



Cleft Stick

News from the National Coppice Federation and the UK Coppice Industry

The NCFed weekend Gathering and AGM

**Coppice Peer Awards, discussions,
courses and much more.**

Down in the Willow Garden

**The growing and sale
of willow rods**

The Field Station

**Broadening the case
for UK wood.**

Image - Garrett Nellie



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Editorial

What does a rocket scientist say when a colleague is making a meal of a problem at work? And when awful things happen to a sailor, 200 miles west of Rockall, what do friends suggest to lighten the mood? I wondered about this when a friend said she always finds solace, if down in the dumps, by visiting a local woodland. How come I sometimes feel gloomy, even though I spend nearly all my time in a wood?!

I was rocked a little by Matthew Taylor's short article in the Guardian on 11 November. He reports the results of a study, funded by the charity Impact on Urban Health, suggesting that wood burners are a more expensive way to heat homes than gas boilers or heat pumps. They apparently incur "15% higher yearly costs compared with gas of using an already installed wood burner for 20% of a home's heating".

Together with the mounting evidence that burning wood in stoves produces high levels of the most dangerous small particulate pollution, PM2.5, could these findings be the proverbial straw that breaks wood burning's back? If so, there might be tragic consequences for some UK coppiced woodlands. If you sell firewood, this kind of story must be seen as a call to action. Is there more we can do to improve the quality of the firewood we offer for sale? Can stove manufacturers do more to make the burn cleaner? Are we prepared to lower our prices to make firewood sales competitive? Or is this simply a piece of flawed research? I'm in no position to provide answers but this issue and others, makes me even more convinced that we need to be strong and organised and that means joining a coppice group affiliated to the National Coppice Federation.

The world feels to be increasingly balanced on a knife edge. It's worrying, so perhaps it's not surprising I succumb to gloom now and then. I am trying to develop a defence that revolves around seeing the positives of my life, and they are, fortunately, many. Most I won't bore you with, but the two that resonate right now are: I am able to spend a great deal of time in various woods and get money out of it; and what we do for a living is contributing something to making the world a bit better. My friend is a casual user of this marvellous drug. I'm the junkie!

Write for Cleft Stick

We are always on the look out for more stories of coppice, woodlands, safety, products, 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 bash out some words and send something to us at news@ncfed.org.uk Or maybe just give me a call: 07794 013876.

A very big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition and that of course includes Tim Roskell and Glenn Hadley, our Editorial Assistants. An extra large thank you to our designer for this edition, Luisa Cundle. Hopefully she will be taking on the job for the next edition too.

Guy Lambourne, Editor.



Deadline for the next edition of Cleft Stick is 30 April 2024. Please submit finished articles, photographs, ideas, opinions... to news@ncfed.org.uk



Stuart Brooking surveying hazel coppice in Devon.

More Coppice Into Productive Management Project

The Team is pleased to announce that following the project's steady initiation in the South West, we have been awarded further funding by the Forestry Commission to roll out our coppice mapping project to the East of England and East Midlands, as well as Yorkshire and the North East. With the South West region having so far surveyed four times more coppice woodland (391ha) than previously recorded in the National Forest Inventory (~95ha) - the National Steering Group (formerly project committee for the South West) have been busy recruiting for various roles to support the regional roll-out of the project. Following a few rounds of successful interviews appointments have been made.

Spar making course success

The East Anglian Coppice Network's spar making day in December was fully booked. So there is interest amongst coppice workers to respond to the need for UK- produced spars. Heritage Crafts (HC) generously supported the day and has identified the making of thatching spars as an endangered craft. They are keen to encourage people to develop the skills to make these vital components of traditionally thatched roofs.

Andy Basham of Coppice Designs in Saffron Walden successfully applied for HC funds to learn the craft himself and wanted to include others through the East Anglian Coppice Network. He was very pleased to secure the expert tuition of spar maker, Charlie Potter from Pebmarsh, Essex; the 'last spar maker in East Anglia'. Charlie brought real professional skill and experience to the day, held at the SSSI woodland, in Essex, where Andy coppices hazel on behalf of Natural England.

Price concerns

Participants, mostly from East Anglia, thoroughly enjoyed the day and made a lot of spars Charlie was using Polish gads (unsplit hazel – the precursor of spars) in his demonstrations; apparently even gads are in short supply from the UK. It's a simple process and easily learned, but all quickly realised it would take a lot of practice to become fast enough to turn pro. There was much discussion on prices - Charlie suggested £210 per thousand. Given the time required to achieve that speed, nobody left intending to go 100% spar.

Repeat day planned

The session will be repeated early in 2024. Interested? Contact Andy direct. Cost £50 per person. Profits will support the East Anglian Coppice Network. To register your interest, please contact Andy Basham on 07971 642243.

The venue

The day will be held at a woodland near Saffron Walden, Essex. Further details to be supplied on booking.

What to bring

Any splitting and sharpening tools or devices you may own - hook, froe, adze, etc. There will be a limited supply of some tools available for loan. Material for making spars. Lengths of hazel or perhaps willow of around 30 inches (76cm) and 1 inch (25mm) diameter or above. We would like a good variety of material to practise on so don't just

bring your favourite bits. Bring plenty. If coming by train we may be able to supply material for you to work on. All resulting spars will be kept by Andy as payment! Food for lunch. We will provide drinks throughout the day. Some or even all of the day will be run outside so please wrap up very warm with waterproof coat and footwear.

Travel

Directions will be sent after booking. It will be possible to provide a lift from Audley End station, before 8.30am. Please let us know in plenty of time if you plan to come by train.

NCFed Management Team - New Directors

As announced at the Weekend Gathering and AGM, we are delighted to welcome three new faces to our list of directors.



Suz Williams

As a member of the Chilterns and Thames Valley Coppice Group, Suz was unanimously elected as a full director, having been proposed and seconded by her coppice group. Some five years ago, Suz was looking for a career change from being a support worker and started her journey into the coppice industry as an apprentice. Her experience to date includes managing coppiced woodland in South Oxfordshire, as well as London, and teaching various woodland crafts to all age groups. She's looking forward to getting stuck in and focusing on training and standards.



Ben Scarcliffe

Ben, a member of the NCFed affiliated Whittlewood Forest Group, was co-opted as a director earlier this year. At the AGM he was proposed and seconded by his coppice group and unanimously voted in as a full director. Ben started in the industry some 26 years ago and has worked in the domestic, commercial and utility sectors in arboriculture. He got involved in more coppice and forestry related work after meeting and working alongside a great mentor Dave Faulkner. Being self-employed gave Ben the freedom to work in many other areas, including countryside management, alongside ecologists on habitat creation, survey work, ride creation and tariffing for the Forestry Commission. He is looking forward to using his professional contacts and wealth of experience for the benefit of NCFed.



Dan Carne

Dan is an ecologist with a background in consultancy and the charitable sector, working with protected species, woodland, wetland, biodiversity net gain, and grassland restoration.

Previously the Director of the Woodmeadow Network for Woodmeadow Trust, he is now Woodmeadow Specialist at Plantlife International. Dan is also a member of the English Woodland Biodiversity Group and Defra Trees and Forestry Forum.

He has a fascination with woodland flora communities, which have suffered dramatic declines within existing woodlands across the country over the past fifty years, partly due to lapsed management. He has been a strong advocate for the benefits of coppice management, not just upon woodland flora but also economically, culturally and socially.



Image - Jane Lambourne

Coppice Peer Awards

Sponsored by Greenwood Ecology & Countryside Management

Best Entrant

(less than 5 years active) - Isaac Probart

Isaac is a young coppice worker based in Dorset who has shown huge enthusiasm for coppicing and coppice crafts. His fellow college students tell stories of how he used his college lunch breaks to make thatching spars from the boot of his car! Since finishing college, Isaac has taken a job in agriculture but also has set up his own coppice business on the side, supplying a range of products including raw materials, hazel hurdles and spars. He regularly attends shows and events, demonstrating the craft and inspiring other young (and not so young) people. In an industry where we desperately need young entrants, Isaac stands out as an example that coppice work remains a viable career for young entrants.



Isaac finally being presented with his beautiful trophy by Pete Snelson of Dorset Coppice Group.

Image - Pete Etheridge

The actual award, a beautiful turned bowl made by fellow Dorset Coppice Group's (DCG) Mark Codling, did a fair few miles before being presented. It was taken to the weekend Gathering in Lancashire by Tim Roskell of DCG and then, because Isaac wasn't able to be at the Gathering, returned to Dorset by longtime DCG member Pete Snelson who formally presented the bowl to Isaac.

Pete Etheridge



Twiggy presents the Lifelong Contribution award to Lorna Singleton at the 2023 Gathering.

Lifelong Contribution to Coppice Crafts - Lorna Singleton

A native of Cumbria, Lorna studied Social Anthropology and Archaeology at Manchester. Yearning to leave the city led her to voluntary work in her native county and signing up for a three-year apprenticeship in coppicing and woodland crafts with the Bill Hogarth MBE Memorial Apprenticeship Trust in 2010. Before starting the apprenticeship, she attended a swill basket making workshop with well known Cumbrian craftsman, Owen Jones. Although she didn't realise it then, the die was cast and she is now a respected craftsperson in her own right. She and Owen now manage a woodland together and work very closely with their independent businesses.

Rightly proud of his friend's achievement in winning this prestigious award, tutor, mentor and long-term collaborator, Owen Jones said: "I was delighted to hear that Lorna had won this award. It is richly deserved, particularly this year, after organising the innovative and ground breaking 'Wood, Weave, Water' course. Lorna

is very dedicated to split-wood basketry and continues to develop her work with new styles and ideas but always resourced with materials from the local coppice woods, which she cares passionately about. Well done Lorna.

Hedgelaying Officer appointed

Russell Woodham, from Dorset Coppice Group, has agreed to take up a voluntary role as NCFed's Hedgelaying Officer. He is a very active member of the National Hedgelaying Society (NHLS) and will be the voice of NCFed in relation to issues surrounding hedgelaying - supply of stakes and binders; government grants/support for hedgelaying as well as liaising with external stakeholders such as the NHLS.

Russell will work with NCFed's affiliated supporter and coppice groups to encourage group members to work together to create robust local supply chains for coppiced hedgelaying products. His role will also include keeping abreast of developments within hedgelaying and reporting any major changes in policy/markets that could affect the coppice industry. Any hedgelaying related queries should be addressed to hedgelaying@ncfed.org.uk

For further general information about the National Hedgelaying Society (NHLS) <https://hedgelaying.org.uk/>

A portrait of the hedgelayer

As those of you who follow the world of portraiture will know already... 2023's Ondaatje's Prize for Portraiture's gold medal for the most distinguished portrait of the year was won by artist Toby Wiggins with his beautiful painting - 'Winter's Work; Russell Woodham at rest while laying a hazel hedge in the Dorset Style'.

Not surprisingly, Russell attended the exhibition, held at the Mall Galleries, during which he met actor, Edward Fox, who later commissioned him to lay hedges at his Dorset home. A most enterprising way to find work.

The Ondaatje Prize For Portraiture - The Royal Society of Portrait Painters (therp.co.uk)



Our new Hedgelaying Officer, in oils, caught at rest

On the move

Sadly, we are losing two key players from our management team. They will be sorely missed but both will remain involved with the Federation in one way or another.

Pete Etheridge – Director

Pete, an active member of Dorset Coppice Group (as well as Vice Chair and Group Representative) joined as an NCFed Director during the Lockdown AGM of October 2020. With tireless enthusiasm and contributions during his time as a director and by sitting on the External Affairs Sub committee, Pete has helped NCFed move forward in its aims to serve the coppice industry. Before becoming a director, Pete was involved behind the scenes with NCFed, working on initiatives to bridge the gap between conservation organisations and commercial coppice workers.

He says:

It has been a pleasure to serve the membership of NCFed for the past six years as an officer and as a director for the past three years. The time has come however, for me to step down, pass on the baton, spend more time with my loved ones and pursue

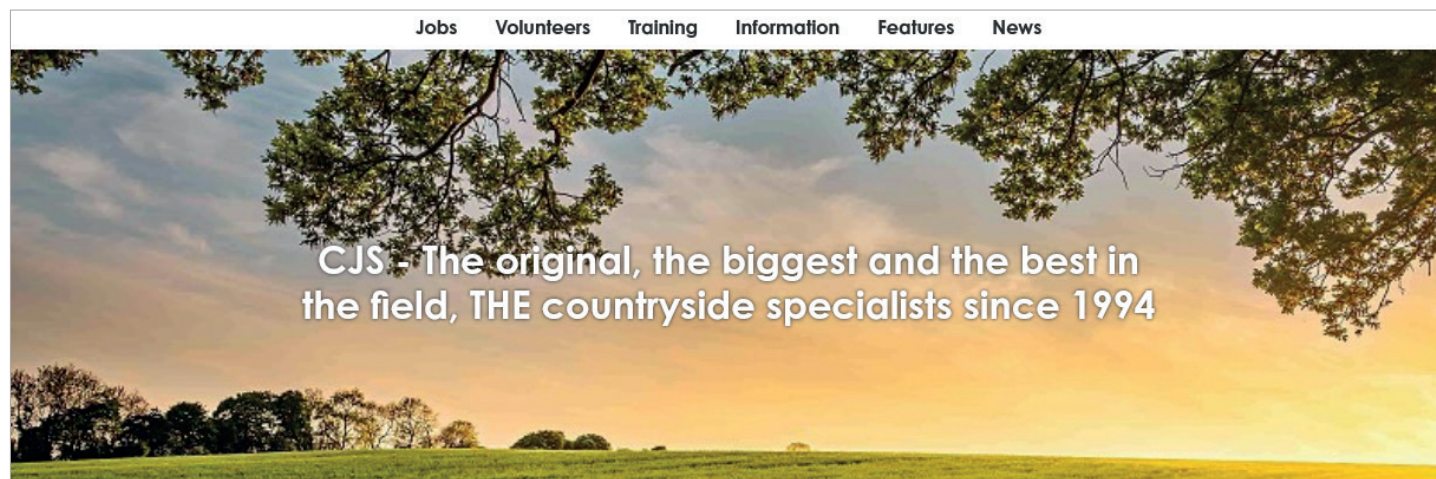
some different adventures while I still can. I remain convinced that NCFed is a vital voice for the coppice industry and I look forward to seeing it go from strength to strength. It will always have my utmost support."

Pete is still looking to be involved with the NCFed management team on an advisory panel, the formation of which is at an early stage.

Tean Mitchell – Company Secretary

Tean, also a member of the Dorset Group, took on the role as NCFed's secretary in December 2021. She carried out a whole host of duties very efficiently, always sending out agendas and minutes on time, for the various Zoom meetings that directors, the group reps and other subcommittees held. She always kept participants on track and contributed enormously to all meetings, drawing on her extensive knowledge and experience of coppicing, training, woodland restoration, and environmental project management.

Tean will continue to be involved with NCFed's Training and Standards Subcommittee (TASSC).



<https://www.countryside-jobs.com/>

CJS - what's that then?

Crazy Jumping Snails? Complete Juniper Solutions? In reality nothing quite so exotic; CJS stands for Countryside Jobs Service, which as a happy reader once memorably said “does what it says on the tin”. Countryside Jobs Service is the original countryside specialist, publishing countryside, conservation and wildlife sector covering, jobs, volunteers, news and training. CJS is an ethical business working in harmony with environmental professionals to conserve the British countryside and natural world, motivated by conservation success not profits. Although primarily known for our job service, CJS is much more than a recruitment site, we also publish a wide range of countryside, ecology and conservation related content.

From small beginnings

In July 1994 the first edition of CJS Weekly consisting of several pages of job adverts landed on doormats. Dispatched from the dining room table of founders, Niall and Anthea Carson and created in the small, two person office of their house on the edge of the North York Moors, CJS was an extra to their Rent-a-Ranger business. When not busy with all that, they were hands-on with their small but growing woodland on the hillside above the house. By the time I joined the team in 1998 the woodland, like

CJS, was established and Niall was rotationally coppicing the wood, mostly hazel, to fuel the woodburner and make an eclectic range of walking sticks. He says these days there's enough dead and dying ash to keep the stove fuelled although coppicing continues if not quite as actively as before.

Growing up and moving out

CJS grew faster than the hazel and it wasn't long before the expanding team needed more space so moved to the current office in Goathland, still on the moors but without the woodland backdrop. Times change: Niall retired in 2006 to spend more time in his woodland and on his other more relaxing interests. Today CJS has three newsletters which are all digital - no more stuffing envelopes late into the night on a Saturday, and like many places, the pandemic brought a change in working practices.

The CJS Team now works from home on flexible hours, but that hasn't affected our level of service and we're delighted that it continues to grow. As well as the original jobs provision there's now a full information service as an integral part of CJS. We are publishing several features each week looking at all things countryside careers and land management related, which are heralding a return to more traditional management practices – yes,

including coppicing! There have also been articles on meadow management in conjunction with solar power generation, conservation grazing and we published a feature about the resurgence of scything.

Many of these traditional methods are brand new to our more recent graduates and new starters and a range of courses explaining the theory and practice can now be found alongside listings for chainsaw certificates and the use of GIS, on the CJS Training Directory. If you run one why not add the details? It's free to advertise. We can help you find apprentices too – if that's your thing.

Reasons to be proud

We're proud that nearly thirty years on from that first edition we hold true to Niall and Anthea's principals of putting back as much into conserving the countryside as possible. CJS is run along Social Enterprise principals. We still offer standard free lineage in CJS Weekly, in fact it's possible to advertise virtually anything (anything relevant to the countryside that is) free of charge with CJS.

Where to start?

The website is the best place to explore all that CJS has to offer. We describe it as a one-stop shop for everyone in the countryside, conservation, ecology and wildlife sectors. You'll find adverts for jobs and volunteer placements,



Two of Niall's hand made walking sticks, the long one is hazel, the shorter holly.

there is a daily news service, the full training directory of courses, both short CPD type and longer qualifications, and professional events plus all those fascinating feature articles - quite a bit more than the original sole function of a jobs service for countryside staff.
www.countryside-jobs.com

Kerryn Humphreys, CJS Editor.

I've lived and worked on the North York Moors nearly all my life, I graduated in Ecology from Sheffield University more years ago than I care to think about, I started working at CJS in 1998 and took over as editor in 2006.



Furniture for hire

Mark Clarke's innovative take on greenwood chairs

A few years ago I read a Heritage Crafts Association (HCA) story about a Red List of Endangered Crafts. This included coppicing, green woodworking and furniture making. Having trained as a furniture maker many years ago at the London College of Furniture, but

never having joined the industry, I felt inspired to make a return to my childhood aspiration - to make furniture.

I graduated in the late 1980s - not a good time to enter the industry. I decided to retrain as a teacher of Craft Design and Technology and had been working in this capacity for over 25 years before finding Forest Schools. What a breath of fresh air! Why had it taken me so long to find this way of working with children and adults? Outside, beyond four walls, fresh air, space; it's beneficial in so many ways for children and staff. I had never considered green woodworking until I delved into Forest School training which has now taken me back to furniture and the amazing craft of coppicing.

Over the last seven or eight years, I have studied both green woodworking and coppicing, learning from practitioners and experts; as well as by trial and error. I joined the East Midlands Coppice Group and have attended the Annual NCFed Weekend Gathering and AGM for the last few years. It's a highlight of my year and an honour to spend time with members who make a living in the woods. I wish I could have joined you many years ago. So now I spend my winters working with small woodland owners, farmers and volunteers helping to restore and regenerate old, neglected, overstood hazel coupes into managed coppice. It's hard work, often with little reward in terms of decent quality and volume of usable materials, but I see it as valuable and beneficial to future generations.

As spring arrives, I move inside to a barn in Lincolnshire and begin building furniture from last season's coppiced hazel. In 2023 I managed 120 rustic chairs and 100 sweet



Coppiced hazel furniture for hire.

chestnut and hazel benches. The furniture is for hire to outdoor, woodland based events, weddings, banquets and festivals. I have just returned from a successful bushcraft show where all the furniture was used. The chairs and benches are simple in design but have many qualities other hire furniture perhaps does not.

They use natural, locally-sourced materials, cut from coppiced woodland. There's no waste - I use everything; thicker rods (hedging stakes), for chair legs; ligger rods and spar gad sized materials make great rails and beanpoles, and binders make good materials for seats.

Furniture, in particular stick chairs requires large quantities of material. Some active coppice workers say there is a healthy living to be made from coppice work, supplying materials for traditional products, but I suggest, as the HCA have discovered through their research, that the markets are limited and having alternative outlets for things such as larger-scale furniture can be a good thing.

Mark Clarke, Forest Cool Crafts, East Midlands Coppice Group
markgclarke@gmail.com

Inside Rick Smith's cabin

I built a timber-framed cabin in Dorset and have written a few thoughts about the process. I wanted to use as much wood as possible, cut and milled myself and although I could not produce every last piece, the rest is all local in origin, milled nearby or here onsite.

The original design was 10m x 4m, based around eight 6" x 6" oak posts braced and pegged. All of the oak for the posts and braces was originally graded as firewood, but we managed to put it to better use. I added a utility room, 1.5m wide, running the whole 10m length. That gives space for fridge, freezer, washing machine, wet clothes, wet dog, chainsaw gear and the like. The utility room's posts and braces are in ash, and the (internal) cladding in oak. Because it will not be exposed to the weather, it seemed a waste to use valuable and durable oak posts when ash would do. The cladding is long oak boards, classed as sawmill waste. The oak has cracked and split as it dried; but used internally, that does not matter, and in fact enhances the beauty and character, as does the contrast of the dark oak with the pale ash.

I decided to keep the essential structure of the main cabin visible showing the beauty and simplicity of the timber frame. The walls, floor and ceiling are all in ash, from a single tree in the woods here. It was a twin stem and one stem split out several years ago, damaging and compromising the rest of the tree. So we climbed it, dismantled the canopy; felled the remaining stem and the whole lot was hauled out and milled here in the yard using a mobile sawmill.

It would have been a lot quicker and easier to cover the oak braces with the ash, rather than cut each individual piece around them, but something would have been lost. When people ask how much it all cost, I answer firstly that I have not yet tried to work it out; but also that it could have been done more cheaply, if price alone had been the sole yardstick. However, I



Inside Rick Smith's cabin – no profligacy, just dedication, collaboration and passion.

wanted something beautiful as well as utilitarian, and I feel we achieved that. One of the best bits is the alder used to clad inside the shower room. It was an idea I had because of alder's association with, and resistance to, water. I left the wood for a while to let it dry and then spalt, which produces a beautiful, warm, honey-apricot colour, streaked with black and cream.

I should make it clear that I am neither a builder nor a framer, so I did not really do any of the work as such. In fact, it was all a collaborative project and depended on the skills and knowledge of other people. I contributed the original idea and vision, and a lot of the timber, and then gauged what was and was not possible from the advice of others. It is not perfect, but it does encompass many good things, and I have always taken the view that the best way to learn about anything is to do it. So I now have a good idea of its weaknesses and strengths, and how these might be addressed. Also, we all learned a lot by virtue of sharing skills and knowledge. This I intend to use in another build (in the pipeline now). Even all the highly skilled people learned something. That is the beauty of collaboration.

A few years ago, I bought Edward Parker and Anna Lewington's book 'Ancient Trees - trees that live for a thousand years'. I had some examples of wood from a few of the species cited in the book, so I thought it would be interesting to collect as many as possible.

I am writing this on my laptop, sitting at an eight foot long table made from deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), a tree we felled in Corscombe, the next door village. I have doors and window frames made from cedar of Lebanon, a beautiful black-streaked sweet chestnut worktop (which came to me classed as firewood), a monkey puzzle bowl, an olive bowl, a small table made of giant redwood and numerous things made out of oak. I'm still working on the other species. I'm not sure that I'll ever get bristlecone pine or *Welwitschia*, but it's a project. You never know. I will probably fail to name all the tree species in the cabin, but some others are: silver birch, masur birch, pear, larch, tulip tree (*Liriodendron*), holly, *Robinia* (locust), Gleditsia (honey locust), common buckthorn, hazel, cherry, mulberry, Judas tree, *Albizia*, field maple, gorse, laburnum, western red cedar, elm, walnut, beech, poplar and willow.

The cabin is an attempt to reflect an ethos, a way of thinking that values what is local, what is simple, what is intrinsically beautiful. There is a story to be told in every object; and not just the wood. I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to build the cabin, something many



Rick Smith's cabin.

people would love to be able to do. We live in a world defined by shocking profligacy, and indifference to nature. All human wealth derives from nature; there is no other source. Nothing comes from the Moon or Mars. It is all of the earth. If we destroy nature, as we are doing, there is no economy. It really is that simple.

Until the politicians grasp that, all the talk about climate change and loss of biodiversity is essentially academic. With a structure like this cabin, the debt to nature is very obvious. I know where everything came from, more or less.

Rick Smith - Member of Dorset Coppice Group.

Swallows, Amazons and Earthburns

Brian Crawley is President of Coppice Association North West (CANW). In their late 50s he and his wife embarked on a career change into coppicing, principally making barbecue charcoal. He made a presentation during the Gathering in 2023, about earthburns; not he says, about earthburns in general but rather, a specific site for them. Such was the interest in his presentation, we persuaded him to give us the gist here.

I had always been aware of the traditional way of making charcoal in 'charcoal earthburns' - a stack of wood covered with earth to limit the burn's oxygen intake. The receipt of a set of photographs of a charcoal earthburn from David Jones, who was a patient of my daughter



The burn site before lighting. The bank is is where the Swallows came down to meet the charcoal burners.

(a dental hygienist), encouraged my interest in the subject. David's photos were of an earthburn which had taken place in 1972 and were an extract from his book "A Lakeland Camera". I was given a copy of the book only recently.

I later discovered that the charcoal burn had taken place as a result of a discussion between Mike Dow, Treasurer, in the early days, of Haybridge Nature Reserve, in the Rusland Valley, and Mike Davies-Shiel, a very prominent local archaeologist. They enticed a local woodland worker, Jack Allonby, who had a retired uncle, Tyson Allonby, himself an ex-charcoal burner, to do an earthburn. Jack was helped by Bill Norris who regularly helped Mike Davies-Shiel and lived in the same village as Jack. Mike Dow directed a film made of the burn; Bill Norris narrated. I was put in touch with Mike Dow through CANW's secretary Alan Shepley, who had worked with Mike in earlier years, and I was given a DVD of their film "Charcoal Burners of High Furness". Although not necessarily my way of doing an earthburn, it was historically interesting.

For many years I had been fascinated by the children's visit to the charcoal burners, in the Swallows and Amazons film and had always wondered where it was filmed. A gentleman on a charcoal making course which we ran, exclaimed to us that he was there when it was filmed and very soon took us to the site, not far from where he lived in Ickenthwaite in the Rusland Valley. He was amazed that they got a double decker bus up the lane to the site for the children's classroom. However, our inspection of the site in Glass Knott Wood on the very narrow, winding and steep Corker Lane up to Ickenthwaite, and another look at the Mike Dow film and David Jones's photos convinced me that this was the same site.

I can't remember how I first got in touch with Sophie Neville, who played Titty in the Swallows and Amazons film, but she has a blog which gives some interesting details about "The real Charcoal Burners – who we met whilst filming Swallows and Amazons". I was able to comment on the blog as well as passing on a photograph of the site taken many years after filming.



A very good outcome.

It became an obsession with me to carry out another charcoal burn on the site at some time. That time became significant in 2023 when I realised that the original filming had been done in 1973, 50 years previously. It also turned out to be that the NCFed Weekend Gathering was being held in the North West.

Glass Knott Wood is now owned by the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and permission to carry out the burn was requested and eventually approved with enthusiasm from them. At the same time, Dan Sumner, a colleague and local charcoal maker, was looking for instruction on how to do an earthburn and we agreed that this was a good time for me to show him. The burn took place two weeks before the Gathering and we had a fascinating visit to the site from Jack Allonby's son John, together with Bill Norris's daughter June, who had lived in the same small village, Spark Bridge, 50 years ago.

A young John Allonby had been at the site with his father during both shoots. We had a few very good helpers and some other visitors from LDNPA, Cumbria Woodlands, Coppice Association North West, The Arthur Ransome Society and Ruslands Horizons.

Brian Crawley - CANW

Down in the Willow Garden - The growing and sale of willow rods

A Brief History - Andy Alder of Woodscape

As part of our family micro business, we grow and sell willow rods. Most people think of the Somerset Levels as the main willow growing area of the country, but here in North East Derbyshire and the Trent Valley, willow growing was a huge industry supplying the pottery trade with baskets to transport pots.

“..... the valley of the Trent and its tributaries is the most important district in England, for both osier growing and basket making, not only for quality of output, but also quality of rods, and care given to their cultivation, and for the fineness of the basketry done there”.

Rural Industries Survey, Agricultural Research Institute, Oxford, 1926 – authors – FitzRandolph and Hay.

In our village of Pilsley NE Derbyshire there stands a pub called the Willow Tree which was once a brewery started by Reuben Hollis in 1878, when his basket making business began to decline.

Osiers traditionally grown in the area:

Salix triandra – almond leafed willow

Salix viminalis – common osier

Salix purpurea – purple willow

Salix daphnoides – violet willow

Salix basfordiana – basford willow

Salix sanguinea – Belgian red willow

Salix decipiens – white Dutch or varnished willow

Salix pentandra – bay willow

Our willow growing projects

We grow mainly osier willow (*viminalis* Super Hybrid) and small amounts of purple willow. We have grown willow in a variety of ways and experimented over the last thirty years, planting and managing osier beds for owners including Nottingham Trent University and Skegby



Vigorous growth from setts approximately 4 months old.



A willow cut being started and our Rowan scratching his head whilst remembering what I said I wanted.

Horticultural Unit. Maintenance work in the willow beds starts in October and November for general weeding and anything else that needs to be done and cutting starts in February as we sell our rods green and not seasoned.

Planting and managing willow

We plant out new beds using setts (foot long willow rods about the diameter of your thumb), planted 1 foot between setts and 2 feet between rows so we can mow and weed. I plant setts in November and let them grow for three years before the first cut. This year however we have been planting them in nursery beds to be planted out as young trees in November. They grow vigorously in the first season but most of the stored energy is used in root development.

We started many years ago by cutting coppards (three feet high stools - a cross between coppice and pollard). We did this to prevent rabbit damage to new growth, and because it would save our backs, or so we thought. As some of our beds grew older, rods began breaking off the stools and rot set in; we now cut to the ground and seem to have a longer growth period. I think we get longer, straighter rods this way as well.

We leave a stub of around an inch long – if you leave longer stubs, you will get more rods, but the butt ends will often arch out or grow around each other, the short stub encourages shoots from the root system as well.

Rotations

We tend to cut willow on one, two and three-year rotations. It depends on your market or need for craft materials. Basket makers tend to buy one and two-year-old rods and the sculpture, hurdle and continuous fencing makers like two and three-year-old rods.

If I am paying I would be happy with up to £150 a coup, depending on the amount, quality, and sizes – but £60 to £100 is reasonable. At a higher rate we of course need to cut and sell more to make a profit. I tend to hand cut about a third of an acre a year but bed sizes do vary. I try to tie it in with what I know is in the order book. I usually cut with Rowan (my lad) and often we have a friend or volunteer helping out. We cover their costs and feed them.

I have cut in the past with both billhooks and sickles but find we are quicker with good quality loppers and secateurs. Wolf-Garten, which are very good, hold an edge and are not that expensive. The phone usually starts ringing in March and April and the order book can get quite full. The willow is roughly graded on site for transportation and taken back to the barn where we grade properly.

Grading, bundling, holting and all that stuff

Once everything is back in the barn, we start



French bundling machine with measuring stick for checking bundle sizes.

grading into small, medium, and large rods. These are refined as we bundle. This system seems to work for us.

It's always nice when a massive pile of rods turns into an organised barn full of orders. The next step is to bundle the rods. We use a French bundling machine which works on a lever and ratchet system to grip the rods for tying. We use a bat to level up the butt ends and then tie – using baler twine on large orders and sisal string on smaller orders. One of the secrets is tying very close to the butt ends to stop the butt ends kicking out – tie too high up the bolt and they splay out. If there is going to be a lot of handling during transport of large bundles, onto lorries for example, we find baler twine better.

I suppose the next question is pricing. As a rough guide, pricing is as follows: (we like to keep the maths easy).

Small rods - £10 for 50 rods

Medium rods - £7.50 for 25 rods

Large rods - £10 for 20 rods

Setts - £1 each

Basket rod bolts - £45 each.

We recently planted a new bed of around an acre in size, so this will come into production in 2023/24.

*Andy Alder, Woodscape, East Midlands Coppice Group.
07879 465020 | Andrew.alder@outlook.com*

The Field Station - Broadening the case for UK wood

The rise of biobased materials presents an immediate and vital response to the climate crisis. It sets out to disrupt the carbon-intensive construction industry that contributes a staggering 42% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Materials with negative carbon footprints, such as hempcrete, strawbale, and regenerative wood products, have garnered interest as tools to decarbonize the construction sector and counter energy-intensive materials like concrete, aluminum, and steel. Individuals, companies, and nations are rallying behind these alternatives to reduce their carbon footprint and drive the transition to a more sustainable economy.

Central to this transformation is a pivot towards local supply chains. Presently, around 20% of construction emissions are attributed to the extraction, processing, and transportation of building materials, contributing approximately 5% of the world's annual greenhouse gas output.

Prioritizing localized material networks is a fundamental step in this global transition, as it has the potential to curb transportation emissions while enriching landscapes with economic, cultural, and ecological value.

In the UK, timber is the greatest culprit as 80% is imported, with the majority being fast-growing C24-rated softwood. Even those softwoods grown locally are primarily non-native and managed through monocultural plantation practices, which carry a host of environmental concerns. Remarkably, native broadleaf forests, which constitute over half of all UK wood, remain largely untapped in construction. This is primarily due to the dominance of softwoods, which grow rapidly and meet the industry's demand for material uniformity.

To facilitate this transition, the industry should embrace new technologies and milling methods capable of handling the diverse qualities of hardwood timber. Furthermore, this approach can gain momentum by embracing carbon-



The Field Station is accessible from the public footpaths at Hooke Park.

sequestering and regenerative woodland practices such as coppicing, pollarding, and continuous cover forestry. These sustainable practices ensure a perpetual supply of timber without compromising the ecological value of the land.

Enter Hooke Park, an active woodland and educational campus in Dorset, with a mission to bring this vision to life, and where I attended graduate school. The Architectural Association's Master's program at Hooke Park focuses on harnessing non-traditional woodland products in construction through material research and 1:1 prototyping. The campus is a testament to innovative timber structures that honor the entire tree, from the sturdy stump to the majestic crown timber. One of the latest constructions is the Field Station, a 100m² pavilion that boasts an impressive space truss roof meticulously crafted from beech branch braces. Its striking form is a blend of woodland-inspired whimsy with the futuristic allure of an H.G. Wells spacecraft. The design challenges the notion that branch timber is only fit for firewood, aiming to unlock the full potential of every part of the tree.

You may be surprised to learn that 20-30% of the wood fibre from mature broadleaf trees is left scattered on the forest floor as broken limbs and bark residue after the felling process. Embracing the spirit of "estover," my classmates and I ventured into the forest, scavenging branches of

the perfect size. The fabrication process required a digital workflow that combined manual material collection with 3D scanning and robotic milling. The result? All 256 distinct branch braces feature identical end joint geometries—a feat that would have been impossible just a few years ago. However, thanks to the rapid progress of computer vision systems and the widespread availability of digital fabrication tools, this method serves as a proof-of-concept for processing diverse materials on a large scale.

These branch braces, with diameters ranging from 50 mm to 100 mm, can be sustainably harvested using various woodland management techniques. Notably, coppicing has demonstrated its historical success in yielding construction-grade materials from sweet chestnut and oak. The UK will need to expand its timber production to meet an expected threefold increase in market demand by 2060. Promoting the use of small-diameter roundwood and preserving the woodlands that produce it will become increasingly important in bolstering the local timber supply. The Field Station stands as an exciting harbinger of developments on the horizon, having recently earned recognition as winner of the prestigious 2023 Wood Awards—an accolade that spotlights excellence and innovation in British timber architecture and design. The industry is taking notice.

With generous support from the RIBA Research Fund, I have continued the research started at Hooke exploring the potential for small-diameter roundwood construction and assessing the carbon reduction for this proposed supply chain.

I invite anyone who shares this vision and curiosity to reach out to me at garrettknelli@gmail.com. I'm eager to learn more about the species and products currently harvested from UK coppices and woodlands, as well as the sustainable management strategies that can bolster the cultivation of construction-grade small-diameter roundwood.

If you'd like to experience this movement in person, consider visiting Hooke Park. The Park's public



Beech branches were robotically milled using a KUKA KR-150 and circular saw mounted to a lathe.



A unique fabrication workflow produced 256 braces with identical end geometries.

footpaths are open to all, providing opportunities to see several experimental structures and the magnificent woodland. For a more comprehensive view of the entire campus, you can join our scheduled campus tours held on the first Monday of every other month.

To plan your visit, please contact Hooke Park administration at Hookeadmin@aaschool.ac.uk



Garrett Nelli is an architect from Seattle, WA and graduate of the AA's Design + Make Postgraduate Programme. His proposal "Branching Out: Make Use, Not Waste" was selected as a 2023 RIBA Research Fund grantee. Please contact at garrettknelli@gmail.com

Charcoal News - Jim Bettle, NCFed Rep

I hope everyone had a good charcoal season. Obviously it differs for people depending on their location but it certainly was a strange summer of weather for us in Dorset.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the Weekend Gathering this year and as we go to press I am still awaiting news on how any charcoal discussion groups went... more to follow.

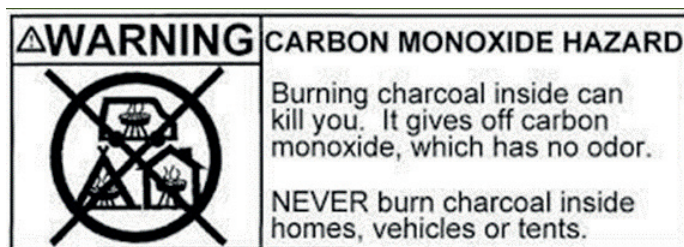
The reason for my absence? I was lucky enough to be conducting some charcoal training in Georgia (I will tell more in future editions), but for now I thought I would share a photo from their equivalent of B&Q... nice to see faggots are still properly appreciated in other parts of the world.

We have been liaising with Dorset Trading Standards over the past couple of months regarding the inclusion of carbon monoxide warnings on our charcoal bags (such as the one pictured). It would seem that although they are unable to compel us to do so, they are very serious in their assertion that we should. They also admit that they can only advise businesses in their area. I would respectfully suggest that all UK producers work towards adjusting their bags to contain this warning, and I have amended the Charcoal Guidelines on the NCFed website to reflect this.

Finally a new player in the UK charcoal industry is emerging. Based in London, the gentleman wants to create a business - *The House of Charcoal*, an



Faggots in Georgia's equivalent of B&Q.



online shop offering many brands of UK produced charcoal. Indeed he may already have spoken to you. I shall be circulating an email to all those registered on the directory outlining his proposition, but if you are a producer and would welcome someone doing all your selling for you, but are not included on the NCFed directory, drop me an email: charcoal@ncfed.org.uk to ensure you are included in any future communications.

Jim Bettle, Dorset Charcoal Co, Dorset Coppice Group
jim@dorsetcharcoal.co.uk

The National Hedgelaying Championship

On Saturday 25th September, we as members of the newly formed Whittlewood Forest Coppice Group, spoke on behalf of the National Coppice Federation by manning a pitch at the National Hedgelaying Championship at Stanford Hall, Lutterworth.

We were amongst other stalls ranging from Stihl equipment to walking sticks to bric-a-brac to rustic handmade furniture and some decent food and beverages. We had an early start to set up but the weather remained clear as we familiarised ourselves with our surroundings. The hedgelaying competition bordered the perimeter with the stalls and marquee within.

Our aim was to make people aware of the National Coppice Federation's *More Coppice into Productive Management* project and to promote the importance of coppice management, whether that be on a small or large scale. We were also able to let people know about their local coppice groups and where to find other key information. We took some of our products to show what could be made from a woodland's understorey materials.



Whittlewood's stand at the 2023 National Hedgelaying Championships

As promised by the organisers, there were a hundred competitors and hundreds of spectators and it felt like we engaged with most of them come the end of the day. It was nice to meet new people and catch up with old friends and to talk about our shared love of and enthusiasm for all things coppice.



Plenty of silverware to be won by top hedgelayers.

The four of us came away feeling happy and warm from the whole experience. At this point we would like to thank anyone reading this who spoke to us; it just reinforced the importance of having the National Coppice Federation represented at these special events. A big thank you also to Margaret and Steve Budding for their great work behind the scenes and of course the National Hedgelaying Society.

Jon works with brother Dave, Matt Griffiths and Bohumil Masnicak. We mainly work the coppice for David Faulkner Forestry, supplying stakes and binders, faggots, spars, liggers and many other hazel products. We also lay hedges and supply tipi poles nationwide.

Jon Faulkner
01280 422101.
www.whittlewoodconcept.com

Bio-chain oil

If you use a chainsaw, electric or petrol, you use chain oil. This sticky oil is pumped into the groove of a chainsaw's guide bar when the throttle is activated. The chain distributes it around the bar, providing essential lubrication and cooling. Without that oil both chain and bar would fail very quickly.

A few years ago I bought a new Stihl 261, which has served me well so far. The chain oil reservoir cap sometimes doesn't close securely if the tank is filled to the brim, and although usually I spot this, on a couple of occasions I have picked the saw up and immediately noticed the cap off and oil on the floor. The first time I despaired at the pollution it caused - one small patch of soil destroyed.



Image - Guy Lambourne

Stihl 261 thriving on a diet of bio chain oil.

Then I remembered the spill was bio-oil, used after working on a local authority site, so perhaps my action wasn't quite so bad as I had first thought. My initial feeling of horror on pouring oil into the soil was misguided however. During the course of day's coppicing - processing and cutting, I might throw (as a pretty modest estimate) two tanks of oil into the wood via the saw chain, without the slightest concern. That's 0.54 litres of oil. I work in one hazel coppice on and off through any winter, so if I run the saw, say for twenty days (figure plucked out of the air), that's over ten litres of oil dumped in the wood! I've been working this wood for fifteen years or so, so I must have deposited 150 litres of oil in it and others in the area. I immediately imagined taking seven, twenty litre containers and pouring them into a coppice coup amongst the flowers and grasses... don't quote my figures but they are accurate enough to be horrifying.

Since then I've gone against most advice and bought bio-oil. In my experience, dealers and other users I know, turn their noses up at the stuff, suggesting that some unspecified horror will result from its use. I can say very happily that five year's hard work with my 261 sees

it running very sweetly, with no noticeable increase in chain or bar wear. The same is true of a Stihl electric saw I bought four years ago. I do keep a one litre container of mineral oil with which to soak chains, particularly before a lay off period. Whatever the producers say, bio-oil sets when left on a chain for a while and that's not great for the saw.

Aspen suggest that "Because Aspen Bio[Oil] Chain is biodegradable, it does not cause pollution of groundwater and sprayed oil is completely broken down once in contact with the soil flora". <https://aspenfuel.co.uk/products/aspen-oil/>

One has to take these claims with a degree of wariness but it must be what we should be wanting to hear. Bio-oil is much more expensive than its mineral counterpart, but I feel strongly that we shouldn't continue to chuck mineral oil - oil that will remain and accumulate - into the environment, cut after cut.

Guy Lambourne, East Anglian Coppice Network.



Image - Guy Lambourne

Weekend Gathering

The NCFed Weekend Gathering and AGM 2023

I think this year's was the sixth Gathering I've attended. Whilst I won't tell you it was the best; that would be unfair on others, it was a most enjoyable, informative and friendly experience, set in a picturesque bit of the UK, new to me. I've not been involved in a Gathering's planning but having experience of other large outdoor events, I know something of the stress such an experience can bring. So first I offer hearty congratulations to all those involved at Coppice Association North-West for making it such a great weekend. The North Lancashire or perhaps South Lakes setting was marvellous.

Arrival, late, just after 10am, at a camp site on a cold, wet October morning. Having risen before five, thinking about a fire and an armchair, but immediately swept into an atmosphere of bonhomie, chat, handshakes and back slapping, laughter, failing to remember names (and some faces - sorry), cups of tea... the torrential motorway quickly fades.

I'm directed to meet outside a shower block in a wood with other group reps. We vote on the Coppice Peer Awards. Back to base, more tea. I find myself watching Owen Jones splitting steamed oak. What a pleasure, such skill – it looks easy; I know it isn't. I am slightly in awe of Owen's calloused hands. It's good to finally meet someone whose name I have known for years.

Jane appears with a beautiful hazel flower, the result of a session with Twiggy. She's pleased with herself. An entertaining conversation with Andy Basham and Kit Davis about things thatchy and spary. Mark Ricketts shows me the leather billhook holster he made during a leatherworking course led by Tony Morgan – I wanted to do that. The holster is very good - copper bits.



Owen Jones making a swill basket in split oak



Splitting oak for shingles



Lorna Singleton presents the prize for 'hand carved spoon or spatula' to Steve Fowkes.

The first of several simple but really very good meals – soup and bread, venison stew (of course), crumble... superb Guinness cake, large chunks of wholesome flapjack. I could easily write about just these, never mind coppicing.

The afternoon's more formal. We break into groups for discussions (reports elsewhere). Usually fascinating, mine, co-operative working, is no exception; and straight into prizes for the Coppice Craft Competition, presented by Lorna Singleton. A lot of the work is remarkable. And here I will mention that three prizes went to members of the East Anglian Coppice Network – just saying. So much skill in such a flat part of England.

Twiggy presents the Coppice Peer Award for Lifelong Contribution to Coppice Crafts, to local celebrity, Lorna Singleton. An attempt is made to present the Best New Entrant award to Dorset's Isaac Stobart. Turns out he's in Dorset. The beautiful prize bowl, disappointed, heads back down the M6. More about CPA elsewhere.

We managed to miss the beginning of Charlie Whinney's keynote talk, held, rather wonderfully, in the dark, around the fire; his subject, Regenerative Design. Interesting discussion follows. Here I will quote Jane - later and two pints in: "there aren't many groups of people who would listen to each other so respectfully without needing charring" - coppice workers. Kit Davis produces large quantities of cider from somewhere. Top local duo Reubens Train perform splendidly by the fire, but deprived of amplifiers they struggle to be heard – not sure J. Hendrix would have tolerated that.

Sunday morning frosty. In a tent! But crisply sunny so not all bad. Tool auction follows breakfast - failed to buy the tool I didn't need - probably not bad. Spare flapjacks and Guinness cake need a home - definitely not bad!

Visits. We drive to Gait Barrows NNR – somewhere in NW England. A walk led by Duncan Goulder of The Coppice Co-op and



Voting for the coppice peer awards



Natural England's Jim Turner talks about dormice at Gait Barrows NNR.

Natural England's Jim Turner takes us through lovely hazel coppice. Loads of questions and discussion. Quiz Duncan on the running of a co-operative. He says: "It's like socialism in action". Wow! Still mulling this over. There's limestone pavement at Gait Barrows, saved in the 1980s, from the quarrymen (probably not those ones), by campaigners and determined local authority planners. Possibly the highlight of the weekend for me though (sorry everyone else) was tiny hazel dormice footprints in an ingenious tree mounted tube, loaded at each end with charcoal dust.

The long, tedious drive south rounds things off - fairly bad. All the stuff I should have been doing comes to mind. The weekend cost money: I could be buying things. And time: I could be working or something. It's cold. It's wet. But I am full of ideas, warm feelings of belonging and a renewed enthusiasm. It's one occasion where I don't have to explain what we do for a living.

Guy Lambourne, East Anglian Coppice Network

The Joys of the Annual Weekend Gathering and AGM

The trip up to Lancashire was much anticipated. Having booked on the panel-making course with Twiggy I was confronted by the fact that despite restoring coppice for 11 years, the amount of hazel splitting I have done is minimal. I shouldn't have worried, everything worked out well.

Twiggy took time to explain and demonstrate again and again until I had at least a basic understanding and the realisation that as in everything we do, time on the tools and hours of practise are the way forward. A great day and the best way to start the weekend.

This set the tone for a wonderful weekend where I learned much, talked a lot and certainly laughed a lot more. The venue was perfect, the food exceptional and the organisation first class. I have never left an event feeling as inspired as I did when leaving on the Sunday afternoon.

Mike Taylor, West Midlands Coppice Group

Friday Courses

These were a great hit. Twiggy taught the making of Westmorland panels, a style of hurdle promoted and named by Colin Simpson who was a terrific craftsman and long time member of Coppice Association North West. He wanted a woven hazel panel to utilise the short lengths of straight hazel produced by coppicing, before we realised that deer fencing was the only way to go! So with a top and bottom rail there was no need to go round and back. This is not as easy as it sounds. The trick is not splitting your top rail as you try to force the sales back into line. Bravo Twiggy for getting everyone through!

Fan birds were amazing, Steve Tomlin of scything (amongst other things) fame was able to get everyone producing a beautiful hanging bird in such a short space of time.



There's something about the smell of hot split oak - Owen Jones and friends



Twiggy demonstrates the subtleties of splitting hazel.



Twiggy talks Mike Taylor through the Westmoreland panel process.

Time wise the most ambitious course was perhaps the riven oak basket, having both Owen and Lorna keeping the participants on track was so necessary, with the multiple processes of cleaving, boiling, riving and dressing out the oak strips before the complex weave could commence. It was so exciting to see the finished results.

Tool sheath Making with Tony was another intense ask, the quiet concentration of the leather workers paid off though and they all made lovely and essential bill hook guards. Last but definitely not least we had Charlie Whinney with his introduction to steam bending course. Everyone was enraptured by his skill and creativity with the wood and there were some brilliant sculptural pieces produced. Thanks so much to all the tutors for sharing their specialist knowledge and skills.

Saturday's Keynote Speech

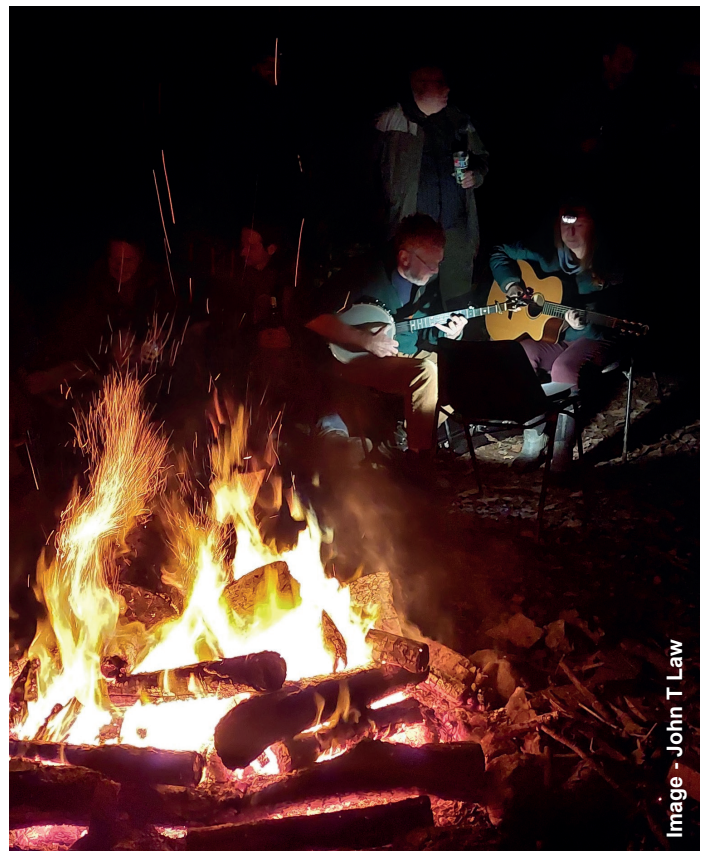
Charlie Whinney spoke on Saturday night. His subject - Regenerative Design - although fairly esoteric, his talk held the gathering around the fire enthralled as he spoke of the importance of working with nature and how we as coppice workers fit in with the solutions provided by this way of thinking. Don't please ask me to explain now about entropy. I thought for a moment, as Charlie was speaking, that I had a handle on it but that moment has now passed! What moved me though, was the feeling of shared hope and endeavour and the willingness of everyone who spoke in the discussion that followed to engage with the need for change. It is no longer defensible to pursue the capitalist dream.

Thank you Charlie, for giving us all food for thought.

Rebecca Oaks, Coppice Association North West



NCFed Chair, Dave Jackson and Director, Tim Roskell deep in something.



Live in Lancashire - Reubens Train

Group discussions at this year's Weekend Gathering

Every Gathering includes discussion groups on a selection of important themes and this year's was no exception. In the past, reporting back has been a bit hit and miss so we thought notes made by each group should be published. A bit long for Cleft Stick, they are available at:

<https://ncfed.org.uk/news/gathering-discussions/>

Do take a look, there are interesting, thought provoking words that may prompt you to get involved. If you have something to contribute to the debate, let us know via news@ncfed.org.uk

The discussions for which we received notes were: Planning, Training and Apprenticeships, Coppice Co-ops.

Thank you...

On behalf of all, a huge amount of thanks to: Rebecca Oaks, Edward Mills, Duncan Goulder, Darren Jones, Lorna Singleton and Kath Morgan, Brian Crawley. Rob Fulton should get a special mention as top volunteer, he did more than his fair share of parking duties.



Duncan Goulder of the Coppice Coop and Jim Turner of Natural England talk hazel coppice.



Winner of the willow basket category, Aurora



Basket entries in the coppice craft competition



Bowls in the coppice craft competition

From our Groups

Autumn News from Wye Coppice

Trainees complete their first month

Jack, Jazmin, Olive and Will – our successful candidates for the 2023-2024 Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) traineeships - have got off to a great start. Will already had some chainsaw training and a bit of experience, so he got straight down to work on several sites. The other three successfully learnt how to use their saws safely and have been working at Wet Meadow, near Trellech, and Troy Park, closer to Monmouth. Find out more about how they've found things and what they're looking forward to in this news story: www.wyecoppice.co.uk/news-oct-2023-trainees-off-to-a-great-start



Trainees (L-R) Jack, Jazmin, Olive and Will.

Linear Park Natural Flood Management

The more experienced members of the team were pleased to work on an interesting job at Linear Park, Cinderford, in September. Severn Rivers Trust, in collaboration with the Forestry Commission and Severn Trent Water, are leading a project to promote natural flood management in the Severn Vale catchment. They called on Wye Coppice to fell a number of trees into Cinderford Brook, and to secure woody debris in the water to interrupt the flow and create varied habitat. We were happy to help with this nature-based solution.



Natural flood management in action.

Coppice Coupes and more

We have a number of cutting projects on the go, including a multi-site contract with Natural Resources Wales in Monmouthshire, Usk and Caerphilly. One coppice coupe at Wet Meadow has been completed in good time, giving the trainees an opportunity to learn how to use a winch for extracting wood from less accessible places. Other recent work includes removing ash affected by dieback at a beautiful site near Bath, in the grounds of Combe Grove wellness retreat. The ancient woodland here has not been managed for some eighty years, so we will be continuing with other low impact works to benefit the local ecology.

Community Programme

Our free community programme, supported by the Wye Valley AONB SDF, kicks off on 28 October with Coppicing Basics at Wet Meadow. This informal introduction to coppice work will run from 10am till 2pm, on site at Wet Meadow. Drop us a line for more info at: info@Wyecoppice.co.uk and see the full programme on our Courses webpage: <https://www.wyecoppice.co.uk/courses-and-training>

Caroline Weaver, Wye Coppice CIC

Dorset Round Up

As I sit and write this update from Dorset, the dew is hanging heavy on the grass. The fallow deer in the wood opposite are rutting; I can hear the roars of the bucks drifting over the meadow. The rooks outside my office window are becoming increasingly vocal and the house martins are starting to congregate before their long autumn migration. This all means that the cutting season has started.

We've once again had a busy summer season. Many of our members attended shows and events either to demonstrate their craft or to drum up business for the winter months. Our own Wood Fair was held in May and we were once again blessed with glorious weather! With well over 200 people attending, the event continues to go from strength to strength. It was a bittersweet event this year, as Ern Steel was no longer with us. Ern once made a miniature hazel hurdle that he used to keep on the mantelpiece of his Estate cottage. His family kindly gifted it to Dorset Coppice Group on Ern's death and it was presented, by Ern's family, to Darren Hammerton who won the hurdle making competition (again!). A touching moment, as Ern had also bequeathed his splitting hook to Darren, which I had the privilege of passing on to him that very morning.

With the launch of our new website (www.dorsetcoppicgroup.co.uk), re-commencement of monthly training courses, our ongoing monthly volunteer work parties, and monthly green woodworking days – we're certainly showing no signs of slowing down as the darker months of the year arrive! We wish you all well for the remainder of the 2023/24 cutting season.

Pete Etheridge

East Anglian Coppice Network – member cull and mechanical cut

Admin is hardly news but by the time you read this, we will have shed some members. Since our inception, we have taken a relaxed stance on welcoming new 'members' – anyone who filled in our form, we accepted with open arms. This seemed a bit unfair on those who chose to pay their £10, but it did mean we had a fairly long membership list. It's taken almost a year (things roll slowly in the flatlands), but we have just deleted those on the email group who still hadn't paid. Thankfully that left us with a surprisingly healthy twenty-something paid up members.



Mark points out the surprisingly neat result of mechanical tree shears on an old hazel stool.

A recent meeting at the Wildlife Trust BCN's headquarters in Cambridgeshire, was well attended and enthusiasm suggests we definitely have a future. The afternoon saw us at Waresley Wood SSSI, one of a suite of beautiful woods, close to Cambridge, where we chatted (of course) and saw the results of Mark Ricketts' groundbreaking work with tree shears to get overstood hazel into rotation. Combined with replanting, the results looked good. Mark and the Wildlife Trust deserve congratulations for trying something radical; something that seems to be working. Mark has promised to write something for the next edition of Cleft Stick!

Guy Lambourne

The West Midlands Coppice Group

We have only managed to meet once this summer for a variety of reasons and this is something we intend to change going forward. Although the group is small, just fifteen members, there is certainly enough noise and banter going on.

Contact has been made in various ways with Forestry England and both the Staffordshire and Shropshire Wildlife Trusts. These contacts are only in the very early days and have not yet led to much in the short term.

Meetings take place in my woodland near Telford and consist of general chat about



what we do and ways of networking. This helps develop understanding between us so any up and coming business opportunities can be offered to those in the group capable of fulfilling them.

Discussions are always held about finding woodlands to work for those without opportunities and how to make coppice work viable in our area. The desire to keep the group informal has always been important to us and I think it will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Mike Taylor, Group Rep for The West Midlands Coppice Group.

Terry's Top Tips

Metal finishes - Gate hinges and more

Well, ol' Terry here does like to try and do his best by his clients so I always like to use good quality fittings for a gate. Bright steel, zinc plated, bright zinc plated (BZP), electro-galvanised, hot dip galvanized, stainless steel; these are just a few of the terms you'll come across when looking at buying gate furniture (hinges, catches, bolts etc).

If my clients really want the very best, top-notch fittings, stainless steel is the one, but it can come with an 'eftier price tag than galvanised. For example, a pair of 300mm long, stainless steel T hinges could set you back some £35-45 depending upon the quality (lightweight, heavy weight) whereas a galvanised pair might be £5-10. Then don't forget the catch or closing mechanism you'll need as well. All that said, if the client wants it then I quote for it.

Stainless steel (A2/316 grade) has a high hardness level providing corrosion and oxidation resistance, with a good prevention of wear and tear. It does not rust. However, unlike A4 grade stainless steel, it should not come into contact with salt. So, if you're supplying something that is going to be in a salty environment (coastal) then you must use A4 stainless steel. A4 grade fittings are generally more expensive than A2, but in the long run can be more cost-effective due to the lack of maintenance or replacement required.

I likes to keep a note see (in the back of me old, well used notebook) of all the best deals for the best product for my clients (there's them other folks out there that keeps that information on one of those spreadsheet things). Sadly, my local suppliers in town don't always have in stock what I need, so I have to resort to going online, but BEWARE! Some online retailers will say something is galvanised and it isn't, or when it arrives on your doorstep you'll find, very annoyingly, for example that one part of a hinge set is galvanised and the other part is only BZP.



Metal Finishes Chart-Courtesy of Gate Mate-Superior Gate Furniture

1 Screws and bolt fittings with a Net-Coat® finish

2 Stainless steel screws

3 Bright zinc plated screws and washers

4 Hot dip galvanised T hinges and washers

I have wasted so much time in the past having to complain, return the goods, get my money back and then start all over again.

Many fittings will come with a fully hot dipped, galvanised finish and the screws will either have a Net-Coat® finish (made by Tite-Fix Ltd) or a zinc plated finish. WHAT, zinc plated? Talk about spoiling the gate for a ha'p'orth of tar!

At least the Net Coat treated fixings (available in silver or green colours) will, they say, exhibit high corrosion resistance BUT that's only in pressure treated timber. You CAN use stainless steel screws with galvanised finishes but there is a small risk of bimetallic (galvanic) corrosion occurring due to the two differing materials.

However, it is not normally considered to be a serious corrosion risk, except possibly in severe (marine type) environments. Stainless steel screws are always recommended where you are using oak, sweet chestnut, larch and cedar otherwise ordinary screws will show signs of corrosion due to either tannins or acetic acids found in these timbers.

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And finally, blacksmith-made bespoke gate furniture. These amazing craftsmen and women of fire and steel will often use a treatment process, on their beautiful hand forged hinges and the like, that involves quenching the hot metalwork in, so I have read somewhere, a combination of beeswax, boiled linseed oil etc. Please someone, educate ol' Terry 'ere and tell 'im and the good readers of Cleft Stick how it's done.

If anyone thinks they can help Terry further his knowledge of this technique, please do get in touch via news@ncfed.org.uk

FINISHES

There are a number of finishes available across all our ranges; offering different levels of corrosion resistance and a choice of price points.

SELF COLOUR
Unfinished steel. These products are typically used in fabrication, and will naturally rust very quickly – this should be removed prior to galvanisation.

EPOXY BLACK/EPOXY BROWN
Polyester powder coating is baked or sprayed onto the raw metal, resulting in a smooth finish. Provides limited corrosion resistance on moving parts as the finish can flake off, meaning the steel will corrode more easily.

BZP
Also known as Zinc Plated. These products have been finished with a process of electroplating zinc onto steel, resulting in a shiny finish about 6-8 microns thick. Although zinc plated products are typically cheaper than galvanised ones, they usually rust more easily due to the thinner coating.

BZP/YP
Also known as BZP/Yellow Passivated. These products have a zinc plated finish with an additional yellow passivating treatment. This extra layer increases the corrosion resistance and gives the product a light yellow appearance.

PRE-GALVANISED
These products are fabricated from sheet steel that has already been galvanised, giving a finish approximately 20 microns thick. The resulting corrosion resistance is between that of hot-dip galvanising and zinc plating.

GALVANISED
A 'hot-dip' or 'spelter' galvanised finish approximately 60 microns thick. The product is dipped in molten zinc, resulting in a thick, rough coating that has a high corrosion resistance.

PREMIUM BLACK
A 'hot-dip' galvanised finish with a black polyester powder coating on top. This double layer results in a high level of corrosion resistance.

RUSPERT® GREEN/SILVER
Ruspert® is a rustproof treatment technology with superior corrosion resistance. An organic coating, containing aluminium flakes, and special rustproof paint passivates the metallic layer, preventing intrusion from corrosive factors and controlling the self-sacrificial galvanic effect of zinc.

STAINLESS STEEL
Stainless steel is an iron alloy with high levels of chromium, giving it an external layer that is virtually rust free. Our premium range products are made from marine grade 316 stainless steel – ideal for coastal and other high-moisture environments.

CORROSION RESISTANCE

	No level of corrosion resistance
	Limited level of corrosion resistance
	Low level of corrosion resistance
	Medium level of corrosion resistance
	High level of corrosion resistance
	Almost total corrosion resistance

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;
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 cooperate, 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 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.

**National
Coppice
Federation**

