



The

Cleft Stick

News from NCFed and the UK Coppice Industry



Image Guy Lambourne

Coppice Peer Awards

Federation Chair Dave Jackson presents a Lifetime Achievement Award to lifelong Sussex coppice worker and father of British charcoal making, Alan Waters, at the Annual Gathering and AGM in October. Full story inside.

Coppice Research

The National Coppice Federation has started work on an important research project that will map existing coppice in South West England.

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Gathering & AGM

Full report and loads of pictures on this year's very successful and thoroughly enjoyable event, hosted by the Dorset Coppice Group.

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Dartmoor Dragon Retort

Could this be the answer for the small-scale producer, making charcoal from coppice restoration? Read one owner's honest review.

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From the Chair

It's that time of year again and I'm sure we are all looking to the woods and the season's harvest. The mountains of fresh-coppiced supplies are always good to behold!



NCFed is going through exciting times, particularly with regard receiving our first grant to enable mapping of the extent and quality of coppice in England, starting in the south-west region. The new project management team have been selected and we look forward to seeing the fruit of their labour in the coming years.

It is sometimes apparent that confusion exists over who and what NCFed is and what we do! So, I'd like to try and diffuse some of that confusion here. NCFed is a national umbrella organisation for all of its affiliated supporter and coppice group members, to come together and exercise a national voice and collective muscle to further the aims of YOU, the members of affiliated groups. We are only as strong as the individuals that come forth and volunteer their time on everyone else's behalf.

So please do check out the officer vacancies page on the website (there are a few mentioned on the next page – Ed) and join the growing dynamic team which is NCFed. Don't worry, if you are not currently a member of an affiliated group, either join one or join our new Holding Group to become a part of the NCFed machine.

In the meantime enjoy those wintery woods and flood those coppices with light.

Dave Jackson, Chair

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

**National
Coppice
Federation**



Supporting the Coppice Industry

Editorial

You will find plenty of references to the 2022 Gathering in this edition of Cleft Stick and I make no apologies for that. It was a great weekend. All credit to the Dorset Coppice Group for their time, dedication and enthusiasm in making it happen, apparently so effortlessly. The fact that it sold out was a good sign, although some reading this might feel a bit miffed at having missed out.



Several things have stuck in my mind since getting home and returning to normal non-tenty and not very sociable life.

First, the warm feeling of community and belonging I felt through the weekend. I spoke to as many people as possible and although we are a varied lot, of all ages and all manner of backgrounds, at the risk of being a bit soppy, there was great warmth and I enjoyed a real

feeling of belonging.

Second, there was a noticeably larger number of women in the tent than I remember in previous years. This seems very healthy and something to be nurtured and encouraged.

Finally, on the Saturday evening, Nigel Turton, President of the National Society of Master Thatchers presented a £100

prize to the winner of the 'Best bundle of spars' this year won by Dorset's own Rod Miller. It was great to have NSMT's sponsorship of the competition again but what I found particularly remarkable was his comment, and I quote directly from the note I made at the time:
"Spars are too cheap. We need to pay more for them".

I come back to a point that I and others make regularly – being part of the National Coppice Federation brings a unity of purpose and an effectiveness of communication that would be lacking for anyone operating alone. Whilst our own prices are for negotiation with our customers, such a remark should

**"Spars are too cheap".
President of NSMT**

bring confidence to our industry, a confidence to ask sensible prices for quality products, and I'm not just talking spars here. If we are setting

worthwhile prices, more people will be able to make an income from coppicing that will pay all the bills.

We cover a wide range of subject matter in this edition of Cleft Stick and hope you enjoy giving it a read. We are always on the look out for more stories of coppice, woodlands, safety, wildlife, business matters, equipment, people... if you find something interesting, it's a sure bet others will too. So, if you have a mind to, please put finger to keyboard over the winter and send us some stuff. If writing isn't your favourite, you could just jot down a few thoughts and send them in.

Or maybe just give me a call - 07794 013876.

Guy Lambourne, Editor

Vacancies

Graphic Designer required

To lay out The Cleft Stick, the National Coppice Federation's newsletter, currently produced electronically, twice a year. We need someone to work with the editorial team to put each edition together and develop its look in the future.

You will need to be competent in the use of a design package which could be open source software (this edition has been laid out using such a package). An ability to work to a deadline is essential.

All work can be carried out from the comfort of home.

This role would suit a professional needing to keep their hand in, someone retired or needing experience to develop a CV.

Interested? Please contact news@ncfed.org.uk

This is a voluntary post



Federation Officer Roles

Advertising Officer, Graphic Design, Public Relations, Insurance, Recruitment, Coppice Contracts, Tree Health/Biosecurity...

Almost all of the work of NCFed is carried out on a voluntary basis and there is always room for more people to get involved. Roles vary in the skills and time required.

We are currently working on the creation of job descriptions for lots of posts but in the meantime, if you are

"..there is always room for more people to get involved."

interested in finding out more, please email recruitment@ncfed.org.uk

..Biodiversity Officer, Deer, Spar, Hurdle, Faggot, Cleft Fencing, Birch Coppice...

Editorial Assistants - Glenn Hadley and Tim Roskell

Deadline for next edition 31 March 2023

Please send all words, ideas, stories and images to news@ncfed.org.uk

NCFed Peer Awards



Award winner, Alan Waters with Rosie Rendell

his wife are like family to me. His patience and guidance helped me get to where I am and I am thrilled that he won this award. He is a man with a huge heart and a generous soul. A passion for the woods runs through his veins. He is keen to encourage others into coppice work and would love to see more coppice restoration across the UK.

Everybody at the gathering was extremely moved to see this award presented to a man so deserving of it. Many congratulations Alan, from all of us.

Rosie Rendell, Surrey and Sussex Coppice Group

"His love and passion for coppicing and charcoal burning is plain for all to see"

The 2022 NCFed Annual Gathering held in Dorset saw the very first winner of the new Federation 'Peer Awards'.

The single category this year was 'Lifetime Commitment to the Coppice Industry' and voting was open to all affiliated coppice groups and their members, to nominate the person they believed was the most deserving of this award.

Nominations came in from all over the UK and on this occasion there was one coppice worker who received the majority of the votes. The nominations were read aloud at the AGM; a truly emotional moment for many involved in the giving of the award and especially the recipient who was overwhelmed by the experience. It was awarded to a man who has been truly dedicated to his craft for most of his life - Alan Waters.

Alan started work in the woods as a young boy and was originally shown how to coppice by two women, Peggy and Hilda. His love and passion for coppicing and charcoal burning is plain for all to see and he has always been happy to share his knowledge and skills with those who are interested to learn.

I was one such person.

Around thirteen years ago I met Alan and his wife whilst on a course he was teaching and was so inspired by what I learnt that Alan soon became my mentor through a coppice apprenticeship. During that time he gave me a billhook, that was passed to him by his mentors many years previously, to use and treasure. This was a symbolic moment as it meant he could see my love of the woods and had faith that I would keep working in coppiced woodlands. I have been a full-time coppice worker and hedge layer ever since. We have continued to work together occasionally and he and



The Federation's Press Release Officer, Richard Lofthouse, achieved success by getting the Peer Awards story run in the Chichester Observer on 3rd November. Although local newspapers aren't the force they once were, it is still worth sending press releases to yours, if you still have one. If you need guidance on preparing press releases, let us know.

Coppicing's Impact on Woodland Bats

A research project begun in 2018 and due to finish soon, aims to show what impacts coppicing may have on levels of activity and species diversity in woodland bats. The study was started after Rachel Bates of Castle Hill Ecology was asked by the manager of a Cambridgeshire country park what effect the re-introduction of a coppicing regime might have on woodland bats after several decades of no woodland management.

Rachel had no idea how to answer the question and a quick literature search revealed very little information either. So a pilot project was carried out during 2018 at the Country Park and Hayley Wood in Cambridgeshire (owned and

managed by Beds, Cambs and Northants Wildlife Trust), to try and answer the question, with equipment funded by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES). Unfortunately, the country park ran out of funding in late 2019 and the order of coppicing at Hayley had to change the same year, meaning data would no longer be sufficient for analysis or indeed comparable at all.

A second project was planned for summer 2020, to cover ten woodlands across East Anglia and the south, but the arrival of COVID-19 postponed its start. Fortunately, things got back on track in June 2021 and the project expanded, with baseline, static bat detector recordings being collected from uncoppiced coupes in twenty woodlands across England. Post-coppicing recordings were collected in June 2022, in order to compare levels of bat activity and species diversity in coupes before and after coppicing. Full analysis is currently underway and a report due in early 2023.

Some hypotheses produced as a result of the pilot study in 2019 and tested by subsequent work could be seen as worrying. These include:

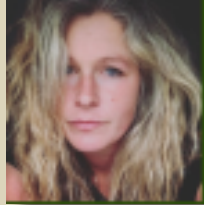
- Newly-coppiced coupes will have higher levels of bat activity than coupes with older coppice
- Levels of bat activity in mature woodland coupes will decrease after coppicing/management
- Coppiced coupes will support fewer woodland bat species than mature woodland
- Newly-coppiced coupes will support a greater species diversity than older coppice coupes
- Bat species diversity in mature woodland will decrease after coppicing/management

The full report will be eagerly awaited by anyone with an interest in coppicing and the findings of the project will be used to guide future advice for the management of woodlands for bats. We hope to report on the findings of the project in Cleft Stick next spring.

With thanks to Rachel Bates of Castle Hill Ecology, an independent ecological consultant who carries out research projects in her free time.

Shop and Centre of Learning Springs to Life

Makers Barn on the edge of Petworth in West Sussex, is an exciting new project due to open its doors at the beginning of March 2023.



The Barn, currently an empty shell, will become a beautiful shop championing and selling coppice products (made by myself, fellow coppice workers and green woodworkers); as well as other handmade crafts and items made locally and around the UK. I'm passionate about what we do and how we manage the woods we work. I want to showcase our skills, get our products out there and get them noticed. This will also educate people about the benefits of coppicing for wildlife, the environment, rural workers and the local economy.

As well as the shop, the barn will become a centre for learning. I will be running courses both in the barn and in the coppice that I work. Once established and settled, I will be offering courses taught by guest instructors, from a rich palette of subjects. There will be something for everyone. I started on my path into coppicing because of a course that I attended and I hope this will happen to others. The courses will be for anyone 18 and above and of all abilities. Eventually there will be activities and workshops aimed at school groups and young people with the aim of getting them to roll their sleeves up, get their hands dirty and be inspired. The experiences we have when we are young shape our futures so somewhere out there are the next coppice workers and craftspeople who will tend our woods when we're gone.



The future Makers Barn, near Petworth, Sussex

It's an exciting venture and I can't wait to get started. If any of you would like to get in touch about making products to sell at the barn or teaching courses a little further down the line please do get in touch.

*Rosie Rendell
07823 321039
makersbarnpetworth@gmail.com*

Tony Newby

It is with much sadness that I am writing to inform you of the death of Tony Newby in July of this year.

For those who didn't know him, Tony was a major stalwart of The Association of Pole Lathe Turners and Green Woodworkers (APTWG). He had also been involved with many projects over the years, predominantly working with and for BTCV (latterly TCV) and other volunteer organisations.

An accomplished dry stone waller, hedge layer and greenwood craftsman, Tony's skills and enthusiasm were well known and respected throughout the UK and beyond. Before the pandemic he had spent a couple of summers in Iceland training people who were in turn leading volunteers in various projects. This involved camping in some very mountainous and isolated areas.

His biggest influence was with APTGW, where he was Chairman and also fulfilled many roles from Treasurer to organising The Bodgers Ball at various venues. He co-ordinated the West Midlands Group for many years and was ever-present at countless demonstrations and events throughout the Midlands including judging the Log to Leg races at the Bodgers Ball and the APF.

His knowledge was immense, and he would gladly help anyone who sought his advice and if you asked his opinion he would offer it, usually with a wicked sense of humour.

In later years he spent time helping his local community by supporting the Citizens Advice Bureau, the local food hub as well as scything graveyards with God's Golden Acre. Never happier than working in the local woods, helping people, demonstrating or teaching the next generation, Tony will be very sadly missed.

In the late winter the local APTGW group will be planting trees as part of the restoration of some local coppice woodland, to leave a lasting living memorial.

Our thoughts are with Jenny his wife and his family.

Mike Taylor, West Midlands Coppice Group



Image Mike Taylor

Charcoal

A big thank you to everyone who provided an example of their empty charcoal bag. These will be used in the creation of a collage image in a national promotion of UK Charcoal next spring or summer. There is just still time to send your bag in if you haven't already done so; please email charcoal@ncfed.org.uk for more information.

We also intend to use this image on a generic UK Charcoal poster which we hope to have available for next year. Watch this space for details.



Image Guy Lambourne

Gathering discussion

Many thanks to those who attended the Gathering and particularly the charcoal discussion group. Plenty of issues were discussed, not least the promotional campaign mentioned above. In addition to the work NCFed can do promoting UK-produced charcoal nationally (through the media and collaborative working with organisations such as National BBQ Week and Grown in Britain), we hope regional coppice groups can complement this push by holding local events. This could take the form of local press articles, events, bbqs, (maybe in partnership with local conservation bodies), etc. Please discuss this in your local groups.

Use of NCFed Charcoal Bag

A big topic of debate at the Gathering was the supply and purchase of the NCFed charcoal bag. This was in response to their possible misuse in Devon over the summer. We agreed that NCFed should retain some control over who gets to use these bags; i.e. proof that purchasers are coppice group members.

It was reported that Selway Packaging Ltd, the suppliers of the bag were on board with this idea. After a healthy discussion it was decided that, with the NCFed board's approval, it would become a requirement that any potential bag purchaser should first register for the NCFed charcoal directory. This already appears on the Federation's website and a new column will be added indicating which coppice group the producer belongs to.

Please look out for communications from us over the winter asking you to reapply to be on the NCFed Charcoal Producers' Directory. And spread the word that being registered on this directory will be a requirement in the future, if you wish to purchase the NCFed charcoal bag.

Jim Bettle, Charcoal Officer

Woodfuel Certification Costs

Since May 2021, as part of a national Clean Air Strategy, all woodfuel sold in quantities under 2m³ must be supplied at less than 20% moisture content and sold as 'Ready to Burn'. From as early as 2020, NCFed was in discussion with other woodland organisations, Woodsure and DEFRA, about developing a group scheme for woodfuel certification to enable smaller suppliers to share costs and administration.

An NCFed survey in Spring 2021 confirmed that coppice group members trade in smaller quantities, most delivering very locally and that some would be interested in joining a certification group, at the right price.

Suppliers trading over 600m³ annually must have their own certification with Woodsure. This currently costs £500 in the first year, with £385 annual fees thereafter, plus between £270 and £2,400 in additional volume-based fees.

NCFed has estimated a woodfuel certification group running on fees of £130-£175 per supplier. This would establish a Group Manager to visit each supplier checking processes and product. One sample from each 'cluster' under 600m³ of specified 'fuel types' (hardwood, softwood, mixed, kindling, briquettes) in the group, would be submitted to Woodsure annually for testing. NCFed's budget also includes sending samples from all suppliers in each cluster for lab testing. Budgeting has yet to account for some of the costs of establishment and approval. The table below shows the full range of fees for Woodsure's woodfuel certification as Ready To Burn.

The National Forest and Small Woods have both committed to putting certification groups in place by directing staff time and existing budgets to their development. Small Woods are well on the way to having a group in place and are considering making membership of it available at a discount to their members, yet open to non-members as well.

Contact simonjames@smallwoods.org.uk for more information.

This summer, Woodsure also announced a Small Foresters certification deal for those selling under 300m³, who may sign up individually as 'Ready To Burn' for an annual fee of £300. Contact support@woodsurre.co.uk for more information.

Elsewhere, Stove Ready Wood, is a DIY initiative that provides a model for suppliers to self-certify their product as meeting the moisture requirements, for no fee. See www.stovereadywood.uk NB The regulation specifies that the fine for non-compliance, enforceable by Local Authorities, is £300.

Any queries, offers to help or funds to put a pilot woodfuel certification group for coppice workers in place.

Contact woodfuel@ncfed.org.uk.

*Tim Cumine
for NCFed Woodfuel Working Group*



Image Guy Lambourne

Ready To Burn Costs - November 2022									
Individual costs		C. Draft Group Costs (annual supply / member < 600m ³)							
A. Small Foresters (< 300m³)		no. members*		50		30		10	
£300		no. clusters < 600 m ³ *		10		5		3	
B. Standard Supplier (> 600m³)		max vol		6,000 m ³		3,000 m ³		1,800 m ³	
1	2+	years		1	2+	1	2+	1	2+
£507.60	£385.20	Annual Fee		£132.80	£130.30	£137.90	£133.80	£174.60	£162.30
Add. Size-based fees:		includes ...							
< 600-2,000 m ³	£268.80	Fueltest @ £62.40 / cluster		£624.00		£312.00		£187.20	
< 3,500 m ³	£465.60	Add. Individual tests @ £30		40 = £1,200.00		25 = £750.00		7 = £210.00	
< 8,500 m ³	£1,101.60	Grp Manager (4hrs / member)		£4,000.00		£2,400.00		£800.00	
<20,000 m ³	£1,591.20	miles** : £1.80 / L @ 7.7 m / L	1310mi :	£340.30	715 mi :	£165.00	175 mi :	£40.00	
<40,000 m ³	£2,448.00	driving times : av per member	33h30 :	40min	18h30 :	37min	5h :	30min	
* = e.g. Mileage calculated in MS Automoute, using Biomass Suppliers List - closest 10, 30 & 50 suppliers to RG10									

Table comparing 3 routes to Ready to Burn certification:

A: Small Forester; B: Individual; C: Proposed Group

More Coppice Into Productive Management: Update



An update by Project Manager Graham Morgan on this innovative Project which will put coppice on the map.

The Project started right at the end of July 2022. August and September mainly involved the Project setup phase (establishing various administrative and reporting processes). A Project Information Leaflet was also produced which is now available to view at www.ncfed.org.uk

Since October, NCFed has been engaged in recruiting for a number of positions on the project's Management Committee, and that process is nearly complete. Working alongside the Project Manager and other specialists including surveyors, the Management Committee will play a crucial role in providing strategic leadership, helping to answer some big questions, and undertaking operational activities.

Our initial desk study reviewed the Forestry Commission's National Forest Inventory (NFI) data from 2020. There is only 95ha of mapped coppice and coppice with standards within the Forestry Commission's Southwest England administrative region in the NFI 2020 data. We have already identified where existing coppice woodlands are present but not mapped in the NFI data and we expect that the final figure will be appreciably more.

Initial development has also started on the prototype Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping app for use during the coppice woodland survey. We will be testing that in the field soon and defining our survey and data handling protocols. In early November, we held our first Project Partner meeting online, attended by eleven different organisations across the environmental/rural/forestry sectors to discuss how they can help us identify and agree access to coppice

The Project At A Glance

Project basics: £160k over nearly 3 years, Funded by Forestry Commission's Woodland Into Management Forest Innovation Fund. Southwest England.

Project aim: to help get more coppice woodland restored and into productive management for a range of socio-economic and environmental benefits.

How: the main activity is to map the extent and condition of coppice woodland, produce maps showing priority areas for restoration and provide information resources for coppice restoration. This will better inform policy decisions and coppice restoration/management action.

woodlands and spread wider awareness of the Project. A similar number of organisations again are keen to stay up to date with the Project. We have been really pleased by the positivity and enthusiasm for the Project.

Between now and the end of March next year, we have lots to do to get ready for the coppice surveys planned for 2023 including agreeing access with landowners and training surveyors. NCFed Member Groups will be of great importance in better understanding the coppice resource in the UK.

If you know of any coppice woodland in Southwest England (managed or unmanaged), please email Graham Morgan at: morecoppiceSW@ncfed.org.uk. The minimum details we would need are a central point grid reference, name of the woodland and who to contact for access.

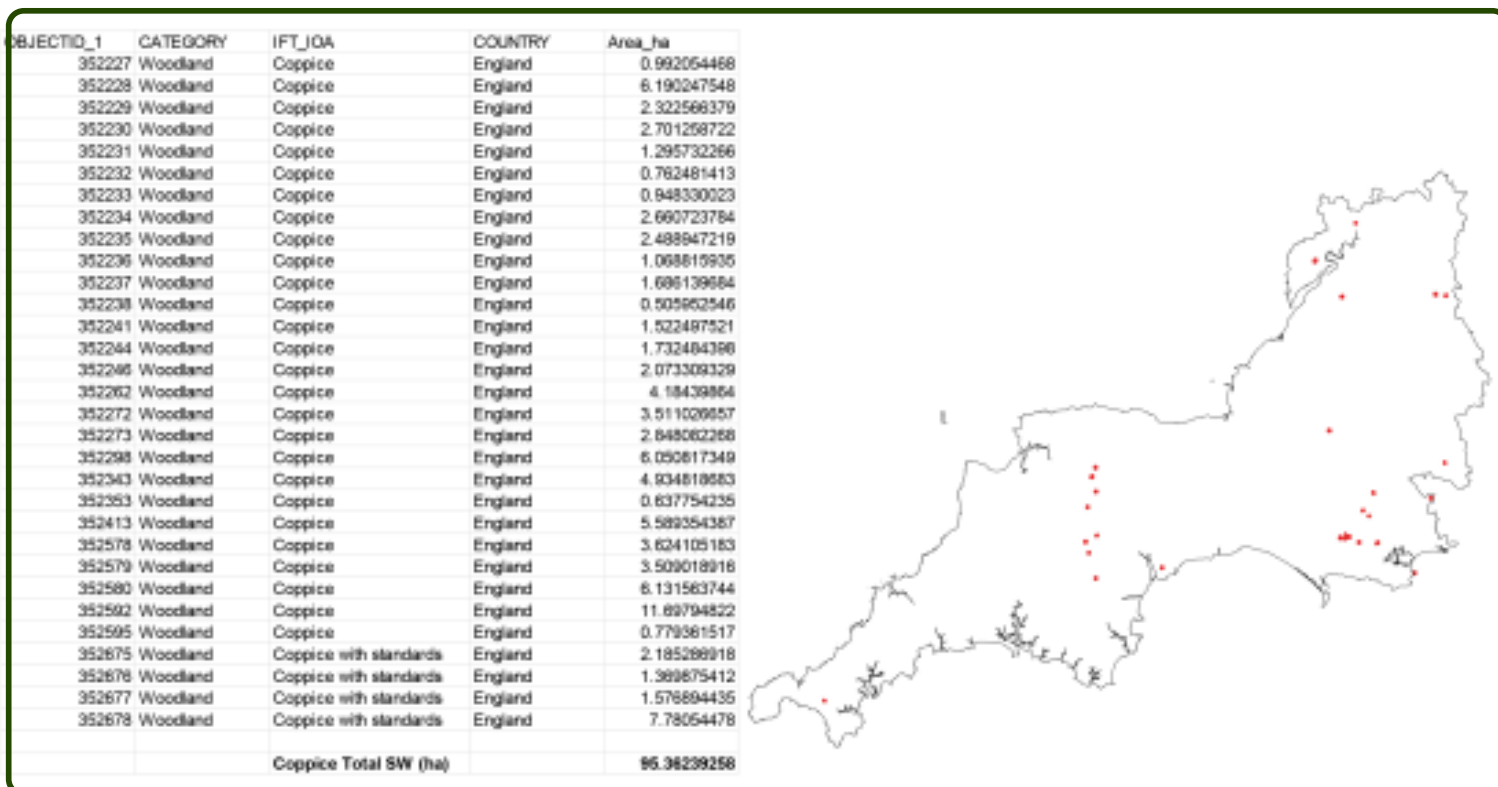


Figure 1: Extract from NFI 2020 data showing only 95ha of mapped coppice or coppice with standards in the Southwest (red dots). The Project aims to identify appreciably more and prioritise them for action.

Directors Face to face again at last

Despite being involved in coppicing since 2008 and having been at the launch of NCFed, I was a stranger to some of the Directors when I agreed to take on being NCFed's Secretary in December of last year. While "Zooming" is brilliant, meeting face-to-face has all sorts of benefits lost on the internet. And it was good to meet them all in person.

Which is why the directors found themselves huddling round a huge table in the open barn at The Woodyard, Colly Farm Yard, near Tetbury in Gloucestershire, on a wet and windy day in July.

Under discussion were all the usual suspects such as "how much money have we got?" but the focus of Directors' meetings is the future of coppice and coppice workers, and how NCFed can best serve to advance and support the member groups. Here, I only have room to highlight a couple of the discussions on that day.

A seminar held by Brian Williamson for officers of the Forestry Commission had created hugely positive feedback. Designed to encourage a better understanding of coppicing and the needs of coppice workers, the event promoted all that coppice has to offer the forestry estate of the UK. New relationships are already being forged with officers around the country. With further help from Brian, and maybe some funding, NCFed hopes to support repeat events for other organisations such as the Woodland and Wildlife Trusts. To find out more please get in touch.

NCFed has gained its first ever research grant from the Forestry Commission, to start mapping coppice woodland and its condition and quality in the UK. There is a paucity of data which NCFed, as the national body promoting coppice and coppice products, needs to formulate strategies to apply pressure on relevant bodies to get more coppice woodland into production, and to promote and support the

Thanks to Departing Directors

Two of our directors stepped down at the recent AGM, held in Dorset. Martin Hales has reached the end of the time any one director is allowed and Glenn Hadley had to resign due to pressure of other commitments. We would like to express our thanks to both Glenn and Martin for their dedication and commitment to NCFed. Both are known as people, who, whilst quiet, always have something useful and worthwhile to contribute - the kind of people who can be relied on to get things done.

Thank you both.

industry. Graham Morgan who (working with NCFed Treasurer Tom Coxhead) made the successful bid on behalf of NCFed, gave a report of progress. More details in this issue.

Currently volunteers run all of NCFed affairs. Directors considered the possibility of raising funding for a paid employee to enable the directors to spend more time on core strategic objectives, rather than day to day administration. The Treasurer agreed to look at possible funding streams.

With two key directors leaving the team, partly due to constraints of NCFed Articles of Association, the recruitment of new directors is pressing. The Chair (Dave Jackson) thanked Martin Hales for his long service and Glenn Hadley for his invaluable work on NCFed's IT needs. Fortunately, Glenn agreed to continue supporting our website and on-line presence.

Your Board is actively seeking new directors to spread the workload as widely as possible. Please come forward if you feel you could play a part.

Dr Tean Mitchell, NCFed Secretary



Image Graham Morgan

Directors - L-R, Tom Coxhead, Tim Roskell, Tim Cumine, Martin Hale, Glenn Hadley, Pete Etheridge, Dave Jackson, Tean Mitchell

Gathering and AGM 2022



As I write, less than a week has passed since the Gathering and AGM. Looking out of my window at the Dorset countryside, autumn is rolling on apace and our garden is carpeted in golden birch leaves.

Without wanting to be biased (although I inevitably am), we at Dorset Coppice Group feel that the weekend was a huge success and that was confirmed by many of the lovely messages we received in your feedback forms. Yes, there were a few lessons learnt, but these will be fed back to NCFed and 'Coppice Association North West' who we are excited to announce will be hosting the Gathering & AGM in 2023! Your feedback will ensure that the event continues to improve year on year.

*Pete Etheridge,
Dorset Coppice Group*

Pre-Gathering Courses

We had four courses on the Friday which all sold out. Sean Hellman returned to repeat last year's tool sharpening session. Despite the fact participants had decades of coppice and hedgelaying experience between them, this proved that you can actually teach old dogs new tricks! Suz Williams' split hazel basket course sold out almost immediately, with a huge waiting list for cancellations – sorry that so many of you weren't able to book a place. Sharif Adams ran a pole lathe bowl turning day; all participants headed home after the weekend with a beautiful and functional bowl. Toby Hoad not only ran an experience day in horse logging, but also shifted a load of timber for the Group; killing two birds with one stone.

Tim Russ Event Photography

We would like to thank Tim Russ for taking lots of beautiful photographs at this year's Gathering and allowing Dorset Coppice Group and NCFed to use them here. I'm sure you'll agree they are super!

Visit his Facebook - <http://bit.ly/3OuWvzu>

Craft Competition

Once again we had loads of entries for the craft competitions and would like to extend our thanks to the National Society of Master Thatchers who offered a very generous £100 prize for the best bundle of 100 spars. This was won by Dorset-based, Rod Miller, judged by NSMT President, Nigel Turton.

Winners in the other categories:

Gate hurdle: Tracey Styles

Bag of charcoal: Whittlewood Project

Besom broom: Guy Lambourne

Woodland derived basket: Louise Arthur

Coppice derived furniture: Pete Moors

Miscellaneous trees: Sharif Adams



Sales and Demos

Saturday saw a range of demonstrations including charcoal making (in retorts), besom broom making, nail gun use in green woodworking, faggot making, spar making, bushcraft skills, Dorset button making and a supply of refurbished



tools and bespoke billhook holders for sale. The auction was a huge success and I even put my hand in my pocket (a rare occurrence!) for a lovely century old billhook.



Gathering and AGM 2022



Discussion Groups

This year we hosted a range of discussion groups on topics including charcoal, coppicing contracts, hazel propagation/coppice design and thatching spars. These were a popular and worthwhile element to the weekend and NCFed has plans to facilitate further, more detailed discussions in the future (watch this space).

Notes of the discussions will be distributed via Group Reps soon.

What you said...

From social media and feedback forms. Thank you for your kind words.

"Fabulous weekend at the gathering, it was amazing to see such talented and artistic wood workers, great to put names to faces, meet new folks and to meet up with old acquaintances. Very well done to David Ewers and his dedicated team for the hours of hard work to make this all possible..."

"Great times at the NCFed Gathering and AGM... A few days at Bonsley woods... enormous appreciation to those who organised and ran the event and big love to all who were there. Always great to see new and old faces."

"Superb weekend at the NCFed Gathering up at Bonsley Woods. Great to finally meet some of you that I follow on here [IG] ...couldn't have asked for a better weekend"

"Excellent weekend with friends at the NCFed annual gathering. Thank you, Dorset Coppice Group for hosting."

"Just to say thank you for a superbly orchestrated weekend. I think Dorset definitely raised the bar for future NCFed events and put on a weekend that everyone will remember. Top work!"

Food and Booze

We would like to extend our thanks to Gritchie Brewery for sponsoring the bar and donating two kegs of Moon Lore for the Gathering. Beer and cider was sourced as locally as possible; the brewery was less than four miles away. The 'Hurdle Maker' cider also went down well. Whilst there was a slight delay in serving Saturday evening's meal, we are also proud to say that the venison (a Sika deer) was sourced within 500m of the event and kindly donated by Forestry England.



The Gathering auction

Firstly, let me say the auction at the gathering is a team effort. I would like to thank the team - Tean Mitchell - auction office, Jo McClure - rostrum clerk, Suz Williams - porter, Paul Brayshaw - runner, Jon Fraser - paperwork proforma and supervisor booking in of lots.

This year's auction offered a small number of lots but turned over £398 with an average price of £18.09 per lot. Items being sold ranged from a pair of fireman's wellington boots for a pound to a blacksmith's leg vice which made £56. Most lots sold and I thank vendors for realistic reserves which in most cases were exceeded.

The leg vice gave me a wry smile as the purchaser was from Sheffield so the vice is probably going back to where it was made. A spar hook which made £40 went to a thatcher for his apprentice.

So I consider the auction achieved its aim: in general terms the lots were entered by the old and bought by the young, keeping the kit in the coppice circle.

Thanks to ace auctioneer and reporter, Pete Jameson of Dorset Coppice Group



News from Affiliated Groups

Dorset Coppice Group Round Up

Down 'ere in Dorset we've had a busy summer of shows and events. Members were present at many of the various wood fairs and country fairs that are a common feature of rural summer life here in the West Country.



A lot of our time and energy was spent organising and planning the 2022 NCFed Annual Gathering & AGM (see write up elsewhere in Cleft Stick). Despite that, we continued to host numerous groups at the Living Classroom; giving people the opportunity to experience the woodland environment and learn more about coppicing and coppice crafts. We continue to host a monthly 'Spoon Club & Green Woodworking' meeting. Folks travel from far and wide to share skills, network and drink copious amounts of tea.

As a slight departure from the norm, we held a moth trapping event at Bonsley Wood to understand more about these nocturnal critters that provide such a valuable, yet often overlooked, ecosystem function in our woodlands. All the records gathered have been passed to our local records centre to aid in the knowledge of the diversity, abundance and distribution of these species across the county. DCG agreed to having some barberry planted along our coppice edges to expand the range of the barberry carpet moth. The good news is that their numbers in Dorset are increasing and our small efforts at Bonsley are potentially helping to expand their range.



One of the highlights of 2022 was DCG member Ben Short publishing his first book *Burn*, a powerful account of his journey from creative advertising guru in London, to west Dorset charcoal burner and hedgelayer. His journey and struggles with mental health resonate strongly with many in our profession and we were delighted that Ben read a passage from his book at the Gathering.

Now that the Gathering is behind us, we are looking forward to getting started with our coppicing at Bonsley Wood. Whilst most people are hunkering down for winter, we're sharpening our hooks, servicing chainsaws and looking forward to another productive cutting season ahead.

Pete Etheridge, Dorset Coppice Group

Image - Barberry carpet moth - Alex Hyde

Setting up The West Midlands Coppice Group

In the strange days of early 2021 I was working in the coppice thinking how lucky I was, when I was interrupted by my phone. It was Dave Jackson telling me a friend had suggested me as a potential group contact in our area. I had been thinking about it for a while and Dave promised to send me what details he had regarding members from a group set up a long time ago and I promised to get it organised in the summer.

It took me just over 12 months. I spoke to lots of people, sent emails and put posts on social media. Eventually I arranged a date for April 2022 and kept my fingers crossed. I even put up a new tarp.

To my absolute delight twenty people turned up, with a wide range of skills, experience and knowledge; all keen develop a "network". We had a very open discussion on what we wanted and didn't want from the group. The harder decision was perhaps the name as some had travelled quite a distance. After the formal bit of the meeting, we had a tour around our wood. All this followed by lots of tea, coffee, cake and biscuits.

The outcome? We now have a Facebook page and WhatsApp group and we are setting up a directory so those with skills to offer can broadcast their talents. We had another meeting in September. Five people who couldn't attend the meeting have also joined the group.

When setting these groups up it is easy to get carried away but there was a great sense of relaxed reality, with nobody getting ahead of themselves - slowly does it! Even so, communication between members and sharing of contacts has been beneficial already.

I got a huge lift from the day. A typical bloke, I like to work in the woods on my own, not anti-social but certainly I'm someone who doesn't like crowds. It was pleasant meeting up with such similar minded folk. It will be a pleasure to see how things progress and change over the coming years. If anyone is fairly local and wants to join us you are more than welcome.

Mike Taylor, West Midlands Coppice Group



Image Mike Taylor

First meeting of the West Midlands Group

Welcoming the Devon Coppice and Smallwoods Group

This year has seen the return of a group to represent Devon. The Devon Coppice and Smallwoods Group (DCSG) has been re-established by a group of working coppicers, woodland owners, crafters and charcoal burners. We aim to support the restoration of Devon's coppice and woodlands and what makes them so special.



James Dyson demonstrating the coppicers' grip

The Devonshire woodland hills and valleys hold a long and ancient heritage of skills and industries. Oak coppice long managed for charcoal, tanning bark and pit props for the tin mines; farmland hazel coppice for spars; green hay, faggots and underwood crafts that supplied the isolated rural communities with tools, baskets, fuel and a means to survive in the hills and on the coast and moorland of Devon.

Today many skills and crafts are kept alive by a healthy community of coppice workers, foresters, crafters and creatives. And as the interest grows in local wood crafts and products, the quantity and quality of produce develops with the industry. Much of the woodland is still undermanaged and what's left of the coppice is overstood.

A multifaceted restoration was needed - not only of the woods, but of the larger network. This prompted the restructuring of a coppice group. Devon is a big county to represent (3rd biggest in UK) and the previous effort in 2016 had fallen flat. It was inactive, but thanks to Adrian Thomas – who assumed all positions – it was not dead.

There was little but conversation until spring 2022 when it was decided that effort should be made to relight the fire and get the group going... or to put it in coppicing terms, the first cut had yielded little, only that it had been cut. For

"Much of the woodland is still undermanaged and what's left of the coppice is overstood."

this to sustain itself would take a lot more management and energy. But there were new shoots ready to grow.

The inaugural meeting was well attended and it was decided that the group could continue, with new blood and a purpose. This group is run by working coppice workers, who've worked many years of trial and tribulation to achieve enough experience to get Devon Coppice and Small Woods recognised, and their workers supported.



The group is still developing its network across the county and is led by acting chair James Dyson. For the first time in many years, the group recently attended the NCFed Gathering in Dorset. There are already plans for coppice courses, talks and seminars on what is required to work Devon's coppice. One of the main focuses of the group is the history and potential of charcoal production in the county. Devon already supports several dozen charcoal burners and there are hopes to network this community into a viable industry of coppice restoration to combat the tide of imported charcoal.

The acting committee has been meeting regularly and on the 10th December, is holding the first official general meeting of the DCSG

Keep a look out for more of what the DCSG is up to. Many thanks for an open welcome into the NCFed.

It's good to be back...

Jordan Harris, Vice Chairman.
devon coppice and small woods group@gmail.com for any information, to join or support the group.

Chilterns & Thames Valley Coppice Group

After a few years as an informal and largely inactive group, the change to NCFed's membership rules has stimulated us to become a properly constituted group.

We previously had about 22 members. However, with our new £15pa membership fee, this has reduced to 16. Even so, with fewer members we anticipate a more stimulated group, whose members will bring their varied skills and knowledge to the events in which we hope to participate.

The process of formalising the group involves creating a constitution and opening a bank account. MetroBank offers free banking to small associations.

Hopefully, we'll be set up by the end of the year and then work on organising a programme of activities for 2023.

Martin Wise,
Group Rep

Coppice Association North West Weekend in the Woods

Last spring CANW ran a weekend of workshops on a variety of subjects including steam bending, willow and hedge baskets, ash longbows and pole lathe bowl turning. The weekend was held at Chapel House Woods, Staveley-in-Cartmel, Newby Bridge (a few miles south of Lake Windemere).

As the new NCFed Rep I looked forward to this event and the opportunity to meet some members. It was virtually a sell out and alongside learning traditional skills everyone enjoyed the interaction and chats around the fire which had been missing for too long.



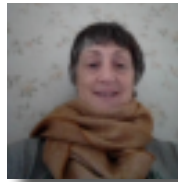
Image Melanie Fryer

Woodlands are just such great places to be, especially in spring. I find the whole atmosphere intoxicating and a delight for the senses. The spring had been very dry but true to form in the Lake District the rains came and we were glad of the tarps - little did we know what was to come!

All the workshops received positive feedback. Many thanks to all the tutors, organisers and helpers, in particular Tony and Kath Morgan, Duncan Goulder and Jack Holden, for their time and commitment. More events are being planned by the committee.

*Melanie Fryer
Group Rep - CANW*

Melanie works in livestock farming/gardening and is passionate about wildlife conservation.



The Bill Hogarth, MBE, Memorial Apprenticeship Trust (BHMAT)

Woodland Pioneers: introduction to coppicing

I'm very happy to say that we were able to run our Woodland Pioneers in full during August this year, at Chapel House Woods, Staveley-in-Cartmel, Cumbria. Last year we ran a slightly slimmed-down version but this time round we had 22 'newbies' and 12 'returners' making, learning, and having lots of fun in the woods.



People new to WP learnt how to make 'treen' (small, wooden items including spatulas and gypsy flowers) with Lorna Singleton, a greenwood stool with Helen Clarke and in groups, made Westmorland panels with Owen Jones; and were also shown the magical process of charcoal making using a retort as well as barrels, by The Coppice Co-op.

"Best week of the Year!"

Returning participants spent their time with Jack Holden and Tom Wright making a timber frame for our new tea tent (exciting!!), and with James Mitchell making a stick chair.

On Friday, participants were able to choose from willow weaving, carving, preparing hazel strips for baskets, Turkish drop spindles, tool sharpening, or raising the tea tent frame.

Yoga was on offer each morning. We were fed beautiful food (including freshly bread – baked in a spectacular rocket oven). In the evenings, guided walks, talks on the Trust and the coppicing apprenticeship scheme, an evening of 'Coppicers' Question Time', a raffle, a very silly and hugely enjoyable quiz, and some gorgeous music around the fire.

Thanks to everyone who had anything whatsoever to do with the week – I'll leave the last word with the participants: "a brilliant week", "best week of the year", "magical", "a total blast", "hugely valuable", "inspiring".

If you're interested in finding out more about next year's course – or BHMAT and what we do, email Kath on info@coppiceapprentice.org.uk – look forward to seeing you there next year!

Kath Morgan



Woodland Pioneers 2022

Image Kath Morgan

Kath is the Apprentice Coordinator for the Bill Hogarth (MBE) Memorial Apprenticeship Trust. They run 3-year apprenticeships in coppicing which helps apprentices develop their own coppice businesses. Woodland Pioneers is run each year - for those interested in the scheme and/or in coppicing and greenwood crafts - www.coppiceapprentice.org.uk

A View from the Loft:

Richard Lofthouse



As the new Press Officer for NCFed, I've been offered this column in The Cleft Stick, so it's very good to say 'hello' here to everyone.

I'm a London-based journalist, part-time hedge layer and novice coppicer, and edit the newsletter for the National Hedgelaying Society (NHLS). There is great demand among hedgers for NCFed member woodland products especially stakes and binders! If you have stakes and binders to supply, please consider sticking in an ad (email below).

Let's switch topics completely and look to India in the same week (as I'm writing) that Rishi Sunak took office as Britain's Prime Minister. A friend whose hedge I had laid, sent me as a thank you a book I'd never heard of, *The Great Hedge of India*, by Roy Moxham. It presents as a slender little travel book and reads easily. It's not new, but it's been re-edited (2001, 2016). In bookland, that means it's a hit, but it never got the prominence it deserved.

The author got wind that during the reign of Queen Victoria, the British imperial authorities planted 'the world's greatest hedge' right across India to act as a customs barrier to prevent smuggling and the evasion of salt taxes. Off he goes to India, from London, in the 1990s to find a remnant, to find 'proof that it really existed.'

It sounds like fiction, not history. One of the original reviewers said, 'At first I thought this remarkable book must be a hoax...' But it was not.

The trouble is that the acacia bushes and spiky Indian plum trees that comprised much of the hedge, which in places was ten feet tall and fourteen feet thick, don't live for more than 60 years. The hedge was abandoned on 1 April, 1879. So the author was unlikely to find any recognisable remnant.

The author accepts the futility of his quest. Every time he returns to India with local friends, new maps and early GPS devices, his hedge quest is met with dangerous robbers, dusty fields and awkward canals. Sometimes he is simply standing in the wrong place.

But as the reader you are carried along, right into a broader inquiry into the actual realities of taxing salt in a country where the rural poor depended on it for their most basic survival and needed more of it than we might assume on account of heavy manual work in a very hot climate, a vegetarian diet and no processed foods laced with 'hidden salt', unlike today in the West.

He says:

'I had assumed it was merely a flamboyant boundary, perhaps fashioned by administrators with fond memories of English hedgerows. It was a terrible discovery to find that it had been constructed, and ruthlessly policed, so as to totally cut off an affordable supply of an absolute necessity of life.'

At its height, the hedge stretched 1,600 miles and where it couldn't be grown, it was a dry hedge, with 250 tons of material manually hefted into position for each mile. In one year an official calculated that the 13,000 hedge maintenance workforce 'cut, carried and stacked on it fully 100,000 tons of thorny brushwood.' It was an incredible achievement, but towards a devastatingly malign objective.

Moxham notes how in the last fifteen years of the great Indian hedge, 1864-79, there were 15 famines in India. The official British reports gave a total death toll of 3,761,420 Indians. The real figure is likely to have been at least 5,000,000. It's better to spell it out: five million deaths.

Many of those deaths were from fever and diarrhoea intensified, if not brought on by, salt depletion. Such deaths were recorded under generic categories such as 'bowel-complaints.'

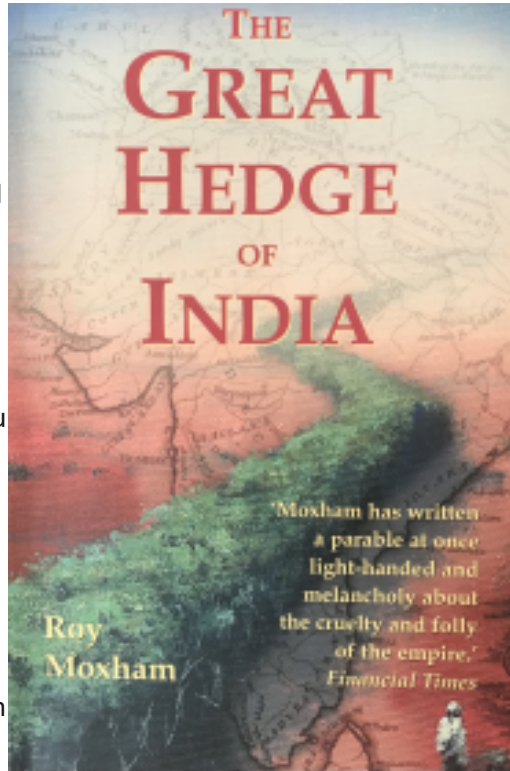
The salt taxes were collected throughout the famines, without the slightest remission, an extraordinary record of cruelty. Moxham finds his hedge in the end but I won't spoil the plot.

As an admirer of great hedges it's impossible not to admire this one, as long as we divorce it from its purpose. I can feel that warm tinkle of post-Imperial glow: the specific ambition and wherewithal to pull off a 1,600 mile hedge in the most challenging of terrains. It was a stupendous folly but it was performed and performed well.

Instead today we have DEFRA and 'Hedgelink', a glorified talking shop that you attend via ZOOM while slurping coffee and looking out of the window. Possibly not a total waste of time? Who's to say.

But I can't end the column like that so let's rest our sights on the Great Big Dorset Hedge, that will run right across Dorset for 90 miles from Forde Abbey in the west to Bokerley Dyke on the edge of Hampshire in the north-east. That's more like it – but we need equivalent projects for coppice and hedges in all parts of the UK.

Richard Lofthouse



Contact Richard at newsletter@hedgelaying.org.uk for hedgelaying advertising, and for NCFed business to press@ncfed.org.uk

Tried & Tested

LastPass...

So, hands up who has all their passwords (accumulated over the years with numerous online retailers and other organisations) squirreled away inside the back of a favourite picture on the desk or hidden away in a drawer amongst the underwear? If you're lucky enough to be a member of MENSA, perhaps they are lodged

in your super brain, for easy recall.

If not, here is the lifeline to help you. I've been using the *LastPass* app on my phone for some two years now and, like a chainsaw to the woodsman or a billhook to the hedge layer, I wouldn't be without it.

Without some form of password manager, I find it impossible to keep track of all those hopefully strong and unique passwords. I looked at various free password manager apps and although the reviews in specialist computer mags always suggest some negative features, more often than not, these issues can be overcome by choosing a paid for 'premium' version. However, this is a case of horses for courses and, for most of us, a free version is perfectly sufficient. This is where the free, *LastPass* app comes in. I would point out that the free app is limited to one device (mine is on my phone) so if you want to include another device such as a PC or tablet, you will need the paid for version.

To sign up for *LastPass*, enter your email address and create a strong master password. NB. this password you WILL have to remember as, for added security, there is no "Forgotten your password?" facility. The app includes a host of features too long to list here but includes, for example, auto-filling of forms (so there's no need to leave a website to add name, address, delivery address and contact details); a password generator and strength indicator. The app also allows the saving of a wide range of other entries such as notes, addresses, payment cards, bank accounts, driver's licence, insurance policies etc.

Ok, so you might not want to put so much personal information into one place. Well, that's fine, that's your choice. Just use it for passwords only. However, for those who do use it to its full capabilities, you can be reassured that your information is very safe and secure. I'm not into the techy side of this security stuff at all but Google it and you will come across this "...uses military-grade AES-256-bit encryption to lock your secure vault. Only your master password can unlock the vault..." and no doubt there's a whole lot more!

<https://lastpass.com>

Tim Roskell, Dorset Coppice Group!



RED LIST OF
ENDANGERED
CRAFTS

The Heritage Crafts Association's *Red List of Endangered Crafts*, first published in 2017, was the first report of its kind to rank traditional crafts by the likelihood they would survive to the next generation, based on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding principles. It was led by the Heritage Crafts Association, the only UK UNESCO-accredited NGO working primarily in the domain of traditional craftsmanship – see <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist/>.

Among these crafts are several that reside in the domain of coppice workers. If you have any views on how the following accounts might be improved or updated, if you have contact for craftspeople not already listed, or think other crafts might be recognised, please get in touch with easc@ncfed.org.uk. The list is due to be updated by March 2023 for publication in May.

Critically Endangered:

- Swill basket making
- Clog making
- Hazel basket making

Endangered

- Hurdle making
- Rake making
- Broom making

Viable

- Coppice working
- Hedgelaying
- Green wood working
- Pole lathe turning
- Charcoal burning

Under consideration – more details urgently required.

- Spar making (currently under coppice working)
- Shingle making (currently under coppice working)
- Pimp making (currently under coppice working)

Tim Cumine



Making a hazel frame basket - an endangered craft?

Using IBCs for wood seasoning

You Tube is full of stuff and I often wonder what we did without it. A couple of years ago I was thinking about how to store wood for seasoning before charring and spent some time browsing fairly aimlessly. There are plenty of blokes in North Carolina suggesting interesting ways to do almost anything one cares to mention, but finally focussing, I found people suggesting the use of IBC cages as great seasoning vessels.

I should mention that IBC is short for Intermediate Bulk Container - presumably made to carry middling quantities of liquids. The roughly metre cube plastic containers are housed in galvanized steel cages and mounted on wood or plastic pallets. These guys in the US suggest using the cages for log storage and as long as your logs don't fall through the cage they work fine and have the great advantage that they can be moved whilst full, using a forklift. I lined the inside of the cages with rabbit netting to stop small hazel logs falling out. IBCs can be had for little or indeed no money as they seem to be throw away items. If you can find the right people, they may be very pleased to pass some on.

There was no mention in the Carolinas of what to do with the plastic cube once its supporting cage is full of logs. I fear the landscape around these isolated homesteads are littered with abandoned containers. And dead critters.

I didn't want to acquire more if doing so would leave me with a disposal issue. So I cut the tops off and the bases out of a couple of the cubes, mounted them on timber pallets using wood screws and penny washers and tried filling them with logs. Not a great result. The plastic is too flimsy to support the weight of a full load. They sag. So I added a pair of palletwood battens around the top of each side, one inside and one outside, using wood screws. This gives just enough rigidity to hold a rough cube shape even when full.

I acquired a 100mm diameter hole cutter and cut holes in the bottoms and sides until the things looked like sieves. With a lid made from the original plastic top or a pallet covered in polythene sheet, they were good to go. That was last summer and I filled them with wood (mostly hazel, ash, oak and field maple) cut during winter 2020/21 and split in August 2021. At that point the moisture content was at 30-40+%. By August this year, a random selection of logs from several IBCs was down to 11-18% with no noticeable difference between those in cages and those in the sieve-like plastic containers. Whilst this summer was exceptionally dry and wood stood in a bog would have been dried to a frazzle in this part of the world, these results are good enough for me to be on the lookout for more IBCs before next summer.

Downsides? Well you do need to be able to lift them with a machine to move and tilt them. Because we farm, a tractor with front loader is available. I suggest some caution when acquiring them – they usually have a label suggesting what's been in them. Take note and clean thoroughly or avoid if the contents sound toxic.

Guy Lambourne, East Anglian Coppice Network



Logs in cage and plastic cube, complete with roof

Dartmoor Dragon Retort Kiln

The Dartmoor Dragon charcoal retort was developed by Beau Dobson, and a production model is sold by Exeter Charcoal. It's still a pretty new machine to the market. Chiz Harward gives a personal, considered appraisal of it over several months of use.

I'd seen Beau's early prototypes of his barrel-based retort on Facebook and loved the idea of a cassette-based retort from the off. Beau's simple concept was to use 50-gallon oil drums so that you could simply swap out a drum of charcoal for a new drum of wood. To me this eliminated the biggest issue with all kilns: waiting around to empty and reload. The size also appealed: an oil drum was a nice easy size to fill and a constant stream of barrels cooking away every day seemed a welcome break from the intensity of processing, filling and emptying a ring kiln on my own.

Continues on page 18



The Dartmoor Dragon Retort in the woods

Image Chiz Harward

Dartmoor Dragon Retort Kiln (continued)

...continued from page 17

An idle moan that others seemed to get kilns for free, led to 15 minutes on the internet searching for grants I applied for one and promptly forgot about it. A month later, I had a Dragon on order. At nearly £4K plus VAT it was a big win. The retort is very nicely fabricated and should last a good few years out in the woods. It comes apart into two main pieces, the base and clamshell lid are a good two-person lift each. It is therefore portable...but not portable. It could be trailer mounted.

You set a decent sized fire in the base then lift the barrel onto two support struts, which cradle it above the fire. Close the lid and off it goes. The insulated kiln quickly rises in temperature, the fire driving off the moisture at around 350-450°C. After a couple of hours, the wood starts retorting, the



Image Chiz Harward

The air supply is regulated automatically

gases escape via drilled holes, ignite on the fire beneath and cook the second stage of the burn. It's really important to keep a decent fire going in the base with actual flame to ignite the gases.

Once retorting the temperature shoots to around 500°C and a stainless-steel bar expands and closes the air supply automatically (the bar is 'set' via a threaded section). Temperature drops, bar contracts, valve opens, fire gets going again... sounds easy? It doesn't always work quite like that and you do need to fiddle with the bar and adjust the flue butterfly. Once the wood is completely converted the barrel is lifted out and placed drilled-holes-down on sand to cool, replaced with a new one and the fire restocked. I do all this solo, using a ramp made from old, warped struts.

By this method Beau and Exeter say you can burn a barrel in 4.5 hours, with subsequent barrels taking about 4 hours depending on timber species. So two barrels can be processed in a long day, and a third, along with a load more fuel, chucked on as you head home. My experience is that it all takes a bit longer, and some barrels of dry wood take over 6 hours.

It is fair to say I have had problems with the kiln. It was effectively a full-cost prototype that I tested to near destruction, by accident: I warped weak struts, I found out the kiln needs to be really flat, I ran 24-hour burns, I found that retorts don't always retort and that the gases don't always burn, and most importantly that it cannot be just left alone to do its thing. It is also fair to say that Exeter Charcoal have been brilliant, and we've had long discussions that will hopefully improve the kiln.

What I had hoped for was a fire-and-forget kiln that could chunter away in the corner of the wood, on its own, with an occasional visit to swap barrels. That isn't my experience, and I now stay within the same or adjacent coupes and check it every 20 minutes. The kiln will go way over 800°C very fast if you don't control the air.

The big question is economics. It's a lush bit of kit but you could buy several ring kilns for the price, or go big and get an Exeter. I ran some rough numbers... In a Dragon, a single barrel will yield 7 buckets* of charcoal and use half a barrel of 'waste' wood as fuel. If you lived on site you could run a Dragon for three barrels a day. Five days a week would produce 55 sacks*, whilst you have done other work (or not) nearby. Processing, loading and bagging takes about 8 hours over that week.

In that week you could run a ring kiln twice and get more charcoal, plus fines, taking maybe two days (assuming you burn overnight and sleep, which I do). To make 1000 sacks of charcoal a year with a 6' ring-kiln needs say 25 burns over an 87 day season, whereas to make the same with a Dragon would take ninety five twelve hour days (285 barrels at 3 barrels a day), running it every day".

The Dragon gives steady low intensity production and is easier to run over winter than a ring kiln, to build up stock. The cassette system means you can do little and often, and it isn't as daunting as filling a ring kiln. If you can get a grant then it is viable, but the upfront costs are high. The Dragon is a great concept, and I hope that it can be developed further. Cassettes are the way forward.

**a bucket is a builder's bucket, sacks are the Selway NCFed large bags (2 buckets full)*

Chiz Harward, Froe Wood



Image Chiz Harward

Charred barrel out and a new charge in

Features

Making it at Market Wood, Marketing and Mental Health

The path is never clear when you're on it, until you turn around and look at where you've been.

For me, the journey started when pole-lathe turning entered my field of passions. While completing my time-exchange to help pay for a Permaculture Design Certificate at Abundant Earth. I came across Matty Whittaker in his woodland workshop. My jaw hit the floor. We got in contact and he agreed to teach me the angles game and further supported me through my attendance at the Northern Bowl Gathering 2019.

Through volunteering and training opportunities I have weaved my way through many greenwood courses and experiences. Woodland Pioneers 2021 was a pivotal moment for me. It was then I realised that people did this for their livelihoods and were able to connect to nature through their work.

During my first coppice season, an opportunity for people to turn their hobby into a business presented itself. Ruth Thompson of Sylvan Skills messaged me. I took an interest and gave it a go, at worst I could decide not to continue. So, I applied as a pole-lathe turner. Five months later, with Zoom calls, video submissions and coppice season



Filming for Making it at Market

finished, I was invited to be a contributor for "Making it at Market" on BBC1. What drew me in was the collaborative nature of the journey rather than the usual competitive hook.

I traded for the first time in public with my local bodgers' group at the Northumberland County Show. There were audible gasps and inquiries about what I was doing. I sold a bowl to the Mayor of Leicester and Leicestershire was where the programme was filmed - at National Trust, Stonywell; synchronicity at work perhaps.

My business mentor, Alice Blogg, took interest in my ethos and approach to craft, as it deeply aligns with her own. We recognise the disconnect between market and natural materials. Personally, using ancient woodland management practices and heritage craft, I aim to bring forward a story of

sustainability and longevity. I hope there will be more awareness of these industries, in turn increasing value for the community surrounding them.



"Making it at Market" provided me with the support to develop skills in business. As well as being at the forefront of a new business, I had to navigate through new styles of communication, being in front of a camera and in a world I am unfamiliar with. At home I leant into the support of those around me in setting up a workshop in my neighbour's old stable and getting wood from folks like Bill Oaks.

I'm really excited to be part of the growing community in the North East. It seems I'm standing on the shoulders of giants who have paved the way for me.

Continuing the work of others through my apprenticeship with Bill Hogarth Memorial Apprenticeship Trust and Living Woods North East Community Interest Company's project, 'Rekindle'.



Shannon at the lathe

I appreciate being able to work in woodlands, where I find sanctuary. Nature has always been a healing space, more so this year than most. Being recently diagnosed with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Autism and ADHD the lens in which I view the world has shifted dramatically and these landscapes have helped ground me.

Through "Making it at Market", I established the starting point for my business while re-establishing the way in which I viewed myself. From this my confidence grew and my ideas that had been floating around for years became reality.

As I reach out through my craft and business, I hope to inspire growth within these communities. Even in my years of engagement with craft I have seen a resurgence of activity, ignited by many factors from mental health to renewed kinship of people working with their hands. I welcome you to follow my onward journey on social media, take a look at my website or get in touch.



Shannon Berry
www.shannonberrynature.co.uk
hello@shannonberrynature.co.uk
Insta: @shannon.berry.nature
FB: @shannon.berry.nature

Hooke Park Open Day

On a beautiful spring day in May this year, we had the pleasure of visiting an open day at Hooke Park, near Beaminster, West Dorset, close to where we live. It is a highly-renowned place of practical study in all things sustainable and woody and it was a joy to behold. I felt instantly at home there!

The Open Day

As we approached the main site, along the drive bordered by woodland, a few structures came into view giving us a taste of what was to come, nestled in the woods. Our main objective, to see the diverse range of buildings created by students, was temporarily thwarted in a very pleasant way. A friendly volunteer greeted us and invited us for complimentary coffee and delicious homemade cakes in the main refectory. How could we refuse? We consumed happily and gazed in awe at the fine architecture of this building that served as the eating space for all those working and studying at Hooke Park Wood. A lovely building; so welcoming and warm, so easy on the eye.

Hooke Park harnesses great minds in developing sustainable building techniques in wood, which in turn will serve our planet kindly. The sheer beauty of each building we discovered on this gently sloping site in deciduous

Background history

Hooke Park was set up by the Parnham Trust and John Makepeace, the furniture designer and maker, in the 1980s. John, along with other creative folks, came up with some designs and then built the first buildings that are now the key elements of Hooke Park today. It was acquired in 2002 by the Architectural Association School of Architecture.

What is Hooke Park about?

Take one woodland setting that is a designated Ancient Woodland (historically a deer-hunting enclosure) and forms a part of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Add a team of expert practitioners, including craftspeople, designers, engineers, robotic technicians and foresters, who when combined offer a wide and diverse skillset. Add visiting groups of students from the Architectural Association School of Architecture. Add on-site residential accommodation, workshop and studio spaces, experimental fabrication equipment along with a building site type environment. Oh yes, also add The AA Wood Laboratory - set up to help further educate architects in the sustainable use of forest produce for build projects and to encourage new forms of research.

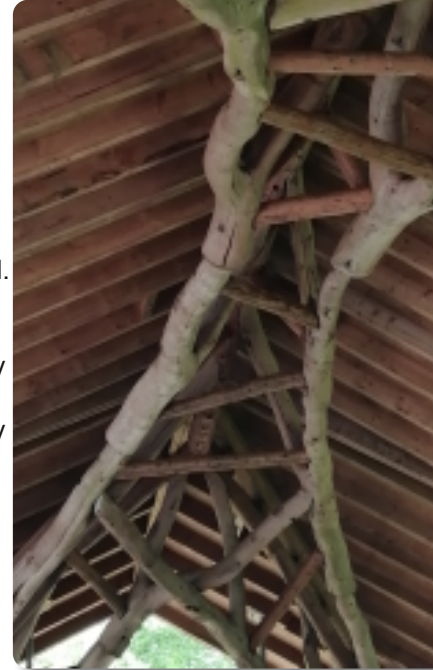
The result: a "Design and Make" programme that sees incredibly exciting construction and landscape-focused projects being undertaken.

woodland, was testament to human invention and creativity.

Trusses branched upwards to support curved roofs of wood shingles, various timber roof coverings and other modern roofing materials. Harmonious shapes were everywhere. Everything was just as you would expect from good architecture, where the light played on the textures of the wood and where every angle was aesthetically pleasing. Each entrance and doorway beckoned, encouraging the visitor into cleverly proportioned spaces of purpose, shelter and peace.

It was a real privilege to be given an opportunity to see how we could, and can, do things better in this synthetic, profit-driven world. I hope that in time these building practices enter the mainstream where they truly belong, gaining the recognition and respect they deserve.

Hooke Park - "testament to human invention and creativity."



The roof of the wood store

<https://hookepark.aaschool.ac.uk/>

Helen Roskell

Helen is a member of Dorset Coppice Group, loves to see woody creativity and shares her own creative skills and passions, not in wood but in textiles. She runs creative textile workshops in West Dorset. <https://www.facebook.com/EverySmallStitchCreativeTextileWorkshops>



A cabin in the grounds of Hook Park

Cracking the Instagram Code

It is a fact that in today's world, to increase business, you need to have an online presence. But when faced with the world of social media, three questions become apparent – What, how, and why?

What?

There are many social media options to choose from, each has a different flavour and reach.

Tic Tok is for young folk (not me... well frankly, I'm not young), Facebook is now for the older folk (50+), YouTube is good for in depth videos, and Twitter is for sharing opinions.

My social media platform of choice is Instagram and that's where I'll focus for the rest of this article. Originally

meant for photographs of one's life, Instagram has evolved into a platform that attracts creators of all kinds and people interested in what they create. It's also an opportunity to connect and meet with other people doing the same things as us. But how to do this?

How?

Instagram offers three options for sharing: posts, stories and reels.

Posts - still images that work best for highlighting your product or event. A good quality, well-lit photo of your product can really grab the attention of a 'passer by'.

Stories - only visible for 24 hours. They can be your own still images, videos or other people's posts. Their limited visibility is useful for sharing more personal content. I wouldn't want my holiday pictures being part of my permanent profile, but by sharing them as stories I'm proving that I'm a real person.

Reels - an opportunity to post videos about yourself or your product. There are lots of YouTube videos or online articles



Image Tim Russ

.. and stories to show the light-hearted side of your life

and 'concepts' we're hooked on buying stories, rather than goods. Online is no different. When I was getting started, I was advised to get myself in front of the camera. People engage with people, not products. Luckily for me, it turns out I'm a show off and I enjoy the process of making and editing videos of me dancing around like a loony with a basket. But that won't work for everyone. Knowing yourself, and what feels good for you, is key. If you are a more serious person, some moody, well-lit shots of yourself with your product would probably work better.

How To Get Started: A Quick Recipe

1. Post 3 – 4 still image posts of your product, workspace and yourself.
2. Write a post about how you got started with a nice self portrait.
3. Sprinkle in a reel or two, showing the making process, or yourself describing how you made something.
4. Add two stories about your day – what you're up to regarding your business or life.
5. Find the people who you admire and follow them.
6. Follow the people who follow them. These will be the people most likely to already be interested in your product.
7. Repeat and remember to like other people's content. What goes around, comes around!

Warning - if a name has a random number next to it, it's probably a fake account. If you get any strange messages, block and report them.

Why?

If you get it right, you could go viral. And that will catapult your business into the spotlight. The algorithm will promote popular content and show your posts or reels to audience members who may have never heard of coppicing or coppice crafts.

A word of warning... the algorithm only promotes constant participants. This means you need to be posting daily, if not twice a day, to grab attention. Otherwise you will be ignored. It can become tedious and you may end up feeling like you work for Instagram.

Getting likes and follows is also addictive! If you're checking your phone 20 times a day, you're not a bad person, you're just hooked. Despite these pitfalls, it is possible to have a healthy relationship with Instagram.

Suz Williams
Coppicing_suz



Image Tim Russ

Use good, well lit images showing you in action...

on how to use the reel feature. In a nutshell, add clips together, edit them to music or sounds, and then add captions or titles. This is best for 'how to' tutorials or even just close ups on some fine work. Never underestimate the desire of the human brain to watch monotonous crafting! Sadly, the product itself is usually not enough to interest people. After many decades of advertisers selling 'lifestyles'

Book Review

Countryside Revival: British Countryside After Brexit and Covid
By Mark McEvilly (self-published)

“Rural Britain is convulsing through enormous change that could be for better or if we are uninformed and inattentive for worse. Due to the ongoing drama of Brexit-Covid’s impacts upon our lives and homes it is very difficult for any publication to remain on target for any period of time regarding short term changes and policy... The book throughout has a generalist approach for viewing this breadth of rural trends, concerns and successes as a whole rather than a single specialist issue. This is a strength, intended to give the reader an oversight of Rural Britain in the early 2020s. It highlights many (though not by any means all), key reports and ideas that those of us with a deep interest and love of the country should be aware of.”
(Taken from the introduction)

NCFed is grateful to the author for sending us a copy of this book to review. As the author states, in these rapidly changing times, it is difficult for a book that focusses on policies and issues affecting the British countryside to remain on target for any significant length of time. However, in capturing a snapshot of the current situation within the British countryside, I feel that it succeeds in doing this. I also applaud his holistic approach to rural life, rather than concentrating on individual aspects of it. We are all, like it or not, affected by issues such as affordable housing and rural crime.

Of particular interest to members will be the sections on coppicing (pages 60-61), as well as the need for affordable housing for woodland workers (pages 142-143).

Whilst interpretations of how the countryside is managed will vary between people, the author does a good job of remaining impartial throughout and provides a broad range of perspectives from conventional land management practices, though to newer emerging ideas such as agroforestry and the importance of ‘non timber forest products’.

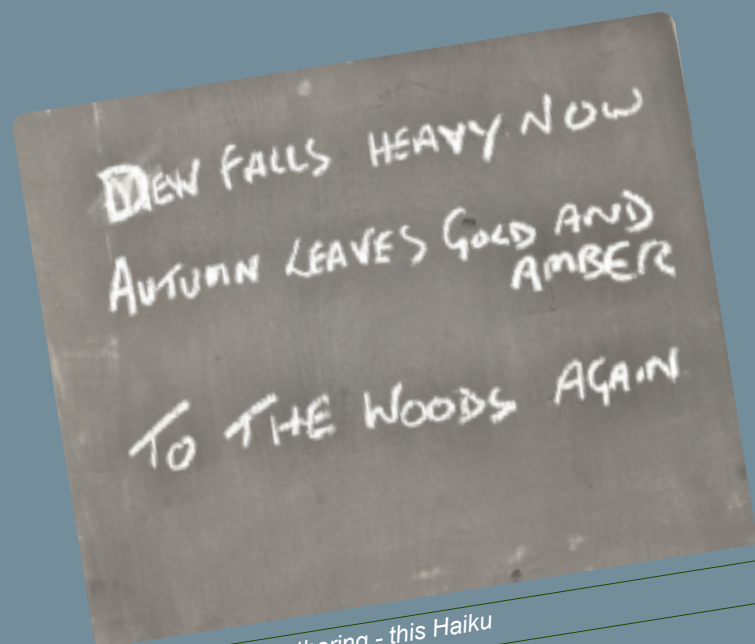
I suspect that in years to come, this book will provide a valuable snapshot of the rural sector in 2022 (one of its aims), which will allow us all to work out how far we have progressed.

Pete Etheridge

Poetry Corner

Autumn, more than Spring, is the start of the year in the coppice.
It is the start of the busy cutting season, marked by today’s equinox.
Summer has been spent with long days charcoal burning and planning for the shorter days’ work.
Turning, weaving, riving, carving.
You have only what you cut.
Wishing you had more.
Wishing you had less.
Long hot days to enjoy the slowly fading green.
Guarding the new growth.
Waiting for cooler, shorter days and a heavy damp air.
Too often, the trigger to start again is being caught without a torch.
Surprised, after all that waiting.
Now the work begins as the Ceps emerge.
Slowly at first; the leaves stay longer each year, the sap refusing to drop.
But steady away.
Fell, cut, trim, stack, sharpen, bundle.
A rhythm marked out by the work of the axe and the hook.
The earth still warm, the season still young.
The short cold days lie ahead, when with luck a hard frost will steel the ground and burn the lungs.
But the new year has started,
and there is work to be done.

Chiz Harward



Spotted at the Gathering - this Haiku

Terry's Top Tips

Glove Love

Don't throw away those old gloves... just yet anyway! Well, ol' Terry here never likes to throw anything away until he's had his money's worth. I have various types of gloves for different uses but often end up using my favourite

"Showa" builders' gloves when I'm shifting around bits of rough timber that would, otherwise, very kindly share their lovely splinters with me! This type of glove is made from a blend of cotton and polyester, with a latex coated palm that also extends around the fingers.

I tend to stick with the Showa brand, as I've found that cheaper, own label brands from certain nationwide tool stores

don't last so long. So, on the subject of wearing out, inevitably on my Showa gloves, the latex starts to become too thin or has worn out on some of the finger tips (normally it's the thumb first). I've found two re-uses.

The first is to cut off the fingertips (of your gloves!) to create a pair of fingerless gloves – great when you want to be able work in the cold with small things such as screws and nails.

The second came to me when I decided to try and take a slice off one of my fingers when I wasn't wearing gloves. I don't know about any of you folks out there, but do you find

if you've a plaster or bandage on a finger or some other part of your anatomy, that's the area you will knock against something. Boy does it hurt! So, as you'll see from the pictures I decided to add another layer of protection. I took one of my severely worn-out gloves, cut off the middle three finger section as one piece and hey presto, an instant additional protective layer for my bandaged middle finger. I now have a selection of these including some single finger ones. The three-

finger model stayed put on my hand without needing anything to keep it in place. Single finger versions need a strip of microporous surgical tape, so don't forget to keep a roll of that in your first aid kit.



Getting a grip

Not all my coppice poles grow dead straight and peeling the odd bent one for structures requiring rustic charm can be a challenge. I have tried all manner of temporary woodland devices over the years, including cut nails, wedges, clamps and weights but have finally landed on something that works (most) of the time.

Fixing a couple of double-sided timber joiners, one either side of the inside of a forked pole rest, can act as an efficient grip when peeling bent poles.

The joiners fix the pole in place while you merrily pull away on the bark. A top tip to avoid ripping up the surface of the pole is to lift the pole from the grip before turning over. Double sided timber joiners can be obtained from most DIY stores.

Coupcutter



Peeling a bent pole like this would usually end up with the pole rolling over to a more stable position.



Timber joiners fixed to forked pole rest resolve that problem

Terry

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? Alternatively, there is now an option to join a holding group designed for anyone not in an existing group's area. Full details on the website.

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