



*Putting Life into your Landscape"*

Summer 2017

### Chairman's Remarks

Dear All

Once again we are in the middle of summer, as regards coppicing products the trade is rather quiet, some hurdles and spars are going out but customers are holding back at the moment.

Some shows and events are going on, we will see in late autumn for any results, I don't think it will be that good.

Re: Charcoal Events - Forest of Dean has taken place at the end of May, Alan Walters Charfest is in early August. We have just held a joint event with the Dorset Coppice Group in the Reading Room at Alderholt, attendance was not too bad and an evening of verse poetry and good food was enjoyed. P J was at the helm and it is hopeful that a return event can be held in the future.

The colour picture is of me and my father Len Lane at Damerham Flower Show in June 1975. The temperature that day was over 100 degrees, never been that hot before or after!! Note the banding in the hurdles, not made like that today.

The black and white picture is me and my father again, in April 1955 in Lopshill Pond Copse which is between Damerham and Lower Daggon on the Hampshire/Dorset border near Alderholt. This copse was removed in the 1960's. Notice the very long 12" wood cutting hooks – Ewell is the make and they were made between 1949 and 1951. Father had three and I still have two of them.



Peter Lane  
Chairman



### AGM 2017

There was a rather disappointing turn out for the AGM with fewer than 20 members including the Committee. This currently represents fewer than 1/5th of the membership. It was held on a Saturday, and in the extreme south east of the county, but still a rather poor turnout.

We were fortunate with the weather, which was dry, and not at all bad for April. After our normal business, Helen Bentley-Fox of Grown in Britain gave us a talk on the aims of the organisation. There is currently a coppice standard being developed with coppice workers and it is hoped that this will be available for launching soon. She was very encouraged by the interest shown by the members of HCCG present.

After the AGM there was a guided walk in Bluebell Wood which illustrated some of the points discussed at the AGM, to see how the coppice is coming back after being left since the mid 1960s, and to see the amazing display of bluebells and other flowers which gives the wood its local name.

## Ernie Steel-the Fastest Spar Maker in the West

As part of the Dorset Coppice Groups Woodfair at Bonsley Wood in May 2017 they ran a thatching spar competition.



The format was similar to other competitions in that it was primarily the greatest number of useable thatching spars in 15 minutes, but in addition the exact judging scheme devised by the sponsor, Jim Bettle of Dorset Charcoal Company included points for quality of point, evenness of shaft and amount of waste produced.

I approach these competitions on the basis that it is a bit of fun, some friendly rivalry and an element of luck of the draw as to if the hazel you have selected because it looks good on the outside looks as good when you put the hook into it. But if you equate these competitions to the old fashioned hiring fairs, then Jim's judging system was very valid as employers would want an emphasis on speed, but quality and utilising the maximum amount of material would also be important.

Hampshire Coppice Craftsmen's Group was well represented, HCCG member Ern Steel coming first 59 spars 89 points, member Ken Goulton 77 points, second place, Dorset Coppice Group member Alex Redd 3rd, 60 points. HCCG member Simon Hartley won the Underdog prize. The Underdog was a prize for the least number of spars made but still having the courage to enter the competition-prize donated by P and W Charcoal.

I know our editor will be surprised that Peter Jameson did not win his own prize [ No, he tries to get a novice to enter, and has even tried to get me to enter a spar making competition when he knows I am awful at splitting hazel Ed]

Other HCCG members who competed were Peter Lane and Darren Hammerton.

We look forward to next year's competition with a few tweaks on the space and lighting now that Dave Ewers has run his first competition.

Charcoal Peter (and occasional sparmaker)



1st prize



2nd prize



Underdog



## HCCG Website and Facebook page

So what is this website and facebook thing then? We know that to some of our members the internet is the work of the devil or something that is of little interest, but to others it is a useful tool for advertising and communication. The aim of this article is to help those of you that wish to take advantage of the group resources to better understand and use it and increase the scope of your advertising.

### Website

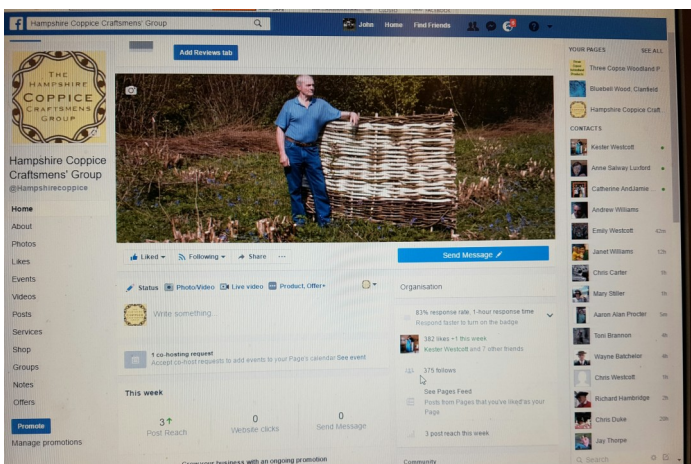
#### What does the website give you and the public?

One of the many advantages of group membership is the free products and services listing on the group website, as well as information for the press and general public as to what this coppicing lark is. There are links to the Hampshire Standards on both charcoal and firewood, as well as films of members making products and useful links.

It also gives the public a means of contacting you the members, or us as a group.

As you may have seen from the E-mails that are sent out by Toni we are regularly contacted by both members of the public and group members looking for products and services and it gives show organisers looking for members to demonstrate a point of contact. The web team also takes a proactive role with show organisers as far as charges go suggesting free pitches or demonstrator fees where charges are suggested.

### Facebook



#### So what is social media?

In its simplest form it is a forum to discuss ideas as well as having subscribers. The group page has over 400 subscribers with more people finding us every day. As well as those who subscribe to the group Facebook page their friends will see anything they like or share on; in the past we have had upwards of 2000 people seeing group posts.

As a group we use the Facebook page to share information and advertise events, as well as to keep in contact with like minded organisations such as other coppice groups and national organisations like the Forestry Commission.

Over the past few years HCCG have moved away from large scale group demonstration. However many of you are to be seen regularly at shows throughout the county and beyond showing off your coppice and green wood skills to the public.

This is where social media is playing a greater role, with

more of your potential customers going online to find products and services, as well as days out with the family.

Telling the public that members will be at a show selling their wares can put you directly into their minds. In the last year alone we (the Westcotts) have had a number of sales directly off the back of social media.

#### The future

HCCG Committee have been discussing the future use of the group web resources and come to the conclusion it's about time the members put more into them.

#### So how can the members of the group help in this?

The website has to an extent been static for a number of years due to lack of members input. As with all of the group's activities the web team are volunteers and we manage the website and Facebook page in that is laughingly referred to as spare time.

We need members to keep us up to date with changes to their products and services, as this keeps your customers informed.

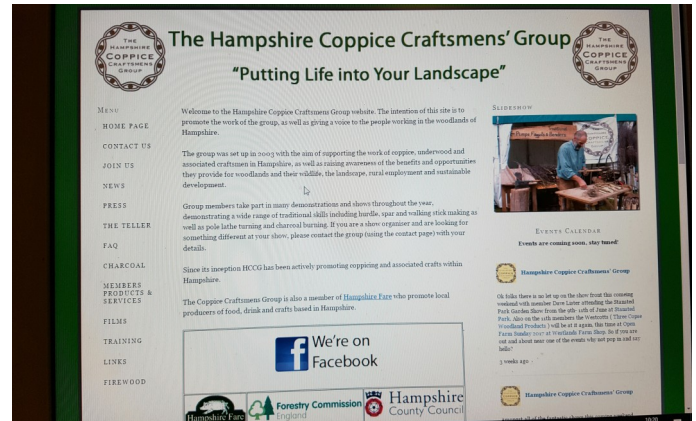
As we mentioned above we already have Hampshire standards for charcoal and firewood but how about standards for other products?

At meetings we regularly have comments about imported, often inferior products undercutting our home made hurdles, spars etc. So how about helping us write standards for things such as Hurdles, Besoms, Spars and the like?

We are also asking for show dates so that we can inform potential customers of your presence at shows.

For those of you that are running training courses we are also offering Facebook and website space to get your courses out to the public.

Kester Westcott



## Book Review

### Spon by Barn the Spoon

Some of you will have met Barnaby Carder, more often known as Barn the Spoon, and more of you will be aware of him through various articles and posts as the mad woodsman who has set up a spoon making workshop in a recently gentrified part of the East End of London.

I only met him once a few years ago at the APF. At that time he was an itinerant spoon maker, wandering the country from wood to wood and sleeping in the woods or on friends sofas. He had managed to wander to the midlands and to the APF, where he had set up his tent and stand with the other green woodworkers in a corner of the show.

His book is very interesting and easy to read with a good number of illustrations. It is written partly for green woodworkers and partly for those who are finding spoon making as the latest thing. The book was apparently launched with the 'hipsters next door providing the canapés', from which I assume they find each other equally amusing.

The first part on wood culture is more for those that do not work in the woods, including possible sources for those than cannot go out and cut their own.

There is then a section on tools; what are needed and how to sharpen them. It is refreshing to find that he regards the only really necessary tools to be an axe, a straight knife, a curved knife and a saw. Looking on some spoon forums, the number of different tools people seem to need or want is amazing.

The next chapter deals with the knife grips. Although I use most of them, I did find some interest in this section as I don't necessarily use all of them. As I do my roughing out mainly with a draw knife, this isn't surprising, but I will study this and practise some of the grips as they may make some parts of making the spoon easier. Not unnaturally the next chapter is on making a basic spoon.

The third part is about the requirements of different sorts of spoon and the points to consider with a variety of basic types. I found this particularly interesting and think that by following some of the suggestions, my spoon making may improve.

Barn is intending to do a series of videos which cover the points shown in pictures and described in his book, and other interesting greenwood and associated work. He asked for suggestions for subjects for other videos on a spoon forum I follow on Facebook, so there could be quite a lot of interesting work continuing from this book.

### Two HCCG members spotted in 'The Other Forest'



Our past Chair, Peter Jameson who spends a lot of time in the New Forest went off for his annual holiday at the Festival of Fire and Wood in the 'Other Forest'-the Forest of Dean over the late May bank holiday weekend with an earth burn.

Darren, who at the moment is taking it a bit easier than working 8 days a week was for some reason (the clue may be in the photograph) was in Cheltenham which is also in Gloucestershire, so he decided to burn a bit more Derv and go and see an earthburn. We look forward to having Darren's thoughts of the Festival of Fire and Wood in a future article.

Peter Jameson

Photos by kind permission of Jane Ponton.



## Chelara Ash Dieback-what has been noticed?

Chelara is very much with us in south east Hampshire, and may well have spread to most parts of the county by now. It was sadly confirmed in our wood last year.

Last year it was quite wet for most of the time and we saw the first signs of the leaves being affected early in the year; earlier than the June to October that we had been told to watch out for. By September it was very obvious in some trees, particularly where they were along the drip line of water from beech trees. This year so far, as it has been generally quite dry, we saw no early signs of affected leaves.

While we have lost some saplings, perhaps 5-15 years old, and some growth from coppice stools, many branches have sprouted from below the infection. We don't know at this stage whether the affected trees will die, will grow back from a lower level, or if we will just lose some growth from stools or the whole lot.



Travelling around, not just in the woods, it is obvious that there are some trees that are quite badly affected, with the odd ones dead or dying, while others next to them appear perfectly healthy. Hopefully this means that at least some have a higher level of resistance or even immunity to Chelara.

It remains to be seen what will happen for the rest of the year. If it remains fairly dry, there is a chance that there will be less infection and that some affected trees will grow back. The number of resistant or immune trees is the most important point.

Chelara so far has not behaved in the UK in the same way as the rest of Europe. Initially it was expected to cover the whole country within a few years, but further investigation showed that the year after it was discovered, some plants had been infected 15 years before. Why this should occur I don't think anyone knows, but a lot of work is being done, mainly by the Forestry Commission, so a lot more is being elucidated.

In some places, notably Denmark, where they mainly graft their trees for timber, the death rate among the grafts, which are mainly clonal, has been very high. In the UK, most ash trees are grown from seed with many being natural regeneration. Both of these will give the tree a better chance as there will be far more genetic variation, and natural regeneration has the added advantage that trees will only grow in places that suit them.

At present the advice is to only prune or fell dangerous branches or trees, and to allow as much seeding as possible. Each seedling will have a different genetic make up, and those that survive will have more chance of being resistant or immune.

Chris Westcott

For further information on this subject I suggest you visit: [www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara) This was updated last month and gives the latest situation. 58% of England is now infected which makes me rather pessimistic. I did find it in a few trees in Denmark but when I visited a Woodland Trust site in Kent 18 months ago, nearly all the young planted ash, adjacent self-set ash and coppice regrowth in an ancient wood was either already dead or infected, which was most dispiriting. Since then the expected national 5% survival was reduced to 2% but has more recently been increased up to 10% as more diversity has been identified in the UK ash gene pool.

The remaining recommendation is not to fell ash at present, since you may accidentally remove disease resistant trees from which a new viable population can emerge. Seedlings and saplings succumb in a year or two, young trees in four or five years and old trees in eight to ten years. The Island was the last county in England to be infected last year and it continues to spread westwards.

Those members working mixed coppices and perhaps relying on the ash component as an important part of their income, will be greatest affected. Once marketable ash has stood dead for at least a year, it can be utilised. It can be left standing and seasoning for a few short years, during which I see much being presented to market but once this is depleted, I suspect there will be a developing hiatus. These members must plan ahead, perhaps by finding other coppices with less ash. This will be most urgent for anyone working ash hangers.

This paints my real concern, which I hope you find helpful. If I am wrong, that's a bonus! But we should all plan for the worst situation.

Hugh Milner



## Joint HCCG and DCG Meeting Alderholt

Members from Dorset and Hampshire met at Alderholt Reading Rooms for a joint HCCG and Dorset Coppice Group meeting on 15th July. The theme for the evening was hurdles, with a favourite woodland poem and an American supper thrown in.

Peter Lane had arranged a display of pictures of hurdle making over many years, which attracted quite a lot of interest; there was also a display of pictures of charcoal making.

When all were assembled Peter Jameson, after a short introduction, chaired the poetry reading. He previously indicated that he hoped there would not be many variations on the poem 'Logs to burn', but in fact nobody came up with a single version. There was, instead, some original poetry from one of DCG members, then various authors including Sussex authors Kipling and AA Milne. Some of them I had only previously known as seasonal folk songs, for instance 'Oak and Ash and Thorn' which I have been singing for years at mid summer.

Peter Lane then told us something of the history of the Reading Rooms, which his family had been involved with for many years. Built on land granted to the village by the local estate in the 1890s the building is clad in corrugated iron, not the flimsy stuff you get today but the type that make you bend at the knee when you try to lift it. It became dilapidated between the wars but was refurbished post WWII and has had a kitchen extension and toilet added in recent years making it quite a nice venue for small functions.

The American supper was varied and there was plenty of it. There are some talented chefs among our members, which is always a useful attribute in a coppice group, as food always seems to be close to a Coppice Workers heart. During the meal, there was a lot of talk among the participants, getting to know new members and those from 'the other side' of the Border.

Thank you to Peter Lane for arranging the venue and exhibition, Peter Jameson for being Master of Ceremonies, Dave Ewers, the new Chair of DCG for co-hosting the event, and all those who contributed literature and food.

John Westcott



### **Management Committee**

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Toni Brannon, Assoc 02392 580988 (Secretary and Membership)  
Steve Reed, Assoc (Treasurer)  
John Westcott, Member 02392 596720 (Vice Chairman)  
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Peter Jameson, Member 01202 603202  
Phil Clayton Member  
Kester Westcott Member  
Adam Hurren Member  
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