

Living Woods

No. 63 SUMMER 2022

MAGAZINE

A woman in a pink shirt and blue pants is working with wood under a wooden structure in a forest. The structure has a corrugated metal roof. The background is a dense forest of green trees.

SPOONTOWN
WELCOME TO A NEW FESTIVAL
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES
WHAT ARE THEY?

plus

BYO CHARCOAL
THE PLANE TREE

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This issue we report on the Forestry Commission's new focus on protecting ancient and veteran trees with their 'Keepers of Time' policy and hear from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) about ecosystem services, those tangible intangibles of woodland ownership.

There's also an element of DIY in the pages of this edition, from spoon-carver Jill Swan who has founded Spooontown, her own spoon-carving event, to Alex Bienfait who is using boards of sweet chestnut from his own wood to clad his energy-efficient house. Even I've joined in, with a spot of small-scale charcoal-making.

With a welcome return of woodfairs around the country, including the mighty APF in September and more traditional events such as the Strumpshaw Tree Festival in July, why not support local craftspeople and businesses by visiting the shows?

Enjoy the summer!

Judith Millidge
Editor



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Jil Swan's spoon academy takes shape.

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@Woodland News

Luna Cinema 2022

For those who like nothing better than a night under the stars in the company of their favourite film stars, Forestry England presents Luna Cinema 2022, a series of films shown in woodland locations around the country.

From Westonbirt to Sherwood Forest to Thetford Forest, movies on offer include *The Greatest Showman*, *Dirty Dancing*, *No Time to Die*, *West Side Story* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Dates are weekends in July and September. Visit the [Forestry England website](#) to book tickets.



BUGS MATTER

The worrying decline in insects has been widely reported over recent years, most notably in a Danish survey which reported an 80% decline in insect life between 1997 and 2017. Another survey, run by the charity Buglife in conjunction with Kent Wildlife Trust, found a decline of 60% between 2004 and 2021.

This summer Buglife has launched the Bugs Matter campaign in an effort to get a wider overview of insect life in the UK. They are asking members of the public to download an app and to measure the 'splat effect' after every car journey – in other words to count the number of dead insects on your number plate and to record the numbers.

There are more details on the [Buglife website](#) and the app is free to download for both Android and Apple smartphones.



**Bugs
Matter**

Adapting woodlands to climate change



Woodland owners and managers will welcome the publication of a new guide, the UK Forestry Standard Practice Guide, *Adapting forest and woodland management to the changing climate*. It outlines the steps that can be taken to foster woodlands which will be resilient to current and future threats as a result of climate change, such as drought, changing weather patterns and more frequent, severe weather events.

Woodlands and forests have an important role to play in tackling the effects of climate change. Trees remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it in a solid form as wood. The harvesting and use of wood from sustainably managed forests transfers the carbon into wood products where it

can continue to be stored, often over long periods, in materials such as those used for construction and furniture.

Even if the promised efforts to curb climate emissions are carried out, the UK's climate is going to change and this guide provides information on how to better understand and assess the risks associated with climate change, in order to plan for the future and adapt forest and woodland management. [Download the guide here.](#)

Protecting forests

With new statistics showing that a record number of tree pests and diseases are being reported, the opening of a state-of-the-art laboratory which will conduct innovative research into tree pests and diseases is very welcome.

The £5.8 million Holt Laboratory was opened by Defra and the Forestry Commission as part of National Plant Health Week and it will study known and emerging threats from tree pests and diseases to ensure a robust and rapid response to outbreaks.

The Forest Research Holt Laboratory, located within the Alice Holt Forest in Surrey, will bring together leading scientists to undertake research on pests and pathogens which could be detrimental or seriously damaging to our forests. This will inform UK-wide efforts to combat ongoing pest and disease outbreaks.

The TreeAlert service received 3,790 reports from the public over the past year (April 2021–March 2022), which was almost a 25% increase on the previous year. The

most commonly reported pest and diseases were oak processionary moth and ash dieback, respectively.

Chair of the Forestry Commission, Sir William Worsley, said:

'The threat to the health of our trees from pests and diseases is real and increasing. Trees are vital economic, environmental and social assets and so it is imperative that we do all we can to reduce these threats.'

The opening of this new laboratory demonstrates the significant investment that the Government and the Forestry Commission are making to ensure the long-term resilience



of our trees.'

Public vigilance is a key part of the fight against tree disease. You can look out for any unusual symptoms – like leaf discolouration or 'bleeding' lesions – on trees and report any sightings via [TreeAlert](#), the Forestry Commission's online tree pest and disease reporting tool.

Additionally, Forest Research has a [useful web page](#) to help identify some of the problems that plague our trees.

Plant a tree for the Jubilee



1,500

trees planted by the Queen around the world during the course of her reign

The **Queen's Green Canopy** is a unique initiative which will create a lasting legacy for the Platinum Jubilee. To increase the native tree cover, we have all been urged to mark the Queen's 70 years on the throne, and communities, individuals and no doubt many woodland owners have been planting trees, with more than 60,000 planted in the autumn planting season up to January 2022. In case there was any doubt about the value of tree-planting, the website includes a wealth of information:

- British oak trees support an estimated 2,300 species, an incredible variety of wildlife
- A mature tree can absorb up to 150kg of CO₂ a year
- Green spaces around the UK remove up to 1.3 billion kg of air pollutants each year
- Well-placed trees can help cool the air between 2 and 8 degrees C in urban communities.

In addition, a network of 70 ancient woodlands has been dedicated to the Queen to highlight the importance of their irreplaceable habitat.



It seems appropriate that while the country is celebrating that significant monarchical milestone of a Platinum Jubilee, the Forestry Commission is reminding us about their **Keepers of Time** policy, which concerns trees whose origins stretch back centuries.

It may sound like an episode of *Dr Who*, but it is in fact an intrinsic part of the **England Trees Action Plan**. Keepers of Time outlines the value of England's ancient woodlands and ancient and veteran trees, and states the government's commitment to protect and preserve these irreplaceable habitats for future generations.

England has an unrivalled collection of ancient and veteran trees – there are more in the UK than in many other European countries. The **Ancient Tree Inventory** maps and records the oldest and most important trees in the country, but even though more than 180,000 are listed, there are more to add.

Defra has revised the Keepers of Time policy in several ways.

- It reflects the challenges of climate change when protecting ancient habitats from future threats.
- A new category of woodland has been introduced. 'Long Established Woodland' is woodland that was recorded on the Ordnance Survey Epoch 1 map in 1893 and has remained wooded ever since. This will ensure that the societal and ecological values of these woods will be recognised. All ancient woodland is long-established, but not all long-established woodland is ancient.
- Wood pasture and parkland are given more prominence as irreplaceable habitats

The Forestry Commission is working alongside Defra and Natural England with some input from the Woodland Trust to manage the scheme. A spokesperson for Natural England said:

'Natural England owns and manages the Ancient Woodland Inventory, which is a keystone of evidence for identifying ancient woodland. The evocative name of the policy statement has been retained, by popular request, and it speaks volumes about what it seeks to protect. The need for this policy document is still as valid today as it was when first published in 2005, and the publishing of this refreshed statement, reflecting the latest evidence, is testament to this.

It very much underpins our work in offering protection for irreplaceable habitats. It underlines the importance of native woodland in government thinking, as we also endeavour to achieve the ambitious targets set out in the England Trees Action Plan. Natural England believes that the recognition of wood pasture and parkland as a form of ancient woodland is another big step forward in our thinking on ancient woodland.'

The **Queen's Green Canopy** is one part of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations which will have a lasting legacy and reinforces the Keeper of Time aims. In May, the Prince of Wales unveiled a network of **70 Ancient Woodlands and 70 Ancient Trees**, which he urged the public to protect and ultimately, to renew. Dedicated to her Her Majesty, these ancient trees and woodlands stretch from Scotland to Cornwall.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ANCIENT AND A VETERAN TREE?

An ancient tree is in the third and final stage of its life. Britain's longest-lived species are yew, oak and sweet chestnut, and those that are hundreds of years old share similar characteristics.

- The crown is reduced in size and height
- The girth is large in comparison to younger trees of the same species
- The trunk is hollow and the bark is deeply creviced.

Veteran trees, by contrast, are in the second stage of their lives. They may have signs of fungal decay and are likely to have crevices and holes that are useful habitat for wildlife. **More details here.**

Visit the **Ancient Tree Inventory** to map ancient and veteran trees.

Download **What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest?**

The full **Keepers of Time Policy** can be seen here.

WELCOME TO SPOONTOWN

Spoon carver and tutor **JILL SWAN** has launched a new spoon carving festival in Kent. Building upon Jill's popular spoon academy and sessions at shows across the UK, Spooontown promises to be the largest gathering of spoon carvers in the garden of England this July.

It's funny how life can take you in an unexpected direction. There I was in 2007 recently moved to a seaside Victorian villa, contemplating how to eradicate an infestation of pigeons parked on my roof. After an expensive and unsuccessful attempt by the local vermin operative, I decided it was time to have a go myself, so I dug out my .22 air rifle, popped off a couple of them and the flock soon vanished.

This proved to be the inspiration I needed to join a local target-shooting club that met in a small woodland. The members were generous and friendly, but it came to an end when they wanted to appoint me the club secretary. Not my thing at all, but another seed was sown.

I loved my time in the woodlands and owning my own woodland became my next brainwave. But how to acquire one? A friend was a local land agent and took me along to a nearby auction where I was given a salutary lesson in both bidding and the price of woodland. My hand was not even airborne before the one I'd set my heart on had gone for three times the guide price.

Luck was on my side,



however, when a short time later I found some wonderful ancient woodland privately and the deal was done.

With several acres to play in, my shooting skills really improved, but sparing a thought for the squirrels, I decided on a different path. I studied woodland management, read many books on trees and woodlands and got my chainsaw ticket. But one day, annoyed by a local who dismissed my wonderful woodland as 'nothing but firewood', I thought 'I'll show these naysayers'.

More than just firewood

I wanted to prove that my woodland – full of hornbeam, oak, maple, beech, chestnut, rowan and holly – could be useful over and above its purpose as a safe haven for wildlife and biodiversity. Above all, I knew I wanted to produce something beautiful from my trees.

Thus it began: armed with a piece of field maple from a hedge-laying exercise, I went home, dug out a saw and an axe, along with my collection of chisels kept from my time at art college, and started to make my first spoon.



Everybody has a wooden spoon – we had a big earthenware jar on the shelf full of them when I was a kid. I wanted to make my wood useful, so it was an easy choice of what to make. Years ago, I studied sculpture and the knack of carving soon returned.

Soon I was quite overtaken by it. Simple tools, quiet, no expensive materials, no dust, no smells, no chemicals; you can stop and start, have a think about it and change your mind with only a dustpan and brush needed to clear up. Before long, I discovered the added joy of carving with someone else, forming an alliance along with a couple of new-found spoon buddies. An exhibition at a local art fair gave me a huge boost in confidence.

Suddenly, I was seeing spoon carvers everywhere. The Welsh and Scandinavians have a long and rich history of spoon-making going back centuries, and I felt that I was joining a heritage craft rich with inspiration and talented carvers.

A couple of friends asked me to teach them how to make a spoon and I accepted this challenge with some trepidation. By

the end of the lesson, I knew that this is what I wanted to do.

Using some previously earned business acumen, the next step was to expand the classes, and where better than in my own beautiful woodland. Friends helped to make a clearing, and with a couple of Kelly kettles for tea, we were away.

The idea of Spoon Academy was born. Through social media and word of mouth, I soon found myself in demand for country shows around the UK, a literary festival, Christmas markets, not to mention an eye-opening trip to the Northern Spirits Festival in Galilee, Israel. Prior to lockdown, my diary was pretty full and, along with finding time for filming tutorials for the highly entertaining YouTube channel **Zed Outdoors**, I was struggling to keep up with demand.

The road to Spootown

During the long days of isolation throughout the national lockdown of 2020, the idea of a spoon gathering in my home county of Kent became a bit of an

Above: With the Kelly kettle set up, construction on the spoon academy shelter in the woodland proceeded quickly.

Below: A spoon carved from an extremely old bit of wood fallen from an ancient oak. Jill thought it would just crumble, but dried it slowly and transformed it into a useable and beautiful utensil.



obsession. Spooontown – or at least the idea – was born.

Having visited leading shows like Spoonfest in Derbyshire and the Great Scottish Spoon Hoolie, the suitability of the venue was my prime concern. The importance of infrastructure and ease of access was top of the list.

Luck visited me once again when I was invited to demonstrate at a Kent Wildlife Trust event in Sittingbourne. The site owner and I got chatting and the suggestion of us hosting Spooontown together just fell into place. It's a wonderful location in the high Weald of Kent, with running water, toilets, a café, acres of woodland, parking, and best of all, a steam railway.

Since then, I have forged a tremendous working relationship with a diverse selection of skilled help, from caterers to a web designer, woodsmen, carpenters, a knife sharpener and even a folk band!

Spoontown is hoping to carve out a new spoon community in the south-east and to bring together carvers from beginners to seasoned professionals. Throughout the four-day event ticket holders are invited to learn the art of spoon-carving, bowl-turning, leatherwork and more, in small groups.

At this early stage the preparation feels overwhelming, but it will not undermine our determination to establish Spooontown as the event all spoonatics really want to come to. The emphasis is very much on our community, learning and fun.

Instrumental in publicising and informing everyone is my dear friend Zed Shah who has spent hours building the **Spoontown website**.

Should all go well this year, the forward plan is to reduce my time spent teaching as my hands are not as strong as they were, and to focus on hosting quality events for our spooncarving community.

Already ticket sales are beyond expectation and are limited to 150 so it augurs well for July 28th.

We look forward to meeting spooncarvers old and new at the venue in Bredgar (Sittingbourne) to firmly establish a community where this ever-popular craft is growing and growing.



A spoon-carving workshop gets underway.

SPOONTOWN 2022

Tickets are available from
www.spoontown.co.uk

Facebook for Spooontownies

To read more about Jill Swan and her work, visit her website,
www.jillswan.com

Spooontown
Carving out a new spoon community.
28-31 July 2022

The largest spoon carving gathering in the South of England

- +Spoon Carving
- +Camping for 3 nights
- +Workshops & Demos
- +Much, much more

www.spoontown.co.uk
Sittingbourne, Kent (UK)

WOODLANDS

Protect, Improve, Expand and Sustain

The Sylva Foundation, the Forestry Canopy Foundation and Grown in Britain are working together on the PIES project, a scheme to support woodland owners and managers to 'Protect, Improve, Expand and Sustain' their woodlands. **DR GABRIEL HEMERY** explains.

The aim of the PIES project is simple: to assist woodland owners and managers who want to care for their land. Guidance from the three organisations will help them to enhance its environmental condition and deliver goods and services for the benefit of everyone.

The scheme will provide a network of independent forestry agents who will deliver high-quality and standardised advice to landowners across England, supporting them in planning to comply with the UK Forestry Standard, achieving Grown in Britain certification, and improving access to the Woodland Carbon Code. Landowners taking part in the project will receive subsidised support, including one-to-one advice with ongoing online support and technical services. The invitation to landowners to take part is expected to be ready from July, and in the meantime, more information about the project and an expression of interest form is available on **the Sylva website**.

The PIES team combines the strategic work and information technology provided by Sylva Foundation, the network of independent forestry managers supported by the Forest Canopy Foundation, and the work of Grown in Britain in supporting the green economy. Together, the partnership will provide a joined-up approach, supporting

landowners in meeting the objectives of the government's England Trees Action Plan. As all three organisations are not-for-profit, and focussed on delivery of sustainable forest management for public good, the partnership will have a long-term view and an ongoing positive impact.

Dr Gabriel Hemery, CEO of Sylva Foundation, commented, 'We are delighted to be working with our partners to deliver this innovative approach to supporting landowners across England. The PIES project will help meet many of the key elements of the England Trees Action Plan, including expanding and connecting woodlands, promoting the green economy, and protecting and improving existing woodlands.'

Dougal Driver, CEO of Grown in Britain, added, 'There have never been so many opportunities for landowners and managers to provide nature-based solutions for the economy, planet and people. We are excited to be part of this project that will build and sustain vital connections between different parts of the supply chain, for timber, carbon, and the array of benefits that woodlands can provide.'

To register your interest and to receive updates about PIES, visit the **Sylva website here**.



Photo courtesy Gabriel Hemery.

WHAT ARE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES?



Photo courtesy 2B Forest.

OWEN DAVIES and **AMY WILLOX** from the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) UK introduce ecosystem services for woodland owners. They explain how FSC tools recognise (and hopefully reward) owners whose woodland management helps to enhance their woodlands.

For some, the most obvious benefits we derive from woodland are the tangible products we can hold in our hands – things like wood, wild mushrooms, and venison. Even the most hard-nosed and practical of us, though, can recognise that there are other benefits, and to some people they seem far more important – a healthy environment, thriving wildlife, clean water, and spaces for spiritual connection with the natural world, to name but a few. The full range of benefits our woodlands can provide for us can be described as ecosystem services.

The United Nations' Millennium Ecosystem Assessment defined ecosystem services simply as the benefits people obtain from ecosystems, and linked them to human

wellbeing. The assessment recognised four different categories of services:

- provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fibre
- regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality
- cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits
- supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling.

While some of this might seem quite abstract, looking

at the world in this way is a reminder that our wellbeing depends on basic natural processes, and that we ignore that dependency at our peril. Increasingly, governments, organisations and individuals are looking at ecosystems not only in terms of the immediate material benefits they can yield, but also in terms of the more fundamental ways they support our lives.

It is worth noting that the ecosystem service concept is all about us as humans, and the benefits we derive from ecosystems. Many of us, of course, believe that ecosystems and the non-human lives they support have their own intrinsic value, independent of and just as important as our needs and wants.

What does an ecosystem services mindset mean?

Following best practice in woodland management should already go a long way towards protecting the ecosystem services we all depend on, whether it's avoiding damage to soils or watercourses, taking action to benefit biodiversity, or giving communities opportunities for access and activities. However, thinking explicitly about ecosystem services might help us to re-evaluate their value both to us, as owners and managers of woodland, and to wider society, and to consider where we can do more to enhance them. As society as a whole becomes more conscious of ecosystem services, and as expectations on us as stewards of woodland increase, there might even be opportunities to turn some of those abstract services into tangible benefits.

How does FSC recognise the provision of ecosystem services?

In the **Winter 2021 edition** of Living Woods, we introduced you to FSC certification and its relevance to small woods. The protection of ecosystem services is hardwired into FSC standards – anyone holding FSC Forest Management certification should, at the very least, be maintaining the level of services provided by their woods.

Going beyond these fundamental protections, and the claims about responsible management that go with them, in 2018 FSC introduced an Ecosystem Services Procedure. By demonstrating links between their

management and positive outcomes, this add-on allows certificate holders to make specific FSC-verified claims about maintaining or enhancing ecosystem services under five headings:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Carbon storage and sequestration
- Watershed services
- Soil conservation
- Recreation services

You might see value in such verified claims for your own assurance that you are managing your woods well, or in communicating with others, or even in getting financial support to continue your good work. More and more individuals and organisations are looking for ways to use their funds in ways that benefit society and the environment. We are keen to remind them that supporting good management in existing woodlands is just as important as funding new tree-planting.

Where can I learn more?

If you're interested in FSC certification and ecosystem services verification, you can learn more via the **FSC UK website**. Or contact Amy at amy@fsc-uk.org.

Case study

Natural forest cover, tourism, and carbon in small woods in Portugal

In Arouca, Portugal, a group of small forest owners (managed as part of the 2B Forest group scheme) jointly verified biodiversity, carbon, and recreation claims. They demonstrated how their activities positively contributed to the restoration of natural forest cover and maintaining the Natura 2000 ecological network, and conserving the Pavia Walkways important for tourism in the area. In addition, they verified impacts for conserving and restoring carbon stocks. The forest owners have been sponsored for their actions through Reflora Initiative – a platform connecting investors with forest projects.

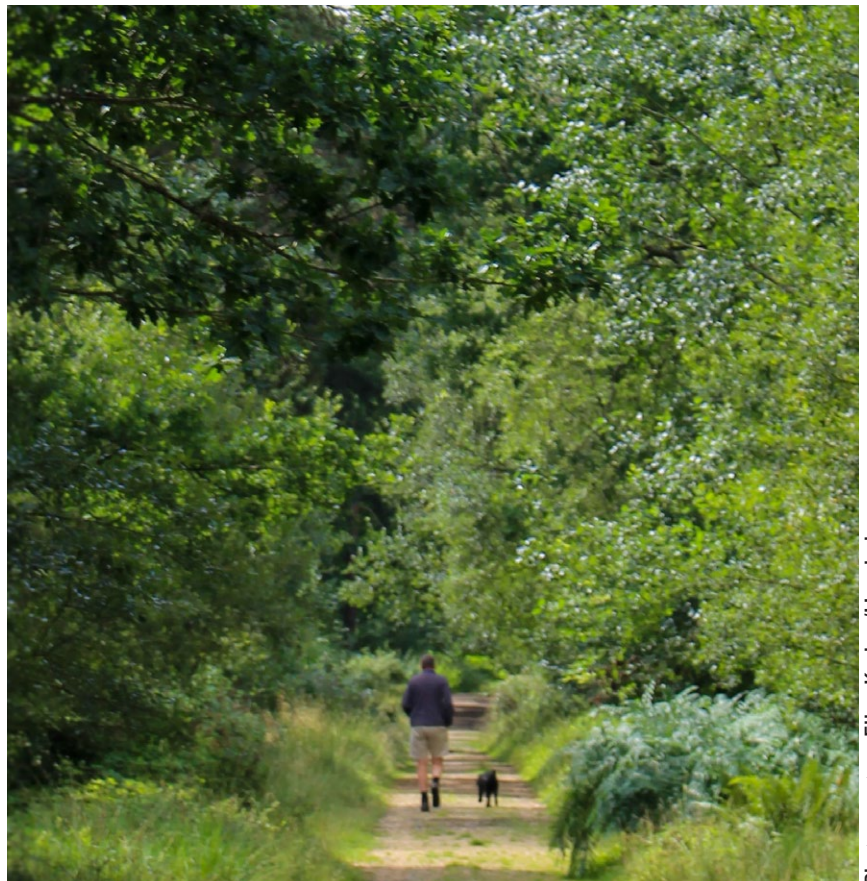


Photo courtesy Ellen Kerbey/Unsplash.

BOARDING *the* HOUSE

Alex Bienfait provides an update on creating an energy-efficient Passivhaus using timber from his own woodland to clad the structure.

A year ago, we wrote about our ambitions to use timber from our wood on a Passivhaus renovation and extension of our house, a 1950s three-bedroom house in Ashford, Kent. Finally, in the spring of 2021, this dream started to become a reality.

We needed sweet chestnut timber for two main purposes: to make waney-edged cladding for the outside of the house, and to create some feature posts for the porch and garage canopy. When we came to choose the trees, our woodland didn't have enough of the right size to fulfil our needs. Fortunately, Woodlands.co.uk gave us the opportunity to coppice another small nearby coupe from their own land.

Milling and materials

Sweet chestnut is one of the most important trees in Kent. It's surprising not to see it in greater use for structural framing 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.

At the time of writing last year, we had felled the timber

and started the process of milling, but cladding had not begun yet. Now a year on, and richer with lots of experience, we hope this update will inspire but also show that the process is not without its hidden challenges.

One major difficulty has been the length of time taken by the build itself. All sorts of familiar factors have conspired to draw out our project: delivery delays caused by Brexit, as well as shortages of material, fuel and labour due to Covid. Then there is the slow patient work of doing the cladding itself. Even when the rest of the build is ready and cladding can proceed, you need dry weather and another pair of willing hands: the boards can be long and heavy and two people are needed to handle them. Right now, a year on from my previous article, we still have one elevation left to clad.

One of the great appeals of waney-edged cladding is that no one board is the same as another, in either length, width or thickness. Creative thought is required when putting them up and matching them. It's probably a bit like dry stone walling: hunting down the right plank of width and curve to cover and match the existing line. One of good things we





Ivan Thomson sets to work milling the sweet chestnut. If a plank is going to split, it is likely to be at this stage of the process. No two boards are alike, so fitting them as cladding is a little like doing a giant jigsaw.

quickly learned is that long lengths of oddly shaped cladding wood are not necessarily a problem; they can be trimmed, notched and straightened or just cut into shorter lengths. Areas where only short lengths are needed, between windows for instance, present great opportunities for using wood with unusual features and shapes.

Using sweet chestnut

One surprise has been discovering how stable sweet chestnut is. Other wood workers have confirmed our experience that if a plank is going to split, it is most likely to do so at the milling stage. That's not to say it will never split, and it can be a disheartening experience to hear trunk after trunk crack open during milling. But once you get some good boards, you can have confidence that timber will remain sound for as long as you need.

Most of the timber we milled was green, but we had several large trunks of timber that got left for a year before milling, which clearly helps stability. Cladding can be put up green but leaving it a year to dry makes the planks much easier and lighter to handle. If cladding green in summer, the advice is to



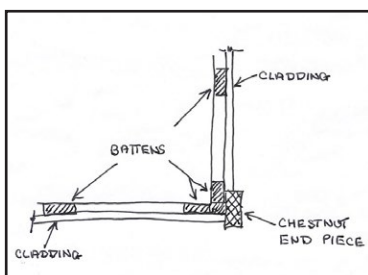


initially protect the cladding from intense sunlight so it doesn't dry out too quickly and warp.

When fixing, you need to allow for movement. Some sources recommended 8mm holes with 6mm screws, fitted with washers. However, we struggled to find 6mm screws with flat heads to take the washers and eventually adopted 6mm holes, and 5mm counter-sunk screws secured onto battens at 600mm centres. Time will tell if this proves sufficient, but so far, it's secure and stable.

Both oak and sweet chestnut have a high tannic acid content. Tannic acid is corrosive to ferrous metals: it is therefore very important to use stainless steel fixings. As the boards weather, the tannin will slowly leach out and stain anything below. This prompted another change of decision for the outside of house. With the cladding just at first floor, we had planned at ground level to use a single-application mono-couche render, but we realised this was likely to discolour with potential tannin staining. We switched to a plaster and paint at ground floor level because it could be repainted if necessary and was a cheaper option anyway.

We knew it was important to start the cladding with the corners in place.



However, we had planned initially to create the corners from square posts that were notched, creating L-shaped posts. But the first set of posts warped and needed to be larger. Not having sufficient timber ready to mill, we got on with the cladding regardless. As we progressed, we realised that corners are best made of a combination of building out the batten, and flat 50mm thick end boards (see sketch).

Feather-edge boards are undoubtedly best. The boards are lighter, make much more efficient use of the available wood, and create a tighter fit. However, milling the feather edge does add quite a degree of complexity at the milling stage. To speed up the milling, we ended up using a combination of feather and straight edged boards.

A year on, we're proud how things are looking, and much relieved to be able to see the end of the build in sight. A few passers-by have stopped to say how beautiful the house is, even unfinished. At present, we are waiting for further scaffold to complete the last elevation.

Finally, you may be curious how we are getting on living in a highly insulated Passivhaus. We are amazed how comfortable the general ambient temperature is. We have had no heating since end of February and the house has remained a very comfortable 20 degrees.



Sweet chestnut feature posts for the entrance porch blend in beautifully with the feather-edge boards that clad the top floor of the house.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORY

Architect Alan Budden and John Williams
Eco Design Architects

Structural Engineer Roger Faires
Kirkwood Structures

Main contractor Chris Goddard
Goddard's Home improvements

Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) Rod Williams and Rueben Wilkinson
Mango projects

Milling
Ivan and Terry Thompson
Tree of life Veganics. For wood and food
07968 810638



JUDITH MILLIDGE finally gets her hands dirty and learns how to burn her own charcoal.



The smart black drum is packed with small logs and branches up to about 30 cm long. Make sure the drum is filled to the brim, then fit the lid.

What to do with all those small branches that are too small to consider as logs and too big to rot down easily? One of the answers is to turn them into charcoal. Over the years I have seen charcoal-making in action and was frankly terrified by the prospect of trying to do it in my own woodland – packing a large retort for a 24-hour burn and supervising it safely seems a little intimidating.

According to **NCFed**, Britons burn through more than 110,000 tons of charcoal every year, and 90% of that is imported from abroad. Imported charcoal often comes from countries where environmental regulation is lacking, and deforestation and pollution are serious issues. British charcoal, by contrast, emanates from sustainably managed woodlands, often from regenerative hardwood coppice, so buying British means fewer airmiles, improved woodland biodiversity and support for local business.

Buying British-made charcoal is an ethical option, so it seems obvious that making your own would earn extra brownie points on the sustainability scale.

The drum

Enter the small drum method. Apparently, it is not difficult to use an old oil drum to make your own retort – see YouTube and other online sources for instructions on how to do this. However, we acquired a ready-made drum in our local garden centre, a Kadai Charcoal Maker, which we took to our woodland and set to work.

A 450mm long steel drum, with doors at either end, a handle and two tiny gas vents, this charcoal maker will produce about 1 kg of charcoal per burn.

The wood

We packed the drum tightly with a mixed selection of small branches from ash, hornbeam and birch. Note that you will also need to gather a good amount of combustible material for the fire. The burn will last about three hours and the temperature needs to be maintained.

The fire

We used an Indian fire pit to build up a substantial fire. One advantage of this is that the fire will not damage the woodland floor; but you don't need a portable fire pit. Many woodland owners will no doubt have a fire pit area in their woodland, which might benefit from a little excavation to enable the drum to sit low to be surrounded by logs and embers.

Once the fire had been burning for about half an hour, the charcoal drum was tucked into the fire and more small logs placed around it to get it really hot. Very quickly, steam will start to hiss out of the drum, which shows that the process is working and after about 90 minutes a satisfying flame appeared at the top vents and then from the doors. Much larger professional retorts can recycle these hot gases as part of the burn, but in this case the flames simply look pretty.

Once the flames had disappeared – about three hours after starting the whole process – we left the drum in the dying fire, checking that it was safe before we left the wood.

The charcoal

Returning 24 hours later, everything had cooled and we could prise open the drum (the kit includes a handy priser) to reveal black gold – charcoal from our own wood.

We haven't yet had an opportunity to use it, and the single kilo produced is probably not quite enough for a barbecue. However, it was a really easy process which we shall repeat.

The fire kept us warm on a cool day and next time I shall try to ensure that we cook on it too – probably nothing more than baked potatoes or using it for a kettle, as keeping the charcoal drum hot is the main purpose.

The Kadai Charcoal Maker is available from www.kadai.co.uk and other suppliers.



Once the fire was established, the charcoal drum was tucked into the firepit.



After about 90 minutes, flames appeared from the top vents and the doors of the drum, demonstrating that the wood gases were being burnt off as part of the process of pyrolysis.



An ashen shadow of its former glory, the charcoal drum was easy to prise open to reveal about a kilo of quality charcoal.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Peering out from among the Woods to the Moores, Hills, and Brooks, **JOHN JACKSON**, former CEO of the Royal Forestry Society, reflects on the sheer number and diversity of surnames that are rooted in the natural world.

You don't need to spend too long in the woodland world before you begin to notice the sheer number of people with surnames which firmly root their family in the natural world. Among the Woods, Trees, Hills and Fields are Birds, Foxes, Hares, Crows, Fishers, Harts, Sawyers, and Bowers, not to mention Fords, Rivers, Reeds, Brooks and Wells.

Nominative determinism, or the idea that people tend to gravitate towards areas of work that fit their names, was first hypothesised in 1994, but several hundred years ago the reverse was true: surnames often reflected where people lived or what they did.

Having a surname is something we take for granted nowadays, but it was not always so.

The Normans

Surnames landed on Britain's well-wooded shores with the Normans from 1066. At first restricted to the nobility, the convenience of having family names arose to distinguish between two individuals with identical first ones as the sparse rural populace grew. And not before time, as in the 13th century about a third of all men in England shared the first name of John, Richard or William.

By the start of the 15th century surnames in England and the Scottish Lowlands had mostly settled down and become hereditary – passed from one generation to the next.

Many modern-day surnames reflect society as it was in the mid to late



Above: Knotty Ash, Liverpool, whose name is derived from a knarled ash. In 2004 comedian Ken Dodd, who was a proud son of the city, planted a new ash tree near the site of the original.

Below: President of the Royal Horticultural Society Keith Weed, with HM The Queen at the Chelsea Flower Show, 2022. The Windsors, of course, take their family name from their favourite castle.



Middle Ages when most people still lived off the land and had close connections with trees and woodlands. British surnames can tell us a lot about our heritage and how the countryside was far more clothed with trees then than now.

Although the Industrial Revolution (c.1760-1840) heralded a radical shift from a land-based to an urban way of life, people's family names went with them and many still reflect our rural roots and heritage.

Family trees

So how and why did surnames arise and what do they tell us about our distant ancestors' links to trees and woodlands by the Middle Ages?

- Many came from how a person made their living – examples of craftsmen working with trees and timber would be Barrell, Barker, Carpenter, Cartwright, Cooper, Forester, Sawyer or Woodman. At first, these last names were adaptable too and evolved from generation to generation, or even as a person changed his job – so 'Richard Woodman' may have taken the name 'Richard Sawyer' as his trade progressed and went up-market.

- Others relate to where a person dwelt or came from. No prizes for guessing the origin of your surname if it is 'such-and-such wood', be it Black, Green, Red, Little or Under.

- Then there are other general location names, such as Dell, Holt or Wood itself. More specific places such as a village or town often had something to do with

trees as well, such as Sevenoaks, Nine Elms or Knotty Ash.

- Or maybe your forefathers lived near a notable species of landmark tree – like Alder or Ashe or Oak.

- In an age when few knew how to read or write, last names were sometimes misspelt, corrupted, or written in the records as they sounded – so Birch became Burch and the Norman French Bois became Boyce – a manuscript equivalent of a modern typo.

- Other early common surnames stemmed from the parent's first name. So 'Richard's son' became Richardson. Many Welsh surnames follow this pattern too, with Jones (from 'John's son') or Williams being the most frequent.

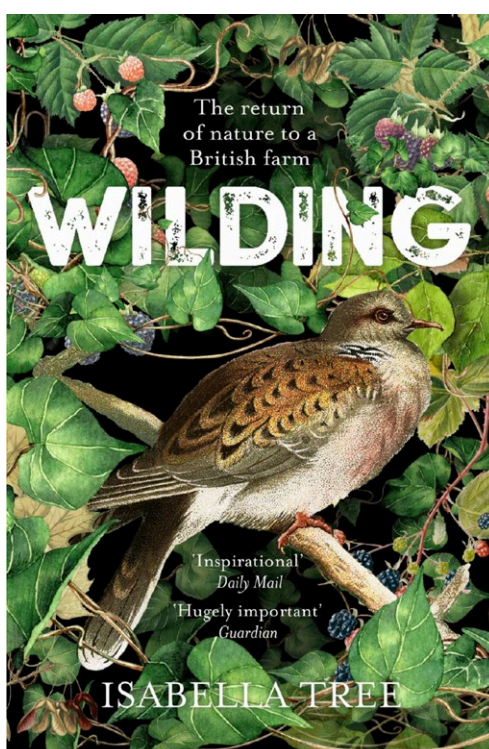
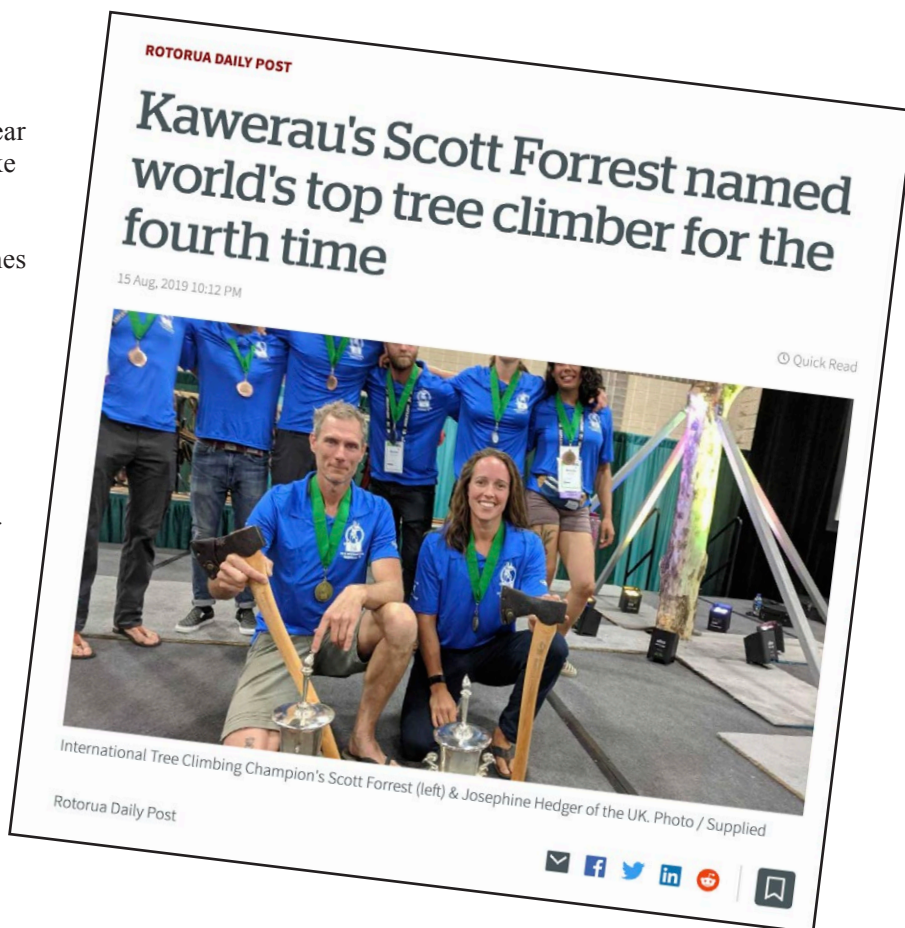
- Another widespread source of surnames was nicknames or descriptive terms – Armstrong, Brown, Goodfellow, Long, Short or Whitehead, all fall in this category.

- Many given names evolved directly into surnames. When a baby was christened with two or more baptismal names, the second might be adopted later as a last name instead. So, the descendants of say 'William Everard What's-His-Name' might adopt Everard as their last name.

If you don't boast a tree-derived surname or bloodline, just try casting your eye down a list of contributors to Living Woods Magazine, TV celebrities, sports people or even a roll call of members of parliament. Quite a number of surnames will have something to do with trees, tree products or craftsmen using timber, demonstrating just how vital trees were in the everyday lives of pre-industrial, well-wooded Britain.

As for nominative determinism, there's a least one Woods among the past presidents of the Royal Forestry Society (and the former editor of this magazine) and the current President of the Royal Horticultural Society is one Keith Weed.

Finally, according to Wikipedia, Wood is the 26th most common surname in Britain (just after Jackson).



New Zealander Scott Forrest is an arborist and an accomplished tree climber. Winner of the International Tree Climbing Championship four times, in 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2019, Scott is a self-employed contractor who uses his day job as valuable training for competitions.

Isabella Tree began her career as a travel writer, but it is with the publication of *Wilding* that she lived up to her surname. This is the account of the rewilding of her family farm in Sussex.

Woodland agent **RUTH FELTHAM**, no stranger to silvicultural terminology and a hands-on woodland manager, reviews a 60-year-old forestry classic.

PRACTICAL FORESTRY FOR THE AGENT AND SURVEYOR

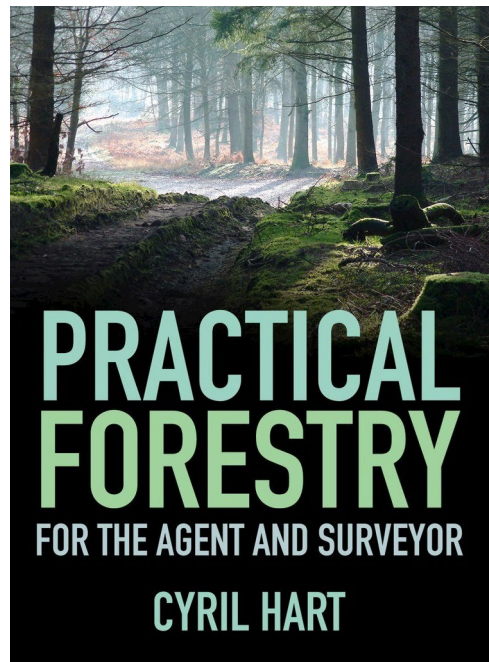
Cyril Hart

The History Press
Paperback (4th Edition)
696 pages
RRP £40
ISBN 9780750999410

Upon first appearance this encyclopaedic tome could also be titled '...and not for the fainthearted'. Heralded as a trusted companion to forestry students and experts, it is described in reviews as the 'definitive guide to forestry', and is aimed at private growers managing woodland for commercial purposes. As you might expect, *Practical Forestry* authoritatively addresses the question of valuation, but it is also an extremely useful reference book which is easily navigated and is surprisingly accessible. Colourful photos (such as the botanical features of four commonly planted commercial broadleaves), figures and illustrations (specifications for rabbit, stock and deer fencing, for example), and tables (such as the costs of road haulage) pepper the book throughout and provide digestible nuggets of expertise.

Despite the incredible depth and detail of the topics covered, the book does not assume that the reader has significant prior knowledge or understanding of forestry. For example, a list of abbreviations for Economics and Mensuration is given at the start of the book. For those who have read a management plan for the first time, abbreviations such as DBH, YC and OB are then demystified and explained clearly.

In terms of content, *Practical Forestry* starts by looking at native and exotic trees, introduces forestry concepts such as identification and measurement, raising stock and genetics. The book continues with a deep dive into the forest ecosystems



(with a focus on climate and soils), which in turn informs species choices, covered in the following chapter.

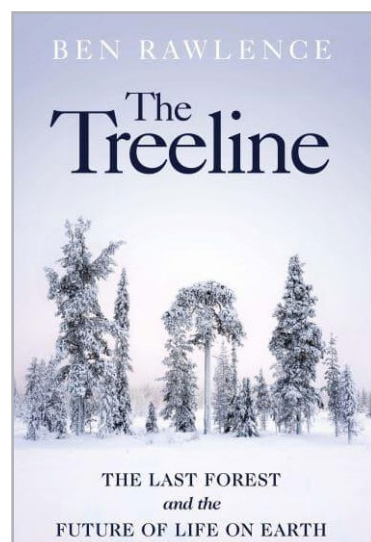
Establishment and costs of plantations, aftercare of plantations, silvicultural systems and thinning are all covered in the next chapters. The timber industry is then explored, with sections on properties of timber; quality and grading, harvesting and restocking, forest planning, forest management (including non-wood benefits such as recreation, wildlife conservation and sporting pursuits).

Following the chapters on the economics and support of private forestry (covering grants, subsidies and taxation), the book closes with chapters on woodland accounts, forestry valuation and finally investment in private forestry.

The book was originally published in 1962 and is now in its fourth edition. This information alone serves as testament to the invaluable content it offers. For those who want to understand more about working, managing and preserving Britain's wonderful woodlands, it should be considered a worthwhile investment.

BOOK REVIEW

A woodland manager in Scotland, **JOHN CAMERON** absorbs the lessons from this assessment of how climate change is affecting the northern forests of the world.



THE TREELINE
The Last Forest and the future of
Life on Earth

Ben Rawlence

Jonathan Cape
Hardcover
352 pages
RRP £20
ISBN 9781787332249

Having listened with great interest to the serialisation of this work on Radio 4, my interest was stirred to seek this book out and learn what else it had to offer. The short answer is, an amazing amount!

Almost all the evidence is pointing inexorably toward a warming world, with its negative impacts broadly accepted. What is much less considered is the reality of these rising temperatures in real and comprehensible terms that resonate. *The Treeline* will ring true with anyone who has an interest in the northern forest. The Boreal forest and its fringe with the Arctic treeline are just one of the many frontiers of a wooded boundary that is under stress as it is forced to adapt to the changes that are already happening.

Ben Rawlence takes us on a journey around the globe within the northerly latitudes of the forestry necklace that the planet wears. He introduces his readers to different countries which are all experiencing dramatic changes, and he recounts how they are being felt, not just by the ecology but also by the human populations that dwell in these areas.

From some of Scotland's diminished and now diminutive ancient forest, through Scandinavia, the Russian Federation and on through Alaska and northern Canada, the author paints a clear picture. He tells the story of the people who are at the forefront of the change and how it is affecting their current way of life, as well as the outlook for the future, which is often bleak.

Painstakingly researched, with much time spent travelling in the harsh conditions of the upper latitudes, the author conveys the magic and vitality of this seemingly desolate world with an expansive range of personal experience, gained through the earned trust of the indigenous people.

What is clear is that the natural world is not waiting for mankind; the trees are on the move in a vision almost from Tolkien. Pioneering species are stealing a march, establishing themselves further and further north in response to warming conditions. This rapid colonisation of hitherto frozen land is pushing the native ecology further north, with all that entails.

The result of the author's work is an engaging and illuminating account of the effects that the northward moving treeline is having on human beings, animals and the wider planet. Unfortunately, it would appear that not all new tree growth and forest expansion is necessarily beneficial.

“

The earth is out of balance, and the treeline zone is a territory in the grip of large geological change, confounding and challenging our ideas of the past, present and future.

”



London resident **CLARE GIBSON** uncovers the surprising cultural and symbolic heritage of the plane tree.

As its name suggests, the London plane is, for many people, a symbol of London. A hybrid of the oriental plane (*Platanus orientalis*) and the American sycamore or plane (*P. occidentalis*), it is thought that the first London plane (*P. x acerifolia* or *P. x hispanica*) came into being in the London garden of botanist John Tradescant during the 17th century.

A tall tree with wide leaves, the London plane's ability to withstand pollution, as well as to tolerate pollarding and cramped growing conditions, caused the Victorians to plant it extensively in London and other cities.

The characteristic that is probably most noticeable to passers-by is its mottled-looking, peeling bark, which, in ancient times, caused planes to be considered, like snakes, symbols of regeneration, reptiles and trees both shedding their old skins or bark to reveal the young scales or wood beneath. The plane's dappled bark rather resembles military camouflage, and in Germany, the *Platanenmuster* ('plane pattern') refers to a distinctive camouflage-patterned uniform worn by the Waffen-SS during World War II.

The tree's towering height meant that the oriental plane was regarded as a guardian or protective tree in Persia (Iran), which is why it was typically planted by important sites, such as springs and water, mosques and mausoleums. This was also the case in Turkey, where plane trees were equated with magnificence, sovereignty and endurance, which is partly why they came to represent the strength of the Ottoman emperors. Another reason is the celebrated dream of Osman, the founder of the Ottoman Empire, in which a plane tree sprouted from his chest and grew so large that it covered continents, shading beneath its boughs mighty mountains and rivers, fertile fields and beautiful, prosperous cities – a dream that was interpreted as a vision of Sultan Osman's future empire. Indeed, whenever the Ottomans conquered a new territory, they traditionally planted a plane by water

to symbolise their victory, dominion and power. A huge plane tree – called the İnkaya Çınar – that is believed to be 600 years old is, moreover, a symbol of the Turkish city of Bursa, which is famed for its ancient planes.

Another legendary plane tree is that of Gortys, on the island of Crete, under which Zeus, the supreme Greek god, is said to have seduced Europa, the daughter of the king of Phoenicia, having abducted her in the guise of a bull. That this particular plane is a rare evergreen that never sheds its leaves in winter is said to be due to

its divine connection, and it has become a symbol of immortality and masculinity.

Its wood is not particularly valued, and it does not bear edible fruit, but the oriental plane was held in great respect in the Middle East, both for its size and for the shade cast by its leafy branches, which provided blessed relief from the hammer-heat of a summer's day. Aesop's fable 'The travellers and the plane tree' emphasised this particular aspect and the plane

was further valued in Greece because the philosophical discussions of members of Plato's Academy in Athens were believed to have been held under its boughs. The tree came to be regarded as a symbol of the Academy, as well as of scholarship and intellect.

There is a plane tree on the Greek island of Kos that is likewise known as the tree of Hippocrates, because the ancient Greek physician apparently taught his students under its canopy (or that of a predecessor). These associations clarify why the plane's meaning in the Victorian language of flowers is 'genius'; another explanation being found in the apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus 24:14, in which Wisdom states: 'I . . . grew up as a plane tree by the water.' The gentle shelter provided by the plane also gives it symbolic significance in Christian thought, the tree being likened to both Christ's all-enveloping love and to the theological virtue of charity.



'Rustam Shoots His Half-brother Shaghad through a Plane Tree', Folio from a Shahnama (Book of Kings) of Firdausi, dated A.H. 887/A.D. 1482 (Metropolitan Museum of Art).



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EVENTS ROUND-UP

2022

JUNE

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23–26 June 2022
Edinburgh, Scotland

[DEVON COUNTY SHOW](#)

30 June–2 July 2022
Clyst St Mary, Exeter; Devon

JULY

[TIMBER FESTIVAL](#)

1–3 July 2022
Feanedock, National Forest

[KENT COUNTY SHOW](#)

8–10 July 2022
Maidstone, Kent

[GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW](#)

12–15 July 2022
Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate

[STRUMPSHAW TREE FAIR](#)

16–17 July 2022
Strumpshaw, Norfolk

[ROYAL WELSH SHOW](#)

18–21 July 2022
Builth Wells, Wales

[NEW FOREST AND HAMPSHIRE COUNTY SHOW](#)

26–28 July 2022
Brockenhurst, Hampshire

[THE BUSHCRAFT SHOW](#)

29–31 July 2022
Stanford Hall, Lutterworth, Leics

AUGUST

[SOUTH DOWNS SHOW](#)

13–14 August 2022
Queen Elizabeth Country Park,
Petersfield, Hampshire

[WILDERNESS GATHERING](#)

18–21 August 2022
West Knoyle, Wiltshire

[THE OAK FAIR](#)

27–28 August 2022
Sturminster Newton, Dorset

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22–24 September 2022,
Ragley Estate, Warwickshire

[BELMONT WOODFEST & COUNTRY FAIR](#)

10–11 September 2022
Faversham, Kent

[SURREY HILLS WOOD FAIR](#)

10–11 September 2022
Cranleigh, Guildford

[BENTLEY WOODFAIR & COUNTRY SHOW](#)

16–18 September 2022
Lewes, East Sussex





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