

Coppice survey by Debbie Bartlett

Coppicing is a traditional and sustainable way of managing woodland. Trees are cut down to ground level and then grow up with several stems. The process can be repeated indefinitely, the time between cutting depending on type of tree and intended use.



Many different plants and animals – from butterflies to dormice – benefit from the increased light levels and shrubby re-growth that result from coppicing.

We need to know how much coppice is cut and where it is happening in order to target research, raise awareness of the industry and increase support for local coppice products. The previous survey, carried out between 2000 and 2003 helped attract funding to support the industry, increasing woodland management and benefiting woodland wildlife. It is now being repeated. You can download the forms from the SWOG website. Please fill them in!

<http://www.swog.org.uk/news/coppicing-survey-by-debbie/>

Make money from your photos!

Woodlands.co.uk are on the look out for photos of people involved in Family Forestry. (people doing stuff in woods!) Send photos to margaret@woodlands.co.uk. £10 Amazon voucher for every photo used.

Wood Share

I get a lot of requests from people who would like to camp in woods in exchange for doing some work for the owners. If you think you might be interested in this kind of work exchange, let me know

tracy@woodlands.co.uk

South East

Coming up

Early summer walk – plant ID, East Sussex
Spring walk – West Sussex
Watch this space for more details

Sussex Wildlife Trust West Weald newsletter

<http://www.swog.org.uk/articles/sussex-wildlife-trust-west-weald-newsletter/>

South West

Reintroducing coppice in Dartmoor

http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/au_suscoppr0909

Outbreak of phytophthora ramorum in SW England.

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcsy_mptomshandoutfinal.pdf/\\$file/fcsy_mptomshandoutfinal.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcsy_mptomshandoutfinal.pdf/$file/fcsy_mptomshandoutfinal.pdf)

WoodlandsTV.co.uk

Making a trug
Anglo saxon dwelling
Knots
Medieval timber work
Working horses
Kelly Kettle

Paling courses by Toby

We've just spent a very interesting time with Peter Jones in Kent, brushing up on our paling technique. Peter has been making a living splitting up palings for 40 years and certainly knows his stuff. Cleft work is the mainstay of our business and I believe that anything that improves efficiency and quality is money in the bank.

We met Peter at the Weald wood fair when demonstrating our walkalong paling machine. After a chat we decided it would be good to spend a bit of time picking his brains on the subject.

We started the weekend by watching him cutting out. Cutting out is an important and often overlooked skill; if you don't start with the right bit of wood it'll never be right. Peter uses a Fordson Major tractor with a PTO saw bench mounted on the back and a cradle on the front for holding the cut out lengths to bring back from the woods. A notched jig enables him to cut to the desired lengths at a glance and single-handed.



Most of the time was spent in his workshop, where we peeled, split and pointed while ironing out any wrinkles in our method. He has a wealth of knowledge on chestnut fencing (my favourite subject) so I also got to quiz him about the different jigs he uses, and some other styles of traditional fencing, such as driven spile, which is definitely something I'll be adding to the product list at home.

He finished by taking us for a walk through the woods he works in, showing us some good and bad examples of coppicing. We saw stools damaged by fire and the results of summer and spring cutting, as well as some mighty fine chestnut coppice. I would recommend anyone with an interest in cleft work spend some time with Peter Jones. We certainly got a lot from it and are ready to get back on the break and froe after the Christmas away.

We then spent a week with Dave Rossney on his coppice harvesting efficiency course, as a refresher and learned how to speed up without breaking our backs... Any one interested in the course should contact Dave Rossney at esusforestry@btinternet.com

Events North

SWOG meeting

27th March 2010

The Woodsmith's workshop:
Beamish Museum,
Co Durham

<http://www.woodsmithstore.co.uk/shop>

Wide choice of courses

www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

Coppice courses in Pembrokeshire

www.coppicewoodcollege.co.uk

FREE Woodfuel suppliers' forum

21st Jan

<http://www.swog.org.uk/news/yorkshire-and-humber-woofuel-suppliers-forum-by-rudie/>

Woodlands.co.uk blogs

Woodland archaeology
Planting a tree
Fungi
Discovering Long Wood
Save our sedge

www.woodlands.co.uk/blog

Scotland

Royal Highland Show 24- 27th June

We hope to be there! Hope you are too!

<http://www.royalhighlandshow.org/>

More information needed!
Please email Tracy with events.

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Tree O Clock – by Phil

As part of National tree week and the BBC's attempt to beat the Guinness world record for the most number of trees planted in multiple locations in one hour (the current record is 653,143) we held a tree planting event at Ravenshill Nature Reserve, Alfrick.



Malvern Community Forest, in partnership with Ravenshill Nature Rangers (the local children's group) who are based at Ravenshill, held a community tree planting event on Saturday 5th December between 11am and 12 o'clock. 35 people planted, staked and applied tree guards to 300 Hazel saplings in 28 minutes in a previously coppiced area. This was 100 more than we pledged.

They were planted in an area where all the new shoots had been badly damaged by Muntjac deer after having been previously coppiced last season. The Deputy Leader of Malvern Hills District Council, Councillor Joe Smith attended the event as one of the two independent witnesses.

The group gave away a selection of freebies such as children's Tee shirts, eco shopping bags and various environmental booklets donated by the BBC. Members of Malvern Community Forest donated cakes and hot drinks, which were much appreciated.

The tree planting was followed by a short guided walk around part of the reserve where the benefits of coppicing, a traditional method of woodland management, were explained by Phil Hopkinson, Chairman of Malvern Community Forest and Trevor Smart the woodland owner.

Malvern Community Forest is group of local people are seeking land on which they would like to recreate part of the Malvern Chase as a community woodland and encourage landowners to plant trees. The Chase was an area of ancient forest which was administered from Hanley Castle, and which covered 13 parishes including Great Malvern, Little Malvern, Hanley Castle, Colwall, Mathon and Welland several hundred years ago.

They have also received pledges for the provision of over 2000 trees.

Central

Greenwood Centre
Coalbrookdale
www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk

Malvern Coppicing
Worcestershire
**For a list of new courses
see the website:**
www.malverncoppicing.co.uk

East Anglia

Field Studies council
Epping Forest
Identifying trees without
leaves: 24th Jan
<http://www.field-studies-council.org/2010/courseinfo.aspx?id=89>

Information needed! Please email Tracy with events.

Wales

**Ask a Better Woods for
Wales management
planner all your want to
know:**
Meeting being planned near
Welshpool.

Woodland Skills Centre,
Wales
www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

Moelyci Centre
Bangor
Coppicing course
10th Jan.
<http://www.moelyci.org/>



Woodland archaeology summary

Delving into the history hidden in your woodland.

When I first started this series back in the summer of last year, I really had no idea how long it would take to get through everything I wanted to talk about. Here we are six months on and I feel it's time to reflect on what we've looked at and take a short break.

My approach has been to start from an interpretation of features found in woodlands – my headings have been 'Charcoal burners' platforms', 'Sawpits' and so on. All you can see is a flattened area, possibly with some black soil, or a slight depression with a bank on one side. Interpretation comes after you've found what you think is a man-made feature. An awful lot of the time I will walk around woodlands, look at a feature and say, it's man-made but I don't know what it was for. Archaeologists (and don't forget, I'm just a woodland owner) will spend a lot of time describing the feature and only later come up with an interpretation, usually with the word 'possibly' attached.

What I'm really trying to say is, do get someone else to look at any features you find in your wood to see if they can come up with an interpretation of their own. Now is the best time of the year to do this, while the vegetation is down and the trees aren't in leaf. Drop me an email at david@sewaf.org.uk and I'll be happy to come along. But I'd rather do it before the spring flowers are out – if bluebells are to be flattened I'd rather the local fauna did it, not me!

While you're waiting for me to get started on this series again, I've jotted down a list of those publications I've come across which I've found to be most help.

Woodland archaeology books

Specifically on woodland archaeology:

Rotherham I D, Jones M, Smith L & Handley C Eds. The Woodland Heritage Manual. Wildtrack Publishing, Sheffield 2008.

A very comprehensive manual. A possible criticism is their emphasis on ground flora. Probably a little too detailed for those with a passing interest, but good grounding if you wish to take the subject further. Quite expensive.

Woodland Archaeology in the North Wessex Downs AONB. A downloadable document from www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

A good general introduction to the subject. This is intended as a training manual, not as light reading, so some of the sections require a level of skill (for example, in using a compass) that the average person may not have. But it is free. Also available on the Forestry Commission website.

Morris, John. The Cultural Heritage of Chiltern Woods. Published by John Morris at the Chiltern Woodlands Project 2009.

A well-illustrated and very readable introduction suitable whatever your level of interest. Also a sensible price. Can be ordered from www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/woodlands_project.html

Bannister N & Bartlett D. Exploring your Woodlands History. c.2002

A fairly basic guide for community groups and woodland owners and based on Clowes Wood near Canterbury, Kent. Not an easy book to find as I don't think it was ever put on the market.

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Bannister N. The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East. 2007.

Another very readable guide to woodland archaeology with useful flow-charts to help with identification and recording forms. This was another booklet which didn't find its way onto the market, but it was produced for the AONBs in the south east, some of whom may have a copy.

Books which include elements of woodland archaeology:

Rackham, Oliver. Ancient Woodland, Castlepoint Press 2003

The definitive guide to ancient woodland and what you can find in it. Although based mainly on East Anglia, most of the book has a general application. Expensive, and still in print. His previous edition (1980, pub Edward Arnold) is still available second hand but is even more expensive.

Muir, Richard. The New Reading the Landscape, University of Exeter, 2000.

A good introduction and a very readable account of landscape archaeology in general.

Hoskins, W G. The Making of the English Landscape, Hodder & Stoughton 1955

One of the original books on the subject providing a general overview.

Cleere, H and Crossley, D. The Iron Industry of the Weald. Merton Priory Press 1995.

Now out of print but remains the only authoritative guide to the Wealden iron industry. Not a light read, and probably best borrowed first from a local library.

Hodgkinson, Jeremy. The Wealden Iron Industry, Tempus Press 2008

Not yet in print, but due out this spring. Should be a very good read with plenty of illustrations. Written by one of the few people who know the industry well.

Aston, M. Interpreting the Landscape. Batsford 1992.

Now a little dated, but adopts some valuable approaches to the subject. It was written before the Internet was widely in use. Loads of second-hand copies on various book dealers' sites.

Background reading of a more general nature

Wooldridge, S W. The Weald, The New Naturalist Series, Collins 1962

Brandon, Peter. The Kent and Sussex Weald, Phillimore 2003

Drewett P, Rudling D & Gardner, M. The South-East to AD1000, Longman 1988

Brandon P & Short B. The South-East from AD1000, Longman 1990

I'm a Welsh Woodland owner (Get me out of here?)

By Shane Logan

PART 1

When Tracy Pepler asked me to write this article I thought that it would be an easy task, then I remembered that in spite of more than 20 years involved with woodland management I too am still learning and hopefully always will – don't worry I will give up when I know it all!



O.K. first some ground rules in forest management gleaned from long years of toil in British forestry. Firstly trees are very hard to put back up when they have been felled and secondly forests have a nasty habit of growing – bear with me on this!

If you are considering acquiring a woodland or have been fortunate enough to be left one then congratulations! You are embarking on probably one of the most important voyages of personal discovery you are ever likely to make. You will love, hate, be embraced and immersed in your woodlands, they will hold some of your best and worst times within your lifetime and hopefully become a constant touchstone, somewhere that gives you a sense of being grounded no matter what life throws at you. You can grow all the trees you want for money but forests really do have a soul. As I enter the middle of my life I look at trees and woods I grew in my native Ulster and realise those cellulose strands and fibres hold real memories of the years gone by and years to come. Conversations nearly 20 years old come back as fresh as ever when I remember why we planted Oak there and Larch here; of some of the pranks the forest workers played on each other and sometimes on me; of the hours of quiet solitude away from a troubled land and life. Yes, my forests have always been a place of peace for me.

So here we are in Wales, you have woodland and you're scratching your head as to what next? O.K. Remember what I said about the two problems with woods and trees? With this in mind what is it you want to do? Is it for a bit of firewood, is it to get away from it all? Timber production, sporting, or a method of off-setting tax perhaps? Whatever it is, bearing in mind the two problems with forestry, then you will need a plan!

Why plan?

I look at many unplanned forests in the country, they've been left to get on with things as they see fit. Sometimes this is alright as long as you don't have any invasive species such as rhododendron or sycamore (personal opinion) for example. Fine also if the forest then breaks itself down into a natural ecological cycle with a good variety of mature, semi mature, immature and juvenile trees and associated flora and fauna occurring throughout. But really how often does this actually happen without some form of intervention? We can see in the world in which we live today that man is a great force for good and evil but does that mean that man is not / should not be a part of the ecological cycle – a force for good? Where man is part of the problem he is intrinsically part of the solution as well.

Without intervention often our woodlands at worst decay in age class, species composition and structure and at best maintain something of a weak structure.

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Even if you see minimal intervention as the way forward, does this not mean you need a plan – or at least something written down to support your legacy? Would you really want the woodland you have so carefully nurtured to be handed over at the end of your tenure to be neglected? I'm not for one minute commenting on wills and their legality, I'm a forester not a solicitor, but once you think of it as a legacy, your legacy you may want to provide a written record of how you managed it and how you would like to see it managed in the future. I'm now of course going to say 'written' as in spite of a decent working relationship with computers the written word still works for me! (Save it on a disk just in case too!)



What's in a plan?

Firstly let's establish who this plan is for? A forest management plan is like a contract between two parties, you and your woodland. You have a series of outcomes that you want, the woodland can provide those outcomes and in return you both promise to work together in a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership.

The next question is how long is a plan? Generally forest management plans are short term, up to five years but also give aspirations for the future up to say 10 years. That said I have seen continental management plans that gave aspirations for nearly 200 years, but let's not get carried away just yet!

Now decide what it is you want your woodland to do, given the range of species present, structure, local markets, your own end uses etc. Depending on the scale of your woodland this may mean breaking the area down into easily recognizable chunks (compartments) and perhaps even subdividing it further into smaller areas (sub-compartments). Don't be alarmed, compartments and sub-compartments are easy to sort out on a map – the point is they have to be obvious. For example, one of your areas is oak the other is ash, one becomes compartment 1 and the other 2. Perhaps these areas have different age or structures within them, say the Oak has an area of mature trees and a smaller area of younger trees, then they are simply sub-divided sub-compartments 1a and 1b. Why do this? So you can assign a different management regime to each one.

As a Management Planner for the Better Woodlands for Wales FC Wales Grants Scheme I'm often asked by owners do I have to do what the Commission tells me? The answer is an emphatic no! You make the choices of how you want to manage the woodland in consultation with a Management Planner and you manage your woods. Once the management plan is agreed between you, your Management Planner and FC (Wales) and contracts have been exchanged that is the point at which you are bound to carry out the agreed work for the next 5 years. But this is all work that you have agreed to improve and enhance your woodlands as part of your management plan. Obviously FC Grants favour native woodland improvement but the range available to assist you is frankly breathtaking and encompasses everything you would expect to find in forest management including managing your woods to enhance biodiversity.

In conclusion – if I have not bored all of you witless of course – trees are hard to put back when they are felled, so have a good reason for felling and some idea of what to do next, and woods have a nasty habit of growing unless you are content that the last time you visited your forest that stand of young oak trees probably needed some urgent pruning. When was that? 10 years ago! Forests are a great stealer of time.

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Unless you particularly like chaos then PLAN!

In part II I will be looking at the sort of outcomes you can expect from a plan and how to work with a Management Planner to get the best out of your woods – don't think of Management Plans as control think of them as an invaluable tool to enhance your legacy.

In closing I leave you all with this piece of wisdom I received many years ago from a woodsman when I asked about firewood he said *'son, you'll be heated at least five times before you ever get that on the fire, once when you cut it, once when you split it, once when you carry it to the trailer, once when you unload it and stack it in the shed and again when you carry it in to the house!'*

Welcome to the University of Woodland Management!

Wales and biodiversity

Did you know that Wales supports 75% of the total diversity of mosses and liverworts, 74% of the lichens and 80% of the rust fungi?

Would you like to know more?

http://www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=216&Itemid=3

http://www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=217&Itemid=3

Carmarthenshire biodiversity partnership are also looking for dormice

http://www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=218&Itemid=3

Photography competition: Snowdonia

The Snowdonia Mammal Group is running a photography competition. The best photos will be used in the Atlas, to be published in 2010, also the winner will appear on the front cover. We are looking for pictures of Welsh mammals, but also habitats, field signs and people surveying. Please send your pictures to the group at snowdoniamammals@aol.com. The Mammal Group will be able to use any pictures submitted, (not for profit), but will credit the photographer. Please pass this e-mail on to anyone that you think might be able to help.

Kate Williamson, Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Snowdonia National Park Authority

The Woodland Skills Centre in North-East Wales, only 30 minutes from Chester, runs a wide range of courses that might be of interest to people who own or are thinking of buying a small woodland. These include "Small Woodland Management", "Practical Woodland Tasks", "Growing Trees from Seed", "Home Chainsaw", "Hedgelaying", "Wire Fencing", "Gates, Steps and Stiles" and many coppice, greenwood and traditional crafts. There are also a range of Bushcraft courses and woodland holidays for families. The Centre is in the heart of the Clwydian Range AONB and offers free camping.

Details of all courses for 2010 can be seen at www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

Turkey fat dangerous to birds

The RSPB is warning people that cooked turkey fat is extremely dangerous to birds.

Many people put the leftover contents of Christmas dinner roasting tins outside, wrongly believing that it is as beneficial to birds as other fats like lard and suet. Suggestions that pouring the fat onto bird tables, or mixing it with seed in the belief it will give birds energy and nutrients, are unfounded and the wildlife charity is warning that it could actually kill garden birds.

Cooked turkey fat is completely unsuitable for birds for several reasons.

- It remains soft even when cooled, meaning it could smear onto birds' feathers and ruin their water-proofing and insulating qualities. Birds need clean, dry feathers to survive the cold and a layer of grease would make this virtually impossible.
- The softness of turkey fat once cooked also means it is impractical to make popular 'bird cake' where you mix fat with bird seeds, as it will not harden enough to hold its shape.
- The fat in roasting tins cannot be separated from other leftover elements such as meat juices. This concoction can go rancid very quickly, especially if left in a warm kitchen for a while before being put outside, and form an ideal breeding ground for salmonella and other food poisoning bacteria. Birds are prone to bacterial infections at this time of year as their defences are low and their energy levels depleted with the cold.
- Also, many people add other ingredients to a joint of meat before roasting including rubbing it liberally with salt in order to crisp the skin. High levels of salt are toxic to garden birds.

Kirsi Peck, RSPB Wildlife Adviser, says: "Using fat from roasting tins to feed to garden birds is one big no-no.

"Roasting tin fat will probably be mixed with lots of other juices which will go off very quickly and cause disease on bird tables. It could also damage birds' feathers, which are so important for keeping them healthy and warm. And any salt added to meat can have a devastating effect of its own. Christmas time always brings out the suggestion that it's a good idea and people want to do all they can to help wildlife, but in reality, they could be killing them with kindness."

The charity says that additional feeding at this time of year can be the difference between life and death, particularly for some of the smaller garden birds. Natural food will be in short supply as trees and bushes are covered in snow and frost and the ground is hard.

All meats fats are bad

The cooking juices from all other meats as well as turkey are equally as unsuitable for feeding to garden birds.

(Information from Jo Mullet, Swansea)





News from the woods

Mike and Tracy have finished most of their coppicing for the year, Heather and Rod have changed their management plan to suit their dormice, and David has been chasing fox hunters off his land!

Toby and Ali went on a paling course to brush up on their skills.



You can read more about it on the website

<http://www.swog.org.uk/news/paling-course-by-toby/>

An update on our progress with grants for restoring the hedge across the top of our ancient woodbank....

After much soul searching, contacting the RFS and Natural England, I contacted the West Sussex Countryside Ranger (Geraldine Fewster) who put me in touch with Julie Bolton (Trees and Woodlands Officer for West Sussex County Council). She came out to have a look at the project and has offered to give a grant to buy 600 native hedgerow plants to be planted early next year (if it stops raining long enough to be able to the groundwork!!).

Others may find their County Councils helpful too.
Stephanie

Reading

The woodland trust has written a brief guide for those who own ancient woodland. You can download it online.

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/why-woods-matter/protection/ancient-woodland-guide/Pages/guide-ancient-woodland.aspx>

Snow

And of course we have all had snow! Greyman sent in some fabulous pictures.



See more of his pictures on our website

<http://www.swog.org.uk/news/snow-days>

facebook

www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523

The Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) is on facebook. You can also become a SWOG blog fan and receive feed from the site when new articles go up.