



The

Cleft Stick

News from NCFed and the UK Coppice Industry



Gathering and AGM 2021

The Federation's Annual Gathering and AGM was held, during October, near Reading in South Oxfordshire, hosted by the Chilterns and Thames Valley Coppice Group. It had been a long time coming and was a huge success. More than eighty coppice workers, friends, representatives from allied trades and organisations turned up to chat, exchange information and simply enjoy being with a group of lovely, like-minded people. Full report inside.

A Pint With... Nick Gibbs

The well-respected editor, writer and public speaker, talks to CS about inspiration, roots, his latest magazine title - *Quercus* and his recovery from the terrible accident that came close to ending his career. *Page 12*

Take a Better Picture

Rosie Rendell guides you to better use of your camera - how to produce images that will make an impact on your social media channels (and NCFed's too).

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Safer Forestry

There has been a rise in fatalities in the forestry industry this year. Herefordshire's Toby Allen offers some important advice to keep us all safe in the woods.

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Image Guy Lambourne

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The National Coppice Federation *Uniting regional coppice groups*

The National Coppice Federation (NCFed) was formed in 2013 with the aim of uniting already existing regional coppice groups under one banner. Since then more local groups have formed and become affiliated to the NCFed, growing our membership and reach considerably.

Aims

The NCFed has three key aims:

1. to promote coppicing as a form of woodland management that provides economic, ecological and culturally significant benefits;
2. to bring together regional coppice groups and provide a unified voice for the industry; and
3. to encourage and promote best practice

From the Chair

Greetings fellow coppice workers. I'm sure you are all, like me, enjoying the return of winter and working the woods again, as the cycle of coppice continues. I always consider the onset of winter the start of my new year and I am one of the few people I know, who wills on the hard frosts and gales to remove those last stubborn leaves! However, the nights are long, so get yourself a cup of tea, sit down and enjoy reading the fantastic *Cleft Stick!*



October saw the return of the NCFed Gathering after a year's absence due to Covid. It was a great weekend, with lots of friendly faces and opportunities to learn something new. If you haven't been to a Gathering, make it a priority next year; you won't regret it! However, we do still need to find a Regional Coppice Group to host it in 2022. It's not a ridiculous amount of work and the team here at NCFed will be on hand to offer help and support all the way. Please email me at chair@ncfed.org.uk or phone on 07814 487578, to discuss this informally if you think your group might be interested.

This year has seen a few changes in directors. We've said goodbye to Chris Letchford, Helen Waterfield and Toby Allen. I'd like to personally thank all of them for their hard work and enthusiasm. Helen stood down as Treasurer earlier this year but continues her role on social media and Toby will contribute on key issues as and when. Tim Cumine has stood down as Secretary but remains a director. He worked tirelessly on many issues and will continue his proactive roles as director and as part of the Strategy Sub-Committee. A new Secretary is within our sights! We also welcome Tom Coxhead (Leeds Coppice Group) as our new Treasurer.

We have new appointments within the Media and Marketing Sub-Committee (MAMSc), both born out of networking at the recent Gathering. Firstly, Nadia Clark (Avon and South Cotswolds Coppice Group) will be overseeing our Instagram account, whilst Rosie Rendell (Sussex and Surrey Coppice Group) will be helping with events such as the National Bean Pole Campaign. We also have a potential new Press Officer, but negotiations are in their very early stages. We still really need someone to take on the role of Membership Secretary. If you think you could offer us a little of your time, please contact me.

NCFed is a growing family of dedicated volunteers. We can only achieve what you, our members, volunteer to do. So, if you feel you have anything to offer, please DO get in touch. We are stronger together!

Happy Christmas
and a sustainable New Year.

Dave Jackson, Chair



Supporting the Coppice Industry

Editorial

We live in momentous times. The COP26 summit brought home to me the gravity of our world's position. It's tempting to feel down, especially for one such as I (Eeyore in most situations) and withdraw from news altogether. Don't succumb! There is space for optimism. Just having all those countries represented in Glasgow must be a sign that there is willingness to address these issues seriously. And although Putin and Xi Jinping were absent, Russia and China were at least represented. It's left me wondering "What can I do?"



My answer isn't going to make a huge difference – we won't be flying again, we run an electric chainsaw (alongside petrol) and our home electricity supply is renewable, we are buying more locally produced food where we can, but it's expensive, we have just bought soya and palm kernel free feed for our beef bull (that's another story), expensive too, and we buy organic milk and have it delivered by a milkman; again expensive. Small beer all.

I wrestle with vehicles – in several senses. We run an old Land Rover of which I'm embarrassingly fond. It has a dirty diesel engine. What to do? I guess the best option would be to run the business without the vehicle. But we need to get off road and tow large trailers on tarmac. So more practically, a new vehicle with the cleanest possible engine; but that would still burn fossil fuels and be out of reach financially. I don't believe there's currently an electric alternative available, but when there is, the same financial problem arises. So use it less and locally is where we are now. We aren't alone in this.

As individuals, it's very hard to feel we can make any difference at all, but as an organisation, NCFed is well placed to influence decision makers. Jim Bettles' efforts with charcoal regulation is a great example. There are plenty of areas in which, as a body of people, we should be able to affect how the future unfolds.

Another example we are well positioned for is how the trees we know must be planted in the UK will be used and managed in future. Alongside a huge raft of other efforts, from insulating homes to capturing atmospheric carbon in gigatonnes, it's clear the world must plant trees on a colossal scale. In the UK, it's far from clear where these trees will go, how they will be paid for, from where the stock will come, who will do the planting, who will maintain them and how all that will be paid for. And of course there's the small issue of what these new plantations will be used for. I trust there are minds pushing all these things around and we should be part of those discussions. For we can offer an answer to a small part of one of those large questions. We all know the excitement of making a wood work, seeing it flourish, produce money and become a haven for more and more plants, animals and fungi. Coppicing isn't the complete answer but it could be a part of one.

I have attempted to influence a tree planting charity with which I have ties. I've lobbied them to design some plantings with an eye for future coppice rotations. As yet without success, but I will persevere.

Guy Lambourne, Editor

Editorial Assistants - Tim Roskell and Glenn Hadley

Deadline for next edition 30 March 2022.

Please send all correspondence to news@ncfed.org.uk

Coppice Seminar Westonbirt, April 2022

Many of you will know that Brian Williamson - Gloucestershire based wattle hurdle-maker and former NCFed Director - has for many years been leading the restoration of forty-five acres of hazel coppice at Westonbirt, the National Arboretum. "One of the most beautiful and important plant collections in the world" according to Forestry England's web site, but also home to one hundred and fifty acres of semi-natural ancient woodland.



Image Brian Williamson

Recently cut hazel at Westonbirt

Brian is clearly succeeding in influencing the great and good at the Forestry Commission (FC). Jointly with FC staff he is organising a seminar for both FC Beat and Woodland Officers, which will be held at the Arboretum in April 2022.

The seminar will run over two days, the first being aimed at Beat Officers and the second at Woodland Officers.

Using the work in the Arboretum as a case study, the Seminar's aims are:

1. To encourage FC Officers to bring suitable areas of woodland back in to coppice management.
2. To provide information to FC staff which will enable them to better inform other woodland owners of the economic and environmental benefits of coppicing.
3. To explore some of the difficulties in setting-up robust legal agreements by way of the issues (and solutions) found by some of the Forest Districts.
4. To initiate a discussion on the possibilities of targeting grant aid at coppice restoration.

Each day will comprise a mixture of talks covering many aspects of coppicing; a tour of Westonbirt Coppice Restoration; displays of



Image Brian Williamson

Westonbirt's lovely hazel coppice with standards

products and coppicers at work and, of course, encounters with spring flowers and happy visitors.

Although the National Coppice Federation will be fully involved in the event – we'll be helping with the planning and organisation as well as putting up speakers and exhibitors - it won't be open to NCFed members. We aim to develop another similar event in future that will be well and truly aimed at the needs and wants of coppice workers.

Watch this space.



Coppice News

Forestry Commission Deer Officers

In November, I spent a day talking about deer and the problems they cause in woodlands, in the company of other woody types from Bedfordshire. The day was hosted by the Greensand Trust, paid for by the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership and led by the Forestry Commission's David Hootton. Given the seriousness of both the deer issue in the UK and David's expertise, I thought it worthwhile to ask him to provide a bit of information about the FC's national staff structure with regard deer.



David Hootton talks deer

I am one of five Deer Officers who are working with the Forestry Commission Area Teams across England.

The roles are relatively new posts, developed following the closure of The Deer Initiative in 2020, with the acknowledgement that deer populations of all species are increasing in range and number over many areas of the country, with impacts adversely affecting key targets of Woodlands into Management and Woodland Creation

The Deer Officer plays a critical role as the interface between Forest Services and landowners, land managers and forestry agents in providing advice and facilitation for the management of wild deer to reduce their impacts on woodland condition and establishment. The Deer Officer role involves engaging with landowners, woodland owners, agents, deer managers and stakeholder organisations to provide guidance and advice on deer management including impacts on woodlands and other landscape objectives, with an aim of encouraging and enabling collaborative, landscape scale deer management activities.

The role will also look to share best practice among landowners, managers and deer stalkers, engaging with the media as required, to support the sustainable management of deer populations in a safe, and humane manner.

In the first instance please contact the Area offices for direct contact details of the Deer Officer for your area.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening>



Burning Issues

NCFed Woodfuel survey, Firewood regs and group certification news

Thanks to all who took the time to respond to our Spring Woodfuel Survey. Results have provided valuable insight into the coppice woodfuel trade and have been guiding our response to the new woodfuel regulations.

Woodfuel certification

Few can have missed the recent regulation*, requiring smaller quantities of woodfuel sold in England to be certified as under 20% moisture content. In October 2020 the government confirmed measures to reduce levels of particulate matter generated by woodsmoke (PM2.5), that threatens health wherever it drifts. Since May 1, 2021, suppliers trading over 600m³ have been obliged to sell woodfuel in quantities less than 2m³ certified as 'Ready To Burn'. Small foresters (those trading less than 600 cubes per year) have until May 1, 2022, to comply.

Group certification scheme

As a partner to these developments, NCFed has been in discussion with Woodsure, Small Woods, Confor and others about a group certification scheme, designed to enable those who trade in quantities under 2m³ and under 600m³ annually to sell woodfuel as 'Ready to Burn'. with reduced costs and admin.

Woodsure's plans for a group scheme have shifted over the course of 2021. Initial proposals required each group member's fees to pay for an individual laboratory test. In the latest version, Woodsure has proposed to DEFRA that suppliers may be gathered in clusters of similar fuel types (each cluster below 600m³) and require a lab test per cluster, though not one per supplier, delegating this detail to the Group Manager. While this is set to make participation in group certification cheaper, it would mask the individual supplier's identity in the certification system and increase the complexity of managing the group.

Essentially group certification relies on a Group Manager to bear the detailed admin required by running the group. Included in a Group Manager's proposed responsibilities are correspondence with all group members, individual testing, checking onsite storage, advising on use of codes and logos and confirming the legality of inputs into woodfuel trade.

A longer exploration of the dynamics of the woodfuel trade, the mechanics of regulation, the results of the Spring Woodfuel Survey and the possible costs of running and joining a group will appear in the News Section of the NCFed website in the next few days.

Tim Cumine, for NCFed Woodfuel Working Group

*In October 2020, government passed The Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020. Line and letter here - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1095/contents/made>

Coppice News

First European record of tree disease found in Cornwall

Woodland managers, landowners, the forest industry and tree nurseries are being urged to remain vigilant after the Forestry Commission (FC) and Forest Research (FR) identified the tree pathogen *Phytophthora pluvialis* in woodland in Cornwall and Devon. The UK Chief Plant Health Officer has confirmed the finding, following routine Forestry Commission plant health surveillance activities.

P. pluvialis, is a fungus-like pathogen known to affect a variety of tree species, including western hemlock, Douglas fir, tanoak and several pine species (in particular radiata pine). It is reported to cause needle cast (where needles turn brown and fall off), shoot dieback, and lesions on the stem, branches, and roots.

These are the first reports of this pathogen in Europe. At this stage it is unknown if *P. pluvialis* is the direct cause of the observed symptoms which have been found on mature western hemlock and Douglas fir trees.

FC, FR and the Animal and Plant Health Agency are conducting further surveillance and diagnostic analysis to understand more about the pathogen and ensure that any required control measures are swiftly undertaken to stop its spread. Following extensive surveillance, further outbreaks have been found in Cornwall and Devon.

Nicola Spence, the UK Chief Plant Health Officer, said: "We are taking swift and robust action against this finding of *Phytophthora pluvialis*, as part of our biosecurity protocol used for tree pests and diseases. I urge all sectors to support efforts to tackle this pathogen by checking the health of western hemlock and Douglas fir trees".



Key symptoms to look for are lesions on the stem, branch or roots. Any sightings should be reported to FC via its Tree Alert online portal.

FC has introduced a demarcated area in Cornwall, to restrict the movement of materials capable of spreading the disease

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/forestry-commission-act-on-new-tree-disease-found-in-cornwall>



Free Trees for UK Tree Planting Projects

If you are involved in tree planting projects, especially on publicly accessible land it may be worth looking at *Eforests* who offer free trees for projects in the UK.

Request free trees for your community woodland or nature reserve from *Eforests*, an organisation that works with wildlife trusts, community woodland groups and nature reserve managers around the UK, supplying them with free trees. The trees are funded by their clients, both individuals and companies, who want to have trees planted on their behalf and be able to visit them. They want everyone to be able to enjoy the trees that are planted and, as the trees mature, be able to visit and walk among them.

Trees can be delivered from October to March. If your group needs some trees for a planting project, ideally on publicly accessible land, take a look at <https://eforests.co.uk/FreeTrees>



Image: Jane Lambourne

NCFed Zoom account - now available

Covid has changed a great deal about how we do things and some are likely to stay changed. However much some of us might dislike online meetings, they are likely to remain a fixture, especially for groups who aren't close geographically.



NCFed has purchased a Zoom account, primarily for the directors' and committee meetings that go on throughout the year. The account will also be made available for the use of affiliated groups. This means that groups can have a Zoom meeting of more than forty minutes without interruption or without having to use a borrowed account.

If your group wants to use the Fed Zoom account, simply email zoom@ncfed.org.uk

NCFed Gathering and AGM 2021

Well, if you missed it, you missed a good one! Over the weekend of Oct 15-17th, around eighty NCFed members (and some non-members) assembled at the Scout Hut in Crays Pond, a small hamlet in the south Chiltern Hills, for the Weekend Gathering and AGM. The Chilterns & Thames Valley Coppice Group hosted the Gathering, postponed from 2020 due to Covid, blessed by gentle sunshine and a large amount of coppice wisdom.

Workshops

To get the ball rolling, for the first time, there were a couple of pre-Gathering courses on Friday 15th. Brian Williamson led a course for hurdle makers to improve their skills and Sean Hellman led one on tool sharpening, with a focus on bill hooks – a skill I'm sure that most of us could always improve on! The aim is to continue these CPD courses for future gatherings, to develop skills for professional coppice workers as opposed to absolute beginners, who are already well catered for elsewhere.



Sales and Demos

On Saturday morning, the tree-enclosed field adjoining the hut held host to a fantastic array of sales stalls, craft demonstrations and skill shares. This included retort charcoal burning, chestnut cleaving, pimps, hurdles, basketry, fan birds, rustic furniture, hazel nuts and last but certainly not least, spar making.

Spars and Spar makers

For the first time, the National Society of Master Thatchers (who are now Supporter Members of NCFed) attended. They were demonstrating and talking about spar making and their new industry standard. They are keen to foster relations with NCFed in order to encourage a revival in UK spar production. They also sponsored a £100 prize for the best bundle of Spars. This hotly contested competition was judged by master thatcher Kit and the prize was awarded to Simon Farndon from Hampshire.

Gathering reflections 1

Being woodland owners we came to the gathering with the intention of learning about coppice products, how they are worked and how the raw material is produced. What an education we received, thanks to the trade demonstrations, competitions and site visits we came away inspired.

For us, Mark's tour of North Grove Wood highlighted the quality of hazel that is required and gave a standard to aim at. Sadly, none of ours comes close to that bundle of tall, straight stems but at least we now have something to aspire to.

Many thanks to the organisers for a great weekend and we look forward to meeting up again next year in another part of the country. With luck we will be able to report an improvement to the quality of our hazel but these things take time and we have a lot of restoration ahead of us yet.
Chuck Dandridge

NCFed Gathering (continued)

Competition

In the charming 1920s 'shabby-chic' hut, entries for the craft competition were arranged for viewing and judging by attendees. The purpose of these new competitions was not just for a bit of fun (which it undoubtedly was), but also to help raise the bar in standards and to inspire! There was a range of categories which are listed below along with the winners, all of whom each won £25.

Competition winners (pictured below)

Wattle hurdle - Brian Williamson

Besom - Brian Williamson

Bag of charcoal - Guy Lambourne

Woodland derived basket - James Hookway and Jack Riston, (joint winners)

Coppice derived furniture - Dave Jackson

Miscellaneous treen - Les Brannon's hay rake



Image Tim Cumine

Gathering Reflections 2

As newbies to NCFed Ian and I came along to our first GATHERing this year. I took part in the hurdle making pre-event course – a day working under Brian Williamson's kind, knowledgeable and attentive teaching. Ian, in the meantime, spent a pleasurable day chatting with Toni Brannon and others while helping out with the event set up.

The event itself was a thing of a coppice worker's dreams - spending time with people I have for many years held in the highest regard, old friends re-acquainted and new ones made. So many open, kind, informed and passionate people in one place. Passionate about our chosen careers and lifestyles - what a bunch! I thank you.

The demonstrators, people, place, site visit to Mark Cotterell's hazel coppice, North Grove, were all things to write home about... not forgetting the food and beer. Very well done to the team who must have worked so hard – an absolute triumph. We went home feeling truly supported, inspired and very eager to expand the NCFed family to West Wales – watch this space.

Hope your cuts go well and you sell every stick.

Tracey Styles, West Wales

See page 10 to read about Tracey's efforts to establish a group in West Wales



On Saturday afternoon, many attendees travelled the mile and a half to North Grove, a lovely mixed wood overlooking the Thames Valley and Vale of the White Horse. In this Woodland Trust owned wood, Mark Cotterell manages a superb in-rotation hazel coppice of some 1.5 acres. Other attendees visited on Sunday, after lunch.

The *Froe-Up and Split Bar* had been beautifully constructed, by Dave Jackson and Andrew Jarvis and did brisk business selling beer from West Berks Brewery, Loddon Brewery and Tutt's Clump Cider, with Sammi Davenport as chief barmaid. Suz Williams womaned the reception and handled the stream of queries and entries for the craft competition and tool auction.

Our catering team (myself and Romilly Swann, local wool and fleece craftswoman and outside caterer), produced two lunches of Gloucester Old Spot sausages in excellent bread rolls and a dinner of venison stew on Saturday evening. We were massively helped by member Graham Thorne and my partner Lucy.



NCFed Gathering (continued)

The Future of Spars

After dinner on Saturday, a fascinating and in-depth discussion about the future of spar making took place - more on this important issue in due course. The evening was rounded off brilliantly by music from *Dolly and the Clothes Pegs*, who played a gig of great tunes with verve and energy.

On Sunday morning we held the AGM followed by the Tool Auction, the latter expertly led by Peter Jameson.

By 6pm on Sunday, the venue was empty and swept and the site cleared. Big thanks to all who stayed to help, all the many volunteers who helped set up throughout the weekend and to everyone who brought displays, demonstrations, skills and knowledge. A thoroughly great weekend I think you'll all agree!

Martin Wise (Chilterns and Thames Valley CG)
All images Guy Lambourne, except where labelled

The Sale - a view from the rostrum

Firstly, let me say the 2021 gathering sale of tools and other items of interest was a team effort. My thanks to Booking Clerk and Sale Porter, Suzie and Rostrum Clerk, Jack. I am grateful also to the vendors for giving some room for movement between their reserve price and the buy-now price. In several cases their faith was repaid with a better than buy-now price under the hammer. The total turnover was £463.50.



The cheapest lot was a set of morse drills with brace and bit ends that went to Leeds for £4. The star was a pimp clamp that went to Devon for £80.

I couldn't help smiling at a lopping axe that moved about six miles within Sussex via the Gathering at Crays Pond in Oxfordshire and I wasn't sure whether to smile or worry when I recognised two lots on which I had tapped the gavel down before. On balance I opted for a smile - the aim of the sale is to keep the kit within our circle, and that has been fulfilled.

Long may we be able to gather in person for live auctions and preserve the old tradition of selling to names not numbers. I for one missed auctions during lockdown.

P S Jameson occasional amateur auctioneer and member of Dorset Coppice Group.

The Set up

The weekend gathering is one of the highlights of the coppice year and it is always a pleasure to be in a room full of familiar faces, discussing all things coppice.

The organisation pivots around four main areas – venue, food, demonstrators, and beer. The venue is crucial to create the right atmosphere. We were lucky to have a rustic scout hut nearby with enough land to host demonstrators and spaces for camping.



The matter of feeding up to eighty people is quite a task but the tradition of having a venison stew on the Saturday removes some of the decision-making and it becomes a case of deciding what to offer people for lunches. We went for sausage baps (yum) and hired a wonderful local caterer and a friend who has experience in feeding large groups of people.

Organising demonstrators this year might have been easier than before as the lack of opportunities over the last two years fuelled more interest.

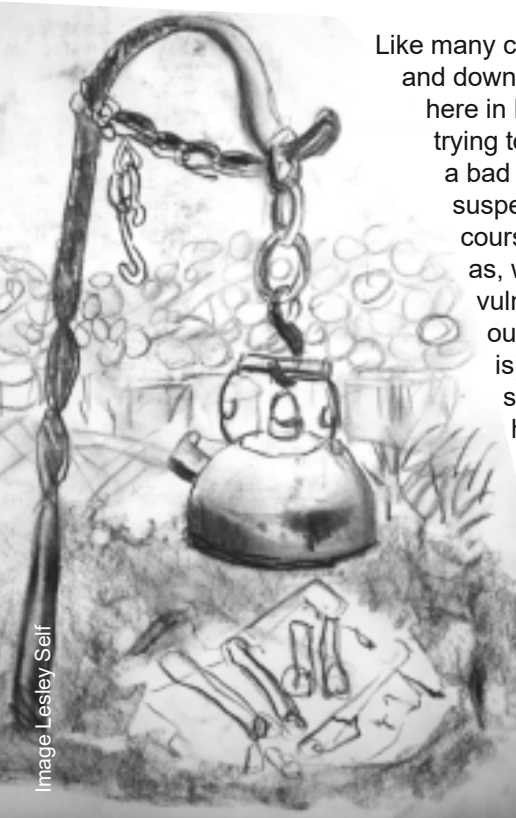
The weekend required a huge printout of participants, and more pieces of paper for organising the auction and craft competition. These went really well and we had some great lots in the auction.

We will create a 'Gathering Pack' very soon containing everything you need to know to host a successful gathering. So it should be even better in 2022.
Suz Williams



News from Affiliated Groups

Dorset Coppice Group



Like many coppice groups up and down the country, we here in Dorset have been trying to make the best of a bad situation. We suspended our monthly courses due to Covid as, with a number of vulnerable members, our priority was (and is) to keep them safe. We have, however, restarted our monthly outdoor work parties and members have been helping with a range of tasks, for which we are hugely appreciative.

Charcoal complements paper's texture

In August we ran a charcoal burn aimed at artists (for a brilliant write up, see: <https://bit.ly/3qDb0Yg>). This proved very popular and is an event we aim to repeat next year.

Members have continued to attend numerous shows and events to demonstrate their crafts and sell their wares, notably a large turnout at the Stock Gaylard Oak Fair in August. As a group, we have been supporting this event since its inception and are pleased to see it grow to become one of the largest wood fairs in southern England.

Dorset also had a good turnout at the NCFed Gathering and, on behalf of the Group, we would like to extend our thanks to the Chilterns & Thames Valley Coppice Group for all of their hard work in making it such a successful weekend. As I write this, having just returned from the woods, we are looking forward to a members' meeting next Saturday where we will be making roof shingles, milling some timber, lighting a Hookway retort and hosting a social BBQ for members and guests.

Looking to the future, we plan to reinstate our monthly courses and are in talks with our local Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty office to provide training for young people in coppicing, coppice crafts and sustainable woodland management. After the past 18 months, we are looking to the future with positivity and excitement.

Pete Etheridge, Dorset Coppice Group

East Anglian Coppice Network

The East Anglian Coppice Network (EACN) covers a large geographic area, more than two hours' drive across it in any direction, so we don't get together very often. However, in September we attended our first ever public event. The Wonder of Wood fair is to become Cambridge's annual event for all things wood and carving, and as it happens, one of our group members lives in the host village. It was free to register so how could we resist? Despite only giving ourselves a couple of weeks to prepare, we managed to put some information together on coppicing, flyers advertising EACN and the wider NCFed, have some products for sale and enough Network members available to cover the stall for two whole days.

There were quite a lot of spoon makers and other carvers there and also one of our network members in his own right, Andy Basham of *Coppice Designs*. The local tree-work/equipment-selling and fixing company had displays of chainsaw use, tree climbing and metalworking underway, there were hurdle makers, storytellers, terrible live music, food, beer and cider. And most importantly, there were plenty of visitors.

One of the advantages of the location was it being next to a set of artisan shops, a deli and café, which attract a regular stream of visitors over an average weekend. There was good local advertising, and the weather delivered, too. As we were next to the local wood turners and one of the coffee vans, they attracted lots of people whom we could corner for a conversation about coppicing, and get them hooked. Well, that was the strategy on Saturday, lady's day - the stall being 'manned' by Louise, Jos and Rachel. I am sure the Sunday team - Guy, Sean and Glenn did equally well in engaging the public in conversation.

Would we do it again? Yes, for sure. Hopefully we'll hold our annual meeting at some point over the weekend too. And we'll be more organised, with a proper table and display boards that don't blow over and something sturdy to attach our banner to. But we made it over the initial hurdle.

Louise Bacon



Andy Basham chats about East Anglian coppice issues

News from affiliated Groups

A new group in Leeds

The Leeds Coppice Group is made up of members of the local coppice co-operative - Leeds Coppice Workers (LCW) and other self-employed crafts people, foresters, woodland owners and friends from the region. It's a bit of a work in progress as a regional group at the moment and in the long term, it may be beneficial to evolve into a West Yorkshire or perhaps, more ambitiously, a whole of Yorkshire group.

LCW is a worker's co-operative committed to restoring and managing neglected and underused woodlands in the Leeds area. We aim to create jobs in Leeds woodlands for our members and promote the use of locally sourced woodland products within the Leeds area.

We run monthly volunteer days in the winter and a variety of courses throughout the year. LCW has seven members who work on a part time, weekly basis. The co-op will turn ten years old in 2022.

This year we are working across twelve main sites. Six of those are proper coppice whilst the other work is made up of selective thinning, hedge laying and other environmental projects. Much of the coppice restoration work struggles to pay for itself as the woods are in various stages of neglect or restoration and commonly have difficult access.



Members of Leeds Coppice Group

Being part of a co-op enables us to take on a wide variety of worthwhile work and provides strength and continuity for the woods themselves. If someone needs time off or moves away, the co-op is able to continue the work in some form, ensuring continual management. There is both security for members and some sacrifice that comes with being part of a co-op. Everybody gets paid equally regardless of job or proficiency and has an equal vote in co-op meetings. Downsides of co-ops include more meetings & bureaucracy but this enables us to create stronger systems and thus take on a wider range of work which we find to be fulfilling. The co-op wage is modest but as anyone that coppices for a living will know, nothing beats doing work that you enjoy with good people around you.

Tom Coxhead

A Coppice Group in West Wales?

I met Tracey Styles at the Gathering in October - you'll find her words about the event elsewhere. She is in the early stages of setting up a West Wales Coppice Group and it looks like she and her partner, Ian, went home after that weekend inspired to get things moving. It has taken a few years to reach this point and the story might encourage others to keep plugging away.

Tracey and others manage fifteen-acres of broadleaves called Cornerwood, near Cardigan, where Ceredigion meets Pembrokeshire. They have been cutting and managing things sustainably since 2007. Some years ago, they were looking to build in the wood and were after good advice on permitted development and turned to their mates, Ally and Toby of Say it With Wood fame, who put her onto several likely people. She ended up asking Graham Morgan of the Small Woods Association to write a report on Cornerwood and its management, which Tracey says was "really fantastic!" I guess Graham got paid for his contribution but Toby, being the generous soul that he is, asked for nothing more in return than for Tracey to set up an NCFed group in Wales.



Tracey, ready for the cut

Although she intended to deliver on her side of this bargain, things cropped up, time passed and her promise got filed. Tracey worked as volunteer then employee at Coppice Wood College, near Eglwysrwrw, for two days a week on their sustainable woodland management course, (where all felling is done with traditional hand tools), in part of Pengelli Wood, Pembrokeshire, and volunteered to help build a timber framed workshop on site with Tŷ Pren (builders of roundwood timber frames for the modern world). All whilst still cutting and crafting at Cornerwood.

Since then she has met lots of coppice workers and green woodworkers in and around West Wales and got to thinking "If only there were an organisation that could bring all these people together!" At some stage the penny dropped and she and Ian spent a weekend in sunny South Oxfordshire last October, in the company of Fed members from all over the UK.

It's looking like Tracey's part of the bargain with Toby and Ally will be fulfilled early next year when she plans to bring together the many like-minded West Wales workers for a first meeting. I hope she remembers to tell Toby and Ally!

Guy Lambourne

Cornerwood on Facebook - <https://bit.ly/corner-wood>
<https://coppicewoodcollege.co.uk/>
Tŷ Pren - <https://typren.co.uk/>

Putting the COP into Coppice

Whilst Extinction Rebellion forced climate change to the forefront of public attention, the recent COP 26 summit finally brought home to most of us, that the world is warming and we need to act soon. It was easy to feel a smug satisfaction as the penny dropped around the country - we've been on about this stuff for years. Most coppice businesses I know are passionate about the good things we do. Using this as a selling point, we've converted people by osmosis, and shown our customers that their purchasing choices really can make a difference. It's been hard work and I think we deserve a bit of self-praise.

But have we done enough? Of all the facets of UK Forestry, coppicing is the most publicly accepted. I'd gamble coppice and horse logging have starred in more episodes of Countryfile than any other timber game component. Our public love us. By marketing a positive message that 'coppice is great' we have penetrated into the hearts of a certain demographic. If we really do believe what we preach, it's time to get serious and make coppicing mainstream. This needs to be on an industrial scale. So, we can use coppice to replace carbon heavy products and fossil fuels, store carbon both in the soil and as products, while creating the conditions to mitigate the effects of global warming and biodiversity loss. By pushing out to do more we can become part of the solution. That will look and feel different to each of us because we are such a diverse facet of British Woodlands.



Image Jane Lambourne



Image Jane Lambourne

I am a shameless evangelist for the role of coppice in the climate crisis. You probably are as well. Together we can explore the ways coppice can be relevant and necessary to a society that is making the transition to Net Zero CO2 emissions. Luckily we all joined an organisation with a binding aim - to bring coppice workers together and help us support each other to promote coppicing.

Tribal leadership theory has us moving up levels from lone warriors, to a proud tribe and then through to wonderment that we are part of something bigger. I feel that is where the coppice trades now stand. Through savvy direct marketing we've reached the public, and that brings responsibility. People are worried about trees and confused about cutting them down. Our job is to act as a guide through this, show the difference between cutting down a rainforest to grow soy or palm oil, and managing Britain's forests.

We are well placed to assist the rest of UK Forestry in communicating the fantastic benefits of managing our woodlands and making useful things from the only proven carbon storage kid on the block - wood. We are a precious part of a fabulous machine that will help solve the climate conundrum, we might not agree with all parts of that machine but it is moving in the same direction. We must reflect that in our marketing and social media. It's important.

The time has come for coppice to emerge from the cosy Countryfile cliché. We must find ways to expand our success. By moving beyond the niche, we'll demonstrate that our job is great, what we do is great, we are part of something greater that will do great things, and bring society along for the ride. Get cutting.

Toby Allen, Herefordshire Coppice Club

A Pint With Nick Gibbs

Nick Gibbs founded Freshwood Publishing in 2008 and launched Living Woods Magazine in the same year. As Freshwood expanded, he conceived other titles, covering subjects as wide ranging as golf and sailing. In 2014, he was involved in a bicycle crash that resulted in a life changing brain injury which for many would have been career ending. Nick however, has since developed a reputation as an inspirational public speaker and in June 2020, launched his latest title - Quercus - a magazine for "anyone working wood by hand, with chairmaking, green woodworking, Slöjd, carving and furniture-making".



Nick in workshop with lovely box plane

Cleft Stick - *Where did your love of woodlands and woodworking come from; who or what inspired you?*

Nick Gibbs - My parents ran a furniture business, largely caning and rushing chairs, but also manufacturing beds, headboards, tables etc. Having spent so much time in the workshops since I was six, I am imbued with wood and tools, but have never been trained as a woodworker. Though I worked as a jobbing carpenter in London in my 20s, I never really considered myself as a professional, nor very good. I was trained as a magazine editor, and as such my first job was as Deputy Editor (and quickly Editor) of The Woodworker. I knew very little about tools. I then launched Good Woodworking, and became more woodwork aware, having my own workshop for the first time.

Since then I have made all sorts of things, more often than not as projects for magazines. Woodlands came into my life when I started editing *Smallwoods* magazine and had to learn about trees. Perhaps as a consequence I bought a cabin in France, with its own woods and river, and my awareness of trees grew. The Shack became well known once I had launched *Living Woods*. We tested bramble-clearing devices, felling axes, battery-powered chainsaws for clearing the tops of felled trees, a forester's hook (I've forgotten the name for the device you use for twisting trunks), a trunk trolley (I've forgotten what they are called too) for moving trunks around, and chainsaw mills to produce cladding. I've been on coppicing courses and chainsaw courses, but I do still wonder how much I really know about woodlands.

Above all I have been inspired by my parents, Henry and Janet, who purchased of Holt Brothers. in High Wycombe, the last caning and rushing business in the capital of chairmaking. At a young age I learnt to respect and love the lady caners and rushers, who came from such cared-for working class homes, to understand their lives a little while I was experiencing a privileged education. And there was the unforgettable smell of cane and rush and shellac and animal glue, and the inspiration to find freedom in running one's own business.

CS - *What led you to move from woodland to workshop for Quercus?*

NG - After my accident I had to close Living Woods and stopped editing Smallwoods. I also had to close British Woodworking. My interest in both woodlands and woodworking waned, especially since epilepsy (caused by my brain injury) meant that I couldn't drive to the Shack, and I also didn't have a workshop. Most people said I would never edit a magazine again, so I gave away loads of tools and books and benches in a fit of pique. They have all found good homes, and I smile when I see friends using them now. I was saddest losing Living Woods (though it too has gone to a good home with woodlands.co.uk), as it was such an intriguing magazine to edit. But you need the right environment, the right space and the right tools for green woodworking. A workshop is easier to locate, though I have yet to set one up permanently.

CS - *Your injury must have had a profound effect on your life. How have you managed to rehabilitate, apparently so successfully?*

NG - I floundered for five or six years, searching for purpose. Neurodocs will say that your brain plateaus after two or three years and there'll be no further improvements. In my case this is bollocks. I certainly had no clear aim. I had edited magazines for thirty years; it is my passion and my craft, and my life. I've often found it hard to distinguish medical and circumstantial madness, not sure if my insecurities are a consequence of a damaged brain or not being able to do what I love. I became obsessed with routines and regimes, and was perhaps even paranoid. Recovery is an awkward word for anyone with a damaged brain; it's more about developing a coping strategy. I still don't really know who I am now, but have found a balance in editing magazines for the old and new me's.



The French Shack

A Pint With Nick Gibbs (cont'd)

CS - In our last edition, Toni Brannon, a Hampshire coppice worker wrote about her husband Les, and their use of coppicing and craft working as therapy to aid his recovery from a stroke. Might there be parallels between the two of you and could lessons be learned from your stories?

NG - Being patronised has been a horror. There are times when I've given up contesting goodness, and have accepted the niceness of family and friends, and let them make decisions and make tea. Neurodocs refer to this as having a 'drowsy' brain. The 'does he take sugar' climate. I expect it is much the same for people who suffer a stroke. These often lead to semi-paralysis in the face or arms. Scientists in the US have tested an experiment to constrain a patient's 'good' arm, forcing them to revert to the 'damaged' one. Results have shown that improvements to the 'damaged' arm are far greater than expected and that improvements have a positive impact upon other brain activity. If there is a parallel, then from my experience, it is that loved ones might, at times, try to be a little less comforting, and not quite so praiseworthy. That might just be me.



CS - Explain how 'Lockdown saved my damaged brain'.

NG - Brains are elastic. That's why advocates of neuroplasticity insist that new networks can be laid to bypass damaged ones, which you can never restore. You can choose whether to find a different route to your original destination, or choose new places to go. Since no one thought I'd be an editor again, I searched for new targets, employing my inherent abilities and experience to get me there, only to be dissatisfied with the places I found. After so many futile adventures for a 'noisy' brain, (including times as a kitchen porter, Deliveroo rider, country club groundsman, hotel handyman and assistant hedge trimmer). At the end of 2019 I decided to roam Oxford (where I was living), reading books and exploring the shelves of the city's wonderful libraries. I was just coming to enjoy this new vocation when Lockdown closed the Bodleian and the Radcliffe Camera, and I had to find something to do in my sitting room. So I decided to launch the magazine that the chairmaker John Brown and I had devised twenty years ago. It was only supposed to be a few pages long, but I soon realised that a proper magazine editor publishes a proper magazine and with only fleeting expectations produced the first 64-page issue of *Quercus* in May 2020. Nine editions later I can feel my brain energising, more able to do many things, so long as I remember not to do too much. Friends and family have noticed a significant change, and my damaged brain is less often noticed or recalled.



Quercus Magazine was launched in June 2020 for anyone working wood by hand, with chairmaking, green woodworking, Slöjld, carving and furniture-making

Quercus is edited and published bi-monthly on the Isle of Wight, England by Nick Gibbs, with the assistance of freelance writers and magazine people. We hope you enjoy the magazine, and contact us with any ideas, comments or suggestions.

Subscription costs for £27.00 for the printed copy and £24.99 for the digital version.

To find out more and subscribe:
<https://quercusmagazine.com/>

CS - Whose writing do you turn to for inspiration?

NG - Steinbeck. Orwell. Hemingway perhaps. But the book I would keep above all others would be Ferdinand by Munro Leaf, the tale of a Spanish bull who loves sitting beneath a cork oak tree, smelling the flowers, but is taken to fight in Madrid when he sits on a bee and impresses visiting scouts with his snorting and pounding. It has a happy ending.

CS - Have you a favourite woodworking tool, one you would never part with?

NG - A small wooden Mujifang spokeshave from Taiwan. I have spent many happy hours using one to shape the hand-made helicopters we've sold at shows instead of subscriptions. I try to forgive the miscreant who stole a much-loved model from my bench while I was having an epileptic fit at Westonbirt one year.

CS - What's the next addition to the Nick Gibbs stable of publications?

NG - Certainly, no magazines. One is more than enough. But I've said that before. Perhaps a book.

We are very grateful to Nick for sparing the time to talk to us.
All images are Nick's

Steady that piece of workshop timber

Ol' Terry here is rather partial to using oval mortise and tenon joints (usually found on traditional sheep hurdles) for use on small gate frames and rails. I normally use a pillar drill with a good forstner bit to drill out the bulk of the mortise.



Now, when I've got a lovely bit of wood that's not straight it can be a pain to hold the timber steady while drilling out the mortises. So, to stop the timber wobbling about and ensure all the mortises are drilled out in the same plane as each other (and not all skew-whiff), I simply screw a piece of sawn timber- that's a bit of 2"x 1" batten in the picture (or 50mm x 25mm in new money) on to one end at 90 degrees to the direction of the proposed mortise holes. I will sometimes also clamp the batten to my pillar drill table extension so both hands are free.



Now for a table extension, I use a long length of sawn timber (4"x 2"/100mm x 50mm) supported on blocks of wood at one end on top of the bench and clamped at t'other end to the pillar drill vice. This provides a perfect extension to the pillar drill table and helps support the timber that I'm drilling, keeping it

nice 'n level. Bingo, job's a good un!

Terry, take a look at "Tried and Tested" in this issue of Cleft Stick which has an interesting write up about a great forstner bit. You might want to buy one to add to your tool box!-Ed.

Thanks Terry for that top tip. If anyone else has a great tip (for either in the workshop or out in the woods) please send through to the Newsdesk - Thanks. Ed

Shave Horse Saddle Sore?

Well, me ol' rump isn't as cushioned as it used to be so I've made myself a sliding seat for me shave horse. So long as the main body plank of your shave horse has reasonably parallel sides then anyone should be able to knock up a seat like mine.



It's a simple construction comprising two side battens (2" x 1" x about 12" long) with a 3/4" thick piece of plywood approximately 12" long x the width of the plank, plus the battens, plus total 1/4" (the last allows for a clearance gap between the battens and plank). The ply is firstly screwed to the top face of the battens.

Now is the slightly fiddly bit! I used an old cushion which I held in place with a bit of upholstery fabric. I stapled one edge of the fabric along the bottom edge face of the batten (fold the fabric edge over on the inside by say an inch to double up the material before you staple it in position). With that edge secured you can then pull the fabric taut over the side of the batten; over the side, top and other side of the cushion and then over the side of the other batten.



Do a similar fold as before and staple the fabric to the bottom face of the batten. You'll then need to fold and staple the front and back edges – a bit more tricky as you'll probably have to cut the corners of the material and do some tucks and folds. Don't forget to ensure you keep the fabric taut in all directions. You'll see from my pics that my upholstery skills won't win any prizes but it does the job!

Finally, take a candle, or some thick wax polish and rub it over the underside of the ply seat. This acts as a lubricant so your seat easily slides back and forth when you're sitting on it. If your plank is new or dry and hasn't yet developed that natural patina you get from hours sitting on your horse, you may need to slap on a bit of polish where the upholstered seat is going to move along.



Happy bottom days!

Safer Forestry

It has been an awful couple of years for chainsaw accidents. In 2021 alone, from January to September, there have been seven chainsaw related fatalities and two more have been reported since. On top of this are some appalling life changing injuries resulting from tree and chainsaw accidents.

So why are these accidents happening? To put it bluntly no one knows, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) can't release details until any legal proceedings are dealt with, which could take as long as four years. Most of the deaths were classified as being in arboriculture, but the lines are blurred nowadays as arb contractors are taking on ash dieback work.

Removing ash has been a major concern over the last couple of years. It's a dangerous pastime for a chainsaw operator. Anybody felling ash will be expected to prove they are competent, with a robust method statement and a strong reason why it's not being done with a machine. The HSE, Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) the Forestry Contracting Association (FCA) and the Arb Association will be working together to find a solution. But in the meantime, it's down to us all to look after ourselves.

Coppice workers and small scale woodfolk often feel separate from the rest of the forest industries. However, if you think you're immune because you only cut small trees, try hitting yourself in the face with a Morris stave; it hurts! I've personally been put on my backside by an inch thick ash whip when I misjudged the tension. Cutting coppice is a technically challenging and skilled job, with its own dangers that won't be covered in a basic chainsaw course. I know of some bad accidents involving coppice, including 2 broken backs, and a fatality. If we die, or have a bad accident, none of the great things we want to achieve by cutting coppice will happen. If you witness a bad incident on site it will likely haunt you for the rest of your life. I want us all to stay safe.

Toby Allen of Say it With Wood and the Herefordshire Coppice Club



From Gillian Clark, CEO of FISA

"Of major concern to all in the forestry industry, are the recent fatal incidents in tree work. Recent HSE notifications of nine tree work related deaths (two being within forestry; seven being within the arboriculture association), nearly all involved chainsaw operators being struck by a falling tree or part of a tree. This will clearly be the central focus for FISA in the coming period. FISA will set up a review group working in conjunction with the HSE/AFAG; working closely with those organisations both directly involved in the forestry industry, through the FISA Steering & Working Groups, and additionally those external organisations like the Arboriculture Association. With this recent high incidence of fatal injuries, we will seek to identify common factors and key influences that have contributed to the tree work accidents, targeting key issues, raising awareness and reviewing industry guidance and recommendations".

Safety Check List

Here are some of the things we should all be doing. If you know it already, read it anyway as a reminder!

- **Plan and communicate.** It doesn't have to be fancy, just agree a method before you start. Make sure everyone is happy with that method and that all involved are aware of the risks and what you are doing to control them. If you don't feel qualified to assess the risks of a job, find someone that is. Know what the emergency procedures are, what your location is and how you will get help.
- **Know your own and others' competence.** We all have our strengths and weaknesses; it takes real confidence to admit when we are out of our depth. When engaging others make sure they really are experienced and competent for the job. Especially when cutting ash.
- **Look up.** Being hit by a falling branch is more common than chainsaw wounds. Take time before cutting a tree to assess the tree and what will happen when it falls. Again, especially when cutting ash.
- **Know yourself.** If you are tired, or having a bad day maybe it's time to do something else for a bit. Go at a pace that is comfortable for you. Relax and have fun.
- **Get informed.** The FISA, FCA and HSE websites have lots of useful information about managing risk for most activities. Read them, they are there for you. Use that information to build your methodology and risk assessments.
- **Don't cut corners.** If you have priced a job badly, or are behind on a job, taking risks isn't the way to solve it.
- **Be trained.** Keep updating your skills and get as much training as possible. Identify where the gaps in your knowledge are and how to fill them, from real experts (not people on Facebook). Get proper first aid training - if you plan to use haemostats and tourniquets learn how to use them.
- **Look after others.** You may feel uncomfortable telling someone they are doing something unsafe, but it could save their life.



Image Guy Lambourne

Avoid this - a barber chair

Learning from beekeepers and deer stalkers...

..George Darwall, thinks we should

If local novices want to learn hedge laying I let them help me. We split the proceeds. Somebody has to pull out the brambles or stoke a bonfire and we may share transport to the worksite. After they've become familiar with a billhook they try some laying while I do some menial work. Once experienced they may still join me at times, allowing me to take on bigger projects, but it's gratifying when they also find work independently. One protege keeps bees so he's busy in summer and glad of winter work.



Image George Darwall

After laying hedges with George, Brian Kitchener now also makes hurdles

Bee keeping offers an interesting paradigm. The UK has a few hundred professional apiarists with hundreds of hives each, struggling to make a hard-earned living and at the mercy of a wet summer. They're complemented by tens of thousands of part-time hobbyists earning beer money at best. The industry as a whole provides a free environmental service worth hundreds of millions of

pounds a year to the UK economy. Hedge laying and hurdle making pay better than bee keeping, so why not expand the industry by recruiting people like me?

I asked this question in 1998 in the newsletter of the Wessex Coppice Group, a forerunner of the present Dorset and Hampshire groups. Since then I've plugged the theme in the national, local, conservation and specialist woodsman press. Nobody's ever stuck their neck out to say it won't work.

Full time professional coppice workers face immense difficulties in the 21st Century. NCFed should do everything it can to help them, but why leave it at that? NCFed is surely the champion for coppice, not just professional woodsmen. It should recognise the potential of an expanded part-time sector - at least in the small scale context - and support it. How? If you meet Joe Public socially and tell him you keep bees, he'll not be surprised, may take an intelligent interest and even know the environmental importance of your pastime. He isn't as well informed about hazel crafts... yet. People don't realise they offer a realistic hobby to take up. Our infrastructure could tell them.

By joining the British Beekeepers' Association the novice will meet fellow enthusiasts who'll help him start. His subscription includes free basic insurance. Were I a recreational deer stalker in the British Deer Society wanting to earn a modest turnover (less than £5k per annum), an extra £22 per annum would cover me prowling woods in the half-light, with a lethal weapon. The best insurance I can get to lay hedges and coppice in broad daylight with hand tools costs £250 per annum! It's tailored for professionals with a higher turnover, not part-timers. If we had a critical mass of the latter, NCFed could doubtless negotiate something better. If we had realistic insurance, that critical mass would be encouraged. With thousands of members we could surely get a discount on those expensive pruning saw blades I wear out yearly.

George Darwall, Dorset Coppice Group

Great Christmas Present Idea

If you're struggling to find someone a Christmas present, how about this cracking 2022 calendar from the Landworkers Alliance? Titled "Working the Land, Cooling the Planet" it's full of beautiful illustrations by Rosanna Morris – a very talented, socially engaged artist - and would grace the wall of any Fed group member.

For 2022, the year following COP26, this calendar showcases twelve practices that are part of the solution for cooling the planet and building the world. Coppicing and Woodlands; Healthy Soils; Protect Pollinators; Agroforestry; Natural Building and more are just some of the titles given to each month.

The calendar is available online:
<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/shop/2022-calendar/>



Instagram - A Celebration of Your Work

Here at the NCFed, we'd like to celebrate and share all the amazing work that members of groups, affiliated to NCFed, do. So we've decided to use our Instagram account to do just that. This media platform is one of the most well known and widely used for sharing images. It can be an extremely effective aid to publicising all things coppice related and helping promote the NCFed as well as affiliated groups and their members. This will be a fantastic platform for you all to showcase your work - not only nationally but globally.

The NCFed Instagram Team will, in due course, be sending out full details to all members (via the Reps of all our affiliated Coppice and Supporter Groups) about this exciting idea. In the meantime, we are working behind the scenes, setting up a dedicated email address and finalising details of how this will work to everyone's advantage.

To give you an idea of what we will be looking for, here are a few things for you to ponder over. Get those pictures that you've already taken (as well as new ones in the pipeline) ready for the launch. If you are not already following NCFed in Instagram here's the link: www.instagram.com/nationalcoppicefederation

Subject matter can include images of all coppice related things:

- coppicing in progress, finished cut coupes, coppiced materials stacked/bundled up, products made from coppice material (either the finished product or stages of progress in the making), images of nature showing the flora/fauna/benefits of coppicing, etc.
- Pictures need to be thoughtfully composed (There's a great article on this very topic on page 18 of this issue)
- We will want a short paragraph about the images along with details of your name and business or trading name, including your website address. You will be able to include an image of your business logo and/or your business card. Consider including a picture of yourself... folks like to be able to put a face to a name!
- We will need to know which coppice or supporter group you are a member of. Your group will also then get a mention in the IG posting.

This Instagram account will be very much yours, but administered by NCFed. It will be about promoting the coppice industry, how we coppice and what comes out of the woods and the products into which it's converted. It will be seen by fellow NCFed members, non-members and importantly, the general public.

We will also, from time to time, post about NCFed - the faces and work behind the scenes. All in all this promises to be a great opportunity for all to be involved with something that will benefit you, your business and ultimately the coppice industry as a whole. We'll be in touch soon!

*The NCFed Instagram Team
Nadia Clarke & Tim Roskell*

Charcoal Regulation update

You may remember that we reported in the last edition of CS that my MP Simon Hoare and myself met Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, back in March of this year to discuss the regulation of charcoal imports (see the last edition - 05-Cleft-Stick-Spring-2021.pdf (ncfed.org.uk) . Following that meeting we were instructed to meet with the Principal Advisor, Business and Markets at the Forestry Commission, to discuss how the issue of unregulated charcoal being imported into the UK could be resolved. We were informed that the UK Government had decided not to include charcoal as a Forest Risk Commodity under the new Environment Bill but instead to ensure UK Timber Regulations (UKTR) be amended instead, at some point in the future, to include charcoal, as this is not currently the case.

A caveat was however placed on this amendment - it would only happen once the EU Timber Regulations (EUTR) were amended, as the government did not want to be seen to be diverging from EU regulations, because this might endanger the Northern Ireland protocol. You can make your own judgement at this point as to the benefits of Brexit! The minister stated that she did not want charcoal covered by both legislations as this would be "duplication!"

I am still in contact with the Principal Advisor Business and Markets at the Forestry Commission, and my MP, as we are pressing for an update on when the UKTR will be strengthened to include imported charcoal. Mr Hoare tabled a written question in the commons at the end of October to this effect. In addition, I am in contact with the Earthworm Foundation to establish when Europe is planning to do the same. The Earthworm Foundation (although strangely named) is a fantastic organisation that has helped us massively in preparing our "charcoal case".



Image Guy Lambourne

I can thoroughly recommend their reports on the subject which can be found at: <https://bit.ly/earthworm-charcoal> and <https://www.earthworm.org/our-work/products/charcoal>

In anticipation of a complete lack of progress I am planning a concerted media campaign in the spring, not only to highlight the issue of imported charcoal and the total lack of action, but also to extol the virtues of British charcoal. Watch this space.

Jim Bettle, National Coppice Federation Charcoal Representative

How to take that perfect picture

Coppicing, hedge-laying, woven fences and more is at the heart of my business. I run three Instagram accounts; two for my businesses and one for the Sussex and Surrey Coppice Group.

I was asked to think about the tips I would give on taking great photos not only for your business promotion but also the NCFed's forthcoming Instagram - A Celebration of Your Work, which is to be launched soon. So, I thought it might be helpful to provide some pointers and guidance on which shots to send in to make this really work for all of us and to ensure that the Instagram team don't get swamped with hundreds of "snaps"! I have tried to select a good and bad example for each tip.

Composition

How things are positioned makes a difference to the overall look of the image as illustrated here. The subject matter needs to stand out. Try to avoid the photo looking cluttered with no particular focal point.



Lighting

Good lighting is crucial. Bright sunshine is your enemy and clouds your friends when it comes to taking pictures, unless you can make use of the sun's rays. Bright sunshine can really bleach an image whereas dappled shade or overcast skies can be used to your advantage.



Angle

Rather than picking up your camera and just taking a photo from the usual spot at head height, ask yourself if there is another perspective which might make your photo more interesting.



Before, During and After...

People find it fascinating to see the progress of our work so if you're doing a job or making something that lends itself to that before and after shot, it can be great for illustrating the effectiveness of our work.

You could even set up a time-lapse on one of your projects and send it in if it's not too long. Some phones can do this for you, but you'll need to check how that works as there's more to it than I can explain here!



..that perfect picture

(continued)

Symmetry

Sometimes using symmetry can enhance an image and help to show the subject matter off so that it looks its best.



Pattern

Pattern can make for great images especially in our line of work where there are patterns in just about everything we make



and do. We can use pattern to show our materials at their very best, so think about how the patterns in your work can be used effectively.

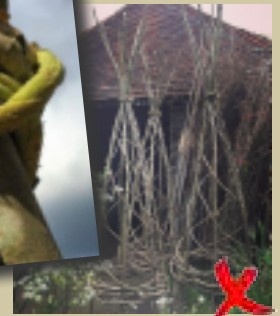
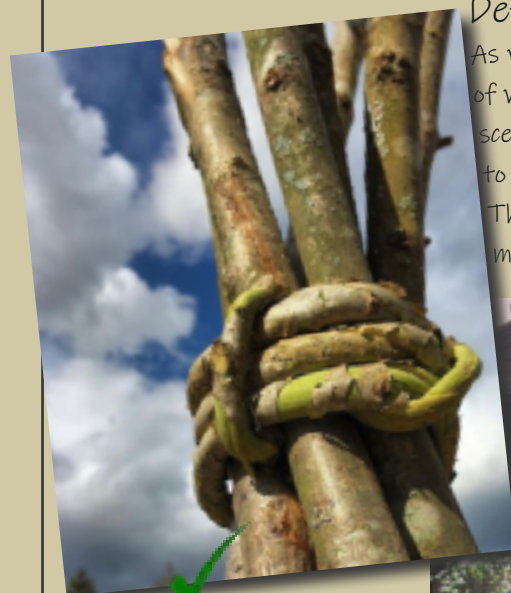
Focus

If you're using a smart phone you can touch the screen when taking a photo to position the focus of the lens. This can make all the difference between a 'snap' and a good image



Detail

As well as taking photos of whole objects or scenes, it can be striking to concentrate on detail. The detail can be the most interesting part!



Background

What is behind your subject matters. The backdrop makes a dramatic difference to your image. Sometimes less is more and detail makes the image really work.



I'm sure lots of you are brilliant photographers and don't need me telling you how to take photos. From my perspective these are some of the things to think about when taking your pictures, with not only your business in mind, but also the NCFed's *A Celebration of Your Work*.

And finally, the NCFed will need your photographic contributions. We can really make this something brilliant as there are so many of us and we all do things differently and make all sorts of amazing things. So, get those photos coming in when you receive all that details, in due course, about the IG launch.

Thank you in advance you lovely lot!

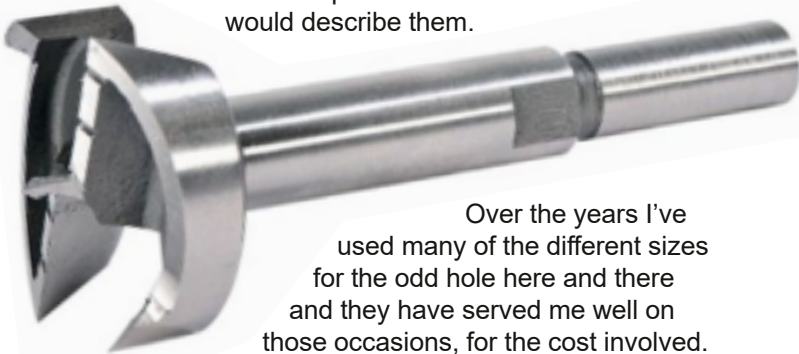
Rosie Rendell

All images are Rosie's

Tried and tested

Forstner bits “The Colt Maxi-Cut Rotastop”

When I first set up my business in green woodworking, I needed to drill just a couple of large diameter (about 50mm) holes as part of a small project for the workshop. I bought a 16 piece set of unbranded Forstner bits ranging in size from 6mm to 54mm for, at that time, probably £25 or so. Nowadays, these sets are nearer to the £35 to £40 bracket. “Cheap and cheerful” is how I would describe them.



Over the years I've used many of the different sizes for the odd hole here and there and they have served me well on those occasions, for the cost involved.

However, as years progressed and my product range widened, so did my need for more and better kit to do the job. When it came to having to drill out some 240 holes for a set of 6 rail gate/sheep hurdles I knew that my budget set of forstners wouldn't be up to it.

Looking into the world of forstners, you will find that there are different jobs that some can and can't do. Many are designed to drill only into side grain (as in the instance of the oval mortises found in gate hurdles) and some to drill only down into end grain. So, if you are someone who does drilling both into the side grain and end grain, you would normally have to buy two different forstner bits.

Alternatively, if you look hard enough you will find a make that has both functions in one bit. That's where the “The Colt Maxi-Cut Rotastop” comes into play. The technical blurb says that these bits “..guarantee a faster cutting



Image Tim Roskell

performance compared to any other forstner bit.” Compared to my cheap and cheerful forstners, I can say they certainly do! Sadly, I have no other branded forstners to compare with my Colt Maxi-Cuts. However, I was very impressed with them when I had a bit of a production line going with continuous hole drilling in the sweet chestnut heads that I was preparing for the hurdles. I was using a 19mm bit on my pillar drill and the bit cut through the green chestnut effortlessly. I tended to use a bit of a plunging action which helps keep the hole and the cutting edge of the bit, clear of the swarf. They are not cheap to buy, with prices (depending upon where you buy them) ranging from about £30 for a 24mm bit up to some £275 for a 100mm bit (ouch!), but the ones I have purchased over the years (19mm, 25mm and 50mm) have paid for themselves and are still going strong.

One thing to bear in mind is the running speed. The size of the forstner bit will have a bearing on the speed to select for your pillar drill. Running at the correct speed is very important as it can affect the performance of the forstner bit.

- Finally, here is what their technical blurb also mentions:
- Centre point that offers no resistance as it cuts through the wood ahead of the main cutters
 - Asymmetrical chip breakers that cut the swarf into chips rather than swirls making waste easier to remove
 - Uses the unique RotaStop® shank system eliminating the risk of rotation in the chuck
 - Made from the finest raw material giving ultimate sharpness and maximum tool life
 - Made in Germany

Tim Roskell, Dorset Coppice group



About the NCFed

The National Coppice Federation (NCFed) was formed in 2013 with the aim of uniting already existing regional coppice groups under one banner. Since then more local groups have formed and become affiliated to the NCFed, growing our membership and reach considerably.

Aims

The NCFed has three key aims:

1. to promote coppicing as a form of woodland management that provides economic, ecological and culturally significant benefits;
2. to bring together regional coppice groups and provide a unified voice for the industry; and
3. to encourage and promote best practice.

Regional Coppice Groups

Regional groups are the backbone of the NCFed. Some have been established for many years and are very active in their local areas, organising regular social meetings and training courses for members and running events for the public. Others are smaller scale and focus on encouraging networking, co-operation and support between coppice workers.

Coppicing across the country

The National Coppice Federation is the umbrella organisation for local coppice groups from across the UK. These groups in turn have individual members. The groups vary in size, both in terms of membership and geographical area, and also in scope, with some groups being extremely active and others less so.

Membership Benefits

- You'll be part of a national network that shares skills and ideas and better understands the bigger coppicing picture;
- You'll be part of a regional group that will connect you with local, like-minded individuals that you can co-operate, collaborate and socialise with;
- You'll be part of a movement that aims to improve the coppicing industry and to find solutions to problems and issues;
- You'll be eligible for discounted insurance through our Insurance Scheme; and
- You'll be able to attend our fantastic annual gathering at a reduced rate.

How to join

You will need to find and join your local coppice group; membership fees include a sum that is paid to the NCFed nationally. If there is no local group to join (coverage of the UK is not yet complete), why not consider setting up a new group?

Receive Cleft Stick and other important information from NCFed by signing up for our mailing list at:

<https://ncfed.org.uk/news/>



**National
Coppice
Federation**



Supporting the Coppice Industry