood, Mark credits the legendary Mike Abbott with awakening his interest and helping him to hone his skills. Having spent a fascinating afternoon watching a green woodworker making chair parts at a country show in Anglesey in 1989, Mark received Mike Abbott's first book (*Green Woodwork*) from his wife as a gift, and was hooked.

Twenty years later, he went on two courses, one with Mike and the other with Gudrun Leitz at Clisset Wood. While Mike's course concentrated on the technical aspects of chair-making, Gudrun's brought out the 'arty' side of Mark's talent. He produced two chairs, the first of a collection that soon began to take over his house. Mark worked with Mike occasionally on development weeks, and in 2015 helped out as one of his assistants on several courses. 'The sense of achievement gained from making your first chair is indescribable and I'd recommend that everyone should have a go'.



Making a living from bespoke chair making is no easy matter and many craftsmen offer training and courses as a sideline to supplement their income. Pitching the prices is always difficult and many craftsmen struggle to get this right when they are starting out. Mark says, 'When I started selling my chairs, I had a long discussion with a group of green woodworkers regarding pricing and they unanimously agreed pricing was their biggest bugbear.'



A labour of love: making rustic ash chairs

Mark reckons it take about 20 hours to make a simple chair, and more intricate designs with complicated back panels, seating patterns, arms and rockers or carving obviously take longer. Mark averages one or two pieces a week, although he has spent as long as 60 hours on one really special chair. He tries to make components in batches to save time, but the legs must be reasonably green, so that when the chairs are assembled the natural drying of the wood secures the joints. Mark doesn't use any glue in his chairs, so must use the wood at its best.

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'At my first commercial contemporary arts and crafts fair, several other makers complimented my chairs but all suggested that I'd priced them too low. They were right, but putting a cost on your own time and effort is one of the hardest things to do. Even now I struggle to set prices for any of my new and unique designs. I have looked at various formulae for calculating product costs and they all seem quite unrealistic to me. My wife is of great assistance when pricing my work though, as she questions all my pricing decisions, getting me to consider exactly how long each process takes and why some designs cost more than others

'All my chairs are hand-crafted from ash using traditional woodcraft tools and techniques and as such each chair is unique. I weave a variety of seat patterns using Danish cord, Sisal, paper rush, bark and Kambaa. I am never going to make a fortune chair making, but I love the making and development of new and improved chair designs.'

In his book, *The Man Who Made things out of Trees*, author Rob Penn enumerated the many uses of ash wood over the course of human history. It was readily available and widely used for tools, handles, utensils, pots and vessels, as well as chairs.

Mark believes that ash is perfect for chairs,

being flexible, strong and lightweight. The strength allows the use of smaller dimension timber thus creating a visual lightness to the chair frame. The flexibility means the furniture has a natural spring that gives slightly when you sit and pushes back, assisting when you're getting up. When green (freshly cut), ash is easily worked with sharp hand tools. It splits (cleaves) along the grain very well and cleft wood, which has been split with the grain,

is much stronger (up to 100%) than sawn timber. This allows the components to be smaller diameter and ultimately produces a light weight but strong chair. Aesthetically, ash is beautiful creamy colour, which mellows into a warm honey colour with age.

Mark is a member of the Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Green Woodworkers and undertakes commissions. He will be found demonstrating at several woodfairs and craft shows around the country over the course of the summer. Visit his website www.rustic-ash.co.uk for more information.

Prize-winning bodger

I was encouraged to enter some of my work into the Bodgers Ball Competition last year. I submitted a 'picket fence' armchair and a child's double-rocking seesaw, and much to my delight, both won first places in their classes. This made me realise that people actually appreciated my efforts and really boosted my confidence.



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

Trouble in the Garden

Box has been used extensively in formal gardens since Tudor times, but it is now under threat from pathogens that result in Box Blight, as well as the caterpillar of the Box tree moth from Asia.

Bumblebee survival

Researchers have discovered that high quality pollen-rich environments are not only good for the current generation of bees, but they also enable their descendants to thrive, too. The results support the management of farmland in an environmentally-friendly manner to provide more flowers along the edges of arable fields, and the maintenance of hedgerows and meadows as further wild flower resources.

The Fight for Beauty – book review

In her book, *The Fight for Beauty*, Fiona Reynolds, former head of the National Trust, argues that we need to help the public to have easy access to the British countryside and to do conservation in a hands-on way rather than leave it all to professionals. We must help people touch and feel trees and woodlands if we want them to be valued.

Rehoming red squirrels

The charity Trees for Life has developed the Red

Squirrel Reintroduction projects with the aim of establishing ten ‘new’ populations in the north-west Highlands in order to increase the number and the range of the red squirrel.

A threat to bluebells?

Most people are aware of the uneasy co-existence of native British bluebells alongside Spanish hybrids. Now another threat has emerged. Bluebell development and flowering depends on a short period of time in early spring before the leaf canopy of trees closes over. If they cannot time their growth to match this, they may lose out in the struggle for survival.

Wildflowers of the roadside and verges

Plantlife has launched an initiative to encourage local councils to look after their roadsides and verges, which are home to more than 700 different species, 12% of which are endangered.

Woodlands TV

Artists’ retreat in the woodlands

The Forge offers volunteers and creative individuals a place to explore the outdoor arts sector. They organise events such as the ‘Just So’ Festival, which takes families out of their day-to-day lives into enchanting places and stories. They believe in the power of a moment of wonder to open a family’s eyes to the magic in everyday life.



The Arb Show

12–14 May 2017

Westobirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire

www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show

Weird and Wonderful Wood

13–14 May 2017

Stowmarket, Suffolk

www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk/

The Bushcraft Show

27–29 May 2017

Beehive Farm, Rosliston, Derbyshire

www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk

Devon County Show

18–20 May 2017

Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon

www.devoncountyshow.co.uk

Royal Bath & West Show

31 May – 3 June 2017

Shepton Mallet, Somerset

www.bathandwest.com

Weald and Downland Living Museum Show

17–18 June 2017

Chichester, West Sussex

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

Royal Welsh Show

24–27 July 2017

Builth Wells, Wales

www.rwas.wales

New Forest and Hampshire County Show

25–27 July 2017

Brockenhurst, Hampshire

www.newforestshow.co.uk

Woodfest Wales

29–30 July 2017

St Asaph, Denbighshire

www.woodfestwales.co.uk

South Downs Show

19–20 August 2017

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Petersfield,
Hampshire

www.southdownsshow.co.uk

Wilderness Gathering

16–20 August

West Knoyle, Wiltshire

www.wildernessgathering.co.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

26–27 August 2017

Sturminster Newton, Dorset

www.stockgaylard.com

Wychwood Forest Fair

3 September 2017

Charlbury, Oxfordshire

www.wychwoodproject.org

Confor Woodland Show

7–8 September 2017

Longleat, Wiltshire

www.confor.org.uk/about-confor

Belmont Woodfest & Country Fair

9–10 September 2017

Faversham, Kent

www.belmont-house.org

Bentley Weald Wood Fair

15–17 September 2017

Lewes, East Sussex

www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair

Surrey Hills Wood Fair

30 Sept–1 Oct 2017

Birtley House, Guildford

www.surreyhills.org/events/

Ticks

Ticks

It's peak feeding time for ticks who are especially partial to human blood. Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures found in woodland and heath areas.

They can transmit bacteria that cause diseases such as Lyme disease, which can lead to very serious conditions if left untreated. Symptoms of Lyme disease can include flu-like symptoms, fatigue, muscle and joint pain. Tick bites may not hurt and you don't always notice you've been bitten, so make sure you thoroughly check yourself, your children and your pets after a trip to the woods.



Protect yourself against bites

- Cover skin, especially in “brushy” areas
- Wear long trousers rather than shorts or a skirt
- Favour light coloured clothing to make ticks

easier to spot

- Button up collars and cuffs, and tuck socks into trousers
- Wear boots, not sandals
- Apply an acaricide (e.g., permethrin) or insect repellent to clothes and exposed skin.
- Be especially vigilant during peak feeding times, May–July

and September–October.

This **leaflet** from the Royal Forestry Society provides more detailed advice.

Help for owners

One of the best ways to learn about local conditions in your area and to discuss matters of woodland maintenance is to share your experiences with other owners. If you would like to get in touch with your woodland neighbours, but never seem to bump into them while at your wood, SWOG can help. We only share email addresses with permission, but if you email judith@swog.org.uk, she can link you up.

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



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

SWOG co-ordinator and newsletter editor

judith@swog.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter @_swog

