



*Putting Life into your Landscape”*

July 2011

### Chairman’s Letter

A pretty mixed bag in the Teller this time, which shows how much has been going on since the last issue.

Lucie Cowles sent me a 6 page write up of Alan Waters earth burn, from which I have included only some of the pictures. I am sure if you would like the whole pictorial story, she will be pleased to send it to you. Peter Jameson has provided an article in his usual amusing style, and Steve Reed has given me a write up about the FC Woodland Forum.

Now of course is the season of shows, and HCCG has just made a very impressive appearance at the South Down Wood Fair. There will probably be a write up of this and a few other events in the next issue, but I would like to thank all who were there. Especial thanks are due to Toni Brannon who organised everything for us and to Jo Baker who brought the HCC shelters down and took them back in her own time. We had 12 members exhibiting various coppice crafts and from the number of visitors we had on the Sunday, the public learnt a lot more about coppice craftsmanship. I have been told that, sponsorship willing, there will be a Wood Fair next year as this one was so successful.

If you have any local shows you want sent round, please give details to Toni, who can circulate them to those members in your area. As most of the Committee are in the southern half of the county, we don’t always hear about shows and events in the north, so please let Toni know.

You will be glad to know that HCCG is becoming more widely known as a group that can provide demonstrators at shows, and Toni is being approached by a number of organisations about HCCG attendance. In some cases she is able to get a fee for the demonstrator, and at the worst free stand space and the right to sell produce.

Things are slowly progressing with the National Coppice Federation, and I hope to have some more news on that to circulate either in the next issue or separately.

The debate on Forestry Commission Land continues, and some more information on this can be found in the article on page 6. If you are on e-mail you should have received a reminder about submitting your view to the expert panel appointed to look into this.

The social side has been neglected a bit in late years, so we are hoping to develop it again. Lucie has been putting together some events for us, which should be sent round soon. Please support them as otherwise we will not be able to run anything, and it would be nice to get together sometimes other than for shows.

Chris Westcott

### National Coppice Federation

The inaugural meeting of the National Coppice Federation was expected to be in September but it has now been decided to postpone this so that everything is properly organised. There has been some difficulty in finding contacts for all areas of the country, and this needs to be resolved before the official launch. I will give further information as it is received.

HCCG will put forward a delegate who will be included in the election for membership of the Committee. If they are successful, they will go on to develop the National Coppice Federation. They will be on the Committee for probably something like 2 years with several meetings a year around the country, usually tied in with other events, and in discussion with other members by e-mail. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the HCCG Committee.

Further details will be circulated by e-mail and post when we know them.

## Countrywatch

I went to a meeting in May about the extension of Countrywatch to the whole of Hampshire. There were lectures by various people including an Assistant Chief Constable being put in charge of countryside matters, which is a great improvement. There were also a range of products which would be of use to larger organisation, but most of them would not be suitable for us

North Hampshire Country Watch (NHCW) has been established along with teams that cover East Hampshire, the IOW and West Hampshire. The NHCW team will provide specialist cover for the Districts that make up North Hampshire Policing Area; Andover, Basingstoke & Deane, East Hampshire, Hart & Rushmoor, and Winchester. The team will also assist Country Watch officers South of Butser Hill.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) work throughout Hampshire Constabulary and provide a local service to all communities. Many of these teams have well established links within these communities and Countrywatch works with these teams and established schemes to support them and deal with local priorities.

Test Valley has an excellent established Farm Watch scheme and Countrywatch works with it to see how this effective scheme can be adopted across other areas of the County.

Team members also work with their colleagues in police forces that border Hampshire. Working in partnership with rural communities, local officers and National organisations the team aim to target the problems that are important to you.

Your local team members are:-

Pc Ames	Hart/Rushmoor
Pc Pittman	Andover
Pc Radcliffe	Winchester
Pc Owen	Winchester
Pc Coleshill	Basingstoke
Pc Skittlethorpe	East Hants
PCSO Veal	South of Butser

PCSO Gibbs and PCSO Rowell provide the team with support across the whole area.



If you would like to pass information anonymously please contact Crime Stoppers **0800 555 111**

Countrywatch and Safer Neighbourhood Teams rely upon information passed by members of the public, particularly those of us that are out and about delivering firewood etc. We have been members of South of Butser Countrywatch for some time and get messages about anything brought to the police attention like theft, trespass, poaching and suspicious vehicles and people. We also have some nice Countrywatch signs that seem to deter people from parking in gateways as they think they are being watched. I would recommend contacting your local Countrywatch team member for further information.

Chris Westcott with extracts from Police news bulletin.

### Charcoal Bags

HCCG Charcoal bags are available from Chris Westcott. Please contact me on 02392 595147 or [chris@wesnetservices.co.uk](mailto:chris@wesnetservices.co.uk) if you want to arrange to buy some.

Unfortunately there was a significant price increase this time, and they are now 41p per bag. This is still good value for money and they are still the same quality and design with the HCCG logo and the advantages of using English charcoal.

### Editors Note

If you have any articles for inclusion in the Teller, please send them to me. All contributions gratefully received.

Even if they are in note form, I can work them up into an article, so please send them to me.

## The Networking of HCCG



Claysmore School held a 'Dorset Day' on Sunday 1st May. There were two HCCG members with a stand and one Dorset Coppice Group member. Peter Jameson was demonstrating a craft, but not woodcraft. Lucie Cowles said she would not tell, but see picture of Peter in touch with his feminine side.



Lucy sold some bean poles to a lady in Broadstone who had no roof rack on car. [a common case of enthusiasm overcoming common sense- Ed.] Network thought; Luckily Peter lives in Broadstone, he will

deliver. Broadstone used to be cut in half by a railway line regretfully grubbed up by Lord Beeching. Seeing the address delivering the following day, was it going to take longer to re-rope the bean poles and drive 2 miles or walk them 1/2 mile under the old railway bridge.

Vying for the environmentally friendly option walked the poles. Peter may have got some funny looks but would he have noticed? Environmental delivery and a leaner charcoal burner. Apologies to Paul Vodden who would have had to walk less than 1/2 mile; business from under his eyebrows.



Do you have a better beanpole week story?

(Translated from the original) Peter Jameson and Lucie Cowles

## South West Network and Natter

The South West Network and Natter on 23rd March was attended by 13 members and 3 guests. Much coppice was talked about including sips of mainly Ringwood Best.

## Hampshire Woodland Forum 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011

There were updates on changes to the organisational structures of both the Forestry Commission and Natural England. The effect on operational people should be limited to changes in the areas they cover but both are moving to administrative "hubs". The advice is to contact the Woodland Officers in the first instance.

Phil Allen reported that HCC are also reorganising and several staff will be leaving shortly.

Anyone intending to create new woodland should be aware of the Woodland Carbon Code, details are on the FC website.

John Stride reported on Phytophthora ramorum. This is perhaps not of direct effect on coppice workers but there is clearly a lot of work being done, particularly on the infection of Larch. Regular surveys are being undertaken and trees confirmed as infected are being felled. At present the affected areas are to the west which has been designated zone 1 and particular rules are in place. Most of Hampshire is in zone 2 (except the New Forest) Requests for felling licences should exclude Larch. There is no risk of spread from sawn logs but there are rules on harvesting, handling and the disposal of bark etc. For the latest information see the Forest Research website but anyone who suspects an outbreak or needs advice should contact the local Woodland Officer.

It was also reported that there have been significant changes to Woodland Grants.

- A change in restocking requirements to allow up to 20% non natives provided they are not invasive and to allow "advancing native species" ie beech or "honorary natives" eg sycamore, particularly if they are already present in the wood
- conifer nurses may be used
- increased flexibility to leave open space
- a Phytophthora supplement. To be eligible the good practice guidelines in operations note 24 must be followed.
- Changes to the rates

Best advice is to take advice from your local FC Officer!!

Steve Reed

# Earth Burn

Ashdown Forest 2011



There is an art to building a Charcoal Earth Burn. Too small and its not worth the yield. Too big and you'll get lots of 'Brown Ends' (which in itself isn't a disaster as these are excellent for keeping the camp fire burning). Fundamentally though, who'd want to build a small one?

Building these structures takes love, care and attention and the three hearth masters have an inordinate amount of experience in building them. One is normally built, we built three. Four days and three burns made me imagine what it would have been like doing this 6 days a week, every week for life. We were keeping a part of our heritage alive and it was great. We were, for a short space in time a regular little production team.

These Hearth Masters (including you Jo) don't tell you what to do, they show you. Its a very visual way of learning, picking things up as you experience the whole Earth burn process from start to finish. You can't be told how to build and tend a pile of wood covered in Hay and

soil cooking at over 600oC, or read how to do it in a book. You've got to participate, from start to finish, all night through. If Gemma blows a dragons nostril at 3am one moonlight night, some one has to be there to put it out...

Some folks like Alan, Jo, Pete and Mark are 'veteran' earth burners who are free and easy in sharing their vast knowledge with those who are prepared to observe and take part. If you're there all night you should join in on the 'watch'. The camaraderie around the camp fire at O'dark stupid o'clock will forever be legendary and its quite amazing how good you feel the next day.

To sum up the whole experience. The above brief explanation of my week doesn't do it justice, I could have waxed lyrical about the brilliant characters, diverse conversation, sharing of ideas, funny moments and good selection of Whisky's but you should experience it for yourself. It has left me firmly back on two sugars in a cup of tea and looking forward to the next opportunity to get together and cook some wood!

We all came from all walks of life, a really welcoming group of individuals. But in the woods we were (and are) woodsmen. In that I mean we are people of the woods. Each with our own experience in interacting with tree's. I can appreciate how much time and effort went in to making the whole week run so smoothly. So, Id like to say a massive thank you to all those who made the week in the woods possible. It was awesome :)



Gemma :)  
Why did we call her Gemma?



As Pete had an extraordinarily large tape measure in his car it would have been rude not to use it.



Inside the clamp



Just add... Hay...



...Soil



and water sparingly...



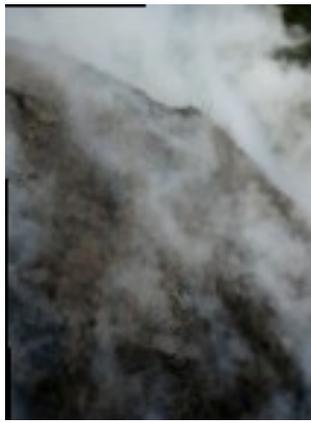
Firing her up!



How long can we stay up here before our boots catch fire?



A Shovel... very nice it is too.



Under there it's 600oC



Charlie the camp fire Dog



Its an extremely dusty job but its worth the satisfaction of eyeing up...



and it'll make your feet hot...



The finished product :)

## Forestry Commission Land-Panel Consultation

As I mentioned last time, having caused something of a furore by proposing to sell off or lease FC land to the private sector, Caroline Spelman has set up an Expert Panel to take this further. Among the other representatives there is one from ConFor who will be putting the forestry and associated industry's view.

ConFor is particularly concerned that the forestry side will be regarded as a sideline as many of the other panel members are from a non-forestry background. ConFor regard one advantage of FC ownership being a steady flow of timber coming from the woodland rather than only being sold when prices are high. This affects people like pulp mills and board manufacturers, but may also have some effect on us if coppice is again seen as being 'not financially viable' if timber prices are high.

While ConFor does not have quite the same aims as the coppice industry, they are the nearest we have to representation on this invited panel. I hope that those of you on e-mail have made your views known, as it is important that coppice workers views are taken into account, and that we are seen as a valid part of the forestry industries.

As an aside, this is the sort of thing that a National Coppice Federation will be most suitable in dealing with. A combined voice of the industry carries far more weight than each of us as individuals.

Chris Westcott

### An Ill Wind

I was given a snippet from, I think, the Telegraph magazine by one of our outlet owners a few weeks ago. According to the article, charcoal is in short supply because of floods in Namibia.

I looked into this a bit further, and found that severe flooding in Namibia in the spring had washed away roads, houses and factories. A lot of imported charcoal apparently comes from there, and now, even if it can be produced, it cannot be transported to the shipping points.

Looking at the charcoal in Sainsbury's (a bad habit I know), I noticed that the price was very high, and in fact we are now very competitive. An example is 2 disposable barbecues for over £6 representing £3 per barbecue.

We have noticed an increase in sales of charcoal this year. We are selling it at more markets, but our normal outlets are selling it rather faster too. An early spring meant our first kiln firing was in early April in spite of the fact we had some left over from a late autumn firing.

Hopefully, enough people will try English charcoal and be converted to it, so that when the price of imported charcoal falls again they will stay with it. We have reports from one of our outlets that people particularly ask for our charcoal as it is so much better than the imported stuff.

An ill wind blows no good, and make hay while the sun shines! Two rather apt proverbs at the moment.

Chris Westcott

### Events

Further information will be circulated to members by  
Toni Brannon.

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|-----------------|--|
| September 24th  | HCCG Barbecue. Let Toni Brannon know if interested.  |
| October 1st-2nd | Winchester Cathedral Harvest Weekend<br>Contact Dennis Dooley 01590 622400 or<br>07740 126211  |
| October 2nd     | Hampshire County Ploughing Match<br>at Southwood Farm, Dummer.<br>Contact Andy Barratt on<br>woodsandhedges@gmail.com or<br>07771 566893 |

### Management Committee

- |  |
|--|
| Christine Westcott, Member 02392 596720<br>(Chairman and The Teller co-editor) |
| Peter Jameson, Member 01202 603202 (Vice Chairman)                             |
| Toni Brannon, Assoc 02392 580988 (Secretary)                                   |
| Steve Reed, Assoc (Treasurer)  |
| Peter Lane, Member 01425 654413  |
| John Westcott, Member 02392 596720   |
| Matt Melton, Member 07843 740431 (Teller Co-editor)                            |
| Lucie Cowles, Member (Social Secretary)<br>naturalpathconservation@gmail.com   |