



The Cleft Stick, Autumn 2019 Issue

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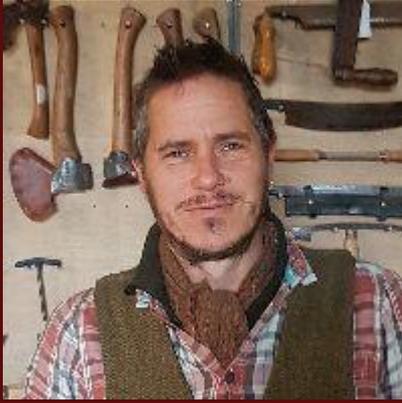
Welcome to the Cleft Stick Newsletter Autumn 2019 Issue

Firstly, appologies for the delay in distributing this Autumn Issue. It's been six months since the last new look Cleft Stick Newsletter and lots has happened. With the recent AGM held at the 2019 Gathering there have been changes in Directors, with some long serving stalwarts giving way to new. Guy Lambourne will also be taking over as Editor of the Cleft Stick from myself as I was voted in as Chair following Toby Allen standing down as Chair (but remains a director). I felt there was a potential conflict of interest being both Chair and Editor but I feel the Cleft Stick will be in very safe hands with Guy. He will be supported in this role, as I have been, by the Media & Marketing Sub-Committee (MAMSC) team members. I also propose to establish a team of regional reporters who will feed stories to Guy. If you are a wanabe writer please volunteer. I am particularly keen to have representation from the far north, southern counties and Wales.

As always, this is YOUR newsletter, so as well as containing all that is going on within NCFed itself, we need YOUR contributions from around the UK. The next issue date is 30th April 2020, so please get your contributions, group updates and events to us well in time by sending them, along with photos, to news@ncfed.org.uk.

If you currently get the Cleft Stick via your group rep, remember that if you'd prefer you can subscribe personally on the website www.ncfed.org.uk. Scroll to the bottom of the home page to find the 'subscribe' button.

Thanks and happy reading,
Dave Jackson (Cleft Stick Editor)



Letter from the Chair

Welcome to the Autumn issue of the Cleft Stick, the biannual newsletter of the NCFed.

It's a bit of a surprise that I find myself writing this letter. I just went along to the annual gathering to see old friends and have some fun when I find myself being gently pushed forward to take on the role of Chair. Toby Allen decided to stand down so that he could put his focus into other projects. I look forward to taking on this role and helping steer the NCFed towards becoming a well oiled organisation able to serve the needs of the nation's coppice industry.

A little about me for those that don't know me - I have run my own coppice business for 20 years, spending the first 19 of those based in Malvern, Worcestershire. In 2018 I took a big risk, upping sticks (quite literally!) and moved back to the area I was brought up in - near the River Thames in North Berkshire/ South Oxfordshire. It seems to be paying off! I was involved in the initial steering group set up to establish a new national coppice organisation and was one of the founding directors, organising the first NCFed Gathering and AGM in Worcestershire, I am now an active member of the Chilterns and Thames Valley Coppice Group.

I'm still trying to work out what I want to help achieve as Chair, but I believe in teamwork and delegation in order to spread the work of running this organisation effectively. There is lots that could and should be done, we just have to work out our priorities going forward. NCFed has suffered over the years from director fatigue - too few people doing too great a role. Therefore we will be looking for a number of people to come forward and embrace small roles and responsibilities. I hope to begin the process of identifying some of the roles at the forthcoming directors and reps meeting on 19th November.

I would like to continue to improve communication within NCFed and the affiliated groups so everyone better understands what is happening. This newsletter is I hope proof of that, and the appointment of the Communications Officer by Toby Allen has undoubtedly improved the situation. But I also want to know what our members think the purpose of NCFed should be. What should we be focussing on? One area we are really starting to get to grips with is marketing and promotion. The National Coppice Week is a great example of how a national organisation can help with promoting locally based coppice groups and businesses. We have a very keen and pro-active team in MAMSC and I would like to see the development of other sub-committees overseeing other key areas of development. I also want to see the NCFed website be developed as a resourceful tool to direct the

public towards suppliers of key coppice products and resources - to make it easier for the local coppice worker or crafts person to be found.

If you have ideas, let us know. Better still, volunteer your expertise. If you haven't got any, then just give us your time! Email directors@ncfed.org.uk.

I think that's enough for now. Hope to see you all at next years gathering here in Oxfordshire.

Enjoy the winter woods,

Dave Jackson
Chair, NCFed

The AGM 2019



The AGM was held, as usual, at the NCFed annual gathering, this year in Herefordshire. Toby Allen chaired and reports and updates were given by various directors and officers regarding the website, Cleft Stick, Finances, membership, National Coppice Week, social media and the Media & Marketing Sub-Committee. Individual written updates on all these subjects can be found below.

Four directors stood down, namely Rebecca Oaks (CANW), Toni Brannon (Hampshire), Chris Letchford (Sussex and Surrey) and Lewis Goldwater (Herefordshire). Toni confirmed that whilst standing down as a director she would continue in her role of Membership Secretary in her capacity of an officer. Toby Allen stood down as Chair but remains on the the board as a director to lead on project initiatives.

Toby led the election of new directors which included Martin Hales (Herefordshire), Tim Roskell (Avon & South Cotswolds) and Dave Jackson (Chilterns & Thames Valley).

Toby nominated Dave Jackson as chair which was unanimously agreed. Dave considered that there may be some conflict of interest with undertaking the chair and editor of the Newsletter. Guy Lambourne agreed to take on the role of Newsletter editor supported by Dave.

Richard Thomason (Secretary)

NCFed Communications Officer Update

This year saw the launch of our Facebook group! Currently with 259 members, the group is a chance to have informal conversations with other coppice workers who are part of or like NCFed's work. So far we've had some great conversations and its becoming a wealth of information on various aspects of the Coppice Industry. If you have any questions, want to start a discussion or have a request for anything then come and join us! Search for 'NCFed Group' and click 'Join'.

The original facebook page is still running with 751 followers and this is the place to find out about NCFed and industry news, affiliated groups and up coming events as well as news and pictures from previous events. Finally we have the instagram page which currently has 230 followers. We plan to fill it with lots of pictures, so if you are a member of a local group and have any pictures of your work that you'd like us to share on instagram email them over to me, Suz, (thecoppiceco@gmail.com) and I'll spread the word.

Suz Williams

National Coppice Week 2019 Questionnaire Results



At the gathering in October, we asked everyone to fill in a brief questionnaire to get a feel for opinions about National Coppice Week. Whilst this was a rather last-minute thing, it produced some stuff that is worth passing on. Here are the results that I feel are most significant:

- 33 responses were received from 13 NCFed groups plus the Small Woods Association
- 30% had submitted an event
- Reasons for not submitting an event (as a percentage of those who did not submit an event) Not enough time – 35% Lack of experience - 26%
- Proportion of respondents keen to submit an event in 2020 – 64%
- The name - National Coppice Week – 67%; National Coppice Month – 27%; National Coppice Day – 2%

We asked you the following questions:

Why did you get involved?

Promote to a wider audience
Because we care
Networking
Support the big picture
To support the local coppice industry
Great cause!

Why are you keen to submit an event in 2020?

Promote awareness and understanding of coppicing
To support NCW
Let more people know about what we do
My wood should be fit for visitors in 2020
The more people know the better

Other general comments

Is there national media coverage?
Lots of our local organisations were interested in participating but didn't have enough time
Lots of potential for outreach
Working with other groups to spread the word
Get the registration form on the front page of the web site

Whilst the decision to go ahead with National Coppice Week in 2020 needs to be considered by directors and we need to hear how the events went this year and how event organisers felt about the week (we will do this soon), there seems to be some useful information to be drawn from the questionnaire results.

There is enthusiasm for a National Coppice Week 2020, nobody suggested that it wasn't the kind of thing that NCFed should be pursuing and a majority of respondents were keen to run an event next year.

The reasons for not getting involved this year were of interest. The two clear front-runners were:

1. "Not enough time". Definitely understandable. However, most of us can make time for something if we believe it's important and beneficial. Could NCFed carry out an internal campaign through reps and wherever else, to convince group members that participation could be beneficial to our own businesses as well as for the wider coppice/woodland/wildlife/buy local angles?
2. "Not enough experience/confidence". Could NCFed take a lead here? Could we offer something to help group members who would like to run events? Could we run training days, remote training, a mentor system, could we produce information sheets or are there such things out there already?

I will leave these questions with you. I suspect the Media and Marketing Sub-committee will be considering them and others over the next few months. If you have views, please do share them with us.

Guy Lambourne

Photo & Poster from an event run by the Chilterns & Thames Valley Coppice Group



The above poster is based on a template in a resource pack supplied by the National Coppice Week team.

New look Website www.ncfed.org.uk

As you will be aware, the original NCFed website was out of service for some time as it had been subject to hacking. But after considerable work carried out by Glenn Hadley (Website Officer) the new look website is now up and running. It has all the same essential nuts and bolts of the old website but will continue to be developed by Glenn over the coming months.

Calling all happy snappers!

We are on the lookout for a supply of good quality photographs that can be used to brighten up the websites pages. Photos of coppice, coppicing, crafting and any other related topics would be most welcome and all images used will be credited. If you have anything that you think might fit the bill then please email them to webmaster@ncfed.org.uk along with your name and where and when the photo was taken. If you have any thoughts, comments or suggestions on how the website could be improved then please include these in your email too!

Glenn Hadley

NCFed Membership Update

The NCFed membership now consists of 19 affiliated local groups, representing a total of 515 individual members. More small groups keep on coming out of the woodwork on a yearly basis.

Toni Brannon (Membership Officer)

Media and Marketing Sub Committee (MAMSC)

Since April this year MAMSC have held 3 skype meetings and, with a lot to discuss and move forward, these have usually inevitably been some two hours long! Now that we have the framework in place for many of the items discussed, we aim to have shorter meetings which will have a more specific focus on certain issues as well as other ideas in the melting pot.

We have seen the launch of National Coppice Week with a series of events being run in October and 2020 promises to be bigger and better with more events being run across all corners of the UK. We have actively helped this year's hosts of the NCFed Weekend Gathering and AGM (Herefordshire Coppice Club) to widely promote this great event via social media and via regular mail-shots to our members who are not on Facebook etc.

A range of other topics have been discussed over the months specifically aimed at promoting awareness of the National Coppice Federation, encouraging formation of new member groups etc.

Other ideas to be developed include a database of facebook pages/groups that are relevant to our industry to ensure we share interesting and relevant posts, information etc to those folks. We are also looking at a Marketing Pack for coppice group members of NCFed to help them promote awareness of NCFed when they are demonstrating or selling (either as a group or as individuals) at wood fairs, county shows, etc.

In due course we will be discussing National Bean Pole Week 2020 as the next major event to be promoted amongst both members and non members of NCFed alike.

If you have any ideas, thoughts, observations etc about what MAMSC do, or could do better, or feel you could contribute more by joining the MAMSC crew please do get in touch at mamsc@ncfed.org.uk.

Tim Roskell
Secretary MAMSC

NCFed Directors, Officers and Group Reps, November 2019

Who's Who

Directors

Dave Jackson (Chair), 2019
Helen Waterfield (Treasurer), Co-opted
Richard Thomason (Secretary), Co-opted
Toby Allen (Special Project Officer), Co-opted
Glenn Hadley (Website Officer), 2018
Rob Newby (Chair MAMSC), 2017
Martin Hales, 2019
Tim Roskell, 2019

Officers

Toni Brannon (Membership Officer)
Guy Lambourne (Cleft Stick Editor & National Coppice Week Co-ordinator)
Suz Williams (Communications Officer)
Richard Thomason (National Beanpole Week Co-ordinator)

Social Media Team

Suz Williams
Helen Waterfield
Tim Roskell

Media & Marketing Sub-Committee (MAMSC)

Rob Newby (Chair)
Tim Roskell (Secretary)
Guy Lambourne
Glenn Hadley
Helen Waterfield
Dave Jackson
Suz Williams

Group Reps

Helen Waterfield (Cymdeithas Coedlan Cymru (Wales Coppice Association))
Tim Roskell (Avon and South Cotswolds Coppice Group)
Martin Wise (Chilterns & Thames Valley Coppice Group)
Tom Kemp (Cornwall Coppice Network)
Iain Turner (Devon Coppice Group)
Guy Lambourne (East Anglia Coppice Network)
Nadine Grundy (East Midlands Coppice Network)
Rob Newby (Five Shires Coppicing Group)
Adam Hurren (Hampshire Coppice Group)
Jim Bettle (Dorset Coppice Group)
Bob Hewitt (Surry and Sussex Coppice Group)

Martin Hales (Herefordshire Coppice Club)
Geoff Mason (Isle of Wight Coppice Group)
Tim Davis (North East Coppice Group)
Paul Trevor (Rockingham Forest Coppice Network)
Frank Wright (Tottington Woodlanders)
Richard Thomason (Shropshire Coppice Network)
Jo Clayton (Coppice Association North West)
James Carpenter (Anglesey and North Gwynedd Coppice Group)

A Thankyou to Past Directors

At this years AGM we said goodbye to a number of directors, but in particular I wanted to mark the moving on of three long serving directors who have all played a major and pro-active role in developing the National Coppice Federation - Rebecca Oaks, Toni Brannon and Chris Letchford. Rebecca (CANW) and Toni (Hampshire Coppice Group) were amongst the founding group of directors present at the official NCFed Launch in Westminster, while Chris came on board not long afterwards to represent the Sussex and Surrey Coppice Group.

Chris Letchford

Chris was always a valued contributor to directors' meetings, getting involved in all aspects of our work. In particular he worked on the Coppice Survey, trying to gather data on the size and activity of the national coppice industry. Whilst I'm sure he sometimes felt as if he was banging his head against a brick wall, his determination and enthusiasm for this project was second to none. Thanks Chris.

Toni Brannon

Toni - well what can you say? An excellent communicator, dedicated to all she does not just for NCFed, but also for her local group and the wider coppice community. Toni, from the start, took on the role as Membership Officer, overseeing the rapid growth and development of local coppice groups that resulted from the creation of the NCFed. She has supported new groups, liased with new and old groups, collected subs, chased affiliation forms, maintained lists of members and dealt with numerous requests for membership checks. All this whilst also being involved in the many other dealings of the NCFed. Oh, and lets not forget that Toni negotiated and set up the NCFed insurance scheme, which I'm sure many, including myself, have benefited from. Whilst standing down as a director, she continues in her vital role as Membership Officer. We'd be a little bit lost without you. Thanks Toni.

Rebecca Oaks

Rebecca, the first Chair, was the face of NCFed from the start. It's not easy leading a new organisation from the start when there are no systems, procedures, protocols or website and communications in place. Dispite this Rebecca steered us forward, negotiating the numerous politics, trips and hazards laid before us in a calm and professional manner. Rebecca represented the NCFed at numerous events in person, wrote many letters, held many meetings on our behalf in

the background, all whilst running her own successful coppice business in Cumbria, helping to run the Bill Hogarth Memorial Apprenticeship Scheme, and oh yes, writing the odd book or two! After standing down as Chair, Rebecca continued as a director until standing down completely this year so that she can focus on new interests in her life. Rebecca, we owe you a great deal. Thankyou very much.

I'm sure I've missed out many good deeds carried out by the above, not to mention all the other numerous past directors. So thanks to everyone who has stepped up to the mark, past and present, and helped this fledgeling organisation begin to thrive.

Dave Jackson

NCFed Coppice Merchant



A new Whatsapp initiative for coppice workers

How many times have you had an enquiry far too big for you to handle, or simply too busy to fulfill?

Or needed coppice materials yourself to complete a job?

We've wondered how NCFed could help in managing such orders for a while. So we are launching a new pilot scheme which we hope will do just that.

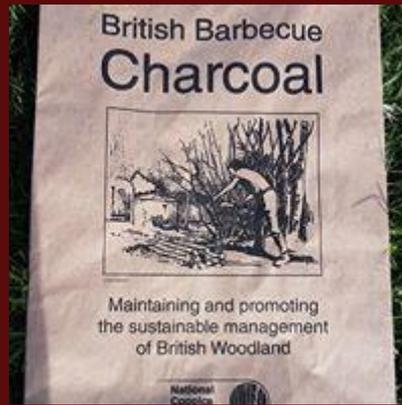
We have created a WhatsApp Group called 'NCFed Coppice Merchant' where all members can share details of orders they can't fulfill on their own, or where you can send requests for materials you may need. But it will only work if we get lots of coppice workers to join!

If you've never used WhatsApp before, then all you need is a mobile number and a smart phone. Download the WhatsApp app then text Dave Jackson on 07814 487578 to be added. It's totally free and low maintenance.

Calling all group reps

This initiative will only get off the ground if you can encourage your members to join the WhatsApp NCFed Coppice Merchant Group. So please publicise it in your emails and newsletters, group facebook pages and website.

This is just a trial at this stage. If the system works and there is a demand, we may look at a more sophisticated approach in the future.



Order your NCFed Charcoal Bags for next season

The new NCFed charcoal bags are ready for orders from Selway Packaging in both the small and large sizes. Both cost 32p plus vat and carriage. Contact Paula Hunt at Selways on 01189 462333 to order. Please make sure you specify that you want the NCFed bags to ensure you do not get the old Coppice Association bags by mistake!

NCFed Insurance Scheme

Have you moved your business insurance over to the NCFed scheme at Beech Tree Insurance? Many have and saved money in the process. One major benefit is the free Employers Liability cover, which if you employ anyone or simply ever work with volunteers, is a must.

Information is on the website, or call Beech Tree Insurance on 01245 500433 and say you want the NCFed Coppice Insurance Scheme.

The NCFed Weekend Gathering 2019

A Fantastic Gathering in Herefordshire

As many of you will know, we had a great time at the gathering, held this year near Bromyard in Herefordshire. Hosted by the Herefordshire Coppice Club we must thank Toby Allen, Lewis Goldwater and Sherwood Keogh in particular. The venue was great, being the venue of the Nozstock music festival, with useful shacks, stages and even a ready made bar just waiting to be propped up by thirsty coppice workers.

So we'll start with the bar, the wonderfully named 'Froe up and Split Bar'.



This is where all the serious business happened, sampling the local brews on offer. The catering was provided by the site owners and was superb - prepared and cooked in their farmhouse kitchen and delivered to the serving hatch and tables on site, despite a near miss when someone carrying the potatoes slipped on the mud and saved the spuds at the expense of her trousers!



Hot water was supplied by the largest Kelly Kettle in the world I dare say (claim not proven!). Sherwood Keogh had it purpose made just for the gathering - and I hope he will be bringing it along to the next gathering - please Sherwood! The impressive fire pit was actually an inverted charcoal kiln lid and I think I was the first (quite literally) foul of the muddy slope around the fire much to the amusement of those that witnessed.



And of course there were demonstrations including the brash kiln (see article below), Chestnut cleaving by Aly of Say it With Wood, shingle making with Maurice Clothier (see separate article), log splitting with Dan and hazel basketry with Lewis Goldwater, as well as the tool auction with master of ceremonies, Peter Jameson.





We had an interesting site visit to Moreton Wood with Paul and Jo Morton. They showed us around their beautiful 38 acre woodland managed for conservation, biodiversity and of course products. We walked around the woods looking at coppice coups, deer fencing, use of woodland pigs, woodland archaeological features and charcoal kilns. But the highlight for me was when we stumbled across their beautiful timber frame workshop, subtly hidden amongst the trees.



For more information about Paul and Jo's work please visit www.moretonwood.co.uk.

On the Saturday evening we had a really interesting talk on woodland archaeology covering the usual saw pits, charcoal hearths, wood boundaries, but also how to read the signs of previous

horticultural use from before your ancient woodland ever existed! Oh and of course stories of unearthed human remains! Followed by more beer, bar propping, fireside chats and the wonderful band.



But, as always, the real beauty of coming to the annual gathering is to catch up with old friends, talk coppice, take inspiration and learn something new. It is the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunity for coppice workers. If you haven't ventured to a gathering before, or for a while, then make that effort and come to the next gathering in South Oxfordshire. You won't regret it!

Once again, a BIG thankyou to the whole Herefordshire Coppice Club team that pulled together to make this a great weekend.

Dave Jackson

Biochar and Looking at Brash in a Different Way !

At the NCFed Gathering and AGM this year, James Hookway (of "The Hookway Charcoal Retort" fame) took the opportunity of demonstrating his new brash kiln.

Brash, a "by product" from coppicing (as well as hedge-laying etc) is sometimes used to protect coppiced stools (there are differing opinions on this practice- we won't go there in this article!) as well as being used to form dead hedges around coppiced areas. It is also left in windrows to slowly decay and provide wildlife habitats. If there's too much brash then bit of a burn up on site is usually the next course of action.

So, if a burn up is required then why not "turn the burn into earn" as James was keen to show us.

The Process

He fired up the brash kiln, initially with some relatively small but dry kindling wood heaped up in the bottom of his kiln, then continued to add more brash wood etc. Some of the images show "miss splits" from making chestnut palings... there was a bit of a brash deficit at the Gathering venue!



This process continued with more brash being added almost to the point of smothering the fire. When the fire occasionally started to burn too fiercely he just added more wood to almost smother it and to slow it down again. He explained that if the fire becomes a bit smoky, then just back off and let the fire catch up. More brash was continuously added on top of the char that had been made until the kiln was three quarters full.



Finally, when the fire died down, he started to shovel (and boy did that have a long handle for obvious reasons!) the hot embers into two recycled steel drums - with the rubber seals previously discarded! The lids to the drums were then placed in position allowing the biochar to finish off its process devoid of further air supply.

On a typical burn, like the one he demonstrated, he would normally anticipate some 20-35kg of biochar, depending of course upon the “quality” of the brash!

So, why biochar?

Biochar is a natural soil enhancer produced from fine grained charcoal. James explained that biochar is especially good for free draining soils as it helps retain water and nutrients for plants to access and is excellent for soils which have been depleted of such nutrients. By enhancing the biochar with the addition of organic (or other) nutrients and then adding to the soil in the Spring, this provides the best opportunity for the roots to take up those added nutrients.

Biochar improves the aeration of the soil which is also part and parcel of good gardening practice as this encourages airflow around the roots of plants and thus a healthier biology within the soil. It creates a home for micro organisms and mycorrhizal fungi improving the health of all soil types. There is a symbiotic link between plants and fungi so by adding biochar you are naturally helping create healthier plants.

The high level of chemical stability and the porous nature of biochar means that just one application should remain effective in the soil for many, some have suggested hundreds of years.

And of course climate change. A very important and current subject that is on everyone lips. Adding biochar to the soil helps trap (sequester) CO₂ from the atmosphere as 1kg of biochar sequesters 3.67kg of CO₂. Something for all of us to think about.

What's next?

Jame's brash kiln, as can be seen from the image, is square in plan view. He has now designed one that is rectangular, so that it can accommodate longer lengths of brash.

Details of his brash kiln are not yet on his website but for further information please email him at hookwayretort@gmail.com.

Tim Roskell

A Visit to Crunchie's Cobs out in the woods

Well what a great way to finish off the National Coppice Federation's Weekend Gathering and AGM... and it decided to stop raining as well!

We all know the benefits of using our four legged friends out in the woods: low impact, quiet and an environmentally friendly alternative to mechanical methods, especially where the latter would find it hard to access the wood and operate due to the topography. Crunchie is most definitely a great ambassador for the horse logging sector of our traditional woodland management industry.

He is clearly a man of the horses and the woods. He exudes passion for what he does, along with humour and a great strength of personality. He has been involved with horses for all of his life and in 2005 he started out in the world of horse logging working with his Gypsy cob ponies. He told us of his initial struggles in respect of Planning and living on site... the local planners were somewhat surprised when a huge box full of supportive letters accompanied his planning application! He also won the hearts and mind of the local residents (who were concerned about "that man cutting down some of the trees in the woods") by inviting them around to come and see, and learn, what he and his business was about. They went away more knowledgeable and with new friendships formed.

As well as horse logging his own timber and that of other clients, Crunchie explained that he also earns his living from charcoal making, bracken rolling, tree felling, woodland thinning and firewood supplies. However he also uses his ponies to transport a wide range of materials, both on and off road... even a bride and groom if that's what someone wanted!

Crunchie rigged up one of his horses and off we followed in to a steeply sloping wood where we were all able to see horse power come in to its own. As we, the spectators, slipped and slid about on the soft muddy slopes, Crunchie and his pony made light work of shifting a couple of long trunks... both horse and man working in unison and making the job look easy. Crunchie showed how he could manoeuvre his pony on a very tight turning circle (I wish my pickup truck was like that!) so that they were ready to pull off in the right direction. I take my hat off to anyone working with logging horses in these conditions. Its hard graft trying to ensure that you don't end up on your proverbial rear end!

As a contrast, to finish off the demonstration, another pony was hitched up to an interesting looking rig already loaded with a stack of wood piled high. Crunchie set off (with his dog clearly on its favourite spot...on top of the woodpile) via a track out of the woods leaving only a small sign on the soft mud, that it had ever been there. Truly low impact! Thanks Crunchie for your time-everyone present enjoyed it very much. <http://www.crunchiescobs.uk/>



Tim Roskell

Cleft Shingles - Stoke Lacy Church Spire

I was approached by the Stoke Lacy Parish Council about making cleft oak shingles for the re-roofing of the spire. As I had some clean oak logs 2'+ in diameter left from my recent thinning at nearby Lower Brockhampton Estate, I said yes, and gave a quotation per square metre. The spec was 13" long and random widths no smaller than 3" (the widest were nearly 12").

Months later and a couple of weeks before the job commenced, the builder confirmed that he would like me to go ahead, on a "hand to mouth" basis! That means he wanted me to deliver each week as they were made, so as not to over order. Apparently they had re-roofed the spire of Dilwyn Church previously with cleft oak shingles and had considerably over ordered. The difficulty is with estimating the quantity needed when there are hips and ridges on the roof, as the shingles have to be cut on an angle on site to fit, and simply measuring the roof area does not give a true indication of the quantity needed.



The job took about 3 months, and I hired help for some of that time. I ran out of oak part way through the job, and had to fell some more; in total it took 8 trees, and the 12 tonnes of branchwood went to a firewood merchant. At some point shingles were fixed to the roof only 3 days after the oak was felled!

It is pleasing to know that the attractive durable roof covering travelled only 4 miles from stump to end use on the spire. The builders and villagers all expressed how pleased they were with the oak shingles.

Maurice Clother

www.touch-wood.co.uk

Site Visit to the Church Spire

We all had a fascinating site visit to the Stoke Lacy Church Spire to see the shingles (or shakes!) in the flesh! Maurice talked us through the entire process and we all stood in awe below the spire looking up at the craftsmanship involved. This is an amazing example of sustainable and locally produced roofing.



This stained glass photo shows the link between the church and the Morgan Car Family, still made locally in Malvern.

Dave Jackson

Articles, Notices & Group Updates



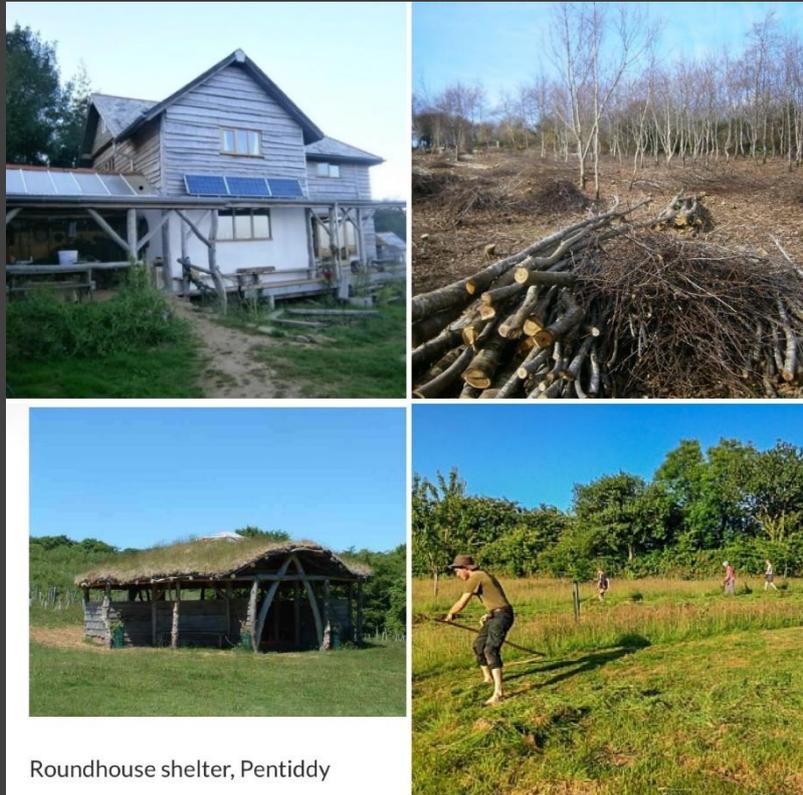
Internship at Pentiddy Woods, Cornwall

Due to a change in situation we still have an opportunity for a fully immersive experience in an off-grid, land-based, regenerative community.

Learn a diverse range of skills from harvesting seaweed to baking in a wood-fired oven, from making hay with a scythe to managing a coppice and hedge-laying.

January 2020- July 2020.

www.pentiddy.co.uk/internship



Roundhouse shelter, Pentiddy

Articles for Cleft Stick

If you have anything interesting to share with the wider coppicing community then please get writing your article for inclusion in the next Cleft Stick.

Send to news@ncfed.org.uk



You can read the latest FC buletin here....

<https://mailchi.mp/forestry/tree-health-news-november-2019?e=db738be3da>

Coppice Group Updates

Group reps - please get writing your local coppice group updates for inclusion in the next Cleft Stick in April.

Send to news@ncfed.org.uk

Thanks

Events

NCFed Weekend Gathering & AGM 2020

SAVE THE DATE..... 16th to 18th October 2020

Next years Gathering will be hosted by the Chilterns and Thames Valley Coppice Group. We have already visited a potential venue and are very excited about the site and are in negotiations with the venue in South Oxfordshire over costs.

We want next years gathering to be better than ever with lots more participation from you all with demos, product displays and sharing of devices and equipment ideas to give a truly inspirational and educational event.

Put the dates in your diary.

Carry on Coppicing for National Beanpole Week

11th to 19th April 2020

Coppice workers are getting ready for National Beanpole Week 2020 , which is taking place between 11 – 19 April 2020

The campaign celebrates and promotes the importance of our ancient coppiced woodlands and encourages gardeners to get behind the campaign and use the humble British Beanpole.

The campaign will be promoted nationally and has found support from Gardening celebrities and the national press. NCFed will encourage the nations gardeners to support their local coppice workers and we must try and make access to local suppliers as simple as possible.

To take part in the campaign and to be listed as a supplier or if you're hosting an event please contact Richard Thomason – richardthomason@smallwoods.org.uk.

More information on how to get involved will be distributed over the next few months.

Richard Thomason

Regular Features



A pint with.....Brian Williamson

Before we begin I have a confession to make. This edition of 'A Pint With' didn't take place in a pub, but by the retort at Brian Williamsons project at Westonbirt Arboretum. However, we still had a great chat and I found out a little bit about Brians project and what his vision for the future of coppicing is.

Suz Williams



Suz - Can you tell us a little about the project at Westonbirt?

Brian - It was something that grew out of the forestry commission, which is always a good start, and they were keen to bring coppicing back into Silk Wood, which is part of the Arboretum. There is a long recorded history of coppice management happening here and because it's part of the heritage site, which includes the old Westonbirt house where Sir Robert Holford used to live, they are looking at the whole landscape around.

It has, as most people will be aware, good reasons from a conservation point of view, such as supporting the wildlife, and because it's a great amenity within the arboretum as people like walking in woods and the woods that people most like walking in is a coppiced wood with standards. So coppicing it was ticking all sorts of good boxes, sustainability, local produce, good amenity, wildlife value, part of the historical and cultural heritage of the landscape, and particularly from my point of view it's got an economic underpinning. We're looking to make this economically viable woodlands, so that the bean counters in the forestry commission accountancy department don't turn around sometime in the future and say 'oo look we're spending £5000 a year on managing this coppice we can't afford that. We want them to turn around and say "oo look this coppice is generating so many hundreds or even thousand pounds of income for us, we definitely want to keep that going".

Suz - What are the challenges have you faced at Westonbirt?

Brian - I suppose the single biggest challenge is earning a living as restoring derelict coppice doesn't generate a lot of money. The first cut might be a reasonable 'break-even' because you've got bit of timber for fire wood and charcoal, you've got standards to thin and there is quite a volume of material that comes out. The second and third cuts aren't producing a lot of good quality hazel, you may well have moved a lot of your bigger timber already, so you've got to find ways of bridging that gap until you get into the fourth cut when the coppice itself will be generating an income. And that will depend on how well you've done your restoration work under that time.

Suz - What are your main products?

Brian - At the moment, it's probably fairly evenly divided between firewood, which is coming out of the branch-wood of the oaks we're thinning, out of some of the ash, the field maples, the over stood hazel and charcoal, which comes from exactly the same kind of material. The coppice itself is mostly producing beanpoles, pea sticks, faggots, hedge-laying stakes and binders, and a few (but as yet very few) good quality rods for things like hurdle making. We run a few courses along side of it,

which always helps.

Suz - What is your top tip to anybody who wants to get into coppicing?

Brian - I've probably got several top tips. When you say coppicing you're probably talking about coppice restoration, because unless you're in the Hampshire or Dorset area you're not going to get good quality coppice to earn a living from. So by and large you are talking about coppice restoration and you've got to make sure you're secure where you are. You don't want to start work for a few years then get kicked off by a change of owner or an owner who changes his mind and wants something different, so some kind of long term security is important.

You've got to consider a couple of practical things such as, can you control the deer population - not so much the population but the deer browsing, so that your coppice regrowth can come back, you can thin enough standards to get enough light in. Sometimes it can be difficult to get enough trees out. Are there constraints on you for access? You might be on a shooting estate that only lets you in after the end of the shooting season, which is very restrictive. So there are all sorts of practical things you need to have sorted before you even get into the wood and start cutting and marketing it.

Suz - What is your big vision for coppice industry?

Brian - Simply that you find it all over the country, that lots of woods have areas of coppiced woodland within them being managed economically and for me it always comes back to the economic management. I think that the notion that coppicing is something that conservation organisations do is utterly ridiculous. Its making this separation between earning an income and managing the wildlife. You manage for the habitat, you manage economically and the wildlife follows behind. People tend to have it the other way around.

So my vision is lots of economically managed coppice benefiting the wildlife, producing locally made goods out of sustainably managed woodlands, to replace bamboo and charcoal from Malaysia and Brazil, brought in half way around the world. That kind of thing.

Suz - Have you learnt anything new this year?

Brian - I am always revising how I coppice. I think we've settled into a fairly effective method of deer control (Note: Brian uses two 4ft high fences with a 6ft gap between them to deter deer from jumping into a small space). I don't know about this year but within the last two years certainly I've modified my layering technique yet again. What we're doing now is layering before we cut rather than after it; so we get it out of the way. It doesn't impede on your trimming out or cutting. Most importantly you're layering when the stools are still standing so you can see exactly where you want to put your new layer. The amount of times I've gone through something I worked seven years ago and come across a layer 2ft away from an existing stool, and you think 'Ah! That was a waste of time!'. So doing it before means you absolutely pin point where you want it. If you're laying well it should be fairly low to the ground and everything can go over the top of it. The one thing it sometimes does is stop you from cutting the stool as low as you should as the layer sits up above ground, but that can be remedied further down the line when you cut the layer away from its parent and take the whole stool down.

Suz - What's your favourite part of this work?

Brian - I'm not sure I could divide it out! Its such a good thing all round. Anytime of year I could be doing something and think 'ah I really like this!' and then a few months later I'll be doing something else and think 'oh this is so good!' but I suppose really when it comes down to it, standing in a patch of coppice at the end of its' first years regrowth and how well 6ft of clean stems have got away from the deer, got away from the bramble and see it against the backdrop of the next 6 year old coup and think 'yes, I've got it!' Suddenly it's turned into proper coppice.

Editors Note

I think you'll all agree that Brian deserves a big thankyou for all his past work for NCFed as a past director and Chair, as the first Cleft Stick Editor and for the organisation of the NCFed Coppice Restoration Seminar. Cheers Brian.

Could you interview a coppice character over a pint (or two) for the next issue of the Cleft Stick?

I believe we already have one in the pipeline conducted at the gathering, so you have a whole year to do it!

Please get in touch with your ideas.

Terry's Top Tips....

Ideas and tips from the woods and workshop

Woodman's Soggy Foot Syndrome!

So, its been raining all day long and you've been out in the woods (or installing a fence or structure from those coppiced timbers) and your old faithful footwear has let you down. You've got wet boots, wet socks and of course very wet feet and you feel every squelch as you wearily head back to your truck at the end of a hard day ready for the long journey home.

But luckily, you always carry spare socks and footwear in your vehicle, don't you? Of course. But, have you got the one secret item stashed in your glove compartment ...talcum powder? Sprinkle generously all over those water infused feet, between the toes and, for good measure, a good puff of powder into the dry socks themselves before putting them on. This has the effect of soaking up a limited amount of moisture in your skin as well as making the skin feel soft and dry... what's not to like about that then?

Terry



Workshop Vanity Mirror

When trying to drill a hole with an auger or brace and bit, or even a lovely Gatemakers brace like Bob below, have you ever wished you had someone to the side of you to tell you if you're drilling at the right angle? Its easy to judge the angle in your line of sight, but not sideways!

But stress no more - just get a large old mirror and mount on a wall to the side of your favourite drilling vice. Draw a load of vertical & horizontal (or any angle needed) lines on it with a thick marker. The next time you drill, simply glance sideways in the mirror to check your figure, and while you're at it you can easily check your angle.

Terry

Tool sharpening Lubricant

Well, old Terry here is not the sharpest person in his workshop and nor are his tools! So, when I was at the Bodgers' Ball this year I took the opportunity of signing up for a morning's workshop with Sean Hellman to learn how to sharpen my straight edge tools.

I'm not going to share any of his sharpening secrets here with you lot (you'll have to pay for your own course!) but one top tip he told us about was what to use as a suitable sharpening lubricant .

Water? WD 40? 3 in 1 oil? No, just something as simple as sweet smelling baby lotion. Not only does it do the job of preventing he clogging of the pores between the diamond particles on the sharpening plate but it also helps feed your skin! One word of advice- don't be tempted to use oils as a lubricant on a waterstone... the clue is in the name.

Terry



If you have any top tips for the next issue, please send them in.

Email news@ncfed.org.uk

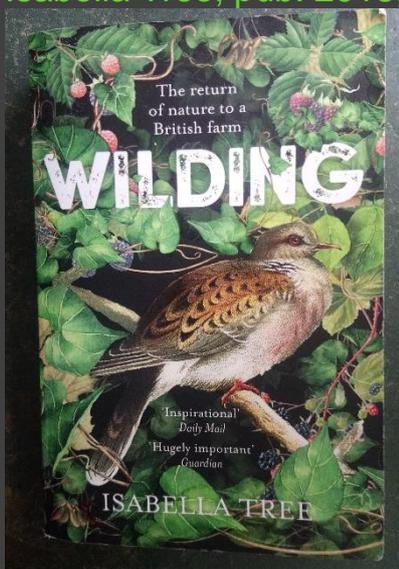
Your name doesn't have to be Terry!

From the bookshelf....

Reviews of new and old favourites

Wilding, the return of nature to a British farm

Isabella Tree, pub. 2018, Picador



If I was writing a review for the back of this book I think “thought provoking” would do nicely. Given freedom to add another word, I’d go for “extremely thought provoking”. Having read the book in the spring after my wife kept quoting from it, saying “listen to this!” I reread it and got more from it the second time through and decided to write this review.

Written by the owner of the Knepp Estate, a large Sussex farming business, it is an account of her and her husband’s experiences since the late 1990s, of changing the business from intensive arable and dairy farming to lightly controlled wilderness, funded both from the public purse and a growing wild meat and tourism business.

On first reading I was pretty shocked by the author’s demands of DEFRA and English Nature (as was), that they should fund a project that would not only take land out of production but allow it to scrub up and become incapable of food production. Their proposal required the whole to be fenced to keep deer and other stock in. Bearing in mind that the whole estate is 3500 acres, that’s one long fence – something like 9 miles and over £250,000 worth in 2009. The original scheme also proposed a land bridge to allow animals to cross the A272 safely. No figures were suggested for the cost of that and it hasn’t happened so far.

A significant reason for choosing to withdraw from intensive agriculture was their problem making a profit from the estate because it lies on famously claggy Sussex clay. There are mentions of a stud manager and polo ponies, descriptions of castles and ancient deer parks. I became outraged. Not because they wanted to take their farm out of food production (Isabella Tree makes very convincing arguments in favour of that move), but because they wanted the government and EU to pay for it through Environmental Stewardship and were highly critical of those government bodies that didn’t move immediately to do their bidding. Moreover, I was angry because they felt entitled to receive funding and had the contacts, forcefulness, and self-confidence to stir things up at a high level.

So a bit of jealousy and class struggle was going on beneath the surface on my part. I read the rest of the book in a bit of a lather and skimmed a whole lot of interesting things. These included the chapters about nightingales, purple emperor and painted lady butterflies, the Oustvaardersplassen, beavers, turtle doves, renewable power, ragwort and, most interesting for the purposes of Cleft Stick readers, coppicing and forestry management. I wasn’t fully concentrating.

On the last Saturday in June this year I was sitting, with my family, drinking a beer in a wood we manage. Gazing vaguely upwards, I spotted a large butterfly I didn’t recognise, flying quickly overhead. After some time chasing it fairly unsuccessfully and more time spent watching my wife balancing alarmingly on top of some step ladders, armed with a camera, we thought it just might be a purple emperor. Very excitingly, through July we saw, photographed and positively identified several more of these (all male) butterflies. On trying to find out about their habits I contacted our local natural history society who confirmed there had been other sightings locally. Information about the management of a wood, detailed enough for someone like me who might want to maintain a population, seemed sketchy. If only I’d been concentrating on ‘Wilding’. Within its pages are nuggets of wisdom about exactly where the females lay their eggs and how they overwinter, what sort of sallow in which kinds of locations they favour. Luckily on second reading this sunk in. The same is true of the nightingales, turtle doves, beavers and a whole load of other stuff. None of these have

appeared in our wood yet though.

The book is full of amazing stuff and the research, both rigorous and more empirical is, I am sure, building a wealth of knowledge that will be extremely useful in the future. I hear wilding has reached the Archers (apparently, a well-known, BBC radio sit-com) and that's about as mainstream as these things get. It has changed somewhat the way we are looking at the future of some of the land we look after and that's quite an achievement.

Six months have passed and I've calmed down a lot, but my initial unease remains. Should some pretty wealthy landowners in southern England be paid large amounts of money by British and European tax payers to abandon their 3500 acres of farmland to nature? Or to look at it another way, to allow their farm to become an appalling haven for weeds and other vermin, or maybe a third way, to create an amazingly dense patchwork of habitats that attract wildlife on a scale and of a diversity not seen in England since the seventeenth century? On balance I think I'd say yes.

Guy Lambourne

If you would like to review a book for this feature please send your review, along with photo(s) to news@ncfed.org.uk

Tried & tested....

Working with a Sussex Gatemaker's Brace

It was in about July 2016 when I was fortunate enough to acquire a beautiful blacksmith made brace and I'd been asked to make a Pig Slaughtering Bench for The Ironbridge Gorge Museum in Shropshire.

A baulk of green Ash was supplied, that turned out to be bone dry. Their Scotch Eye wasn't able to even start a hole. I decided to try the brace with a Gedges Auger. Without much effort I managed to drill four 1" holes for the legs. The drill, once into the wood was easily turned using the wheel. It gives great torque to drive augers. We have even drilled an old split cruck of Oak when making a chopping block. In combination with a Twybil it's a lovely tool for cutting mortices and hole making as well as an eye catching conversation point in my workshop!



Bob Thomas.

Obituaries

If you hear of anyone passing that was well known and/or respected either locally or nationally in the coppicing world, then please send us an obituary (with a photograph) to let the wider coppice and woodland community know.

Send to news@ncfed.org.uk

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