

# The Cleft Stick

Prototype, Nov 2013.



*an intermittent e-mailing from NCFed*

*The Cleft Stick is intended to disseminate news and information to particular individuals within NCFed. It goes to: the Directors; relevant Local and Regional Group Committee members; Local Reps; individuals not affiliated to groups. It will also go to appropriate organisations and individuals without NCFed. It will go out only by email to save on time and cost. It will go out as often as there is sufficient copy of sufficient importance.*

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## Welcome to The Cleft Stick.

This first issue is intended as a quick introduction to itself and to where NCFed currently 'is'. I shall be following it up fairly swiftly with a more expansive issue, which will also go out to all the contacts that we made whilst getting the Launch together. These newsletters can only be as good as their content, so please send me lots of stuff to put in!

## Readership.

This issue should have reached; The directors; two or three officials of each of the established local groups; a contact for the 'unconstituted' local groups; a handful of local reps and a number of unaffiliated individuals.

If you know of anyone who hasn't received this and who you think should have, please let me know. The more people who know what is going on, the better.

## The Launch!

NCFed was formally launched in London on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Around one hundred people gathered near Westminster to hear keynote talks from: Prof Julian Evans, President of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, Ed Suttie of the Grown in Britain campaign, Pooran Desai of Bio-regional and Dr Martin Warren of Butterfly Conservation.

We were also due for a meeting with the Secretary of State for the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), but owing to a cabinet reshuffle he was unavailable. We're hoping to catch up with the new one at a later date. A photo opportunity with Sir George Younger also failed to materialise (we think he looked out of his window and didn't fancy the teeming rain!).

Despite the no-show from the politicians the launch went extremely well. Much networking was done and many contacts made. There also an impressive display of coppice products from workers around the country to inspire us (*and if I can track some photo's down and master the technology, I'll see if I can show some of them off in the next issue*).



It seems that this is an auspicious time to be promoting the sales of homegrown timbers and wood (see some of the links below) and we all carried a good deal of inspiration away with us.

Links: [www.charteredforesters.org](http://www.charteredforesters.org) ,  
[www.growninbritain.org](http://www.growninbritain.org) , [www.woodforgood.com](http://www.woodforgood.com) ,  
[www.bioregional.com](http://www.bioregional.com) , [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org) .

Coppice workers in the rain (as usual!)

## What are we doing?

During the course of our last few meetings (and as a result of the wider, national, discussions over the past couple of years), we have identified a number of matters to pursue which we think will benefit the coppice industry. These are, in no particular order:

- \* **the formation of new local Groups**
- \* **the new website**
- \* **the 2014 AGM/gathering (and subsequent ones)**
- \* **100 Woods campaign**
- \* **updating the old Coppice Association charcoal bags**
- \* **negotiating a good, nationally available, insurance policy for coppice workers**
- \* **bulk buying of bio-degradable chain oil**
- \* **coppice restoration and improvement seminar**
- \* **forging links with potential 'partner' organisations**
- \* **reviewing the hazel coppice grading system**

There are also more 'aspirational' matters, like planning permissions for dwellings within woodlands, with which we may be able to get involved.

## 2014 AGM/Gathering.

Details are still to be confirmed, but next years AGM/Gathering should be in Dorset during October. We'll let you know more as soon as we know more

## The 100 Woods campaign.

One of the recurring themes from recent gatherings of coppice workers has been the difficulty in sourcing good quality materials, either standing or cut.

Consequently, we are looking to encourage woodland owners (of any persuasion) to bring all, or part, of their wood back into a coppice rotation.

The criteria for this are still being worked out, but it will be essential that effective commercial working is at the heart of any scheme that qualifies to be a part of the campaign. We'll be keeping you updated about this as we go along.

## Hazel coppice restoration/improvement seminar.

This will be held in Gloucestershire in the spring of 2015, and will be loosely based around the restoration work that has been going on in Westonirt Arboretum since 2003.

Coppice restoration is a skill that hasn't had to be practiced until recent years, as the coppicing trend has been downwards for much of the past 200. The recent revival of the industry has meant that there is a shortage of working coppice across the country, and that much of what is being worked could be improved.

We will be trying to bring together the experiences of people across the country to help us all in restoring neglected, or improving poor quality, hazel coppice.

## Measuring firewood.

Toni Brannon writes that the Hampshire Group recently had a get-together which included a load of logs, a cubic metre box, a variety of pick-up trucks and trailers and a tape measure.

One of the bug-bears of the firewood industry is that people sell by weight (! – *my exclamation mark*) and by volume and that volume is often described simply as 'a load'.

Bringing transparency (and maybe a measure of consistency) to the proceedings has got to be a good thing and Hampshire's idea would be worth repeating elsewhere.

According to Toni, '... we all went away wiser, with some learning that their vehicles contained more than they thought and someone realising that the six spud sacks on the Fiesta back-seat were way too cheap!.'

## FISA.

New safety regulations for forestry workers have recently been introduced by FISA (Forest Industry Safety Accord) and seem to be causing people problems. If anyone has any details of these issues could they email them in to me and we'll see if we're able to make any representation about them.

## Deer management Courses

Plumpton College (east Sussex) are hosting four, one-day, courses in Deer management. Subsidy may be available for those working in the forestry sector under the RDPE scheme.

Topics covered will include: Deer Awareness: Population and Cull: Deer impact assessment; Landowner/stalker agreements; Landscape scale management; Risks and liability; deer economics and more.

The full cost per day is £158-50p. RDPE cost is £55-50p per day.

Go to: [www.foodfarmingforestry.co.uk](http://www.foodfarmingforestry.co.uk) for more information.

## Coppice tools bring and buy sale.

Early news of this event in Kent.

Venue: Pepenbury, Cornford Lane, Pembury, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 4QU.

Date: Sat, Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. 10.30am – 4pm. Café on site.

Donations on gate to Pepenbury ([www.pepenbury.info/](http://www.pepenbury.info/)), a centre for adults with learning disabilities.

For more information contact: Matt – 07796804419; Toby- 07811852704.

## NCFed directors.

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## Diary dates.

### **2013.**

#### **December.**

17<sup>th</sup>. Deer management course, Plumpton College, E. Sussex.

### **2014.**

#### **February.**

1<sup>st</sup>. Coppice tools Bring-and-Buy Sale, Kent (see above for details).

25<sup>th</sup>. Deer management...

26<sup>th</sup>. Deer management...

27<sup>th</sup>. Deer management courses, Plumpton College, E. Sussex.

#### **October.**

AGM and Gathering. Somewhere in Dorset (date and place to be confirmed).

### **2015.**

#### **Spring.**

Hazel Coppice. Restoration and Improvement Seminar, Westonbirt Arboretum, Glos..

*(Please send in details of anything that you think might be of interest to a regional or national audience).*

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Information is power! The more we all know the better off we all are, so please send me details of what you know as soon as you know it, so that it can be shared with everyone else.

As well as disseminating information about the workings of NCFed, the Cleft Stick welcomes news of forthcoming events and happenings across the country; articles of interest to workers of wood and workers in woods; book reviews; 'masterclass' technical details, etc etc.

It would also like to publish links to other organisations (perhaps on an annual basis), so details of any you might be involved with would be welcome.

It will not concern itself with reviews of matters past (unless they also relate to things to come) nor will it seek to promote details of courses run by individuals, whether coppice group members or no, or sales of product.

Please send material for inclusion to: Brian Williamson at [brian.hurdles@virgin.net](mailto:brian.hurdles@virgin.net) .