

Living Woods

No.60 SUMMER 2021

MAGAZINE

**PLANTING A
WOODLAND**

**DOG DAYS
OF SUMMER**

plus

BOOKS

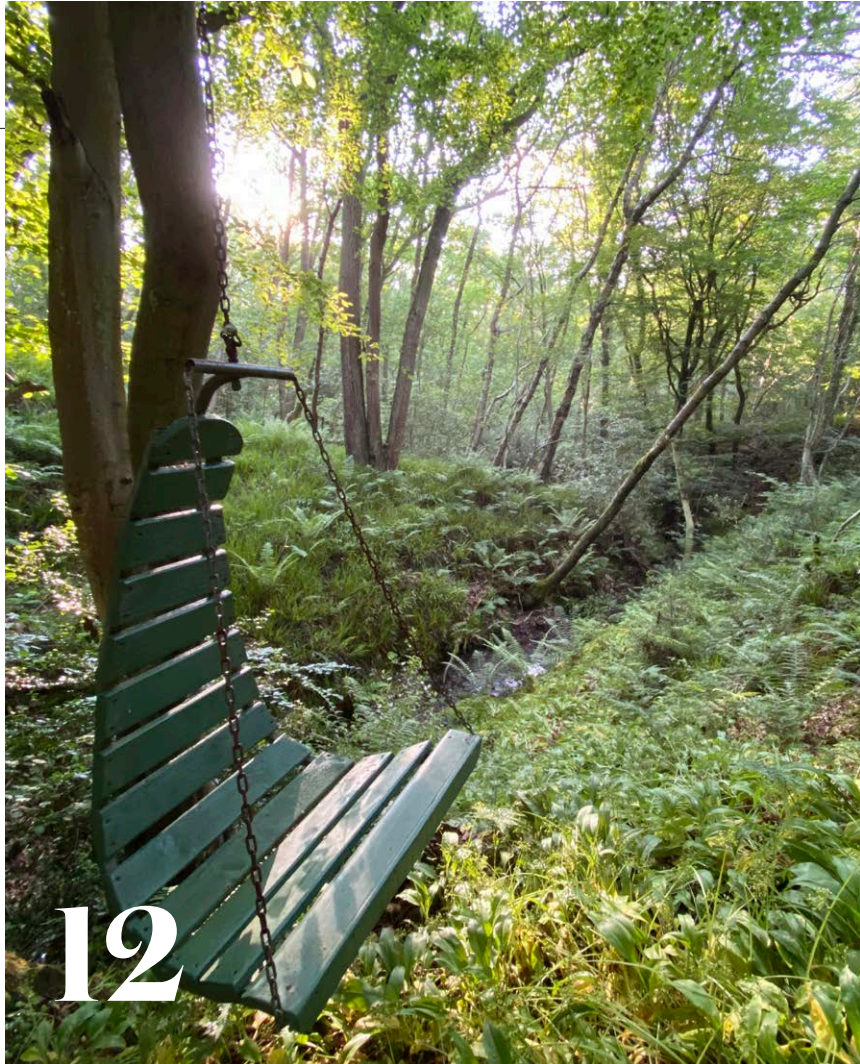
BIRDLIFE

FELLING LICENCES

CONTENTS

With a dismal spring behind us, we're pinning our hopes on a warmer and more sociable summer. More than one of our contributors mentions the beneficial effect of woodlands on their mental health and we celebrate that with a feature focused simply on enjoying woodlands with family. However, management is not neglected and Caroline Gooch takes us through the finer points of when and how to apply for a felling licence, while Alex Bienfait explains how he harvested local sweet chestnut coppice to make his home more energy-efficient. With the publication of the government's England Trees Action Plan, we look at tree-planting and the opportunities for individuals to plant a woodland from scratch. Finally, we launch Twitter – Nick Gardner's entertaining new column on woodland birds.

Judith Millidge Editor
judith@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk



Woodland chair swing. (Photo Caroline Bales)



COVER PHOTO
Base camp in the woods.
(Photo: Caroline Bales)

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@Woodland News

LAUNCH OF THE ENGLAND TREES ACTION PLAN 2021–2024

Launched by the government in May, the **England Trees Action Plan** is an attempt to turn around the widespread loss of nature in England. It sets out a long-term plan for trees, woodlands and forests and includes a vision for the economic, environmental, and social benefits that we will realise with the growth of new trees and woodlands.

The Plan pledges to treble tree-planting to approximately 7,000 hectares of woodland per year by the end of this Parliament (May 2024). It is supported by over £500m of the £640m Nature for Climate Fund and is part of the government's commitment to delivering net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and achieving the goals of its 25 Year Environment Plan. A series of funds will support the creation and management of woodland, including £6m for the Urban Tree Challenge Fund over the next two years. The Plan includes commitments to

- improve woodland management
- boost tree cover by both creating new woodland and by planting trees in urban areas
- provide annual maintenance payments for ten years.

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) has pointed out that

ambitious planting schemes need long-term management and is calling for a sufficiently skilled workforce to manage them for decades to come.

RFS Chief Executive Christopher Williams said: 'We need to make sure anyone involved in planting schemes has the required skills and understanding, which the RFS is well-placed to provide. Without this attention to detail, all the

benefits of carbon capture and storage and other public benefits from new woodland creation will not be secured.

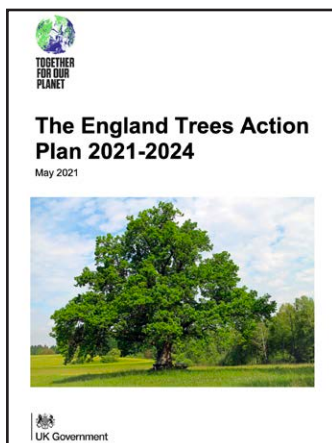
'We need to encourage school leavers to consider forestry as a career; to help FE colleges and universities deliver courses that support the foresters, researchers and managers of the future and we need to support apprenticeships into the future.

'Crucially, further outreach is needed to upskill experienced land managers who may find themselves planting or managing woodland rather than agricultural crops for the first time and to support foresters looking to climate-adapt existing woodland

using novel species or management techniques.

'Long-term comprehensive and linked skills and education policies, which go well beyond the term of this Parliament, are needed across all ages.'

Several new planting grants are available for woodland owners and managers – details overleaf.



WOOD SHOWS 2021

A number of wood shows have made cautious plans for events this summer. This is not an exhaustive list – please check with organisers before visiting.

Timber Festival
2-4 July, Feanedock, National Forest

Great Yorkshire Show
13-16 July, Harrogate

Strumpshaw Tree Fair
14-15 August, Norfolk

Wilderness Gathering 19-22 August, West Knoyle, Wiltshire

Wychwood Forest Fair
22 August, Witney, Oxfordshire

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair
28-29 August, Dorset

Surrey Hills Wood Fair
11-12 September, Cranleigh, Surrey

Belmont Wood Fair
11-12 September, Faversham, Kent



GRANTS FOR TREE-PLANTING



Trainhugger

Grants are available to members of the Royal Forestry Society, mainly to those who are ineligible for other grants or specifically for small plantings under 500 trees. Grants will be awarded to RFS and RSFS members who want to plant trees to increase resilience to pests, diseases, or climate change.

This grant is funded by **Trainhugger**, a new train ticket search and booking service for tree-huggers, which will donate 50p from every booking to the RFS for tree-planting.

Queen's Green Canopy (QGC)

Trees are available from the Woodland Trust to celebrate the 'Treebiliee', the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. We are all urged to 'plant a tree for the jubilee' and free tree packs are available under a number of criteria. Community woodlands and schools are most likely to benefit under this scheme.

England Woodland Creation Offer

With £15.9 million available in its first year, this new flagship scheme is administered by the Forestry Commission to help landowners and land managers create new woodland. It will support the creation of diverse woodland types at different scales, from a minimum size woodland of just one hectare per application. It provides extra incentive for the creation of new broadleaf woodlands, especially those which extend existing priority woodlands, benefit water habitats, or provide access to the public. The grant will cover standard capital costs for tree-planting (up to a per hectare cap of £8,500) and annual maintenance payments of £200 per hectare for 10 years.

More details here.



STRIPPING SEASON

Grey squirrels pose the largest threat to the health of broadleaf trees and bark-strip relentlessly between April and August each year. Damage to trees can be more obvious at this time of year, as vulnerable tissues are newly exposed beneath the protective outer bark.

The **UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA)** is gathering evidence of the damage grey squirrels inflict upon broadleaf trees. They are keen to see evidence from woodland owners in the form of photos or videos.

If you can help, please email evidence to info@squirrelaccord.uk with any credits or details you wish to be included.



PIONEERING PROJECT TO SAVE OAK TREES LAUNCHED

The UK is home to around 170 million oak trees, and more ancient oaks than the rest of Europe combined. Native oaks support over 2,000 species of insects, birds, mammals, and fungi, but climate change, human activity, and outbreaks of tree disease are affecting the health of our forests.

Future Oak is a pioneering project investigating the role of beneficial microbes in fighting diseases that affect the Britain's native oak trees, in particular, Acute Oak Decline (AOD). Scientists at Bangor University, Aberystwyth University, Forest Research and Sylva Foundation, will study how oak microbiomes are affected by environmental change and disease.

Forest managers and owners are invited to help researchers discover how declining health is affecting oak trees across the UK, and to understand views on possible new treatments. **Please take part in this survey**, which closes on 11 July.

VIEW THROUGH THE TREES

Get off my land! **JULIA GOODFELLOW-SMITH** ponders woodland owners' response to trespassers.



Photo courtesy Neill Theasby/Greograph

My heart skipped a beat as the sun, filtering through the trees, glinted off the blade of the Yorkshire billhook spinning through the air. My eyes widened and I held my breath as it dropped back towards the earth – and the hand of our visitor. The laughter that had been ringing through the trees just moments before had stopped. I could hear a buzzard's call cutting through the silence as the blade sliced downward.

Would he catch it by the handle, or lose some of his fingers? Why on earth was I allowing an almost total stranger, who had already told us that he was dyspraxic, to juggle with our double-bladed Yorkshire billhook?

Wind back 20 minutes, and Mike was fuming. 'What are those people doing, walking along our track?' He started down the path to intercept them, ready to tell them to leave in no uncertain terms. 'Hold on a sec, Mike. Are they really doing any harm?' I ventured. We discussed it for a moment and agreed that he would change tack.

Instead of sending them packing, Mike invited them in, along the path to our fire pit. And here we were a little later being treated to some incredible tricks and heart-stopping moments.

Everywhere else in the world, we embrace contact with strangers because you never know what amazing experiences it will lead to. As a result, we have laughed, danced, been invited into people's homes, even been given places to stay. But in our woodland, we had

become territorial. Although we consider ourselves to be guardians of the woodland rather than owners of it, it was our space, only to be enjoyed by others on our say-so. Although we were always polite to uninvited strangers, the message was clear: 'Get off my land!'

This is a sentiment that I know other landowners share. As I walked the South West Coast Path last year, I became very aware of the number of 'Private Property' signs. Every time I saw one, I bristled. Why shouldn't I be allowed to walk across that field, if I don't do any damage? Why shouldn't I be allowed to wild camp, as long as I leave no trace?

And yet in our woodland, it is a different matter. We want to protect it from damage, we want the wildlife to thrive. And we want it to ourselves.

However, from now on, we have decided to fight that instinct to shut everyone else out. We have decided to welcome strangers into our woodland, instead of discouraging them.

It feels hard, and it might backfire yet, but if we hadn't started to take this approach, we would never have met Dan and his friends and had half an hour of their jovial company. They would never have learnt about what we are doing in the woods and why. And at the end of the day, they were just out for a Sunday stroll, they were not going to cause any harm. Except possibly to themselves, of course!



Fripp Meadow, Maiden Newton, Dorset, with the River Frome meandering along the edge of the meadow.

As the England Trees Action Plan is launched, and the government extends financial support and expertise to those involved in tree creation schemes, **ANTON BASKERVILLE** looks at how to go about planting your own woodland.

The UK has seen a recent surge in interest in planting trees, particularly from individuals, families, small businesses and community organisations. As the reality of our changing climate becomes more apparent, and awareness of the benefits of tree-planting grows, there is an increasing appetite for acquiring land and creating woodlands from scratch. As well as the environmental and conservation benefits, planting a woodland offers the opportunity to take on a project which can be nurtured and curated over many years, transforming the land, and leaving a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Woodland creation is an opportunity we can all grasp.



Forester Dave Dolby planting oak, walnut, lime and Douglas fir on a site near Headley, Hampshire.

What are the benefits?

Trees are a wonderful mechanism for sinking carbon into the ground. Over a year, 1 acre of woodland will absorb around 6 tonnes of harmful carbon dioxide from the environment, while producing around 4 tonnes of breathable oxygen. This equates to the amount of carbon dioxide released from driving your car 26,000 miles, and the amount of oxygen needed for 18 adults to live for one year.

From a conservation perspective, establishing new woodland creates habitats and food sources for wildlife, reduces the risk of flooding and prevents soil erosion through new root networks. Planting and enjoying your own woodland, as well as

connecting with nature can also benefit individual wellbeing.

Location, location, location

Former pastureland is available for sale throughout the country as meadows suitable for tree-planting. Features to look out for include woodland shaws, undulating topography, water courses and well-established hedgerows. Such features are often undesirable for farmers as they are inefficient from a commercial perspective, but they are much sought-after by those interested in rewilding. A nearby established woodland is even better, as it will provide a seed source which will aid natural regeneration of the land.

Some environments are simply not suitable for tree-planting – carbon-rich peat bogs or heathland, for example, where the addition of trees would destroy valuable established habitat.

Right tree, right place

Although planting native broadleaved species is generally encouraged, there are lots of options which will all be of benefit and there is no 'right' way to do it. It is a good idea to consider the ground one is planting on. Alder or willow, for example, are best suited to wetter ground. Fruit and nut trees, with gorgeous spring blossom, are often popular. One of the benefits of planting a woodland from scratch is the opportunity to design the landscape of the future.

This can be achieved through both species selection and complementing the natural topography of the land with rides, glades and woodland paths.

Future forests

A can-do attitude and willingness to learn will take anyone a long way when it comes to planting trees. Prior experience is not essential, and anyone can turn their hand to it. It is often fun to assemble a group of family and friends and plant the trees over a weekend. Contracting out the planting to a professional forester always remains an option.

There is an urgent need to increase the tree cover across the UK: the government has a stated ambition of planting 30,000 hectares of trees every year to increase woodland cover in England to 12% by mid-century.

The results will be of benefit to everyone: it will improve air quality, provide habitats for wildlife and natural spaces for people to enjoy. Larger-scale corporate offsetting certainly has a role to play in this, but there is a dynamic and developing movement of people-powered reforestation, which is driven by small-scale planters with a passion for the environment who together, bit by bit, are transforming Britain's countryside.

Anton Baskerville manages tree-planting projects for Woodlands.co.uk

FROM FIELD TO FOREST: planting your own woodland

In 2002 **DAVID PARKINS** began to fulfil a lifetime's dream to plant his own wood. He recounts how he went about it and some of the problems he overcame along the way, and offers some tips for planting and caring for a brand new woodland.

This July, our Northumberland wood celebrates its 19th birthday. What began as grass is now a flourishing woodland.

The wood replaces one I saw bulldozed as a child, inspiring me to plant another. Many years later, I bought a 6½ acre field in Northumberland to make my dream a reality; I was committed to the long haul. Establishing the wood was never going to be easy.

Cold winter days of hard, repetitive, work lay ahead and in summer little reprieve from weeding and mowing. In autumn came the failed sapling tally, a blunt reminder that only the trees choose to grow. At the start I knew none of this and I began the job without either grants or the kit I needed for the job. Although I quickly attained chainsaw and pesticide (herbicide) application qualifications, to start with I simply surveyed my ground.

The land

The field rose gently northwards and midway dipped slightly before flattening out. There were plenty of worms in the pH-neutral clay soil – good for most trees. I walked the length and breadth, making a sketch plan of the stands before mowing the tracks between.

My plan was to plant a sustainable, mixed-age wood of standards and coppice. This type of wood is managed by felling selected mature trees as timber and replacing them, preferably, with self-seeders from neighbouring trees. Coppice is cropped more often, perhaps every seven to ten years on a rotation. The whole wood then remains pleasing to the eye and an enjoyable place to be.

Saplings require shelters, or guards, supported by wooden stakes for protection against herbivores. My chosen tree density was 1,200 per acre, equating to over



7,000 trees in the entire woodland and more after it expanded to 9½ acres. I intended to plant-up the stands over several winters to aid uneven ageing. Storage and sheds came to mind.

I spoke to the local planners, who regarded the area as an ‘open country’ location and permitted the installation of green, or brown, shipping containers. Remember this was 2002! I bought two, one to secure my growing accumulation of tools and the other, once I had fitted a gas hob, became base camp.

Planting

Next came site preparation. I intended to plant 1,200 trees a year and, with climate change in mind, divided the field into stands of mixed species. Each stand would have a dominant species, with others alongside for diversity.

I was eager to begin. I bought a tree spade and a pair of high quality wellies. My planting technique evolved and the daily number of ‘plants’ steadily increased. It was muddy work, so I kept clean footwear in the van for the trip home.

Between late August and end of September I cleared the site and purchased guards and stakes. I used 1.2m tube guards attached to 1.5m x 25mm² stakes. I planted my first hazel in November 2002.

For genetic assortment I sourced the trees from two nurseries, one south of the Tyne, and the other north of the Tweed. One sold bare root stock, the other cell grown, so I accidentally ended up with both types.

I used the stakes to mark the tree positions about two metres apart and avoided planting in straight rows. I quickly learnt that using a post driver is quicker and safer than a hammer for knocking stakes into the ground and

ABOVE: A lasting tribute to all David's hard work: a 2019 image shows the stands of mixed planting, divided up by scalloped tracks and rides.

that a mattock is really useful for turf removal. Once the trees were planted, I applied herbicide over a square metre around each stake with a knapsack sprayer.

By the end of March the winter planting work was over and I was able to plan the next stage.

Growing

I checked the saplings the following August and was prepared for the inevitable chore of digging up and burning dead stock. Despite my best efforts 6% of the trees perished in their first year and I ordered replacements for ‘beating-up’ (repeat planting) the following winter.

When trees emerge from the tube they are ready for pruning. The tubes are removed and side shoots pruned off, helping to create a straight stem. The guards are refitted or replaced by expanding mesh tubes. Over the years, continual removal of the side branches produces straight timber and raises the canopy. Eventually, mesh tubes fall off the herbivore- and weed-proof trunk.

New wood weeding is unavoidable. The saplings need regular weeding around and inside their guards for up to three years. Mowing, strimming, herbicides and handwork were deployed to keep the weeds down. Two events, however, were beyond my control.

The water table rose turning some stands into swamps and I added alder to the planting list. Disease struck, killing over 2,000 trees. Chalara accounted for 900 ash. Other maladies dispatched 600 birch, 500 osiers and 200 bird cherries. Their replacements were mainly oak, Sitka and Norwegian maple. Cutting down the diseased



ABOVE: Vital tools for the successful planting and maintenance of young trees.

BELOW: Young saplings spaced two metres apart and protected with expanding guards.

trees was disheartening and the resulting bonfires were huge. Despite these trials I did not give up.

I finally completed the site in January 2020. It would all have been done by 2014 had it not been for the effects of various tree diseases. The planting work was a solo effort, partly because working friends and family are, in law, employees requiring liability insurance. That said, they are welcome as guests and the wood is almost a party venue!

In 2019 I picked 100 woodland acorns and sowed them back home. Sixty-five germinated. In December 2020 the young oaks were returned to the wood and transplanted into a cleared osier stand. The age gap now stands at 18 years between my oldest and youngest trees.

I'd establish another wood by encouraging self-seeders. They thrive amongst brambles and thistles, both commonly found on derelict, rubble-strewn sites. Abandoned airfield anyone?



*David has written a much fuller account of his planting trials and tribulations in his book, **Saplings and Spades**, available priced £9.99 from Amazon and elsewhere For signed copies at £7.50 each, inc. p&p (UK only) email David at ravensandthistles@gmail.com who will send you BACS details for payment.*

LINKS

England Trees Action Plan

UK Forestry Standard blog

Meadows for sale

PLANTING TIPS

Plan your planting

and order the saplings accordingly. Both bare rooted (BR) and cell grown stock (CG) give decent results.

Treat saplings respectfully:

do not throw the bags or boxes around. Remove the string around bare root bundles. Keep the roots moist and store in bag. Leave cell grown stock wrapped. Keep bare roots bagged up until planting – winter sun and wind dry out roots quickly. Carry unwrapped cell grown saplings in a bucket.

Root pits must be wide enough to allow the roots to follow their natural downward spread from stem bottom to root tip. Do not force the root mass into the hole. The pits must be sufficiently deep to bury the roots to an inch (a gloved index finger) above the BR's nursery soil line or the top of the CG's root plug.

Heeling in: once satisfied, gently firm the sapling in using your foot. The stem should be vertical and about two fingers' width away from the stake.

Tubes: Place tubes centrally over the saplings with the stake outside the tube. Make sure the ties have not trapped any stems or shoots against the inside wall. Firm the tube into the ground and tighten up. The tube should be a snug fit next to the stake.

TWITTER

In the first instalment of a regular column, ornithologist **NICK GARDNER** chooses his favourite summer bird, the unassuming globe-trotter, the willow warbler.

Choosing a bird of the season was trickier than I thought. When trying to engage people with the wonders of the natural world, often it seems easier with bold, colourful and outwardly charismatic animals like the goldfinch or those that perform spectacular displays like the swooping peregrine falcon. The one I've decided to shine a light on for this summer might seem like an odd choice, because it's small, mostly greenish brown with the subtlest hints of yellow on its belly and face. At first glance, the willow warbler, *Phylloscopus trochilus*, does not stand out from the feathered crowd. However, I find that hidden gems can be just as inspiring as their outgoing cousins – hopefully you'll agree.

Warblers in Europe, Asia and Africa are not the most 'user-friendly' of birds: many of them are small and various shades of brown and green, some of them are incredibly similar, and they are often infuriatingly hard to observe. Trust me though, it's worth it to get to know them. With the exception of Cetti's warbler, all the species in the UK arrive in spring and depart for their African wintering grounds in late summer-autumn. Willow warblers are among the earliest to arrive in April, just after their close relative, the chiffchaff. These two are confusingly similar but can be distinguished by a few key features: legs, songs and wings. Willow warblers usually have dark legs, where chiffchaffs' tend to be pale – beware, there is some variation here, it's not a guarantee. The simplest identifier requires your ears: the songs of these 'sister species' are completely different, with the chiffchaff's 'chiff-chaff-chiff-chaff' not holding a candle to the simple yet sweet descending whistled phrases of the willow warbler. All my humble (and entirely correct) opinion, of course. The last distinguishing feature actually deserves its own paragraph, so read on...

When people are first learning about willow warblers, they might very well come across the descriptor 'primary projection', in reference to the chiffchaff comparison. Don't be daunted: it's nerdy, but actually quite simple. The primaries are the longest wing feathers, those that form the wing tip. They are the most important feathers for flight. The 'primary projection' is how far these long feathers protrude from the wing tip. In willow warblers, this projection is noticeably longer than in chiffchaffs. It sounds dull, I know, but why might this difference exist? Both of these birds migrate, but it turns out that

willow warblers often migrate significantly further, so they need the extra flying power, hence, longer wing tips. Willow warblers weigh about the same as a postcard, yet fly 5,000 miles each way from sub-Saharan Africa to our woodlands and back, every year. Populations of this species that breed in far eastern Russia have been tracked to fly nearly 8,000 miles in just 100 days - pretty spectacular, I would say!

Habitat

In your local area, the best places to see these oft-overlooked beauties is young, early successional woodland. Look for patches of birch, alder and, of course, willow. For anyone managing a woodland, the importance of clearings and gradual edge transitions cannot

be overstated, these habitats support many insects and therefore attract many birds: willow warblers among them. Lastly, anyone who talks to me about birds for longer than about 37 seconds will know my main advice for bird appreciation – listen!

Check out their songs on xeno-canto.org, have a read of the [RSPB page](#) and go out to admire these understated long-distance champions.



A willow warbler.

(Photo courtesy Andreas Trepte, www.avi-fauna.info.)

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Dryad Wood
North Yorkshire
£115,000



Ladram Bay Wood
Devon
£69,000



Photo courtesy: Dmitry Gladikh/Unsplash

We've all had a frustrating few months being locked up, but summer is on the horizon and with Covid restrictions easing, it's time to enjoy our woodlands again. We asked two owners about how they have used their woodlands over the past few months and their plans for the summer.

Woodland owners are in the fortunate position of owning somewhere to camp and to spend time with as many friends and family as Covid restrictions allow.

Many people speak of their woods as havens and that has never been more true than in 2021. While the Covid restrictions of 2020 meant that many owners were unable to visit their woods, the future seems a little brighter for the summer of 2021. One thing is certain: woodland sales have remained buoyant and it is wonderful to see so many families at the start of their woodland adventure. The press has been full of stories extolling the value of the great outdoors and the benefits to both physical and mental health.

CAROLINE BALES has owned an 11-acre mixed woodland on the Northumberland border for 11 years.

'We visited during the second lockdown which we felt so lucky about. It's a wonderful place for

“

The best thing about it is owning your own little bit of pure unspoiled nature.

You can go there and be completely surrounded but completely alone.

”

the kids to be able to enjoy and is somewhere we feel we can get away from all the stresses of normal life.

I love that my 7- and 10-year old girls can navigate their way around the woodland, keep a campfire going, identify the different trees, forage edible plants and spot wildlife. They don't mind getting mucky and love visiting the woods.

We will definitely be camping a lot

in the summer. We have a camper van but will also pitch a tent, wild camp or sleep in hammocks.

I use my woodland to host women-only wild camping events. I feel women don't often get the chance to enjoy time completely away from families/work/life responsibilities and I want to provide the opportunity to try wild camping, bushcraft and forest bathing in a safe but wild woodland environment.

The mental health benefits to spending time in nature are well documented and everyone can do with more woodland therapy. I have a real interest in traditional wood crafts and greenwood crafts so enjoy woodwork. I teach how to fire-build, make shelters, carve spoons and do different wood crafts.

Unfortunately during lockdown we had a number of break-ins to the secure containers in our woodland and had tools and equipment stolen. This was very upsetting as



it's a really special place and awful to think of someone mindlessly damaging property

This has meant we have had to put up more cameras, more 'private land' signs and be extra vigilant with anyone found walking through the woodland. It has made me more determined to use woodland in positive ways, though.

I love to cook on the campfire. Any stew or soup is an easy meal, or baked potatoes, fried wraps, and full English breakfasts. We've even cooked bread in a Dutch oven. Everyone loves the blueberry pancakes made on a skillet, and grilled banana and chocolate always goes down well.

The best thing about it is owning your own little bit of pure unspoiled nature. You can go there and be completely surrounded but completely alone. There's something healing about spending time in such a natural place. Everything is growing and existing without interference and just as it should be.'

Caroline's distinctive shelter is made from some salvaged stage props and a tarp. It's been invaluable in the chilly spring weather. Caroline also teaches green woodworking and woodland crafts. Follow her instagram page to see more images @wishwell_woods



OWEN GARDNER'S wood in Hampshire was a lockdown purchase. He and his family took possession of 5.5 acres of mainly broadleaf woodland in July 2020 and have enjoyed watching it change through the seasons over the past year. It has enriched the family's life in a number of ways, not least by giving Owen an entirely new (and real, swaying) background for remote working.

“

People's reactions to joining a video conference when you have swaying trees in the background vary, but all of them are very positive!

”

‘We have watched the woodland through the first few seasons to learn and understand our broadleaf woodland better, and have taken delight in the way the woodland changes character over that time. Now we have a better understanding, following the advice we have gained from various experts, and – inspired by those who have been custodians of woodland for decades – we are looking forward to spending more time up there as a family.

We are hoping to increase the diversity of the woodland, so some strategic planting and felling will be taking place to open up the canopy to the young trees. Overall, we are looking forward to enhancing and nurturing the flora and fauna, by removing invasive species, coppicing, providing habitat like deadwood, and planting for enrichment. Our eldest son will take great delight in his trail camera, capturing muntjac and roe deer, badgers, foxes (and the occasional rambler!) exploring our woodland, while our youngest will pass the time away lounging in his hammock.

As the weather improves, I certainly intend to take advantage of dropping the boys at school, and working from the forest. People's reactions to joining a video conference when you have swaying trees in the background vary, but all of them are very positive. It's the very definition of remote working!

Most importantly, and from a mindfulness and wellness perspective, the thing we are looking forward to most as a family is spending time together, with friends, sitting round a campfire with a glass, camping in hammocks, and building memories of playing in the woods.’

Thanks to Caroline and Owen for sharing their experiences and photographs.



The Gardner family have enjoyed observing the changing seasons in their woodland for a year.

Advice for new owners

- Don't be in a hurry to change your woodland. Take a bit of time just to study what you have.
- A chainsaw is not compulsory, but if you do get one, make sure you get trained and wear the appropriate protective gear.
- Draw a sketch map of your wood, noting the different areas such as coppice sections, or older trees or areas of different species, ponds, glades, etc. This will help you decide where to focus management activities in the autumn.
- Do a bit of research about the history of the wood. Old maps can reveal the original purpose of tracks, hedges, ditches and pits.
- Shelter and sheds – don't be in too much of a hurry to erect a structure. See how you get on with a tarp or tent at first.



WOODLANDS AWARDS 2021

Ever evolving, the Awards are back!

ANTONY MASON of Woodlands.co.uk reports.

The Woodlands Awards aim to spotlight and celebrate the hard work, artistry, knowledge and enterprise invested in British woodlands.

'That's fantastic news, great to have something positive to report, in these tricky times.' This is how one winner of the Woodlands Awards 2020 responded. Buoyed by similar responses from the 40 winners in 2020, Woodlands.co.uk are launching the Awards for 2021, with renewed vigour – and encouraging everyone to join in, either by entering themselves for a prize, or nominating others. There are real prizes to be won in many categories: 'The prizes arrived this morning... what can I say except they are wonderful and very generous. Thank you very much!'

Awards categories

There are 14 categories again this year. It is not quite the same list as last year, as two awards have been replaced by two new ones. The Makers in Wood Award is designed to celebrate the best of woodland-related craft work: furniture, turning, jewellery, sculpture, spoons and more. Best Woodland Toilets – a topic described elsewhere as 'close to every wood owner's heart' – calls for ingenuity, aesthetic choices and perhaps a sprinkling of humour.

How to enter

Each of the categories has its own criteria for entry. Some (such as the Woodland Photography Award) depend on individuals submitting their own entries. Some (such

as the Woodland Courses Award) depend on personal recommendations. Others still (such as the Woodland Instagram Award and the new Makers in Wood Award) depend on a mixture of these.

The main idea is that they are all easy to enter. Full details are available on the **Woodlands Awards web pages**.

Deadline for submissions: 31 July 2021.

Any questions? Please email **antony@woodlands.co.uk**

Winners

A panel of judges will draw up shortlists of the best entries, and then award the prizes. There may be a number of winners in each category: all entries judged to be of equally high merit will be awarded a First Prize (i.e. no Second, Third etc).

The 2021 award winners will be announced in September 2021.

A note to past winners: the competition rules say that winners cannot win an award in the same category for a second time, but there is nothing to stop them entering (or being entered) in another category.

Prizes

The prizes (depending on the category) will be a mixture of award certificates, selected woodland books and woodland equipment and/or tools – and recognition!

Details about 2020 winners can be found on the **award winners pages**.



**THE WOODLANDS
AWARDS
SPONSORED BY
Woodlands.co.uk**

Prizes will be awarded in each of the following categories:

AWARDS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Small Woodland Websites
Woodland Photography
Woodland Instagrams
Makers in Wood **NEW**
Woodland Tool
Recommendations
Woodland Huts
Woodland Toilets **NEW**

AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISES

Woodland Contractors
Woodland Tree-Planting
Projects
Forest Schools
Woodland Courses
Community Woods
Woodland Books of the
Year
Regional and National
Woodland Organisations



Forestry Commission Local Partnerships Advisor **CAROLINE GOOCH** explains why felling is often beneficial for the health of woodlands and how to ensure that you remain on the right side of the law.

To the casual observer, owning a woodland and felling trees seem at odds with each other. There is no doubt in the reasonable mind that we are in the middle of both a climate and biodiversity emergency. Woodlands, both native broadleaves and mixed conifer plantations, support a myriad of wildlife and ecosystems, store carbon in their timber and soils, slow rainfall and prevent flash flooding, and of course release oxygen. Why would you buy a woodland just to cut it down?

It is worth bearing in mind that trees and woodlands are multi-functional. Woodlands provide great opportunities for recreation and wellbeing, as well as being a source of timber for construction, fencing, gardening materials and fuel for biomass. The UK imports 80% of its timber; and, incredibly, is the second-largest importer of timber, after China. Coupled with the general absence of large 'ecosystem engineer' species which would normally create natural gaps in woodland, such as beavers and bison, and it's clear that there is a need for active management to ensure woodlands meet all the demands put upon them while being protected

for the longterm in a sustainable manner.

Felling in small woods

So why would you want to fell trees in your woodland? Creating open space, such as rides and glades, can have a wonderful effect on woodland biodiversity. It allows light and warmth to the woodland floor and allows the growth of varied vegetation to support a wider range of fauna such as butterflies. You may wish to thin out some more poorly-growing trees to allow others to grow more strongly, or to create a 'halo' around an ancient or veteran tree to release it from competition.

Coppicing, the act of cutting and recutting a tree and its subsequent regrowth in a cycle, not only provides workable straight stems for produce like cleft fencing, palings, bean poles and pea sticks but it, too, has massive wildlife benefits as it creates a temporary increase in light levels to the woodland floor. Cutting in rotation creates a varied age structure and light levels, widening the benefit to

more species. Or you might want to produce a little bit of firewood or charcoal.

Felling and the law

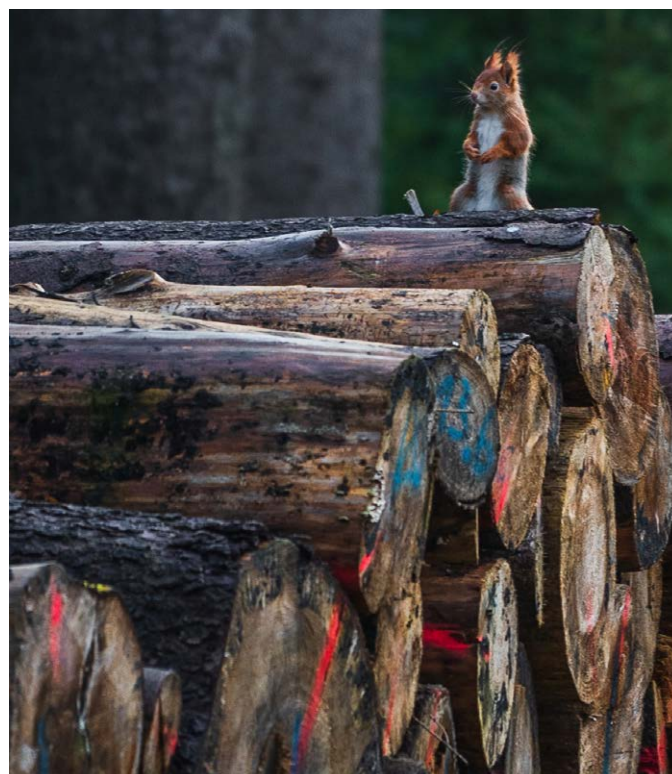
Whatever your reasons for wanting to fell trees, the big question is 'do I need permission?' Trees and woodland are offered a number of protections under legislation. These include the Forestry Act 1967, the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (via Tree Preservation Orders). The Forestry Act is the main statutory regime by which the Forestry Commission regulates tree felling, through the granting of felling licences. The Act requires a felling licence to be in place before any tree in England or Wales can be felled, unless an exemption to the need for a licence applies. The most common exemptions are:

- Felling less than 5 cubic metres of timber per calendar quarter of trees on your own property;
- Trees standing in a private garden;
- Trees with a stem diameter of less than 8cm (the diameter of a baked bean can) when measured 1.3m off the ground; and
- When the felling is authorised by the granting of full planning permission (outline permission is not sufficient, and that the granting of planning permission after tree felling has already taken place does not retrospectively authorise that felling).

Applying for a felling licence

The easiest way to apply for a felling licence is to apply via **Felling Licence Online**, the online portal used by the Forestry Commission to process all felling licences. Once received and assigned, you will be contacted by your local Woodland Officer to arrange a site visit to ensure the work proposed complies with the UK Forestry Standard, and will not have a negative effect on, or cause loss of, your woodland. If your proposal includes anything other than thinning, there may be conditions on the licence which

REASON FOR CONSULTATION	CONSULTING BODY
Any trees are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or are in a Conservation Area	Local planning authority
Your woodland is in a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	National Park or AONB
The site has a designation, such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA)	Natural England
The area contains a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) which may be affected by any works	Historic England
The consultees have 28 days in which to respond and may request additional information.	



In a reminder that felling improves woodland biodiversity, a red squirrel sits atop a sizeable log pile. (Photo by Max Saeling /Unsplash)

require you to restock the trees felled. This could be through natural regeneration, coppice regrowth or by replanting. Once agreed with the Woodland Officer, any conditional licences will be put on a Public Register for comment by the public for 28 days.

It's worth noting that, in addition to the consultation Public Register, your felling licence may also be sent for consultation to other bodies.

As you can imagine, these processes take time, and it's recommended you submit your licence application at least three months before you intend to fell your trees to make sure your licence is granted in time. Once granted, the felling permissions within most stand-alone licences last for five years. Felling licences which are linked to an FC-approved Woodland Management Plan will give felling permissions that last for ten years, so if you have an interest in the longer-term management of your woodland, it is well worth the effort of developing a management plan. The Forestry Commission is there to help you manage and maintain your woodland in a way that meets your objectives in a sustainable manner, whilst complying with regulations, benefiting everyone and most importantly, protecting woodland for now and the future.

LINKS

[Forestry Commission Guides](#)

[Tree felling overview](#)
[Tree felling – Getting permission](#)
[Felling Licences and Tree Preservation Orders](#)

[Blogs](#)

[How much is 5m³?](#)
[Processing 40m³ of logs](#)
[Tree volume calculator](#)

USING TIMBER FROM YOUR WOOD

Many wood owners long to use the timber from their wood in the structure of their own home. For **ALEX BIENFAIT**, that dream came a step closer when he planned an extension to his house, to be built along low-energy Passivhaus principles.

When we started planning an extension to our newly bought 1950s three-bedroom house, the idea of using our own wood was not on the radar. But we did hope the extension could make best use of passive solar heat so that we could be self-reliant in energy: factoring in roof space for solar panels was important. However, the immediate challenge was the orientation of our house, which is aligned on a south-west, north-east axis. Any side extension would create a shadow that would dominate the rest of the house.

None of the local designers and architects we spoke to offered extra ideas or took our environmental ambitions seriously. So we cast the net more widely and eventually engaged Alan Budden and John Williams of Eco Design Consultants (EDC), architects specialising in

Passivhaus design in Milton Keynes.

In a meeting that happened just before the pandemic, they patiently listened to our ideas and then promptly turned them on their head. Rather than building to the side, they suggested elongating the house to extend its southern frontage, which was possible because of the distance from the neighbouring house. This would create an energy-efficient shape, open out the south side to glazing and created a long roof for photovoltaic (PV) panels. And, in a delightful nod to our love of woodland, John included in the plans a half-cladding of waney-edge chestnut wood to be milled from our own woodland.

Timber in housing

When it comes to using timber in building, traditionally the focus has been

WHAT IS PASSIVHAUS?

Passivhaus is the leading international low-energy, design standard and the world's leading fabric-first approach to low-energy building. 'It dramatically reduces heating and cooling requirements, whilst creating excellent indoor air quality, comfort and health. The standard is equally suited to retrofits.' (*Eco Design website*)

LINKS

[Passivhaustrust.org.uk](https://passivhaustrust.org.uk)
Eco Design Consultants
Goddards Home
Improvements
Kirkwood Structure

Simon surveys the sweet chestnut sourced from a nearby woodland.



on oak, but there are other many other good structural timbers. Locally here in Kent, one of the most important is sweet chestnut. It's surprising not to see it in greater use for structural framing in buildings, as it has great rot-resistant properties. It is mainly used for hop poles and fencing but was traditionally used for cordwood building and, as in our case, cladding.

Our own chestnut turned out not to be suitable, sadly, because the trees are either too large or too bent. However, Woodlands.co.uk kindly provided the opportunity to coppice a small parcel of suitable chestnut very nearby. So I did actually coppice the wood with the help of my brother-in-law Chris and friend Simon.

The next challenge was working out how to extract and mill the wood. Here, we were helped by our friends Terry Thompson and his brother Ivan who have a wood yard and a mobile saw mill. They decided it would be most practical to bring the timber to the yard, where we could work under cover and benefit from the forklift truck. I was amazed at what a small wheel truck kitted out with a 1-tonne crane and trailer could move.

We're now at the stage of milling the timber: this is the point when you discover that the trees you thought were straight in fact have very wavy profiles! Another decision concerned the width of the cladding, with some of the trunks being excess of 30cm in diameter. But at this width the danger of splitting increases, so we're limiting the width to 23cm.

It is worth pointing out that the wood is being used 'green', that is to say, unseasoned. This is possible because it will be fixed on one side only, allowing any shrinkage to occur without affecting the whole. (Note boards over 100mm require double fixing.) The wood is being milled with a 'feathered edge', so it will be slightly thinner along what will be its top edge when it is in position.

What else is involved

The process of making conversion of a conventional house to Passivhaus involves sticking lots of insulation to the external wall faces and wrapping the whole inside an airtight membrane. All windows will be triple-glazed and ventilation provided through MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) ducting.

As our project is a retrofit, it is unlikely to achieve full Passivhaus status, which usually applies to new builds. We will be happy to settle for the slightly lower EnerPHit rating.

The house is fast taking its new shape right now. Mountains of insulation have arrived on site, and once that has been secured we will start fixing some of the cladding. 6.94 kW of solar PV panels have just been fitted.

We've just had our plans to install a 7,500-litre rainwater harvesting tank and soakaway signed off by building control. We plan to use rainwater for flushing toilets and in the washing machine.

It takes a special kind of builder to accept the challenge of such an unusual build. The airtightness aspect requires that they carefully think through the order in which things are done. The airtightness membranes are fixed with a tape so sticky that it is rumoured that one worker (not one of ours) required a skin graft after getting some of it on his arm!

There have certainly been challenges but Chris Goddard, of Goddard's Home Improvements, has stayed on top of them and kept the job moving. He and his men seem to be excited and energised at the prospect of wood cladding, which is really gratifying.

Shortly we're going to be ready to start applying the cladding, and we look forward to sharing the results.

TOP: Work on the extension begins with insulating Alex's 1950s house in Kent. Employing a team of architects who could utilise energy-efficient methods of construction was crucial.

MIDDLE: Chris and Ivan harvest the sweet chestnut logs to transport them to their yard for milling (bottom).



FOLLOW THE LIGHT

A Year in Epping Forest and Hollow Ponds



In a *Journal of the Plague Year*, Daniel Defoe recounted that during the plague of 1665, groups of Londoners moved out to Epping to settle in the forest in order to escape the plague that ravaged the city. Three hundred and fifty years later, many of us have been escaping to woodlands simply to enjoy a bit of fresh air during the 21st-century plague that is the Covid pandemic.

Photographer **Caro Jones** is a travel and nature photographer based in Walthamstow, London. She has published a photo series, **'Follow the Light: A Year in Epping Forest and Hollow Ponds'** that documents the changing of the seasons in the ancient woodland during the extraordinary year of 2020.

She started documenting Epping Forest in the warm, dry spring of the first lockdown. As part of her daily exercise she would go



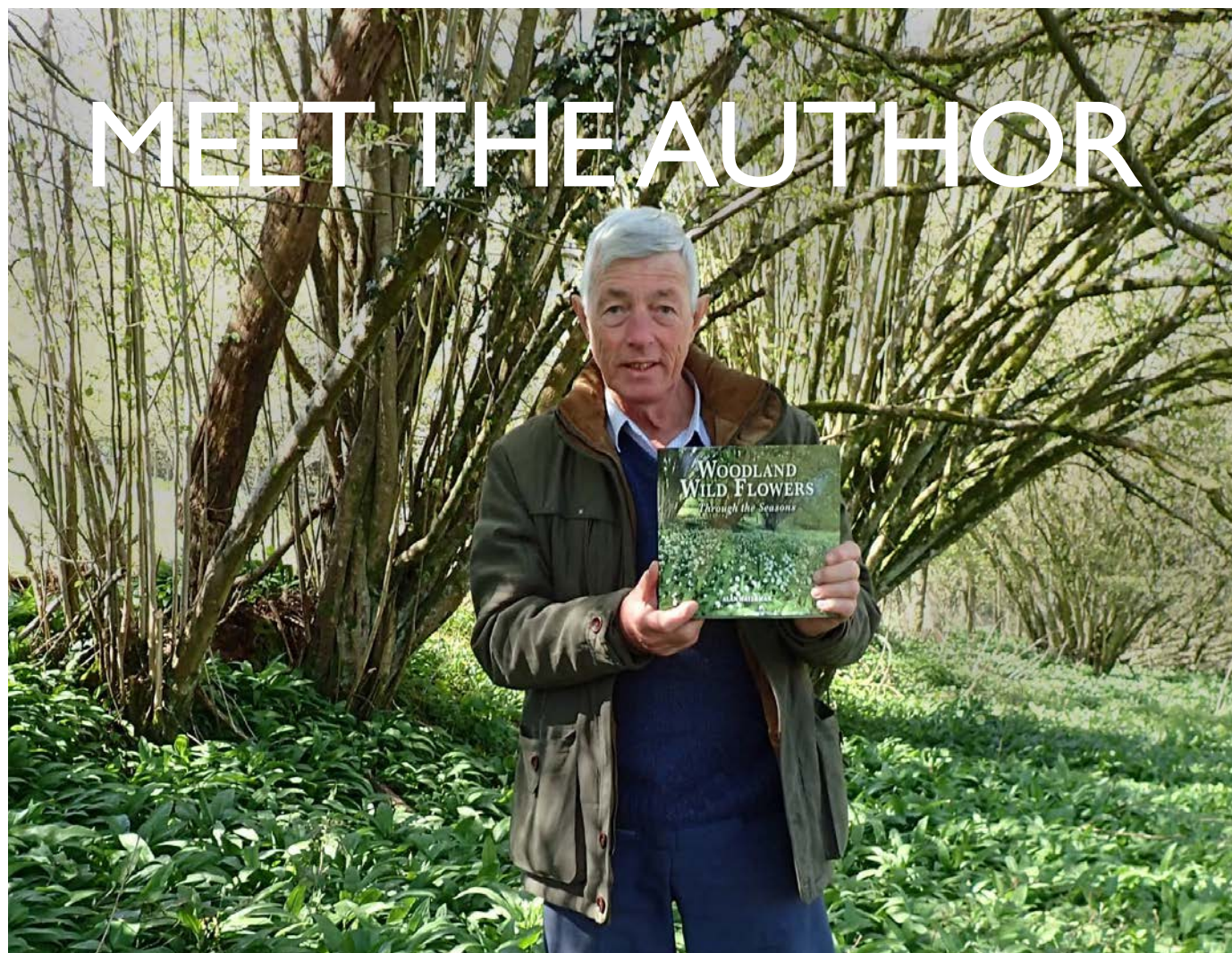
to the forest, camera in hand, to take photos of the woodland and the bright yellow gorse fields. She discovered the amazing light in the forest, such as the glimpse of sunlight streaming through the branches and the beautiful glow over the ponds at sunset. In the chilly winter days in the woodland the bright yellow gorse fell away to reveal prickly bushes; the trees were now bare and stark and the sun would set low in the winter afternoon.

Caro relished the project and discovered that it improved her mental wellbeing; she hopes that others will find inspiration through her photographs of these special places.

'Follow the Light: A Year in Epping Forest and Hollow Ponds' will be exhibited at Orford House, Walthamstow Village, E17 9QR from 26 July until 26 September 2021. Framed prints will be available for purchase.

For enquiries please DM Caro on Instagram: [@carolucyjones](https://www.instagram.com/carolucyjones)





A former teacher, enthusiastic and award-winning blogger and keen ecologist, Alan Waterman has merged his skills and experience to produce his first book, ***Woodland Wild Flowers***.

Why did you decide to write the book?

I'm a keen photographer and can see no point in simply photographing things just for the sake of it. Years ago, long before the advent of the internet, we lived in Spain and I really enjoyed photographing the local flora and fauna. I made a scrapbook of my prints, which are a little discoloured now, but that's where it began. I want people to see my work, and these days blogging makes it easy. Family and friends have been really encouraging.

I was a biology teacher and for many years ran a field studies centre in Norfolk for A-Level pupils. The ecology element of school curricula is often overlooked and our courses, which we ran in a converted pub on the banks of the Great Ouse, fulfilled a real need. The urge to impart information never really goes away.

Your book began life as a record of flora in your woodland. Tells us about your wood.

Catbrook Wood is a six-acre plot within a larger plantation called Ninewells Wood in south Wales and we purchased it in 2013. It was a mixture of mature Corsican pine and

native species, but it quickly became clear that the pine was suffering from Red Needle Blight (*Dothistroma Needle Blight*, or DNB), so, having taken professional advice, we arranged to have it felled. From the start I made careful records of the species of trees, plants and animals that were in both Catbrook and the wider area of Ninewells Wood. We went on to replant the wood with oak, beech and hazel, most grown from seeds collected no more than 10 miles from the wood. Silver birch naturally regenerated, we made paths and have really increased the biodiversity of the whole area. Any wild flowers were either already there and lying dormant in the soil or they were brought in naturally on the wind or the fur of a visiting fox. I started to record the wild flowers that popped up: rose bay willow herb, foxglove, heather, ragged robin and many others.

I extended my recording to cover woodland wild flowers growing in neighbouring woods along the Wye Valley and in the Forest of Dean and devoted a section of this blog to the flowers, calling it 'Woodland wild flowers of the Wye Valley'. As the area includes 80% of all the species in the UK, it was not a huge jump to embark on a book that covered wild flowers for the whole of the UK.

How did you get your work published?

I was encouraged by folks saying how interesting they found some of the stuff I was writing and was really pleased to win an award from Woodlands.co.uk for my blog. The wild flower blog was a more ambitious project as it included other stuff apart from just the flowers, such as information about the evolution of plants, the woodland environment, and the age of trees. I began to fill in the gaps in my photographic collection to include the missing 20% of woodland plants.

I was lucky to find the specialist publishers Merlin Unwin and sent them a sample in December 2018. Months went by and they asked for some more photographs. As it turned out, my photos of the rare plants were not too bad and what needed improving was the more common plants as I had rather overlooked them. Of course, Covid was no barrier to this, as those commonly occurring plants were all growing fairly close to home.

Eventually, once the contents were finalised, we signed a contract in autumn 2020 and the book was published in May.

LINKS

Alan's blog:
[catbrookwood.wordpress](https://catbrookwood.wordpress.com)

Merlin Unwin Books



Ecologists ROY AND KATHRYN NELSON assess a richly illustrated guide to woodland wild flowers.

The challenge that woodland wild flowers pose to the observer is that there is an abundance of different species. So, the identification of these woodland plants can be confusing and challenging due to similarities of their shape, size and colour. They can grow in specific locations, with some being plentiful whilst others are rare. Although we may be lucky enough to discover them, we often do not have the skills to identify them. This is a great pity, for many of them are extraordinarily beautiful and are part of our natural heritage. *Woodland Wild Flowers* by Alan Waterman assists in the identification of these unique plants. The book is richly illustrated with a range of photographs of 170 species.

The flower descriptors in the book are seasonally organized to help the casual plant hunter throughout the year. Although the book is not a comprehensive list of all the plants that may be encountered, it does describe many that grow in woodland settings. These are described with informative background details along with their accompanying photographs. The book is relatively large, so it is not pocket friendly and therefore does not lend itself to being a field guide.

The short summaries on the woodland flowers sometimes, but not always feature the plant's ecosystem. A more detailed indication of the flower's associated tree cover and geographical distribution would be helpful. This additional information perhaps could have been more fully explored. Unfortunately, some of the photographs do not show the plants in their natural woodland settings. Also, the information at the back of the book on subjects such as hedges, soil, pollen analysis, and how to age trees is interesting but appears to lack coherence with the rest of the book.

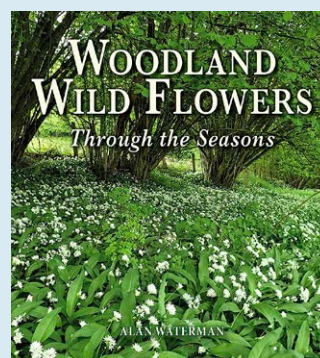
The non-native plants have been described similarly to the native species. Although they are often naturalized in woodlands and regularly found, Alan Waterman does not fully indicate that they are changing the ecology of the woods. The native species are part of the complex ecosystem, whereas the 'exotics' have the potential to disrupt this delicately balanced food web. Nevertheless, this is a useful book which gives the flower hunter an insight into the diversity of our natural environment and it encourages an appreciation of the rich biome of our wonderful woodlands.

WOODLAND WILD FLOWERS THROUGH THE SEASONS

Alan Waterman

Merlin Unwin Books
Hardback
256 pages
£20

ISBN: 978-1-913159-25-2



BOOK REVIEW

Writer **LAWRENCE ILLSLEY**

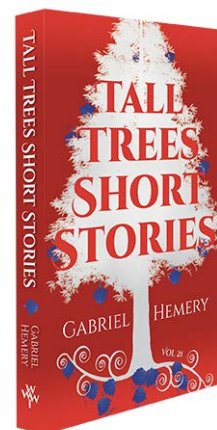
admires the breadth of storytelling in Gabriel Hemery's latest collection of short stories.

Tall Trees Short Stories Vol 21 is the second collection of short stories written by renowned silvologist Gabriel Hemery. It follows in the arboreal footsteps of his first collection and will delight readers who share Hemery's abundant love for the forest.

The stories in the collection offer as much variety as a woodland bursting into life. Each is different and showcases Hemery's engaging, often gleeful, prose and empathic understanding of people. We meet a wide range of characters, from a Parisian inventor to Terry who lives in a tower block. My favourite perhaps is the young girl who reads *Woodlore for Young Sportsmen* (originally published in 1922) and thinks the author has made a big mistake not including girls. A belief which adds a refreshingly contemporary touch to the narrative and is the first example of a theme, repeated throughout the book, where characters embody modern concerns.

Although conceptually grounded in the present, the stories themselves range across the centuries. We travel from the Victorian era, through the wars, pause at mobile phones, before diving headlong into the future. Hemery is certainly an author who knows no bounds. This breadth of storytelling may have lost coherence were it not for the ever-present trees, which slowly emerge as the real heroes of the book.

Many tales are focussed upon a particular tree, a potent device suggestive of *Overstory* by Richard Powers. The trees provide a fulcrum, an axis-mundi, for the story – a plane tree in 'In Plane View', a sweet chestnut in 'Fin'. Woodland trades and woodcraft occupy a similar role in the narrative. We meet coopers, sawyers and even silvologists when, unusually for fiction, we get a glimpse of the author himself in *Tall Stories, Short Trees* (an intentional jumbling of the title of the book). 'His woolly hat looked sodden and a permanent drip of



TALL TREES SHORT STORIES VOL 21
Gabriel Hemery

£10.99 (paperback)
£3.99 (e-book)
ISBN: 9781916336230

moisture hung from his nose. He looked happy, like he was in his element.'

I appreciated the introduction. Hemery is clearly someone who knows an incredible

amount about trees and wants to share this knowledge. This is a man whom we want to hear talk about trees. Technical information about each tree is slipped into the stories. But this knowledge, gleaned from years of practice, enhances rather than undermines the storytelling. Hemery has the scientist's eye for detail and the writer's ear for words. He not only knows about trees but loves them too. Much of the detail he shares with us is

descriptive and personal, such as the crack of beech twigs in spring.

This collection is both human and natural, urban and wild. It allows us to consider the connections between us and the world we inhabit rather than focussing on the separation between humans and the Earth. It seems to me that if we are to reverse some of the impact of our tenure on this planet we need to learn how to reconnect with the landscape and how we can live alongside, or even with nature. Books like Hemery's are a wonderful place to start.

Lawrence Illsley is a writer and poet. His collection A Brief History of Trees was published by Live Canon in October 2020.

“

*Hemery has the
scientist's eye for
detail and the
writer's ear for
words.*

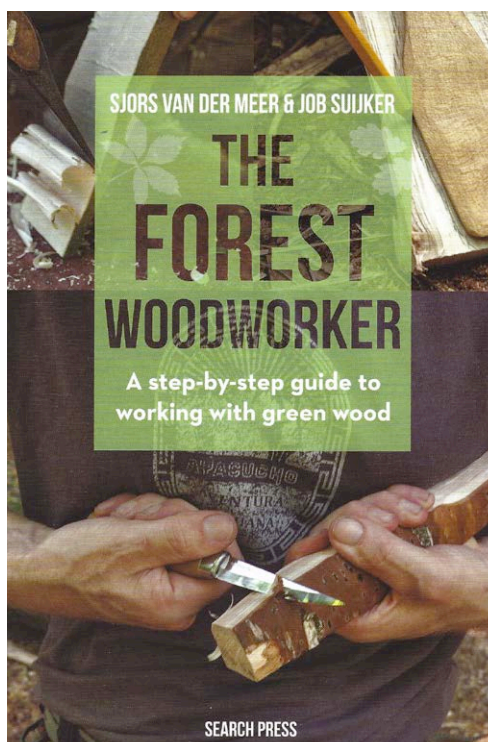
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Keen woodworker **RICHARD HARE** finds plenty to enjoy in this thoughtful and highly illustrated guide to green woodworking.

The *Forest Woodworker* is a delightfully presented hardback book, written by two Dutch Green woodwork enthusiasts, Sjors Van Der Meer and Job Suijker. The photos to the front and rear of the cover are representative of its contents. There are two forewords, one by renowned green woodworker Mike Abbot, who has written several books on the subject himself, and the other by Otto Koedijk. Both give an inspiring endorsement on the subject and point to the fact that this kind of woodwork, as exemplified by the authors, is more than just 'making things', more than just an end product, rather more of a deep connection the maker has with nature and the materials she gives up. I think Abbot even uses the word 'spiritual' – which as long as we don't have to define it, – seems to sit perfectly reasonably within his text!

The book goes on to introduce the traditional tools which are being restored by 'green wood' enthusiasts. Tools that you make as well, like the shave horse, an indispensable vice to grip your work and ubiquitous to all green woodworking camps. Contrast is made between how the trees are carefully and sustainably harvested by the green woodworker, whereas the 'dry wood furniture maker' may not even know which country, let alone which woodland his or her stock has come from. In a logical sequence, the book moves through the 'magic' of cleaving, via the mortise and tenon joint and the properties of the wood, from the heart to the sapwood, covering its movement characteristics and when and when not to use the branch knots you will discover lurking under the bark.

A further chapter is devoted to tree species, their wood and uses, and just a brief mention of the place coppicing may play in this. The book moves swiftly along to look at some of the most common woodworking techniques followed by a chapter which demonstrates how to make some of the most commonly needed tools, like a mallet and shave horse together with some projects that you can use them on.



THE FOREST WOODWORKER

A step-by-step guide to working with green wood

Sjors Van Der Meer and Job Suijker

Search Press
Hardback
176 pages
£11.99

ISBN: 978-1782217367

It wraps up with a section on the care and maintenance of tools, as well as the safety aspect of their use. There is a bibliography of useful books and websites at the end, but there is no index.

I really liked this book, and although there are many similar titles there is always something new to take away, some technique never tried or used before. The photos are very clear and easy to follow in the projects section.

It's not quite a coffee-table book, nor is it a workshop manual, probably somewhere in between. It would be an ideal gift for enthusing someone new to the craft and I'm certainly looking forward to finding a use for all that wood I've cut over the winter.



Woodland manager **JOHN CAMERON** finds himself both bemused and bedazzled by this absorbing study of fungi and their impact on our environment.

It seems extraordinary that fungi account for the largest interconnected organisms on the planet and yet, disappointingly, over 90% of species remain undocumented. *Entangled Life* introduces the reader to the incredible and almost unbelievable world of fungi on the micro and macro scale, with fascinating examples that illustrate just how adaptable they are. From the very smallest and most ancient origins on the planet, the reader is taken on a mind-expanding journey, detailing the intricate, interconnected relationship of fungi with the living world, and to some of the idiosyncratic and puzzling chemicals contained within them.

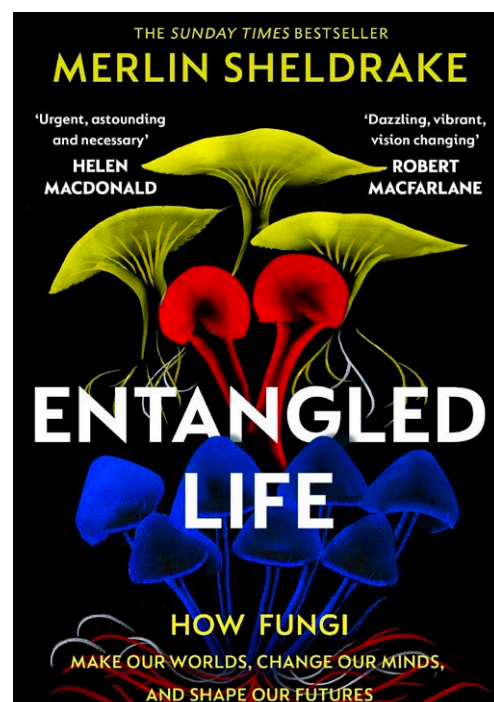
Entangled Life manages to be both at once a scholarly and scientific discourse which discusses the interconnectivity and dependency of the world around us, while at the same time entertaining readers with snippets of fact and folklore from around the globe. From the mystery and secrecy surrounding the hunt for the aromatic truffle, to the hallucinogenic and psychedelic effects of the chemicals contained in some mushrooms, the story weaves gently and methodically like the tentacles of mycelium growth that it is describing.

For the reader with scientific interest, numerous recounted laboratory experiments will doubtless interest, with insight into the function and purpose of fungi. Often the extraordinary results are unexpected and pose more questions than are answered. Examples include eating rubbish, surviving radioactivity and zombie ant-creation – just some of the many worldly examples of the tremendously intriguing behaviour of fungi.

While some of the more developed practices of fungi are explored, so too is the ancient relationship of fungi with algae, perhaps equal and symbiotic; or in a dark and sinister turn, perhaps not? Who benefits who, in this familiar interconnection of nature? Similarly, the unseen dependency of tree and plant root systems, almost entirely reliant on mycorrhizal associations, going back over 400 million years to its earliest recorded fossil records, but probably far longer. The 'wood wide web' is an easy-to-comprehend term that seems to encapsulate our feelings as woods people about the importance of diversity. And the implications of fungal associations with particular species of trees explains the prominence of birch and mountain ash, to name but a few, as particularly successful pioneer species of upland, marginal or nutrient-poor conditions.

A striking thought is that fungi are the destroyers of the world through decay and decomposition, but at the same time they are the constructors or composers. We are invited to consider how the planet would look, if all of the successes of life on our beautiful planet were not recycled by fungi: an astonishing mess comes to mind! Perhaps fungi are the housekeepers of the planet? Even the distinctly less-than-natural products made by man, such as plastics, petrochemicals, glyphosate weed killers and nerve agents come in for discussion, with some species or other of fungi developing a penchant for consuming these damaging creations.

The reader is left with hope and the distinct impression that it will be fungi that hold the key to saving the planet.



ENTANGLED LIFE

How fungi make our worlds, change our minds and shape our futures

Merlin Sheldrake

Vintage Books

Hardback £15.30

Paperback £9 (from 2 September)

ISBN: 978-1784708276



SYMBOLS IN TREES

Aspen leaves (Hans Braxmeier/Pixbay)

Shaking like a leaf, **CLARE GIBSON** examines the shivering reputation of aspen trees.

‘Willows whiten, aspens quiver’, wrote the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson in ‘The Lady of Shalott’. Indeed, few trees evoke a single characteristic as perfectly as the aspen, as is indicated by its Latin name, *Populus tremula*, or trembling poplar.

Also known as the quaking aspen and shiver-tree, it derives these names from its leaves, which are attached to their stems by long, flattened petioles, causing them to flutter in the slightest of breezes. This has given rise to many symbolic associations, such as with fear, as alluded to by the German expression *zittern wie Espenlaub*, which means ‘to tremble like aspen leaves’, and equates to the English phrase ‘to shake like a leaf’. Aspen leaves’ constant motion may likewise bring to mind vacillation, which is why the tree can also symbolise uncertainty.

Shivers and fevers

In centuries past, the aspen was believed to have the ability to banish fevers, the reasoning being that its quivering leaves corresponded to the shivering of a person with a high temperature. Folk medicine consequently advocated various aspen-related cures for fever, including sufferers reciting the rhyme ‘Aspen tree, aspen tree, I prithee to shake and shiver instead of me’ while pinning a lock of their hair to an aspen and then returning home in silence.

Another of the aspen’s reputed healing powers is more scientifically based, for as a salicaceous tree, the salicylic acid that the aspen contains gives its leaves aspirin-like anti-inflammatory properties.

In Britain, the aspen is most common in northern Scotland, and another of the aspen’s common names, old-wives’ tongues, originates in Roxburghshire. Rather than referring to the appearance of the tree’s trembling leaves, the name alludes to the so-called similarity of their constant rustling to the sound of the incessant chattering of ‘old wives’. Similarly, in his *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1597), the botanist John Gerard wrote that the ‘Aspe . . . may also be called Tremble . . . considering it is the matter whereof womens toongs were made, as the Poets and some others report, which seldome cease wagging’. Less misogynistically, another old folk

tradition promised that if someone slept with an aspen leaf under his or her tongue, as a symbol of speech, the leaf would bestow eloquence upon that person on awakening. The noise produced by aspen leaves additionally made them ideal for the past practice of phyllomancy, that is, of divination using leaves, in this instance requiring the listener to ascribe meaning to the tree’s apparent whispering of messages, messages received from the gods via the wind. Another link between the tree and communication can be found in the Gaelic tree alphabet, in which the aspen was symbolised by the letter Eadha.

Protective strength

Christian lore is ambivalent about the aspen. According to one myth, when the aspen learned that its wood would be used for the cross on which Christ would be crucified, it began to shake with horror and continues to do so to this day. Another says that the aspen has been cursed to tremble in perpetuity because it – alone among the various types of trees – refused to bow its head in deference and sorrow as Christ passed it on the way to his crucifixion. Both of these stories resulted in the aspen being thought of as a symbol of shame and lamentation. The pre-Christian Celts regarded the aspen more positively, however, prizing its light and robust wood as ideal for shield-making, and therefore deeming it a symbol of strength and protection.

The ancient Greeks associated the aspen with the underworld, believing that it grew there, and the tree therefore became a symbol of funerals and grieving. Yet trees in general are also symbols of life, and so, according to Robert Graves, writing in *The White Goddess* (1948), ‘in ancient Ireland the fé or measuring rod used by coffin-makers on corpses was of aspen, presumably as a reminder to the souls of the dead that this was not the end’. In the same context, Graves mentions that headdresses crafted from golden aspen leaves were found in Mesopotamian burials dating from 3000 BC.

Representing communication, fear and indecision, shame and lamentation, strength and protection, and even life and death, the aspen is a tree of profound symbolism.



The aspen tree, from John Gerard's *Herball*.



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Caroline Bales
Instagram: @wishwell_woods

Alex Bienfait

Nick Gardner
@_birdyNick

Owen Gardner

Clare Gibson
@MrsSymbols

Caroline Gooch
Forestry Commission

Julia Goodfellow-Smith
questforfuturesolutions.co.uk

Richard Hare
Keeper's Coppicing

Lawrence Illsley
lawrenceillsley.com

Caro Jones
Instagram: @carolucyjones

Roy and Kathryn Nelson

David Parkins

Alan Waterman
catbrookwood.wordpress

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