



THE COPPICE ASSOCIATION North West

NEWSLETTER No 45 Summer 2011 **'Working Woodlands' event gets funding!**

The exhibition planned for the whole of April at Farfield Mill, Sedbergh has received £10,000 of funding from 'Awards for All' .

The event called 'Working Woodlands- the story of coppice' will take over all the Mill's exhibition spaces and will be the largest event ever attempted by the Association. A large portion of the grant will go towards putting on a series of workshops for both children and adults.



Bark peeling in action at the first 'CANW storm'

Members have already started producing exhibits for the 'one wood' section of the event at a couple of 'CANW Storm' days at Moss and

Height Spring woods, which were very well attended with bark peeling and whittling being the major activities. There is a woodland weekend planned at the wood for 5&6th November.

Busy summer for CANW.

The Association has been present at several shows this summer from Damson Day in the Lyth valley, Holker Flower show, Cuerden Valley show and Sizergh greenwood fair. We've also had the most successful 'Weekend in the Woods' event with every course booked up and 60 people shaving, weaving, cleaving and chair-making in Chapel House wood.

Walter is coppice hero - official

We all knew it, but President Walter Lloyd has now received the accolade officially. Walter was presented with an award for 'the person who has made most difference to forestry in the last 20 years' at the Cumbria Woodlands 20th birthday bash . Walter has come up with a short coppice autobiography on page 4 so you can see why.

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CANW Events

5/6th November - Moss & Height Spring CANW Storm

The request was made for a weekend event at Moss and Height Spring woods, here it is.....the chance to spend the whole weekend there! The intention is to have a work party on the Saturday with a bonfire night type celebration on the Saturday night . No air burst fireworks please, we don't want to scare the local wildlife, or local locals. The hardy can camp overnight in the wood and then there will be a short making day on the Sunday.

14th December - Talk on Moss & Height Spring woods

All are welcome at Sprint Mill, Burneside, Nr. Kendal LA8 9AQ at 7.00pm on Wednesday 14 December 2011 when Brian Crawley will present his slideshow and talk about the significant history of Moss and Height Spring woods (as given at Woodland Pioneers this year) and a chance for discussion about the exciting future of this woodland.

27th January -7pm AGM Sprint Mill, Burneside

Note the *new venue* , agenda and further details to follow.

1st-30th April 2012 Working Woodlands - the story of coppice. Farfield Mill, Sedbergh

CANW's mega, major exhibition at Farfield Mill. Workshops, children's activities, demonstrations and much more. Get involved.

12-13th May 2012 Weekend in the Woods

The line up for next May's Weekend in the Woods is:-

Hazel Hurdles - Sam Ansell
Trug Making - Bill Saunders
Bowl Lathe Turning - Peter Wood
Stick Chairs - James Mitchell
Make a Shave Horse - Twiggy
Willow Weaving -Helen Elvin
Spoon Carving -Steve Tomlin
Cleft Gate Hurdles - Mike Carswell
Wood Carving - Geoff Whitley

CANW members £90, non-members £100

There are more details including an application form on the CANW website.

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Harry Potter and the larch disease of doom.

“Phytophthora Ramorum” said Harry Potter waving his wand in the direction of a larch tree. Alright, its nothing to do with the junior wizard but spells disaster for one of the more useful softwoods and could directly effect our access to areas of woodland and start involving us in biosecurity measures if we travel between different woods.

P. ramorum infection causes Japanese larch shoot tips to wilt and needles to turn black and fall prematurely. Cankers that bleed resin can appear on the branches and upper trunk. More than 2 million larch trees in the UK, mostly in South West England, South Wales and Northern Ireland, have been felled since 2009.

The disease, which kills larch trees very quickly and is a recent arrival in Britain, has been confirmed in two woods in the Eskdale Valley in western Cumbria.



Larch trees produce large quantities of the spores that spread the disease, which can infect many species of trees and plants. The only available disease control treatment is to fell the trees, preferably before the next spore release, which current knowledge indicates occurs in the autumn.

The outbreak is the second in North West England after one in southern Lancashire, and only the third outbreak in England outside the South West, where the disease has caused the premature felling of hundreds of thousands of larch trees. The Forestry Commission has been surveying the western side of the country from the air to locate patches of the disease.

P.Ramorum thrives in damp environments, which is partly why larch trees only on the milder, moister, western side of Britain have been found affected so far. It spreads easily in moisture and water, so moist air currents, mists, fog

and watercourses all provide the potential for movement. It can also be spread as contaminating spores by animals and possibly also by birds, as well as on footwear, vehicle wheels, and machinery and equipment used in forests.

When a diseased larch is found, the only course of action is to fell the tree and any susceptible trees within 200 metres. While the wood of infected larches is still ok, the disease remains in the bark and needles, so only specially licensed contractors are allowed to remove the wood.

Because the disease is very difficult to spot when the needles are off the FC is not issuing felling licenses for the winter felling of larch in the high risk areas.

Biosecurity

How does this effect coppicing? I hear you ask. Well quite a lot of coppice woodlands have areas of larch or are next door to areas of larch. If an outbreak occurs you will at the least be having to disinfect your vehicles and equipment, and it could be that a large landowner may take the view its better to keep access to a minimum while the outbreak is sorted out. We saw quite draconian measures during the foot and mouth outbreak.

If your woodland is affected the Forestry Commission recommends:-

Footwear

Before entering a phytophthora control site...

Footwear must be clean and free from mud and plant material and sprayed with Propeller™.

Before leaving a phytophthora control site...boots must be washed off on a hard standing near the entrance to the wood using a stiff brush and water. It is essential that all traces of soil be removed.

••• The brush for this must be kept on site in a bucket of disinfectant.

After cleaning, footwear must be sprayed with Propeller™ and left until it has evaporated.

Care must be taken to ensure that any water run-off does not enter watercourses.

Clothes

Need to be checked for needles and debris. Wet clothing should be changed.

Off road vehicles

Leaving a site, should be cleaned of mud using a pressure washer on hard standing next to the road and then the tyres disinfected with Propeller™ .

Keep your fingers crossed.

Cumbria Woodlands 20th Anniversary Awards

I was a bit taken aback when Sarah rang up to invite me to Merewood, and to say that I had been nominated for an award.

I don't usually go in for self analysis, but I wondered how I had arrived at that point of nomination, and thought it might be useful to others to follow my development in the woods.

As I said at Merewood, I was brought up in Cornwall, and I remember as a very small boy hearing some grown-ups saying that the trouble with Cornwall was that there were no trees. I piped up "oh yes there are; there is a tree in the Parsons garden". In fact only the very sheltered valleys really give trees a chance there, but I learnt how to use an axe, cutting furze for fuel for our open fire.'

In 1940 my school was evacuated to Wales, to the Severn valley, and I spent a lot of time in the extensive woodlands, in the company, among others, of charcoal burners - strong men in leather aprons and with double bitted axes, using sectional steel kilns. The coppice wood was pulled out of the riverside swamps by a steam traction engine that was also used to drive a circular saw,

One weekend in particular, a bunch of us boys thought we would help the charcoal burners by sawing up timber on their Sunday off. I was in charge of the steam engine but unfortunately its boiler was kept topped up from the water tank by a steam injector, on the venturi principle instead of the mechanical steam pump that I was used to. I never did get the hang of steam injectors although since then I have often been told how simple they are, and I was not able to keep the boiler water level up and had to put out the fire to avoid serious damage to the flue pipes. Next day the men were NOT amused when they had to fill the boiler with buckets through the removeable plate. We thought we had been helping. Just what they thought, history does not relate. But I did get a serious interest in charcoal.

I joined the Navy in 1943, and before the war was over I found myself in South East Asia, where there were real jungles with real wild life in them - Wild tigers and elephants for example,

and mangrove swamps, and thickets of bamboo that could grow 120 feet in one season and plantations of rubber and oil palm and pineapples.

When I came out of the navy I spent most of the summer of 1947 working at the East Malling Research Station in the orchards of Kent, but I also found out about chestnut coppice. In 1949 I started farming on my own account, in a valley almost bare of trees, although I was shown a photograph from 100 years ago when all you could see was tree tops. In 1951 or 1952 I got a Forestry Commission Advisor to come and look at my land. "That half acre hollow would do nicely to plant Sitka Spruce and Japanese Larch" he said, so I managed to get hold of a mattock - everything was still either rationed or in short supply - and got in, I think it was a thousand plants. Two years later there was very heavy snow that filled the hollow and covered the sheep netting, so the sheep walked in and ate anything that stuck up through the snow. When the advisor came to look, he found three little trees left, and said "Ah yes, we don't recommend those varieties now!" After that I persuaded the County Council to plant, and fence, for me, with a lot of success. Around that time I remember reading an influential article in *The Countryman* by a man who, when he came out of the army, started coppicing in Kent and made a living from quite a small wood.

In about 1980, Dr Oliver Rackham gave a lecture at Grizedale, on the very poor state of the large acreage of coppice woodlands in the South Lakes. "What we need" he said "is a New Woodmanship, young people working in the woods and bringing in fresh ideas". Michael Gee, Tom Clare and Bill Lloyd were talking about this afterwards, and as a result they set up the New Woodmanship Trust, that ran conferences and the first Weekend in the Woods, with Mary Barrett demonstrating Swill Basket making, and Mike Abbott showing us how to use a Pole Lathe and make chairs. Then with the help of Jon Williams at the Lake District National Park, they set up the Phoenix Project to revive coppicing. Historically, one eighth of the coppice wood went to specialized trades like swills and besom brooms and hurdles and so on, and seven eighths was used for charcoal and fire wood, so the key was the seven eighths, Could charcoal still be profitable? The Lake District National Park found a site, and a stack of 100 tons of wood, and money to pay for

a report., Then they needed someone to do the work. I was the only person that they knew of that had any experience at all of making charcoal, even if that was forty years earlier as a boy, so I got the job.

The National Park asked two things - can good quality charcoal be made from derelict coppice, and can it be made to pay? The answer to both of these was Yes, and so I kept the business going for several years before selling it as a going concern. I very soon found that although the work was physical, it was not particularly hard, and there were long periods when there were nothing to do except watch the colour of the smoke to monitor the state of the burn., I had four eight foot something kilns, burning two at a time while the other two cooled, and I found that while watching, I could also occupy myself making things from the stack of wood - tent pegs, hurdles, chairs, almost any coppice product, so I started learning how to make them by going on courses and workshops and so on - at the Ironbridge Greenwood Trust in particular - Mike Abbott for chairs, David Hodson the former land agent of the Herriard Estate in Hampshire who had learnt the hurdle making skill from the former head woodman there, Cutty Westbrook. I have a lovely photo of Cutty Westbrook standing in front of a stack of 2000 hurdles that he has just made. Yurts with Hal Wynne-Jones, felt with Ann Belgrave. and I was able to do several Hedge Laying courses with the Agricultural Training Board, because Hedge Laying is a specialised form of coppicing.

I was able to move the whole business from wood to wood, and lived in a horse drawn bow top caravan that I had built, pulled by Fell Ponies that I had been breeding for many years. For several years I was working in the same wood as Bill Hogarth, watching him at work, and talking about coppicing and coppice products, not only in the woods but also at shows and demonstrations when he could make and sell 100 besom brooms in 6 hours, while talking about them and about coppicing to the many interested punters and putting £7 in his pocket for everyone sold, AND be paid to be there with travelling expenses on top. When I first met Bill he was making and selling 20 coppice products; just before he died he told me that he had reached his 100th product.

In 1990 Anne Frahm held the first Weekend in the Woods at the Hay Bridge Nature Reserve that became an annual event for 7 years until Ann became too ill to run it. Bill Hogarth and Owen Jones and George Reed became mainstays of the workshops and we had as many as 15 different skills in some years. Bill reckoned that he must have trained over 1000 students at Hay Bridge and other places. In 1991 Cumbria Broadleaves came into being followed by the Coppice Association which has survived in the North West, and the Bill Hogarth Memorial Apprenticeship Trust which is successfully increasing the number of active coppice workers.

When I sold the charcoal business I intended to work mainly with hazel. I had seen hazel in Hampshire with the stools 4 feet apart, and averaging 50 rods to each stool, and it takes 25 rods about 7 years old to make a hurdle. Unfortunately there is no managed coppice of this quality in the North of England, so I started to grow willow instead, which can be cropped every year or two according to the size needed for a very wide range of uses.

When I was a boy I used to follow the Threshing Tackle from farm to farm in the autumn, the big box pulled by a steam traction engine that drove it by a belt when operating, the sheaves of oats or wheat fed into the very fast running drum that beat the grain out, to be sieved into sacks at one end, the straw conveyed to the other end, to be bound with two strands of binder twine into bundles to be stacked. Sometimes the twine broke or the knot failed, and there was a lot of loose straw. One of the old men would start to twist loose straw into a thick rope and make a fresh bundle and I quickly got the knack of doing this. In 1991, Ian Hunter was putting on a workshop at Edinburgh for the Architects Winter School and asked me to come and demonstrate straw rope making. We had 4 tons of straw bales and tied up trees and traffic wardens vans and double decker buses, and some years later when Ian was mounting a show at Manchester Airport with Herdwick wool the theme, he had me making check-in barriers from Herdwick wool rope. This makes very good rope, but in the past wool was always too expensive a fibre for that purpose, but in recent years the value has been so low that the farmer only received one penny a kilo for Herdwick wool, although when processed into

yarn it can be £5 a kilo or more. The price of raw wool is a little better now, but still doesn't pay to produce. Once you get the principle of twisting or plaiting, almost any fibre can be used for cord or string or rope.

So how have I got here? I think it is by taking any opportunity that occurs, going through open doors to see what is on the other side, and getting stuck in, dirty hands and all. I have slowed down now, but still enjoy actually doing things, and still learning whenever I get the chance. Above all, I seem to have been in a good place at a good time to take advantage of a situation.

Walter Lloyd



A great turnout to help Walter cut his willow bed



Willow Cutting at Walter Lloyd's spot.

Back in the late winter Steve Tomlin arranged a group of folk to go and help Walter cut his willow beds. There are so many different kinds of willow there that it has become a rather big task for one person on their own to cope with. So a group of us turned up one fine morning to start at the most overgrown area and cut it all down. This should result in good regeneration and provided material for a good number of products including yurt poles, piling for river banks and some fencing materials. A good start was made on cutting on the first day with about 12 people taking part. A couple of further days, one of which I did with Kate and another with a small group meant that a large proportion of the beds was cut. Now at the end of summer the regrowth has been great and will provide more materials for baskets and larger things in the future. It has been good to work as a group to get it done making it a sociable and productive time with a good old chin wag too; Walter has so much knowledge to pass on, I just wish I could remember half of what he tells me! I hope we can do it again this winter to help Walter out and keep such a fantastic resource growing strongly.

Helen Elvin

With Thanks to Steve Tomlin for his photos of the day. Steve's write up of the day can be read at <http://stevetomlincrafts.wordpress.com/>

Walter tells me he is having another cutting frenzy sometime this winter (I can't be more accurate because it depends on the weather) so if you are interested in helping and getting your hands on some excellent willow contact Walter or Helen or Steve Tomlin.

How do you measure charcoal?

With my own charcoal sales slowly building up here in Manchester, I am often battling against the ever-present imported stuff which seems to be as popular as ever with the average customer. The supermarkets are full of the stuff, pallets are sitting in the foyer loaded with heavy bags of carbon that has been shipped half-way across the world, only to be burned in our gardens. I often wonder if anyone is actually thinking about the environmental effects of this imported charcoal, or any charcoal for that matter. We are essentially burning pure carbon, therefore releasing this carbon into the atmosphere, just for the luxury that is a barbecue.

So does this make sense? Well, not if we're not importing it from distant countries like Africa, China and Brazil. It does make sense if the carbon released by the burning is taken up by the new growth from, for example, a coppiced stool. Tesco's current charcoal is made from FSC "cotton tree waste" but no mention is made of the massive environmental impact of growing cotton in the first place (it uses an excessive amount of water) and of course the fact that it has been shipped over from China. Also, the *average* wage in China is about £4,500 per year, so we can only imagine what a rural Chinese charcoal burner is making, and what conditions they may have to put up with to satisfy a contract with Tesco, whether the wood is FSC or not. So if that is the kind of charcoal you want then pop down to your "local" Tesco, where you can get a 5kg bag for only £5 – bargain.

But hold that thought; that's 5 kilograms of imported carbon for £5, which you are then about to release into the atmosphere in a couple of sunny afternoons. It has been made in China, hauled to a warehouse for packaging, hauled to a port, shipped to Europe, hauled to a distribution warehouse, hauled again to the store and then driven back to your house for burning. We're actually burning carbon to import carbon and then burning more of it in our back gardens, I was under the impression that our government was trying to *reduce* carbon emissions. But there is a recession happening and I suppose imports are very important to the economy, and let's not forget about all those jobs Tesco are providing.

Let's set aside the environmental and ethical implications for a moment, everyone likes a bargain and if something is cheap then it must be good, right? I have been exploring another aspect to charcoal sales, which is the actual value for money that a customer gets when they buy the imported stuff. If we look at the average bag of imported charcoal being sold on the high street, the most common price is £5 for 3kg, which is very similar to British charcoal. But there is one massive difference and that is the *volume*. Most charcoal burners I know have been selling theirs by measuring the weight, often as a requirement for fulfilling the Bioregional orders. But as anyone who works with wood-based products on a regular basis will know, that the weight of wood varies wildly depending on many variables including species, water content, rate of growth and even relative gravitational strengths.

Believe it or not, there are actually slight differences in gravity throughout the British Isles, and so a Kentish charcoal burner's 3kg may be slightly smaller in *mass* than a Cumbrian 3kg, because there is a difference in the strength of gravity due to the density distribution of rocks beneath the surface. The actual difference is negligible, but the fact is that weighing an object is not actually an accurate way of measuring it, as it relies on gravity; *weight is the force experienced by an object due to gravity*. Mass on the other hand is a measurement of how much *matter* an object contains, but due to the highly porous nature of charcoal this unit of measurement would only be possible by reducing the charcoal to dust. And as we often use a mix of hardwoods with different densities and growth-rates, the mass of wood will vary again; will my super-fast growing Mancunian Ash be *lighter* than the slow-grown Cumbrian wood?

Customers are often under the impression that they are getting better value for money when they buy a heavy bag, but from what I have seen, there is usually less volume in the heavy imported bags. When explaining to people why they should be buying, or selling, my own charcoal I always make the point that my bags have at least the same volume, regardless of the weight. My own charcoal is measured in a standard builders bucket, which is 15 litres and provides just the right amount for our larger *British Barbecue Charcoal* bag. This means that all of my bags have the same volume of charcoal inside, no-matter what the relative local gravity is. Some of you may ask; but what if your charcoal has lots of tiny pieces and mine has fewer, larger pieces? Well, we should all be grading through a 1/2" (12.5mm) sieve, which means that no-one else's charcoal will have pieces smaller than 1/2", giving us a lower constant in size. There is, in theory, no upper constant but I am sure that a volume-based measurement will still be more accurate than a weighed measurement.

I believe that one of the reasons that imported charcoal is measured by weight is because it is more dense and therefore the whole supply chain can make more money from less actual mass of charcoal. It is basically a con; consumers are being conned into buying heavy charcoal when they should actually be looking for a bigger bag of lightweight charcoal, which as we know lights faster and burns cleaner. So I would like to argue that in order to get a fair and consistent product that all charcoal, including imported, should be measured by *volume*.

Any feedback on this theory would be much appreciated – how do you measure your charcoal?

Mike Carswell

The variation of gravity across the UK varies by a max of 1 part in 2000 which would effect a 3kg bag by 1.5grammes, you could use balance scales to cancel the effect of gravity if you wanted to correct the 1.5g difference. Ed

Biochar Bag Proposal

CANW have been trying to find a way of marketing and selling charcoal fines (biochar) for some time now and with increased awareness by the public and scientists it is time to start working on a new bag for such a product. After much research I have found a supplier who can provide large bags (75 litres+) made from wood-based (FSC) brown paper that is moisture and puncture resistant, totally biodegradable and compostable and also has a square bottom so it can stand up when full. I will be experimenting with some samples of this bag over the next few months to see how practical it is, and if it could stand up to the rigours of an average garden shed. In the meantime, if any of our charcoal burners are interested in the potential market for their fines, or have any marketing ideas, then please get in touch.

Mike Carswell

Haybridge Burn



Brian Crawley seems to be doing more charcoal burning than when he wasn't retired, his latest was at Woodland Pioneers, this is a picture from an earth-burn he did at Haybridge earlier in the summer.



And he has produced the first peeled oak furniture from Moss & Heights with this nice bench which now resides in the wood.

Gareth's BURP



Recently joined member Gareth Thomas (yes him that worked at the National Trust) has sent in a picture of his new invention to protect against blackthorn spiking when clearing scrub. He's christened it the blackthorn universal rip protector. This is the Mk 2 version with built in hazel nut collector (nutty BURP). Looks a bit like a crate tied to his back, good luck in the Dragon's Den Gareth.

Weekend in the Woods 2011

Another set of full courses this year, weather a bit mixed but a good time had by all.



Bill 'the trug' Saunders teaching at WITW

Next issue

All articles gratefully received

Deadline December 30th

Preferably by email or parchment or carrier pidgeon