

No.43 Spring 2017 £5.00

# Living Woods

*Magazine*

## The Building Issue



**Plus: Wood Fairs 2017,  
New Woodland Awards**



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## Editor's comment

What can you build? The answer depends on location – England, Scotland and Wales each have different options and restrictions for woodland builds – and we hope our Woodland Shelter pages help lead you to answers.

Woodland activity tends to go uncelebrated (except here at *Living Woods*, of course, we love your stories). Not any more. The new annual Woodland Awards launch this month on p 17. Nominate someone or a group you admire. Nominate yourself. Just do it before the end of July.

Longer days are here. We look forward to meeting you at wood fairs and other gatherings this spring.

Let us know what you think.



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## One In...

Wood-botherers, take heed. There's a great new spoon-carving event, The Great Scottish Spoon Hoolie, 19 – 21 May in the woods near Tir na Nog, Stirlingshire. Workshop teachers so far include Jill Swan, Martin Hazel, Adrian Lloyd, Jane Mickelborough and Werner 'sexy spoons' Fuchs. Tickets are on sale now: [www.thegreatscottishspoonhoolie.co.uk](http://www.thegreatscottishspoonhoolie.co.uk)

## ... One Out...

The Cranborne Chase Woodfair of 2016, held at Breamore House near Fordingbridge in Hampshire, proved to be the last one. After ten years of what their director called 'a truly fabulous event', the team has decided to focus its energies elsewhere. It's sad to see this one end. That said, someone should buy its domain name: [woodfair.org.uk](http://woodfair.org.uk).

## ...And One Last Hurrah

The European Woodworking Show, 16 – 17 September at Cressing Temple Barns in Essex is likely to be the final EWS ever. The twin pressures of the show outgrowing the medieval barns and the advance of internet shopping make it impossible for the show to continue in its present state. Though if you know of a venue that might partner with the EWS, do get in touch.. [europeanwoodworkingshow.eu](http://europeanwoodworkingshow.eu)

# Call for Vigilance: Sweet Chestnut Blight

Alert. Sweet chestnut blight, caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, has been confirmed on two trees near Exeter in Devon, one of them in a woodland. Andy Hall, the Forestry Commission England's Tree Health Team leader, says, 'We have surveyed sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees within 1km of the affected trees, and found no further signs of it. We are now carrying out a targeted survey of sweet chestnut trees within 5km. We are also tracing and inspecting sweet chestnut plans at other planting sites supplied by the nursery which supplied plants to the affect woodland.' Movement of sweet chestnut and oak material from woodland and business sites within the 5km area is prohibited until further notice. If you spot it, please report it promptly to the Forestry Commission via its Tree Alert reporting tool at [www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert). Full information is available at [www.forestry.gov.uk/chestnutblight](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chestnutblight).



Crown copyright/Forestry Commission

# May the Firs Be With You



Sportsman-turned-actor Spencer Wilding (l in photo) celebrated his role as Darth Vader (m) in the most recent Star Wars film, *Rogue One*, by commissioning a sculpture of the evil Supreme Commander from fellow Welshman, the chainsaw artist Ian Murray (r). With just six days to complete the sculpture before the Christmas deadline, Murray employed his favourite Makita chainsaws to create the work of art that now stands in Wilding's garden. We hope there's room for a big, gold version if Wilding gets lucky at the Oscars sometime. [makitauk.com](http://makitauk.com). [ianmurraychainsawcarving.co.uk](http://ianmurraychainsawcarving.co.uk)

# Urban Forestry Event

TPBE3 is the catchy acronym for the third triennial Trees, People and the Built Environment two-day conference on 5 – 6 April in Birmingham. By looking at success stories from around the world, a gathering of international experts will demonstrate how innovative planning focused on green space in our cities can improve traffic infrastructure and sustain the health of communities and people. We hope it's good for the trees, as well. TPBE3 is hosted and organised by the Institute of Chartered Foresters. For info: [charteredforesters.org/tbpe3](http://charteredforesters.org/tbpe3)

## Chile's on Fire

The forest fires that burst into flame in hot, dry conditions near Valparaiso in Chile just after New Year's Day are still burning, costing at least 11 lives and devouring more than 2,500 square miles. Some striking images of scorched land were caught by NASA's Landsat 8 on 24 January 2017 using shortwave infrared, near-infrared and green light to distinguish burnt areas in brown from unscarred land in green.



© NASA Earth Observatory

## Spoonfest Tix Sales Alert

All spoon carvers and Spoonfest fans: Be poised to act in April. Tickets for Spoonfest 2017 go on sale that month – date tba – and they always sell out in days. The annual spoonalooza is a highlight of the spoon carver's diary, with a myriad of courses (paid) and demonstrations (free) taught by great carvers, as well as 'lots of sharp tools to try out for free, spoon gallery for inspiration, free camping on site, local beer sold for charity,' and more. [spoonfest.co.uk](http://spoonfest.co.uk)

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## Housing for Forestry Workers

Like the housing crisis in London and the southeast, which receives masses of media coverage, a serious lack of affordable accommodation for forest workers causes daily hardship. At last year's APF, it was a big topic of conversation in the Forest Workers Zone.

'It's an issue across all sectors of land workers, and if we want to bring more woodland into management it's something we've got to deal with,' says Toby Allen, organiser of the APF Forest Workers Zone and owner of Say It With Wood in Herefordshire.

'From the feeling at the APF, we are forming a group to work on housing for forestry workers, to look at ways the industry can find solutions to the issue. The main issue seems to be that people instantly think of buying a wood to build a house on when they think of housing for forestry workers. While this is one solution, it is only for those who can afford such luxury. Most new entrants to the forest industry don't have the income to buy land, and are either living with parents, or hidden in a static caravan, truck, yurt etc on farms hoping the council don't find out.'

As this issue of *Living Woods* was going to press, a 'scoping meeting' was convening at The Green Wood Centre in Coalbrookdale to begin what we hope will be a national conversation leading to real solutions.



geophotos / Alamy Stock Photo

## Even Wild Women Need Funding

Tortworth Arboretum is repeating and expanding last year's successful Go Wild Women, a ten-week programme for a dozen women in recovery from alcohol misuse and is launching a crowdfunding campaign to support it. *LW* readers are familiar with Tortworth's excellent outreach to people struggling with addiction and mental illness (see *LW* 39). The Go Wild Women

programme offers woodland skills, outdoor cooking, tool use and social support. Some of last year's Wild Women are returning this year as peer mentors – a very positive development. For info about the Arboretum: [tortwortharboretum.org](http://tortwortharboretum.org).

To donate: [crowdfunder.co.uk](http://crowdfunder.co.uk), then search 'Go Wild Women'

# Brookhouse Wood is Building

by Will St Clair



**W**e've been building and growing at Brookhouse Woods this winter in preparation for the teaching season. Right now, we are a good part of the way through construction of our new roundwood 'tree cabins', cabins

with elements of treehouses. One is almost completed and the other two close behind. I have to say that it has been hard going building in the woods throughout winter. It is cold, everything is wet all the time and my relationship with mud has become deeply personal!

When we set out to build our new structures,



everyone told us to expect a long battle with the planning department, so we armed ourselves with a pre-application and a lot of patience. Spending time with the planning officer on his visit and letting him see how much passion we had for the project seemed to really get him on side. Thanks to a drive to increase tourism in our area and a genuine need to improve the accommodation for our course members, Herefordshire council turned out to be supportive and helpful. It's not the usual outcome, but planning permission came much quicker than we expected. Rather than biding our time, we found ourselves rushing to make preparations for the build.

Before we could begin, we laid some stone on the grass track through the woods. We won't be driving on there much, but getting anything down the track during winter is impossible so the stone was a necessity. We also made use of the track to bury the fresh water supply from the farm's borehole, and to bury the conduit for the cable to the solar panels.

**“We armed ourselves with a pre-application and a lot of patience”**

I kicked myself for not checking the water before filling in the trench. There was a kink in the pipe I only discovered when I connected the water. Finding a kink in a 700 metre pipe buried two feet underground is a daunting prospect I can tell you! Luckily it only required a few hours of agony with a shovel.

The building work itself has been an amazing learning experience, watching Rudi ([www.roundwoodcraft.co.uk](http://www.roundwoodcraft.co.uk)) and his friend Rick build the frames for the tree cabins with expert precision. The results look beautiful. Now timber framers Adam and Emma (and Granny the chicken!) have pitched up next to our caravan and will be our neighbours for the build.

I can't wait for the spring to arrive so we can decorate and then officially open our new roundwood tree cabins. And I equally await the drying up of the mud! We even built a small timber frame porch on our caravan to house muddy clothes, but it works only so well. Our little collie dog, a considerate soul, has sponge-like fur that always brings a good portion of the outside world into our home.

We're also building our course offerings this year. This summer, alongside my own chair making, stool making and spoon carving courses, I will be running two bowl turning courses with Yoav Elkayam (the first of which has already sold out), an ash splint basket making course with renowned craftsman Steve Tomlin (we are also cooking up a scything course for next year) and a Kuksa carving course with upstate New York based carver Alex Yerks.



Will supervises the framing work

Each one of these master green woodworkers is someone whose work inspired me when I first started on this path. I cannot express how delighted I am that they are now my friends and colleagues. It's a testament to the inclusive nature of this craft

of ours. I am extremely grateful to the people who have helped guide me with their work and dedication to keep traditional skills alive. It is a privilege to be able to invite some of them to teach in Brookhouse Woods.

[willstclair.co.uk](http://willstclair.co.uk)

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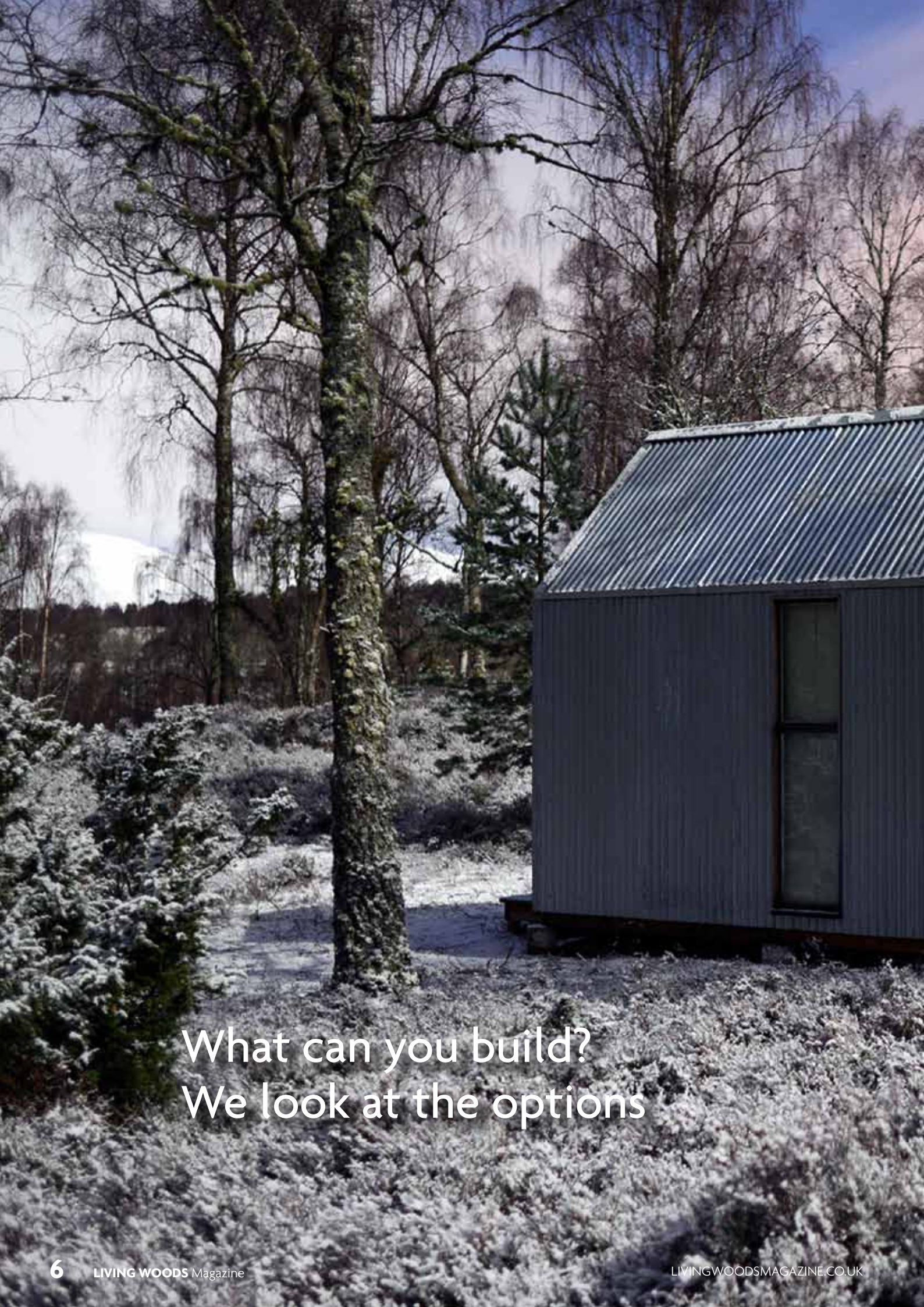
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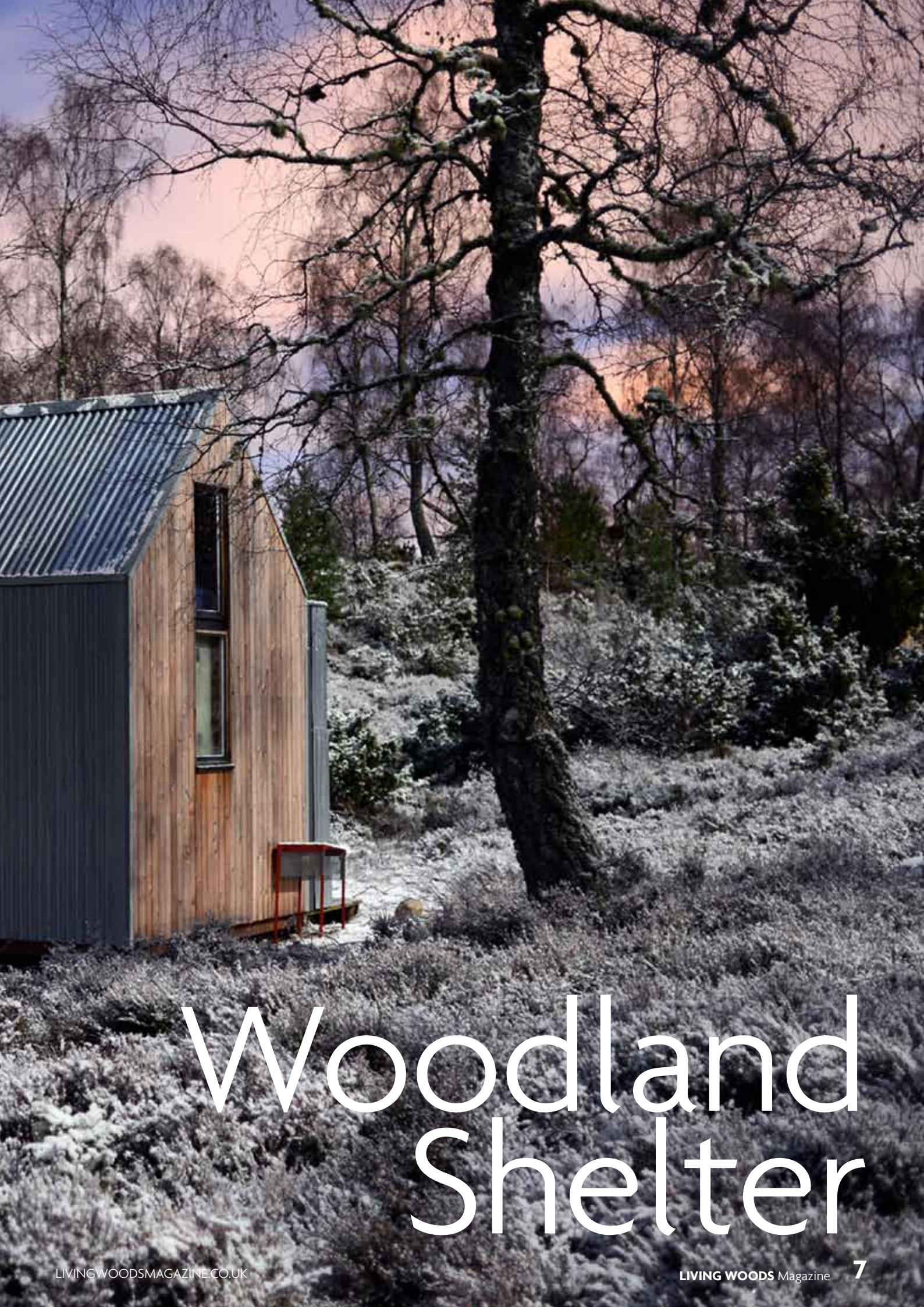
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# What can you build? We look at the options





# Woodland Shelter

# Scotland's Revolution

**Torquil Varty** asks What's not to like about hutting?

**N**orway, with its population of 5.2m, is peppered with nearly 400,000 huts, a genuine and intrinsic part of Norwegian culture. Scotland, however, with an almost equal population, has fewer than a thousand huts in woodlands for its citizens to enjoy. But that may have begun to change. Word in the wood has it that we could be on the verge of a hutting revolution. Or, perhaps, a more sedate evolution.

A hut is simply a small building in the countryside. In the language of the 2014 Scottish Planning Policy, which encourages local authorities to consider the construction of huts, a hut is

'A simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (i.e. not a principal residence); having an internal floor area of no more than 30m<sup>2</sup>; constructed from low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace at the end of its life. Huts may be built singly or in a group.'

In these increasingly turbulent times of instant communication, twitter feeds, narcissistic celebrity culture, media saturation of global events, and the mockery that is modern day politics, more and more people are looking back to nature as a means of reconnecting, searching for an antidote to 21st century lifestyles. It is as true now as it was nearly a hundred years ago that the destination we seek is somewhere out of the city and into the country.

The hutting movement in Scotland began as a working class phenomenon of the early 20th century. Small holiday huts were built close to urban centres, though – as with a lot of land ownership issues in Scotland – the legal possession of many of these sites would be contentious. Industrial production was at its height and the scale of toxic pollution was a clear and present danger to health. In 1918, ex-servicemen were granted camping rights at Carbeth near Glasgow and it was here that a community of around 100 huts developed, though it was not until 2008 that they were able to own the land the huts were built on. Carbeth, now with a thriving community of 140 huts, is the oldest continuously occupied hutting site and is the vanguard of the Scottish hutting movement.

These days, the acquisition of huts has become aspirational for working and middle class alike. There are more opportunities available now to buy small acreages of woodland both by individual owners or groups of people in partnership. People buying woodland assume the stewardship of the land, investing time and energy for little monetary gain.

*Previous page: Inshriach Bothy, part of The Bothy Project network, designed by Iain MacLeod and Bobby Niven, image by Johnny Barrington. [thebothyproject.org](http://thebothyproject.org)*



*Hut with covered logstore*

Torquil Varty



*Cormac's hybrid log cabin hut, Norwegian-Slovakian vernaculars, in mixed piece en piece, corner notched construction*

Cormac Seekings



Ninian Stuart's hut

Falkland Centre for Stewardship



A hut for them to sit in and take stock is a natural extension of this woodland ownership. It is also a practical place to store tools and to shelter from the elements of the Scottish climate. As more people buy small woods, so new and informal communities develop, sharing stories and labour and educating future generations.

Richard Lochhead SNP, the former Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment, says,

'A renewed hutting culture in Scotland would be hugely beneficial because it would encourage people, particularly in our towns and cities, to connect with the countryside and our spectacular natural environment. This can only help the nation's health and wellbeing.'

Thanks to the campaigning group Reforesting Scotland, and its active and informative One Thousand Huts campaign, it appears there is the political will to define a new resurgence in hutting and perhaps to redefine the parameters of land ownership in Scotland.

More than half of Scotland is owned by fewer than 500 people, a staggering statistic by any measure. According to the academic and land reformer, Jim Hunter, this equates to 'the most concentrated pattern of land ownership in the developed world'.

The 2016 Land Reform Act has made bold moves in support of community buyouts with the setting up of a new Scottish land fund. Tenant farmers are to be given improved rights, there is to be greater transparency of land ownership through a public register and deer stalking and large estates will no longer be exempt from the business tax rate. However, there has been concerted resistance on the part of large landowners. Legislation for a land cap restricting the amount of land that one individual can own and a move to halt ownership through offshore tax havens were both voted down by vested interests.

This question of land ownership is inextricably linked to the success or failure of the nascent hutting movement. Efforts by companies such as woodlands.co.uk to redraw the map of land ownership will go some way to redress the balance, however, to a large extent, it will be the ability of community-led efforts to determine whether we can emulate our Norwegian cousins in reclaiming ownership of our landscape or not. But our aspirations should be not necessarily to mirror the Norwegian culture, but to carve out a uniquely Scottish take on hut and woodland ownership. The economics of woodland ownership automatically excludes a swathe of the population from enjoying the self-evident benefits of time spent within a wood. Therefore it falls back on local communities, with the backing of local government, to provide the leadership and creativity required to galvanise citizens from across the economic spectrum to be inspired by what is around us.

Every small woodland that is sold in Scotland chips away at the status quo, albeit slowly. But with a change in the demographics of land ownership, this second period of the hutting revolution is, I think, set on firm foundations and has the capacity to evolve into a strong and vibrant culture. What's not to like about that then?

[thousandhuts.org](http://thousandhuts.org) [reforestingscotland.org](http://reforestingscotland.org)

**Torquil Varty** is a professional hedgelay and fencing contractor and is the Northern Scotland agent for [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk).

# Gimme Shelter

**Carlton Boyce** on sleeping in woodlands under cover

**T**he only thing as pleasurable as spending your days in the woods is to spend your nights there as well. Whether you need to stay out working late to get a job finished or simply fancy sleeping in your own woodland, the question of woodland shelter must be addressed.

Of course, while the UK has no laws to protect your right to camp in the wild, there are plenty that control what you can and can't build on your own land (see feature pages 14 – 15), but assuming you've followed the guidelines, your new shelter will fall into one of two categories: temporary or permanent.

The simplest – and very temporary – way to get a good night's sleep in the woods is to use a bivy bag. I have two: the first is an ex-Army Gore-Tex affair that I picked up for a song many years ago and is still going strong; the second is a more traditional canvas bedroll. My Solo 2 from Outhaus is much cheaper than its rivals, but seems to be at least as well made and it shrugs off all but the most inclement weather.

One step up from the bivy bag, a simple tarpaulin strung between two trees will keep you reasonably dry, and if you add a hammock you can let Mother Nature rock you gently to sleep. Proadventure sell cotton tarps for just over £100, but with care they should outlast you and your children.

Canvas might be heavy (my Solo 2 weighs 6kgs plus a sleeping bag) but it is almost indestructible and while synthetic materials might outperform their natural rivals under some conditions, around campfires a canvas or cotton bed roll is a much safer bet.

An aside: Tents are all very well but they can be a tad too insulating for me. Nothing beats waking up in the night and feeling a breeze on your face as you gaze up at the stars until you fall back to sleep. As Prince Harry said: 'I've come all the way to Africa to be free. I'm taking my bedroll and I'm sleeping by the fire.'

Simpler yet is a lean-to, and one can be erected in an emergency in less than an hour. Building a campfire on the open side will keep you warm even in sub-zero temperatures as the heat is reflected onto your (hopefully sleeping) body.

But perhaps you need something more permanent. My solution was to build a shelter, the backbone of which is four heavy round gateposts sunk into the ground to form a basic frame. I covered two of the sides to protect us from the prevailing weather, while a roll-up canvas on the front



©Carlton Boyce

shields us from driving rain and sleet. The fourth side is open to face the all-night campfire. I've put in a raised floor to keep us dry and warm.

Digging the holes for the gateposts was the hardest part. I found if you tamp the soil down properly you don't need to use concrete to set the uprights, which saves money and effort. Just add a few inches of soil at a time, tamping it down firmly with a stout stick or metal tamper before adding another couple of shovels' worth. Then keep filling and tamping, checking from time to time that everything is still vertical. You'll end up with a post that is completely solid and utterly eco-friendly. Both my farmer brother-in-law and my local Countryside Service do it this way and if it's good enough for the professionals, then it's good enough for me.

The clever ones among you will build the whole shelter from what's growing onsite. An Alaskan mill or similar would soon produce some wavy-edge boards



to clad your shelter, but even if you have to buy some featherboard and posts from a local sawmill it shouldn't cost more than a couple of hundred pounds in all and can be built with a few simple hand tools.

I screwed my shelter together, but nails would be cheaper and work just as well. The roof comprises a framework of 4" x 1" wood, closed in with sheets of Onduline because I had some lying around. Sheets of plywood would be almost as good as long as you paint or varnish them well. My uncomplicated shelter took less than a day to build and it could be removed in half that time if necessary.

But even my simple shelter is far more sophisticated than it needs to be. Cutting down a few saplings and joining them together at the top to form a teepee shape and then covering the sides with brush would form a reasonably weatherproof shelter.

Really adventurous folk will build a proper log cabin

from their own wood. It's not a terribly difficult job and an onsite sawmill like the Logosol M8 would make short work of squaring three of the sides. A simple jog would ensure perfect chinks to lock it all together. A lot of hard work and a little care should result in something that will still be standing in a couple of hundred years' time.

Inspiration can be found online or in the wonderful book *Your Cabin in the Woods* by Conrad E. Meinecke, first published in 1915 and reissued last year by Black Dog & Leventhal, which is stuffed full of inspiration and tips, including getting those tricky floor-to-wall and wall-to-ceiling joints strong and tight.

But please try not to sweat the details or think too big, at least initially. The important thing is to get out there and build something, anything. You can refine and hone as you go along and the only way to truly understand what you need is to go and live in the woods for a night or two and see what works - and what doesn't!

■ Proadventure of Llangollen is my favourite outdoor shop. They can be contacted on 01978 860605 or via their website [www.proadventure.co.uk](http://www.proadventure.co.uk)

■ The Solo 2 bedroll can be bought online at [www.outhausoutdoors.com](http://www.outhausoutdoors.com)

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# One Planet for All

The One Planet Scheme offers hope to would-be woodland dwellers in Wales, by **Nancy Wood**

**W**ales led the way. In 2011, the Assembly passed 'One Wales: One Planet, The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government' to allow strictly controlled, extremely low impact development in rural Wales. Since then, a slow trickle of determined souls have applied for permission to build homes and create self-sustaining lives in the Welsh countryside. So far, 23 One Planet applications have gained approval. But it's not a path for the faint-hearted.

If you divided all of the earth's usable land between the world's current population, you would find that there is about 1.8ha of land per person. But we are gobbling up the earth's resources at a rate of nearly 5ha per person, or more than twice the sustainable level. Those who choose to live the One Planet life reduce their consumption to reflect that we have only this one planet to sustain us. In his book *Birth of an Ecovillage* about the creation of the Lammas Ecovillage in Wales, Paul Wimbury calls it 'walking lightly on the earth'. Former Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing Jane Davidson referred to One Planet adherents as 'guardians of the earth'.

Commitment to the lifestyle is the first requirement for success, even before land is purchased or planning applications are drafted. If that is your dream, you will find a growing collection of places to turn to information, advice (both professional and personal) and support. (See below.) Two of the best-known One Planet developments are villages – Lammas and Nant-y-Cwm – but there is nothing in the guidelines that precludes individual dwellings.

Time is the second requirement. For Salena Walker and Christopher Richards' successful application in Carmarthenshire, the couple spent two years doing research, observing their land, planning, and writing their application – which ran to 55 pages – before applying. The application included management plans, details of their food consumption, budgets for five years, business plans, descriptions of their qualifications to lead such a life. Their plot of land is about one-third woodland, from which they are constructing and heating their home. They draw water from their own wells, live off-grid, are restoring their woodland to broadleaf, and are committed forest gardeners. With no local objections, the application sailed through and was approved in eight months.

The One Planet regulations stipulate that

buildings are at least carbon neutral through their whole lives – you can find plans online for buildings that produce 'negawatts' – and dwellers must undertake land-based activities to meet their minimum requirements of income, food, energy and waste assimilation within less than five years. Plans must also enhance biodiversity, use renewable energy, improve soil conditions and curate cultural heritage.

Some applicants have found a final hurdle among their new neighbours who object to One Planet applications for a variety of reasons. Some councilors and planning officials are less than convinced by the whole idea, even though it is government policy, and introduce objections that must be countered.

But if living on your own land close to nature, eating food you've grown yourself and joining a growing community of 'guardians' is your dream, the One Planet scheme may be the blueprint for your future.

### Resources:

*The One Planet Life* by David Thorpe is a must-read and [theoneplanetlife.com](http://theoneplanetlife.com) is packed with practical information. [www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk](http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk) [lammas.org.uk](http://lammas.org.uk) [www.bio regional.com/oneplanetliving/](http://www.bio regional.com/oneplanetliving/)



The Dale family home, Lammas Ecovillage

# Plan to Build

**Carlton Boyce's** primer on planning law in woodlands

**T**he law on erecting a building in a wood or forest is simple: building a permanent structure is classed as 'development', which means that you need planning permission to do it. If you plunge ahead without gaining it then you risk having to remove it if someone spots it and reports you.

That's the bad news. But there is good news, because if you really need a shelter, then chances are you'll be able to build one. The law makes certain exemptions under something called 'permitted development', a series of exemptions granted by Parliament rather than the local authority.

Permitted development in this case allows for the erection of some types of building provided they are 'reasonably necessary for forestry purposes'. Your application under permitted development will be less onerous than a full-blown planning application would have been and should fairly straightforward – as long as you understand what you're asking for and why.

The term 'forestry purposes' allows for a broad definition, which means that the majority of readers should be able to slot one or more of their activities in under that umbrella. For example, standard woodland jobs like thinning, pruning and planting trees, clearing undergrowth and widening tracks would all count as 'forestry purposes'. So would creating a more biodiverse environment by digging a pond, creating open glades, and removing alien species. And, of course, any commercial activity like cutting and selling firewood, as long as it is a genuine business rather than being done for friends and family, would also qualify as a 'forestry purpose'.

So the storage shed where you keep your tools and safety equipment would probably be allowed under permitted development, but a holiday chalet wouldn't. You might even be able to bring a caravan into your woods and use that for storage and the odd overnight stay, providing you can demonstrate that it is necessary and that you spend no more than 28 days a year sleeping in it.

However, even this isn't a hard-and-fast rule. Longer periods of habitation might also be



Roger Bamber/Alamy Stock Photo

permissible if they are necessary for you to undertake seasonal work. The trouble is that the even something as simple as a definition of what comprises a season has yet to be definitively expressed in law, with the High Court merely ruling that it amounts to a period that is 'less than a year'.

So there is considerable scope for leeway and the key, as with so many brushes with authority, is preparation. Being able to demonstrate that





or the relevant county Countryside Service, they might be able to help, to point you in the direction of funding and even assist you with your grant application.

A management plan will help you convince your local planning authority that you are serious about the work you are doing, and that your storage shed isn't a thinly veiled excuse to pop a small house on there – that's what they fear most.

You might be lucky enough to have bought a wood that already has a shed or building on it, in which case you may be able to claim retrospective planning permission for it. If it has been there for four consecutive years or more then it may be eligible for a Lawful Development Certificate.

The key to all of this is to talk to your local planning department. Almost all are chronically understaffed but are still more than happy to help. Being well prepared and having a good understanding of the law and what you're asking for will go a long way to getting them on your side.

There is a very useful online planning portal ([www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk)) that covers England and Wales, which not only gives a lot of very helpful advice but also allows you to start and view your application online.

While every care has been taken in writing this article, I am not a lawyer and nothing in here should be construed as being the definitive legal position. Lawyers are a necessity at times like these, and you should seek advice from one if you are in any doubt as to the legality of what you would like to do.



flab istr / Alamy Stock Photo

you are managing your woodland professionally is much more likely to lead to a positive result when you apply to erect a shed under permitted development than a slap-dash, haphazard application made on a whim.

So now might be the time to draw up the management plan you've been meaning to write. Professional help is available, possibly free of charge. If you talk to the Forestry Commission

If you live in a National Park, the Broads, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a conservation area or a World Heritage Site then the law is considerably more complex.

A very good summary of the law can be found at:  
[www.woodlands.co.uk/owning-a-wood/sheds-leaflet.pdf](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/owning-a-wood/sheds-leaflet.pdf)

# Landmark Advice Gets New Format

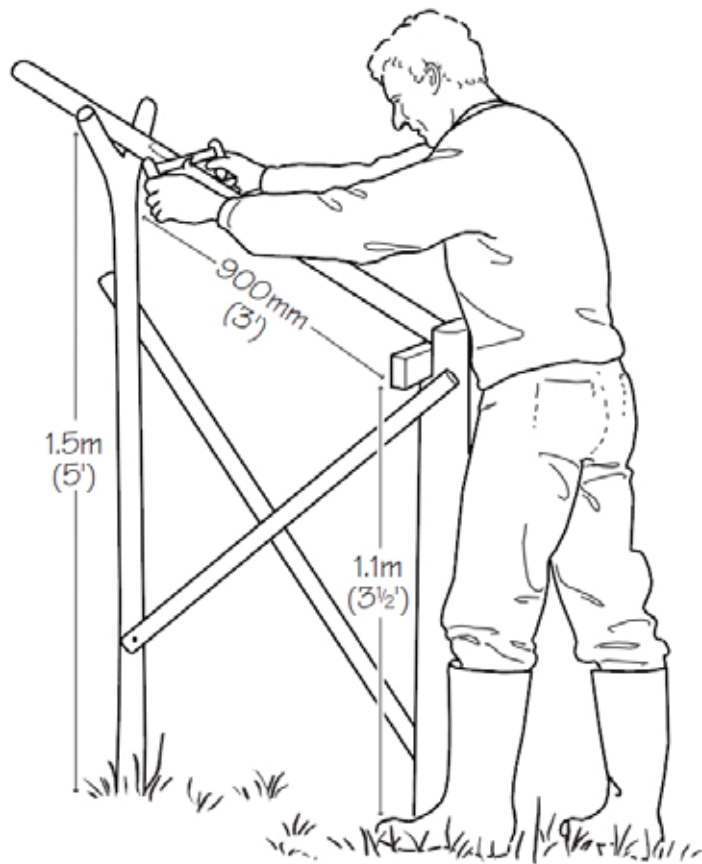
The Conservation Volunteers' practical handbooks are going online

If you've ever used one of The Conservation Volunteers' (TCV) handbooks for guidance and technical information, you know how useful they are and how perfectly pitched both to direct the amateur and prompt the veteran on how to create a new woodland, propagate trees, lay a hedge or a footpath, look after tools and more. Since their first publication in the 1970's and throughout their various updates over the years, the TCV books have been regarded as some of the definitive guides in caring for woodlands and green space.

Until now, the guides have appeared in print form only. From this spring – estimated launch date is April – they will be available digitally online.

With more than 1,000 pages of information laid out clearly in step-by-step format, the online versions of the handbooks will be complete, exactly like the latest former print editions. In addition, there will be 2,000 new illustrations as well as clickable links connecting information and references – no more jumping from one handbook to another. The books will enjoy another benefit of digital publication: they can be updated regularly to keep pace with the latest standards, changes in best working practices and material and labour prices. Over time, videos and photographs may be added as well.

The subscription fee of £15 per year (including VAT) or £7.50 per year for members of TCV's Community network is less than the current cost of a single handbook with postage, and gives unlimited access to all ten handbooks. If you sign up now for launch announcements, you'll receive a 20% discount on



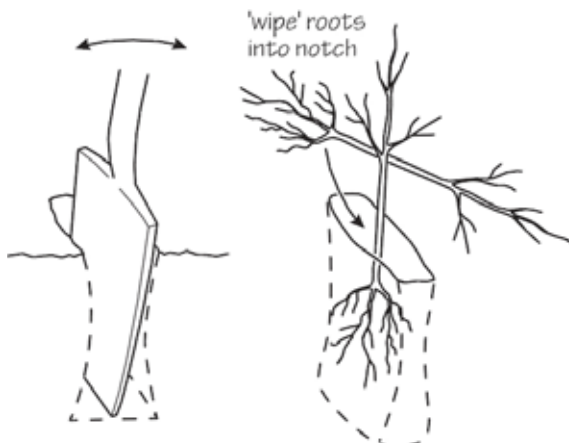
your first year's subscription.

TCV is a UK-wide community volunteering charity whose projects foster health and wellbeing in its volunteers and make lasting changes for the better in outdoor spaces. More than 11,000 people volunteer through TCV and more than 18,000 people participate in their employment and training schemes each year.

[www.theconservationhandbooks.com](http://www.theconservationhandbooks.com) or [facebook.com/TCVHandbooks](https://www.facebook.com/TCVHandbooks)



Are you a photographer? You could win lifetime access to the TCV's Conservation Handbooks website, but you'll have to move quickly. Post a photo on the subject of 'Wildlife in the community' to TCV's facebook page by midnight 17 March 2017 with the tag #TCVComp. They'll post their choice of the best online and the two with the most 'likes' by 31 March will walk away with the prize. Go to [facebook.com/TheConservationVolunteers/](https://www.facebook.com/TheConservationVolunteers/). Good luck!



## ANNOUNCEMENT

# Woodlands Awards

A new set of annual awards is being launched this year and, like the Oscars, there are prizes in all categories, by **Antony Mason** (of [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk))

**A**s every issue of *Living Woods* testifies, wonderful and innovative things are taking place in the woodlands sector all the time. But there has never been an awards scheme that celebrates – and gives due recognition to – all this endeavour.

It is a failing that [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk) is seeking to redress by creating the annual Woodlands Awards. The first awards will be announced this year – and you could be a winner!

### Awards categories

There will be fourteen awards altogether, divided into two groups: awards for individuals (woodland owners and users) and awards for enterprises (woodland organisations, businesses, educational programmes and so on). See the list in the box below.

The categories of the awards have been chosen to promote best practice, to reward good work and innovation, and to inspire others to follow.

### How to enter

Each of the categories will have its own criteria for entry. Some (such as the Woodland Photography Award) will depend on individuals submitting their own entries. Some (such as Woodland Courses) will depend on personal recommendations. Others still (such as Woodland Blogs) will depend on a mixture of these.

■ Deadline for submissions: 31 July 2017.

### Winners

A panel of judges will draw up short lists of the best entries, and then award the prizes. There may be a number of winners in each category: all entries judged to be of equally high merit will be awarded a First Prize (i.e. no Second, Third).

■ Prizes to be announced in early August 2017. Please email [antony@woodlands.co.uk](mailto:antony@woodlands.co.uk) if you know a candidate (it can be you!) for any of the awards.

### Prizes

The prizes will be a mixture of award certificates, selected woodland books and woodland equipment and/or tools – and recognition!

### Watch this space!

A full description of each of the awards will be posted on [www.woodlands.co.uk](http://www.woodlands.co.uk) in March 2017. This will include details about each of the award categories, how to enter or how to recommend a winner, and the basis on which the award will be judged.



Dan Adliberate

### The Woodlands Awards sponsored by [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk)

Prizes will be awarded to the best in each of the following categories:

#### 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

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CHARITY

# DART to the Rescue

A team of volunteer arborists brings relief to disaster-hit communities, armed with expertise, chainsaws and a generous spirit, by **Mike Metcalfe**



*DART team member assesses damage from Cyclone Pam*



**T**yphoon Haiyan was the most powerful storm to make landfall in recorded history. When the storm hit the Philippines in 2013, it left a trail of devastation and heartache in its wake, destroying more than a million homes and killing more than 6,000 people. In the aftermath, I led a small team of Cornish volunteers to deliver shelter and reconstruction aid.

On our arrival, the Deputy Mayor asked us to assist residents of a hard hit coastal town whose homes had been destroyed and who had taken shelter in the local school. Not that the school provided much in the way of shelter! The classrooms that hadn't been destroyed were missing their roofs and the much-loved school mostly resembled a war zone. Authorities wanted to move the displaced families out of the building in order to start the clear-up operation, but the grounds were so full of fallen trees and structural debris that, at first, there wasn't enough space to erect so much as a single tent.

Like many in the region, the school had actively encouraged the growth of trees in its grounds. The head teacher's husband, himself a former pupil at the school, explained to me that tropical fruits like the mango, rambutan and lanzones provided a valuable source of nutrition for generations of children. 'I have so many happy memories of playing in those trees as a child and bringing down fruit for my younger brothers,' he told me. 'It's very sad to see them all destroyed.'

It was true that very few had escaped the storm unscathed. Those that weren't lying on the ground were badly damaged, with broken limbs and branches hanging dangerously overhead. The lifting of roots had fractured the water supply pipe and all the drains were blocked with debris, causing extensive flooding across the school grounds. Contaminated floodwater surrounding so many displaced people with no proper sanitation presented a very real health risk.

Our first priority: clear fallen timber to help drain the standing water and create space for tents and emergency shelter. To accomplish that we needed chainsaws! And even more importantly, we needed someone who understood the potential dangers associated to working on windblown trees.

As fortune had it, we had a professional arborist on our team, Gary Bailey of Glendale Services in Truro. After procuring a handful of chainsaws and protective clothing, Gary delivered a few lessons to us in chainsaw handling and, with words of warning about the tremendous forces of compression and tension ringing in our ears, we got to work.

In such a situation, 'cleared space' is a valuable commodity. Word spread quickly and soon other aid agencies began pulling up at the entrance to the school, asking permission to set up operations in the school grounds. By the time my team's focus shifted to the reconstruction of classrooms, our school

# CHARITY



Chris Weissenborn christpics@gmail.com

grounds had become a recovery hub for the entire community: a UNHCR aid storage facility, a medical clinic, a soup kitchen, food aid distribution centre and child trauma counseling service.

In the end, so much of the deployment had been about trees that on the flight home, I couldn't resist pulling Gary's leg about how he'd volunteered to come to the Philippines to do something different from his regular arborist work in his spare time.

'Seriously though,' I added. 'It's a pity we didn't have a team of your guys from Glendale out there. They'd have done all that clearance work in a quarter of the time it took us.'

A few weeks later, Gary called me up to tell me that he'd floated the idea of an arborists' disaster relief organisation via the online trade forum 'ArbTalk' and had received an immediate and positive response from others in the industry. Many, it seemed, had watched pictures of natural disasters unfolding on their television screens and thought, 'Look at all those trees! I've got the knowledge and experience to help in that situation!'

Convinced that such an organisation must already exist, we searched the internet and spoke to some of the largest international aid agencies – turned out it didn't!

'So what do you do if a vital aid convoy is held up by a fallen tree blocking the road?' I asked a senior manager from Oxfam.

'We generally wait for the local authorities or the military to clear roads,' she replied.

'Yes, but what if that takes days? I've seen for myself how villagers, working with hand tools and machetes, can take days to clear fallen trees!' I pointed out.

'Sadly that's often the case,' she replied. It was all the encouragement we needed. Very soon after that conversation, we formally registered DART – Disaster Arborist Response Team – International UK as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and began getting the word out.

Now into its third year of operation, DART has registered well over a hundred volunteers and completed two successful operational deployments. The first to Vanuatu in the South Pacific in March 2015, just one week after Cyclone Pam had devastated the lives of 132,000 people, 54,000 of whom, according to UNICEF, were children. The worst natural disaster in the island's history, Cyclone Pam recorded sustained winds of 165mph. Not surprisingly, there was a lot of tree damage!

Working under the direction of the Vanuatu Ministry of Public Utilities, the UN, Australian and New Zealand aid coordinators, DART helped to make the grounds of seven schools safe and opened up blocked access routes to remote island communities to assist in the delivery of disaster aid. As in the Philippines, the synergy between schools and trees was an important factor. There is no publicly funded education in Vanuatu so schools maintain their own fruit and vegetable gardens to feed the children and help supplement the cost of education. As a

result, large tropical fruit trees are commonplace in and around school property and the DART team was able to use specialist climbing and arborist triage skills to remove damaged hanging timber from trees that would otherwise have been felled. The team trained local volunteers who worked alongside them and on completion of the deployment, donated all their equipment to the local community.

Training local volunteers was a key aspect of DART's second deployment to the Philippines, to Northern Samar in January 2016. Invited by the Mayor of San Jose to assist with the town's recovery from Typhoon Melor, the DART team once again found itself with the primary task of making safe the town's three schools. The secondary aim of the deployment was to provide on-the-job training for members of the town's Disaster Coordination and Management Organisation. Outfitted with equipment donated by the Charity, they would help the community to become more resilient to extreme weather events in the future.

Now the DART project is exploring a new direction: this month we will deploy a team to West Africa in collaboration with Rory's Well, a Gloucestershire-based overseas development charity that operates in the Pujehun district of southern Sierra Leone, delivering projects to address poor nutrition, water aid, sanitation issues and high infant mortality in 17 villages across the region.

The Pujehun region is rural, remote and extremely poor even by Sierra Leonean standards. Listed 177 out of 187 on the Human Development Index, with approximately 80% of the population living below the poverty line of \$2 a day, the country is still recovering from a decade of civil war and more recently, the Ebola crisis. Politically, Sierra Leone is now relatively stable. Since ratifying the Kyoto Protocol in 2006, the government has taken steps to develop a national approach to tackling climate change, including the preservation and management of the country's vast forestry resources.

Rainforests, mangroves and savannah forests cover an estimated 2.7m ha and host a high level of endemic and internationally rare and threatened species. Deforestation has been a longstanding environmental issue across West Africa, but supported by the UN REDD+ initiative, the Sierra Leone Government has established forestry reserves and implemented forestry protection and management programmes. These include efforts to combat illegal logging and an outright ban on the export of timber in 2008. Sustainable timber extraction and replanting is now regulated to the extent that a government-licensed operator has been appointed to support the DART deployment and provide the project with local advice and legal protection.

DART is providing arborist training and equipment



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Part of the DART Vanuatu deployment team

to help to build livelihoods around a tree planting programme and sustainable forestry management. By providing training in the use of a chainsaw-based milling system to process legally harvested timber, we hope to make community construction projects more affordable.

Right from the first trip to the Philippines, we learned a great deal about the cultural, economic and environmental value of trees in that part of the world. Yes, we'd made mistakes, but unlike many aid agencies, we learned from them.

In those first couple of days, we had burned 'waste' wood in a country where millions cook over an open fire, then watched shame-faced the following morning as women and children raked through still-glowing embers to recover a few lumps of charcoal. We burned timber, then less than a week later paid rapidly-spiraling prices for inferior coconut construction timber. We'd been reminded, by the presence of fruit trees, that in many parts of the world, children don't go to school with a lunchbox. That alone made us fight to save every damaged tree, even where it would be more convenient simply to fell them. We'd watched a long queue of women, waiting patiently for one of our team to chainsaw off a slice from the trunk of a fallen tamarind tree to use as a chopping board, the first step in rebuilding a mother's kitchen and the family home. Most importantly, we'd been reminded that trees matter, even after they fall!

For news, volunteer forms, sponsorship info: [dartinternational.co.uk](http://dartinternational.co.uk)

Following a 28-year military career, **Mike Metcalfe** moved with his family to a Bodmin Moor smallholding in 2004. Since then he's picked up a collection of unruly animals, a degree in International Studies and the role of Operations and Training Manager for DART International UK.

# Saving the World

The Species Recovery Trust is doing it one species at a time, by **Dominic Price**

It is easy to think of biodiversity loss as something that happened after World War II, when we ploughed up meadow and heathland for food production. While this intensification kick-started the loss of biodiversity, even today, with a wealth of conservation places in place and organisations working hard, this loss continues.

For instance, forty years ago (roughly when I was born and well after the end of WWII), there were twice as many species alive on the planet as there are today, according to the World Wildlife Fund's 2014 Living Planet Report.

The level of background extinction (species loss that occurs naturally) is now 1000 times higher than it should be, prompting a general consensus that we are now living in the sixth mass extinction event. In the fifth one the dinosaurs were wiped out.

Against this background, we had an idea to take a handful of species that were teetering on the very brink of extinction and provide them a life raft, conserving them by whatever means necessary. In 2012, the Species Recovery Trust was formed.

Our long-term goal is to save 50 species by the year 2050 and one of our key strategies is to do it as cheaply as possible. We use local volunteers and wherever possible clear scrub by hand rather than hiring machinery. Most importantly we keep on top of sites before the habitat degrades too much or population numbers become too low. When it became clear that environmental funding was about to fall through the floor, we became as streamlined as possible. We have no office





premises and no non-conservation staff, but share out the admin, so our running costs are virtually extinct, as well.

Three of the species we work on are found in woodlands, and their fortunes have been tied to the general status of woodland diversity over the last century.

Although often heavily protected by royal decree and close to the public, the woodlands of two hundred years ago would have been alive with activity, from foresters to charcoal burners, coppicers to herbalists. This activity created a dynamic system of change, where trees were felled, glades were created, then fenced off to allow coppice and, later, huge standard trees to grow.

Wildlife thrived in this environment, with plant species well adapted from a previous age where large mammals had created this sort of disturbance, and from an ecology which allowed their seeds to lie dormant in the ground, waiting for an increase in light and warmth to signal the right time for them to germinate and grow.

Two of the rarest plants in the UK, Starved Wood-sedge (*Carex depauperata*) and Spiked Rampion (*Phyteuma spicatum*), would have thrived in these environments. Starved Wood-sedge has already made one return from near-extinction. Following the great storm of 1987, a huge lime tree fell in Surrey, and a few years later young Starved Wood-sedge plants were discovered growing for the first time in decades. The last local extinction occurred in the grounds of Charterhouse School. The woods there had been managed before the war, but after the war much fewer men returned to carry on traditional woodland management and the valuable habitats extraction created were lost

Starved Wood-sedge now grows at four locations, where with our partner organisation we have used seeds from Kew's Millennium Seedbank to create new sites. We are carrying out experimental management to best learn how to care for the plants.

Spiked Rampion, a beautiful tall plant of woodland rides and glades, suffered similar misfortune. This was the plant Rapunzel was caught stealing (to ease her mother's birth pains) before she was locked away by the witch. It now only grows in seven sites in East Sussex, with the largest population marooned on a road verge beside what was its woodland home, now an arable field.

The conservation of Spiked Rampion has proved challenging, not least because increasing deer numbers nibble off plants. The local council also sanctioned damage at the road verge site. But we are protecting all the remaining locations, where necessary caging off plants to protect them until their numbers reach more secure levels. All the sites are regularly coppiced, and at the road verge



we are working closely with the local council to ensure the verge is protected from untimely mowing and any other damage.

Cosnard's Net-winged Beetle is an extremely rare insect of the woodland. It pupates for several years in the white rotten heart-wood of beech trunks, and thus requires a supply of dead trees. The ecology of this and a host of other deadwood invertebrates highlights the need for another form of woodland management: the retention of dead and dying trees, leaving some areas to 'benign neglect' and particularly by leaving fallen branches and old stumps in situ.

Our work on Cosnard's Net-winged Beetle is split into advising woodland landowners on how best to manage for it, employing a specialist entomologist to survey for it, and more importantly training up volunteers in the techniques of survey for these elusive beetles.

The Species Recovery Trust also runs training courses across the country and our website hosts an array of training resources, including a short film on identifying woodland plants.

The proceeds from these courses support our rare species work. Every pound makes a difference, so we always welcome new supporters and attendees on our courses.

We absolutely believe that, with care and commitment, the current mass extinction wave can be slowed. At the very least we can hand these species on, still fragile, but with their hearts beating, to the next generation.

■ [speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk](http://speciesrecoverytrust.org.uk)

**Dominic Price** is one of the UK's foremost species conservation experts and Director of the Species Recovery Trust. He leads a one-day Woodland Plants Identification Course on Thursday, 18 May 2017, at Garston Wood in Dorset. See the website for details of this and other species work, films, courses and events. Free training films are also available on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com), search 'Species Recovery Trust'.

# WAWA sur Lac

**Tom Krueger** on how to build a traditional African dugout canoe in the Swiss Alps

**T**he idea first came to me in 2002 as I was traveling in eastern Africa. Kenyan fishermen on Lake Turkana and off the coast at Mombasa took to the water in striking traditional craft that I found captivating. As I watched them move over the water, I thought, 'What an awesome boat to make with students back home, and then sail on some local lake.' This is the tale of how a traditional African dugout canoe came to the Swiss Alps.

It wasn't until more than ten years later when I was teaching at Aiglon College, an international boarding school, at Chesnieres in Switzerland, that it came to pass. The family of one of the boys in my boarding house owned a log and lumber business in Ghana. The boy, John, had made a hazel and oak chair in my weekly after school woodworking option and during a visit in 2014, his father, William, commented on the chair. If I ever 'need some fancy bits of wood from Africa' he said he would be very happy to help.

The door had opened and I threw my entire weight at it.

'I am so glad you like the chair and I could do with some African wood, a whole tree, in fact, to be perfectly honest. What do you think about the idea of making, here in the Swiss mountains, a traditional African dugout canoe?'

There was a moment of stunned silence. Then he said, 'That is crazy! Count me in!'

Over the next few days I scoured the internet to narrow down the various types of boats and to find a suitable example. William sent me pictures of boats that he had come across in Ghana. Because this was meant to be a school project, I needed approval from the headmaster, who, fortunately, accepted my proposal.

It was time to return to Africa. William and I agreed on a week's visit to his company premises in Kumasi, Ghana, for the Easter holidays 2015. I would fly out there with John and William would organise local craftsmen to build a traditional boat so that we could 'watch and learn'. I landed mid-morning at the local airport and by 2pm we were already within the company gates staring at a tree that was absolutely massive and bigger than anything I had ever seen. Over the next three and a half days a team of four lumberjacks and three carpenters transformed that Ayous log (the locals call it Wawa) into a beautiful boat, including painting it! I am sure they could have done it even faster if it hadn't been for me stopping them ever so often to ask questions, take photos, do sketches, measure distances, record a number of videos and try some of the traditional tools – much to the amusement of the ever-growing crowd. These sketches, videos and about a thousand photos would be my only source



*The WAWA team turns the hull to work on the underside*

of reference in the months ahead. Elated and scared, excited and doubtful I flew back home to start the lengthy process of bringing an African tree to Switzerland.

The first step was to write to the Ghanaian government (on school headed paper) for permission to export a tree. Once obtained, it became a question of sourcing a suitable specimen and arranging transport, first by container ship to the south coast of Italy and then by flatbed lorry to get the trunk over the Alps and within working distance of our boarding house. This



took the best part of five months.

I used that time to organise my 'tool box': three Stihl chainsaws (MS 180, MS 391, MS 880 with a 90cm blade), a Logosol BigMill Timberjig and BigMill Basic portable sawmill together with an extra 2.75m bar to cut boards up to a length of 5m, a Makita circular saw with 8cm cutting depth, a mechanical train jack able to lift 5t, a concave/convex planer (Wegoma Bootshobel BH 80), a planer that could be attached to a chainsaw (Eder Konturhobel), a solid crowbar and a number

of mid-range angle grinders to use as sanding machines as well as various hand tools bought via eBay (or the Swiss equivalent) including a Japanese hand saw and some wooden planers.

In early October the message came that the arrival of an Ayous tree was imminent. On the big day a small crowd gathered to witness a lorry backing into our drive where a huge mobile crane was already waiting to lift the 11t log of length 11.45m and diameter 1.58m. The mathematicians amongst you will have worked out that we were talking about more than 22 cubic

# ENTERPRISE

metres of wood! After months of waiting, the final delivery only took 90 minutes. What a sight! For the rest of the day I kept looking out of the window to reassure myself that a 'Big Mama Tree' had indeed arrived from Africa. I went outside several times to touch it, smell it and walk the length of it, getting my thoughts together on how to begin with our boat project.

Our first setback came the next morning. We awoke to find the tree covered in snow. My poor little baby! I think it had probably never been that cold in its entire lifetime! It took a few days for the weather to change, then for the next ten weeks we were blessed with sunshine and superb outdoor working conditions. I gathered a team of eight regular students (including John of course) that would join me for 3-4 hours every week. My challenge was to prepare enough meaningful tasks to keep them occupied and interested as, by default, I had to use the chainsaws rather a lot during the early stages of the project and it was clear that the students could play no part in that aspect of the work. Instead, they assisted in preparing the various sections for board cutting including mounting the sawmill, using the jack, sharpening the chains, cutting the edges of the boards with the circular saw, organising the wood-store in a nearby covered parking space, and using the crowbar to break off sections of the trunk that I had cut previously.

By December we had the boat outlined and started digging out the inside. Now the students could work to their heart's content, getting into 'full swing' with the five adze-like tools I had bought from the carpenters in Ghana. As a sideline, we gathered the small off-cuts and sold them as firewood, creating a little bit of cash for tool maintenance, chainsaw petrol and some smaller items like gloves and steel capped boots. We worked until mid-January when the snow finally arrived and our project went into hibernation for several months.

After the Easter holidays in April we lifted the tarpaulin and work commenced once more. We finished the digging out bit within three weeks. The next big task was to work on the underside, shaping the hull. For that we jacked the boat up and, after some initial balancing issues, I worked on the ladders and boards like a trapeze artist. It became evident that the finish I achieved with the chainsaw was poor compared to what the Africans had ended up with. I decided to put the boat completely upside down in order to have a realistic chance of obtaining a smooth underside. When the 'turning day' arrived during the half term holiday in May, I took a dozen mattresses from our boarding house and positioned them in such a way as to cushion the fall. As the boat landed, there was a gut-wrenching WHACK and the sound of breaking wood that almost stopped my heart. I should have used double the number of mattresses, all 44 even! I had been too impatient. A big crack had formed that went right through the hull so that I could see the tarmac below. I wasn't far from shedding a few tears.

It took me a few days to regain some optimism. It came in the form of my Swiss neighbour Alfons who looked at the crack and said: "J'avais vu beaucoup pire (I have seen much worse)." With his help we put big sash clamps in strategic



The Ayous tree arrives in Switzerland



Taking shape

places to prevent further damage and then contacted a shipyard in Evian, France, that in turn put me in contact with an expert on hull repairs. He advised me on which products to get for a full repair.

His 'secret weapon' was called G4, a sort of wood concrete that is applied as a mixture with fine sawdust. It did the trick and together with five 24mm threaded bars, big washers and nuts that we put through the hull in various places our boat became seaworthy again. PHEW! Students got busy applying six layers of



*I begin to hollow out the inside using traditional African tools*



*Nearly complete. She needs to go to Lac Lemman before winter*

antifouling and varnish, enjoying the change of colour from wood to white to grey and a deep red at the end. With the hull repaired and the underside now smooth due to a couple of weeks' worth of adzing, planing and sanding, it was soon time to turn the boat around again. No mattresses this time!

Once the hull was the right way up, a local lumberjack came with his tractor and crane, and we started on the carpentry work. In terms of African time this was the start of day three.

In Switzerland, we were by now in the eleventh month! The students decided where they wanted the seats. They cut the side boards to size, measured and drilled holes, screwed and applied varnish to all the finished surfaces. Alfons, who by now had become a regular 'sur le chantier' and I did a lot of the thinking and organising so that there was always plenty to do. We had set ourselves the deadline of Christmas for the boat to be off-site in a harbour in Lake Geneva. We did not want to risk another winter with sub-zero temperatures and tons of snow up here at an altitude of 1250m.

As the days grew shorter, our working hours increased, sometimes reaching 10 hours a day during weekends. With hands and feet cold and artificial lights throwing dark shadows, we nevertheless wore big grins on our faces as the end was now in sight. 'Big Mama' slowly transformed into an elegant lady. We decided to call her WAWA. One day in early December the last screw was placed, the ropes produced from our replica medieval rope making machine (inspired by a school trip to Guedelon), the names put on the hull, the gunwales fixed and a place in a harbour secured.

The day WAWA was taken to the lake couldn't have been nicer in terms of weather or the feeling of sheer elation. We had spent nearly 1,000 hours of labour and had something very beautiful to show for our efforts. WAWA passed the seaworthiness tests with flying colours and only last week I received the official papers for a 'Wawa Pirogue', a vessel for 12 people and a small outboard motor, though our aim is to propel her with eight paddlers, one African drummer and a captain – ME! Come spring we will have our first outing and then a big launching party in May and the proper maiden voyage.

As for my next venture, I am in the process of acquiring a little house with a bit of a forest around it overlooking some stunning mountain scenery. More student projects are on the horizon. Watch this space.

**Info:** Teacher and woodworker Tom Krueger is in the process of publishing a book that tells the WAWA story in more detail with more than 500 photos. If you are interested in a copy, email [nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk) to reserve a copy. The price is tba, but will be approximately £30.



*Tom Krueger with WAWA*

# Lean & Green

In the 1960s, *Prosopis juliflora*, a thorny shrub known in some places as ‘mesquite’, was introduced to northern India to stop the spread of the desert. As with many introductions, the shrub proved successful but had the unintended consequence of spreading rapidly across the countryside, forming scrub thickets in Karchch district in Gujarat. We were asked for help by ecologists concerned about its spread.

*Prosopis* is a highly adaptable plant that can out-compete native plants in the dry and increasingly salty soil. Farmers had no problem clearing it from their fields, leaving thickets of bushes on the boundaries and roadsides. The plant is also found as scattered scrub, dense in places, on common land. It is a particular issue on the nationally important grasslands, which are valued not only by nomadic herders who bring their animals in after the monsoon to graze the lush grass, but also as wildlife habitat. The Naliya grassland, for example, contains the Lala Indian sanctuary for bustards. Removing an invasive non-native plant once it has become established is difficult if not impossible. But we were also concerned that in this desert landscape the plant, while considered damaging by the scientists, might have value to the local people.

The British Council awarded a grant for MSc students from the University of Greenwich to go out to India and investigate with the Indian scientists. Studying the landscape change, significantly influenced by the plant spreading, was combined with focus groups in rural villages along the coast. These conversations revealed, as we had suspected, that the *Prosopis* was providing a source of fuel, fodder for livestock, medicinal gum and was considered important for honey production.

Villagers did have significant common concerns: the impact of development, particularly industrial pollution on the mangroves which served as fish breeding grounds, water abstraction increasing soil salinity and free ranging animals, including nilgai (an antelope), wild boar and wild ass, as well as domestic animals, eating their crops. To protect their crops, farmers use dead hedging, but they find it is labour-intensive as it breaks down very quickly in the dry heat, and needs constant replacing.

These issues are complex and difficult to

address without political influence, but they were discussed openly at a meeting involving both villagers and local decision makers. During this meeting, we showed a video clip of hedgelaying and suggested that it might be possible to use *Prosopis* to make ‘living fences’ as it is, after all, a thorny shrub. The villagers and decision-makers greeted this idea with enthusiasm, and British Council asked us to return and see if we could make it work.

### What could possibly go wrong?

For a start, we in Britain lay hedges in the winter. When we arrived in May 2016, Northern India was experiencing a heat wave, with temperatures soaring over 40 degrees centigrade. As soon as we arrived, we experimented laying *Prosopis juliflora* on some waste ground. After the plant showed some initial wilting – causing extreme concern – it recovered overnight. So we acquired local tools and used these to lay the roadside boundary of the Vivekanand Research and Training Institute (VRTI), Mandvi. It proved impossible to get stakes into the rock-hard ground, but we found that weaving the long stems together made a robust barrier – painful but effective.

We invited farmers, Forestry Authority officers, and local government officials to a demonstration workshop at VTRI, where we distributed illustrated information sheets, in Gujarati and English. Again, the response was very enthusiastic, as shown in the quotes below:

‘In two years this living fence will definitely grow thick and keep out both wild boar and nilgai.’

‘I very much like this living fence as dead hedging is not permanent. We will take and distribute the information sheet.’

‘People are admiring this living fence like anything and will definitely do it themselves.’

■ For more information on the project:  
[gala.gre.ac.uk/16221/](http://gala.gre.ac.uk/16221/)

### Dr Deborah Bartlett

CMLI FCIEEM is Principal Lecturer and Programme Leader MSc Environmental Conservation, Faculty of Engineering and Science, University of Greenwich.

**Ben Bower**  
negotiates the purchase of tools.



Using British hedgelaying techniques in India, **Dr Debbie Bartlett** and her MSc students create a new use for an invasive species



# Heavy Metal

**Dick White** uses a shipping container for woodland storage

**N**ot long ago, in a blog on sheds in woods, I briefly mentioned the use of shipping containers as a potential storage solution for high-value items or where security is a concern. At the time, I'd never actually dealt with shipping containers in woodlands first-hand.

What a difference a few weeks make! I have just installed a shipping container in one of the woodlands I manage, so now I can offer some practical tips and suggestions, based on experience.

### Types of container

■ **Size:** a half container (20 feet x 8 feet x 8 feet) is the most commonly used, and most easily available, however, the logistical issues of getting something so big into the wood probably rule this out for most of us. 10 foot and 40 foot containers are available and bespoke sizes can also be found (at a price).

■ **Quality:** typically there are 3 levels of quality, with prices to match:

**New** usually means the container has been used for one trip only, i.e. the containers have arrived full in the UK and then sold on rather than re-used.

**Used (A grade)** are containers that, while not as cosmetically or aesthetically attractive as 'new', are still fully functional. That means they are lockable, waterproof and windproof.

**Used** covers the rest. Shop around and you might be lucky. If you are unlucky you could end up with a leaky old rust bucket with wonky doors – but it will be cheap.

■ **Costs & sources:** a quick internet search will locate plenty of potential suppliers. I sourced my half container through Lion Containers [www.lioncontainers.co.uk] who were speedy, friendly and professional. Prices vary, but a new half container, including delivery and VAT, will cost around £2,500.

■ **Options:** in these times of drones (for identifying potential targets) and battery-powered angle grinders, there is no type of storage that is totally secure, but the addition of an 'insurance standard' padlock and a lock-box to shield the padlock will deter the opportunist thief and probably make the 'professional' think twice. You could get the interior sprayed with a condensation-reducing coating to protect your goods. Other options include side doors, serving hatches, ramps and so on. Green and blue are the most commonly available colours, but other colours can be obtained.

### Arranging & taking delivery

■ **Plan ahead:** Think carefully about how exactly you are going to get the container into your wood. Hauliers are a fairly adaptable and cooperative bunch, but are unlikely to be prepared to go off-road. Unless you are content to have your container located at roadside, you will need to organise getting it into the woodland.

■ **Clear instructions/directions:** The haulier will contact you (usually the day before delivery) with an estimated arrival time. This is your chance to let the driver know of obstacles like low or narrow bridges, tight bends, etc, and to confirm exact location.

■ **Delivery address vs home address:** if you have ordered a padlock, this might be sent under separate cover, so check that the delivery address for this is your home rather than to the woodland!

■ **Adequate space – around and above:** when thinking about off-loading and installing the container, remember to look up as well as around. By the time the delivery lorry crane has raised the container up, it will be at a height that could well put it in contact with power or telephone lines.

### Installation

■ **Transfer to site:** Given that many woodland entrances are off narrow lanes, your first challenge will be getting the container from the lorry onto your chosen mode of transport into the wood. The two vehicles will need to be positioned close together, ruling out the option of doing it at the gate for most of us. I had a friendly farmer neighbouring the woodland, with a large, level yard that he was happy to let us use for the transfer. You might find a nearby service area, goods yard or similar. Our transfer transport was a tractor plus flat-bed trailer.

■ **Selecting a location:** pick somewhere convenient, level(ish) and above all, accessible. For security reasons



Rosie Beiben

*A camouflaged container in a woodland.*

*Dick White takes delivery of his container*







it is best not to have the container on public view from the entrance. I selected a level clearing, tucked away behind some conifers, about 100 metres up the main access track.

■ Mind the doors: when loading the container onto your trailer, it is important to have the doors located at the end that leaves the container first. If the container should come down with a bit of a thump, the doors might foul the rear of the trailer, resulting not only in an unhappy trailer owner but also damaged doors or opening mechanisms. We had no forklift nor a tipping trailer for unloading, so after some head scratching we wound a sturdy strop around an equally sturdy tree, then attached ropes from the strop to the container. The tractor crawled away until the container reached tipping point and jerked forward quickly, then whump, down it came.

■ Levelling up: Raising the container a little way off the ground will help preserve its life, so, using a tractor jack, we raised each corner, scraped out a bit

of earth and inserted 2 x concrete blocks plus a short length of 6" x 2" treated timber to spread the load. It is important to get the container level as the doors are heavy, bulky things and opening and closing them can be nigh on impossible if the container is leaning.

■ Extras: I have not yet started to 'customise' my container, but will plan to add a small solar panel for charging the tractor battery, ramps so that I don't have to take a run at it when returning said tractor to its 'garage' and a fold-down shelf to use as a work-bench. Beyond these essentials, I'll wait awhile until the need for other refinements becomes apparent.

#### Conclusion

While they're not for everyone – shipping containers are not especially attractive, cosy or cheap – they do offer a robust, long-lasting and relatively tamper-proof woodland storage solution for those whose requirement is more about having a store than a shelter/hut to spend time in.

**Dick White** is a self-employed woodland manager and is also the local manager, Cornwall & West Devon, for [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk). For his blog post on woodland storage, go to [woodlands.co.uk](http://woodlands.co.uk) and search 'sheds in woods'.

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# Growth Area

**Judith Millidge** gets planting at the Sylva Foundation's Future Forest



**G**abriel Hemery is a man on a mission. He believes that if everyone planted a tree for every year of their life, the world would be a better place. As Chief Executive of the environmental charity the Sylva Foundation, he leads Sylva's mission to revive Britain's wood culture – its pioneering work in silviculture research and woodland education is well known. In 2016 Gabriel planted the first shoots of the Future Forest, a 3-hectare woodland of mixed planting which, it is intended, will help scientists discover the most resilient tree species likely to thrive in the mutable world of climate change, pests and diseases.

The Future Forest, in South Oxfordshire, houses three main groups of trees: native broadleaves, natives with new genes which have been sourced to match Britain's future climate (possibly warmer and wetter), and exotics such as tulip trees and Japanese red cedar, which are likely to be successful in the future. There will also be coppice plots of hazel, sweet chestnut and *robinia*, which will produce wood within five years.

Sylva has offered sponsorship of 300 plots of 25 trees each to local businesses, schools and other organisations. Many families have planted trees in memory of relatives. At least 600 schoolchildren from 20 local schools have been enthusiastic participants, and the whole site, which was a wheat field just six months ago, is nearly covered with tree-guard-encased saplings. It will be a wonderful sight in a few years, but on the bitterly cold winter's day on which our group gathered, it required a leap of imagination to see this rather dank corner of south Oxfordshire as a sun-dappled woodland.

Grown in Britain has sponsored a grove of 250 trees, and early in February, under the direction of Chief Executive Dougal Driver, a group of supporters from

various woodland agencies picked up their spades, chose their trees and began planting. John Weir, the Forestry Commission adviser for woodland creation and resilience, was the acknowledged expert and planted about three times as quickly as most, but he was very encouraging. The participants shared a great feeling of satisfaction (and hot soup) once the trees were all in. The broad range of 38 species included some of the oldest and tallest species on the planet. As Weir said, 'Planting more trees is part of the solution to the problem we humans have created.' When the site is planted up by the end of March it will be open to the public.

Sylva's plans have been marginally hampered by the discovery of both Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon remains on the site. Long Wittenham, which borders the River Thames, was the frontline of King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon kingdom in the 9th century, and was a well-established hamlet for centuries before that. So, currently, Gabriel's neat rows of marker stakes feed around a large rectangle which marks the outline of a 7th century Anglo-Saxon house, and stop short of the field edge where there are Iron Age remains.

The Future Forest is an inspiring and visionary project that has captured the imagination of hundreds of schoolchildren, who, are after all, are the custodians of the future, has attracted the support of business as disparate as Tesco and small local-start-ups, has broadened public awareness of sustainable woodland management and will be a useful laboratory to test the resilience of species, both native and exotic. Most importantly, it will transform three hectares of farmland into a verdant forest that will be appreciated for decades to come.

■ [www.sylva.org.uk](http://www.sylva.org.uk)

*A school group planting trees at Sylva's Future Forest site*

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# Rotatech Chainsaw Bar

**Stuart Brooking** is pleased with performance – and price

**R**otatech is a relatively new brand within the chainsaw sector, but is becoming known rapidly amongst the professional arborists and foresters. Rebranded from Piranha, Rotatech is Northern Arb Supplies' own make and they are the exclusive UK distributor. Soon they will have a distribution branch in France.

I received a Rotatech bar and chain in the post. I was impressed with the packaging for the chain as it comes in a re-sealable and sturdy plastic sleeve. This is great if you need to put on an old chain for some dirtier trees as it allows you to store a spare chain in your chainsaw day pack without it getting wet.

Upon first appearance the guide bar looked well made and durable as well as noticeably thicker vertically than my current Husqvarna guide bar. This seems to make it very slightly heavier, but nothing that would be very noticeable.

The bar fitted perfectly on my Husqvarna 550XP and the chain tightened well. There are holes on the nose of the guide bar to allow greasing of the nose sprocket.

I used the bar over a few days performing a number of different tasks from cross cutting large Douglas fir trees to felling a medium sized cedar and general ground works preparing material for the wood chipper. The guide bar performed excellently with the chain and was a pleasure to use. All tasks were taken with ease. The bar became pinched a couple of times when cross cutting large Douglas fir into 35 foot lengths, but there was no sign of a bent or squeezed bar when finally freed.

The chain came loose once, but this seems to be a symptom of the chainsaw rather than the bar as this seems to happen, whatever the bar.

A couple of colleagues tested my saw with the Rotatech bar on and were impressed. Indeed one of them liked the vertical thickness of the bar as did I.

I live about a mile from a large and well-known online Arb supplier where I checked the current



Walker Tree Services

price for a Husqvarna 15 inch guide bar to fit a 550 XP. They retail at £40.92, plus £5 delivery if you cannot walk there like me! At a specialist online bar and chain retailer website, I can get an Oregon Pro Lite 15 inch bar for £38.82 including delivery.

The Rotatech guide bar for a Husqvarna 550XP on the Northern Arb Supplies website retails for £20.64 including VAT and delivery, and the bar and chain come as a set for £27.06 including VAT and free shipping. This is a minimum saving to me of more than £18 per guide bar.

I also looked up the Stihl prices for comparison. I can purchase a 16-inch bar from the same well-known retailer for £35.62. The equivalent Rotatech guide bar for a Stihl MS291 through Northern Arb Supplies retails for £20.64.

Overall I am very satisfied with the quality of the Rotatech guide bar and the savings I can make are impressive. Talking to colleagues, the chains are very hard, which is good for longevity but also hard on the files. Rotatech sent a flier with details of new product ranges including files and chainsaw oils. I look forward to the release of these to add to my continuing use of Rotatech guide bars.

**Rotatech Chainsaw Bars** are available for most brands of chainsaw in a variety of lengths. [northernarbsupplies.co.uk](http://northernarbsupplies.co.uk)

**Stuart Brooking** has a degree in Environmental Protection, teaches conservation to NVQ level and is active in conservation work and woodland management. He is the woodlands. [co.uk](http://co.uk) agent for Devon.

# Wilder Woods in West Yorks

**The West Yorkshire Woods  
Part One: The Calder Valley**

by **Christopher Goddard**

Published by the author, £12.99

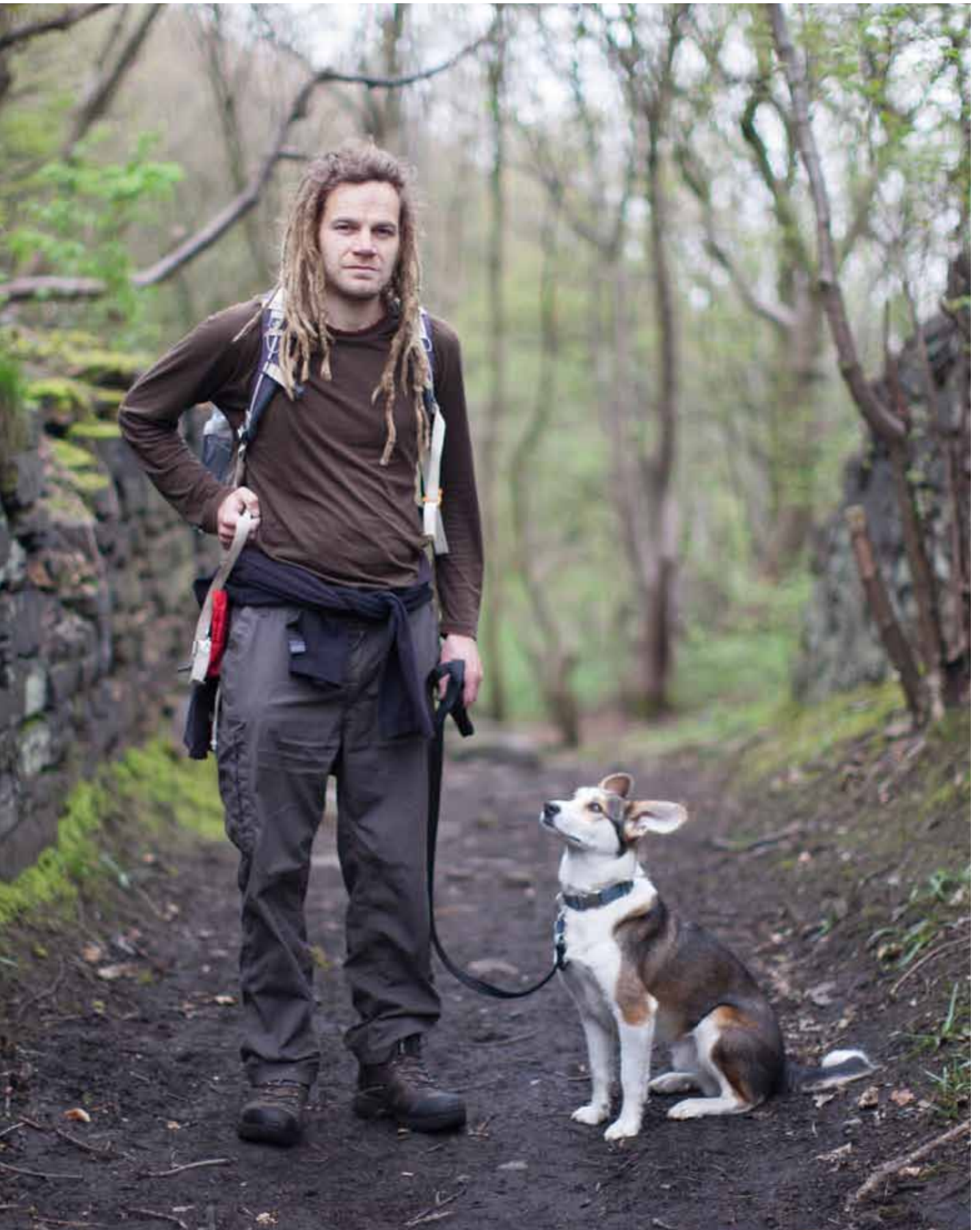
review by David Shepherd

I have valued the comparative solitude of the moors and valleys of the South Pennines for many years and thought I knew them well, but a recent book by Chris Goddard has surprised me by its quality and the wealth of detail revealed that I just wasn't aware of. I grind no axe for the author, having met him trying to sell his books quite by chance. But, bluntly, he really is very good and I thought more people should know about him.

The remarkably numerous Calder Valley woods extend from Todmorden east to Brighouse, and from the M62 to the hills north of Hebden Bridge. The book begins with an evocative account of the author's most abiding encounters with his favourite wood, setting the tone well. There is an explanation of how trees work – a complex and fascinating mechanism succinctly reduced here to something that can actually be understood and remembered. A section on the history of the woodlands includes their development for hunting, coppicing, charcoal production, traditional crafts, industrial uses and folklore.



*Christopher Goddard*



## MAP 12: NORTH DEAN WOOD

North Dean Wood is one of the finest woodlands in the lower Calder Valley. It stretches some three miles from West Vale to Norland, though the eastern end may previously have been known separately as Kings Dean Wood. It is probably most easily accessed from Copley, above which its shaded slopes and long line of crags stand darkly. The whole wood is easy to explore, being Open Access land and full of interesting paths through the varied oak, beech and birch trees. Pickwood Scar is a wooded outlier to the west, the two separated by beautiful Maple Dean Clough.



## & PICKWOOD SCAR

The Roman altar found at Bank Top (see below) has had an interesting journey since its discovery in 1997. It has spent time at Bradley Hall (near Skipton), in a private collection, abandoned in a Cambridgeshire churchyard, then Trinity College's library, before its current home in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University. It dates from around 200AD and is dedicated to Brigantia, the mother goddess of the Brigantes tribe that covered large parts of northern England.

Bone Road is an elegant mansion that was built in the 16th century on the site of an earlier timber house on land owned by the Bisco family. Bone was an Old English word for an animal's skull. Nearby Hallas was originally Hall House and so its name has nothing to do with holly, despite its proliferation along Hallas Lane.



St Stephen's Church is an impressive neo-Gothic building built in the 1840s by subscription, but largely funded by Edward Akroyd. It was built in forestland parish on the opposite bank of the river from the village because of the refusal of the vicar of All Saints Church in Halifax to have another church built in his parish. It is no longer used as a church, but preserved by the Churches Conservation Trust and open to the public as a museum, particularly for its stained glass windows.

Copley Village was constructed in 1847 at the same time as a new mill for Edward Akroyd, because there was little accommodation in the area. The lines of neat millworkers' cottages were built in English Old style and Akroyd paid particular attention to social conditions. There were plenty of allotments, a library, cricket team, evening classes, and rewards of excursions and book prizes. Akroyd subsequently built the Gothic model village of Agroydon on the other side of Hallas, originally planned to be a considerably larger settlement.

If it is hard to follow paths through the open beech woods below Shots Scar at the heart of North Dean Wood, but find it as easy to wander anywhere over the thick leaf carpet. The main path runs from a couple of yags in the well near St Stephen's Church; the lower one peters out near a dry gully but can be picked up again heading up the slope above a small pond to the right; the higher path climbs sooner to cut across the slope of the foot of Shots Scar. Both then continue through the oak and birch woods of Kings Dean. An alternative to both of these is to pick up a foot path along the river bank then head up the slope beyond the dry gully and follow a path that meanders alongside the railway at the way past Kings Dean.

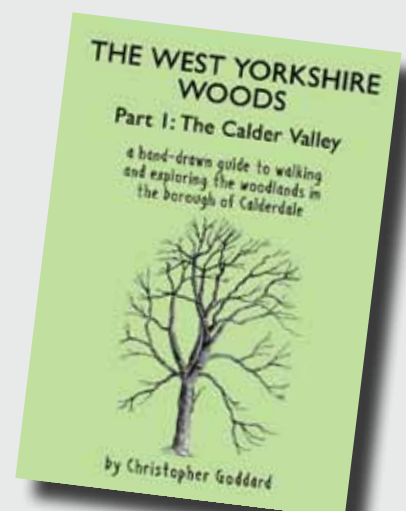


This lucid and absorbing account of the stretches of trees that many will just drive past without a second thought provides a compelling insight into a wealth of detail there for the finding.

There are eleven geographic sections, and the woods within these are engagingly described and depicted with meticulous mapping in classic Wainwright style, before suggested routes of around six to eight miles are provided. These chapters are separated by short essays on the various tree species – how they grow, past uses and what depends on them. Frankly I was taken aback at how much new information I found. The hand-drawn, annotated maps are a delight both to follow and simply to read by the fire. This isn't just another collection of walks to follow but a resource to return to. The index and bibliography are impressive in their coverage and utility.

This volume is clear evidence of a labour of love in progress and I can't fault it. The author's careful attention to detail really does work out on the ground. You might like to support the recently-flooded Bookcase independent bookshop in Hebden Bridge ([www.bookcase.co.uk](http://www.bookcase.co.uk)), or you could deal direct with Chris at [www.christophergoddard.net](http://www.christophergoddard.net). Get this book and put your boots on, you'll be a better person for it. Highly recommended.

Christopher Goddard is also the author of *The West Yorkshire Moors*, and, with Katharine Evans, *The Wales West Coast Path*. He is a founder member of Gritstone, the UK's first publishing cooperative, run by authors for authors. For more info and to order books: [www.gritstone.coop](http://www.gritstone.coop). You can follow Christopher on twitter at @ChrisGoddardMap.





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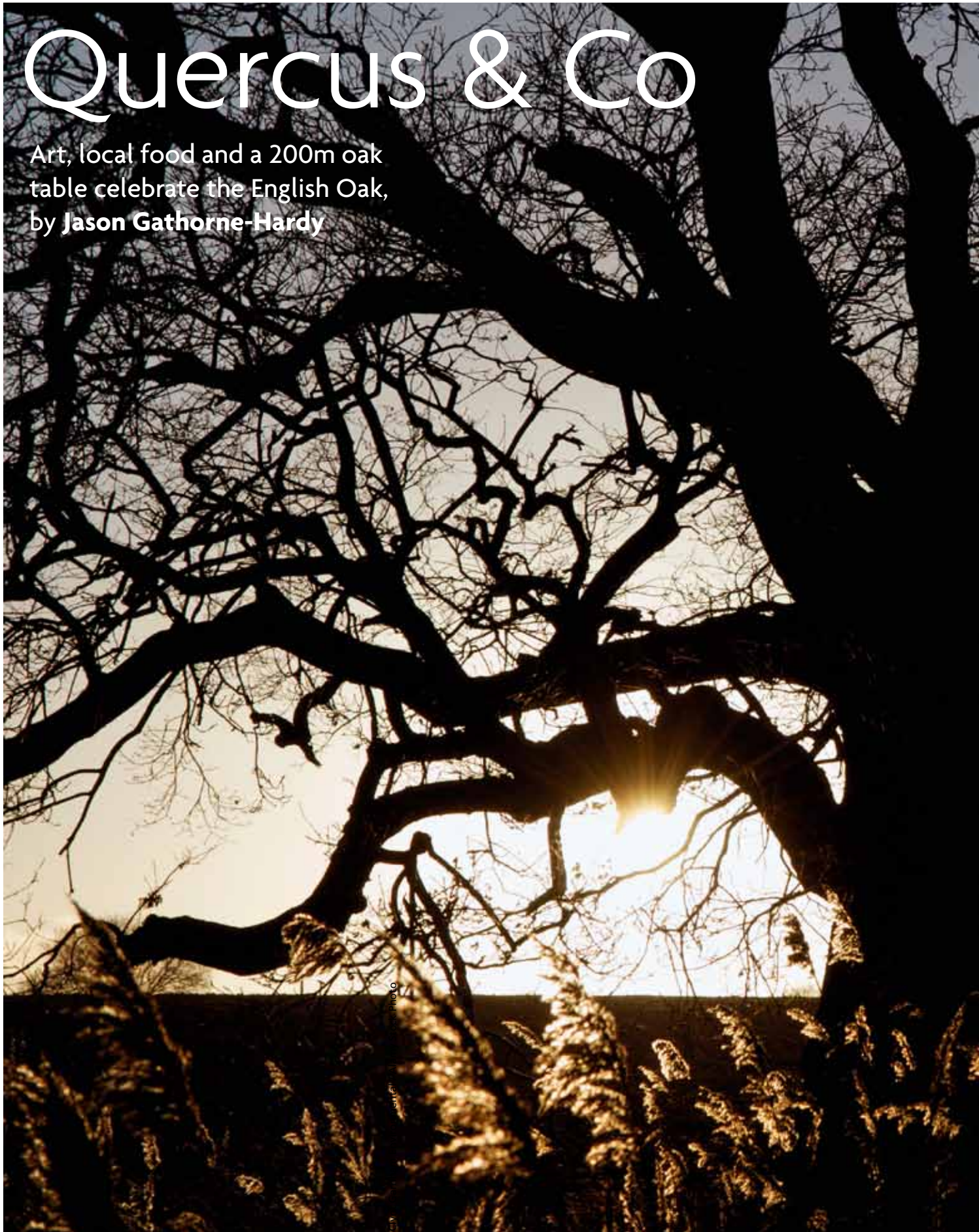
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# Quercus & Co

Art, local food and a 200m oak table celebrate the English Oak,  
by **Jason Gathorne-Hardy**



PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON GATHORNE-HARDY



**H**ere is a thought – an acorn of an idea. Every tree in the UK stands as a living monument to the moment when a seed was blown, dropped or buried at a precise spot, be it a few years ago or half a millennium. This means that wherever we stand in this land we are surrounded by the echoes of these tiny impacts, that the trees that we see around us are like upward splashes of timber in time. The growth rings within their trunks ripple out from the point of impact, like a pebble dropped in a pond. And each echo is different: each species of tree has its own note, its own growth form and rhythm, all reflected in the character and quality of its wood – its branches and trunk.

I am writing these words from a farm in East Suffolk in the Upper Alde Valley about nine miles from the coast. The view from the doorway overlooks a patch of pasture called the Walnuts. Beyond this is a broad hedge and then a former arable field called Rookery. Atop this field, spread out along a beautiful sandy rise that in this county qualifies as a hill or even a promontory, there is a patch of woodland called Rookyard Belt. Its signature note, amid a vigorous and crowded shout of young sycamore trees (all blow-ins, quite literally), is a grove of semi-veteran sweet chestnut trees. None of them is yet four centuries old, but they are all nevertheless impressive in their appearance: thick-trunked with deeply fissured, spiraling bark and dense thickets of stubby growth around their bases. Back down below, to the east of the farmhouse, there is a patch of post-medieval hazel coppice called the Nutgrove. There are almost fifty stools, the largest ones over ten feet across. The hazels are low-growing. They have a different song to the ancient chestnuts: they are busier and more vigorous, cycling their time in decades rather than centuries, with the help of a bill hook or saw.

Looking west, the farm drive leads up towards a lane called the Grove where a stony track climbs up to a plateau, an area of clay land. This is an eastern edge of what in Suffolk we call the clay 'uplands'. (Please bear in mind that all of these terms are relative, with an added East Anglian dimension. A 'rise' in the land is an elevation of ten feet over quarter of a mile. A 'hill' (hold tight) is thirty feet over a hundred yards – and that is steep, whilst promontories, valleys and hill tops are all subtle, at times elusive even invisible.) But follow the track and you reach a small sweeping arc of woodland known on one side as Grassy Belt and the other as Back House Pond Covert.

The trees growing in these various patches of woodland give the local landscape its character. They both define it and describe it, revealing much about its past settlement patterns and land use: they bring it to life. A cluster of pollarded oaks and hazel next to a long shallow pond in part of Back House Pond Covert hint at a lost enclosure. The flurry of self-sown willows, birch, hornbeam and other trees on old pasture suggest changes in land ownership and boundaries. Whilst the sweet chestnuts stand as an

# ALDE VALLEY SPRING FESTIVAL

anomaly – like sentinels. They overlook a stretch of what Oliver Rackham described as ‘farm parkland’: a long thin run of land called The Straits. This extends from the Nutgrove down to the River Alde, the eastern boundary of White House Farm. The view across this from Back House Pond Covert to the Alde is the span of the farm, its reach. The meadows and farm parkland below are embraced and framed by thick hedges and punctuated by a tiny scattering of beautiful, immense veteran oak trees.

These oak trees are the farm’s treasure – its oldest note. They stand around a small area of raised earth on the Straits called the Settlement, beside a run of fields variously called Home Meadow, Milkhouse Pightle and Calves Pightle. (‘Pightle’ is Suffolk dialect for a small field or piece of enclosed land. What this soft, low-lying county lacks in words for hills, ravines and mountains, it makes up for with groops, spongs and pightles, which are words not to be sneezed at, unless you have a muckinja or handkerchief to hand.) All of these trees, be they self-sown or deliberately planted, are part of the farm’s nature. They bring the place to life and give the farm its character and identity. Interwoven, these are the fabric of the landscape in the Alde Valley of East Suffolk.

The softness of the land, the fascinating traces of its past use and the varied forms of its trees feel like the song of this landscape, the things that give it voice and which are worthy of celebration. This brings me to a few other features on the farm I have so far left out. The most obvious of these is a long picnic table that runs askance between two veteran oak trees on The Straits.

This 209m tabletop is made of home-milled oak planked here on the farm, with gateposts for legs – banged in by a local company called Kiwi Fencing. There are a lot of legs. About 82 of them in all, set at 2 ½ yard intervals. We milled the oak using a Hudson sawmill by a local company Drywood Ltd. Each board is 2” thick by 18” wide, cut from trees that had succumbed to age or Acute Oak Decline. We have an extraordinary local food scene in the Alde Valley and Suffolk Coast, and we built a table worthy of a true feast with room enough for all.

On 20th May this table will be the setting for the farm’s annual Big Spring Picnic, just one part of the Alde Valley Spring Festival, a four-week celebration of food, farming, landscape and the arts. It brings together a large pop-up exhibition in the farmyard barns with seasonal heritage craft workshop residencies, writing residencies, Farm Suppers and Festival talks. This year’s Spring Festival is named Quercus & Co - A Celebration of the English Oak, Woodland and Wildlife.

The main event is the pop-up Festival Exhibition in the farm barns showing new works by painters, sculptors and chair makers from Suffolk, the UK and abroad. The focus for 2017 is paintings and sculpture about woodland and wildlife, with new chairs from The Suffolk Chair Collection made using local elm, ash and oak. In a second farmyard a range of pop up Workshop Residencies will explore the theme of Handmade. Practices on display at weekends will include felt-making / spinning, knife



**World’s longest oak table at White House Farm**

making, spoon making, chair making, sign writing, stained glass cutting, instrument making, tile design and bronze work. A programme of Farm Suppers and Festival Talks will look at long distance adventures and trees – with guest speakers including Aljos Farjon, Honorary Researcher at Kew, taking about his research into 400+ year old oak trees in England (Fri, 5 May), and Jack Cooke, author of *The Tree Climber’s Guide* (Fri, 12 May). Above all, the purpose of this year’s programme is to celebrate British trees and their importance in the landscape – and in doing this to also highlight the work of tree charities such as the Woodland Trust and the urgent need to look after the health of our native trees. Come and join in.

**Aljos Farjon, Honorary Research Associate at Kew, measuring one of the farm’s veteran oaks**

Quercus & Co festival at White House Farm, 22nd April - 21st May 2017, see [aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk](http://aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk) for information.



# Exhibit Yourself

As the new selling season opens, consider how and what you want to present to the buying public, by **Peter Lanyon**

**W**hy do we makers attend wood fairs and selling events? Are we looking for commissions, sales direct from the stand, a bigger contact list, course bookings? Answers to these questions help me design my stand and financial goals give an idea of how much stock to bring. Many makers have an absolute bottom line of earning at least 3 x the cost of attending the show. That's an arbitrary figure, but it's good to have an idea of a 'successful' figure in mind.

Where are we selling? Are wood fairs the best place to sell our wares? They attract woody types, but how many of them are buyers, and how many are looking for ideas for their own work? Local craft shows can be a way to broaden your audience and can provide an excellent opportunity to promote courses, if you run them. If your work is of high enough quality to be selected, up-market craft and design shows can bring fantastic exposure and rewards.

How do we design our display? When I visit craft shows I note the stands that draw me in, yet I'm often surprised when, on my second trip round the stands, my eye is caught by something exquisite I had missed first time round. So the design of the stand is crucial, as is your place in it. I have seen exhibitors obscuring their own work, or, worse still, standing in front of their neighbour's work. Put your best pieces where the most people will see them, not too high, and not too low, and give them space. Try to resist the urge to pile everything you have onto your stand. If you carefully select a few pieces and set up the context, you might offer a smart portfolio of excellent images of your other work. Some of the best-designed stands I have seen, and the ones that attract me, are often quite sparse, simple and uncluttered, beautifully lit and thoughtfully laid out.

How can you elevate your work? Presentation and packaging add enormously to the perceived value of your work. A hand-printed bag, a box with a few shavings in, some tissue paper all say that you value your work more than putting a collection of objects in a box for people to

rummage through. My own work is all wooden, but I never ever display wooden objects on a wooden background. A splash of colour, a vase of flowers or a neutral backdrop can help to make your work stand out. Are there other exhibitors, with colourful pieces, whose work you could display alongside your own?

We all struggle with pricing. Pricing your work requires thought, experience, and a ruthless honesty with yourself. I feel that people approach my work with a subconscious idea in mind of what an item might cost. If it is far below that, they may decide to pick up a 'bargain', or may walk away feeling it is of little worth. If my prices far exceed what they imagine, they may think I am trying it on, or they may do a mental shift, and look at my work in a new, more reverential light. It is important to exhibit at shows where the attendees' expectations match, more or less, the prices you charge. This price needs to accommodate show costs, workshop costs, materials, and the time we spend on the stand. Have a firm idea of where you stand on haggling. For me, if it is a low cost item I will not budge, but I've found that people buying a large value item may go off happier if they have shaved a bit off the price. I'm fine with that, if it makes them happy. You may feel differently. For me, pricing is a fluid thing. It depends on whether I like the person, and just how keen I am to sell the piece in the first place.

**Peter Lanyon** is a furniture maker, green woodworker and teacher in South Devon. For information on his work and courses: [peterlanyon-furniture.co.uk](http://peterlanyon-furniture.co.uk)



# Wood Fairs and Events

After the woodland work of winter, it's wood fair season. **Living Woods** will have a presence at several, and will be observing, chatting and absorbing ideas at many others. See you there.

**SPRING AND SUMMER**

**Midlands Woodworking and Power Tool Show**

24–25 March 201  
Newark Showground, Lincs  
[www.nelton.co.uk/midlands-woodworking-power-tool-show.html](http://www.nelton.co.uk/midlands-woodworking-power-tool-show.html)

**Alde Valley Spring Festival 'Quercus & Co'**

22 April – 21 May  
White House Farm nr Saxmundham, Suffolk  
[www.aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk](http://www.aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk)

**The ARB Show**

12 – 13 May  
Westonbirt, The National Arboretum, Tetbury, Gloucestershire  
[www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show](http://www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show)

**Weird and Wonderful Wood**

13 - 14 May  
Haughley Park, Wetherden, Stowmarket, Suffolk  
[www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk](http://www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk)

**Devon County Show**

18 - 20 May

Westpoint Centre, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon  
[www.devoncountyshow.co.uk](http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk)

**The Great Scottish Spoon Hoolie**

20 – 21 May  
Tir na Nog, Stirlingshire  
[www.thegreatscottishspoonhoolie.co.uk](http://www.thegreatscottishspoonhoolie.co.uk)

**The Bushcraft Show**

27 - 29 May  
Beehive Farm Woodland Lakes, Rosliston, Derbyshire  
[www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk](http://www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk)

**West's Wood Fair**

returns 16 – 17 June 2018.  
[www.westwoodfair.co.uk/](http://www.westwoodfair.co.uk/)

**Weald and Downland Living Museum Wood Show**

17 – 18 June  
Singleton, Chichester, West Sussex  
[www.wealddown.co.uk](http://www.wealddown.co.uk)

**Royal Highland Show 2017**

22 - 25 June  
Royal Highland Centre,



©Courtesy of the Arboricultural Association

nr Edinburgh  
[www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org)

**Blackdown Hills Woodland & Country Fair**

Details not yet available.  
[www.woodbiz.co.uk](http://www.woodbiz.co.uk)

**Kent County Show**

7 - 9 July  
Kent Event Centre and Showground, Maidstone, Kent  
[www.kentshowground.co.uk](http://www.kentshowground.co.uk)

**Great Yorkshire Show**

11 - 13 July  
Great Yorkshire Showground,



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

**Holkham Country Fair**

22 – 23 July  
Holkham Hall, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk  
[www.holkhamcountryfair.co.uk](http://www.holkhamcountryfair.co.uk)

**Strumpshaw Tree Fair**

22 – 23 July  
Strumpshaw Steam Museum and Park, nr Norwich  
[www.strumpshawtreefair.co.uk](http://www.strumpshawtreefair.co.uk)

**Royal Welsh Show**

24 - 27 July  
Builth Wells, Powys  
[www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show](http://www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show)

**New Forest and Hampshire Show**

25 - 27 July  
Brockenhurst, Hampshire  
[www.newforestshow.co.uk](http://www.newforestshow.co.uk)

**Woodfest Wales**

29 – 30 July  
Caerwys, North Wales  
[www.woodfestwales.co.uk](http://www.woodfestwales.co.uk)

**Spoonfest**

4 – 6 August  
Edale, Hope Valley, Derbyshire  
[spoonfest.co.uk](http://spoonfest.co.uk)



©Courtesy of the Arboricultural Association

### Wilderness Gathering

16 – 20 August  
West Knoyle, Wiltshire  
[www.wildernessgathering.co.uk](http://www.wildernessgathering.co.uk)

### South Downs Show and Hampshire Woodfair

19 - 20 August  
Queen Elizabeth Country Park,  
nr Petersfield, Hampshire [www.southdownsshow.co.uk](http://www.southdownsshow.co.uk)

### Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

26 - 27 August  
Sturminster Newton, Dorset  
[www.stockgaylard.com](http://www.stockgaylard.com)

### Leicestershire Countryside Show

August Bank Holiday dates to  
be announced  
Beacon Hill Park nr  
Woodhouse Eaves  
[www.leicscountryparks.org.uk](http://www.leicscountryparks.org.uk)

### AUTUMN

#### Wychwood Forest Fair

3 September  
Charlbury, Oxfordshire  
[www.wychwoodproject.org](http://www.wychwoodproject.org)

#### Confor Woodland Show

7–8 September 2017  
Longleat, Wiltshire  
[www.confor.org.uk/about-confor/confor-woodland-show](http://www.confor.org.uk/about-confor/confor-woodland-show)

#### Belmont Woodfest & Country Fair

9–10 September 2017  
Faversham, Kent  
[www.belmont-house.org/events](http://www.belmont-house.org/events)

#### APF Exhibition

will return in 2018.  
Ragley Estate, Warwickshire  
[www.apfexhibition.co.uk](http://www.apfexhibition.co.uk)

#### Bentley Weald Woodfair

15 - 17 September  
Lewes, East Sussex  
[www.bentley.org.uk/events](http://www.bentley.org.uk/events)

#### European Woodworking Show

16 - 17 September  
Crossing Temple Barns,  
Witham, Essex  
[www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu](http://www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu)

#### The Dorset Do, Supporting Traditional Crafts

23 September  
St Leonard and St Ives Village  
Hall, Ringwood  
[dorset-do.co.uk](http://dorset-do.co.uk)

#### Surrey Hills Wood Fair

30 September – 1 October  
Birtley House Estate, Bramley,  
Surrey  
[surreyhills.org/events](http://surreyhills.org/events)

#### Woodland & Craft Fair,

October date to be confirmed  
Ickworth Estate (National  
Trust), Bury St Edmunds,  
Suffolk  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events/](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events/)

#### Tweed Valley Forest Festival

21 – 29 October  
Tweed Valley Forest Park,  
Peebles, Tweeddale  
[forest-festival.com](http://forest-festival.com)



Graham Wood

#### Peebles Wood Market

21 - 22 October  
Tweed Green & Community  
Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders  
[www.forest-festival.com/wood-market](http://www.forest-festival.com/wood-market)

Great Yorkshire Showground  
[www.skpromotions.co.uk/index.html](http://www.skpromotions.co.uk/index.html)

*Do you know of more wood  
fairs and woodland events?  
Please let us know and we'll  
include them next time,  
[nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk).*

#### North of England Woodworking and Power Tool Show

17–19 November 2017-01-23

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# For the Love of Trees

**Judith Millidge** on this year's 800th anniversary celebration of the Forest Charter and plans for the future



Andrew Walmsley / Alamy Stock Photo

*Climber enjoying a beech tree, Shotover Forest, Oxford*

'Nothing beats a barefoot walk in the woods to refresh the mind and body.'

'Trees have a power to capture the imagination of anyone.'

'They are totally indispensable.'

More than 40,000 people from all walks of life have contributed tree stories like those excerpted above to the Charter for Trees, Woods and People website ([www.treecharter.uk](http://www.treecharter.uk)). These stories will form the roots of the new 2017 Forest Charter. The Charter will be launched on 6 November 2017, the 800th anniversary of the original Forest Charter, at Lincoln Castle, the depository of one of the original charters from 1217.

The themes of a 21st century forest charter are very different to those of the 13th, but they seek to re-establish the importance of trees for all of us. We are no longer dependent on woodland for everyday living, with fewer of us

needing it to graze our livestock or to gather firewood on a daily basis, but we undoubtedly need trees more than ever.

Beccy Speight, Chief Executive of the Woodland Trust, said, 'Trees, woods and forest livelihoods in the UK are facing more threats today than at any time in history, yet are consistently undervalued and overlooked in decision-making and practice in all areas of society. We risk losing trees from our lives and landscapes if we don't act before it is too late.'

The Tree Charter is being drawn up by more than 50 organisations under the good auspices of the Woodland Trust. It will consist of ten key principles, defined by the stories gathered from people across the UK, which show how trees enhance their lives.

Like its 1217 counterpart, the Tree Charter will be a physical document with copies displayed in key locations across

the UK. It will also exist on a dedicated website for everyone to access online, with the stories that helped define it, archived by theme.

Carved wooden poles reflecting each chapter theme will be installed in public locations across the UK as a lasting reminder of the charter's existence and of the importance of trees in our lives.

Get involved! From 27 March you can demonstrate your support for the charter simply by clicking on the 'Count me in' link on the Treecharter website. For each signature, the Woodland Trust will plant a tree.

In the long term, it is hoped that the new Charter for Trees will influence policy makers and legislation, and place trees and woodlands back where they belong: at the centre of all our lives.

■ [treecharter.uk](http://treecharter.uk)  
[lincolncastle.com](http://lincolncastle.com)



# LETTERS

Nancy,

I feel the photo on page 45, in your latest Living Woods Book Review, *The Wood Book* described as 'Juniperus virginiana' is in fact Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium sp.*). Especially as the foliage is obviously coloured up for autumn and there is nice row of Cypress knees at the water's edge? The other two pics on same page may also be Swamp Cypress too!

Ian Gourlay  
(former Wood Anatomist, Plant Sci., Dept., Uni. of Oxford)

Ian, Thank you for the correction. I wonder how many other readers spotted the error? NPW



Hi Nancy,

After having read issue 42, I couldn't stop thinking about WOODLOTS! I've often wondered about leasing a woodland, but even the thought of the potential expense puts me off. The Scottish Woodlot Association (SWA) really have got it sorted. I had a quick look for potential UK sites but all I could find was [www.woodnet.org.uk/woodlots](http://www.woodnet.org.uk/woodlots), who pair up people with timber to people who need timber. This is of course a really great idea but nothing like SWA.

Is there anything like SWA in the UK? If not, why not? What can we do about it? Could we copy the Scottish format? (I'm sure they would help.)

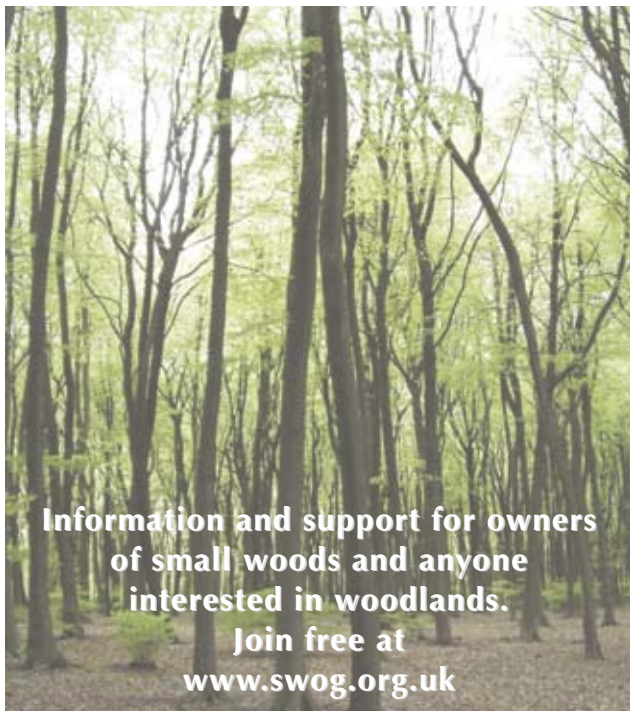


Have you had any other enquiries like this? Just wondered if there was much interest.

Tony Tohill

Readers, Can you assist? Are you interested in forming a hutting movement like that in Scotland? Let me know. NPW

Small Woodland  
Owners' Group  
[www.swog.org.uk](http://www.swog.org.uk)



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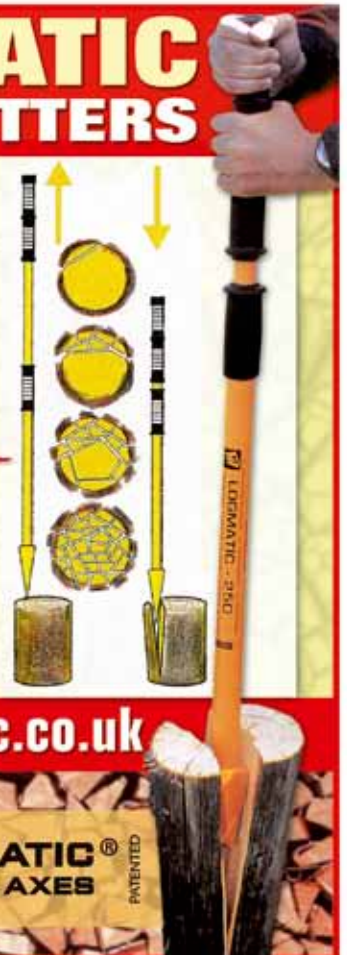
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# Making and Being

**O**f all activities I undertake in life, I am at my best mentally, physically and spiritually when making stools and chairs. Everywhere else, I'm a bit awkward and uncoordinated, I rush around trying to 'get things done' and I am easily distracted.

But in the workshop, I find my movements become measured and graceful, my hands know instinctively what to do, how much pressure to exert, when to push or pull, where to cut or trim. As my mind focuses on the process of making, other thoughts or worries are banished.

I'm fortunate to have a beautiful semi-outdoor workspace in an elevated position. It is surrounded by trees and, as I do most of my chair making between the months of May and September, I have the added pleasure of being in the open air, feeling the sun and breeze on my skin and hearing the melodic sound of birds singing around me. The space inside is peaceful and inspiring, conducive to working slowly and with care.

Unseasoned hazel is my primary material and I love the 'give and take' of working with it. Natural materials always arouse our senses and inspire creativity but there is an extra 'something' about working with green wood.

Of course the smell, the feel and the beauty are pleasing, but deep inside unseasoned wood there are tensions, resistance and energy that differentiate it from other materials.

The making process is both collaboration and struggle. I might have to 'persuade' components into place. When I push in one direction and the stick resists, I can feel its energy and I work with it. That energy, or tension, is the force that holds green wood structures together and makes them strong.

Chairs and stools made with unseasoned hazel echo the contours and textures of nature and also reflect the character of the person who made them.

Using the things we have made makes us feel proud and happy. It is such a simple thing to do – make a chair, make a stool – be happy!

**Alison Ospina** has been making green wood chairs for twenty years at her workshop near Skibbereen in West Cork. She runs one and three day courses in the spring and summer months, in which students design and make their own stool or armchair of locally coppiced hazel. [www.greenwoodchairs.com](http://www.greenwoodchairs.com)



©Tom Wheeler

Look at what's available at [www.woodlands.co.uk](http://www.woodlands.co.uk)



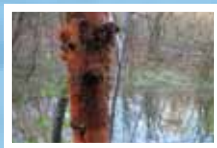
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