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Living Woods Magazine

Rescuing London's Fallen Trees

Would You Give Your Child an Axe?

We Interview Norwegian Woodman Lars Mytting

Plus: Wood Fairs, Pods, Chainsaws and Floods

Contents

Editor's comment

This is the first issue of *Living Woods* under my editorship, and I can report that there's a new mood afoot in Britain. Every person to whom I have mentioned the magazine and its readers has responded with real excitement. Even crusty urbanites want to share their plans to learn to use a chainsaw, install a wood fuel stove, take part in tree-planting efforts. Of course, readers of this magazine know that woodlands are more than just trees, but add to this mood growing numbers of community woodlands, the creative activities of off-grid 'new wood culture' carvers and calls in Parliament for the planting of 200m trees and, well, it starts to add up to something already established and growing steadily.

So it's a privilege to have been given the editorship of *Living Woods* at this time, and to go forward with the vision of its founder Nick Gibbs. We're now a quarterly magazine with a new design. From the revealing interview with Lars Mytting to the last page, I hope you enjoy this issue of *Living Woods*. Let us know what you think.

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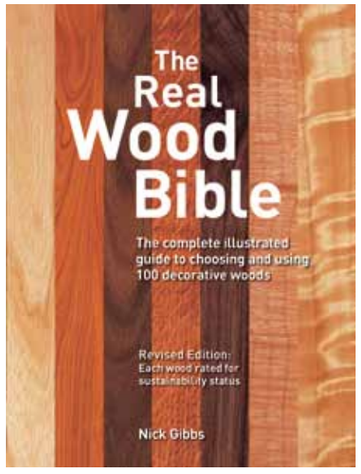
NEWS

Grants, Tickets, Events, Spoons, Music

The Real Wood Bible Updated



Announcing the re-issue of an essential reference for the workshop, *The Real Wood Bible* by Nick Gibbs, founder of this magazine. In three hundred colour photographs, an A to Z of wood specimens is pictured finished and unfinished and in cross section with Nick's expert notes on characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. The revised edition gives sustainability status of each wood – crucial information for woodworkers. Firefly publishers, £14.95, paperback, from 23 May.

Biochar: New Ash Dieback Hope

A private lab, Bartlett Tree Experts, in partnership with the University of Reading, has announced a new area of research that may offer gleam of hope in fighting chalara: biochar. Over the next six years, a study will look into the benefits of airspading purified charcoal, biochar, into the soil around mature ash trees and measuring the effects. So far, six ash saplings treated with biochar have resisted ash dieback for three years, though surrounded by trees infected with the highly contagious disease. Dr Glynn Percival, head plant physiologist at the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratory, says, 'A magic bullet does not exist' but he believes that 'using enriched biochar could help improve the survival prospects for the UK's ash trees.' We await results.

Grant Applications Now

The Countryside Stewardship's woodland creation grant application system is now open. If you are a farmer or other land manager, you may apply for a two year works grant to plant and protect young trees, with a possible ten year supporting grant. But act quickly, as the deadline is 31 March and applicants must request a map from Natural England by 24 March. Search 'woodland creation grant' on www.gov.uk.

Spoonfest Ticket Sales

Mark your diary. Tickets for Spoonfest, the international celebration of the carved wooden spoon, go on sale Saturday, 9 April, at 11am. Last year, tickets for the main event sold out in days. There's nothing like Spoonfest anywhere, a gathering of the top spooncarvers in the world teaching a myriad of courses. There's camping, campfires and unrepeatable atmosphere. 5 – 7 August, Prefest courses 2 – 4 August, at Edale, Hope Valley, Derbyshire. spoonfest.co.uk

Community Woodland Events in Wales

Llais Y Goedwig, the community woodland network for Wales, is hosting key networking events on 19 March in South Wales and 9 April in North Wales, followed by the Community Woodland National Gathering on 26 and 27 May. Click on News & Events at llaisygoedwig.org.uk.

Three Month Free Trial at UK Rural Skills

Are you a rural skills training provider, instructor or employer? You may be interested to hear about not-for-profit UK Rural Skills (UKRS), a new training accreditation scheme to aid training providers deliver courses to accredited levels. If you'd like to take up a three-month free trial membership, go to www.ukruralskills.co.uk, then let us know what you think.

Forest Live Concerts Booking Open

Forest Live has a brilliant lineup of show-stopping musicians for this year's concerts. Now in its sixteenth season, Forest Live concerts combine unforgettable gigs with unique atmosphere in seven stunning forest locations. Events start on 17 June and run through 10 July. www.forestry.gov.uk/music or 03000 680 400.

International Day of Forests 21 March 2016

The United Nations is sponsoring an International Day of Forests on Monday, 21 March to raise awareness around the globe of the importance of forests and trees. While deforestation continues apace across the planet, 1.6 billion people continue to depend on ever-shrinking forests for their livelihood. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes, 'We must invest in our world's forests.' If you would like to create your own event, view the special event webcast from UN Headquarters, tweet in support or simply find out more, go to www.un.org/en/events/forestsday/.

Europe-wide 'My Project' Results Stunning

Our friends at Wood-Mizer are happy to announce the winners of their first Europe-wide 'My Project' competition. The forty entries from eleven countries were naturally created from wood processed on Wood-Mizer sawmills. We defy you to resist La Solane, the first prize winner in the Buildings category, cut on an LT40 mill. This enchanting, rustic treehouse with balcony is sited in the eastern Pyrenees. www.woodmizer-europe.com then look for 'news'.

Charter for Trees, Woods and People 2017

In 1217, just two years after his father had grudgingly signed Magna Carta, the young Henry III signed the Charter of the Forest that restored the rights of freemen to forage, gather wood and graze their livestock in the royal forests.

To commemorate this anniversary, the Woodland Trust is leading more than 45 organisations in calling for a new forest charter for the 21st century. Their message is a simple one: we need to act now before it's too late to celebrate and secure the future our trees and woodland. Our country's woods and trees are facing unprecedented pressures from development, disease and climate change. They risk being neglected, undervalued and forgotten and yet they provide so much – timber, protection from pollution, wildlife sanctuaries and simply as places to unwind and relax.

The 21st century charter will be rooted in individuals' stories and memories; it will provide guidance and inspiration to shape government policy; and will seek to enlist Charter Champions who will inspire and rally friends and communities to stand up for trees and woodland. The campaign was launched in London in January. ■

Visit the website www.treecharter.uk to learn more and join in. – **Judith Millidge**

Charter
for Trees, Woods and People

INTERVIEW

Norwegian Woodman

Lars Mytting, author of *Norwegian Wood*, talks about handmade tools, obsession, and the rewards of being the provider, by **Nancy Wood**

Photographs: Robert Wilson

Lars Mytting is the kind of man you'd be glad to spend an evening with, perhaps with beer in hand, settled in by the woodstove. Conversation would progress from practical matters of tools and weather to more personal thoughts, the sort of stuff that tends to surface only in front of a good fire.

Since his best-selling book, *Norwegian Wood, Chopping, Stacking and Drying Wood* the Scandinavian Way, was published in Norway in 2011 and translated into ten languages last year, hundreds of thousands of readers have spent a few captivating hours with Mytting.

A fiction-writer and journalist by trade, Mytting was originally asked by his publisher to produce a photographic book about the most obsessive woodpile-makers in Norway. It was to be a humorous book, with an edge of mockery. But Mytting could not do it. He'd been inspired by his elderly neighbour, Ottar, to look more deeply into the resonance of wood in the Norwegian soul. What he has created is a narrative of Norway and winter, of history, practical advice, folklore, tools, and technology with lots of science in the mix.

Mytting spoke to me from his study at home in Elverum, in the midst of a heavy snowstorm answering questions from some British readers. 'I get *lots* of emails from readers in the UK,' he says.

First, so many of his readers here live in cities. Did he have any tips for storing wood when space is limited?

'Yes, the one thing to do very often is to put it in the basement,' he said, clearly not quite *au fait* with truly limited urban space, 'The important thing is that it is completely dry when it gets inside, or else it is likely to get mould and that's really awful.'

'There's a magic trick that has been used in Norway for a long time: to cut the wood in double lengths. Say you need lengths of 30cm, so you cut the wood into lengths of 60 cm, and dry it on site before moving it. Then cut the wood to the shorter length with a saw in town. All you need is access to a splitter that's able to handle the long log, but it is amazingly easier to move the double lengths on a trailer. But the logs must be completely dry.

'Then it's really crucial you use all the empty space you can find: a verandah or a basement. I know many doll's houses that are used to store wood!'

Really? Perhaps he means a play house?

His first laugh of the conversation erupts. 'Yes, a play house! A doll's house would store maybe a little bit of kindling.'

Next question: English planning authorities sometimes challenge even the simplest wood shelter, so if we are unable to put wood undercover to dry in the woodland, how much longer will it take to dry out to a reasonable level?

'The first part of the answer is that it depends on the humidity in the air. In Norway we have a tradition to keep it outside without a roof. The idea is to find the driest months of the year. Which leads us to an age-old discussion: to dry wood with the bark up or the bark down,' Mytting replies. This is a question that has, er, split Norway and, he says, is capable of breaking up weddings and christenings.

'The second part of the answer is to stack the wood bark up -- the bark is water repellant. Norwegians who live near the coast are almost religious about it and believe very, very strictly that [wood] should be stored bark up.'

Suddenly Mytting veers off into the peculiar requirements of drying oak and you understand how the book ranged so widely around its subject. 'There are people who say that oak *benefits* from a bit of rain. I heard from the main engineer of a Norwegian furniture giant who had observed that, as it dries, oak shrinks at the ends so it won't let the humidity out. So some people *water* their oak to let it breathe. This is quite advanced, though.'

He returns to the subject, 'If you have birch trees, then you can beat the authorities. Birch bark is waterproof. That's why it is used in old log houses as the surface of the roof. The turf is there just to keep it down.

'Take long peels of birch bark, stripped off in spring

> **But that is the difference between a handmade tool and a chainsaw: the scars of the work are there in the handle and the head.**

when the sap flows and lay it over the wood, even more so when you have limited drying time.

'The main thing is to have as much wind and sun as possible. If there has to be a choice between sun and wind, choose wind.'

We don't do much leaf felling here in Britain, I say, where you fell the tree then leave the leaves on it to allow transpiration to continue. Is it really useful?

'Leaf felling speeds up drying but not by a large percentage and only until the leaves are brown. Most of the benefit is in the first week. And it serves a purpose: it makes it much easier to transport on rough ground. If you leave a short length of branches at the end, you have a handle to drag the wood behind you.'

One UK woodsman asked whether the strictly seasonal method of wood drying in Norway was likely to work so well in rainy Britain.

'It is hard to give firm advice for all climates. Different levels of humidity and wind give quite different results. In mountainous areas of Norway, it requires just a few weeks to get logs fully dry. Once just eighteen days! The wood was left in the sun with a lot of wind. They were perfect, nearly artificial, drying conditions.

'Some people exaggerate the length of time required to dry wood. For oak, even two to three years. It may be that in some places there are only two months with a dip in humidity and it is damp the rest of the year. Then the next year, again there are two months with the same dip in humidity, so instead of six months of proper drying, it takes three years, but still with only two months of proper drying each year!'

Early in *Norwegian Wood*. Mytting signals his intent that the book address matters beyond the practical. He opens the book with a haunting work by Norwegian lumberjack poet Hans Børli that begins,

The scent of fresh wood
is among the last things you will forget
when the veil falls.

I ask him how, given Norwegians' celebrated emotional reserve, he was able to tease out their spiritual connection with wood, firewood, winter.

'The most important thing was to become obsessed about the topic myself. To write in such depth, the writer has to become just as obsessive as the obsessive people he writes about. I spent about two years chopping wood in different districts of Norway.'

He goes on, 'You cannot simply ask people, 'How do you feel?' about chopping wood. This is the sports announcer question! But when I asked about what people were doing, how they did it, a much bigger story unfolded, all the minute details, the affection, the care – *then* you get the story.'

'Today, in the society we live in, everyone's on facebook and twitter and everyone is quick to drop a line. No anniversary seems complete without posting a remark, 'Thanks for our five wonderful years of marriage.' Many men fall short of this language, but they do find it possible to show love in a practical way, like fixing the brakes on the car. In Norway we have a saying, 'Don't say it with flowers, say it with firewood.'

Mytting's woodpile, organised by season with hardwood kept for winter

'Some of the readers say to me, 'Finally I understand a bit about my father, who was always out in the woodshed and was not inside with us.' These men wanted to make something that would be used throughout the winter.'

So this book about chopping wood is really a book about love?

'That's what the Spanish publisher said.'

Who taught him about chopping and stacking?

'No one. I grew up in what I call Norway's electrical age, when electricity was cheap. But I think the critical age is when you have children yourself. I went to a school reunion when we were all about thirty years old. No one was interested in firewood, not one person. Then the next reunion I went to, we were all forty and had children and all the men were talking about firewood!

'I think it's quite a genuine reflex that kicks in, being the 'provider'. It's been scientifically proven, a big survey in Sweden, they asked thousands of people and found that after a certain age when you get a family and children, you get an interest in firewood as well.'

How many axes did he own before he wrote the book?

'Four. I was not completely off the mark.'

And now?

'I have twenty-eight axes! Now I have very specialized tools that I really enjoy using. They are handmade, and that makes you connected to the person who made it, for better or worse. If they were skillful, then you're thankful, but if they were not…'

> **If there has to be a choice between sun and wind, choose wind.**

Are there axes that come more easily to his hand than others?

'Ah, here I have an exception to my own rule. I have one mass-produced Fiskars series. It's so well-made. They do really, really long studies on ergonomics. There's really clever thinking in their design.

'Then Wetterlings and Gransfors are both admirable tools, beautifully crafted.

Of his twenty-eight axes, did any of them come from Ottar, the neighbour who inspired the book?

'No, that is such a personal thing. It is such a personal thing. But that is the difference between a handmade tool and a chainsaw: the scars of the work are there in the handle and the head.

However, Ottar did leave Mytting a legacy.

'Absolutely, one to be grateful for. He enabled me to find the emotional weight, the connection between humans and nature and the seasons. He placed himself in the seasons. Early, early in the spring, he was preparing for another winter when the winter wasn't over yet.

'I have that feeling myself. I enjoy those moments every day, when my children come down in the morning and it's cold. And I have made the fire.'

Why You Should Give Your Child An Axe
(and how to do it safely)

From parent-and-toddler groups to teenagers, **James Kendall** teaches children to face risk with confidence, sound technique and a sharp edge

Use a short chopping block and kneel down to begin instruction

These days, when children are wrapped up in cotton wool to keep them safe from the perceived hazards of modern life, I am an increasingly loud champion of allowing children to take risks and to take some responsibility for managing their own safety. Children need a compelling lure to draw them into the wild and away from the all-powerful computer screen. At our Woodland Classroom in Wales, we use a variety of methods. Among them, I teach children to use an axe.

Many parents and teachers feel alarmed at the thought of giving a razor sharp axe to a child. But consider what the great Roald Dahl said about risk:

"...the more risks you allow children to take, the better they learn to take care of themselves. If you never let them take any risks, then I believe they become very prone to injury. Boys should be allowed to climb tall trees and walk along the tops of high walls and dive into the sea from high rocks... The same with girls. I like the type of child who takes risks. Better by far than the one who never does so."

Sometimes a voice in my head jostles for centre stage, warning that there may be a terrible accident and that it would be better to just let kids play at something safer. But then I see the children's eyes light up with excitement when I say that they can use the axe or knife or go fire lighting. That danger is alluring and I think it's a great weapon in our fight against the screen time of the great indoors. After all, children are just like us grown ups: they don't want to hurt themselves.

I regularly run woodland activity days for kids of all ages and I want to explain to you how I teach kids to use an axe safely. I've had a lot of success with this method, even with very young children, and I hope to give you confidence so you can do it for yourself with your own child.

Splitting firewood is a simple activity that kids grasp quickly. It develops hand-eye co-ordination and builds confidence. Also, no fine craft skills are required. Whoever heard of an ugly piece of firewood?

Getting Started

I like to introduce children to the axe before the knife. The axe's long handle maintains a good distance between the hands and the blade when splitting wood, so there's less chance of small fingers getting in the way. For newbies, I feel it's a safe introduction to sharp tools before progressing on to something more complex, like knife work, which requires greater dexterity.

When teaching children to use an axe, I employ a short chopping block, and I kneel down rather than remaining standing. When you're splitting, think about where the axe would land if you missed your target. Demonstrate this to the child at a very slow speed. Kneeling down means a miss-swung axe will not go into your leg. If it misses the block, at worst you've got a blunted axe in the ground and a trip to your shed for a sharpening stone.

Buddying Up

For children who have never handled an axe before, I recommend starting off by working in pairs. First the adult holds the axe (resting it on top of the log you intend to chop) whilst your young helper hits the poll of the axe with a heavy, wooden mallet to drive the axe through. At the Woodland Classroom, once I'm confident that the child is competent, I buddy them up with another child. Whoever holds the axe takes charge, as they are the one holding the dangerous tool. They tell *their* partner with the mallet when to start hitting and when to stop. This encourages communication, teamwork and responsibility. I ask them to swap roles regularly too.

Some teachers prefer to have beginners hold the axe at ninety degrees to their body so that any swing is away from the user. I don't do this myself, but I'd encourage you to try it out and see what you prefer.

Going It Alone

Once a child is ready to split on their own, we move to the next stage, splitting by swinging. I demonstrate aiming the axe with a slow swing toward the log before I go for the full speed chop, and I ask them to show me this too. That tells me they've understood the motion. Kids can get carried away with their enthusiasm and may swing the axe from all the way behind their head and beyond, which puts them at risk of losing control of their swing.

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Starting Out Splitting: Some Tips

- Use a sturdy, flat chopping block, free of nails – essential for safe splitting.
- Don't wear gloves. You've got better grip without them.
- The right tool for the job! Choose a size of axe that the child can control safely.
- Keep your axe sharp. A sharp tool is much safer to use than a blunt one. It will cut cleaner, respond better to your control and require less force.
- Match the size of the logs you're splitting with what your axe can handle. If the tool struggles then the child won't have success, leading to frustration.
- Place the log at the point farthest from you on the block. If you miss, it's more likely to hit the block.
- Place the widest face of the log towards you to make it an easy target. We want to give youngsters the best chance of success
- Always aim to split the log in half, each time

Blood Bubble

'Blood bubble', a term familiar to outdoor activity leaders, is a technique to keep those using sharp tools at a safe distance from other people. To find your blood bubble, hold out your tool at your furthest arm's length and slowly draw a sphere with it in the air. This is your safe working space where no one else can enter. If someone enters my blood bubble, I stop what I'm doing and put the tool down. Ask the child to find their blood bubble each time they begin to work with sharp tools. It's good practice and you're empowering the child to take responsibility for their own and others' safety.

If the axe gets stuck in the wood, which it often does, I teach the child not to try to pull the log from the axe with their hands as this puts fingers too close to the blade. Teach them to work it free by knocking the log against the edge of the chopping block. Much safer!

These methods have worked well for me in my teaching. Touch wood! Of course, this is "a" way to use an axe with children, not "the" way. If you're someone who already uses axes or other sharp tools with children and you've had success with a different technique, I'd love to hear about it.

In the end, our children deserve to fully engage with nature, and that means they'll encounter some risk. It's our responsibility to pass on good teachings. We owe them the gifts of tool-use and competence.

I'll give the last word on risk to Richard Louv, author of the fantastic book *Last Child in the Woods*, which I highly recommend;

"An indoor (or backseat) childhood does reduce some dangers to children; but other risks are heightened, including risks to physical and psychological health, risk to children's concept and perception of community, risk to self-confidence and the ability to discern true danger."

James Kendall is a Forest School Leader, Social Forester and experienced Woodland Skills Tutor. He is a co-founder of Woodland Classroom, providing forest school programmes, social forestry sessions and which works with schools to promote outdoor learning.

Find their blog and free resources for getting kids into the great outdoors by visiting the website www.woodlandclassroom.com They've also produced a YouTube video demonstrating their safe axe use with kids.

Photographs: Lea Wakeman and Tracey Reynolds

Capital Cuts

Urban eco-startup reclaims prized wood from London's fallen trees, by **Jeff Segal**

Photography: John Angerson

The next time you see a tree being felled on a city street, in an urban park or in someone's garden, take a moment to think about what's going to happen to it. The chances are that once it's down it will be speedily sliced up for firewood, chipped for forest bark, carted off to an incinerator or pulped for paper.

Everybody knows our street and garden trees are a priceless resource with enormous benefits. There are systems like CAVAT that can calculate a monetary value for community trees. So why doesn't the same apply when they've come to the end of their lives? Even a tree blown over in a storm or struck by disease and decay can still yield a substantial volume of high-quality wood. And if a healthy specimen has been felled simply because it's blocking a driveway it's irresponsible to just chuck it away.

Nowadays we recycle almost everything else, but our trees don't seem to count. Our used glass makes fresh glass, our old paper makes new paper, our recycled metal makes drinks cans. But our old trees? A waste product to be got rid of fast.

Yet some of our commonest city trees will yield striking timber, prized by cabinetmakers. The London plane, for example – seen on every main road in some boroughs – produces a unique lacewood figure when it's quarter-sawn. The fruit trees like cherries, crab apples, plums and pears are known for their delicately coloured and figured wood. The sycamores on all those railway embankments can rival American maples with their hard, white wood and their lovely ripples. Even

Timberyard partners process an oak in Furzefield Wood, l to r, Rod Sazio, Jeff Segal, Paul Shrubshall. In background, Iain Loasby of Rivenwood Coppice, Roy the Suffolk Punch horse, Matt Waller, Annie Challis and Tim Little of Hawthorn Heavy Horses

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the laburnums and robinias of suburban gardens will make beautiful furniture.

But still thousands of tonnes of timber from trees like these get destroyed every year in London alone. It's not hard to see why.

Logs are heavy, unwieldy and dangerous to move, and it costs hundreds of pounds to rent a lorry with a grab crane to take them away for sawing. A single oak can easily weigh five tonnes when it's full of water.

Unlike paper, glass and other commonly recycled materials, there's no commercial market for felled trees. Timber merchants don't as a rule buy or collect individual trees, except maybe something rare and valuable like an old English walnut.

Finally, tree surgeons and their clients are impatient to clear the felled or fallen tree. The arborists usually have to be in and out in a day, and they don't have the time to saw the timber themselves. The stem itself might be obstructing a footpath or blocking a garden and has to be shifted fast.

But what if a small team of experts could arrive once the tree surgeons have left, bring in their portable milling equipment, saw the felled log into boards and take away the timber to be air-dried nearby?

A year ago two friends and I – all close neighbours in South London – decided to form an eco-startup called Timberyard.co.uk to do just that.

I'm a cabinetmaker by trade, while my colleague Paul Shrubshall is a qualified arborist, furniture maker and gardener. The third original member is Angus Hanton, the founder of woodlands.co.uk and the publisher of *Living Woods*. We've since been joined by Rod Sazio, a trainee arboriculturist and forestry worker.

We set up Timberyard to rescue threatened timber, to promote the idea of urban forestry and to make a modest change in the way that people think about city trees.

Its roots go back to 2010, when we reprieved a 200-year-old London plane lying on its side outside a vicarage in Herne Hill. The chainsaw gang had already started cutting it into rings, but the church authorities agreed to stop them and we brought in a Lucas Mill contractor to process it on site. The Lucas Mill was tweaked to maximise the output of flecked lacewood, and after five years of seasoning we've now sold all the wood to joiners, cabinetmakers, instrument makers and other craft workers.

Timberyard now works closely with a network of friendly and supportive tree surgeons and other arborists to identify prospects and get the agreement of the property owner to bring in the mill. We stack and air-dry all the wood we've sawn for at least two or three years and then sell it at modest prices to cover our costs.

Over the year or so that we've been in operation we've millled oak, ash, beech, horse chestnut, cedar, plum, birch and walnut, and we have jobs lined up that will replenish our stock of London plane. Our aim is to focus on varieties that will appeal to specialist woodworkers and that might be difficult to source from commercial woodyards. So pippy oak, perhaps, rather than prime oak, and spalted beech rather than plain.

Paul Shrubshall operates the chainsaw mill

©Jeff Segal

There are limits to what Timberyard can do, of course. We're just a small team with portable equipment, little load-carrying capacity and restricted space for drying. But if we have to leave the big trees to the big timber merchants, we hope to be able to supply the smaller species like hawthorns, whitebeams and hollies that aren't of much interest to them.

We're already beginning to create a small but promising market in locally grown hardwood. Joiners and cabinetmakers are coming to us for timber with what they call "a story". The clients for their furniture want a detailed provenance and a local connection – the same things they look for in their artisan bread.

We can name the exact place where each tree was grown, the dates when it was felled and milled and its estimated age. So if you're looking for authenticity and sustainability in your wood, not just in your cup of coffee, have a look at www.timberyard.co.uk and get in touch.

Jeff Segal is a cabinetmaker, a tree lover and a founder member of the Timberyard.co.uk team.

Bomb fragments lodged in trees

Milling timber from London trees carries a lot of risks and difficulties that you won't find in the countryside, but the biggest frustration is metal. London trees are full of it. It can blunt the teeth on a chainsaw, knock the tips off a circular sawblade and leave its telltale blue-black stains in the wood where the tannin in species like oak reacts with ferrous metal.

Older trees, which often marked field or property boundaries, can be peppered with fencing nails and bits of barbed wire. You learn to look for these at around waist height, but don't rely on your eyesight: sweep the log carefully with a good-quality, deep-penetrating metal detector before every fresh cut and listen for the beep.

Square-edged, blacksmith-made iron nails are easy to recognise, but higher up a garden tree you can sometimes find newer steel fixings that parents have hammered in so their children can climb the trunk.

But the real speciality of London's trees – the one thing that's guaranteed to infuriate woodworkers – is shrapnel.

German bombers caused widespread destruction in London and other big cities in the second world war. And it wasn't only the docks and factories that suffered: even the genteel suburban streets around Timberyard's Dulwich base were heavily bombed during the Blitz of October 1940 and hit again by V1 flying bombs in 1944.

Bomb fragments did of course lodge in trees, but much of what the miller finds will be from anti-aircraft shells. Formations of bombers met heavy fire on their way into London and out again, with hundreds of shells exploding in the air around them. Every shard fell to the ground – and thousands of them became embedded into trees.

Bizarrely, trees in big public parks can be particularly badly affected. That's because batteries of anti-aircraft artillery were often located in parks, where there were no buildings to block the gunners' view of the sky.

Pieces of shrapnel will tend to be bigger and more irregular than nails, but whatever the source of the metal in your log you have to find it before your saw does. It can be an arduous task to pull it out. Sometimes pincers or a chisel will do it, but if not you have to chop out a block of wood with the chainsaw. Either way slows you down.

You might count yourself lucky if you miss that nail or shell fragment entirely, but you're really just passing the problem on to the cabinetmaker or joiner who buys your wood. The metal will show up soon enough when they put the board on their table saw or run it through their planer. ■

New Life in the Heart of the Forest

For **Tom Richards**, volunteering at Tortworth Arboretum has given him the key to a new life

For much of my life I have been afflicted with addiction. For many years, I felt I was a victim of life and of a string of tragic events over which I had no control. In the worst times, I became lost in a dark forest of isolation. If nothing had changed, I was on course for total self-destruction.

Now, at 33, I have been able to muster the strength to clean myself up. My previous efforts had failed and I was fearful that this attempt would end in failure as well. But this time, something is different: I have discovered the joy of volunteering at Tortworth Arboretum. This single act appears to be the key to the happy and fulfilling life that I have searched so long for.

I took my first drink the night my grandmother died while I was looking after her at the age of 14. That evening, I rang the rest of the family to inform them of my grandmother's death, then I sat alone at her house, lost in grief. My parents had split up and my relationship with my father had broken down. I was very close to my grandmother and I hero-worshipped my dad. The combined losses were too much for me to bear. I had no idea how to cope. I decided that a sip of whiskey might help. After all, a drink always seemed to help my dad when he was down.

I remember that first sip well. I hated the taste, but after a few minutes I could feel all my pain melting away. A wave of warmth and confidence washed over me. I felt that I had arrived and I drank myself into a stupor.

The next morning, I was really ill, but that did not put me off. I continued to drink at every possible opportunity. Getting friends' older brothers to buy alcohol for me, I would often drink on school nights.

My schoolwork started to suffer. Luckily, I always had the ability to wing it, so no-one really noticed.

> **I remember that first sip well. I hated the taste, but after a few minutes I could feel all my pain melting away**

By the time I left school I could barely imagine going out for the night without having drink to fill me with courage and wit. I had also started dabbling with party drugs. I still managed to hold down a good job, but its only purpose was to pay for my habits.

In my twenties, I had a booming social life, all revolving around drinking alcohol and taking drugs. Everyone considered me the life and soul of the party.

But it was an illusion. Really I was the same scared little boy inside, the one whose life started falling down around him all those years ago.

Then one night tragedy struck again. I was working by then and living in shared accommodation. I had had a few friends around for drinks. We were on the top floor of the house when a friend alerted me to the smell of something burning.

I opened my bedroom door and smoke gushed in, enveloping the entire room. I rushed out and down

the stairs. The heat hit my entire body and face like a blast from an oven. We were trapped on the first floor and with all the smoke, I couldn't see more than a foot in front of my nose. It was so hot that my furniture began to combust with the flames still metres away.

I managed to guide everyone to a window, and we all jumped out, landing in the garden below. I tried to call my family, but no-one answered and it brought back the same feelings of isolation and vulnerability that I experienced when my Grandmother died.

As I stood there and watched my life burn down in front of me, a dealer I knew approached me. He offered me some heroin.

I had been offered heroin before and normally

"The woods remind me of the cycles of life and death and help me come to terms with my feelings and emotions, which were always the real problem.

I would have said no. But I had lost everything that I owned and I was now homeless. And to make matters worse my girlfriend had just left to go travelling for a year. I felt abandoned and hopeless, and I gave in.

The drugs seemed to help at first, but ultimately made things worse. This was the start of the darkest period of my life. I could find no light, no love, just darkness, pain and isolation.

Now I think of addiction like a demonic creature: the more you feed it, the bigger it gets and the bigger it gets, the more it needs feeding. It promises you the world until it is powerful enough to take over and consume you.

I carried on using. Years flew by with me hanging onto work and life by the skin of my teeth. I tried recovery based on will power alone and fell flat on my face.

Then I tried to get sober through group work and counselling, which helped me to identify my problems, but offered no solutions. Sometimes it left me feeling worse than when I had started.

Now I find myself, aged 33, clear of my addiction through a Twelve Step programme which has offered me guidelines to a solution through action. But, for me, finding the volunteer programme at Tortworth Arboretum has been the single most important part of my continued healing.

Volunteering at Tortworth Arboretum works perfectly with many of the programme's steps as well as underlying principles of successful recovery cited by experts.

It gets me out and about in the fresh air, meeting new people and establishing a new social circle away from drugs and drink.

I am developing lots of skills that will serve me well in the future and I am learning fascinating new things. For instance, I know how to identify trees and I have learned how to keep bees and bats.

It gives me a sense of purpose that helps to rebuild my fragile confidence and self-esteem

through hard work, which stimulates the natural production of endorphins and dopamine – all while keeping myself fit. I have learned that I can feel good without drugs and alcohol.

I find that volunteering at the woods has many spiritual benefits to it as well. It is a fantastic feeling to know that you are helping the environment by managing the woodlands, planting trees and providing a thriving habitat for our diverse wildlife.

Being surrounded by the beauty of the woods is awe-inspiring and has a meditative effect on my mind, allowing myself a break from my inner monologue and a moment to appreciate the artistry of nature.

The woods also remind me of the cycles of life and death and help me come to terms with my feelings and emotions, which were always the real problem.

When you work in woodlands, you know that you have to cut down the old to allow the new to grow and blossom. I had to cut away my old life to allow this new one of sobriety to bloom. This is the happiest I have been in a long time. I feel I have found my way and I can finally see the woods from the trees.

If you or someone you love is affected by addiction of any kind, help is at hand. The NHS's website, www.nhs.uk, has a Live Well section with non-judgmental information, advice and links. ■

Transforming Woodland Volunteers

Bec Cork reports that at Tortworth Arboretum and Forest Centre, the landscape is not the only thing under restoration

The overgrown arboretum at Tortworth in Gloucestershire, dating from the mid 1800's, is an unusual place with a fascinating history. Owned in turn by members of the landowning Ducie family as well as the neighbouring prison, it has had a variety of custodians.

Having suffered total neglect over the past ten years, the twenty-acre Tortworth Arboretum has been invaded not only by the usual bramble, rhododendron and laurel, but also by exotic trespassers like bamboo stems and wingnut trees.

I had been organising woodland-based events for a few years when the owner of the woodland approached me to ask if I would assume complete control of the arboretum. I was nervous at first – my understanding of woodlands extended to events and community work, not management of the woodland itself – but he insisted that he aimed to make Tortworth a place for people and community as well as trees. I said yes.

At the end of 2014, I began recruiting volunteers to help clear the overgrowth, and started the long, labor-intensive process of restoring the arboretum and uncovering its riches. The volunteer groups meet monthly, armed with tools donated from the Avon Gardens Trust and the Nineveh Charitable Trust. As a team we cut back towering rhododendron, reopen long-forgotten pathways, and reach trees from the antique plant inventory -- like our giant redwoods or monkey puzzles -- that astound us all by their very survival.

Tortworth's volunteer programme is about survival in another sense. Most of our regular volunteers are unaware that, as well as welcoming local volunteers and students of conservation, we also quietly recruit individuals from an organisation in Bristol for people in recovery from addiction. Some have been unemployed for many years, perhaps isolated from friends and families, and are struggling to overcome and live with their addictions.

For these volunteers, coming to the woods is transformative. They arrive restrained and nervous, unsure of which team to work with or how the day will run. They start off with something simple, like cutting back bramble. By lunch they are starting to get a sense of the teamwork in the group, the satisfaction from their work, the camaraderie with other volunteers. I sit back and listen to conversations around the campfire. They want to finish their pathway up to the redwoods, they want to cut back that last area of bamboo so that the view to the stream is clear, they want to make headway into some bramble to find out what that tree is in the middle. Just give me ten more minutes, they say. It is as if a light has been switched on inside them as they realise that they are an important part of this landscape, of the project and of the health of the woodland.

Our volunteers work in small teams of around 2-6 depending on the task. Experienced volunteers encourage those who are using tools for the first time, sharing skills and safety tips. Tom (feature, page 18), is a shining example. On his first visit he was quiet and timid, but after a few sessions he quickly gained confidence. He almost seemed to grow into his personality, testing out his sense of humour on his team, starting to guide others and give advice based on his expertise. He now leads teams of tree planters, teaching them how to use the tools safely and explaining the reasons behind the work; he is charismatic, positive, and we know that he looks after his team's wellbeing as they work. The change in Tom is inspiring.

Ours is a simple formula, but we have seen that it works. Volunteers come back each month and gain in confidence over time as they begin to take ownership over the project, making decisions about the work they wish to prioritise, and supporting new people with the work. Only two of us know which volunteers have been referred to us through their recovery programme and we keep an eye out to make sure the woods remain a safe and positive space. We seem to drink a lot of tea and always spend a long lunch chatting around the fire - where everyone can relax and be themselves.

Tortworth owes a thank you to all of our volunteers for the hours and days of hard work over the last eighteen months. Each month this dedicated and smiling band turns up in the morning, rain or shine, ready to grab their favourite tool and head off into the undergrowth.

We have big plans for the woodland. We know that we have a national treasure on our hands, something that we are restoring to health for future generations.

Bec Cork is the founder of the Tortworth Forest Centre at Tortworth Arboretum. ■

Bec Cork and volunteers at a Tortworth Volunteer Day

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To get involved with any of the Tortworth projects, or if you would like to donate towards the tea, coffee and campfire-cooked lunch that we provide on our volunteer days, please email bec@tortwortharboretum.org.

For information about Tortworth Aboretum and Forest Centre , www.tortwortharboretum.org.

Flood Plans

Water, water everywhere, and natural flood risk management is gaining ground

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“The project partnership built 167 large woody dams (leaky dams made from branches and logs) and 187 check dams formed from heather bales, in the becks, moorland drains and gullies above the town.

Abigail was destructive. Desmond and Henry were terrors. Barney, Clodagh, Eva, Frank, Gertrude, and Imogen all left their marks and Jake and Katie may be on the way. This winter's named storms and the ensuing floods are estimated to have cost the nation more than £5 billion. Each time, the calls go out for more and higher concrete floodwalls, better warning systems, more pumping stations, more sandbags.

But scientists and policy makers are increasingly coming to appreciate a new, more sustainable approach in managing flood risk and the important role played by trees, grasses, leaky dams and other natural components.

About ten years ago, Tom Nisbet, a forest hydrologist at Forest Research, led a team that studied the usefulness of restoring woodland within flood plains to aid flood alleviation near Ripon in North Yorkshire. While some benefits were identified, Nisbet says, they were limited, and, 'We struggled to get landowners involved. We realized it needed to be part of a bigger project with a large element of public ownership to be more able to make changes on the ground.'

At about the same time, just forty miles away, the town of Pickering suffered the worst of an eight-year series of floods, causing £7m worth of damage. The Environment Agency informed the town that a £6.8m barrier was needed to protect it from further flooding, but that it didn't meet the funding requirements.

'The local populace lost faith in the big agencies,' says activist and current Chair of Pickering and District Civic Society Mike Potter. Working initially with universities of Oxford, Durham and Newcastle to examine partnership-building to address flood risk, 'Slowing the Flow at Pickering' was launched in 2009 with the involvement of more than a dozen local, regional and national organisations led by Forest Research with funding from Defra. The plan was to create exactly the kind of broad-scale project Nisbet had described. Nisbet says, 'Pickering offered the opportunity to be an ideal case study, as a large proportion of the land was under public ownership. We could employ a range of [flood control] measures throughout the entire catchment.'

'Slowing the Flow – it's a cracking name,' says Potter, 'because it's all about attenuation, taking the top off the peak.' The project partnership built 167 large woody dams (leaky dams made from branches and logs) and 187 check dams formed from heather bales, in the becks, moorland drains and gullies above the town. These sustainable, natural constructions impede high water movement without affecting normal flows. They also built a large bund to store up to 120,000 cubic metres of flood water, as well as experimenting with a pair of smaller timber bunds in the neighbouring catchment. No-burn buffer zones were instituted along moorland watercourses, heather was reseeded, catchment-sensitive farming practices introduced on farms and moorlands, and eroding footpaths repaired. The project also planted 44 hectares of woodland.

'Slowing the Flow at Pickering' gained national recognition, won awards and shaped national policy and regional initiatives, including the Countryside Stewardship scheme. MP Anne-Marie Trevelyan, vice-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry, recently called for the Government to increase its current tree-planting target from 11 million new trees to 200 million new trees by 2020.

Trees play a key role in natural flood management. 'Trees are relatively good at using water,' explains Nisbet, 'their tall canopies are very efficient at evaporating water by the process of interception.' Depending on the season, conifers can be more valuable in interception than broadleaves.

In spring and summer, the soils that support trees accumulate a moisture deficit that can offer significant water storage and reduce flood runoff during summer storms. They also have good 'macroporosity' due to tree rooting, meaning that water readily drains into the ground rather than quickly running off the surface. Trees planted in riparian zones aid in the natural formation of large woody dams, adding to hydraulic roughness and slowing the flow further. Bankside trees reduce erosion.

Other areas are adapting the new approach to their own situations, drawing on local knowledge. In Stroud, woodland owners responded to appeals from the District Council and other regional and local groups by felling trees to divert water flow, creating ponds and large woody dams. Somerset's 'Hills to Levels' flood risk management project advises landowners in the upper catchments of four rivers on woodland planting and the construction of small dams, silt traps and leaky ponds.

At Pickering, the long-term assessment of the effectiveness of their own Slowing the Flow effort is ongoing, but so far, there has been no major flooding.

What You Can Do

Tom Nisbet of Forest Research offers the following advice to woodland owners:

- Ascertain if there is flood risk downstream of your woodland or property, especially within the local catchment. The less risk, the less case there is to intervene.
- Check for local or catchment area partnerships that may be established or in the process of forming. Attend their presentations and see how your woodland might fit the project. Avail yourself of Forest Research and Forestry Commission publications and advice.
- If your woods have a stream flowing through, you might consider the potential of building one or more woody dams, though that depends on the nature of the woodland and stream. It is important to consider how much water could be held back and the stability of the dam.
- A downside of woody dams is that such structures do increase the wetness of adjacent ground, at least for a short period, and if not secure, can be washed away, potentially causing problems downstream.
- Be aware that any time a landowner does something to affect the flow of water within a stream or river, consent may be required from the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- Apply good practice and always take expert advice.
- According to the Forestry Commission website, 'For those who have land that is prone to flooding or generating rapid runoff and would like to make a difference, NOW is the time to act.' Grants may be available [see the Forestry Commission website or contact your local FC agent]. ■

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After the Deluge

A German study helps to predict your woodland's recovery following floods, by **Nancy Wood**

If your woodland has suffered flooding, you can see the evidence of immediate damage, but how can you assess your trees' longterm outlook?

With the help of some expert Germans, as it happens. Ten years ago, the FOWARA (Forested Water Retention Areas) Project led from the University of Freiburg surveyed flood resistance in common species of trees. If you know your trees, their list can give you an indication of a tree's ability to survive and thrive.

In general, young trees and very old trees fare worst in flood conditions, while those approaching maturity or those fully mature are best set to weather the wet conditions. The FOWARA Project found that the most flood tolerant trees overall were willow, hybrid poplar, old oak and field elm and that healthy specimens of some other trees endured forty days of undrained flooding: field maple, pine, black walnut and walnut trees. These types would show stem damage, but no indication of dieback.

The next most tolerant trees, at thirty to forty days of flooding without dieback, were lime, ash hornbeam, crab apple, younger oak trees and black locust. Sycamore is intolerant of flooding at eighteen days. Wild cherry, beech and Norway maple were intolerant beyond twelve days of flooding.

As a rule, floods lasting less than a week will not cause healthy trees to die. However, young trees that have been fully submerged are unlikely to survive, unless the water is fast-moving, as a fast-moving stream contains more oxygen than slow-moving water.

Winter floods, as in the UK, that occur during dormancy are far less apt to cause death of trees than flooding during growing season.

Damaged trees may develop curling or wilted leaves, or chlorosis, which is yellowing of leaves that eventually die. Some trees produce a superabundance of fruit and seeds in the year of floods, and then fewer in the years that follow, which researchers were unable to account for. Some exhibit crown dieback, generally preceding plant death.

Debris may have abraded and damaged the tree bark, so watch for fungi and other pathogens, and consider harvesting trees that are most compromised before the useful wood is destroyed by rot. The FOWARA report notes a consistent pattern between the appearance of Armillaria species (honey or shoestring fungi) and the death of affected trees. Oak and ash are least affected.

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David Whiting, of Colorado State University, writes, 'As a rule of thumb, if bark is removed less than one-fourth of the way around a trunk, the damage is considered minor. If the bark is removed more than half of the way around the tree's trunk, the tree is considered to be lost (having no value). This does not mean that the tree will immediately die, just that the future growth potential of the tree is bleak.'

Silt may have washed in with the floodwater. Even a few inches of siltation covering roots is enough to cause further oxygen loss. And if there is visible debris in your woodland, assume there may be invisible hazardous stuff as well, which may damage plant health.

If you do head out with your chainsaw to deal with damaged or downed trees, be particularly careful. The Southern (US) Group of State Foresters cautions against moving downed trees that are lying over one another. 'They are likely to be under tension and when you move them, they could snap violently and cause personal injuries.' Or as Nick Gibbs, founder of Living Woods, has written, 'Windblown trees are some of the most dangerous to resolve, often hung up on others, and as a consequence referred to as 'widow-makers''. ■

Nancy Wood is editor of *Living Woods magazine*.

Glorious Trees

Photographer **Tim Graham** has a passion

Lone Scots Pine, Bodmin Moor, Cornwall

Sole pine tree in a snow-covered field, the Cairngorms

Tim Graham has lived his life as a professional photographer. For many years, he travelled the world photographing the travels and state visits of the British Royal Family. In more than one hundred countries, he enjoyed privileged access to the fascinating sights and events that host countries offer the Royal visitor. Graham's travels gave him countless opportunities to take insightful photographs of everyday scenes and places, and to indulge, as frequently as possible, his passion for capturing the natural world.

Tim Graham has a special affection for trees. He has enjoyed and sought out trees in the landscape and has always been attracted by their sculptural quality. 'I love to see a tree alone in a field, ' he says. 'It's good to see when a modern farmer has left an ancient oak as they're such an oasis for wildlife.'

Graham has selected some of his favourite images of trees from many lands, to share with Living Woods his appreciation of their extraordinary variety, strength, longevity and beauty.

Since Getty Images acquired ownership of his Royal Archive in 2008, Graham has been able to devote his time to taking travel and stock images. Today, his photography is of landscapes, people and the natural world, along with subjects that are always in the news: environment, energy, pollution, population, resources, and waste among them. His most recent trips have been to China, USA, Ireland, France, Scandinavia, India, Bavaria and Spain and he continually photographs within the UK.

www.timgrahamstock.com

IMAGES

Page 30: Silver Birches, Grampian Mountains, Aberdeenshire

Top: 700-year-old Banyan Tree in Ranthambhore National Park, Rajasthan, Northern India

Right: A young beech tree seedling sprouts among dead leaves, New Forest, Hampshire, England

Above: Cypress trees, Val D'Orcia, Tuscany, Italy

Photography: Tim Graham

Chainsaw Care Checklist

Stuart Brooking offers guidance for years of happy – and safe – sawing

The chainsaw is one of the most useful tools for woodland improvement and management, but there are two important factors that must be in the forefront of a chainsaw operator's mind: safe use of the saw and, just as important, regular maintenance of this time-saving tool. Regular chainsaw maintenance will not only improve the functionality of the saw, it will make it safe to use and can keep the saw working for many years.

Courses

The first piece of advice is to attend a course on how to maintain your chainsaw properly! Over time you will easily make back the money spent on the course by the savings you make being able to do the maintenance yourself.

There are two main types of course available, both good, the LANTRA or the NPTC Cross cutting and maintenance course. The NPTC course involves an extra assessment and is aimed at the professional saw user, whereas the LANTRA course (from £225) is suited to those using chainsaws within their own woodland. You can find courses on chainsaw maintenance from around £75 through Hush Farms [see contacts].

You should perform some checks of your saw daily and some at least weekly.

Daily Checks

Before starting the saw on the ground, check the pull cord for wear and tear. If there are any tears in the pull rope, it should be replaced.

Make sure your fuel is correctly mixed for your saw (usually 50:1 chainsaw oil to petrol, or you can use Aspen, a Swedish alkylate petrol specifically designed for small-capacity engines like chainsaws, as a greener alternative) and that you fill up the chain oil reservoir. This ensures the correct and optimum saw performance.

Wearing chainsaw gloves, check the correct tension of the chain. You should be able to pull one of the teeth away from the guide bar and see two exposed teeth on either side. Alternatively, with the chain brake in the 'off' position, you should be just about able to pull the chain forward.

Check bolts to make sure they are tight, especially the ones that secure the guide bar and chain and the bolts for the chain brake.

Now, holding the saw securely using the correct procedure, you can start the saw and perform your pre-work checks.

With the saw running, ensure the throttle is working correctly, that it squeezes in correctly, that no spring is extruding from the trigger unit, and that the engine responds in proper relation to the trigger.

Next, rev the saw about 75% and then put on the chain brake. The chain should stop immediately. If it carries on moving, even a tiny bit, you must stop your saw and take it apart to examine your chain brake, as the band may need a good clean or even replacement.

If the chain brake is functioning well, check that the chain oil is coming through the system. When you rev the saw and direct it at a light-coloured surface like a cut stump, the oil should spray out from the saw.

Finally, ensure that the stop function is working. If you push/pull it and the saw doesn't stop, you should not use the saw. You can stop the saw in this situation by pulling the choke out.

During the Working Day

During the day it is a good idea to give your saw a quick sharpen, using the correct files, every time you fuel up. Your dealer will tell you which chain and file combination you need.

File guides are a very useful tool to get the correct angle of sharpening. Use a vice to hold the guide bar if you're near a workshop, or a portable vice if working out in the middle of nowhere (most likely!).

Check your chain for damage caused by hitting dirt or stones by examining each tooth of the chain. Any top edges of the cutting teeth that look worn are a sign that you have brushed against something that you shouldn't have.

Another sign of chain damage is if your saw starts cutting 'like a banana' – in a slight curve. This shows that the chain has worn unevenly.

To rectify wear to the chain, examine each tooth until you find the one that has the most wear, the ▶

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narrowest. You then need to sharpen this one first using strong, forward only strokes with a sharp file and using the correct angle for your chain. It may take up to 15-20 stokes until you have sharpened the tooth sufficiently to rid the tooth of the signs of wear. After this, sharpen all the rest of the teeth to the same length as you look down upon them. By the way, if the remaining tooth lengths are less than 4mm, you need to fit a new chain.

Next, adjust the height position of each tooth using a flat file and depth gauge. Run the flat file forwards over the depth gauge approximately 3-4 times each time you sharpen the chain. If the file becomes hard to use and doesn't take many filings off, it is time to use a new one. Snap the old round files so you know they are no longer of use.

Clean the saw daily. This protects the components of the saw. The main areas to clean are under the flywheel cover and the guide bar. Wearing gloves, carefully remove these items and clean all dust off using an old toothbrush and flat screwdriver.

If you are cutting shrubs like rhododendron that seem to clog up around the clutch and chain brake, you may need to perform a five-minute clean every second or third refuel as you work.

Every second or third refuel, check the chain catcher – a small piece of metal under the chain at the chainsaw end that looks like a shark's fin – is fully intact and not loose.

Weekly or After a Few Days' Use

Always check the saw for cracks, either in the plastic covers, chain brake or engine. Replace if needed or take to a service workshop.

Check your pull cord as described above and clean it. Remove the side plate by unscrewing the bolts, then clean around the pull cord, carefully ensuring you don't unspring it.

Clean your guide bar by taking it off and removing the chain. Clean out the channel using an old toothbrush, check for 'burrs' – flattened metal sticking out of the edges of the guide bar -- and file them down with a flat file.

Grease the end of the guide bar where the chain wheel is. Turn the guide bar over ever few weeks to ensure even wear. If the bar is bent in any way, then you need to replace it.

Clean the air filter by removing it carefully from the saw, ensuring nothing falls into the carburettor and wash the filter in warm soap solution. If the saw has an air injection system fitted you won't need to do this quite as frequently.

On the engine cylinder, clean out the cooling fins using the flat screwdriver on your chainsaw tool and brush it out with a toothbrush.

Repeat cleaning for the flywheel and the clutch.

Grease the clutch bearing through the hole, or directly onto the bearing depending on the type of saw.

Change fuel and oil filters in the fuel and oil tanks.

If the filter is dirty, it can cause the saw to run erratically. Hook out the fuel line, say with a length of coat hanger or fencing wire bent into a hook, and keep it from dropping back into the fuel tank, a fiddly job. If the saw runs erratically, even after changing filters, it could indicate a small hole in the fuel line and either an extremely fiddly repair or, much better, a trip to the repair shop.

When your engine is cold, carefully remove the spark plug and check that it is clean and is not white or covered in black oil. These could mean you are using an incorrect fuel mix or that the saw needs a tune. Many modern chainsaws automatically tune themselves these days, much to the frustration of the old school forester! If the saw begins running erratically it may need a tune up. This is all done by computer on the modern saws so you will need to take it to a dealer to connect the saw up to a laptop. Check the maintenance requirements for your make and model of saw in the user manual and keep it handy in your vehicle or forestry store. A well maintained saw will last for many years and will make a happy and safe operator.

Dick White, a woodland manager in Cornwall, writes:

- At my 'passing out' ceremony about eleven years ago, when I first obtained my chainsaw qualification, my tutor presented me not with a medal, but with a four-inch length of plastic pipe and a six-inch length of wire. These two items (and I still have the originals) have proved absolutely indispensable.
- The plastic pipe removes the burrs from the edges of the teeth after filing. You don't want those fragments of metal accumulating inside the saw and you certainly don't want to be removing the burr with your fingers!
- The wire – bent round at one end – hooks the fuel filter out of the tank for cleaning or replacement. Even if the tank opening were big enough to allow you to use your fingers, waggling them around in petrol isn't to be recommended.
- Also, after several iterations of using different bags/"satchels"/rucksacks, etc, for carrying essential tools into the woods with limited success, I found the perfect tool-box at an army surplus store in Exeter. It is a rectangular ammunition box which is, quite literally, bomb-proof (and hence water-proof). It will withstand trees dropping on it and can even be sat on at coffee-break time if the ground is wet.

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Oil the Same?

A northern arborist writes to us, 'Some people like to use vegetable oil as opposed to proper chain oil. The plusses are that it's better for the environment and, if you're doing a lot of cutting, can be much cheaper. The con is that it freezes in cold weather – so it's no go in winter up here in Scotland. My experience, looking at saws that have been using it a while, is that they are a lot more worn in places, so it is arguable that the money you save on oil will be spent replacing parts.'

Stuart Brooking manages the Devon region for woodlands.co.uk and is involved in occasional conservation projects and work and writing management plans for small woodland owners. He is a fully qualified and insured chainsaw operative with more than 10 years' experience.

LANTRA www.lantra.co.uk 02476 696996
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Tellison's lead singer Stephen H Davidson prepares to meet the heavies

Leafy Shoots

'Would you mind if we dug a shallow grave?' **Judith Millidge** recounts her woodland's brush with show business

Maybe it's a sign of middle age that, right in the middle of a blockbuster movie, just when you'd expect to be dazzled by Hollywood's most glamorous stars and whizziest special effects, you find yourself sitting back and admiring the scenery. Star Wars: The Force Awakens has been widely hailed as a worthy addition to the franchise, with its clever self-referential nods to the previous editions and an ending that leaves plenty of potential for two more sequels. But what stayed with me were the scenes in the woodlands here on planet Earth. They were particularly beautiful.

Thirty years ago, in Return of the Jedi, the spectacular Redwood State Park forest of California became the Forest Moon of Endor, home to the Ewoks and the backdrop for the flying speeder bike chase sequences. In the latest incarnation, Puzzlewood in the Forest of Dean, a verdant ancient woodland full of roots, rocks and gulleys, became the location for the clash of light sabres between Rey and the evil Kylo Ren in the forest of the planet Takodana. I've long wondered how location managers find the woodlands they need for the many detective and spy dramas whose dramatic tension hinges on some sort of pursuit through a forest.

If you are a woodland owner, as I am, you know that one of the most common questions faced by owners of small woodlands after, 'Why on earth would you buy a wood?', is, 'Can you make any money from it?' The short answer is probably, 'Not much.' There are certainly small sums to be made from selling logs, coppice poles or the products of green woodworking projects. Some lucky owners mill or sell stands of timber and others open up their woodland for conservation groups or other outdoor activities. One of the paths less travelled to make money from woodlands is to lease your wood to a film crew.

Considering the Star Wars examples, it is clear that there is real money to be made in using woodland locations in the movies. Not all of us have the facilities, the space or would necessarily want the pantechnicons of a full film crew lumbering down our woodland tracks, but smaller filming projects sometimes require a woodland ▶

setting. And some of these smaller projects can be quite quirky and interesting.

So it was more out of curiosity than materialism that I responded to a plea from a freelance film director who wanted to shoot a short music video with the indie rock band Tellison in some woodland near to London.

The arrangements were fairly straightforward. Director Malcolm Greenhill and I emailed several times to manage expectations (me) and make requests (him). I had a look at his work and listened to the music of the band on the internet to satisfy myself that anything they produced would not veer over into the dark side of bad taste. Once we had established that everyone could cope without a loo, piped water or electricity for the day, and that they were venturing into the wood entirely at their own risk, we were all set.

Or almost.

Malcolm asked whether I would mind them digging a hole, well, more specifically, a shallow grave. He airily assured me that it was entirely necessary for artistic purposes. The general theme of the video, he said, was a tongue-in-cheek Sopranos spoof where a few devious gangsters lead an unlucky gambler into the woods to dig his own grave. Out of the blue, the gambler is miraculously saved by a stranger dressed in an Easter bunny costume. As Malcolm said, 'It will be quite surreal but hopefully very funny. And obviously we will make every effort to make sure we leave everything as we found it.' I agreed.

The September day dawned grey, but the weak sunlight bounced off Tellison's glorious gold classic Mercedes as it bumped down our woodland track. Initially conforming to all my preconceptions about young rock gods and their gaudy taste, the band let down gently: the Mercedes was only hired for the day.

Having established the boundaries of our wood, locating a suitable spot for a shallow grave and offering them the loan of my best shovel, I stood out of the way as the lads got changed. The baby-faced lead singer Stephen acquired the shell suit and chunky necklace of a lowlife gangster; drummer Henry donned the dishevelled remains of his best black tie outfit; bass guitarist Andrew acquired the mean and hungry demeanour of a professional heavy; guitarist Peter, who had plainly drawn the short straw, climbed into a white rabbit outfit and tried not to dirty his fur.

At this point Malcolm corralled the working crew with brisk efficiency and it became clear that the woodland owner was surplus to requirements, so I showed them the biscuit tin and thermos and left. When I returned around 4 pm, the band was still shooting, had demolished all the biscuits and needed to keep going until the dying of the light. They agreed to lock up when they had finished, and I left again. And that was it, until Malcolm emailed his thanks and a link to the finished work. Though the video was called Wrecker, the band could not have been nicer or more keen to ensure that they left no trace. Except for the new acquisition of one shallow grave, the woods were unblemished by their brush with show business.

©Malcolm Greenhill / Tellison

Guitarist Peter Phillips as the video's rescue bunny

Judith Millidge is a woodland owner and co-ordinator for the Small Woodland Owners' Group.

LINKS

Tellison: www.tellison.co.uk
Wrecker video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHq_KQlO_h0
Malcolm Greenhill, Director www.malcolmroygreenhill.com
Puzzlewood, Forest of Dean www.puzzlewood.net

Could your woodland be a film location? There is a dizzying number of film location companies. A good place to begin is with one of the not-for-profit national film agencies.

Creative England: www.creativeengland.co.uk/production-services/filming-locations, Wales Screen http://businesswales.gov.wales/walesscreen/
Creative Scotland: http://www.creativescotlandlocations.com/register-a-location
Northern Ireland Screen: http://www.creativescotlandlocations.com/register-a-location

How to make the day run smoothly

Establish boundaries. If you have a new plantation, for example, and would like the crew to steer clear of it, say so.

Provide tea, coffee and snacks. Even though you may have explained that there is no water, electricity or even the prospect of a pub within five miles, your visitors may not be prepared for a day in the woods without so much as a Costa. Take along a few flasks of tea or coffee and some biscuits. The talent and crew will be pathetically grateful.

Don't light a fire, as the smoke could spoil the filming and ruin the continuity.

Consider access and parking. Make sure you agree how many vehicles the crew will be bringing. Warn them about any potential hazards such as boggy areas, especially if they are likely to bring specialist vehicles.

Although this was a music video, the sound was going to be dubbed over in the studio, so it was rather like watching the production of a silent movie. Other films might not be so quiet, so think about warning the neighbours if you expect strange crashes and bangs to be part of the action.

While a crew may be grateful for the loan of your land, they may not want you to hang around and they certainly won't want you in the way, or worse, in shot. Be discreet and give them space. Set them up and then retreat for a while.

©Judith Millidge

Filming produces some surreal scenes

What I learned

You can get actor's mud in a spray can. After all, why deplete the natural resources of your woodland when. . . No, that's really not right. Surely mud is mud?

You may own the wood, but you have absolutely no control over the kind of film that is produced. When the video comes out, others may not be quite so enamoured of it. They will rightly look at the content of the actual film, rather than the location and they may not appreciate the subject matter. Be prepared for this. Probably the only person that really loves the location will be you. Don't expect the rest of the world to care that much.

Short videos have small budgets, but charming teams of people. In other words, I agreed a nominal fee that covered my time.

Ever the optimist, I now await the call from the Star Wars location manager. Surely he will see past the menacing gangland action of Tellison's Wrecker video to the sylvan glade beyond? My woodland is ready for its close-up.

From Log to moduLog


John inspects a log that shows damage from a lightning strike years ago

A Welsh father and son timber framing team build beauty, sustainability and profit into their woodland, by **Jacob Mooney**


John and Leigh enjoying the fruits of their labour

What don't John and Leigh Price do with their woodland? Their workshop and 10 acres of Welsh woodland near Builth Wells is not only their place of business, it is also a destination for woodland management courses, conferences, school field trips, and soon will be a location where people spend their holidays in 'glamping' pods nestled throughout the woodland. John and Leigh manage timber frame building projects and renovations from their workshop. Past projects include Windsor castle renovations.

After 25 years working as a carpenter, John Price started Smithfield Joinery in the year 2000, his son Leigh joining after his military service. Seven years ago, they implemented a woodland management plan for their acreage. They wanted the woodland to be able to work for itself, to be beautiful and useable at the same time. This required considering the future of the woodland, how it would be used, and how to maintain it.

Previous owners had felled all the oaks and had left the conifers, and so John and Leigh worked with the Forestry Commission to create a replanting strategy that entailed leaving half of the existing conifers standing, and replanting native species among them.

"The larger conifers have shielded the smaller saplings from the wind and so they've grown really fast," Leigh said.

Modulog Inception

While thinking about how to use the natural beauty of the woodland in a profitable way, they decided to place small cabins along the forest trails and rent them out.

"We wanted something that would blend into the woodland," recalls Leigh. "And we wanted to use 'waste' material from our sawmill." Instead of buying cabins, they set out to design their own unique glamping pods, for those who want to camp with a little more 'glamour' than usual.

With an architect, they designed the pods to be durable and versatile for varying uses as garden offices, summerhouses, writing studios, fishing huts, and more. And their new business venture – moduLog – was started.

Design

"The pod is built to last for 20 – 30 years without doing anything to it," Leigh explains. "Everything is built to building regulation standards. So you get a solid structure that's built to last and can be used in all weather conditions."

The cabins are modular so they can be designed in various ways. The exteriors and interiors are easily customizable although the core structure remains the same. Interior furniture converts into beds and have storage space inside. The kitchenette allows for indoor cooking and is mobile for outdoor cooking when the weather is nice. Power can be hooked up, or the pod can come ready with a solar kit that provides enough power for a TV, computer, and basic electric needs.

Locally sourced sheep wool insulation in the ceilings, floor and walls keep the pod warm during the winter and solar reflective insulation in the roof helps to keep the pod cool in the summer. Anti-vermin mesh covers the entire exterior to keep out pests.

"The timber we use was based on what timber we had in the woodland," shares Leigh. All exterior wood elements are milled from trees grown on their own property or from local sources – oak doors, window frames and western red cedar and Douglas fir cladding are sawn and processed in the workshop.

"For the exterior, we wanted the pod to look like a pile of logs, so we use the first cut from the logs," Leigh explains. "We have other roof options – log lap, waney-edge boards and artificial grass. We like the log look because moss and lichens will grow all over it. People ask how the water stays out, but it's only for looks really, all the weatherproofing is underneath."

Sawmilling and construction

"We only select a few trees to cut down at a time," Leigh shares. "We'll be putting log cabins and glamping pods in the woodland, and so we want to keep it looking like a woodland."

Once the trees are felled, they are then sawn on a Wood-Mizer LT40 sawmill into the exact size

of timbers required to complete the project. The sawmill has hydraulic log loading arms and functions for positioning heavy logs easily, so John can focus on cutting the boards and beams he needs.

"As long as you know what you're doing, you can cut any different sizes of timber you want," says Leigh. "You decide what you want, you get the log you want, and you cut the timber you want. Buying in already machined timber is a lot more expensive than using your own. We save about 20% on the exterior timber and 100% on the log halves that we use on the roof by sawmilling it all ourselves."

Since the sawmill is on wheels, John and Leigh can also take it out on jobs cutting timber for customers who have logs on site.

Features and Customisation

People often ask what they can use the moduLog cabins for. Leigh's standard reply is "You can use them for anything you want! You can design it to suit your needs. It's not just off the shelf, one size fits all." In spite of the variety of uses, all the inquiries seem to have one common goal in mind – a more intimate connection with nature.

The moduLog pod blends right into the natural woodland

"With all the glass, they can just sit looking outside at nature," Leigh shares. "The last one we did was an office for an author; he sits inside and writes all his books."

After receiving the initial request for a quote, Leigh goes to work to customise the proposed design to their needs, preferences and budget.

"Because it is modular they can plan how many sections (pods) will be needed, and if they want big windows or small windows," says Leigh.

Full-sized moduLogs can be toured at the workshop, and during the planning stage, Leigh uses scale-model versions of the pods to demonstrate the various configurations possible. This helps clients get hands-on with the layout and see what the final project will look like.

Once the final project is constructed, the modular kit form can be transported as a flat pack. Usually the finished moduLog cabin is constructed on site, but smaller pods can be delivered finished on a trailer.

Woodland management courses and importance

"Woodland management is very important, especially for us because we use a lot of wood. It does not cost much to plant trees and to look after them," shares Leigh. "And you have financial rewards in the future."

John and Leigh put on three courses that teach the whole process of woodland management, sawing and processing timber, and building with that timber.

"People come here and learn from 'seed to saw' and what goes into producing timber and then what you can use that timber for," Leigh shares. "It was my dad's idea to pass down his experience and his knowledge to other people and then they could pass it down."

"Schools bring kids here, so we have a place where the kids can come and learn about trees and planting, growing, felling and processing them on the sawmill, and then see the finished project being made in the joinery shop," Leigh shares. "It's all about passing down knowledge and experience to future generations."

The pod interior can be customised in a variety of ways

More information:

http://www.smithfieldjoinery.co.uk/
http://modulog.co.uk/

Not Just for Woodies

Norwegian Wood: Chopping, Stacking and Drying Wood the Scandinavian Way
by Lars Mytting, tr. Robert Ferguson
MacLehose Press, £20.
review by Angus Hanton

If men have two big secrets – porn and firewood – this book has at least given them permission to talk openly about the latter and to admit that they get intense pleasure from how they find, cut, dry and use their logs. By getting his book into the mainstream, Norwegian author and journalist Lars Mytting has enabled men to come out of the closet and speak openly about their wood. Actually it's not just men: there are couples with their logpiles amongst the hundred or so photos. The logpile pictures draw you in, partly because they are so neat and, sometimes, artistic, but mainly because each one tells a story of countless hours of hard, muscle-warming work.

Norwegian Wood progresses logically from the cold of winter to the forest, and then onto chopping and seasoning before climaxing with stoves and fires. Anyone with a wood-burning stove should read this book for its practical tips. For example, you should split your wood before seasoning it for thorough drying and you should generally put two logs on a fire at the same time so they burn better. We are challenged by two huge claims about firewood. First, Mytting spells out how using a renewable fuel like wood contributes to the fight against global warming.

"Even in oil-rich Norway an astonishing 25% of the energy used to heat private homes comes from wood, and half of that is wood chopped by private individuals. And this harvesting is more than sustainable – Norway's annual consumption of wood is less than 0.5% of the volume of standing trees in Norway."

Second, he shows how the harvesting and preparation of logs can be a central part of how we live our lives.

Mytting dedicates the book to his neighbour, Ottar, an older man who once a year, in late spring, has birch logs delivered to his front drive. We watch an ageing Ottar process these logs and rather than finding himself tired out by the task it restores his vitality. It is a life-giving ritual. This is in a Norwegian town where winter temperatures are often around -30 degrees celsius so keeping warm is a universal concern. At the end of the book we rejoin Ottar to witness his final year of log stacking. When he dies he leaves a legacy of at least three years' supply of firewood for his widow. Just as a "woodfire is about so much more than heat", the stories in this book are about so much more than wood – about how we interact with our neighbours, respect nature, and how we care for future generations. Life, and staying warm, is still a struggle for survival.

There has been a resurgence of interest in woodfuel in Scandinavia: today's firewood consumption in Norway and Denmark is ten times what it was in 1976. Current interest is so high that the National Public Service broadcaster, NRK, even aired a twelve-hour show dedicated to woodfuel. Four hours depicted all aspects, including Lars Mytting demonstrating how to light a fire, but the bulk of it (eight hours) was spent with the camera focused on a log fire. People loved it. Occasionally fuel was added and at one point the camera operator cooked a sausage on the fire. Viewers were avidly sending messages with advice on when to add a log and how to manage the airflow. This growing interest has been boosted by improved technology: better and cheaper chainsaws, hydraulic splitters, and more efficient stoves. But how to use these tools most effectively is part of the mission of the book. As Mytting says, "much of this book is concerned with method". It's also about primaeval feelings and our "instinctive affection for flames".

Log burning probably goes back as far as humans and it has allowed us to inhabit regions which would otherwise be too far north. Historically "gathering fuel was one of the most crucial of all tasks and the calculation was simplicity itself: a little, and you would freeze. Too little and you would die". Within the family unit a good reserve of fuel was essential but in Nordic countries national reserves were also built up at times of crisis. Enormous woodpiles were created in Helsinki during World War II when the annual harvest was a record 25 million cubic metres. You need the book to see the pictures.

When you consider that Norway has a population of only 5 million, sales of about 200,000 copies suggest that about one in ten households owns the book. The surprise best-seller has also travelled well, with versions available in at least ten languages. My own interest in Norwegian Wood started when a Swiss friend of mine said it was a "must read". Although it's been bought by tens of thousands of "armchair woodchoppers" it's a practical guide for those of us who heat our homes with woodfuel and have our very own, rather modest, woodpiles.

That Lars Mytting is a Norwegian journalist explains his love of a good anecdote as well as his deadpan humour. His stories are as much about planning for the future as they are about processing firewood. There are dozens of graphic pictures that all log enthusiasts will drool over. For many men, the logpiles and woodfuel photos will be almost pornographic.


©Inge Hådem

Inge Hådem, 2012 Ark National Firewood Stacking Champion, with his stack covering an entire house

©Lars Mytting

Ole Kristian Kjelling and his wife, Zofia, with their Rossini sculpture stack


©Robert Wilson

Home Alone

Nick Gibbs on a solo odyssey to Le Shack, natural barbed wire, Walden and peace

For the first time since my injury I travelled to Le Shack alone, by taxi-train-bike-ferry-bus-train-bike, ending with a 26km ride from Avranches, touched by the tentacles of Storm Imogen. The outhouse had been raided again, but only the old Seagull outboard taken, and I mowed ferociously with my much-loved Hayter for much of the visit. I find multi-tasking and prioritising difficult now, which is why I have had to pass on *Living Woods*. The joy of being at the Shack is that I don't have to make a list, just choose one task at a time as if it may be the last.

Clearing bramble is obviously the most important job to let grass and young trees grow, and to eliminate some of the trip hazards. This inspired me to fill any gaps along the boundary, where visitors have clearly entered, with a natural form of barbed wire. I deviously planted bramble roots between the hedgerow chestnuts, and wove long lengths of the thicker, spikier, painful stuff in low branches. I must have been the first person to be promulgating bramble since William Pickles Hartley asked in 1871: 'This jelly seems to be popular. How are we going to source enough berries?"

After that I dug up yet more hazel saplings to relocate them in the area previously known as the car park. Over the years there has been a modicum of browsing, and for the first time I saw a pair of Sika bounding across a field near Le Shack. I wondered if the bramble might have kept Bambi from invading more often, and stuck short, sharp pieces around small hazel as natural tree guards. We will see if that works.

***Main:** Le Shack looking good*
***Left:** Nick firewooding by hand, trusted tools Triton SuperJaws, Silky Fox saw and LogMatic gloves*
***Above:** Bramble stalks protect young hazel from browsers*

The seizures I have had since my head injury limit the amount of chainsawing and felling I can do. I only used a Silky Fox saw for cutting firewood this time, discovering that an evening's load of woodfuel can be produced in just fifteen minutes, even by hand. My sawhorse had been stolen, so I checked that logging could be done resting on a pile of cordwood, just in case future robbers take the brilliant Triton SuperJaws they have foolishly ignored in the past.

Le Shack has been a crucial part of publishing Living Woods, and vice versa. I began questioning the purpose of my visit, especially as I found the darkness alone quite frightening, which Thoreau accepted as man's natural fear. I read a fair bit of Walden and of Mark Twain. I enjoyed the respective peace and silliness afforded by being on my own, perhaps now spending visits to Le Shack as an aged Tom Sawyer, devising new ways to use bramble, playing games like Rocket Golf, and sharing bits of lunacy with my Huckleberry friends. ■

Founder of *Living Woods*, **Nick Gibbs** has been in magazine publishing for nearly 30 years. He has edited titles as diverse as sailing, computing, rugby and mountain biking, and set up his company Freshwood Publishing by launching *British Woodworking*. He has a shack in Normandy, and carves replicas of famous golf courses. Details at www.nickgibbs.com

Wood Fairs and Events

After the woodland work of winter, spring brings wood fairs to enjoy, exchange ideas, entice and educate. *Living Woods* will have a presence at several, and will be observing, chatting and absorbing ideas at many others. Mark your diary and we hope to see you there!

SPRING AND SUMMER

©Courtesy of the Arboricultural Association

3ATC UK Open Climbing Competition at 2015 ARB Show

Weird and Wonderful Wood
14–15 May
Haughley Park, Wetherden, Stowmarket, Suffolk www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

Devon County Show
19 – 21 May
Westpoint Centre, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon
http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk

The Bushcraft Show
28–30 May
Beehive Farm Woodland Lakes, Rosliston, Derbyshire www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk

The ARB Show
3–4 June
Westonbirt, The National Arboretum, Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show

West's Wood Fair
18 & 19 June
East Dean, Chichester, West Sussex
www.westswoodfair.co.uk/

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum Wood Show returns in 2017.

Royal Highland Show 2016
23–26 June
Edinburgh
royalhighlandshow.org

Woodfest Wales
24–26 June
Caerwys, North Wales
www.woodfestwales.co.uk

Blackdown Hills Woodland & Country Fair
is having a rest and will return in 2017.

Kent County Show
8 – 10 July
Kent Event Centre and Showground, Maidstone, Kent
kentshowground.co.uk

Holkham Country Fair
returns in 2017.

Great Yorkshire Show
12 – 14 July
Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, Yorkshire
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk

Royal Welsh Show
18–21 July
Builth Wells, Powys
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show

New Forest and Hampshire Show
26–28 July
Brockenhurst, Hampshire
www.newforestshow.co.uk

Spoonfest
5 – 7 August
Edale, Hope Valley, Derbyshire
spoonfest.co.uk

South Downs Show and Hampshire Woodfair
20–21 August
Queen Elizabeth Country Park, nr Petersfield, Hampshire www.southdownsshow.co.uk

Treefest at Westonbirt
Arboretum
27–29 August
Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair
27–28 August
Sturminster Newton, Dorset
www.stockgaylard.com

AUTUMN

©Courtesy of the Arboricultural Association

Demonstration at 2015 The ARB Show

Wychwood Forest Fair
4 September
Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

European Woodworking Show
returns in September, 2017.

APF Exhibition
15–17 September
Ragley Estate, Warwickshire
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Bentley Weald Woodfair
23–25 September
Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

The Cranborne Chase
Woodfair
3 – 4 October
Breamore House nr. Fordingbridge, Hampshire
www.woodfair.org.uk

Woodland & Craft Fair,
8 October
Ickworth Estate (National Trust), Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk
http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events/

Tweed Valley Forest Festival
21 – 30 October
Tweed Valley Forest Park, Peebles, Tweeddale
forest-festival.com

Peebles Wood Market
22–23 October
Tweed Green & Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market ■

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

Into the Woods

When I was twelve, my family bought a woodland.
It was magical.

Whenever possible, we got out of London for whole weekends of wildness, to construct dens, build dams across streams, cut bracken from the paths and make things out of very green branches. Going into the woods for the first time you get your ideas of where to start from watching what others are doing. We felt we more like wild west pioneers than just a suburban family who'd driven thirty miles south into rural Sussex. The whole woodland project was a cross between an adventure playground and a giant classroom.

We loved sharing our woodland with anyone who would come with us, school friends, cousins, neighbours. When they got to "the wood" they joined in with what others had thought of doing: planting trees, digging ditches, hacking through the undergrowth and building campfires. Looking back, we felt like explorers who had come from the city to an undiscovered country and that we were uncovering things that "no white man" had ever previously known about: spotting glow-worms late at night, building treehouses, tracking deer, making swings, finding adders, and digging up clay to do pottery as if we were humans at the dawn of civilisation.

Much later, after university, I was looking for a way of getting back into the woods myself and finding a way to help others experience these magical early experiences. I ended up building a business, www.woodlands.co.uk, which makes woodlands available to families for enjoyment and conservation. To do this properly, we needed to tell people about what sort of things others are doing in the woods, just as our friends taught us all those years ago. Nick Gibbs' magazine, *Living Woods*, has been a fantastic help in doing this. So when, recently, I was given the chance to take on the magazine I saw it as a great opportunity to help to share some of the things happening in woodlands and especially to inspire those who are going into a new woodland for the first time and are at the beginning of their own adventure. ■

– *Angus Hanton*

©om Wheeler

Up for the challenge

Tree work demands the best of me. From the smallest karabiner to the right saw, everything goes towards getting the job done properly and safely. I need equipment that's tough, safe, starts on first pull and keeps going through the day, every day.
That's why I choose STIHL.

Chris Pratt
Arborist since 1995

MS 150 C-E
This compact and light weight saw is perfect for wood carving, coppicing and hedge-laying

Find out more at your local
STIHL Approved Dealer or visit
www.stihl.co.uk/pro

STIHL®