



THE COPPICE ASSOCIATION North West

www.coppicenorthwest.org.uk

AGM OMG !

NEWSLETTER No 50 Autumn 2014

AGM

The AGM is at Sprint Mill again this year, thanks to Edward and Romela Ackland. These have become wonderful events in the middle of winter, good company, occasional quiz and a raffle. If you've not been to Sprint Mill before there is a crude map on the inside page, and everyone is welcome. Tea is available but bring your own drinks if you want something stronger.

Peter Freeman.

Long term member and regular at the MAHS work days Peter Freeman has died after some months of ill health. Brian Crawley has written about his memorial do on page 4.



Ncfed agm

The National Coppice Federation's first AGM was held in Dorset at the Ancient Technology Centre see the write up on page 5. CANW has invited NCFED to have the next AGM in the North West.

Coppice Exhibition

We've had a couple of exhibitions at Farfield Mill which have gone very well and we are in the formative stages of trying to stage another one probably somewhere else for a change. Any suggestions for venues or offers of help organising to 'the Secretary' .

Birch Pokers

Cumbria Woodlands has had an enquiry from a chap looking for "pokers" for aluminium smelting; these would normally be birch, around 10-12' long 1 1/2" at the butt to 1/2" top.

Mike Lowther (Corby, Carlisle) requires these as he supplies a couple of companies, his number is 07770568013 if anyone knows of any suitable woodlands or can supply the product."

Please contact the guy directly.

Walter Lloyd
 President
 Lakeland Willows,
 Fairview Lane,
 Staveley in Cartmel,
 Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 8NS
 M 0774 005 3794

SAM ANSELL
 Chair
 M 07990 952473 E

Grace Holland
 Secretary
 C/o the office

secretary.canw@googlemail.com

REBECCA OAKS
 Vice-chair
 93, Silverdale Road
 Yealand Redmayne
 Carnforth
 LA5 9TD
 Tel: 01524 781375
 Email:
 rebacca.oaks@btinternet.com

BRIAN CRAWLEY
 11a Merefell Road
 Bolton Le Sands
 Carnforth LA5 8EX
 Tel: 01524 903583

Louis Le Glas
 Treasurer
 louis@coppicecoop.co.uk
 Via Sam Ansell

TWIGGY
 209 Chorley Road
 Blackrod,
 Bolton BL6 5LJ
 M 07734 353 202
 Email stiggytwigg@hotmail.com

EDWARD MILLS
 5, Beech Court
 Birkkrigg Park High
 Carley Ulverston
 Cumbria
 LA12 0UH
 01229 582551
 M 07875 248115

Email:
 Edward-pam@woodisgood.fsnet.co.uk

IAN TAYLOR
 Newsletter Editor
 Ramree , Brigsteer
 Road , Kendal , LA9
 5DY
 (W) 07813 696161 (H) 01539
 738835
 Email : iantaylor@uk2.net

OFFICE
 c/o Cumbria Woodlands
 River Mill,
 Staveley Mill Yard,
 Staveley,
 Kendal
 Cumbria LA8 9LR
 Tel. 01539 822140
 Fax. 01539 822443
 Email:
 canw@coppicenorthwest.org.uk
 Web site:
 www.coppicenorthwest.org.uk

AGM

Saturday 7th February 2015 7pm Sprint Mill, nr Burneside



Usual mix of formal business, quiz , laughter , tears and the famous raffle (please bring donations for the raffle). If you want to be considered for the committee or you have discussion items to go on the agenda please let Grace the secretary know. New faces always welcome and if you want to be newsletter editor even better. This year its the same day as a MAHS work day so you can combine the two .

Sat 7th Feb MAHS Winter Workday: 10am-dark.

The Autumn workday was a great success, with more folk turning out than usual and everyone getting to take away something they'd made. We haven't set a theme for the next one yet, but again put it in your diaries. It's scheduled for the same day as the AGM so those traveling from further afield can be at both!

13/14th May NCFED Coppice restoration conference with a look round Brian Williamson's work at Westonburt ,talks from the great and the good of coppicing (I've lost the bit of paper with the details on) more details on the NCFED website

May 16/17th Weekend in the Woods

Pencil it in your diary, if you have suggestions for courses please email Grace Holland.

Bobbin Wood We still need 4 tonnes of bobbin wood for Stott Park Bobbin mill. The spec is 2-3 inch diameter, clean straight , 7 foot + long. Can be any species except Oak. It needs to be fresh cut. To keep it simple Stott Park just want one invoicing point so:-

1) organise with Stott Park to deliver your bobbin wood

(Mick 015395 31087)

2) Agree a weight with them when you deliver

3) Invoice CANW for the delivery

Walter's tools



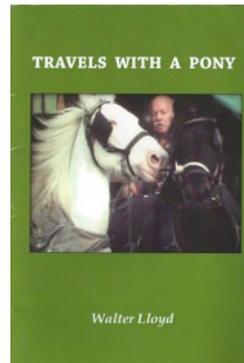
A team of people from the Woodmanship Trust have been beavering away during the year cataloguing and repairing Walter Lloyd's massive collection of old tools. There have also been training days showing the tools being used, and the whole process has been photographed by professional photographer Dayve Ward and the images can be viewed at <http://www.photographybyward.co.uk/walters-tools>



PlantOil chainsaw oil

The 'committee' is experimenting with bulk buying of biodegradable chainsaw oil (Plantoil) and is buying an initial 10 25litre barrels. You should contact Twiggy (07734 353202) in the first instance and the barrels are likely to be stored for picking up at the Coppice Co op yard. We are hoping to get some discount for buying more from Plantoil but please make sure you pay promptly for them.

TRAVELS WITH A PONY



Walter Lloyd has turned out yet another small booklet full of useful tips for those beginning to keep and work ponies. I must admit to finding it an interesting read as a window onto a world I know nothing about, and will have increased respect for the travellers you see parked up on the verge outside Kirkby Lonsdale when Appleby horse fair is looming. It has advice on all aspects of keeping a pony from what to get in the first place, harnesses, carts, how to go about snigging and how to avoid offending fellow travellers.

A diagram of where all the various bits of harness are would have been good as I don't know the difference between hames, traces and breeching straps but this is more than offset by the anecdotes scattered through the book.. Line of the book is probably ' Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it. Good judgement comes from experience, experience comes from bad judgement!.

Available from Wildwood acoustic, PO box 137, Kendal, Cumbria. Price £10

Ian Taylor

Peter Freeman's big do.

By Brian Crawley



The celebration of Peter Freeman's life and myriad interests at St Mark's Church and Parish Hall, Scarisbrick on Saturday 11 October was a 'big do' as Peter had instructed. There must have been about 100 family, Scouting, Saxon, Land Rover, Woodlander, etc supporters at the moving and enigmatic church service and following party and games at the Parish Hall. Excellent reminiscences of Peter's very involved life and important Scouting commitment were given. The facts of his father's Scout Leadership and his mother's Cub Leadership obviously had a substantial influence on him. The outdoor aspects of Scouting often lead to an interest in trees as it did significantly with him. Ed Mills' comment about Peter reflect well the sentiments of the church service.

"I always felt Peter was a very good craftsman and unassuming about his skills. He often contributed to discussions and debates from an unexpected point of view and gave people food for thought; he was a gentle soul and passionate about trees."

My first major working with him was the first charcoal earthburn at great Tower Scout Camp in 2007. This was a joint project stimulated by Ian Jack, who was the woodland consultant for the Campsite, Dewi Jones the forester who was working for Ian, Peter, who was the Scout liaison and Charles Stewart and myself who had recently done our first earthburn in another of Ian Jack's woodlands at Greystoke. Another unexpected and very welcome late night helper was Jim Miller who went on to help Peter and myself with most of our subsequent earthburns until his departure from us last year. Peter was very much at home at Great Tower and integrated us with the scouts very well. The scouts seemed to thoroughly enjoy the events with fire making being part of their ethos. Peter also arranged other activities with the scouts, a very interesting one being the Branch to Bench project. A windblow oak was still growing and we cut a large branch, peeled the bark and made a rustic bench from the peeled wood.

At the church service we were reminded of some of Peter's woodcraft passions by a reading of one of the firewood rhymes and, after a bit of technical expediency, the playing of one of Peter's favourite folk songs. The words were quite difficult to hear but are as follows by Chris Rohmann. Very appropriate. I think Peter would have been quite pleased with his 'big do'.

The Chair Song

*I was trying to grow up the best I could
I met a man making a chair
He was working it out of the hard blond wood
The shape was simple but he worked with care
He was making it pretty, he was making it good
As if it was the very first chair.*

*He had a fingernail broken, real soft spoken
Lines on his whiskers where the smile began
He was a cigarette-smoking, old-time joking
Sunny gentle, sentimental, fine old man.*

*I crouched on the ground and he wiped his hands
That were so much smarter than mine
He must have been working for the midget king
Cause he made it so tiny but it looked so fine
For the joints were perfect and the finish was deep
And the grain was so wavily lined.*

*He told me his stories of the black eyed-deer
Looking in at his window sill
The wild grey geese in the autumn sky
And the men who come down when they feel like a kill
Then he bent to his chisel with a sigh so old
And the wood whistled to his will.*

*At once it was ready, and perfect and new
He turned it and said Here try it, it's for you.
My eyes went wide and my toes went numb
As I sat on it there in the sand
Use it now, said my grandpa, You'll outgrow it soon
But by then you'll be big as a man.*

NCFed AGM news

Seven CANW members made the long trip down to Dorset for the first National Coppice Federation AGM. We arrived in the dark and tried making out the faces in the dimly lit Viking longhouse that was some of the sleeping accommodation for the weekend.

The AGM was being held at the Ancient Technology Centre at Cranborne and waking in the morning having put the tent up in the dark, found I was surrounded by incredible reconstructions of ancient buildings.



There was quite a packed day ahead as we had skill demonstrations and exchanges of tips on doing various greenwood crafts. There was a seventy year old who had been making hurdles since his teens who had a mesmerising way of spitting hazel rods while talking to you and was a mine of information.



Mike Carswell was showing a black and white film on crate making in the potteries and telling us about his trip to see a crate making workshop still in its original form in the middle of Stoke and its owner who was a crate maker in the heyday of Potteries crate making.

There was a trip to an RSPB woodland that had had a lot of coppicing done by Dorset schoolchildren over the years (they work em hard in Dorset) and after some group discussions and a rather nice hog roast the AGM proper in the earth house, a reconstruction of a building in the Isle of Man which looks a grassy knoll on the outside but was like a woody cathedral inside.



The meeting went pretty well and the assembled masses decided on three topics for the directors to concentrate on over the coming year. These are:-

- 1) Exploring ways of getting more coppice back into rotation.
- 2) Publicity and promotion (perhaps have a coppice day)
- 3) improving product value

. It was agreed that the insurance scheme was saving members a lot of money, but with only £500 in the bank it was going to be a hard year to do much. Just talking to other coppice workers from around the country is useful and informative and hearing what other people are selling their charcoal for very informative.

CANW has volunteered to hold the next NCFed AGM, judging by this and the previous meeting its going to be a bit like hosting the Olympics after Beijing, so the more volunteers the better. We'd better start building the venue now.

Stott Park Earthburn, 13-15th June 2014-09-27

We arrived late on the Friday. There was no issue in finding the venue since the smoke signals provided were excellent. We immediately headed towards the thickest part of the haze to say hi & see what was happening.

The stack had been built during the day & had just been lit. It looked grand – about 5ft high by 7ft long & 4ft wide, covered with the neatest looking turfs I've ever seen! The smoke was seeping gently through the fabric of the mound & consolidating into a low hanging haze that distributed itself evenly through the valley, constrained by the limestone cliffs forming one side of a little gorge. Adjacent, 4 muddy coppice workers sat watching, memorized.



We were warmly greeted as always. After a round of hugs & smiles we settled onto a log to share in the vigil, & make a cup of tea. The mound was situated in a small clearing just above a little beck. It was an ideal place for the weekend's visitors to call in & see what we were up to, yet tucked back enough for us to move freely around the site.

Brian had a barrel burn on the go – an old oil drum with a slot cut out of the side, into which he had loaded barrel-sized lengths of wood that were now burning merrily. Each time the flames began to get higher he would put another layer of logs on top, there-by cutting out the oxygen to the lower layers and thus enabling the pyrolysis (conversion to charcoal) beneath.

I was intrigued to see that he wasn't just chucking in wood. Rather he was carefully selecting pieces & laying them precisely, such as a dry-stone waller might do. I could see immediately the effect of this meticulous placement - rather than feeding the fire with more fuel, the licking flames were immediately quelled and the red glow from within took on a brighter hue. More heat was being produced than light, which ultimately meant more charcoal. I noticed the log pile by the barrel was a little low so I wandered down towards the mill to grab another armful. I took care when cutting them to measure the lengths against the barrel and stack them according to their width for easier selection.

Suddenly, there was another kind of smoke in the air, and then a loud clunk followed by some odd squeaking sounds. It was Sam's truck arriving with a 5ft kiln on the back. After another round of greetings we helped prepare a site for the kiln & roll it into place.

The evening drew on into darkness with jovial conversation, fried sausages and real ale, occasionally interrupted by the occurrence of spying red eyes in the mound. These were dealt with by taking a handful of sloppy mud from a bucket, & pasting it over the breach in the turf to seal out the oxygen again.

The neat looking turfs (from B&Q, since there was nothing suitable on site) proved a handful to manage, as they were a bit too thin & had a habit of slipping down the sides.

Regular buckets of mud were retrieved from a vegetated backwater of the stream & were used to seal the gaps between the turfs & 'glue' them into place

We had arranged a rota to keep watch throughout the night, however the temptation to maintain the vigil (and the conversation) was too great. I turned in sometime during the early hours as the sun was rising, leaving Sam, & Dave, who had turned his wheelbarrow into an armchair, still wide awake & on the ball.

After a few hours I was keen to get back to the smoky mound to see the results of our night's work. It was a foot lower, with a strange indentation near

the summit, giving the appearance of having melted somewhat. There was evidence of fresh mud applications, & Dave was prowling around, bucket in hand, scrutinizing in the daylight for vigorous whorls of smoke punching through the now friable turfs. He didn't seem at all interested in going to sleep despite the offer of relief of duty.

Lorna arrived & set up stall making fabulous oak baskets, & Gareth set up down at the mill making artists charcoal and demonstrating spoon carving. Sam A had his kiln puffing away, Brian's barrels were going for it, Sam R & Dave were tending the earthburn, I set about carving a spoon. There was quite a festival atmosphere.

We had lots of interest from the public who had come to visit the mill, & this offered a great opportunity to talk to people and promote the value of regenerative woodland management and its significance to our heritage and culture.

We were offered a guided tour of the mill, which was fascinating. Many of the original machines are still working, so that the whole process could be demonstrated, from tree to bobbin. This illustrated the importance of coppicing to the economy of this time, and put the scale of the operation into perspective.

There was some concern that the turfs were not sealing well enough, despite the extra mud, & we began to worry that our lovely charcoal was just burning away underneath a pile of mud. Of course it is not clever to have a look, so we upped the application of mud & proceeded to smear every wisp of smoke with a sloppy handful. The result was a 4ft high mud pie, oozing steam & smoke. We were just about happy with it when we were invited by English Heritage to join in their BBQ. More sausages!

The second night was more eventful than the first. As the stack reduced in volume (turning into either charcoal or ash, we weren't sure which) it began to slump unevenly. Breaches were more frequent. On one occasion an area the size of a dinner plate caved in without warning & a mad scramble ensued with all hands applying new turfs & mud to seal it up and stop the mound bursting into flames. Despite the previous night's lack of sleep we were all keen to stay with it. Not going to bed felt like an act of solidarity, plus no-one wanted to miss any

action. It's amazing how engaging staring at a pile of steaming mud in the dark can be.

At some point though I couldn't hack it any longer. I crawled away into the darkness and fell asleep. I dreamed a long and complicated dream in which I was being awoken by someone's boot. I woke with a start, and found myself staring at my own reflection in a heavily polished shoe. Slowly I resolved a pair of socks below some neatly ironed trousers (— certainly not a coppice worker's - therefore I must be still asleep...)

"Morning", said the trousers. "The visitors will be arriving from about 8 o'clock", they added.

Then I realised that I must have crashed out on the path between the car park and the mill, and the manager was expecting the public to arrive any minute!



The mound was just over half of its starting size by the time we began to extinguish it. We poured water into it by means of a length of pipe thrust in to the sides. As the mud / turf cap was removed piece-by-piece we sprayed the remaining glowing areas with spray bottles to extinguish them. Our fears were unfounded — there were a few brown ends of course, but also a very respectable haul of charcoal. What a relief! All that remained was to rake it over, bag it up & tidy up the site.

The event was thoroughly enjoyable, & I learned so much from beginning to end. I'll certainly be there for the next one...

Duncan Goulder

Charcoal News

NCFed bag design.

Part of the recent NCFed AGM consisted of a group of workshops on various aspects of the business and I went on the charcoal/biochar discussion. Besides finding out that some people are charging £1.80 a kilo wholesale for their barbecue charcoal (in Bristol) there was some discussion about getting a new bag designed, and I volunteered to join the steering group for this. As I've had a lot of experience not getting any consensus from the charcoal burners in CANW it seems like a good idea to widen the debate to the rest of the country. Anyway if you want some input into the redesign, bearing in mind that NCFed has no money keep it simple.

Ian Taylor
iantaylor@uk2.net

Coppice placement wanted

Danish forestry student Peter Nyby is looking for 2-3 6 month placements with someone working small woodlands as part of his forestry sandwich course. His course will get him chainsaw and first aid certificates before he starts on practical experience within his course. The first period would be in around 6 months time, Peter says:-
"I am doing it through the Danish system because I can get funding and it will give me some basic skills to start off with. But I just really want to work in a woodland in an ecologically sensitive way and without big machinery (which is most of the apprenticeships that they offer through the school). This seemed like a get portal for me to enter into woodland management but I am very flexible about how it happens." if you want to help out Peter or find out more you can contact him by email at Nybypeter@gmail.com

Coppice career opportunity

An opportunity exists for an enterprising person to make a career from coppice/greenwood work in south Gloucestershire. Would best suit someone with an existing woody background, but a less experienced person might also be considered. For more information email Brian Williamson at:

westonbirt.coppice@virginmedia.com .

Friends of Carnforth Coke ovens



The newly formed group of volunteers, working largely in partnership with the Canal & River Trust, who own the site, are hoping to improve the site of the coke ovens by clearing the damaging tree growth from the oven bank, restoring some of the damaged stonework, clearing and restoring the canal wharf to allow boats to moor and providing picnic and other facilities on the site.

The coke ovens are on the non-towpath side of the Lancaster Canal in the Spring Field about 100 yards south of Thwaite End Bridge number 127 at Crag Bank just south of Carnforth. Grid Ref 494 696

If you would like any further information or would like to be involved contact Brian on 07721 007379

Next issue

Deadline(ha!) March 30th

Any articles gratefully received.

Preferably by email with pictures separate to iantaylor@uk2.net.