

A large, gnarled tree silhouette against a sunset sky. The tree is the central focus, with its intricate branches spreading across the frame. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright yellow and orange near the horizon, where the sun is setting. The overall mood is serene and natural.

Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter July 2017

Space invaders

Track back – repairing rides

2017 Woodland Owners' Survey

2017 | BRITISH WOODLANDS SURVEY

Devolution, pests and pathogens, Brexit, emerging markets, climate change, societal attitudes . . . just some of the momentous factors influencing our trees and woodlands, those who care for them, and those who rely on their products and services.

Have your say about what these and other issues mean to you by taking part in Britain's only dedicated national survey about our woodlands and forestry: the British Woodlands Survey 2017.

Dr Gabriel Hemery, Chief Executive of the Sylva Foundation said, 'We developed the British Woodlands Survey to provide a voice to the thousands of woodland owners and forestry professionals in Britain, with the aim of influencing the development of policy, practice and research which is fit-for-purpose.'

The last BWS, which focused on environmental change, represented 11% of all privately-owned forest land in Britain with 1,500 stakeholders taking part in the survey. This year we are asking questions around priority themes suggested by some 400 stakeholders, as well as more of specific regional interest. SWOG is a keen supporter of the survey and we hope as many of you as possible will take part. We can't change all the factors affecting our woodlands, but we can influence how we tackle them and this is your chance to do so.

'The insight provided by BWS in recent years has helped the Woodland Trust to understand the motivations

and needs of woodland owners and managers. This is critical in allowing us to develop our offers of support to prospective and existing woodland owners. It is also vital as evidence for lobbying and advocacy in support of

the woodland sector. The more people participate, the stronger the evidence,' said Mike Townsend, Principal Advisor, Woodland Trust.

BWS has a proven record of working with important forestry organisations in Britain to provide a solid evidence base that influences decision-making, and contributes to policy. If you are a woodland owner or manager, farmer, land agent, professional forester or forestry/wood business, please take part and help shape the future of forestry.

Take the survey

The survey is open from 7 July until the end of September. BWS2017 is led by researchers from Forest Research, Sylva Foundation, University of Oxford and the Woodland Trust. Funding for BWS2017 is provided by Scottish Forestry Trust, Forestry Commission Scotland, and the Woodland Trust. Take the survey here: www.sylva.org.uk/bws2017



*King George VI Oak, Staverton, Suffolk,
Photo: Julian Hight/Woodland Trust*

Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards 2017

The Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards are an annual event open to woodlands of all sizes. They recognise best practice in woodland management and this year have revealed inspiring tales of forestry, woodland management and education, and learning projects.

Entries for 2017 were invited from across Eastern England and the Midlands (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands).

While some of the awards are for larger estates, this year's winners undertake valuable work to realise the value of their timber and manage for resilience. It is something we could all emulate, albeit on a smaller scale. The Wakefield Estate, in particular successfully manages for a variety of criteria including 'timber production, landscape,



Looking out towards the ancient Whittlewood Forest, Wakefield Estate.

2017 Duke of Cornwall Award for Resilient Multi-Purpose Forestry

This Award recognises woodlands that are managed for ecological and economic resilience. It includes adaptation to environmental change such as pests, disease and the threat of climate change in order to meet commercial, environmental and/or social objectives.

Gold: *Carburton and Clumber Woods*, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, owned by the Forestry Commission

Joint Silver: *Morton Hall*, Retford, Nottinghamshire, owned by the Mason family;



private recreation, conservation (particularly achieving "favourable status" for the woodlands within an SSSI), and protection of historical features, as well diversification of the species composition in preparation for a changing climate and increased pest and disease incidence.'

The full list of winners, with details of how to enter next year's contest is on the **RFS website**.

Wakefield Lodge Estate, Potterspury, Northants, owned by Julian Richmond-Watson

Certificate of Merit: *Grimsthorpe Park* woodland, Lincolnshire, owned by Grimsthorpe and Drummond Castle Trust Ltd

2017 Small and Farm Woodlands Award

Gold: *Nursery Wood*, Dunsby, Lincolnshire owned and managed by Hugh Dorrington

Silver: *Needham Hill Farm*, Kinoulton, Nottinghamshire, owned by Vera Oxby

This Award recognises and rewards smaller woodlands which have been actively managed in the last ten years.

SWOG meetings



Managing your woodlands for butterflies – and join in with the Big Butterfly Count 2017

Don't miss the chance to learn about how to encourage butterflies in your woodland! SWOG and **Butterfly Conservation** are running two more workshops to discuss managing woodland for butterflies. It's also the **Big Butterfly Count** from 14 July until 6 August, so even if you can't attend the meetings, you can participate in this nationwide survey.

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 and led by well known butterfly experts Neil Hulme and Steve Wheatley, who will explain in detail which species can be encouraged in each location. Please email judith@swog.org.uk if you would like to attend. More details are on the SWOG website.

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.

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. SWOG can provide up to £100 for your expenses.

Nominations open for the Tree of the Year 2017

The Woodland Trust is urging tree lovers to stump up nominations to become the next Tree of the Year.

The Brimmon Oak in Wales narrowly missed out on being crowned the 2017 European Tree of the Year and the Woodland Trust, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, is hoping to go one step better next time around. People are asked to nominate a tree 'with a story'; this could be a link to a historical figure or event, a tree at the heart of a community or one which is just well loved. Nominations are open to any living tree in the UK with a story to tell and any individual, group or



*The Llangernyw Yew
Photo: Julian Hight/Woodland Trust*

organisation can enter a tree until midnight on Sunday 30 July. More information is available on the **Woodland Trust website**.

Thanks to the Woodland Trust for several pictures, including the cover image of Wyndham's Oak at sunset.

Re-introducing hazel dormice

The hazel dormouse is the only species of dormouse native to the British Isles, but populations have been declining in both range and number for some time. Estimates put the decline at more than 70% over 20 years. Rare and in danger of extinction, they are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Their decline is attributed partly to the loss of woodland and hedgerow habitat, as well as changes to traditional countryside management practices. Their preferred habitat is old coppice woodland, particularly areas of new woody growth that occurs after thinning or coppicing. A well-managed woodland with a healthy understorey will provide the range of food dormice need to survive. In spring they feed on



Steven Cheshire (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust) 2017

the flowers of oak, hawthorn, sycamore and willow and as the season progresses move onto later flowering shrubs such as honeysuckle and bramble. During the summer they take advantage of caterpillars, aphids and wasp galls and then they fatten up for hibernation on fruits and berries such as blackberries and hazelnuts. They need to reach a weight of 15–18g in order to hibernate successfully

Predation by owls and small mammals such as weasels, badgers or squirrels is less of a problem than their ability to survive the winter.

The announcement that the **People's Trust for Endangered Species** (PTES) has reintroduced a colony of 19 breeding pairs in a Warwickshire woodland is great news. Over the last 24 years, more than 864 dormice have been released at 22 different sites across 12 counties.

If you discover dormice in your woodland, you should report it to the PTES. Remember that handling is prohibited, so if you find one, don't touch it. SWOG members Rodney and Heather discovered dormice in their Sussex woodland and have enrolled with the PTES as official dormice monitors. They have written about their experiences on the **SWOG website**.

Track back: repairing a woodland ride

Many small woodland owners share an access track with their neighbours and sooner or later that track will need a bit of TLC. Tracks degrade – they get rutted, become muddy, and often become slow to dry out if the vegetation on the edges begins to overshadow it.

If the track is shared by several owners the only answer is to get together and work out a plan of action. Bernie and Theresa of Solar Wood in East Sussex have sent in some photos of a repair party in Waste Wood, where owners get together reasonably regularly to maintain their mile-long track.

Stoning a track is tough manual labour, which some owners are not accustomed to and a mile of track needs a large delivery of aggregate. 18 tons had been dropped at distribution points along the Waste Wood track, which was enough to repair parts of it. A team of owners and friends, with ages ranging from three to 80, turned out on a sunny Saturday to distribute the stones, fill potholes and improve worn areas.

It was not fast work, but they worked at pace they could all manage and there is plenty of stone left for another day's work. The bonus was getting together for a chat and a catch-up about their woodland activities over a shared lunch.



*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 don't miss it!

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

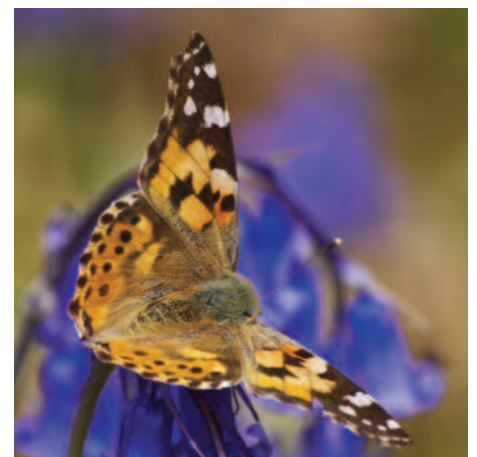
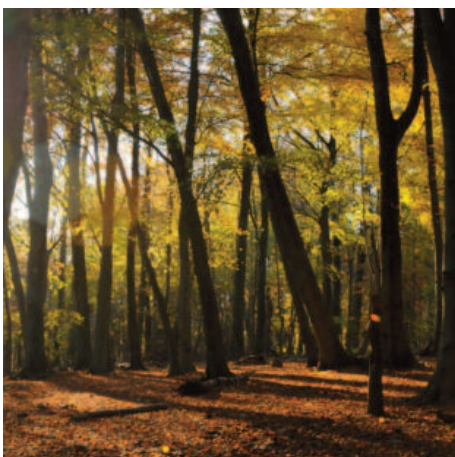
Awards for individuals

- 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

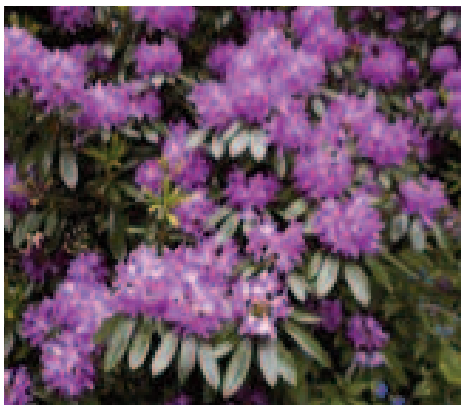
There is a category for everyone, whatever their interest or involvement in woods and forests.



Space invaders

Many woodland owners trying to restore their woodland tackle invasive species which threaten to overwhelm native plants and alter the biodiversity of the area. **Andrea Griffith** Senior Partnership Officer of the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership has compiled a list of just some of the plants to watch out for.

Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*)



This alien evergreen plant, originally thought to be from the Iberian Peninsula, was introduced to Britain by Conrad Loddiges in

1763. It was used as a decorative plant in gardens, parks, and estates as a horticultural exhibit. It was also planted in Victorian hunting estates under woodland canopies and on heathland areas to provide shelter for game species. Unfortunately, this impressive and colourful plant has caused serious issues across the UK. A type of allelopathy, the plant releases chemicals into the soil which inhibit the growth of other species.

Rhododendron changes the soil chemistry in woodlands, impoverishing the soil and making it uninhabitable for several years, even after it is removed. This in turn reduces biodiversity, as the plant can reduce earthworm and invertebrate populations, which has a knock-on effect for birds and mammals.

The dense shade prevents woodland regeneration and can also increase the temperature in woodland which may also affect hibernating mammals such as the dormouse.

Even more seriously, rhododendron is susceptible to the disease *Phytophthora ramorum*, which endangers beech, larch and oak.

There are many methods to control

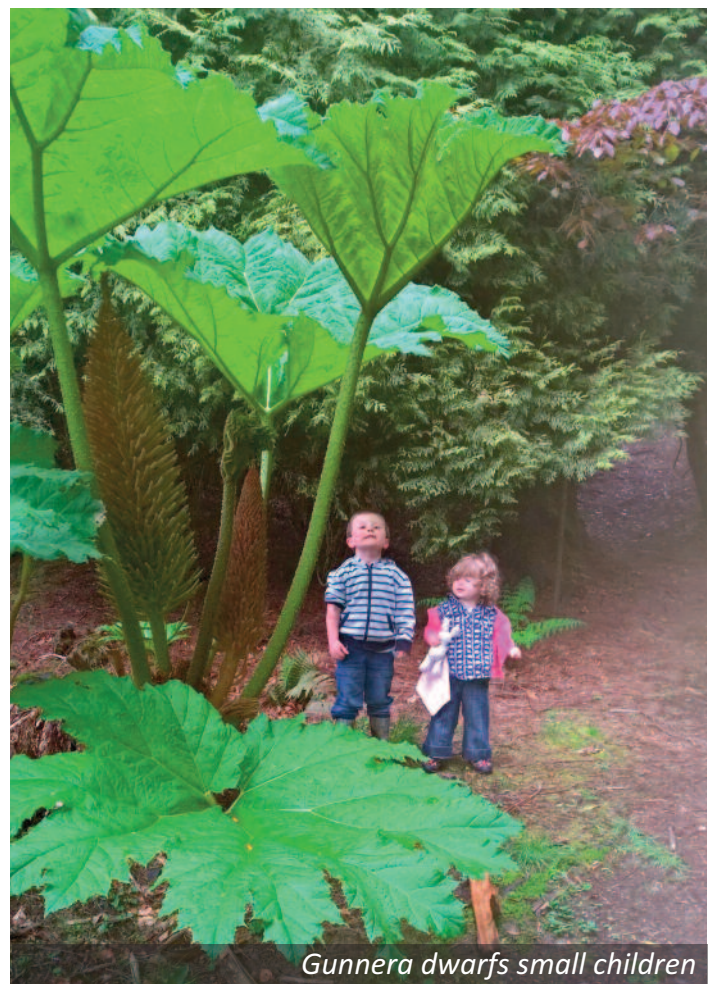
rhododendron, and removing it is hard, but valuable work. The **Forest Research website** has more information, and Kent Wildlife Trust has a useful page of advice **here**.

Wet woodland plants:

American Skunk Cabbage and Gunnera

The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) has noticed a small increase in American Skunk Cabbage and Gunnera (*Gunnera manicata*, also known as giant rhubarb) in woodland, especially wet woodland. Like rhododendron, gunnera was planted as a spectacular horticultural plant in the 19th century. MVCP believes that woodland owners should be mindful of these large-leaved invasive plants because they form dense colonies and prevent native plants from growing underneath. They can also impede water flow by blocking drainage in adjacent streams and rivers particularly when water levels are high

Most of MVCP's work with invasive non-



Gunnera dwarfs small children



Spraying giant hogweed

native species (INNS) is focused on riverbanks and on the many riparian non-native invasive plants which cause problems in this habitat.

Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), which was introduced by the Victorians, is a large plant which can reach over 3m in height. The sap can burn the skin and cause a type of dermatitis where skin becomes sensitive to sunlight. A dangerous plant which should be avoided, it also erodes riverbanks and increases flood risk, as well as displacing native plants.

MVCP has been working with dozens of landowners, local councils and the Environment Agency permits to chemically treat over 10,000

plants, and coverage in the Medway area is gradually decreasing.

Floating Pennywort

Floating Pennywort, an invasive plant which can grow at the rate of 20cm a day, can quickly take over a pond, lake or slow-moving body of water. Similarly, **Water Fern** (*Azolla filiculoides*) is invasive and unsightly. It releases and spreads via spores and it forms dense red or green coloured mats across the surface of still or slow moving water bodies, which block out the light and kill aquatic flora and fish. However, Water Fern is one invasive species which can be controlled by biocontrol and the release of another invader, the North American weevil *Stenopelmus rufinasus* which feeds on and destroys the plant. More information is available here:

www.azollacontrol.com

To learn more about the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership's work, take a look at their website, www.medwayvalley.org, and if your woodland is in the Medway area, please contact them for advice.

If you would like more information about invasive non-native flora and fauna, including free identification factsheets and information on legislation, control and biosecurity, visit the **Non Native Species Secretariat** website.

Plumpton College Courses

Book in July to get 25% off selected short courses.

1 July 2017

Beehive and Frame Assembly Day
Charcoal Making
Summer Floristry Workshop

3 July 2017

NPTC Level 2 Award In Tree Climbing And Rescue
LANTRA Tractor Driving



7 July 2017

Domestic Chainsaw Use:
Maintenance and Cross Cutting (Flimwell)
Small Animal First Aid

10 July 2017

Domestic Chainsaw Use: Felling Small Trees (Flimwell)
Beekeeping Basic and Improvers Course
LANTRA Industrial Counter Balanced Fork Lift

Book your places here:

shop.plumpton.ac.uk/short-courses

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

Plant surfaces: cuticles and hairs

To protect themselves from environmental damage from disease or water loss, plants have evolved protective surfaces and minute hairs.

Hedges in towns and cities

Hedges help to combat pollution in urban areas and are sometimes more effective than trees. They also act as habitat for wildlife and serve as useful ecological corridors.

Unusual or exotic trees: Cedar of Lebanon

Planted as an ornamental tree in many parks and large gardens, the Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) originates, as its name suggests, in the mountains of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Birds and bumblebee decline

Researchers at the University of Exeter have revealed that a shortage of nesting spots contributes to the decline in some bird and bumblebee populations. Conservation methods usually concentrate on improving food sources, but it is clear that a restoration of hedgerows and meadows would help, too.

The mysterious world of the Slime Mould

Animal, vegetable or fungi? Woodland slime mould is a single-celled group of organisms known as protists. They appear as slimy blobs surrounded by oozy networks of cobweb-like patterns that are often strikingly beautiful in their intricacy. Furthermore they move – often with purpose – towards food sources.

TV

Making and playing a didgeridoo

Tall Paul (Paul Cook) shares his passion for all things didgeridoo – explaining the principles of making these wonderful wind instruments and how choice of timber (from beech to eucalyptus) affects sound quality – creating varying tones, reverberations and volume. One of the oldest ever found was in a bog in Ireland and was some 4,000 years old.

Working with flax and nettles

Flax and nettles were once used to make all sorts of crucial items, from sails and bed sheets to clothes and cordage. Allan Brown explains the various processes involved in preparing flax and nettles ready for hand spinning – from growing, cutting, drying and storing, through to working the plant to reduce it to its most useful natural fibres.

Starting a forest garden

Lisa Aitken and Charles Hooper describe how they have created a Forest Garden – an open woodland ecosystem using a range of trees, shrubs and plants for harvest. They share their joint passion for horticulture, self-sufficiency and their desire to work with the land to leave a lasting legacy.



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/



Supporting ancient woodland restoration



Support from the Woodland Trust for Ancient Woodland

The Woodland Trust has created a select panel of professional forestry and ecological consultants to provide no-obligation advice and support to owners of ancient and PAWS woodland across

the south-east and east of England

What does the panel do?

- Carries out detailed surveys to assess distribution, abundance, and threats to the remnants of the ancient woodland.
- Maps the findings in a specialist report with pragmatic woodland management recommendations to inform a wider management plan.

Who can receive support?

- Landowners whose ancient woodland has been planted with non-native conifers.
- Ancient woodland owners struggling with invasive species such as rhododendron.
- Further consultancy support may also be available for the practical aspects of planning, and management work.

Get in touch

Is your ancient woodland in the south-east or east of England? Has it been planted with non-native conifers (PAWS)? Does it have invasive species? The **Field Studies Council** also has a useful guide about indicator plants.

Email restoration@woodlandtrust.org.uk to find out if you are eligible for support.

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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