

Living Woods

No. 47 SPRING 2018

MAGAZINE

A woman with brown hair tied in a bun is focused on carving a wooden bowl. She is using a hand tool with a wooden handle and a metal tip. The bowl has the words "LIVING WOODS" and "BRITAIN" carved into it. In the foreground, there is a tray filled with various hand tools, including chisels and gouges. The background shows a workshop with large windows and wooden beams.

Growing a future for Britain's forests

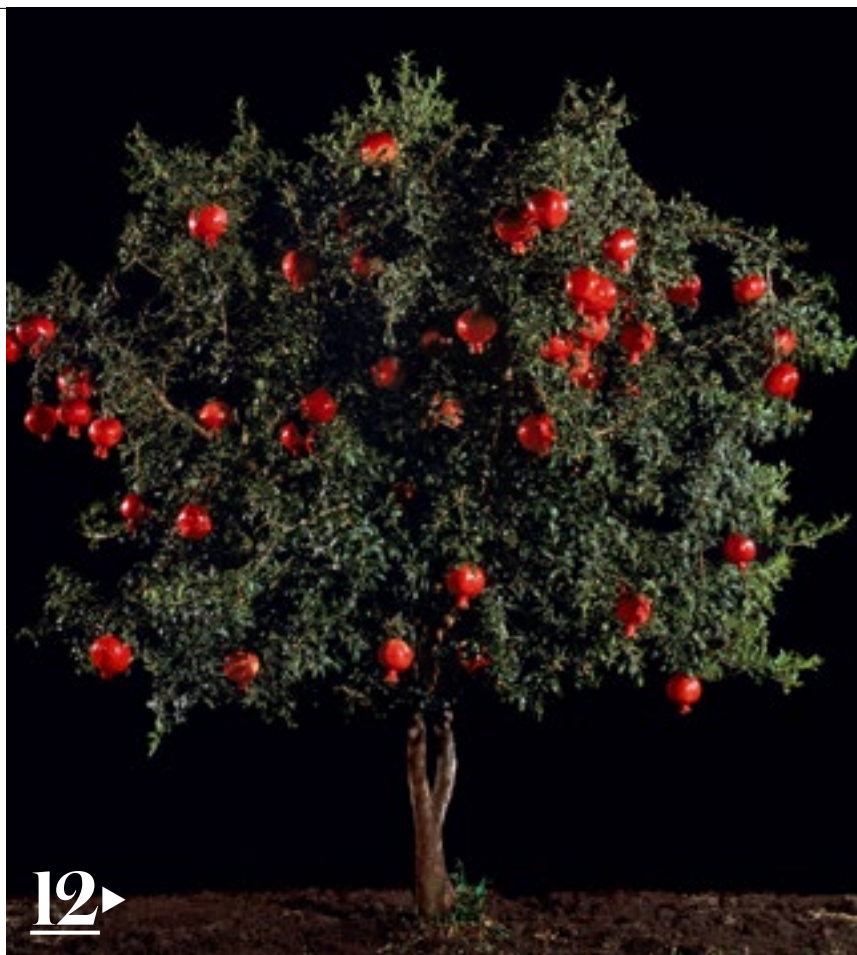
PLUS

- **Harnessing hand-power: using a two-handed saw**
- **Taming the woods: bushcraft activities**

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Like a well-coppiced tree, Living Woods Magazine lives on in a new incarnation, available online and available to download wherever you are. Thank you to everyone who wrote in to say how much they enjoy receiving the magazine – we intend to maintain the same mix of features and articles which makes the magazine so appealing. As spring approaches we look at hiring contractors – is it worth the cost and how to avoid the pitfalls. David Hunter describes his love of managing woodland without power tools and Rod Waterfield harnesses student power to build a sustainable shelter. In a cultural blast, we review the V&A's *Into the Woods* Exhibition, John Lewis-Stempel's latest book *The Wood*, and muse upon the symbolism inherent in willow trees. We hope you enjoy it.

Judith Millidge Editor
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COVER

Designer and craftsman Alice Blogg carves the Grown in Britain Hero Award bowl. (Photo courtesy Alice Blogg)

LivingWoodsMagazine.co.uk



@Woodland News

THE NORTHERN FOREST – GOOD OR BAD?

You can almost feel sorry for the government, who may have expected cries of unalloyed joy in January with the announcement that a whole new forest of some 50 million trees will be planted across the north of England from Liverpool to Hull, with the M62 as its spine.

While welcoming the whole proposal, Austin Brady, director of conservation at the Woodland Trust was quick to remind the public that a new forest could not compensate for the loss of ancient woodland which may result from other infrastructure schemes such as HS2. And in the words of Oliver Rackham, 'Tree-planting is not synonymous with conservation; it is an admission that conservation has failed'. Brady went on to say, 'England is losing tree cover. We need to make sure we are protecting our most important habitats such as ancient woodland as well as investing in new major woodland creation schemes.'

ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2018

Woodland owners and managers and forestry education and skills organisations in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire,



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FOREST LIVE 2018

The Forestry Commission's Forest Live concerts are back with an even better line-up this year. Artists include UB40, Paloma Faith, George Ezra, Kasabian and Gary Barlow. They are all outdoor at venues around the country: Bedgebury, Thetford, Delamere Forest, Sherwood Forest, Dalby Forest, Cannock Chase, and Westonbirt Arboretum. A full list of dates and tickets are here: www.forestry.gov.uk/music

Derbyshire, Somerset and Dorset, and the South West (Devon and Cornwall) have until 6 March to enter the RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards 2018. Details are at www.rfs.org.uk/awards/.

Award-winning architect, broadcaster and academic Piers Taylor, who himself lives in a self-built house in a working woodland, will be presenting the awards at the National Arboretum at Westonbirt in July.

Piers has co-presented *The World's Most Extraordinary*



Homes, three series of *The House that £100k Built* and *Britain's Most Spectacular Backyard Builds* for BBC Two.

RFS Excellence in Forestry Co-ordinator Rachel Thomas says: 'We are delighted that Piers has agreed to present the awards. He has inspired many to look at how home-grown timber can contribute to modern design with all the benefits for sustainable woodland management that brings.'

Join the Royal Forestry Society (RFS)

From £4.54 a month

- A free mentor visit by a woodland management expert
- Visits to private woodlands and other exclusive venues
- QJF magazine and a fortnightly e-news
- Discounts on RFS courses, lectures, products & services

[See what RFS members say in this video](#)

@Woodland News

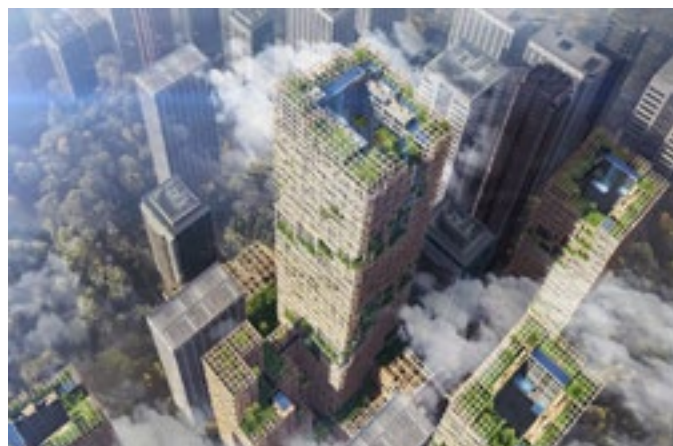
REACHING FOR THE SKY

Sumitomo Forestry has announced plans for a 350-m high skyscraper building.

In 2010, the Japanese government passed an Act for the Promotion of Use of Wood in Public Buildings – an admirable commitment for a country where woodland cover is a mighty 67% (compared to just 12% in the UK). Perhaps better known for the concept of 'Shinrin-yoku', or forest bathing, the Japanese are also investing heavily in research into timber and wood technology, and this building will utilise cross-laminated timber (CLT). Made of layers of timber glued together with fire-

resistant glue, CLT is an engineered wooden material that is light, as strong as steel and fire-resistant.

The 70-storey building will have a hybrid wood and steel structure, using 90% wooden materials. A braced steel structure will help protect against earthquakes. It will incorporate 8,000 homes and include trees and foliage on balconies at every level. The visible interior will be all wood and in the words of the manufacturer, who is committed to building high-rise wooden buildings, 'These structures are like a forest, a habitat for living things.' Read more about high rise timber buildings, or 'Plyscrapers' on [BBC Future here.](#)



10%
of the world's forests
are protected areas
– an area the size
of India.

HERITAGE CRAFTS CONFERENCE: CRAFTS FOR THE FUTURE

Saturday 24 March 2018
Royal Society of Medicine,
Wimpole Street, London

Speakers include Jojo Wood, apprentice clog-maker and wood-worker. Jojo is one of the world's leading spoon-carvers, and is training under the last of the English clog-makers, Jeremy Atkinson. More details [here.](#)

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS PROTECT BIRDS FROM RISING HEAT

Ancient woodlands are rightly valued for their unique ecosystems. Scientific American Magazine reports that the majestic old-growth forests of the Pacific North-West protect birds from the rising heat caused by climate change. Scientists at Oregon University have analysed how the populations of 13 different bird species have changed in the past 30 years. Essentially, populations within old-growth forests are weathering climate change better than birds elsewhere. [To read the report, click here.](#)



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*Dropping big trees
in the wood brings
out the primeval
man in you. Get it
wrong and it
will kill you.*

Forester in BBC's The Forest

”

VIEW THROUGH THE TREES

Julia Goodfellow-Smith meets up with the neighbours

Splitting a woodland into several smaller plots creates a community of woodland owners. So, I have asked our community what the experience has been like in their first 12 to 18 months of ownership.

Nicola and James have been using ponies to supplement power tools in controlling bracken and brambles. Their woodland is unrecognisable from the thicket they bought. They are delighted to see the return of wildlife and are looking forward to seeing their meadow bloom.

Nicola says, 'The woodland is my happy place where I can breathe clean air, exercise and build conservation value.' For James, it is a retreat from his previous work environments and a place where he can develop useful skills for their next ambition – to be smallholders.

Richard bought his woodland as a place for his children to experience and explore nature. He initially thought it would be an extension of his home. Now he also thinks of home as an extension of the woodland, even building a den from woodland branches in the garden. He is pleased that the novelty of spending time in the woods has not worn off for his children, and that they are spending less time on screens at home now too.

Gemma wanted somewhere for herself and her family that would always be there. Until they discovered that their plot is ancient woodland, complete with dormice, they had plans to clear the brambles and create some flat areas. Instead, they have made a few small paths for the children to run around, and are very careful not to disturb the dormice or mycorrhizal fungi. There are times when the children are reluctant to go to the woods, but once there, they never want to leave.

For Tessa, who is renovating her house, the fact that the woodland does not need urgent attention is important. She feels that part of the fun will be developing the woodland over time, to accommodate the changing needs of her children. For now, there's excitement in discovery. 'Our woodland camera is awesome. It's hard for the children to imagine a badger when



JULIA GOODFELLOW-SMITH

“

The woodland is my happy place where I can breathe clean air, exercise and build conservation value.

”

looking at a hole, so we all love to see the photos.'

My husband Mike has always loved being in woodlands, planting trees, chopping them down and making things from them. He loves the beauty of our woodland. 'We have stately beech trees, Scots pine around our camp and daffodils followed by bluebells from one end to the other.' He has been amazed by the variety of fungi we have, and at our reaction, accepting a slower pace of life there.

All of our neighbours have said that they enjoy being part of a community. Richard sums it up nicely. 'I wasn't expecting us to make friends in the woodland. The fact that we're amongst a community of owners has made it more enjoyable than buying a stand-alone wood. I have enjoyed the social side, and the children just run around playing with each other. This is in such contrast to modern-day life.'

GROWING A FUTURE FOR BRITAIN'S FORESTS

All woodland owners are concerned with the future of their wood. **Camilla Hair** explains how the Grown in Britain campaign is connecting supply chains to Britain's forests and woodlands.

In its first four years, [Grown in Britain](#) has established that some major construction contractors would prefer to use British-grown timber. Grown in Britain has set up a licensing scheme covering all parts of the supply chain, from forest owner to wood-user. This means that end-users can be assured of the British origins of products from wood fuel to construction and joinery timber.

To begin at the beginning, Grown in Britain has now licensed enough timber to fill the Elizabeth Tower that houses Big Ben around 400 times, and enough forest area to cover the equivalent of 345,000 football pitches. Its 80 licence-holders include woodlands of 20 hectares and under, right up to Britain's biggest manufacturer of wood products, BSW Timber and its sawmills, and every stage along the supply chain in between. 'There is still a lot of work to be done in bringing woodlands back into active management,' says Grown in Britain CEO Dougal Driver. 'There are potentially several million more tonnes of wood which could be brought into the supply chain, and there's increasing demand for wood which is demonstrably British in origin.'

Woodruff Woodland, near Morpeth in Northumberland, is one example of a Grown in Britain-licensed woodland

which is benefiting from, and returning economic value to, its local community. With a 10-year restoration management plan in place to revive the woodland and maximise its value to biodiversity, Woodruff's other aims include conversion of sustainably-grown and harvested timber into resources available to the local community; removing invasive rhododendrons and re-planting trees, to generate a sustainable future; and to extend wildlife corridors and monitor wildlife populations through surveys.

Social enterprises

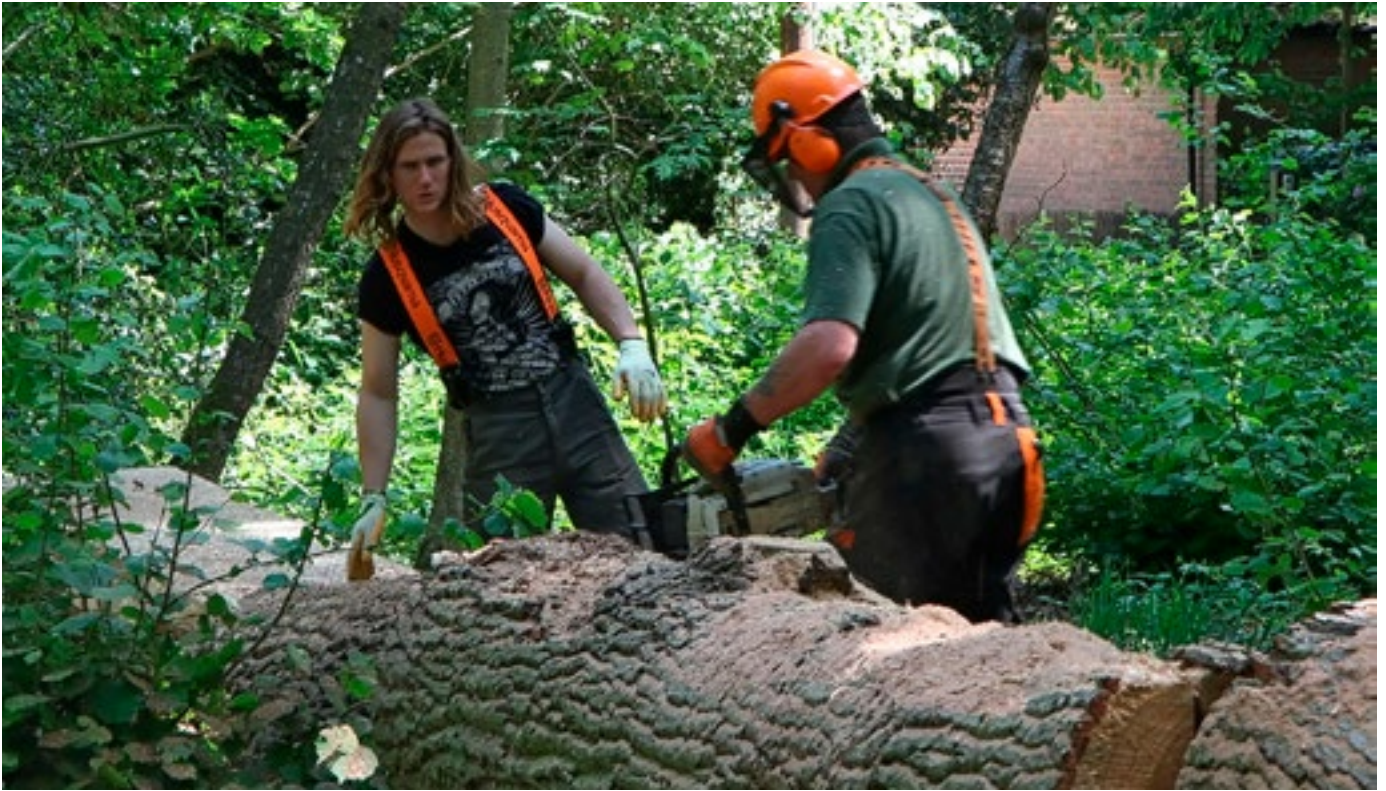
Julia Meldrum, who runs Woodruff Wood, has been a Grown in Britain forest licence-holder for almost three years. 'We have a full complement of customers at the moment as we can only produce a limited amount of wood fuel each year from our small forest. Repeat customers come back because the wood is guaranteed British, and because they like being connected with a local business. The Grown in Britain messaging reinforces the sustainability and local provenance of the wood we produce, and helps people understand that, as well as producing wood fuel, we are simultaneously managing the woodland for wildlife.'

“

There is still a lot of work to be done in bringing woodlands back into active management.

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ABOVE & BELOW: Hill Holt Wood in Lincolnshire is run as a social enterprise, with the profits reinvested for the good of the woodland.

A Grown in Britain forest licence-holder since the start of the campaign in 2013, Hill Holt Wood in Lincolnshire is a woodland social enterprise, and the profits from its now extensive portfolio of activities are reinvested for the good of the woodland and the community. CEO Steve Donagain explains why they became involved with the campaign: ‘We were already very active when Grown in Britain was formed, but the campaign fitted our ethos. We joined because we wanted to demonstrate further the value of British woodland to the community. In common with Grown in Britain, we have always been engaged with educating the public about woods and their benefits. Today we run health programmes on adult mental health, and with the elderly on reducing isolation. We work with teens-to-twenties expanding their world views and have even rebuilt and refurbished five houses using our own timber. We’ve also learned to diversify our income streams, such as running forest weddings and events. This way we can keep the value in the business, and truly create a sustainable future for our forests and our staff.’

Seeing the wood for the trees

During Grown in Britain Week 2017, the campaign held a joint conference with the Country Land & Business Association (CLA) and the Forestry Commission to help owners understand the commercial benefits of managing woodlands for both income and the environment. The first stage of realising value from a woodland is finding an outlet for harvested material, and that is where sawmills like Tyler Hardwoods come in.

Geoff Tyler looks after procurement at Tyler Hardwoods, a Grown in Britain licence-holder. ‘We



welcome enquiries from all round the country. Woodland owners tend to send us photos of the material they have for sale and we need details including the species, diameters and lengths, any information on grade, whether the timber is still standing or is already felled, and if so when it was felled.

‘Popular timbers at the moment include English ash, oak, Douglas fir (all popular with architects for its bigger section sizes), and also elm, larch, and Western red cedar for cladding. We’re particularly interested in specimen-grade material such as ripple logs. There’s no yearly cycle of demand, but we tend to saw sycamore and oak during the winter, so perhaps we purchase more of those species at that time of year.’

Making a mark

Moving on through the supply chain, end-users of wood are also taking up Grown in Britain licensing to prove the provenance of the materials they use, and thus boost the

reputation of their businesses. Designer-maker Alice Blogg is a Grown in Britain licence-holder and produced the 2017 Grown in Britain Hero Award trophy from a piece of British ash, specifically chosen for its colouring and grain. Alice uses locally-sourced British wood in her wide-ranging work which includes interiors, high-end bespoke furniture and Grown in Britain-labelled products for design-centred retailers such as Heal's in central London. 'Using wood that's locally-grown here in Britain means I am using minimal "timber miles" and carbon footprint, as well as working in harmony with nature and the local environment,' Alice says. 'With a variety of commissions on at any one time, I need regular access to timber from business which, like mine, are Grown in Britain-licensed'.

Right tree, right job

Ash, sycamore and poplar are some of the most plentiful British-grown hardwood timbers. A research project undertaken a few years ago under Grown in Britain's auspices has established potential markets for these under-utilised species, by converting them to a higher-value product through thermal modification. Tom Barnes, Managing Director at Grown in Britain licence-holder, Vastern Timber explains: 'We have based our Brimstone timber cladding products on utilising these three readily-available white hardwoods. The thermal modification process involves no chemicals, and the heat treatment removes from the wood the elements that would otherwise attract mechanisms of decay, making it much more durable for exterior cladding. The product won the timber industry's innovation award in 2016, and continues to go from strength to strength with architects, specifiers and self-builders. It proves that even the most common British timbers can find a market with some innovative thinking.'

Grown in Britain has a variety of resources for woodland owners, including a video about valuing hardwood and a price indicator for hardwood logs, which will be updated annually. 'Whether you're a novice or an experienced woodland owner, Grown in Britain is here to help you realise the environmental, economic and social value of your woodlands. As we expand markets for British-grown timber, it's a good time to get involved,' concludes Dougal Driver.



LEFT & BELOW: Designer-maker Alice Blogg worked in ash to produce the 2017 Grown in Britain Hero Award Trophy.

BOTTOM: Brimstone timber cladding uses under-utilised species which can be thermally modified to produce a higher-value product.



How to become a GROWN IN BRITAIN licensed wood

To obtain a Grown in Britain licence, woodlands must be covered by a management plan consistent with the UK Forestry Standard. The GiB team can talk applicants through the process, which is very straightforward. To find out more, contact

enquiries@growninbritain.org

or visit the website

www.growninbritain.org

WOODLANDS AWARDS

2018



The Woodlands Awards are back for their second year.
Antony Mason of Woodlands.co.uk sets the scene.



“
Very pleased with the citation and the award gifts. There are obviously a lot of very talented wood owners out there.
 ”



The whole idea of the Woodlands Awards is to celebrate – and give due recognition to – the wonderful and innovative things that are taking place in the woodlands sector year on year.

For 2018 we are introducing two new awards:

- Best Woodland Sculpture
- Best Woodland Hair and/or Beard (just for fun)

Awards categories

There are 14 awards categories, divided into two groups: awards for individuals (woodland owners and users) and awards for enterprises (woodland organisations, businesses, educational programmes).

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

How to enter

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

Deadline for submissions:
31 July 2018.

A note to past winners: the competition rules say that winners cannot win an award in the same category two years in a row, but there is nothing to stop them entering (or being entered) in another category.

Winners

A panel of judges will draw up shortlists of the best entries, and then award the prizes. There may be a number of winners in each category (last year there were 49 winners altogether): all entries judged to be of equally high merit will be awarded a First Prize (i.e. no Second, Third etc).

The 2018 award winners will be announced in late August 2018.

Please email antony@woodlands.co.uk if you know a candidate (it can be you!) for any of the awards.

Prizes

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

Full details about the awards, how to enter or how to recommend a winner, and the basis on which the award will be judged are on the [Woodlands.co.uk website](http://Woodlands.co.uk).

THE WOODLANDS AWARDS
SPONSORED BY
Woodlands.co.uk

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

Awards for individuals

Woodland Blogs
 Small Woodland Websites
 Woodland Photography
 Woodland Sculpture
 Woodland Tool Recommendations
 Whole Wood Owners' Coordinators
 Woodland Hair (and/or Beard)

Awards for enterprises

Woodland Contractors
 Forest Schools
 Woodland Courses
 Community Woods
 Woodfair Trade Stands
 Woodland Books of the Year
 Regional and National Woodland Organisations

GETTING HELP

At what point do woodland owners need to call in professional help?

Richard Hare offers a few tips.

Very few owners come by their woodland in a perfectly ‘well managed’ state and with nothing to do. True, many new owners don’t know quite what to do and good advice has always been to ‘do nothing’ for a while – well, for the first few seasons or a year anyway. It’s a good time to survey the species in the woodland, read up about what effects coppicing or thinning will have, how fast it will grow back, how quickly the natural regeneration might take and whether you should be planting other species, either as whips or small trees.

Try to remember why you bought the wood in the first place. Was it for the wildlife or for harvesting craft or fire wood? Maybe you simply bought it for recreation or amenity purposes? In a survey entitled [*What do owners do with their woods?*](#) Woodlands.co.uk discovered that owners of all ages purchase woodlands for myriad reasons. One common theme that ran through the responses was the desire to manage the woodland effectively, and owners acknowledged that intervention could require anything from the use of a few simple hand tools and bit of training, to some serious and expensive equipment and many years’ experience.

Lofty ambitions

At some point, you may find yourself considering a big project – perhaps a large amount of coppicing, or the thinning of a substantial area – and you may come to realise that you simply don’t have the time or expertise to do the work as well as you’d like. It’s important to find out exactly what the job involves and to make a realistic estimate of what you can safely achieve yourself. If you feel that the job

will overwhelm you, it’s probably time to summon help.

There are many reasons to carry out woodland management work yourself, not least the feeling of satisfaction and well-being gained from being out in the woods in the ‘green gym’. Countless studies have pointed to the health benefits, both physical and psychological, of working in a natural environment, and woodlands really tick all the boxes here. Doing it yourself can be cost effective, but make sure that you value your time. If you enjoy the task then that is part of the value, but if you are grimacing and cursing throughout the whole experience, resentful of the time it’s taken, then it’s probably not a task for you. Likewise, if

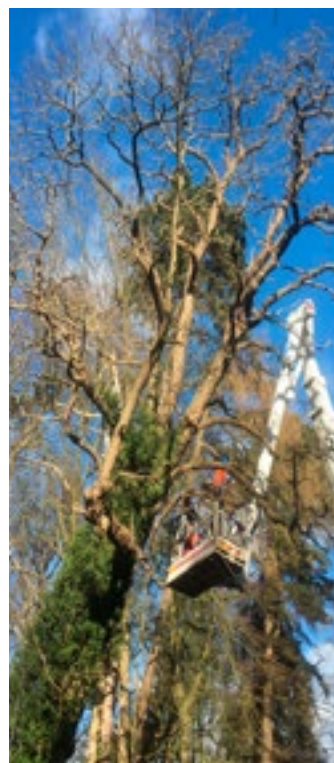
you don’t have the skills, the tools, the experience or confidence to do it yourself, it may be time to think about getting in some paid help. It can be dangerous too, so always err on the side of caution and don’t attempt anything you are unqualified for.

Contracting in

Hiring a contractor can be daunting if you have no experience, so ask around.

Talk to other woodland owners, land managers and local people. Who have they used in the past? Was the work carried out as expected? Did the contractors’ vehicles damage the woodland floor? Be prepared to get several quotes and check carefully what the contractor is offering to do for you. Are you both clear about the monetary arrangement? Most trees have got some value to them even if it’s just as firewood, but whether you see any of the cash value is another thing. On small-scale operations, the economies of scale usually mean that you will be paying the contractor. You may want the trees left ride-side for you to process

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If you don't have the skills, the tools, the experience or the confidence, it might be time to think about getting paid help
”



BRAMPTON VALLEY TRAINING



Mature broadleaved trees are wonderful, but may require attention, especially if they overhang roads or public paths. A good tree surgeon business will have skilled teams and the right equipment to deal with this kind of work (Photo credits: Brampton Valley Training.)

later, or the contractor may be able to offset the cost of the operation and take some of the timber with a resale value. Just be prepared to be disappointed that that prize 150-year-old oak or perfectly formed cherry tree in the middle of your wood is not fetching the viable return you thought you'd get. Contractors have a lot of expensive overheads and their costs will be determined by how easy is to get to the trees for extraction. Also bear in mind the effect of heavy lifting equipment on the woodland floor. Extracting prize oak butts from a remote part of the wood could mean a lot of ground disturbance and it may be better to consider a lighter approach. For example, call in a contractor who can mill the trees in situ and carry out the timber by hand. Or think about employing a horse logger who will be able to extract timber with minimal damage to the ground and understorey.

Long-term investment

Whichever way you go, always check the credentials and insurance of the contractor. If he or she does what you are looking for you may find you use him or her many more times. Make sure you visit your woodland with the contractor before the work starts. You will be able to show them exactly what you want and are likely to acquire new information from a skilled professional who will examine your woodland with an experienced eye. A good contractor with the right equipment who can listen to your requirements and advise you well, might achieve more in a season than many people would in their entire period of ownership. Taking this into account might start making the costs involved look very good value.



Mission control

Five tips for hiring a contractor

- 1 USE SOMEONE LOCAL.** Contractors on the doorstep usually do a good job and can access more kit or staff quickly if need be.
- 2 GET A WRITTEN CONTRACT QUOTE/ESTIMATE.** Be clear about this and if it's a quote, that should be what you pay. An estimate is just that, it could be more or less – be aware of this.
- 3 ASK ABOUT WHEN THEY WILL CARRY OUT THE WORK.** Think about the effects on the ground and environment according to the time of year.
- 4 IF THEY ARE LEAVING TIMBER IN THE WOOD FOR SUMMER EXTRACTION, ASK WHEN WILL IT BE REMOVED.** This may be at the mercy of the weather; but make sure there is a plan in place to get it moved.
- 5 CHECK INSURANCE AND QUALIFICATIONS.** Get references from previous customers.

OWNERS' EXPERIENCE

We took over a small parcel of roadside woodland without any knowledge of what it entailed. First, we hired a contractor with a lift who was able to take down all the potentially hazardous limbs overhanging the footpaths and roads. The following year we found two amazing hedge-layers who came in to lay the roadside hedge, but ended up teaching us how to do it. Now we are enjoying laying the rest of the neglected hedge boundaries ourselves! It's therapeutic and we enjoy blissful winter days in a wet ditch together.



DENMARK FARM



INTO THE WOODS

Grace Belben visits the V&A's Trees in Photography exhibition.

A trip to the V & A is always one of unlimited discovery, and the exhibition *Into the Woods: Trees in Photography* is no exception. The room is small, but the presence of trees provides a calming, reflective atmosphere that creates an illusion of spaciousness.

Trees have been a favourite subject of photography since its invention in the 19th century. In this exhibition the photograph takes many roles, from documenting a historic event, to being a scientific study, to a form of expression. It is the subtle, non-invasive nature of trees that encourages this variety of interpretations and uses.

The oldest photograph in the collection is from 1860, and captures a significant moment in America's history. It shows soldiers from the Royal Engineers cutting down trees to create the border between

the USA and Canada. Contrasting this historic image is Tokihiro Sato's magical forest, *Hakkoda #2*. Sato uses long exposure to create an other-worldly mystical scene.

The black and white photographs of Alfred Stieglitz and Awoiska van der Molen make you believe that trees were made to be photographed. The tonal intricacy created by light and shade on every leaf works together to create a dense detailed silver forest. Amongst these black and white forests, the rich greens and reds of a pomegranate tree appear even more luscious and fertile than usual in Tal Shochat's *Rimon*.

The range of work in this exhibition shows just how much trees have to offer us. It is a celebration of the importance of trees to artists and to society, as it marked the launch of the 2017 Tree Charter.

ABOVE: Tal Shochat, *Rimon (Pomegranate)*, 2011.
© Tal Shochat.

INTO THE WOODS

continues at the V&A until 22 April. Entrance is free. Many of the images can be viewed via the V&A website here: www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions



LEFT: Royal Engineers, Cutting on the 49th Parallel, on the Right Bank of the Mooyie River Looking West, about 1860. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

BELOW LEFT:
Ansel Adams, Aspens,
Northern New Mexico, 1958.

BELOW:
Tokihiko Sato, Hakkoda #2, 2009
Tokihiko Sato, Courtesy Leslie
Tonkonow Artworks + Projects 58.





Staff and students from the University of Liverpool in the finished shelter.

BUILDING WOODLAND SKILLS

If you're an award-winning woodland skills centre and one of your shelters needs replacing, any old shed simply won't do the job. **Rodney Waterfield** called in the experts.

“

We had to make them think about the various ways you can join pieces of wood together, recognising that it is green and will shrink.

”

The Woodland Skills Centre in north Wales is located on a 50-acre site in the heart of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is not only renowned for offering a wide range of more than 50 courses in practical skills and crafts, but it is run by Rodney Waterfield and his family with three management objectives at its heart: social, environmental and economic. All three are given equal weight.

Most of the site is woodland and it includes a number of timber-framed Centre buildings, as well as workshops, polytunnels, a tree nursery, an arboretum, a heritage orchard, a wildflower meadow, an apiary, allotments and a vineyard.

The woodlands are used by the Centre for a wide range of activities – courses in woodland management, coppice work and hedgelaying, forest school, birthday

parties, family events, bushcraft courses and by volunteer groups. There are three sites in the woods with permanent timber-framed shelters, fire circles and compost toilets.

The shelter at one of these sites had outlived its time and needed to be replaced – a job Rod and his team had been meaning to do for several years. The old building was constructed from roundwood larch posts, with sawn timber roof joists, coroline roof sheets and tarpaulin sides.

As luck would have it, one of the staff at the University of Liverpool School of Architecture knew about the woodland and realised that the Centre would make a perfect site for a practical project for first-year architectural students. Early in 2017, the university asked if the students could design and build a structure in

Rod's woods. With the prospect of an imaginative, bespoke building appearing as a replacement for the old shelter, Rod agreed almost immediately, with just one proviso. 'We said that we would need to be involved at all stages to ensure that the building would fit into the woodland and serve the needs we have.'

Scorched larch policy

Rod continues, 'There are over 100 first-year architecture students and they were all invited to draw up a plan for a 4-metre by 4-metre timber building constructed from green larch. Many of the students got involved and five designs emerged from a collaborative project, which they sent to us to examine. They all showed great flair and creativity but a couple of designs were more suitable for a public park than a woodland. We told them what we liked and why, and the students then came up with a detailed design. They were keen to try scorching the larch with a blow torch to increase its durability. We said yes rather nervously and agreed that they would only use one blowtorch on-site near to the build where there was bare earth and no overhanging trees!'

Once the design stage was complete, two members of staff and a small group



Fixing the frame and uprights in place.



Scorching the larch cladding to make it more durable.

of students came to visit the centre and view the site. Rod recalls, 'We went into the woodland to look at the site and then had a session in the office to talk about how we were going to go from a drawing to a building in just 48 hours. It was really interesting watching the students work. They were amazing with a CAD programme on a computer, but lacked experience in the practicalities of actually making something. We had to make them think about the various ways you can join pieces of wood together, recognising that it is green and will shrink. Working in the woodland is also very different from working in a university workshop.'

'We agreed the final design and a cutting list. We were to provide all the timber and the fixings but the university would pay for them. The timber was sourced from a local woodland, was milled and delivered. We got all the fixings: 10 mm bolts, nail plates, joist hangers, nails and screws. We checked that we had sufficient tools: hand saws, hammers, battery drills, etc. When the weekend date was fixed for the build,

BUILDING

over 100 students expressed an interest in coming. It was a really popular project, but we had to limit numbers to 20.

‘The students and staff all arrived on the Friday evening. On Saturday morning we had a clear site, a large stack of larch, lots of hand tools and some scaffolding. There were two members of the Woodland Skills Centre staff, four university staff and 20 students. We wanted the students to manage the project and to work out what needed doing when. We just tried to be on hand with technical assistance.

‘It quickly became apparent that we needed to be more involved – half the students had never used a handsaw or a hammer! We understood why the staff had been so keen to get their students to do some practical work, to think about the logistics of getting materials to site, sequencing the work, understanding the properties of the material and how to work with the materials.

‘It was a real learning experience for the students, but they rose to the challenge, managed the project, worked well together and learned a wide range of practical skills. Apparently, they are still talking about their 48-hour build in the woods and several have come back to look at it again.



The students worked well together to erect the building in just 48 hours.

We were impressed with the vision of Liverpool University and the commitment of the staff in realising what a valuable experience it would be for the students. We ended up with a great building at virtually no cost and we hope they will return this year to undertake a similar project for a neighbouring business.



Rodney Waterfield and his family run the [Woodland Skills Centre](#) in north Wales. Visit their website for details of courses, workshops and camping options.



The scorched larch cladding is fixed to the frame and the shelter takes shape.

EVENTS ROUND-UP

In spring, a woody person's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of wood fairs ...

MAY

THE ARB SHOW

11–12 May 2018
Westonbirt Arboretum,
Gloucestershire

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WOOD

19–20 May 2018 Stowmarket,
Suffolk



THE BUSHCRAFT SHOW

26–28 May 2018
Beehive Farm, Rosliston,
Derbyshire

DEVON COUNTY SHOW

17–19 May 2018
Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon

WOOD FESTIVAL

18–20 May 2018
Brazier's Park, Ipsden,
Oxfordshire

ROYAL BATH & WEST SHOW

30 May–2 June 2018 Shepton
Mallet, Somerset

JUNE

WEST'S WOOD FAIR 8–10
June 2018

East Dean, Chichester, West
Sussex

ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW

21–24 June 2018
Edinburgh, Scotland

JULY

TIMBER FESTIVAL

6–8 July 2018,
Feanedock, National Forest

GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW

10–12 July 2018
Great Yorkshire Showground,
Harrogate

ROYAL WELSH SHOW

23–26 July 2018
Builth Wells, Wales

NEW FOREST AND HAMPSHIRE COUNTY SHOW

24–26 July 2018 Brockenhurst,
Hampshire



WOODFEST WALES

28–29 July 2018
St Asaph, Denbighshire

AUGUST

SOUTH DOWNS SHOW

8–19 August 2018
Queen Elizabeth Country Park,
Petersfield, Hampshire

WILDERNESS GATHERING

16–19 August
West Knoyle, Wiltshire

STOCK GAYLARD OAK FAIR

25–26 August 2018 Sturminster
Newton, Dorset

SEPTEMBER

WYCHWOOD FOREST FAIR

2 September 2018 Charlbury,
Oxfordshire

BELMONT WOODFEST & COUNTRY FAIR

9–10 September 2018
Faversham, Kent

APF SHOW

20–22 September 2018, Ragley
Estate, Warwickshire

BENTLEY WEALD WOOD FAIR

28–30 September 2018 Lewes,
East Sussex

SURREY HILLS WOOD FAIR

TBC 2018 Birtley House,
Guildford





TWO-HANDED SAWS

Chainsaws are noisy and have a habit of stalling at inconvenient moments.

David Hunter suggests a hand-powered alternative.

I was working in the coppice last week with a good friend who had kindly agreed to help me for the day. I had introduced him to the two-man cross-cut saw and we were bucking (cross-cutting) a fallen cherry stem. Half way through the cut he looked across at me, shook his head, smiled, and said ‘David – I think you are mad.’

He was referring not just to my general mental health but to the fact that I elect to use a two-man saw instead of a chainsaw. He may well have a point. You can probably count on one hand the number of people who use two-man cross-cut saws in a coppice business. I imagine this is due to their speed, for they are no doubt slower than their motorised cousins. However, I would argue that

they have many advantages. They are relatively safe, start first time and do not require any fuel beyond the energies of the sawyers. Furthermore, they have the great benefit of being

Top sawing tips

1. Keep your saw sharp and in good condition.
2. When sawing with a person on either end of the saw, never push, only pull. Pushing can cause the saw to bend and then jam in the cut, slowing down the process.
3. Find a good sustainable rhythm that is comfortable for both cutters.
4. Work at a comfortable height if possible (though this can be a challenge with larger poles).

quiet, and hence allow you to talk to your fellow woodland workers and enjoy the sounds of nature around you. Now, for the sake of transparency I must admit that I use a chainsaw for particular tasks. It is, for example, a brilliant tool for processing larger poles ready for making charcoal. However, I do all the felling and general sawing in the coppice with axe and two-man cross-cut saw. I’m sure I take longer cutting as a result, but I’ve yet to hear anyone complain that they have simply spent too much time in the woods.

The two-man cross-cut saw is very user-friendly, and a total beginner can be sawing wood happily within minutes of picking up one end of a well-sharpened and set saw.

FELLING A TREE



1. Starting the directional cut with a match cut

The axe is used to take two 'wedges' out of the side of the tree to be felled. By working on the sides like this, you are cutting into less wood with each blow, making life a little easier on yourself by making the process considerably more efficient. It is very important to make sure that both your 'wedges' match up (hence 'match cut'). If they don't, you risk losing control of the fell and increase the chances of the tree not going where you want it to. Done well, the two cuts will form a point, which usefully indicates the direction the tree should fall in.



2. Finishing the directional cut with the axe

It is now necessary to remove the wood from between the match cuts, with the axe. You need to make sure that you create a clean and even cut here to ensure that the tree falls where you want it to.



3. Felling cut

With the directional cut in, you can now put in the felling cut with the two-man saw. It is really important that both sawyers have a clear route of retreat that they can take once the tree starts to fall. Sawing together, make sure that you are sawing evenly until you make the cut about 1–1½ inches from the directional cut.



4. Wedges

Once happy with the felling cut, you remove the saw and bang in wedges to fell – hopefully. Then stand back, smile, wipe your brow, and have a cup of tea.

5. Stump

The finished stump. You can see clearly all the elements of a safe fell – the gob cut for direction, the felling cut and the 'hinge', which is where the tree folded over to fall.



As the photos on the previous page show, the capabilities of the two-man saw do not stop at bucking (sawing-up trees already on the ground to a desired length). For those without a chainsaw, they can also be used to make the felling process a little easier and more efficient.

Cutting up rough

Once trees get over a certain size it becomes more difficult to fell them in a controlled manner with the axe alone. The saw makes the process more efficient, as well as considerably safer. The series of photos shows the process we used, but felling large trees safely requires experience and skill and I would strongly advise that you seek training before attempting something like this yourself. There are no doubt many ways of achieving the same outcome.

If this article has piqued your interest and you would like to get hold of a saw for use in your own woods then there are a couple of options, and it may be easier and cheaper than you think.

Old two-man saws can often be found hiding out in sheds, on pub walls and at markets around the country (Take a look at this [Woodlands blog](#) on the subject of old tools). Tool sellers at woodfairs will often be a useful source of both saws and knowledge. Old saws may be neglected and in need of some attention, but with a bit of effort they can be brought back to life and back to the woods. Online sites such as e-Bay are also a good place to find them (priced anything from £5 to £50, depending on condition).

Alternatively, you can buy them new from the Sheffield company Flinn-Garlick Saws, the only company in the UK that makes new two-handed saws.

David Hunter is a coppice worker in Pembrokeshire, West Wales. He is also an instructor at Coppicewood College, a woodlands skill centre teaching traditional woodland management methods. Thanks to his colleagues Nick Barnes and Barbara Goodwin for their help with the sawing and to [Flinn-Garlick Saws](#) for supplying the two-man saw.

For more information please visit: in www.coppicewoodcollege.co.uk and David's website, www.thecoppiceplot.com



BUSHCRAFT

TAMING THE WOODLAND WILDERNESS

Olivia Beardsmore offers a taste of a fast-growing woodland hobby.



There are probably as many reasons for buying a woodland as there are owners, but one common thread often runs through: owners would like a place where they can do exactly what they want and where their children can roam reasonably freely. There's a lot to learn and once you immerse yourself in your wood, it's easy to be overwhelmed by real and perceived dangers. Acquiring a few bushcraft skills can help you use the woodland to your advantage and at its heart, bushcraft offers an understanding of the natural world. Foraging, fires,

fungi and building shelters are just a few skills to acquire, but it's not all about crawling about in damp undergrowth and struggling to light a fire – learning how to be still and observe the natural environment maybe the place to start.

Once described as 'wilderness skills', the bushcraft movement is rapidly expanding throughout the UK and globally. It's a hobby which will teach you the skills not just to survive in the woods, but to positively thrive. Your own woodland is the perfect environment to develop an array of bushcraft skills.



Olivia Beardsmore was editor-in-chief of *Bushcraft and Survival Skills Magazine* and organised the Bushcraft and Survival Skills Show, to be held on 26-28 May 2018 in Rosliston, Derbyshire. Visit the website for more details: www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk



Fire-lighting

One anthropologist claims that our love for a campfire stems back to prehistoric times when Stone Age people would socialise around the fire, feeling safe from predators while keeping warm.

In a study published in the *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, Christopher Lynn of the University of Alabama stated that the natural response of modern humans to relax in front of fire is an evolutionary reflex. In an experiment, participants watched a fire; the results showed that their blood pressure dropped and they became more sociable.

Bushcraft teaches many methods of fire-lighting using traditional techniques such as a flint-and-steel, a bow-drill, hand-drill and a fire steel among others. There is something very satisfying about knowing you can do this without matches and copious amounts of artificial accelerants.

Foraging and plant ID_

Food for free – how about that? Your woodland could provide the ingredients or even the full recipe for a number of meals from berries to fungi and the selection will vary depending on the season. It is critical to know exactly what is safe

to eat, however, and although one can learn a great deal from books and online instruction, there is no substitute for identifying edible and inedible plants in situ. Wood sorrel, berries, crab apples and fungi are abundant in the early autumn and carnivores might like to learn about trapping and preparing rabbits or squirrels.

Camp-fire cooking

Once you've learnt how to light the fire and gathered some ingredients, try cooking. There's nothing like a hot meal cooked over an open fire. Dutch oven cooking is now hugely popular and there are numerous books and recipes available for camp cooking.

Shelter building

Although den-building is something you may have done as a child, creating a sturdy shelter is a core survival skill. Using the resources found in your woodland, you could build a debris shelter or a lean-to shelter and test it by spending a night in it. Arrange and secure branches into an A-frame, cover with insulating bracken or brash for a warm shelter, or build a lean-to arrangement and site a fire nearby to keep you snug.



ABOVE: Marshmallows speared on whittled green wood melt over a well-tended fire.

ABOVE LEFT: Insulate shelters with brash and leaves to keep out draughts.
(Photo credit: Bushcraft Magazine)



LEFT: Building an A-frame shelter in the woods using sticks from the woodland floor. (Photo credit: SWOG)



Nature watching

Wildlife watching is like a form of meditation. You need to sit very still, monitor your movements, control your breathing and pay close attention to the sights and sounds which surround you. You may have experienced just watching the grass whilst sunbathing and soon you notice that the grass is actually moving, with lots of little creatures going about their business. Over time, you will become familiar with where to locate certain species in your woodland and you could even learn how to track them.

The Bushcraft Show 2018

If you would like to learn a little more, visit the Bushcraft Show, a jam-packed, three-day event filled with all manner of bushcraft activities. Whether you come for the day or stay for the weekend, you can try your hand at woodland crafts, fire-lighting, shelter-building, tracking, foraging, woodland games and much, much more...

For more information visit www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk



Lending your woodland to bushcraft practitioners

Woodland forums and threads are often peppered with requests from bushcrafters who would like to use a woodland for a couple of days to practise their techniques. Hiring out your woodland is very much a personal decision, but what should you consider if you are thinking about doing this?

1. Payment – you could ask for a small fee. Some bushcrafters are happy to work in the woodland in exchange for a couple of night's use, so you could ask them to come along and help process some logs or fell a tree. In this way, you will get to know the individual first.

2. Leave no trace – this is the bushcraft mantra, but a woodland owner needs to be crystal clear about their expectations. It is reasonable to expect to find your wood as you left it, right down to seeing very minimal traces of fire. It is also worth designating areas that may be off-limits.

3. Agree how much wood or brash can be foraged for shelters or fires. For example, you may wish to restrict wood gathering to fallen wood on the forest floor and may not wish to see any small trees cut down or trimmed. The same is true of forage foodstuffs – the bushcrafter should ask the owner's permission before he harvests any plants and uprooting is specifically forbidden without permission.

4. If your woodland is ancient or within a SSSI (designated Site of Special Scientific Interest) it may be sensible to ask bushcrafters to use a different location.

Bushcraft instructor Paul Kirtley provides a useful set of guidelines in his blog: paulkirtley.co.uk/2014/

BOOK REVIEW

“
*The to-fro rasp of
 a saw in woodland
 seems profane, as
 though sanctity is
 being violated; but it
 is rather the music
 of consideration, of a
 wood being cared for.*
 ”

Judith Millidge settles down to read
The Wood: the Life and Times of Cockshutt Wood
 by John Lewis-Stempel

**THE WOOD: THE
 LIFE AND TIMES OF
 COCKSHUTT WOOD**

Doubleday
 Published 8 March 2018
 304 pages hardback
 RRP £14.99

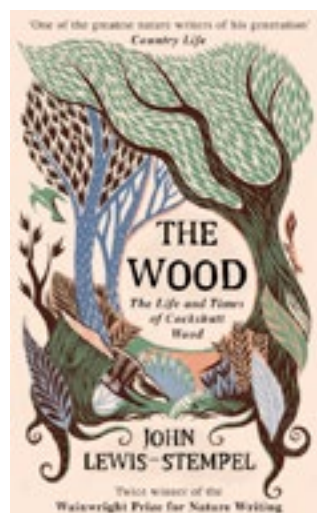
Twice winner of the Wainwright Prize, the writer John Lewis-Stempel is a farmer in Herefordshire who, as he put it, followed advice to diversify his farming business by writing. He has a distinguished body of work to his name and *The Wood* is the latest addition to his canon.

He is well known for his thoughtful and lyrical prose, which is well served by both the breadth and depth of his wide-ranging knowledge. Here is a man who truly loves the land and has both the practical skills to nurture it and the literary talent to write about it.

The Wood describes a year in Cockshutt Wood, a small, three-and-a-half acre mixed woodland Lewis-Stempel managed for four years near his Herefordshire farm. Beginning in December when the days are short and the trees skeletal, Lewis-Stempel describes his daily visits to the wood, noting the bird and animal life, the seasonal changes and the minute alterations that would only be obvious to a manager or owner.

‘Cockshutt was a sanctuary for me too; a place of ceaseless, seasonal wonder where I withdrew into tranquillity.’

He uses his wood to graze small flocks of sheep, some



pigs and a few cows, to shoot the odd pheasant or woodcock and to cull the local squirrel population. He says that he manages the wood for wildlife and, an unashamed lover of field sports, doesn't see why the wildlife shouldn't give something back. Pheasant and woodcock are sometimes shot for the table and he blasts squirrel dreys because he loves song birds and the squirrels eat their eggs.

The pigs and cows graze the understorey and fertilise the soil of this ancient woodland. He harvests holly and young beech to feed his sheep and pigs, a reminder of medieval farming methods which are now almost completely forgotten. He works, above all, to provide balanced management, fully aware that he is simply a custodian, the latest in a long line of woodland managers.

The observations about Cockshutt Wood were written in Lewis-Stempel's last year of management

**Radio 4
 Book of the Week
 19 March**

and it affords him the opportunity to reflect on the impact of his actions. He notes, for example, that the resident brown owls have produced larger clutches of eggs over the course of four years and he attributes this to their improved food supply. This can be tracked back to the decimation of the brambles by his pigs and sheep, leaving a woodland floor of leaf litter and fallen branches populated by small mammals.

He thins oaks, plants whips and saplings, and mourns when a storm fells an ancient beech.

‘A storm in the morning and I'm intentionally in the centre of Cockshutt... Timbers splinter; surf pounds through the crows' nests, bines of honeysuckle shriek... We hold on, me and the exhilarated trees.’

Lewis-Stempel's love of his woodland will be a sensation familiar to many readers of this magazine. His descriptions of the changing seasons are poetic and his knowledge of folklore, traditional remedies and recipes, together with modern arboricultural issues are a joy to read. He lists the etymology of all manner of arboreal and rural terms and the text is peppered with prose and poems by earlier writers such as John Evelyn, Edward Thomas and John Clare.

Informative and beautifully written, this is a book to inspire woodland owners and guaranteed to appeal to woodland enthusiasts everywhere.

SYMBOLS IN TREES

Native to countries around the world, willows play an important part in the mythology of many cultures. **Clare Haworth-Maden** shines a light on the species *Salix*.

The sight of catkins, the silken, fluffy flowers of the various willow species (*Salix*) are a sure sign of spring. Palm Sunday (25 March this year) is looming, and, improvisation being necessary when palm trees are lacking, willow twigs have long been used in many northern and eastern European Palm Sunday church services to represent the palm branches that were strewn in Jesus's path as he entered Jerusalem. Willow withies blessed in church may still be taken home in the belief that they will bestow protection and well-being on those who live there.

The willow's symbolism stretches far further back than the great world religions, however. Its preference for watery habitats symbolically links it to the moon, night and the feminine principle in folk beliefs the world over. The ancient Greeks considered the willow sacred to the moon goddess Artemis, one of whose names was Lygodesma ('willow-bound') because her image was discovered in Sparta surrounded by willows. Hera, goddess of women and marriage, was supposedly born under a willow at Samos, and the willow was also associated with the underworld goddesses Persephone and Hecate.

In Buddhism willow often represents meekness and as the attribute of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, it represents healing, as it does in the hand of his Chinese counterpart, Kwan-yin, who is said to sprinkle the purifying water of life over her worshippers with a willow branch. It is no coincidence that the willow should represent healing, for the salicylic acid that its bark contains can lower fevers and ease pain and inflammation. This knowledge led to Bayer's development of aspirin, or acetylsalicylic acid, in 1899.

The strength and flexibility of its branches and twigs, notably those of osier willow (*Salix viminalis*), make it ideal for basket-making and weaving. This flexible characteristic connected the willow in Chinese minds with yielding feminine grace and beauty (echoed in English by the adjective 'willowy') and, in Taoism, with strength in weakness, in that willow boughs bend in the wind rather than resisting and then breaking.



Gary Knight Flickr Willow in Bushy Park.

The willow's astonishingly fast and vigorous growth additionally made it a symbol of life, fertility and birth – human, as well as vegetal. This is also why the Chinese associate the willow with spring, nature's annual 'rebirth', and display willow twigs with jade-green shoots (symbolising growing prosperity) in their homes during New Year celebrations. The willow was, by contrast, linked in ancient times with infertility because the male willow (willows are dioecious) seems to shed its fruit before it has ripened. In the Middle Ages this came to be associated with the virtue of chastity.

The willow's symbolism is not all positive. The weeping willow (*S. x.sepulcralis*) is a symbol of mourning, partly on account of its drooping branches, which recall streams of tears. Weeping willows are depicted on Georgian mourning jewellery and in the same era, on willow-pattern china. And the expression 'to wear the willow' means to grieve or mourn. No wonder that Shakespeare chose the spot where 'a willow grows aslant a brook' as the place of Ophelia's drowning in *Hamlet*.

Today, cricket bats are traditionally made from willow, which is why the 'sound of leather on willow' symbolises a sporting summer to many. Whether you're watching a cricket match, taking an aspirin, using a willow-pattern plate or weaving a wicker basket, it's worth reflecting on the willow's rich and varied symbolism.

“

*And they shall
spring up as
among the grass,
as willows by the
water courses.*

(Isaiah 44:4)

”

SPRING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY **IGNITE WOODFUEL**

Prices are for members/non-members. For full details please visit the [RFS website](#).

Tree Health Pests and Diseases

6 April Bucks £55/£65

Woodland Archaeology

16 April Bucks £55/£65

Grading and Measuring your Timber

11 May Hereford £60/£80

Essential Guide for Caring for your Wood

13 June Hampshire £55/£65

Tree Identification

29 June Bucks £55/£65

The Ignite programme of training courses is aimed at woodfuel producers, suppliers and users.

One day courses cost £150+VAT per day which includes the LANTRA Awards certification fee, course materials, lunch and refreshments. More details are on the [RDI website](#).

Woodfuel Supply Chain Training

13 March Livius Training Centre, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire

22 March The Forest Centre, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire

28 March Strathearn Community Centre, Crieff, Scotland

PLANTLIFE

[Plantlife](#) is a British conservation charity working nationally and internationally to save threatened wild flowers, plants and fungi.

Looking Out for Small Things: Atlantic woodlands and their lichens and bryophytes

16 April Glaramara Lodge in Borrowdale, Cumbria. **Free.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the following who have contributed to this edition of Living Woods Magazine.

Olivia Beardsmore

[Bushcraft and Survival Skills Magazine](#)

Grace Belben

Alice Blogg, maker

www.aliceblogg.co.uk

[Brampton Valley Training](#)

Denmark Farm, Lampeter, Wales

www.denmarkfarm.org.uk/

Katie Ellis

[Thomas Flinn & Co](#)

Jullia Goodfellow-Smith

www.questforfuturesolutions.co.uk

[Grown in Britain](#)

Richard Hare

[Keeper's Coppicing](#)

Clare Haworth-Maden, aka

[@MrsSymbols](#)

David Hunter

[Coppice Plot](#) and [Coppicewood College](#)

Rodney Waterfield

[Woodland Skills Centre](#)

[Royal Forestry Society](#)

Antony Mason, Johnny Morris and the [Woodlands.co.uk](#) editorial team

