

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter June 2017



Horse logging at High Stoop
Community woodlands
Confor's election manifesto
Free woodland posters

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.



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

Each event will be from 1.30–4.30pm. 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.

Bulworthy Project, Devon: joint visit with the Small Woods Association 15 July 2017 10.00am to 4.00pm

A visit to two unique North Devon woodlands in one day, with the theme of making a living from sustainable woodland activities.

There will be a morning visit to Courage Copse Creatives, a working woodland on a PAWS site which is being restored to native woodland. They provide horse logging courses, educational visits and produce bio char and charcoal.

Lunch will be at the Bulworthy Project's fantastic Barbecue Cafe at £12 per person. In the afternoon we will visit the Bulworthy Project itself, a working woodland planted in 1995. Pete and Anna produce charcoal, run woodland courses and experiences, and open their cafe occasionally through the summer. They have recently built an off-grid cabin for tourist accommodation.

The Bulworthy Project run a great range of courses, from bowmaking to archery to spoon carving and charcoal making. Take a look at **their website** for the full list of courses and dates.

Please note that everyone attending is asked to pay the £12 lunch reservation, which covers a delicious local menu (vegetarian option available) and is part of the booking process.

To book a place via the Bulworthy Project's secure system, please visit their payment page here **www.bulworthyproject.org.uk/meeting**. Scroll down the page and book next to the SWOG logo.



The art of identification – a midsummer download

Following the great tradition of illustrated plant identification, dating back thousands of years, Woodlands.co.uk has produced a range of educational posters designed to help primary school children recognise and understand what they can see in their woodlands.

The first three posters in the series are by illustrator Kate Sutton and are executed in her attractive, accessible style. She has chosen subjects that tie in with different stages of the national curriculum. Beginning with basic tree identification, the *Know your Trees* poster features seven trees you are likely to find in a British woodland. From oak to beech, she has drawn the leaves, nuts or berries and tree shape in her distinct style. The end result is a poster that is both educational and attractive.

The *Life Cycles* poster concentrates on development stages of four woodland creatures and *Woodland Life* depicts the interactions of creatures and plants in the wood. For teachers or keen parents who would like to use the artwork as the basis for a question and answer learning session, lessons plans have been prepared to accompany the posters.

All the material is free to use and can be easily downloaded and printed out on demand from the **Woodlands.co.uk website**.



The Ash Project

The ash tree is the most common tree in Kent (and the third most common in the UK). In 2012 when ash dieback (caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) was first discovered in England, the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was one of the first areas to notice the rapid spread of the disease.

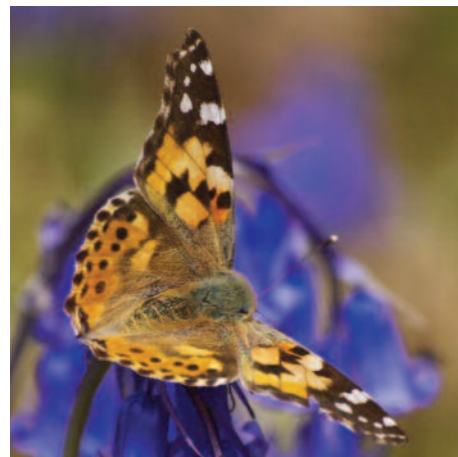
They commissioned the Ash Project, a



cultural response to this devastating loss of one of our most important species of tree. The project asks how we might mark and celebrate ash trees before it is too late. It combines a major new commission by internationally recognised artists Ackroyd & Harvey with a wide-ranging programme of walks, talks and workshops, an online archive and a Kent-wide plan for landscape restoration. They are collaborating across conservation and scientific research work to develop a cultural approach that will preserve memories of the tree in extraordinary and enduring ways for the generations who will live with the loss.

You can take part in the project simply by supporting it online, volunteering, or by contributing to the archive of images, memories and stories about ash trees. Do you use ash to make bowls or other objects, for example?

Take a look at the website **www.theashproject.org.uk** for a full overview of forthcoming events and projects.



*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.

The deadline for all submissions is 31 July 2017.

There is still plenty of time to nominate your favourite woodland enterprise or individual for one of the 14 prestigious Woodland Awards. Simply email awards@woodlands.co.uk with your nomination.

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

Even before the election was announced, several woodland bodies made it clear that they were unimpressed with the government's fulfillment of their pledge to increase the rate of tree planting across the UK.

In March, in the wake of EFRA's report *Forestry in England – Seeing the Wood for the Trees*, the Royal Forestry Society, and Confor echoed Woodland Trust CEO Beccy Speight's view that 'Government policy is failing forestry catastrophically and urgent action is needed. Planting rates are shockingly low – we believe parts of the UK are at real risk of deforestation. Grant systems are complex and restrictive, and protection for ancient woodland is weak'.

It was reported in May that 582 hectares of trees were planted in 2016 – the lowest number since records began in 1976. By contrast almost 2,700 hectares were planted in 2013–14.

According to these figures, some 887,000 trees were planted during the course of 2016, a number which could have been fulfilled by just three professional foresters working full time, who reckon to plant about 1,000 trees per day.

The Conservative government pledged to plant 11 million trees by 2020 – but planting will have to proceed at ten times its current rate to achieve this. The government also aimed to achieve 12% woodland cover in England by 2060, another target that seems increasingly unlikely at current planting rates.

Trees and woodland merit cursory mentions in party manifestos and it has fallen to Confor to grasp the nettle and issue a manifesto for trees

and woodlands. Entitled *Planting the Future*, it lists five key aims to improve planting rates and halt the slide towards deforestation.

1. Plant more trees

At least 5,000 hectares of annual planting is needed in England, when barely 500 hectares has been achieved in each of the last two years. At least half of new planting must be productive species.

2. Take the Forestry Commission back to its roots

The Forestry Commission should be given full responsibility for planting targets, as well as woodland creation applications and funding.

3. Appoint a minister to stand up for forestry

We need a minister with forestry in their title, to press the importance of a £2 billion sector in the industrial strategy and after Brexit, and to champion home-grown timber.

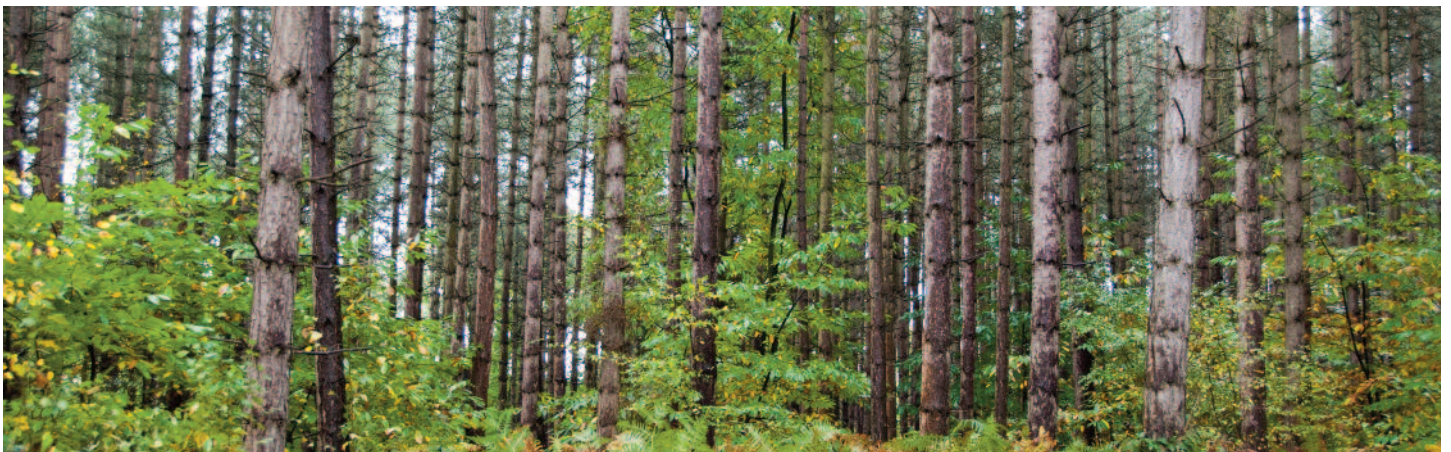
4. Cut red tape

England should follow Scotland's example and appoint a planning expert to identify the bureaucratic barriers to new woodland creation.

5. Ensure fair treatment for forestry

Government agencies and politicians must give equal treatment to a £2 billion sector employing 80,000 people, which offers multiple social and environmental benefits.

Read the whole document on the **Confor website here**.



Horse logging at High Stoop

Karen Moon is a relatively new woodland owner and acquired her wood from the local council, which was selling off this former picnic site in High Stoop, Country Durham. The nine-acre woodland is made up of oak, beech and rowan, interspersed among a lot of conifer. It has not been managed for some time, but it is on the edge of the North Pennines AONB and Karen and her partner are determined to bring some order back to it. They are beginning to thin out the conifer and enlisted the services of a horse-logger to help extract some of the timber. Peter Lawley has been kind enough to send in this report of the SWOG meeting held by Karen in early May.

This woodland visit was advertised as being to a 'unique piece of woodland on a windy hill in the North Pennines'. It was certainly blowing a stiff, cold westerly on Saturday 13 May, but we all got a warm welcome from the owner, Karen Moon, and her family and friends. Karen bought the 9-acre wood a year ago from the local council and it had been badly neglected. She has enlisted the help of Charlie Parker, a local horse logger with many years experience in woodland management, to start getting it back into shape. Karen herself is no stranger to horses, being an instructor with the British Horse Society.



As the day progressed we watched Charlie and his cob move felled tree trunks from the woods as he started the task of bringing some order to chaos. Charlie also dispensed anecdotes and advice in response to our questions, and the hours passed by quickly.

Everyone's wood will be different, but this is where listening to the voice of experience is so valuable. I think Charlie's advice boiled down to 'look at the wood, decide what you want to end up with and then execute a plan to get there which respects the wood, be it alive or dead'.

Although, only a few other woodland owners attended, I think we all found the exchange of information and experiences to be of great value, and from the looks on faces and the easy, useful conversations, this was a very worthwhile event. Karen and Dennis provided plenty of hot drinks and snacks and an excellent lunch of rainbow trout and sausages cooked in the fire-ash. So thank you to her – and let's have lots more events in the north of England!



Charlie Parker has been a forester for more than 40 years. Visit his website www.daleslogger.com to learn more about his work.

Finding a horse logger

Word of mouth recommendations are always useful, but the first port of call may well be online. The **British Horse Loggers** is the only national body representing those working in the industry. It promotes horse logging as a viable and sustainable option within modern forestry and works to preserve a traditional and important skill.

Why use a horse logger?

Horse logging offers an efficient and flexible approach to timber extraction, using a wide range of both traditional and modern equipment. The horses can work through the full range of woodland operations from first thinnings through to extracting the final crop. They are a low impact and sympathetic tool, particularly when it comes to the management of ancient woodland and archaeologically important sites.

Working horses are ideally suited to difficult

sites: steep, wet, inaccessible or environmentally sensitive areas where mechanical extraction is either not welcome or just plain difficult. Horse logging can work efficiently alongside a tractor operation if necessary. The use of horses can minimise damage to existing crops, coppiced stools and areas of regeneration. They can also work in small areas where felling to provide an extraction route can be kept to a minimum. Using horses reduces compaction and damage to the woodland floor and they run on hay, rather than polluting fossil fuels.

The BHL website is full of useful information and includes a comprehensive section on hiring a horse logger, www.britishhorseloggers.org.

Costs

Expect to pay around £200 for a day's work. It may seem expensive, but it is highly skilled work, and given its low impact on the woodland environment, there will be no further costs to factor in, such as making good tracks.



Community woodlands – what are they about?

Community woodlands provide space for leisure, learning, wildlife, and help bring communities together.

*David Williams, the volunteer Director of **Llais y Goedwig**, and a member of Blaen Bran Community Woodland group in south-east Wales, near Cwmbran, explains more about them.*

In simple terms a community woodland is the bringing together of a community of people and an area of woodland. The community may be just a few people, or many and the woodland may be owned by one person, by a constituted group or be a part of the national forest estate (Natural Resources Wales if west of Offa's Dyke, and the Forestry Commission if not).

Every community woodland is different, but there are some common characteristics in that each has a group from a local community that either owns, leases or has some kind of management agreement to use a woodland area for a range of different purposes. This may range from observing wildlife, walking the dog, gathering berries or mushrooms, through to planting trees, improving drainage and cutting back brambles or bracken, and maintaining footpaths. Growing trees for commercial forestry is not usually on the list (although some community woodlands do just that).

Groups may have a formal organisation as a trust, a co-operative, a company (different types), a charity or a social enterprise. They may just have an informal organization, as a 'friends' group, helping to keep a wood tidy and rubbish-free. The woodlands themselves can vary greatly in size from an acre or two, to 100 acres plus.

Community woodland groups have a national body in Wales to link them together –

Llais y Goedwig (LlyG), ('the voice of the wood' in Welsh). It is open for any community woodland groups (CWGs) in Wales to join as full members, with other interested organisations or groups able to join as associate members.

In Scotland the **Community Woodlands Association** (CWA) was founded in 2003, to be the direct representative body of Scotland's community woodland groups. CWA was in being some five years before LlyG and the two bodies meet every year at their respective annual gatherings of member groups.

In England the **Community Forest**



Llangattock community wood volunteers

organisation encourages community woodland involvement. Case studies that share the individual experiences of groups were gathered by Forest Research, and these are available on the **LlyG website here**.

How do groups start?

Ask five different groups and you will get five different answers! Recognising this, Llais y Goedwig has produced a number of publications (available on the website) with some key points to consider. This includes getting to know your local community, getting to know the woodland, through to developing woodland management plans.

Some of the tools to connect with

communities – questionnaires, surveys, public meetings – are covered, as well as the need to understand the history of the local woodland, what has been planted and not least, why is the wood important to the community around it. As with the life cycle of trees themselves, a long-term view is required – so that the ground is ready to plant (preparation), there is plenty of light (good communication), and a reasonable supply of nutrients (volunteers) to help a group grow.

The benefits of community woodlands

Some key themes have emerged from discussion with groups themselves.

- Being part of a healthy and bio-diverse landscape – developing woods to maintain, extend and connect natural habitats and be places for understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment.
- Provide materials and resources to meet local needs – including timber for sawmills, firewood, food products, seeds, bark, moss, etc, planning to shape woodland management to grow the

resources we will need in the future.

- Offer opportunities for local employment – including tourism, recreation, leisure, lifestyle and craft businesses, as well as small business using traditional skills to manage woodland.
- Connect people with the natural world so that communities can experience wildlife in its natural habitat, and work together to increase woodland and community resilience to change.
- Be a focus for community well-being so that woodlands are a context for exploring local history and culture, and are a place for activities for both physical and mental health and wellbeing..
- Contribute to learning and developing skills – improving an understanding of forest and woodland environments, and the skills needed to manage them for different purposes.
- Engage with civil society – informing decision makers about how the decisions they make impact on our activities and communities. This includes local and national consultation as to community involvement in the public forestry estate.



This year's Llais y Goedwig Gathering takes place over three days in June at beautiful Denmark Farm in the middle of Wales. Our theme is growing the network – looking at the sustainability and resilience of groups and the woodlands they work in. More information is on the [website here](#).

Useful websites

Community Forest
Community Woodlands Association (CWA)
Llais y Goedwig (LlyG)

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

Why trees don't grow tall in the same way as people

Ever wondered why the branches of trees remain at the same height, unlike human arms which rise higher as a person grows? Angus explains all.

Bumblebees and insecticides (again!)

More evidence from researchers that exposure to the neonicotinoid insecticide thiamethoxam can have dramatic effects on the feeding behaviour of bumblebee queens and the development of their eggs.

How to get a green Blue Peter badge

Who doesn't want one of those highly prized Blue Peter badges? A green badge is awarded to children who send in stories or demonstrate their work for environment, conservation or nature and Imogen tells us how she got hers.

Learning how to drive a 4x4 in a woodland

'It's the most fun I've ever had outside of the bedroom', said one friend of mine about driving a 4-wheel-drive vehicle. It gives you new powers and you feel you can drive anywhere – over hills and through rivers.' If you have to tackle rough terrain regularly it is probably sensible to learn

how to drive safely off-road.

The roots of forest schools

Forest schools first became popular in the inter-war years, with an emphasis on child-centred learning outdoors.

Benches in woodlands – different designs

The benefits of a decent woodland bench: four designs to choose from.

A reflector oven

Woodland food takes on a whole new flavour with the lightweight and portable reflector oven.

TV

Industrial hemp

Nathaniel, Rhys and Yolanda share their passion for the nutritional and therapeutic benefits of growing, processing and using industrial hemp. Not to be confused with its 'cousin' plant marijuana, licensed industrial hemp only takes four months to mature and the whole plant can be used – roots, stems, leaves, buds and seeds – for food, clothing and supplements.

Buying a woodland: what is SWOG?

Rich and Judith, captured at a woodfair, tell the world about SWOG.



Stone Age hunter gatherers

Historical expert Martin Patterson shares his vast knowledge of the Stone Age Hunter Gatherer period. His passion and skill is obvious as he shows us a range of replica tools and equipment made from natural materials.

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/



Grown in Britain celebrates fourth anniversary



Grown in Britain

Woodland owners are at the heart of a new wood culture in Britain, and Grown in Britain works with those individuals and companies that want to turn woodland into an asset that's not just good for the environment, wildlife and people, but for the bottom line too.

By applying for a Grown in Britain licence for your woodland, you're able to demonstrate commitment to the scheme and provide buyers – and the wider supply chain – with robustly assured and branded British timber.

To celebrate their fourth birthday, Grown in Britain has issued a series of leaflets to encourage woodland owners to register for a GIB licence. 'We want to make sure woodland owners are ahead of the demand curve. These leaflets give basic information on achieving a Grown in Britain licence, which enables woodland owners to use our brand in marketing', says Grown in Britain CEO Dougal Driver.

The three leaflets, for forest owners, for charcoal producers and for Christmas tree suppliers, can be **downloaded here**. The **GIB website** is a mine of information for owners and anyone interested in supporting the British timber trade.

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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