Living Woods MAGAZINE

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The song of the tree

Forest School: passport to wilderness

PLUS

- Ancient techniques in ancient woodland
- Review: adjustable log holder
- Autumn books

CONTENTS

The preservation of ancient woodland is in the news again, and we branch out to Newhaven Coppice, a semi-ancient woodland in the West Country, where traditional tools and techniques are used both to manage the woodland and to recreate aspects of early medieval life. Forest school leader Tom Bardon writes about the joy of outdoor learning. John Rhyder discusses how scientists draw on inidgenous tracking knowledge to monitor wildlife habitat loss and we're delighted to welcome back Nancy Wood with her article about handcrafted wooden sounding bowls and their use in therapeutic medicine. With reviews of some great books and woodland kit, we hope you'll enjoy easing into autumn with Living Woods.

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COVER
Photo courtesy Siska Vrijburg/Unsplash

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@Woodland News

The medieval church of St Leonard, seen through the branches of the ancient Tortworth Chestnut.

A VICTORY FOR THE TREE CHARTER

Developers would never consider demolishing a cathedral to make way for a new road, so why should woodlands which have existed for centuries face similar threats? Ancient woodlands are those which have existed since at least 1600. They are ecologically rich environments, often including veteran trees of staggering beauty. Moreover, the woodland floor, undisturbed for centuries, is Britain's richest wildlife habitat and contains a high proportion of rare and threatened species, many of which are dependent on the unique conditions of the habitat. Natural England calls them a 'living cultural heritage, a natural equivalent to our great churches and castles'.

The Woodland Trust and other environmental bodies have been lobbying governments for years in an effort to ensure greater protection for ancient woodland, which makes up just 2% of all British woodland. It was a central tenet of the 2017 **Tree Charter** campaign and so campaigners can be justifiably proud that less than a year after the Charter's publication, the **Revised National Planning Policy Framework**, published in July, includes much greater protection for ancient trees and woods.

New wording proposed by the Government stated 'development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons.'

These changes have immediate effect and were welcomed by Beccy Speight, Chief Executive of the Woodland Trust. 'It's vital we protect ancient and veteran trees. . .The fact that national policy now does this is a huge step forward.'

> ***Ancient trees stand tall and proud in our landscape, as landmarks, legends and friends. They've seen generations come and go. And there's still so much they can teach us.***
>
> Beccy Speight

@Woodland News

LIGHTWEIGHT TIMBER

Researchers at the Technical University of Munich (TUM) have discovered that trees are growing much more quickly thanks to climate change. This should be good news, suggesting that trees are absorbing more CO_2 and therefore combating global warming. But the team led by Hans Pretzsch, Professor for Forest Growth and Yield Science, has also discovered that the wood is lighter.

The samples are taken from common European tree species such as spruces, pine, beech and oak grown within Europe's oldest experimental forest plot in Bavaria. With the combination of wood samples from the 1870s to the present day, coupled with the latest measurement technology, the team at the School of Life Sciences Weihenstephan was able to demonstrate that the annually growing wood has gradually become lighter by 8–12% since 1900. Over the same period, the volume growth of the trees has accelerated by 29–100%.

In other words, even though a greater volume of wood is being produced today, it now contains less material than just a few decades ago.

The team believe the cause is the long-term increase in temperature due to climate change and the resulting lengthening of the vegetation period. The resulting wood is less solid with a lower calorific value, which has implications for many applications, from wood fuel to construction. The trees themselves are less solid and are more susceptible to wind and snow damage. To read more about this report, visit the **TUM website**.

Photo by Ferdinand Stöhr on Unsplash

8.4 million trees in London – almost one for every person

BREXIT AND WOODLANDS

Most of us escape to the woods to forget politics, but if you are interested in the possible impact of Brexit upon the woodland sector, take a look at the latest edition of **WoodWise here**.

ASH DIEBACK SPREADS

Three new tree and shrub species in the same family as ash (*Oleaceae*) tested positive for ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) infection at the Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire. The infection was identified by staff at the arboretum on mock privet, narrow-leaved mock privet and white fringetree – ornamental trees and shrubs from the Mediterranean and North America. The species were found in close proximity to infected ash trees.

The infection of these ornamental species is unlikely to have such a great impact on the environment as the original diagnosis for British ash trees. Nevertheless, Forest Research is conducting further tests and is monitoring other species in the *Oleaceae* family for susceptibility to *H. fraxineus* infection. A number of these species have already been tested including Osmanthus and Lilac, but were found to be negative. Chief Plant Health Officer, Professor Nicola Spence, said: 'Since 2012, the Government has invested more than £6 million into ash dieback research.'

To report a suspected case of ash dieback in any of these newly identified host species, visit the **Tree Alert portal.**

VIEW THROUGH THE TREES

Julia Goodfellow-Smith learns about weevils and the damage they can do to conifer woodlands

We'd been enjoying the tour of our friends' 150-acre wood, a few miles from our own. It is managed commercially, although clearly provides local amenity as well. It was interesting to learn about their choices of tree, how they thin and crop, and the strategies they are employing in the different compartments.

'Come and take a look at this, Julia,' Chris said as he walked off the track into a recently planted compartment. He explained that they'd had to clear-fell an area of immature Corsican pine the previous year because it had succumbed to red band needle blight. They had replanted the area with Douglas fir. Some of the fir trees were growing well, but others definitely were not. Looking closely, I could see that the bark was lacerated all the way round near the soil. It looked as if it had been chewed, which is exactly what had happened. By that stage, the large pine weevils (*Hylobius abietis*) had moved on, leaving around half of the newly planted trees dead in their wake.

I was curious to know how this happened – Chris is a retired professional forester, after all – isn't this something he could have avoided? I was also curious to find out how large pine weevils could impact on small woodland owners.

Large pine weevils like to lay their eggs in the bark of freshly felled conifer stumps. Once hatched, the larvae feed in the bark. The adult weevil emerges at the soil surface and needs to feed before flying off to lay its own eggs.

When we clear-fell conifers and then replant, we provide the perfect environment for them, as the bark of the saplings gives them a source of food close to the stump where they have developed.

Traditionally, there are two periods of emergence of large pine weevils – around April and August. Those emerging in August overwinter in the soil and re-emerge in spring before flying in search of fresh stumps. So, felling in autumn should mean that there is no risk of the weevils laying their eggs in the stumps until the following spring (unless some other conifers have been felled nearby) and any saplings should be safe until the summer.

Chris explained that the breeding pattern of the large pine weevil is changing. He thinks that the weevils that laid eggs in his tree stumps were from a third emergence – a consequence of climate change speeding up breeding cycles and providing longer growing seasons. It seems that we may need to rethink our strategies for managing weevils.

As small woodland owners, we also need to be aware of this issue. If we or our neighbours are felling conifers and we plant saplings nearby, they are at risk, even if they are broadleaf. There are measures we can take, such as checking felled stumps, leaving clear-felled areas fallow for a couple of years before replanting, avoiding clear-felling in the first place, treating saplings with chemicals (only to be applied by qualified professionals) or applying nematodes to the stumps.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE LARGE PINE WEEVIL (WIKICOMMONS)

There's no one best response. Each option has consequences – cost, time, environmental and health/safety risk – and different chances of success. The Forestry Commission gives advice on its website, but if I wanted to work out the best thing to do in my woodland, I'd find myself a local expert to help me work through my choices. Someone like Chris, in fact, who we met through our membership of the Royal Forestry Society.

Even then, we might not get it right. Woodlands are living systems, full of plants and beasts that we can't fully control. It's inevitable that sometimes we will need to change our plans when unexpected situations arise. It may be frustrating, but isn't that unpredictability also one of the joys of woodland ownership?

The Forestry Commission website has plenty of information about managing pine weevils. **Forestry Commission: weevils.**

> ***The bark was lacerated all the way round near the soil.***

NEWHAVEN COPPICE
Ancient techniques in ancient woodland

Archaeologist, teacher and medieval peasant, **Marc Cox** describes the construction of an Anglo-Saxon longhall at Newhaven Coppice.

Two years after giving up academic and commercial archaeology in favour of a herd of dairy goats and a ten-acre smallholding on the Devon/Somerset border, my neighbour mentioned a woodland up for rent just down the road. Figuring that any medieval peasant would be lost without somewhere to take their pigs to pannage and to coppice for making tree-hay, I jumped at the opportunity.

These seven-and-a-half acres of land at Newhaven Coppice were perfect: a few acres of over-stood, tangled hazel coppice, a couple of nice mature oak-fringed clearings, a wild glade of straight ash and to top it all, an acre-and-a-half of mature Taunton cider apple trees.

One of the main reasons why I had left commercial archaeology to follow a life of peasantry and heritage-based education was to more accurately and intimately get to know the people from our past. I was fascinated by the 90% of organic material culture that usually rots away and the day-to-day impact our ancestors had on the landscapes around them. I quickly came to realise that in order to truly understand what it was I actually excavated, I needed to undertake the processes these people undertook: dig postholes, construct buildings, tend the fields and manage the woodlands.

During the years following my undergraduate degree in archaeology, I found myself living and working at one of those places that profoundly alter your direction, career

and life, which, in my case was the forest school and reconstructed Anglo-Saxon village of Escot Education near Honiton, Devon. It was during my time here that I met an incredibly talented woodsman and bodger, Richard Devaney, who went on to become my mentor, friend and for the last four years or so, my business partner with Newhaven Coppice.

A few weeks after we had negotiated an appropriate tenancy with the landowner, Richard and I met at the gate and wandered down through the woods. We followed long abandoned rides and animal tracks to the heart of the copse: a dry, flat clearing below a towering, ancient crab apple tree. It was here that we made our first raised fire pit, sat upon some logs and put the kettle on.

The joy and curse of working with Richard is that when it comes to wood, he is a contagious purist. All his carpentry is done with an axe, a chisel and a hand auger. We agreed early on that, apart from the actual coppicing work, everything else within the woodland would be done with hand tools. An ethos we still stick to religiously.

Working the coppice

We acquired the copse in winter and began work immediately. It was a flurry of activity, as we had already planned and advertised a whole year of ancient technology-based open days and public events, mainly through the local Blackdown Hill's AONB guide and website. Each month we would look at a different theme or material, ranging from wild food to ceramics, metal-working to wood-working. To accommodate these events we were joined by some good friends Steve and Alex, and with their help, the old tracks, droveways and pathways were cleared of the overgrown vegetation and fallen trees. We also began thinning and coppicing the over-stood hazel, utilising the timber to make benches, another firepit, wattled-fencing, draw-horses, chopping blocks, a pole lathe and a thatched log store. These basic components formed the initial infrastructure and focus for all our future woodland events.

> ***"We agreed early on that, apart from the actual coppicing work, everything else within the woodland would be done with hand tools."***

The first year was a good mix of success and rain, with hundreds of people venturing into our little time-warp to learn, share, make and do. This all culminated in a one-day Ancient Technology festival at the end of the summer, which was attended by over 200 people. After that, things went quiet again in the woods, the deer moved back in and we retreated to the fire pit and our woodworking area. The autumn was spent harvesting apples and making cider. The winter was busy, coppicing the over-stood hazel, pruning the neglected apple trees or running small wood-carving classes.

We thought about rerunning the events the following year, but the work and effort seemed too great an investment for the return. Instead, we ventured out to work with the public with our lathes and draw-horses, straw hats and chopping blocks, and attended a dozen different shows and events over the spring and summer. The aim was to drum up support, business and funding. We managed this to varying degrees, but we failed to follow up with any meaningful actions within the woods themselves.

Grand designs

Nearly every week, for the last four years, we've assembled in our woods, whether to work on the land or a wood-based project, or simply to catch up over a cup of coffee. In the spring of 2017 we were having one such caffeine-based session, discussing ancient

Chopping out a tenon for a mortise and tenon joint.

buildings and dreaming up what we should construct up on the big flat open clearing. Richard and I had been involved with various open-air museums and centres over the years, helping to build villas, forges, roundhouses, sunken-floored huts, longhalls and everything in between. We knew we could build one 'properly', in other words using only the correct tools of the period and based on archaeological excavation plans, but were unsure as to which one we should settle on – a prehistoric roundhouse or an Anglo-Saxon longhall. We needed to breathe new life into the woods and knew one of these ancient communal spaces would do just that. The farmer came in and cut the brambles and bracken in the area we wanted the site to be; it looked perfect. We had amassed a big pile of lovely ash and oak timber over the last year and were anxious to get at it whilst the wood was still green. However, weeks began to pass and our grand idea and enthusiasm seemed to dwindle.

One blisteringly hot May day, Alex and I were pottering about the woodland when we decided to start. It would be a longhall. We sharpened our axes and began work on the oak posts, splitting them in half, hewing them square then chopping out a tenon (or tusk) on the top. We spent the week (arguably the hottest of the year), marking out the building, sorting through the timber and preparing six of the principal uprights and a couple of wall plates from the ash. The project then began to gather pace; we assembled every few weeks in the woodland, either on our own or with a gaggle of enthusiastic volunteers, friends and family members. We took our floor plan from a 7th-century building excavated in Oxfordshire and stuck rigorously to the tools from the period.

Over the last year we've harvested more trees from the woods (felled by hand) and 'turned nature into culture'. The frame is an earth-fast construction, with evenly spaced structural oak posts dug three foot into the solid chert ground, spanned by oak floor plates and ash wall plates, with studwork between. These walls will be finished with wattle and daub infill, supporting a series of trusses, hazel purlins and a thatched wheat-reed roof.

This project seems a culmination of years of learning and experience, with plenty of mistakes thrown in for good measure. As the woodland and the building evolve with renewed energy and new aspirations, a whole new era seems to be developing at Newhaven Coppice. It's time to share the knowledge we've amassed. It's time to open up the woods once again.

Above: open day at Newhaven Coppice.

Right: young volunteers felling a mature oak tree with reproduction bronze age tools to test their effectiveness.

Left: the humble beginnings of the long hall build, as the structure takes shape.

DISCOVERING YOUR INNER PEASANT: COURSES AND WORKSHOPS AT NEWHAVEN COPPICE

If you would like to learn more about ancient and medieval life, think about visiting Newhaven Coppice for one of their immersive weekends. Choose from Prehistoric Woodworking, the art of the Anglo-Saxon Tree-wright, Stone Age Skills or Bronze Age Metallurgy. These are truly unique experiences led by their experienced and diverse team; camping is in the semi-ancient woodland with local, wild, seasonal and historically appropriate food provided.

They also run regular volunteer days to help with the construction of the Anglo-Saxon longhall.

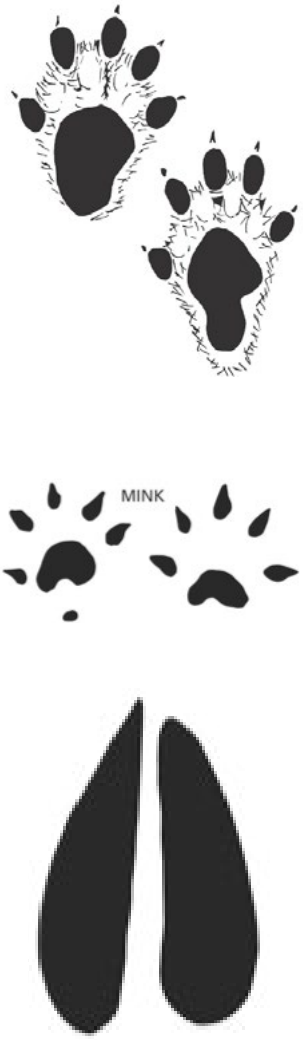
In 2019, Newhaven Coppice will be teaming up with Heydon Hill Artisan Forestry to provide three, one-week-long timber-framing courses, as well as a limited number of charcoal making courses throughout the spring and summer. The 2019 Course List is available for booking at **www.newhavencoppice.co.uk.** For more information please contact newhavencoppice@gmail.com

MUD ON THE TRACKS

Woodsman **JOHN RHYDER** explains how tracking knowledge is increasingly used to assess environmental change.

Traditional ecological knowledge is increasingly being employed to help monitor wildlife and to understand the threats arising from loss or change of habitat and climate around the world. In essence, this body of knowledge is passed down from generation to generation and can be used to note the progress of environmental changes. The Inuit, for example, share their knowledge of bowhead whales to help scientists monitoring changes in the Arctic climate. Knowledge of natural history and identification are key skills in biological monitoring, whether using traditional skills or modern scientific methods. The data gathered can only be as good or as valid as the person doing the gathering.

While traditional tracking knowledge may be declining, its value has been enhanced, almost inevitably, by technology. Tracking is currently enjoying a resurgence of interest as a field skill across the globe, due in no small part to the efforts of South African tracker Louis Liebenberg. Louis recognised the extraordinary understanding of natural history possessed by the bushman of Africa and in 1997 developed a data capture programme designed to be used firstly on a palm pilot (a small hand-held computer) and more recently on a smart phone. The idea was that this icon-based programme could be taken into the field and when tracks were discovered the bushman could tap the icon corresponding to the animal track and its location could be recorded using GPS.



Artist's impression of prints (not to scale) from top to bottom – otter, mink and muntjac deer. (RSPB)

Indigenous ecological knowledge was used to map both the presence and absence of wildlife, mark migration routes and the density of animal movements. The system became known as CyberTracker.

Louis recognised very early on that being born into an indigenous community doesn't necessarily make a master tracker and therefore some way of testing observer reliability was required. He developed a standardised evaluation process to test a tracker's skill in track and sign identification and in trailing or following animals.

Another remarkable man, Mark Elbroch, tracker and biologist and perhaps the world authority on mountain lions, took the system from Africa to North America. In 2012 the first evaluations in northern Europe were held in West Sussex and the Lake District and have since become established in Holland, Germany, Belgium and Slovakia. Simultaneously, CyberTracker evaluators from Africa have introduced the system into Spain, from where it has reached Italy and other countries in southern Europe. In an interesting turnaround, CyberTracker, a data programme, has also become the international standard for testing wildlife tracking ability in the field.

In the UK and northern Europe tracking is currently under-used in the field of wildlife monitoring, probably because of the loss of this basic knowledge from our indigenous skill set. Many believe that technology is the best way to monitor wildlife rather than good

The 1998 CyberTracker handheld device with its graphical display. Below: a boar footprint.

field skills. Scientific studies show, however, that using tracking is often cheaper and certainly more reliable even than trail cameras.

Improving tracking knowledge

Tracking can, and in my opinion, should form an important piece of the tool kit of the modern field naturalist, especially at a time when the industry is suffering from a general and recognised loss of fundamental identification skills. Tracking training and assessment can be now tailored to suit groups. It can be focused on individual animal species and include all the other animals likely to be confused with the target species. For example, otters are an important and protected species and knowledge of their track and sign can easily confirm their presence in an area. Unfortunately, their tracks are often confused with badgers, dogs, foxes, mink and no doubt several others. Sorting out the identification points for all these animals is a relatively simple and cheap process – probably less than the cost of a decent trail camera. It is encouraging to see an increase in the number of professional ecologists attending evaluations and workshops.

In addition to monitoring protected species, tracking can also be used to assess the damage done to crops (including timber) long before it gets out of hand. Knowing, for example, if there are roe or fallow deer in the woods, and combining that with knowledge of the species behaviour, can allow woodland managers and owners to put measures in place to protect against serious damage and browsing pressures.

Tracking can also be used to detect the presence of invasive species such as American mink; in fact, the use of mink rafts, small riverside rafts with a sand/clay base, relies on tracking knowledge. Mink signs are relatively easy to identify and may provide clues to mink presence beyond the area of the raft's location. In Europe tracking is being used to monitor invasive species such as raccoon, raccoon dog and feral cat populations as these become an increasing ecological issue.

Scientific research can also be augmented through tracking skills. A CyberTracker colleague in America completed a master's degree on the seasonal locations of black bear beds. He did this by following or trailing fresh bear trails in Oregon. His advisor didn't believe that trailing bears is even possible, such is the lack of understanding around the subject.

Recreational tracking

Recreationally, tracking is also just great fun; it can support a valid hunting strategy, for example, and is useful in putting photographers in exactly the right position. For the general nature enthusiast tracking just adds to the outdoor experience, in the same way that knowledge of bird song or tree identification makes a walk in the wood more enriching.

I am not suggesting that tracking replaces every other method of getting close to wildlife, but it can certainly add to it, even if it is just simply picking the best spot to place your trail camera. It is time to rediscover some of our own traditional ecological knowledge.

JOHN RHYDER teaches workshops and evaluations in both track and sign and trailing at the Woodcraft School (**www.woodcraftschool.co.uk**). John is the highest qualified tracker in northern Europe under the Cyber Tracker system. https://www.cybertracker.org . He is the author of **Woodcraft, reviewed on page 27**.

Watch John's video on **Animal tracking from prints.**

CANOPY COVERAGE VERSUS BIODIVERSITY

We hear a great deal about deforestation and the loss of trees and associated habitat around the world. Pests and diseases, wildfires, logging, and development are just some of the threats to woodlands and forests across the globe.

Global Land Change from 1982 to 2016, a recent study published in *Nature* magazine, has examined land use records and satellite imaging from 1982 to 2016 and has found evidence to the contrary: happily, forests now cover 7% more of the Earth than they did in 1982. Academics from the University of Maryland report that tree cover has increased by 2.24 million km^2 (an area equivalent to Alaska and Texas combined) in the past 35 years, with loss in tropical regions being balanced by a net gain in more temperate areas.

> ***Forests now cover 7% more of the Earth than they did in 1982.***

The researchers studied data from advanced high-resolution radiometers aboard a series of 16 weather satellites. By comparing daily readings, they were able to see small changes occurring regularly over a relatively long period of time – which added up to large changes.

Tree cover gain is being driven by agricultural abandonment in parts of Europe, Asia, and North America, as well as by China's massive-tree planting programme. (**The Daily Telegraph** reported that China intends to plant trees to cover 6.6 million hectares, an area roughly the size of Ireland.) It is also increasing globally in montane areas, and in most cases it is being driven by human activity.

This is undoubtedly good news, but there are caveats to bear in mind. The tropical rainforest, one of our most diverse ecosystems and the 'lungs of the planet' is still declining. Brazil alone lost an area four times more than the combined total loss of the next four countries on the list (Canada, Russia, Argentina and Paraguay). Loss is generally driven by the expansion of agriculture.

While global tree cover is greater than in 1982, in some areas diverse natural landscapes have been replaced by monoculture crops such as oil palm estates and other industrial plantations. Rubber plantations, for example, have replaced more diverse natural forests in Southeast Asia, and a reduction in animal biodiversity has been well documented.

In Britain, ancient woodlands are often threatened by development, and replanting schemes simply cannot replicate rich ecological environments established over many centuries. Elsewhere in the world, similarly irreplaceable natural forests are replanted with cash crops, so while the actual area of forestry cover may not decline, the quality of the woodland environment and biodiversity surely does.

So behind the headlines, this study reveals qualified good news for forest cover across the globe. Perhaps more importantly it at least establishes a record of land use that enables researchers to continue to assess the impact of change on the environment.

Regimented rows of trees in a rubber plantation. (Photo: Eleanor Warren-Thomas, University of East Anglia

THE SONG OF THE TREE

Are Sounding Bowls musical instruments? Works of art? Therapeutic tools? Aids to meditation? The answer is 'Yes' says **NANCY WOOD.**

The inspiration for Sounding Bowls came to maker Tobias Kaye out of the blue more than 20 years ago during a meditation session. He had been making turned bowls for some time, gaining an international reputation for the beauty of his work, his graceful pieces sought after by collectors and museums. He found himself fascinated by curves, how some seemed to add lightness to the design of a bowl while others seemed to add the warmth of embrace. He noticed some of his bowls had an acoustic richness, very much affected by the refinement of the spiral curves. Then one evening, his meditation was interrupted by an image of one of his bowls pierced by a single string. He began to experiment.

> ***Because the wood is intact, it can speak its nature.***

Like many makers' stories, Kaye's journey to his present life had roots in discontentment and footloose travel before he found his way into woodworking. In his case, his uncle Christopher, at whose home he landed after a long hitchhiking odyssey in North America, had an electric lathe. 'So I began messing about,' says Kaye, 'learning as I went along. My uncle had a boarding hostel for a Steiner school and I got a job there, so I would do woodworking with the kids as an

Tobias Kaye, with one of his bowls.

extracurricular activity. After a while, I thought I might make a go of this.'

At first, the newly designed pierced bowls inspired by Kaye's meditative vision weren't of interest to buyers. He says, 'Somehow the auditory and the tunable aspects put [galleries] off – and dusting underneath the strings was a final straw.' Twenty more versions came and went before Kaye settled on the half dozen forms he makes today.

'I work with wet wood whenever I get the chance,' says Kaye, 'and use the electric lathe to begin, then move the piece into the settling room for drying. I oil the end grain, then when it is ready, each piece is finished with hand-held tools. One tree can produce 10 to 20 pieces, each one two weeks' work.'

Individual sounds

Each bowl (and there are usually more than 200 partly carved pieces in the settling room in his Buckfastleigh studio) is made from a single piece of wood from British broadleaf trees, selected from local windthrow or other naturally harvested stock. The precisely worked-out geometry means that the bottom of a bowl may be no thicker than a matchstick which then gradually increases to a thicker, stronger rim able to support the tension of the strings.

Unlike traditional wooden instruments constructed from a variety of fir or pine woods or wood from more than one tree with strings stretched over the outside of a resonant box, the single-tree integrity of each Sounding Bowl, with its strings right in the resonating space, gives it a voice that is unique to its species. 'Because the wood is intact, it can speak its nature.' Kaye hears a distinctive voice in each of his pieces, arising from the particular tree from which it is made. 'Ash has a youthful, enthusiastic sound. Walnut sounds aged, like a wise counsellor. Cherry has a joyful, dancing voice, while sycamore is like an opera singer.'

Kaye and his team of four have a special sensitivity to the 'personalities' of different woods and to the feelings they evoke in those who play them or hear them played. The arrangement of strings varies in number from five, for pentatonic scales, to 12, 15 or more, enabling traditional Western tunings. Kaye offers individually-designed commissioned works as well as a choice of six 'stock' bowls – though they seem anything but stock – in a variety of hardwoods.

Sound therapy

If you are fortunate enough to meet Kaye at a workshop or event, or even to hold one of his Sounding Bowls in your own hands and to pluck or stroke the strings, you may report – as many others have done – a feeling of calm and wellbeing. In fact, Kaye's bowls have become an important tool for music therapists who work with young and old patients suffering from acute or chronic physical or mental illnesses, especially those in hospices or living with dementia. Kaye's largest customer is the NHS, followed closely by the MHA, formerly the Methodist Homes for the Aged.

Licensed music therapist Mary Hart Aillan, who practises near Lyon in France, says, 'The first Sounding Bowl I held was an 18-string bowl at a training course at St Christopher's Hospice in London. Now I own two Melody Bowls and have the use of a third. I use them every day in my practice.' She finds them exceptionally useful in a variety of settings. 'The first step in therapy is to draw people's attention and interest. When patients see a Sounding Bowl, their first instinct is to reach out and touch it. They've never seen anything like it before.' Aillan finds the vibrations of the bowls can ease the breathing of patients in a coma or slow the agitated pacing of advanced dementia patients.

'I once approached an 86-year-old lady in palliative care who was in lots of pain. She had been born

Tobias sources his wood from local windblow, then each bowl, crafted from a single piece, is hand-made in his workshop at Buckfastleigh. *(All photos courtesy of Sounding Bowls.)*

deaf but could lip read and communicate through sign language. With her permission, I placed a bowl on her stomach and she began to move her fingers on the strings, then to vocalise in the same tonality as the bowl. She wouldn't let me take the bowl back and pushed my hands away, until she grew tired and said that her head hurt from singing and from "listening". She said, "Why am I 86 and I've only discovered music?" Her daughter, who filmed the whole thing, was astonished.'

To Kaye, this physical and emotional connection through the Sounding Bowls is not surprising in the least. He feels a vital affinity for living trees and for the life that continues in them after they are felled as he turns them into his beautiful bowls.

Kaye can also be said to shape lives. Two of his apprentices have gone on as qualified makers to their own workshops in Austria and the USA and he is currently seeking a new apprentice. 'We are looking for someone with a high level of craftsmanship who can see the beauty in the tree and make that beauty sing.'

Turning timber into sound

If anyone has large pieces of walnut or birch, at least 17 inches across and not rotten, Tobias would like to hear from you. Please contact him via the website, **www.soundingbowls.com.**

The website lists current stock of Sounding Bowls with prices and descriptions as well as recordings of the various types and woods, with instructions on how to play the bowls. *The Brotherhood With Trees* audio CD, as well as Kaye's purely technical and highly regarded DVD ROM *Woodturning Skills – Turning with Tobias K.* which includes three hours of tuition, are available, plus many printable guides.

See the website for workshops and events.

PASSPORT TO WILDERNESS

Forest school leader **TOM BARDON** on forest schools, outdoor learning and woodlands.

Over the past decade there has been a huge increase in the prevalence and visibility of woodland-based outdoor learning within the education sector, with the increase in forest school provision in particular being especially pronounced. In 2014, outdoor learning became embedded in the National Curriculum. What is forest school? Why has it become so popular so quickly? How does it fit into our education system? And what might it mean for the future of our woodlands?

Forest school was introduced to the UK in the early to mid-1990s by a group of nursery nurses from Bridgewater College in Somerset who had spent some time working in Scandinavian nurseries, where outdoor learning has been a basic tenet of early years education since the 1950s. The forest school ethos promotes child-led learning experiences in a natural setting such as woodlands. At its heart forest school is about play; about children being able to explore, take risks and make decisions that tailor their experience to their own needs rather than following preordained lesson plans. In this way each child's learning experience will be different and well suited to their own interests and abilities, increasing the motivation to learn and the self-esteem gained through achievement, all while building a strong relationship and respect for the natural environment.

> ***"The emotional and intellectual benefits of playing in a natural environment are myriad and well documented."***

It's easy to see why this approach has garnered such support and

PHOTO COURTESY ANNIE SPRATT ON UNSPLASH

generated a huge groundswell of enthusiasm from educators and families alike. It sounds idyllic, harking back to a bucolic sense of freedom, fun and camaraderie. Everyone I speak to about the approach is keen to tell me at length about their adventures as a child – long summer holidays spent in the woods or splashing in the stream with no parents looking over their shoulder, only returning home to eat or to get washed before bed. Many people wish that their own child or grandchild could have the types of adventures that they experienced in their own youth. The benefits of this kind of freedom and fun seem obvious to those who enjoyed them a generation or two ago, without the need for specialist provision. Quite apart from the physical benefits (obesity crisis, anybody?) the emotional and intellectual benefits of playing in a natural environment are myriad and well documented – reduced stress, increased self-esteem, better relationships, development of resilience, resourcefulness and innovation, increased risk awareness and risk management skills, self-reliance, trust and creativity.

At Greenman Learning, we believe that the forest school approach to learning can complement the more traditional aspects of the modern education system. In British education, children are routinely tested from the age of six, and in the state sector, budgetary constraints mean that there is less time and money for sport, music and creativity. Reports appear regularly in the news about soaring levels of adolescent mental health problems and the problems associated with growing dependence on electronic devices for social interaction and entertainment.

For the generations that grew up without digital dominance of our leisure time, taking a break from tech and spending time outside seems like obvious antidote, and this is where forest school fits in. It is the yang to the yin of a childhood that often features regulated learning and the stress of social networks that never shut down.

Dedicated forest schools can be found all over the country and forest school activities are increasingly being incorporated into traditional learning to tie into the National Curriculum.

PHOTO COURTESY BLAKE CHEEK ON UNSPLASH

Often forest school has to adapt by offering a degree of structure and restricting the freedom and choice on offer in order to justify its continuation in a school system that requires data and clear progression. There is then the argument about whether, through the restriction of these key elements, what is taking place is actually forest school at all and whether actually that's a bad thing? Surely any time spent outside working and learning in nature is preferable to none at all? These are all conversations that continue as forest school in the UK continues to evolve.

Learning for the future

But what of woodlands in all of this? What impact does forest school have

PHOTO COURTESY ANNIE SPRATT ON UNSPLASH

on our woodlands both now and into the future? On the positive side it increases management of the woods. More visitors mean that the woods seem safer, litter is picked up, trees are planted, and vandalism discouraged. On the negative side there is soil erosion and compaction, litter, and a diminished amount of wildlife. More visitors undoubtedly reduce the peace and tranquillity of the area. It's a balance really, and the impact depends on many factors, such as how often the woodland is used, whether there is enough room to rotate between sites to minimise damage, whether permission can be gained for woodland management, etc.

Educating a generation to respect and care for their environment can surely only have a positive long-term effect. My personal view is that in order to build a generation of individuals who care about and will fight to protect our woodlands, we first need to help our children build a relationship with and love for nature. If that means sacrificing one acre of woodland out of every 50 to allow children to play in and experience nature, then it's a price worth paying.

The WILD Passport

TOM BARDON runs **GreenMan Learning**, a forest school and outdoor education company in West Yorkshire, established in 2012. He has been successfully delivering a range of outdoor activities to schools, communities and families.

He has created the WILD Passport, the Woodland skills Individual Learning and Development. It is a a five-year progressive skills curriculum resource that provides measurable skill progression for pupils. Designed to work alongside forest school provision or as a stand-alone programme, the WILD Passport is a flexible tool created to enable outdoor educators to evidence the skills and knowledge learnt throughout their programmes. It is available from **www.wildpassport.co.uk**

WILD Passport

BUILDING FOR THE BIRDS

PHOTO COURTESY SEANMCGEE ON UNSPLASH

RICHARD HARE makes a log cabin for the birds.

This is an entry level project which most people should be able to complete within a couple of hours using a few rudimentary tools. It's a quick and easy project which will help the local birds, uses readily available materials and looks much better than a plywood version purchased from a DIY store.

Tools and materials

a log
a froe (an axe-head or splitting wedge would do)
a beetle or mallet to hit the froe
a hand-saw
a drill
a few nails (preferably the lost head type which can be punched in to become 'invisible', so you'll need a punch if you want to hide them.)

There is a video of the whole process on Rich's website, **www.keeperscoppicing.co.uk**

1 The log must be clean and straight with no knots, and angled to allow the water to run off. You could use any wood which splits easily, but if you've got chestnut or oak, it will obviously last longer than birch or willow. I've used year-old chestnut which seems to be at its optimum for splitting.

2 Use the froe to cleave off the sides first. I find with chestnut that one swift hit with the beetle is usually enough. Sometimes you may find a hidden knot. If you don't get a clean split, throw it on the log pile and get another. Out of 10 logs I tried to split, five came out pretty well.

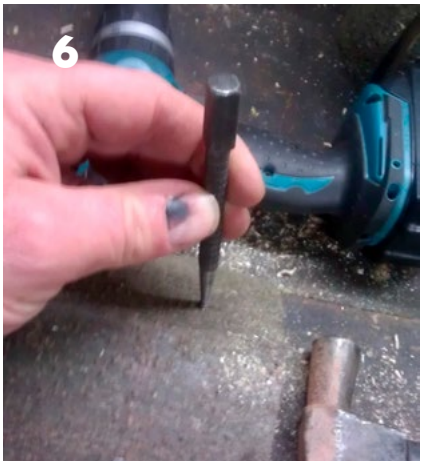
3 Take the middle section out and cut a couple of inches off the end – this will be the floor. The larger bit is for the log pile!

4 Partially assemble it and work out where you want the entrance hole. An inch (25mm) is the right size for tits, or you could saw the top half of the front wall off and leave it open which is recommended for robins. Alternatively, just leave a small front at the bottom and cover the rest with wire gauze and use the box as a feeder.

A handy hint for drilling the hole is to have a piece of wood on the other side to go into. This stops you from smashing out the back and making a mess of the interior décor. The piece of wood you discarded from the middle would be perfect for this.

5 Before you nail it all back together just drill some pilot holes (about 25% less in diameter than the nail itself), which should stop any splits occurring. Also, make a mark directly opposite the entrance hole on the back wall and drill a clearance hole for a screw. You should then be able to access the screw through the entrance hole to fix the box to a suitable tree or post. Put the screw in NOW – it is much easier than when you have put the lid on!

6 Punch the nails in to hide them if you are using lost head nails.



7 For the lid, you could just use a section of a log from one that went wrong. However, although I'm sure the birds wouldn't mind, I prefer to use a slightly more refined version. I like to have a flat sawn finish for the underside as this will create a good seal against the walls and I cleave the top. You could screw the lid on from the top, but I like to fix it from the underside with a couple of suitably sized screws drilled in at an angle. This gives it a nice riven texture and means as you haven't exposed any of the end grain, the water will run off it better and not penetrate the wood. A small detail, but one of the reasons why cleft wood is preferable to sawn for outdoor projects like this.

Here's one we prepared earlier . . .

If you don't have the time or the tools to make a dedicated home for your feathered friends, try this alternative method.

I left a Land Rover parked in the same place for about three weeks during inconsistent spring weather, when the temperature lurched from sub-zero to heat wave. Maybe this is what caused the the persistent and obsessive behaviour of a couple of Great Tits which built a nest in the rear chassis of my Land Rover. I'm not quite sure what they did or where they thought their nest had gone during the times I wasn't there, but maybe I should get busy and start making some more elaborate Land Rover-shaped cabins.

GETTING A GRIP

Does the world need another a portable saw horse/log holder?
STUART BROOKING tries out the Adjusti-Grip Log Holder and gives Living Woods his verdict.

The latest innovation to grace my woodland is the Adjusti-Grip Log Holder, which arrived on my doorstep via a personal delivery from the developer of the product, Ben Boycott.

The Log Holder fits in the back of an estate car and Ben even had space for a large spreading branch to enable him to give me a demo. The Log Holder is based around an 'A' frame design and arrives in two pieces, both constructed out of 'top quality UK sourced heavy-duty box section steel with a long lasting galvanised finish' (according to the promotional material). The main part of the unit is a vertical section of box frame with two spread legs at the base. A third, longer leg connected to the front of this 'A' frame provides a robust and stable frame. A metal jaw protrudes from the vertical box section which grabs the log when you place it down. A metal slider then comes down to hold the top side of the log that you are cutting (see the assembly instructions which come with the instructions).

Many of us who regularly chop up firewood for fires or wood burners can be forgiven for adopting a slightly world-weary air when confronted with yet another innovative saw horse or gimmicky log holder. Ben developed his product because he is a small woodland owner who cuts his own logs to heat a woodburner for his farmhouse. His woodland is isolated in the middle of a farm and can only be accessed by a quad bike. He needed something portable and strong, as his firewood is often sourced from large fallen trees with lots of branches. He had tried a number of other products on the market but felt that nothing was quite up to the varied terrain and size of logs that he encounters.

The log holder, with log firmly held in place in the teethed jaws and spring holder.

Many woodland owners are in a similar situation, often wrestling with the problems of extracting large lengths of fallen timber across rough woodland terrain which is almost inaccessible.

Clamping the jaws

My first impressions of the Adjusti-Grip Log Holder were that it was robustly made, almost industrial looking. Similar products often seem far less hard-wearing and stable. I carried it through to my log processing area in the garden and found that, although quite heavy (at 20 kg), the fact that it can be dismantled into two pieces means that it is easier to carry than my traditional wooden saw horse. The jaws that hold the logs have sharp teeth and are supplied taped in cardboard. However, I would suggest making a permanent cover for them as they could be very dangerous when carrying to site.

In use the Adjusti-Grip Log Holder proved to be extremely stable and robust. Logs of all sizes were easily held in place at an ergonomically sound working height. Smaller logs were held tight by using the extra spring-held hook, which stopped them spinning when being cut with the chainsaw.

The positioning of the holding jaws means that the last log remaining when cutting is of the correct length. It would be easy to position a wheel barrow or trailer underneath the log holder to catch the cut logs and save straining your back when collecting them before moving them to the splitting area.

After buzzing through a number of lengths of timber with ease, I took apart the A-frame and leant the log holder against the side of my shed. The following day I took it to one of my local woodlands to clear a large birch tree that had fallen along the edge of the track. It was easy to carry and set up the log holder to cut the tree into manageable lengths and then use the holder to divide the limbs into 8–10-inch lengths for firewood. The great advantage of the log holder is that it enables users to remove timber from the forest floor for cutting, which ensures that you will not catch your chainsaw on rocks and stones. More importantly, there is no danger of the chainsaw slipping on to the foot which is holding the grounded log steady.

In summary, the Adjusti-Grip Log Holder is a highly effective tool which will hold almost any shape and moveable size of tree or branch. It allows the whole of the tree to be easily and safely processed affording maximum use of timber. It provides a safe working platform for the saw operator and is flexible enough to allow it to be taken into the heart of a woodland to process timber. The product is supplied with comprehensive instructions and I will certainly be asking Ben if I can buy and keep the log holder I tested.

BUYING THE ADJUSTABLE LOG HOLDER

Watch a YouTube video of the log holder in action – click on the picture above.

The all-steel log holder is available for £199 direct from Ben's eBay store.

BEN BOYCOTT, a mechanical engineer by background, wanted a portable log holder that could hold wood of all sizes, shapes and weights securely, even on rough and boggy ground. He designed it to be used safely by a sole operator with a chainsaw, and to survive outside for at least 20 years. He is apologetic about the price, which has doubled in the past year as the price of steel has risen steeply. However, he believes that it will last almost forever, so it is a good investment.

STUART BROOKING is the Woodlands.co.uk agent for Devon. He enjoys the hands-on aspect of work in the woods, clearing tracks, putting up gates and fences and getting people started with their woodland.

BOOK REVIEW

Woodworker **MAURICE PYLE** reviews a Scandinavian classic, recently translated into English, *Slöyd in Wood*.

SLÖJD IN WOOD

Jögge Sundqvist
Lost Art Press
Hardback RRP £32.50

Even on a superficial level, there is nothing to dislike about this book, which is full of vibrant colour photographs, unique instructional hand-drawn black and white line drawings and inspirational 'how to' projects. Most of all, it just touches on a raw, compelling nerve that few of us could fail to connect with. *Slöjd*, as author Jögge Sundqvist says, is about tool marks and carved bevels, worn colours, idiosyncratic design and the self-confidence of unschooled folk art expression.

On closer inspection, this is a much more significant and important book. No matter what you do as a day job to earn a living, the sustainability, the creativity and practical nature of making useful items for the home will make you feel just a little more contemplative and give great satisfaction that you have made something by hand with a few simple tools. '*Slöjd*' literally means handicraft in Swedish and most often relates to woodwork; it is also the name of a system of handicraft-based education. Dare I say, adopting a *slöjd* philosophy could be life-changing? Traditional *slöjd* knowledge is enormous, requiring many years' experience to reach the stage where the grasps and confidence become intuitive, but getting there will be a heap load of fun.

Having owned, and indeed sold the original Swedish version of this book for several years, I thought I knew the book quite well (as far as understanding the odd word and appreciating the pictures goes!) but adding comprehensible text makes it complete.

I'm totally guessing about this, but Jögge's father Wille, who sadly passed away recently, possibly thought Jögge's style a bit wild and wacky but he must have been so proud that Sweden's *slöjd* in wood tradition was being kept alive in such a relevant and vibrant way, appealing to students of all ages.

In this book you'll learn to make bowls, a sheath for your knife, spoons, a place to hang your clothes, cutting boards and so many more things. In the end, you will look up into the branches of the trees around your home and see the things you need.

Slöjd in Wood is the first English

translation of Jögge's classic Swedish book. It's a peek into a world that is dominated by saturated colours, crisp bevels and handmade work.

In addition to introducing you to the pieces you can make for your home, Jögge shows you how to grip a carving knife to produce the cuts that are safe and efficient, and shows you how to replicate the deep colours on your pieces that are simply stunning.

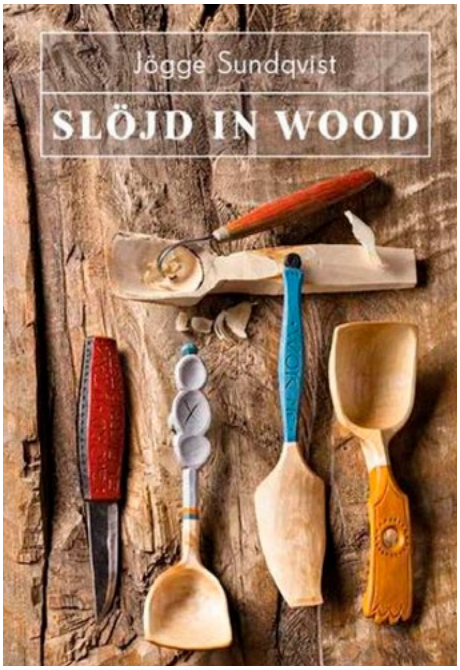
Jögge's philosophy of *slöjd* comes through clearly on every page: make; don't buy. Use; don't waste. Learning is a lifelong process. 'Traditional *slöjd* is a survival kit for the future.'

The Lost Art Press edition of this book has been two years in the making, involving translators on two continents, plus additional drawings and text that help explain the work to an audience that is unfamiliar with the concepts of *slöjd*.

It has been produced in a very similar way to the original Swedish edition, from the paper's opacity, to the binding and hardback cover. This is a significant, high-quality book that is designed to last and be relevant for generations.

Jögge has written several books and produced DVDs on *slöjd* in Swedish, but this translation brings an appreciation and understanding of working with greenwood to a much larger audience.

There are several extracts from the book on the **Lost Art Press blog**. *Slöjd in Wood* is available in the UK from the **Woodsmith Experience.**



Keen camper, former Brownie and firm believer in the power of matches, **DONNA CAMERON** reviews *The Art of Fire*.

THE ART OF FIRE

Daniel Hume
Arrow Books
Paperback £9.99
ISBN: 978-1784758424

Daniel Hume's book is a joy to look at with a stylish design. It's a pick-up-and-browse kind of book that pulls you in to read it.

In essence, it's a personal journey for the author from childhood to date, following his fascination for making fire, with a mash-up of extremely clear 'how-to' drawings, practical intel, engaging facts, legends and colourful photos. It's part travelogue and part practical fire-making manual.

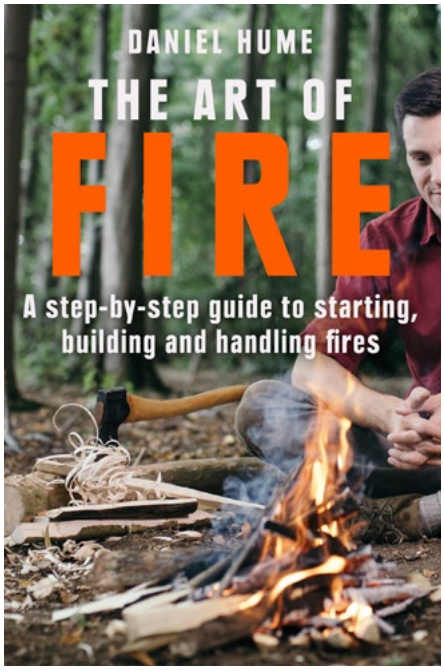
Daniel's passion for fire-making takes him on a global exploration to places, peoples, myths and traditions. He learns first-hand how tribesmen in remote places build fires, which are key to their survival and existence. The photos of people and places are artsy and enriching, and the anecdotes and tales of Daniel's travels are engaging, but not too lengthy or investigative. There is no deep analysis of the rituals, but rather a respectful and unimposing glimpse. I found myself wishing for a map of his travels to understand the enormity of the journeys he took.

The attention to detail is impressive, as the drawings of each tool for fire-making are clear and easy to follow. (And there are great photos to clarify whether you've made it correctly.)

However, the other elements of the book elevate it from a purely practical manual and develop it into a fascinating and delightful read for anyone interested in history, indigenous traditions and the natural world.

Who knew, for example, that the diesel engine was inspired by a device made by the peoples living on Penang, off the West Coast of Malaysia? Or that in a Native American legend, weasels were the only creatures who had fire and only a clever dancing rabbit was able to steal it from them by dancing close to the flames and lighting his own fire from his burning fur?

Formerly an instructor at Ray Mears' School of Wilderness Bushcraft., Daniel Hume has produced a fascinating book, which would suit aspiring bush-crafters as well as those interested in indigenous traditions and history around the world.



And who knows, I might even look out for a suitable elderberry branch in order to make my very own fire-starting hand drill!

CORINNE MOSS, Teaching Trees Officer at the Royal Forestry Society, reviews *Forest School Adventure.*

FOREST SCHOOL ADVENTURE

Naomi Walmsley and Dan Westall
Purchase direct from
GMC Publications
Paperback £16.99
ISBN: 9781784944032

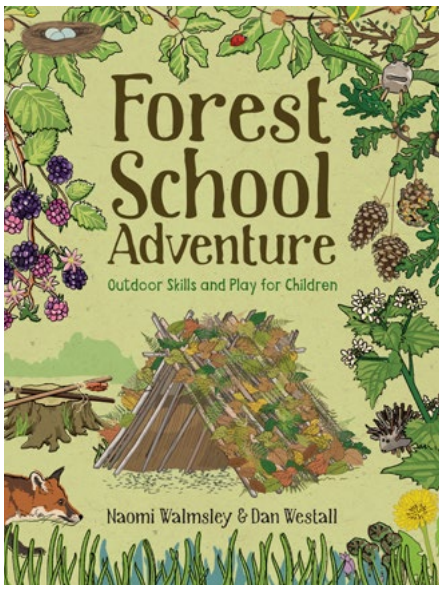
Forest School Adventure is a joy to read! Inspired by their extensive experience of delivering bushcraft sessions and of living for five months in the wild with no modern resources, authors Naomi and Dan have packed this book full of ideas of how to stimulate a love of nature and adventure in kids of all ages, and probably adults too.

The book is a beautifully presented and easy to use resource, ideal for teachers, scout or youth group leaders, as well as parents. It is divided into sections on nature awareness, bushcraft, wild food and games, and each activity has recommended age ranges and gives the time, tools and resources needed to complete it. The simple instructions are illustrated with superb step-by-step photographs and ideas on how to extend or adapt each activity. Even for those with limited experience, this guide is enough to encourage any leader to take children outside to discover the wonders of nature.

The first section of the book, *Nature Awareness,* includes forest school classics such as building bug hotels, bird feeders and natural arts and crafts. Whilst this section will appeal particularly to those who are new to forest school or outdoor education, there are plenty of twists on familiar activities to give more experienced practitioners some new ideas. The 3D natural map hide and seek game will definitely be one that we will be trying out.

Moving on to more adventurous activities, section two looks at bushcraft. Den building is an all-time favourite, but Naomi and Dan's dens are not your average stick lean-tos. They demonstrate different kinds of structures and show you how to turn a makeshift den into something which can really protect you from the elements and that you can sleep in. And for lashing your sticks together, or tying down a tarpaulin, you'll need to know how to tie knots properly, so that's all in there too. This section also covers all aspects of survival, including water collection, different ways to light fires, first aid, use of knives and even primitive skills such as arrow making. If all that sounds a bit scary for trying with kids, don't worry there's plenty of safety guidance included too.

Once you've learnt how to set up camp, you'll need to eat, which leads nicely onto section three which is all about wild food.



Knowing what is safe and legal to forage and what to avoid is vitally important, and with the advice in this section you can't go wrong. Clear photographs are included for identification and the suggested plants should be easy to find. There are enough recipes to muster up a feast and kids will have great fun with things like toasting their home-made bread twists over the fire and baking inside fruit skins. For older children – and braver leaders – there's even full instructions on how to catch and prepare a trout.

The final section of the book is all about games. Having fun outdoors is what really makes children love and want to protect their wild spaces, and for many of us it helped shape our future careers. There are lots of new ideas for games in this section, which will get children moving, let them be silly and help them work together as teams. It's a lovely conclusion to the book.

This book provides everything from the basics of taking children outdoors for short and easy sessions, to real challenges which will not only teach them about nature but will fill them with a sense of achievement. It is a book which should be in every school staff room and has plenty to inspire anyone with children to ditch the technology and go out and explore!

SCOTT BATTY sits back and enjoys *Woodcraft: A practical celebration of the tree*.

WOODCRAFT: A PRACTICAL CELEBRATION OF THE TREE

John Rhyder
Practical Nature
Paperback RRP £30 (Amazon)
Kindle download £9.99
ISBN: 978-1910056189

It's fair to say that I have been looking forward to the release of this book for a long time. Having first visited John Rhyder's Woodcraft School in 2013 and returned for several courses since, I realised early on that there's much to be learnt from Mr Rhyder. So I was especially pleased to discover that far from being a small and discreet offering, this book is nearly 400 pages long and well-illustrated throughout with colour photographs.

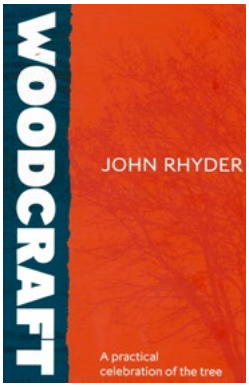
'Woodcraft' in this book includes bushcraft techniques as well as woodworking, or as John says in the introduction, 'I explore the possibilities that trees offer to the woodsman, and the places where knowledge of tools and materials can lead.'

John's lifetime of experience in conservation management and teaching woodland skills shines through each one of the nine chapters, which begin with felling and harvesting. This is about how the non-arborist can take down the odd tree, perhaps for ride management or for craft purposes, and it is work that can be done with an axe and saw.

Moving on to the critical area of choosing and maintaining tools, there is a clear run-down of the features to consider in selecting the holy trinity of knives, axes and saws. This chapter concludes with an explanation of tool sharpening which includes useful step-by-step photos. John goes on to discuss using tool safety, with suggestions for effective carving techniques, grips and projects. There's an entire chapter on bow-making, which walks you through the process with plans and photos, right through to finishing your bow, and making your own bowstrings and arrows. A chapter on dyes, glue and charcoal further illuminates how to make useful substances from natural resources.

John's experience in all manner of outdoor activities seems encyclopaedic. The section on bark, roots and withies discusses weaving bark, making cordage and tinder and how to make a fish hook using roots. If you've not come across withies before, they can be used like wire or thick cord for binding and are made from the small stems of flexible trees (like young hazel). The chapter on 'Foliage, features and fungi' offers an introduction to tree and fungi ID, focusing on ten common species (ten trees, ten tree features and ten fungi), so that the reader is not overwhelmed.

A book of this nature would be incomplete without a chapter on fire. From friction (think rubbing sticks together) to troubleshooting, it then moves on to siting fires, as well as discussing different fire lays – various ways of setting up a fire to optimise it for a particular function. Do you want a low maintenance, fuel-efficient fire? Or one for cooking on? This part of the book will guide you through how best to achieve it. Leaving no trace is also covered, and I think this is something many of us aspire to.



The final chapter is about ropes and knots. You may find some of these useful when felling a tree or when making a bow for creating fire by friction. Alternatively, you might just be glad you read this review first so that you can skip straight to Chapter 9 and learn how to suspend your tarpaulin and hammock safely so you can read the rest of the book relaxing between two trees. Lovely.

If you like spending time in woodland, then I am confident that there is something for you in this book – whether you have your own small woodland to manage or are interested in trying some of the craft work. Far from advocating the exploitation of resources, it has been written with sustainability in mind. When people are able to engage with and take pleasure from the natural environment, they come to value it – and that can only be a good thing for our trees and woodlands.

SYMBOLS IN TREES

Beeches and books – CLARE GIBSON leafs through surprising facts about the symbolism of beech trees.

While the appearance of certain trees evokes their symbolism, that of the common beech, *Fagus sylvatica*, is a little harder to fathom. That said, it's not difficult to see why its graceful, rounded shape and the stunning colours of its leaves in autumn have caused it to be dubbed the 'queen of trees', a more feminine-looking counterpart to the mighty oak's kingliness in the forest hierarchy.

Although the ancient Romans regarded the oak as Jupiter's tree, the beech was also sometimes linked to their supreme god, with Jupiter Fagutalis ('Jupiter of the Beech Trees') being venerated in a grove of beech trees on the Esquiline in Rome. A further connection is with Diana, the goddess of the moon and woodland, to whom a sacred grove of beeches near Tusculum was dedicated. In the Celtic world, Fagus was a beech god who was worshipped in the French Pyrenees.

Prosperity and pannage

There are additional symbolic parallels between beech and oak: both represent provision and prosperity because beechnuts were once just as important as acorns in providing the mast that fattened foraging pigs. The common oak (*Quercus robur*) and the beech are also both Denmark's official national trees, although only the beech features in one of the Danish national anthems. In *Der er et Yndigt Land* ('There is a Lovely Country'), the beech is linked with Denmark's beauty and endurance: 'Our old Denmark shall endure, / as long as the beech reflects / its top in the blue wave'.

Oehlenschläger's stirring lines are not the beech's only literary links. It is no coincidence that the word for 'beech' and 'book' are the virtually

> ***Beech is a common synonym for literature.***

the same, if not identical, in a number of European languages. In German, for example, *Buche* means 'beech' and *Buch*, 'book'. In Sweden, *bok* does double duty in signifying both beech and book. As for English, 'book' and 'beech' are etymologically linked via the Old Norse *bók*. This may be fascinating stuff for word-nerds, but how did it arise?

One clue is the German word *Buchstaben*, which today signifies letters of the alphabet, but literally means 'beech sticks'. One theory suggests that these beech sticks refer to the beech-wood runes used for divination by early Germanic peoples. Furthermore, the beech tree apparently provided a cheaper alternative to the expensive parchment used as a writing surface before paper was introduced to medieval Europe. Robert Graves, in *The White Goddess* (1948), quotes 6th-century bishop-poet Venantius

Fortunatus: 'Let the barbarian rune be marked on beech wood tablets'; other sources state that beech-wood tablets were bound together to form primitive books. Another suggestion is that the beech's inner bark was used for writing on, and this is perhaps more persuasive, not least because the fibrous inner bark of trees is called *liber*, the Latin for 'book'.

The beech was later credited with inspiring the printed word, too, featuring in legends surrounding two rival claimants for the title of inventor of moveable type in the 15th century.

Wooden type

German novelist Günter Grass wrote in *Hundejahre*/Dog Years (1963), 'Gutenberg, before casting metal type, had carved the letters he printed his book with out of beech wood'. The story goes that the idea for moveable type came to Gutenberg when he wrapped a letter that he had crafted from the bark of a beech tree in damp paper before later discovering that it had superimposed its form on the paper. Similarly, Gutenberg's rival, the Dutchman Laurens Janzoon Coster, was entertaining his grandchildren by carving letters from beech bark when he noticed that they made impressions when pressed into sand. Both Gutenberg and Coster initially used wooden characters – perhaps beech wood – in their printing presses before upgrading to metal.

The printing press revolutionised the world, enabling the rapid spread of ideas, increasing literacy and educating the masses. So perhaps the beech's most significant symbolic association is with literature itself, for, as stated by Graves, again in *The White Goddess*: 'Beech is a common synonym for literature'.

EVENTS ROUND-UP

APF 2018

APF 2018, the international forestry machinery exhibition, is the UK's largest tree and timber show. It returns to Ragley Estate, Warwickshire, on 20–22 September.

APF tickets are available for £18 if purchased in advance via the website (£22 on the gate).

If you have never attended the show before, it is not just about machines for large-scale forestry, impressive though they are. Much of the equipment on show is designed for small-scale woodlands and farms specifically to have minimum impact on sensitive sites. You can view mobile sawmills, wood chippers and wood fuel burners, with professional bodies on hand to offer advice.

A wide range of exhibitors offer hand tools and equipment, from a humble chisel for a pole lathe to a chainsaw. Stihl and Husqvarna have their full technical teams on site, so if you have any query about your machines they will be pleased to help. The Forest Worker Zone has a wide variety of drop-in workshops covering everything from woodland management to how to sharpen your chainsaw. Traditional woodcrafts and skills also feature, alongside competitions and demonstrations from the Husqvarna Poleclimber, the European Chainsaw Carving Championships and the loggers from Stihl Timbersports.

The Forestry Commission will host a series of workshops and seminars. Many woodland organisations will be present, including Confor, the RFS, the Arboricultural Association, the Small Woods Association, the National Coppice Federation, and the Woodland Trust.

More details of exhibitors and demonstrations are on the website **www.apfexhibition.co.uk.**

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

OCTOBER

SURREY HILLS WOOD FAIR
6–7 October 2018
Birtley House, Guildford

GROWN IN BRITAIN WEEK
8–14 October 2018

BENTLEY WOODFAIR

BENTLEY WEALD WOODFAIR is an annual celebration of woodlands, forestry, timber, trees, woodcrafts and much more. The East Sussex site at the Bentley Motor Museum and Wildfowl Trust holds two fields of stands, exhibits and displays and an amazing woodland full of demonstrations and activities.

DATE: 28, 29 & 30 September 2018
PRICES: Adults £14
Seniors £12
Children £10 (age 5-15)
Family £47 (2 adults & 3 children)

www.bentley.org.uk

£10 ENTRANCE for Living Woods readers and SWOG members. Download voucher here.

AUTUMN COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

PLUMPTON COLLEGE

Bespoke training throughout the autumn in Sussex

- Basic Tree Inspection
- Award in Felling and Processing Trees up to 380mm
- Powered Pole Pruner
- Vertebrate Pest Control
- Basic Chainsaw Maintenance and Crosscutting
- Chainsaw Refresher Course
- Emergency Tree Work Operations
- Brush-Cutters and Trimmers

For more information email
sarah.firrell@plumpton.ac.uk
www.plumpton.ac.uk

SUSTAINABILITY CENTRE

Sustainable Woodland Management course
5-day course 5-9 November £495
Tutor: Ben Law

Covers biodiversity conservation and woodland management skills through practical and theoretical sessions at the Sustainability Centre in the Hampshire South Downs and Ben Law's Prickly Nut Woods nearby.

See a full llist of woodland and rural courses on the website
www.sustainability-centre.org

RDI

Tree and Timber Measurement Training 27 September 2018
£110+VAT Coneysthorpe and Castle Howard, Yorkshire

One-day workshop for woodland managers and owners to learn about estimating the volume of trees or timber within their woodlands. Includes Lantra Awards certification, course materials, lunch and refreshments. Full details:
www.ruraldevelopment.org.uk
To book 01765 609355 or email
enquiries@ruraldevelopment.org.uk.

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