

LEAF!

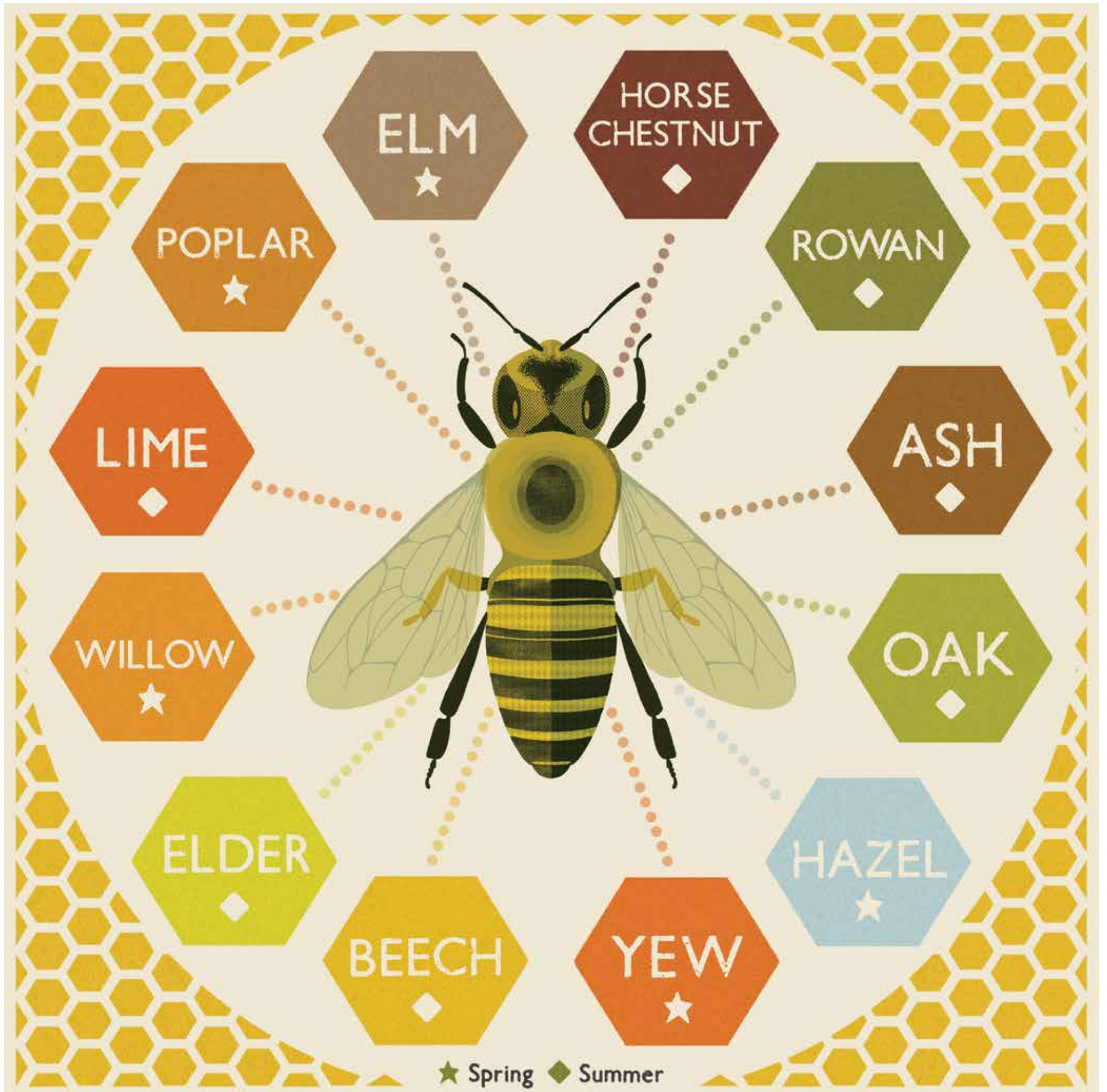
THE NEWSPAPER FOR TREES, WOODS AND PEOPLE

POLLINATION ISSUE | SPRING 2017 | FREE



Charter
for Trees, Woods
and People

TREE CHARTER PRINCIPLES, YOUR TREE STORIES,
BUTTERFLIES, MOTHS AND HOVERFLIES, WOOD
WORKERS, XYLOPHILIA, SPRING FORAGING



Pollen Calendar by Tom Frost. (Hexagons show the natural colours of pollen)

LEAF!

THE NEWSPAPER FOR TREES, WOODS AND PEOPLE

With spring unfolding in a tide of blossom, this is a time of renewal and new ideas. In this issue we reveal the 10 Principles of the Tree Charter that have grown out of more than 50,000 stories about the value of trees, all received from people across the UK. Between now and 6 November, when the Charter will be launched, signatures are being gathered to give strength to the Charter and support a future in which trees and people stand stronger together.

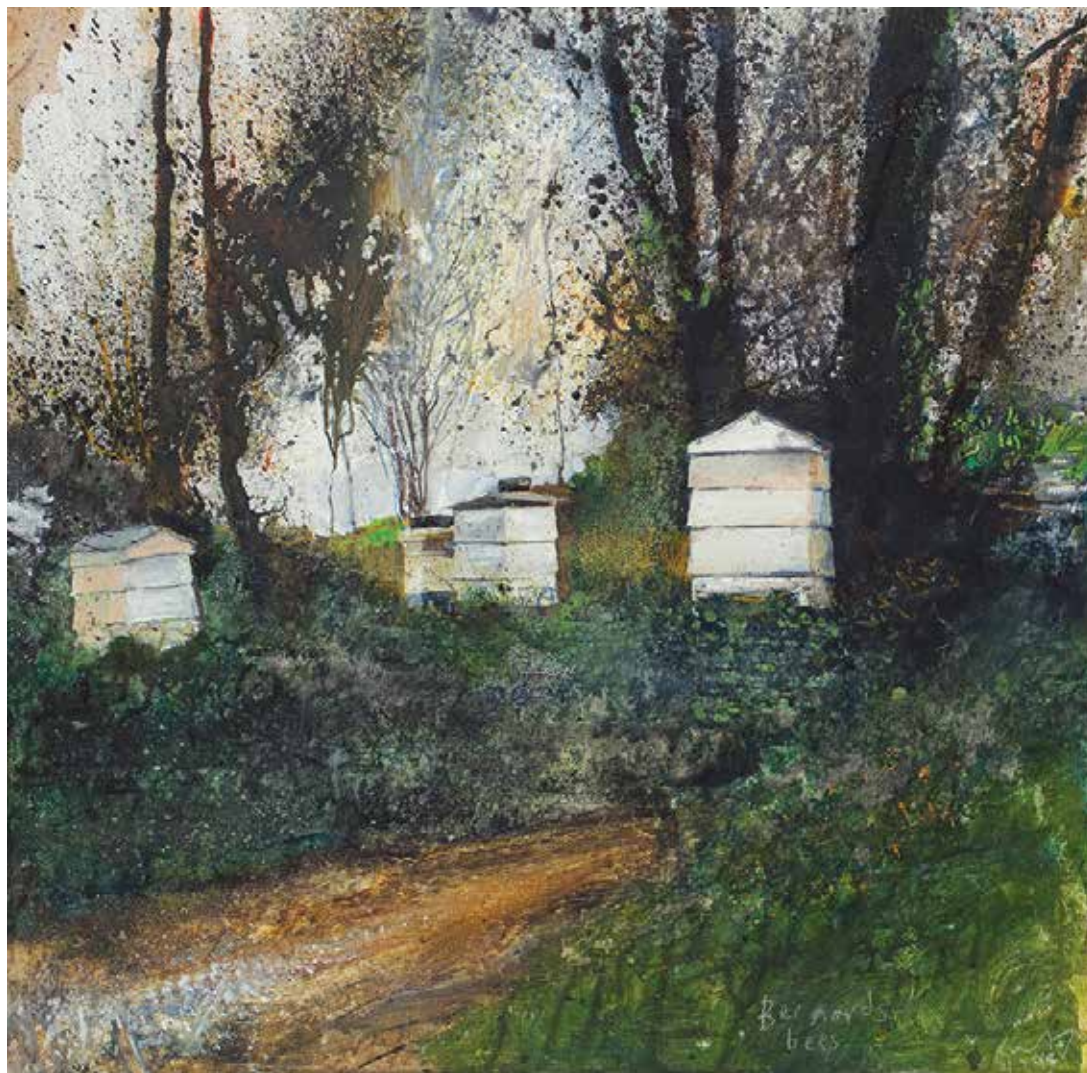
Spring brings pollen, as featured on our cover illustration, and for many months our woods are dusted with its shimmering bloom. First the hazel catkins crack open their long yellow lambtails. Then in March the willow puts out velvet tips and the purple alder catkins break and stretch. Mid-month, there comes a cold snap when spring seems defeated; this is the blackthorn winter that tempts out the sloe blossom. In April, the trees riot. Cherry, apple, plum, pear bloom in all shades of white, cream and pink. In the wildwood, the hawthorn is a froth of flowers, its heavy scent entrancing to insects. The elderflower is next and the oak and lime. Bliss for bees, hoverflies and other pollinators, not so good for hayfever sufferers.

Pollination reflects an underlying harmony in nature. It relies on a mutualistic relationship based on co-operation rather than combat. Trees nurture their chances of reproduction by providing pollen and nectar to insects and animals. Pollinators nourish their ability to survive and reproduce by feeding on nectar and pollen. Both receive benefit and flourish.

Just as many species of tree need to cross-pollinate to achieve wider fertilisation, so too do ideas benefit from sharing and collaboration. In *LEAF!* we aim to inspire you to get involved with trees and woodland. In this spring issue we share some of the many tree stories readers have contributed. We highlight campaigners' efforts to save the Vernon Oak in Sheffield and meet people whose jobs are all about working with wood.

Spring brings the impetus to get outdoors again. Time to get planting in the garden – our piece on butterflies will help you choose flowers for butterflies and moths. Or try a taste of foraged food and drink, including the beech-leaf liqueur invented originally by chair bodgers in the Chilterns.

Finally, a big thank you to all the Charter Branches and individual Charter Champions who helped to collect tree stories and views from all sections of society. These will be analysed in detail over the coming months to determine the articles of the Tree Charter, which will help society to achieve the 10 Principles outlined in this issue. 🌿



Bernard's Bees by Kurt Jackson: leading British contemporary artist Kurt Jackson celebrates bees and other pollinators in exhibition opening in Cornwall this spring. 'Bees (and the Odd Wasp) in My Bonnet' explores the importance, diversity and current plight of bees and wasps. It's based on Jackson's experience as a beekeeper and draws on scientific knowledge he gained as a zoology student. The exhibition opens on 25 March at the Jackson Foundation Gallery near St Ives.

Editors

Sara Hudston

Adrian Cooper

Art Direction

Gracie Burnett

Cover Artist

Tom Frost

Resident Artists

Nice Pattullo

Bea Forshall

Illustration

Kurt Jackson

Eliza Glyn

Harriet Lee-Merriem

John Harmer

Simon Pemberton

Common Ground Art Collection

Design

Common Ground

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Sabon & Nice New

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The Woodland Trust

Little Toller Books

Published by

Common Ground

Lower Dairy

Toller Fratrum

Dorset DT2 0EL

commonground.org.uk

The Woodland Trust

Kempton Way

Grantham

Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

woodlandtrust.org.uk

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COMMON GROUND is an arts and environmental charity working both locally and nationally to seek new, imaginative ways to engage people with their local environment and celebrate the intimate connections communities have with the landscape that surrounds them.

THE WOODLAND TRUST is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity, and the leading voice for woods and trees. We inspire people to visit woods, plant trees, treasure wildlife and enjoy the overwhelming benefits that woods and trees offer to our landscape and lives. The Woodland Trust is leading the call for a Charter for Trees, Woods and People. For more information on the Charter visit treecharter.uk

Views expressed are those of the writers.

The Woodland Trust is a registered charity, Nos. 294344 and SC038885.

CATCH

by Matt Howard

Whatever the canker,
the dank and grind of winter –
after the hinge of all that harshness,
when there isn't thirst for more,
no continuance,
things catch on, open
as the days open, now, like any day
we've known before, that stretches somehow,
allowing us more of ourselves,
with the chance of a fullness,
past the mud-greening clumps
that burst into primrose, bluebells
and it's plain as any oak flower,
when the right wind takes
and heartwood thickens
as the first swallows home
skim the river's reflection
for a catch of water.



1. THRIVING HABITATS FOR DIVERSE SPECIES

DAISY, AGED 10, SHARES HER TREE STORY:

'I love the nature in a wood and the peace. I also like to look at the tracks of animals and where they're going.'

Sign the Tree Charter: treecharter.uk/sign



Out on a limb: tree climbing with artist Anthony Schrag, one of the *Our Woods* events.

Corby's *Our Woods* festival culminates in a performance this May

ROOTED IN THE COMMUNITY

Our Woods is a multi-event festival for everyone to celebrate, enjoy and dare to try something new in and around the woods of Corby.

Woodlands are a vital aspect of modern life, and Corby is uniquely fortunate to have ancient woodlands at the heart of the town. Locals say the woods keep them in touch with nature and the environment. They are good for the soul; they are alive.

Go on a discovery walk, make new connections through dance, climb trees, try printmaking, draw, listen to storytellers, hear the history of Corby woods, learn about mushrooms, enjoy music and take part.

These 46 events lead up to a final performance *'Dreaming Our Woods'* on 5, 6, 7 May 2017 – which promises to be an amazing light, sound and movement extravaganza followed by a magical walk through the woods past thousands of Fabulous Flowers of the Forest and magical creatures made by children from the town.

Our Woods is part of the *Deep Roots Tall Trees* project. The name was inspired by a walk taken by jazz singer and writer Barb Jungr. *Deep Roots Tall Trees* symbolises the town's history, and the power of community, generation after generation.

'When I came up with the name "*Deep Roots Tall Trees*" after a walk in Kings Wood, I had no idea how deep those roots might grow and how tall the tree might become,' said Barb. Her original work with Rosalind Stoddart to create a cycle of songs about Corby has developed beyond their dreams.

'The vision Ros and I had together has blossomed into a huge spreading tree with much more than we could ever have imagined,' added Barb.

The woods surrounding Corby town are part of the ancient Rockingham Forest and there are romantic myths and legends associated with them. In recent times, people have been reclaiming the woods by protesting and saving them from being lost to urban development. 🌱

Matt Howard lives in Norwich, where he works for the RSPB. He is also a steering group member of New Networks for Nature, an eco-organisation that asserts the central importance of landscape and nature in our cultural life. His debut pamphlet, *The Organ Box*, was published by Eyewear.



THE CLACTON SPEARHEAD 450,000 BCE

Two ice ages ago a yew branch is made into a spearhead and lost at what is now Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. Rediscovered in 1911, it is one of the oldest-known wooden human artefacts and indicates woodworking.



THE SWEET TRACK 3806 BCE

A two-kilometre trackway across the wetlands of the Somerset Levels is built out of long oak planks with pieces of hazel, alder, ash, holly, willow and coppiced lime. Coppicing – the cutting and re-cutting of small underwood shoots from the base of a tree – is a lynchpin of traditional woodland management to this day. Neolithic woodsmanship was very sophisticated, crafting different sizes of different woods without the use of metal tools.

Deep Roots Tall Trees celebrates Corby's community spirit through its trees.



WILDWOOD 5000 BCE

Trees, trees and more trees! A dynamic patchwork of woodland and areas of grassland in which the grazing of deer and auroch (wild oxen) play an important part. In the fifth millennium BCE, in the late Mesolithic, wildwood is dominated by lime in Lowland England, by oak and hazel in Wales, western England, and south Scotland, by elm and hazel in most of Ireland, and birch and pine in the Scottish Highlands.

The Vernon Oak campaign was started by residents on Vernon Road, Sheffield, and is part of Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG), a city-wide campaign to encourage the local authority to 'adopt a responsible, sustainable approach' to tree management.



The Vernon Oak, Sheffield: adorned with hearts for the Valentine's Day protest.

Sheffield residents battle to preserve a much-loved street tree

SAVE VERNON!

Campaigners across Sheffield have been fighting to save mature trees from felling. Thousands of trees have been condemned under Sheffield City Council's 'Streets Ahead' project, which was launched in 2012 to improve the conditions of the city's roads and pavements. A survey carried out by the council in 2012 said that only dead, dying, diseased or dangerous trees would be felled and replacements replanted. Thousands of mature trees have since been destroyed.

But protesters say that many of the condemned trees are safe and healthy and should not be chopped down. A report by the Sheffield Independent Tree Panel on 'Vernon', a 150-year-old oak tree on Vernon Road in Dore, found it was 'a very fine specimen, in excellent condition, with a further 150 years' life expectancy.'

Despite panel members advising 'that there is a strong arboricultural case for retaining this tree,' the council has said it must go. It says the tree is causing problems to private property and the council is at

risk of legal action if they don't deal with it.

Local people have been protesting vociferously. On Valentine's Day, they decorated Vernon with banners and red love hearts adorned with poems and messages.

'The oak was here before the houses. We think it marked a field boundary in the days when Dore was in Derbyshire,' explained Margaret Peart, who lives in Vernon Road.

'It's a link with the past and it represents our heritage. There are engineering solutions that won't cost extra.'

Vernon has been very active on social media. Campaigners have even written a special song, which they sing at protests to the tune of 'Heads and Shoulders, Knees and Toes.'

*Our Vernon's feeling sad, feeling sad
'Cos he ain't done nothing bad, nothing bad:
Root, trunk, branch, leaves, all fulfil their role
But when he's gone it's just a hole, just a hole.*

*Vernon Oak is for the chop, for the chop
This is something we must stop, we must stop:
Make them see that he is one of us
To stay on being glorious, glorious.* 🌱

Follow the campaign on Twitter @savedoretrees

Caroline Summerfield's plays have been performed in theatres across the UK, including Jermy Street, Finborough and the REP in Birmingham.

Angela Summerfield is an artist and art historian whose work is inspired by her love of nature and trees. She lives in north Gloucestershire.



NEOLITHIC FARMING 4000BCE

Neolithic people begin slowly converting wildwood, or the open areas within wildwood, into fields, pastures, heaths and moorland. The British Isles passes the stage of being half forest probably at some time in the Bronze or early Iron Age, roughly between 1,300 and 700BCE.



BRONZE AGE HEADACHES 2000BCE

Tree bark of the white willow contains salicin, a chemical similar to that found in modern aspirin. Making tea from the bark of willow trees is known to release a medicine that is effective against minor aches and pains. The first recorded use of salicin is 2,000BCE, and it was used in the ancient worlds of Sumeria, Egypt and Rome.



SEA HENGE 2049 BCE

A large oak and a circle of 55 surrounding oak posts are used to construct one of two Sea Henges near the North Norfolk coast (later inundated and preserved by rising sea-levels). Stonehenge is completed about this time as is the nearby Wood Henge in Amesbury, Wiltshire.



An extract from Caroline Summerfield's new play inspired by ancient woodlands near her home

THE TREE TAPESTRY

IT IS AUTUMN AT DAYBREAK AND ALBERT WIGGETT, AN ELDERLY FORESTER, STANDS IN A CLEARING IN THE WOOD:

ALBERT: I likes these woods. I likes this time of day. I likes this time of year too. But 'tis cold.

(He shivers involuntarily against the cold)

Though I loves the trees.

See! They have turned their leaves and now drip with gold. 'Tis not gold you can keep though. Nor can you sell it either, but you can see it. So that's what I tell them. You can't go chopping down those trees, because they're full of gold.

But they can't see it ... or won't. They sees the land instead and that's all. And I can tell they think that I am an old fool. So I asks them a question: 'Where would we be without our forests, our woodlands and our trees?' They pause. No one has dared ask them that before.

The Life of the Forest: A pastel drawing by Angela Summerfield which will be exhibited as part of the Arborealist exhibition at Nature in Art Gallery and Museum, Gloucestershire, 11 April-14 May 2017, where Angela will also be artist in residence.

And instead of answering me, they says, 'Albert Wiggett we've heard enough from you.' And I tells them, 'No they haven't, because this is only the beginning!'

(A drum beat starts, followed by the Musicians who play softly as Albert speaks)

Spirits of the forest hear me
 Summon up the season's wind and rain
 And nourish all our trees again.
 Stand tall the mighty Beech,
 Branch yourself outwards far beyond anyone's reach.
 Then Sycamore with your twisted branches
 Turn your leaves from green to gold
 And reach them up above the skies
 Giving shelter to whomsoever there lies.
 Next comes the mighty Oak, that most English tree of all
 And when the winds blow your leaves down do they fall
 Lobed in their shape, scaly in bark
 Stocky your trunk and good to climb for a lark!
 Bear up acorns and let your leaves unfold,
 If they be evergreen, then they shan't turn to gold.
 Larch then too will follow suit,
 Shedding your coniferous needles

And standing tall you keep the Beech in good company
 Because our native Elm is now alas a rarity;
 Disease has taken its toll there
 And the Ash too is now under threat
 If there be dieback, it'll be next.
 So to the Hornbeam on the edge of this wood
 Rough and tough it is, just like me,
 Its leaves coarse as are my hands and with hairs too underneath
 So to my favourite, last but not least
 The Silver Birch tree in these woods
 A queen of beauty there she stands
 Her white bark peels, her branches fine
 A canopy so light, so free
 That as the wind blows her leaves fall on me
 Yellow they are, as yellow as gold
(The drumming reaches a crescendo)
 And truth be told: this wood shall never, ever be sold! 🌿

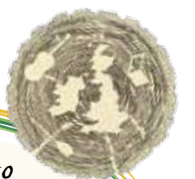
World premiere

The first act of Caroline's two-act play will have its premiere at the Everyman Theatre Cheltenham, 8-10 June 2017.

4. A THRIVING FORESTRY SECTOR

DOUGAL SHARES HIS TREE STORY:

'My favourite tree is a Douglas fir. In the summer in the West of England you can stand next to a Douglas fir that is enjoying itself and growing so well in our conditions that you can actually hear the bark cracking as it grows. It's one of the only trees in our country that grows so fast that the bark cracks as it grows. As it cracks the green-grey ridged bark reveals a pink line underneath, which is the fresh bark growing from underneath. It makes such fantastic timber for building, and when you crush the needles it smells like pineapples.'



Sign the Tree Charter: treecharter.uk/sign

Journalist John Humphrys remembers playing conkers

WHY I LOVE CHESTNUTS

I grew up in Splott, one of the poorer parts of Cardiff, at a time when there were park keepers to stop you from climbing the trees. They usually failed – we were quicker than them – and the experience came in useful in adult life. I've spent many happy (and sometimes precarious) hours climbing trees in order to prune them. I have an abiding love of horse chestnuts – again influenced by my childhood. These days I see them as objects of beauty but then it was the conkers we were desperate for. I remember autumn holidays in Oxford where an aunt lived. I spent most of my time in college meadows stuffing my pockets with their shiny brown fruit. They looked a bit less shiny after a good soak in vinegar – strictly illegal on the conkers circuit but we all did it. Over the years I have planted many hundreds of trees and hope to plant many more. Perhaps I'll be buried beneath one of them. I love the thought of my grandchildren and their children climbing a tree I planted. No doubt we all want to leave the world a slightly better place than we found it. Planting trees is one way of making a contribution. 🌱

John Grundy recounts his tree-climbing adventures

THE BIG BEECH

In the wood in Somerset next to the house where I grew up, a school, stood the Big Beech, pre-eminent among other fine beeches, fat of girth, good to climb. You could swing up via a low-hanging branch or clamber up the main trunk. High above the ground was a yellow line painted by my father, above which pupils of the school were not allowed to climb. Of course everyone aimed to carve their initials well above the line.

As a boy I spent many hours climbing with others or dreaming by myself in the branches of the Big Beech – and later as an adult. Sadly, the tree blew down in a storm a few years ago. A dendrologist established that the tree was about 500 years old and by girth one of the largest beech trees in England. Incredible to think that those childhood hours were spent among branches that sprouted when Henry VIII was on the throne. 🌱



The Big Beech: one of the largest in England.



Tea In The Tree by Eliza Glyn: 'When I was 11, I used to walk up the road to meet Daniel and we'd spend hours playing in a horse chestnut tree with bright-pink blossom. Its first branch was just within reach – it took a mighty effort to get up and onto this branch, but then the rest of the climb was easier. We were always up and down this tree with snacks, cushions, rope, all sorts of stuff. One day we built a pulley system so we could haul up an old blue milk crate – we wanted it to be the base of our tree house. Daniel was at the bottom yanking it up the tree and the crate somehow fell down onto his head. It was hard plastic, and I think it really hurt him as he just crouched there very quietly for a while. But pretty soon we were back to getting that crate up the tree, pulling, balancing, shoving it into place. In the end, the blue crate didn't work out as a treehouse base so we moved on to other things.'

Eliza Glyn is an illustrator and artist living in New Zealand. Her subjects include landscapes, flora and still life.

Emma Lewis thanks the trees that shaped her childhood

FOR THE LOVE OF TREES

I grew up in a small village in Wales. The village was part of a large estate owned by a wealthy family. We were surrounded by woodland and my love for trees started at a very young age. From my bedroom I would stare out in amazement at the giant redwoods that towered above all the other trees and the village's high stone wall.

From a young age I wanted to visit them, as they were such an amazing sight. I have such fond memories of our wonderful village school that had a woodland attached to its playground. Here is where I spent most of my childhood, both in school and after school and weekends.

The woodland was a mature one, full of oaks, sweet chestnuts and many other trees. I

remember the sweet chestnut trees in particular. They were impressive and twisted high up into the sky. I always remember the sheer beauty of 'my' woodland – that's what it felt like to me. It felt special and sacred and would always put a smile on my face. I had a deep connection to that place.

Unfortunately, after many years, the woodland was cut down. I remember being heartbroken, like I'd lost some of my family. The woodland lost its amazing energy that day and is still recovering now. I did visit the redwoods on the estate when I was older. I would stand at the bottom of them and look up their towering trunks and feel their fantastic bark and wonder how old they were and what was about when they were planted.

The estate also had a number of monkey puzzle trees, which were just as impressive. A number of these beauties were also cut down during routine management of the forest but others remained.

All in all, without trees in my life as a small child I wouldn't be who I am today. They taught me so much about nature and myself and I thank them for that. 🌱



THE ANKERWYCKE YEW

Rivers and trees were sacred to the Celts and the tribes of invaders who came to Britain after the Romans left. Over time, the Anglo-Saxons became Christianised, but retained a respect for many natural landmarks. Alfred the Great (Wessex King 871-899CE) held councils at Runnymede, possibly under the branches of the Ankerwycke Yew, which took root at Runnymede around 2,000 years ago. This tree still stands at Runnymede by the Thames in Surrey.

Dave Goulson is Professor of Biology at Sussex University. He has published more than 270 scientific articles on the ecology and conservation of bumblebees and other insects and wrote *The Sunday Times* bestseller *A Sting in the Tale*.

Bea Forshall studied Illustration at Falmouth College of Art and creates beautiful artworks about animals and conservation.

It's not all about bees. Dave Goulson explains the merits of the humble hoverfly

HOVERFLIES – THE FORGOTTEN POLLINATORS

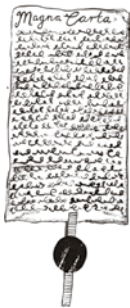
For most people, pollination means honey bees; the domestic bees kept in wooden hives and from which, of course, we get honey. If pushed, they might concede that they've also heard of bumblebees. Very few people have any idea that there are actually over 270 species of bee in the UK alone, and over 20,000 in the world. What's more, pollination isn't just carried out by bees. There are also flies, beetles, wasps, butterflies, moths, thrips and more, a myriad of tiny creatures that transport pollen from flower to flower in search of food, and hence inadvertently ensure that our crops bear fruit and that wildflowers set seed. It is estimated that in the UK we have at least 1,600 insect pollinators; no-one has yet tried to work out how many there might be in the world.

Among the most beautiful and easily observed of these forgotten pollinators are the hoverflies. There are a similar number of species in the UK as there are bees, roughly 270, and some of them are stunningly pretty creatures. Hoverflies have few defences against predators, other than their considerable speed, so many have evolved to resemble bees or wasps so that hungry birds might mistakenly think that they have a sting. This often fools us humans too!

This spring, look closely at the insects visiting flowers in your garden. Many have yellow and black stripes, but count the wings – bees and wasps have two pairs, while flies have just one. Some of the most spectacular hoverflies are the bumblebee mimics such as *Volucella bombylans*, a large furry fly that comes in two forms, one of which has the yellow and black stripes of our white-tailed bumblebee, while the other is black with a red tail and is pretending to be a red-tailed bumblebee. Also keep an eye out for *Volucella zonaria*, a big brick-red and yellow insect which mimics our native hornet.

Hoverflies aren't just important pollinators, some of them are also invaluable natural enemies of garden pests. For example, the maggot-like grubs of the marmalade hoverfly, *Episyrphus balteatus*, are voracious predators of aphids, and will help to clear them from your beans, cabbages or roses.

If you'd like to see more hoverflies in your garden, there are simple things you can do. Plant some suitable flowers; they like shallow ones such as marjoram, thyme, fennel and angelica. If you have space, leave room for hogweed – they love it. Don't use insecticides, for there is really no need in your garden, and you will probably do more harm than good. You might also consider making a 'hoverfly lagoon', a container full of water and leaves that provides habitat for lovely species such as *Myathropa florea* which have aquatic grubs (instructions here: thebuzzclub.uk). If we all do our bit, perhaps we can turn our villages, towns and cities into giant pollinator reserves where hoverflies, bees and all the many other forgotten pollinators can thrive. 🌱



THE MAGNA CARTA & CHARTER OF THE FOREST

English Barons force King John to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215, a Fundamental Charter of Liberties. This quite possibly happened beneath the Ankerwycke Yew. In 1217 John's heir, Henry III, signs a Charter of the Forest at Runnymede. Clauses of the Magna Carta relating to the forests are expanded and made into their own Charter, setting out freedoms and liberties of all those living in forest areas. It re-establishes rights of access to the Royal Forests for free men.

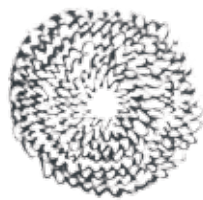


NEW FOREST 1079

Following the Norman Conquest, the New Forest was proclaimed a royal forest by William the Conqueror. It was created from more than 20 hamlets and isolated farmsteads, becoming a single, 'new' area.



BEA FORSHALL'S HOVERFLIES



The Search Continues

Dave Goulson's new book, *Bee Quest*, is published in April by Jonathan Cape, price £16.99. A hunt for the world's most elusive bees leads him from Salisbury Plain to Sussex hedgerows and from Poland to Patagonia.



Gardeners can do their bit: small tortoiseshell butterfly on a Shasta daisy photographed by Sarah Walters for Butterfly Conservation.

Liam Creedon suggests how you can attract butterflies and moths to your garden

GET PLANTING FOR MOTHS AND BUTTERFLIES

The spring afternoon spectacle of bees embarking on buzzing sortie missions amid the fronds, stems and leaves of garden flowerbeds is a comforting sign that all's well with the world.

We all know our bees are in trouble and we are increasingly aware of the key role they play as pollinators whose actions help keep food on our tables. Bee-pollinated crops include many fruits, nuts, seeds, beans, coffee and oilseed rape – all providing vital nutrients and variety to human diets worldwide. But although honey bees, solitary bees and bumble bees are the poster boys for pollination, other insects including moths, butterflies, hoverflies and beetles have a significant role to play in pollinating wildflowers. Wildflower pollination supports a wide and complex network of animal and plant life. The pollination service provided by these overlooked

insects is an important process which helps maintain the health of our environment.

Moths in particular have a role to play in pollinating plants and with a bit of effort you can witness this process for yourself in your own back garden. One of the most spectacular nectar-feeding and day-flying moth visitors to our gardens is the hummingbird hawkmoth.

Butterflies, although playing a less prominent role in pollination, still have a part to play. Sadly, like our bees, many of our butterfly and moth species are in a worrying state of decline.

According to Butterfly Conservation, more than three quarters of UK butterflies have declined in abundance over the last 40 years and, in the same period, two thirds of common and widespread moths have also seen their numbers fall. The decline of butterflies and moths is being driven by multiple factors including climate change, habitat loss and agricultural intensification.

But gardeners can do their bit to help reverse these alarming slumps. The UK's network of around 22 million gardens can act as an important refuge where pollinating insects can find the food and shelter they need to thrive.

Butterfly Conservation's 'Plant Pots For Pollinators' campaign is encouraging gardeners to plant at least one pot full of nectar sources in their gardens or window boxes.

hanging from hazel, willow and poplar.

Adolescent April arrives in glorious green and, like an opening scene from *The Wind in the Willows*, doors and windows are flung open to welcome the clemency of mid-spring, and despite a reputation for sudden showers it's rapidly becoming one of the driest months of the year. Appropriately, April takes its name from the Latin verb *aperire* – meaning 'to open' – and all around at this time of year buds are bursting, leaves are unfurling as green-fingered hands open to accept the growing gifts of daylight and temperature. In rivers and streams the mouths of salmon and brown trout gape open to gulp the emergence of abundant buzzing insects, including St Mark's Fly (*Bibio marci*) which shares its name with the saint whose feast day falls on 25 April. The beaks of birds, both resident and recently arrived, are also opening wide to give voice to the unfolding drama, from the staccato two-tone of chiffchaffs among the trees to the continuous, mellifluous melody of skylarks above the fields.

Spring is the time to get planting and the top five nectar sources for container gardening are:

1. Balkan clary *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'
2. Catmint *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low'
3. Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea* 'Pow Wow Pink'
4. Cosmos *bipinnatus* Sonata Series
5. Cranesbill Geranium 'Rozanne'

Out too early

It's a well known conundrum that perplexes householders every year – just what should you do if you find a butterfly fluttering around your house or shed when the weather is still a little on the Baltic side. Frost and even snow can be expected well into April in some years but unseasonable warm snaps can lull butterflies into believing spring has sprung.

If you find a butterfly that is active when it really still should be hunkering down against the cold then the best solution is to rehouse it into a suitable location. Catch the butterfly carefully and put it in a cardboard box or similar in a cool place for half an hour or so to see if it will calm down. Once it is calm, you might be able to gently encourage the sleepy butterfly out on to the wall or ceiling of an unheated room or building such as a shed, porch, garage or outhouse. Just remember that the butterfly will need to be able to escape when it awakens in early spring. 🌱

If we're lucky, we might hear the evocative, otherworldly call of the cuckoo from April onwards. Lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) is one of a dozen British wildflowers to assume the vernacular name of 'cuckoo flower' reflecting their seasonal synchronicity, but increasingly it often stands alone: pretty in pink but sadly un-serenaded by its namesake.

Culturally the cuckoo has long been held in high esteem as both a herald and emblem of high spring and all its festive fertility: so beloved and cherished by country folk that several villages and rural towns, from Yorkshire to Cornwall, continue to hold traditional cuckoo fairs in April and May. Each one has its own regional expression, but curiously many of them share the same origin story, worthy of any April fools, whereby the villagers attempted to prolong the luxurious days of spring and summer by building a high stone wall around a newly arrived cuckoo – but without a roof to keep it in, it simply flew up and away into the open April sky. 🌱

Liam Creedon is Head of Media at Butterfly Conservation and editor of the charity's membership magazine *Butterfly*. A former wildlife feature writer and journalist with the Press Association, he is a keen bird and butterfly watcher.



ROBIN HOOD

Nobody knows who this 13th-century figure really was. Maybe his Lincoln Green clothes stood for the Green Man. Maybe 'Hood' meant 'wood', or the name 'Robin' a nature spirit. He has entered our culture as a free man fighting over the rights to woodland. The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest is said to have hidden Robin Hood from his enemies.



INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION 1760

In the Industrial Revolution, wood starts to be replaced by metal, brick and steel as Britain's main building material, and by coal as its principal fuel. Copses of hazel and sweet chestnut start to be neglected. Workers leave the land for the cities. Native woods and forests begin to recede from British life, if not from the memory.



PLANTATION FORESTRY 1800s

Plantation forestry starts in earnest, based on the German model with a commitment to conifers and inspired by 'Empire Forestry' in British India. Afforestation of open land such as moors and heaths starts.

Martin Maudsley describes the signs of spring from blossoming flowers to seasonal cuckoo fairs

OPEN SEASON

Spring, as manifested by its sequence of natural stirrings and happenings, is a long and luxurious spell of life. Its inception stretches back to the beginning of February – marked by the Celtic festival of Imbolc (literally: 'in the belly') and attended by vestal snowdrops, known colloquially as naked maidens or February fair-maids. As the infancy of spring steps precociously forward into March, a traditionally tempestuous month epitomised by Mars the Roman god of war, the woodlands and waysides are covered by a surging spring tide of yellow: the pale perfection of primroses, the glittering gold of lesser celandines and foaming clusters of catkins

Martin Maudsley is a professional storyteller based in Dorset and working across the South West of England. He is the lead artist for Common Ground's Seasonal Schools project.

THE TREE CHARTER PRINCIPLES

What we believe in:

1. THRIVING HABITATS FOR DIVERSE SPECIES

Urban and rural landscapes should have a rich diversity of trees, hedges and woods to provide homes, food and safe routes for our native wildlife.

2. PLANTING FOR THE FUTURE

As the population of the UK expands, we need more forests, woods, street trees, hedges and individual trees across the landscape. We want all planting to be environmentally and economically sustainable.

3. CELEBRATING THE CULTURAL IMPACT OF TREES

Trees, woods and forests have shaped who we are. They are woven into our art, literature, folklore, place names and traditions.

4. A THRIVING FORESTRY SECTOR

We want forestry in the UK to be more visible, understood and supported so that it can achieve its huge potential and provide jobs, forest products, environmental benefits and economic opportunities for all.

5. BETTER PROTECTION FOR TREES AND WOODS

We want stronger legal protection for trees and woods that have special cultural, scientific or historic significance to prevent the loss of precious and irreplaceable ecosystems and living monuments.

6. ENHANCING NEW DEVELOPMENTS WITH TREES

Planning regulations should support the inclusion of trees as natural solutions to drainage, cooling, air quality and water purification.

7. UNDERSTANDING AND USING THE NATURAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF TREES

Having trees nearby leads to improved childhood fitness, and evidence shows that people living in areas with high levels of greenery are 40% less likely to be overweight or obese.

8. ACCESS TO TREES FOR EVERYONE

Everyone should have access to trees irrespective of age, economic status, ethnicity or disability.

9. ADDRESSING THREATS TO WOODS AND TREES THROUGH GOOD MANAGEMENT

We believe that more woods should be better managed and woodland plans should aim for long-term sustainability and be based upon evidence of threats and the latest projections of climate change.

10. STRENGTHENING LANDSCAPES WITH WOODS AND TREES

Trees and woods capture carbon, lower flood risk, and supply us with timber, clean air, clean water, shade, shelter, recreation opportunities and homes for wildlife. We believe that the government must adopt policies and encourage new markets which reflect the value of these ecosystem services instead of taking them for granted.



Ben Crowe runs Crimson Guitars, which makes a range of electric guitars and luthier tools. A luthier is someone who builds or repairs string instruments, generally consisting of a neck and a sound box.



DOUGLAS FIR 1827

With purple-brown bark, this evergreen tree which can grow to 55m and live for more than 1000 years, is introduced to the UK from the Pacific Northwest by Scottish botanist David Douglas.



COMMONS PRESERVATION 1850

The Lord of the Manor of Loughton encloses 1000 acres of Epping Forest, leaving just nine acres for recreation of the villagers. Thomas Willingale, a labourer, leads a revolt and lops hornbeam pollards for firewood in the traditional manner. The Willingale family are sentenced to hard labour but the Commons Preservation Society takes up their cause and by 1851 the Lords of the Forest are ordered by Courts to remove fences. They refuse and in 1879 5000 people turn up to protest by exercising their rights. Two years later Queen Victoria is compelled to declare the forest open to the public 'without let or hindrance'.



GIANT SEQUOIA 1852

William Lobb visits San Francisco and is dazzled by the huge conifers in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. This 'vegetable monster' triggered an enormous craze in British horticultural circles when Mr Lobb returned with seeds, shoots and seedlings, which grew into the thousands of saplings that were bought to adorn the estates of Victorian Britain.

Reclaimed wood is the basis for a series of electric guitars made by master luthier Ben Crowe

RAW BEAUTY

Old wooden furniture, 300-year-old tree trunks salvaged from the bottom of a lake, roof beams from a fire station – they've all been turned into hand-made electric guitars by master luthier Ben Crowe.

'We recycle and reuse as much wood as possible; anything that's useable, we'll use it,' explained Ben, who runs Crimson Guitars.

'With reclaimed wood you can get really interesting stuff; wider boards, a tighter grain and often a quality you can't buy new for love or money.'

Ben scours reclamation yards and builders' skips for pieces. He's frequently saved wood that was going to be burned or thrown away. The results are used for the bodies and tops in his Raw series, one of several lines that he makes.

'The ethos behind the Raw series is that the wood we use is beautiful in its own right, including its imperfections, whether they be knots in the timber, occlusions, through body holes, insect holes or even bark,' said Ben.

'It's more work and therefore more expensive to use reclaimed wood, but it's worth it. Every guitar is unique.'

Some of the more eroded bodies are embellished with copper gilding to enhance the texture and draw out the latent beauty of the material.

Ben originally started making guitars in his garage in Chichester while learning how to build early stringed musical instruments at West Dean College. He cheerfully admits that he found the early music scene 'a little too conservative' for his taste. Ten years ago he began Crimson in his garden shed and the business grew. The shed's long gone and he's now based in a workshop in Dorset where he employs 20 people.

From here, he builds instruments for such luminaries of the guitar world as Robert Fripp, Charlie Jones and Jakko Jakszyk. YouTube has helped him reach a worldwide audience with his video tutorials and he's also known for making



Above: Raw Series guitar body made of English walnut salvaged from an old table.

Below: Luthier tools owned by Ben Crowe. Photography by Shaun Ward.

luthier tools as well as the instruments themselves.

His choice of wood is one reason he prefers electric guitars to acoustic. He says British wood is more suitable for electric guitars, particularly ash,

'We recycle and reuse as much wood as possible; anything that's useable, we'll use it'

beech and sycamore, which he uses a lot. He has a fondness for English walnut or even yew. But he's not against using more exotic woods if they have been salvaged. He's currently particularly excited about parts of an old mahogany staircase he literally pulled off a bonfire – no doubt it will prove a veritable 'Stairway to Heaven' for some lucky musician! 🌱



One of Sussex's oldest forestry and timber companies is thriving

SOWING SEEDS AND SAWDUST

English Woodlands Forestry and Timber is one of the oldest forestry companies in Sussex. Its roots go back to the late 1940s post-war boom in forest industries. Those were the days when thousands of men across the UK worked to clear 'redundant' broadleaf woodlands and create new conifer plantations. In Sussex and Kent there were scores of local sawmills processing huge volumes of local wood. English Woodlands emerged from a series of mergers and buyouts among these operators.

In 1987, The Great Storm delivered massive amounts of windblown timber to the sawmills, which were already at capacity. For the next

decade, English Woodlands concentrated on milling. But once the stocks were finally cleared, the company diversified into forestry management, looking after the woodland environment on behalf of forest owners as well as continuing to mill and supply timber.

The forestry team plan, conserve and regenerate woodlands. They are in the woods at daybreak to make the most of daylight hours – that's 4am in high summer! The timber team's task is to take a tree and give it a second life as wood. Their work begins with the careful selection of good-quality standing trees or round timber. Then comes milling. For timber cladding, structural timber beams or landscaping this could be all that's required, but if the wood is to be for furniture making, joinery, cabinetry or flooring then they begin the slow (very slow at a year per inch) drying process. Boules of wood are stacked, bound and air-dried before kilning to reduce moisture levels further, making wood suitable for use in interiors. 🌱



Freshly cut: boules of timber sticked and stacked for air drying at Cocking Sawmills.

10. STRENGTHENING LANDSCAPES WITH WOODS AND TREES

ALAN SHARES HIS TREE STORY:

'They store carbon. They generate oxygen. Within streets they filter traffic noise and airborne pollutants. They are not just trees, they are complete ecosystems. They condition soil. They store water and help prevent flooding. They ask for little, save we leave them to do their magic and help this planet's eco system to survive.'



Sign the Tree Charter: treecharter.uk/sign



Left: David Saltmarsh on his outside pole lathe preparing to turn a chair leg. Right: Slat-back chair with cabriole legs painted with black over green milk paint.



David Saltmarsh of Fivepenny Chairs talks us through the fine art of chair-making

SITTING DOWN ON THE JOB

‘You can always tell if an old chair was made with green wood – the spindles and legs won’t be round, they will have gone oval. It’s caused by the way the wood shrinks around the grain as it dries.’

David Saltmarsh produces his own take on the traditional Windsor chair. He’s spent years learning the old ways of making.

‘For the first ten years there was no power, not even electric light. I was very committed to not using any power tools at all,’ he explained. Instead, he made a foot-operated pole lathe and used hand tools to chop, cut, shape and bore. For more than six years he made nothing but traditional Windsor chairs following age-old patterns and craft techniques. He saw this as an apprenticeship, a case of learning the basics thoroughly before trying any variations of his own.

Over the next seven years, he gradually increased

his level of design innovation. He prefers to use ash, oak and cherry rather than the traditional beech, with elm for seats when he can get it. Ninety percent of the wood he uses comes from within 20 miles of where he lives. He has a share in a mobile sawmill that he operates with friends and he mills most of the oak and ash he needs himself. Other, rarer pieces are often gifts or commissions.

‘Chair-making takes me to another place, I find it fascinating. I love being in my workshop’

‘Wood has to be of a real high standard for chair-making. It’s got to be clean and straight with an even grain and few side branches. Trees that have grown on flat ground tend to be better than hillside trees as each side of the tree will be of equal strength.’

He prefers to work the wood when it is unseasoned as it is easier to shape when green. The higher water content makes it softer and suppler. Once he has made the chair parts he dries them in a rack high above his kitchen Rayburn (wood-fuelled

of course) before assembling. A chair may contain over 40 mortice and tenon joints. It is important that all of these mortices are accurately positioned and at the correct angle. Sometimes David drills these by eye and sometimes he uses a system of bevels and mirrors to help judge the angle from different directions. When finished, he colours some chairs with milk paint, an American technique which adds a milky lustre. Others he simply polishes with tung oil.

In recent years he has connected his shed to the off-grid power supply on the farm (solar panels and a small turbine) and bought a bandsaw and cordless drill. He’s had a couple of electric light fittings installed too, but doesn’t like the harshness of the light. Most of his work is still done by hand and every chair is different. He prefers to make one-off pieces rather than matching sets of chairs.

‘Chair-making takes me to another place, I find it fascinating. I love being in my workshop. I can be there all evening with my slippers on and it feels like only an hour. There’s always more to learn, it’s so enjoyable.’ 🌱

The Work Shed

You can find out more about David’s chairs on his website – fivepennychairs.co.uk

Guy Corbett-Marshall describes a new era at Whitney Sawmills

CUTTING EDGE

Last year, the national charity Woodland Heritage became the new owner of Whitney Sawmills, a business established by local craftsman, Will Bullough, over a quarter of a century ago in the charming Herefordshire village of Whitney-on-Wye. In those days Will was a craftsman who became increasingly frustrated with the quality of the timber available, so he decided to try milling and drying his own materials, little realising what this experiment would eventually lead to.

The sawmill grew steadily to become a UK-wide supplier of timber to businesses of all sizes from the grand Dumfries House project in Scotland to one-man boat builders in Cornwall. Over the years the mill has supplied many exciting, prestige projects such as fine oak for the King’s Dining Room in Edinburgh Castle, or sweet chestnut for the royal row barge, *Gloriana*. More recently it has been milling oak and elm for the restoration of HMS *Victory* and more locally the rebuilding of Grade I listed Llwyn Celyn just over the border in Wales.

An active member of the Tree Charter’s steering



Royal barge: Building the *Gloriana* from sweet chestnut.

group, Woodland Heritage was established in 1994 by two cabinet makers ‘keen to put something back’, who wanted to promote the growing of trees and the use of wood. Working with Will Bullough, their popular ‘From Woodland to Workshop’ courses were established nearly a decade ago, all of which have been run from Whitney Sawmills and which have attracted well over 200 students over the years, all from some part of the timber supply chain.

‘Whitney Sawmills has long been a part of

Woodland Heritage’s way of working,’ said the charity’s co-founder and chairman of trustees, Peter Goodwin. ‘A sawmill is at the centre of the timber supply chain, being the crucial link between grower and user, which is the very reason why we have always held our From Woodland to Workshop courses at Whitney. And while there has been a huge reduction in the number of hardwood sawmills in the UK in recent decades, Woodland Heritage believes that with the right approach a healthy future exists for those that remain.’ 🌱

David Saltmarsh of Fivepenny Chairs produces his own take on the traditional Windsor chair. He works from the shed he built 13 years ago on his eco smallholding in Dorset.



FORESTRY COMMISSION 1919
Britain has less than 5% tree coverage when the Forestry Commission is set up by the government. It begins systematic mass planting of moorlands, heathlands and conversion of ancient woodlands to plantations of Sitka spruce and other fast-growing, non-native conifers. The forestry policy is based on cost-benefit theory but many ancient woodland conversions are, in the end, unprofitable. Woodsmanship starts to die out.



WOODLAND TRUST

THE WOODLAND TRUST 1972

Spiralling threats to our precious woods and trees leads to the founding of the Woodland Trust, which remains at the forefront of the fight to protect, restore and create UK woodland. The Woodland Trust now owns and manages more than 1,000 wildlife-rich native woods across the UK, including many ancient woodlands and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.



COMMON GROUND 1983

Common Ground is founded and its first major project is ‘Trees, Woods and the Green Man’ – from 1986 to 1989 it explores the cultural relationship between trees and people, publishing various books and initiating several art exhibitions, including ‘The Tree of Life’ with the South Bank Centre, ‘Out of the Wood’ with the Crafts Council, and Andy Goldsworthy’s ‘Leaves’ show at the Natural History Museum.

Guy Corbett-Marshall is the development director and first employee of Woodland Heritage. Before that, Guy worked for The Wildlife Trusts for over 23 years, the last 16 of which were spent as chief executive of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Martha Sprackland is Poet-in-residence at Caught by the River. Her pamphlet *Glass as Broken Glass* was published by Rack Press. She was twice a winner of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award.

Rachael Allen's first pamphlet of poems was published by Faber & Faber in the Faber New Poets series. She is the poetry editor for *Granta* magazine and coeditor at poetry press *Clinic* and the online journal *Tender*.

A conversation between Martha Sprackland and Rachael Allen inspired by building dens

MEMORY DEN

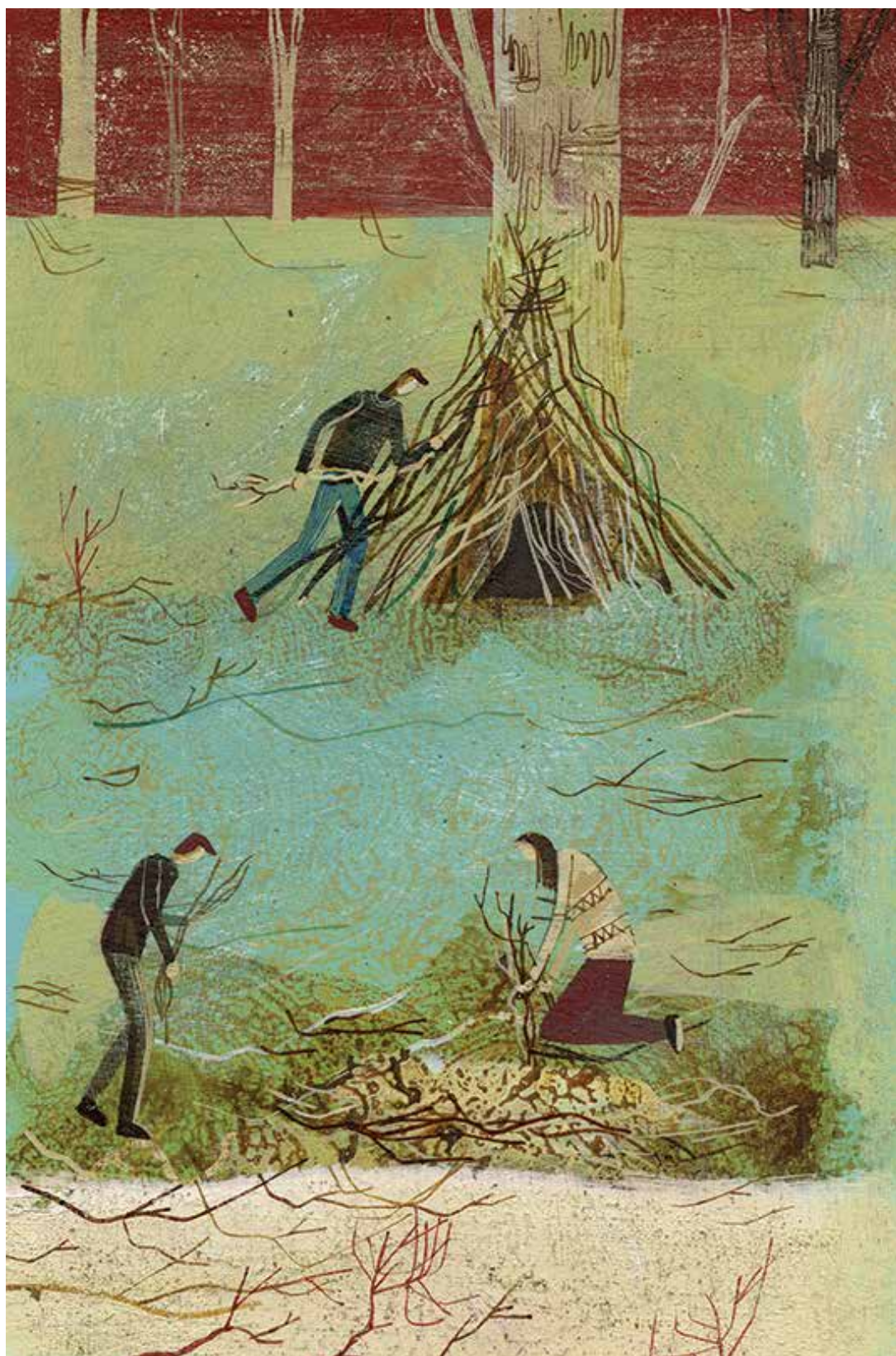
Martha Sprackland: As children, we would squeeze through a gap under the fence at the back of the rec, or, if we were brave enough, would leap the eight-foot brushed-steel spikes from the launchpad of the squat pebbledashed building outside the tennis courts. This got us out onto the golf-course rough, where we had our den. I think of it anytime I see corrugated iron or blue tarpaulin. A sandy hollow between three big, twisty pines, roofed with stolen wood and panel pins pulled from pallets behind the greengrocer's shop. We defended our den fiercely from invading gangs, who would pelt us with plastic bottles full of sand for weight – you get a good bruise off that. We stole golf balls from the green and sold them back to the club. Mainly we just crouched there on the damp sand, sketching out plans, passing round a cigarette and dreaming of a bigger wilderness.

In Clissold Park, London, where I spent much of a long, hot summer, there's a beautiful tree near the southeast entrance. With a strong, straight, upright trunk and few low branches, this one isn't a climber, but a den. Its foliage spills in a perfect circle from the high crown, like a fountain. Underneath, a dark hidden space I would have taken as my headquarters as a child. I think this is universal, this early urge to build, to nest, to colonise, that endures into adulthood. I've asked the poet Rachael Allen whether she built dens as a child.

Rachael Allen: The early 90s' children's film *Once Upon a Forest* was a kind of early-years introduction to the destruction of the natural world and humankind's impact on wilderness. The main story line features a loveable hedgehog/rodent who becomes sick from leaked 'chemical fumes'. It is probably most famous for featuring an invention canonical in children's imaginations (for those who saw the film anyway) called a Wingamathing. For those who don't know the film, a Wingamathing looks like an animated version of the raft that Tom Hanks makes to get off his island in *Cast Away*: an imaginatively yet believably cobbled together bundle of sticks, leaves, twigs and other items procured from the forest.

The Wingamathing was an alluring device sprung from the eccentric mind of an older hedgehog/rodent mulch-dweller who made numerous attractive plans, sketches and blueprints for his assemblage on pleasing yellowing paper. He became too sick to make a Wingamathing, perhaps dying before he could (my memory and tvtropes.org fails me), but his plans were followed to the letter by a scamperish crew of younger hedgehog/rodents. One of the more memorable scenes of the film shows the animals boating around the sky in their leafy contraption.

The urge to make a Wingamathing was my first urge to make a den. My Best Friend Forever Lindy (spoiler – no longer my best friend forever but in some parallel universe, maybe) and I would watch *Once Upon a Forest* late at night, drafting up similar plans for our own Wingamathing. We'd wake up early and etch pencil marks on the slim trees that hung over her patio as if we were going to cut them down. We'd chew three packs of chewing gum straight to ensure we had enough of a sticky material to secure one branch to another. We invented equations that made absolutely no sense figuring out our weights and heights in comparison to



Dens of our youth: 'I think this is universal, this early urge to build, to nest'. Illustration by John Harmer

what we estimated the branches could hold. We were in the grip of building a small space that we were convinced, nay, knew, would launch us up into the sky away from the oak tree branch we were planning to throw it off.

I'm not sure when we realised the Wingamathing was not going to materialise, that we'd never peel enough stringy bark off of her dad's prized trees to make binding materials. That we weren't even sure how the wings could be made to move, let alone what we were going to make them out of.

I remember it sharply as my first experience of stress and disappointment – I'm not particularly good at taking no for an answer and this was my first taste of having to. I can see myself storming around her small gravelly backyard, saying something like 'there must be another way we can put the base together!'

I have had dens since, in abandoned farms, in flat, wonderful trees, but I was happiest and most absorbed when I was in the thick of believing that we were definitely making the Wingamathing and, within the week, would be floating around above the houses we lived in, so my favourite and first was this – the flying den I couldn't make. 🌱

PRESCRIBED FIRE by Rachael Allen

Watch a forest burn
with granular heat
a boy, large-eyed
pressure in a ditch
grips to a dank
disordered root system
no tongue
flavoured camo
bathes in the black
and emergent pool
see the trees on fire
char simultaneously
as the boy floats up
to the billowing ceiling



THE GREAT STORM 1987

A powerful storm ravages the UK in the middle of October. Winds gust up to 100mph, 18 people lose their lives, and of the 15 million trees said to have blown over in the night, most are chainsawed and removed, even if they are still rooted and alive. This reaction in the aftermath of the storm reveals our estranged relationship with trees.



SELL THE FOREST! 2010

The Coalition Government announces plans to sell part of the Public Forest estate in England, including ancient woodland, into private hands. Hundreds of thousands of people object, and in 2011 the government abandons the plan.

An extract from Laura Beatty's introduction to *Through the Woods* by HE Bates

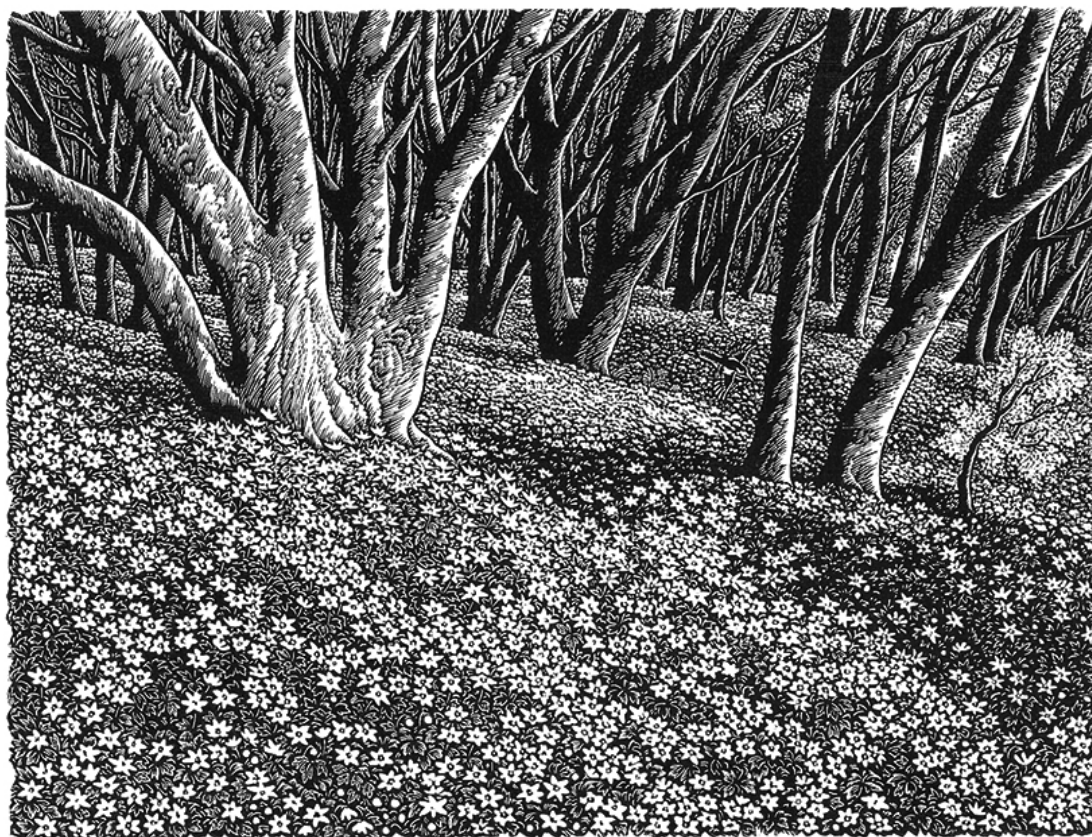
WHAT MAKES A WOOD?

'There is', Bates muses at the end of *Through the Woods*, 'some precious quality brought about by the close gathering together of trees into a wood that defies analysis.'

So what is it? What makes a wood? More precisely, since the actual woods of Bates' acquaintance are very different from each other, what do such distinct places have to do with 'The English Woodland' of his subtitle? One is the compromised wood of his childhood in Northamptonshire, a 'paradise of primroses' through which the roar of passing trains smashes at regular intervals, and the other is the soft chestnut wood of his choosing, where the light falls on quiet and whose trees stand in pools of bluebells. How, or even why, would you reconcile such difference? What do we mean by that potent, recognisable generic that we so often invoke, and to which you can apply the definite article with such confidence, the woodland that all of us carry around in our heads? Because woods are very deep in our consciousness; they are our place of forage and shelter but also our place of trial and growth and horror at ourselves or of others, our resource and our repository. They are the place that both our food and our stories come from.

These are the questions that *Through the Woods* revolves, quietly and at the back of its mind, as it climbs the slow spiral of a year, from April to April. What are woods in themselves and what are they to us?

You won't for instance, Bates is clear, get a wood just by planting a series of trees, and in particular you won't get one by planting the same type of tree. 'There must be,' he says, 'all kinds of trees, all



Wood anemone: one of spring's earliest wildflowers. Wood engraving by Sue Scullard.

kinds of flowers and creatures, a conflicting and yet harmonious pooling of life.' That is Bates' recipe – variety and conflict and harmony.

If we follow him we find a wood that we can see and taste and smell, that closes over our heads with its loose canopy and its slim trunks and its patterns of light closely observed and reconstructed, a wood full of slow change, of a procession of leaves and flowers, rustling with the footfall of unseen creatures.

Honeysuckle is 'unbuttoning among the wood ridings'; in summer there are canopies of 'sun-metallic leaves'; in winter it is fallen leaves that are conjured up, the chestnut like 'ragged scraps of fawn paper', the beech 'like copper shavings',

poplar and sycamore 'flat and slippery yellow fish'. And without their leaves, oaks are 'leather-budded' and the elm has 'little fluffy French knots of dark pink wool securely sewn on the jagged branches'.

Only in memory or on paper can these fleeting things, the woods full of orchids, the 'paradises of primroses' be fixed. This is what writing can do. It can make something fixed that is solid enough to nurse and uphold us whatever we have lost or destroyed. It can give us a place we can walk into at the author's invitation, a place where there will be 'all kinds of trees, all kinds of flowers and creatures, a conflicting and yet harmonious pooling of life.' A wood. 🌱



ASH DIEBACK 2012

Chalara dieback in ash trees is first noticed in Britain. Ash Disease is caused by the microscopic fungus Hymenoscyphus fraxineus, which inhabits leaves and twigs, damaging them by making a chemical called viridiol that is very toxic to ash. By July 2013 the fungus had been found in 549 sites around Britain and Ireland.

Sean Sutcliffe on his obsession with native wood rarities

XYLOPHILIA

I started collecting timber over 20 years ago. I was always looking for interesting, sustainable and UK native alternatives for customers who might be thinking of rare and exotic timbers. I used to spend a lot of time in and around timber yards but nowadays dealers know to call me when they have something interesting.

In addition to the normal commercial native species, we try to buy any interesting and unusual logs so that we can offer something out of the ordinary for commissions. Interesting species include rippled sycamore, rippled ash, rippled maple, common elm and wych elm. We have one particularly remarkable log of blistered elm which is absolutely covered in grain waves that look very three-dimensional even when smooth. We have been very lucky to source some amazing rippled sycamore. You never know quite when it's going to crop up as it seems that no one really knows why ripples develop. Its grain is so extraordinarily three-dimensional in appearance that it really tricks you until you stroke it. I fell so in love with these logs that I made my own kitchen table from them.

Our bog oak is another personal favourite because it gives the rich, very dark brown 'almost black' that we only normally associate with ebones. It comes with such a sustainable source and a narrative of its 5,000-year history. We found it through a timber merchant who called me one day to say a farmer in Cambridgeshire had snagged his plough on what he

thought might be a tree. We dashed up there the very next day and bought 30 logs that were still in the mud. At the time it seemed like a huge risk but I'm so glad we bought it.

Fruiting or wild cherry is another fabulous and more unusual species. It is so much more lively than the American cherry that we are used to and it has a lovely range of colours. It works beautifully because of its fine, slightly waxy texture and is in every sense a joy.

The relationship between people and wood is the oldest other-species relationship we have. Wood provided our earliest shelters, tools and weapons as well as being our source of heat from the beginning of time. This relationship has woven its way deeply into human DNA and into our hearts. I honestly believe that there is no human who doesn't have an innate love of wood. It is our oldest friend.

We've worked with a number of artists on projects using wood. We made a screen with 66 different woods as part of Martin Creed's *Stripe* series. Initially it seemed like a huge challenge to find 66 different timbers but it turned out that we had over 40 of them in our own timber barn and the remainder we sourced from our local timber merchants, Tyler Hardwoods, who are always very helpful to small workshops and craftsmen.

We have also worked on projects with artist Allen Jones creating the *Hole Chair*, and *Ves-el*, a sculptural wooden vase, for Zaha Hadid.

Sadly, our woodlands are changing because of climate and disease. The most imminent threat that concerns me as a furniture-maker is ash dieback, followed by emerald ash borer, which will see the near or total eradication of the ash species. Ash is an outstanding wood with great properties of strength,

flexibility and workability. It is a real favourite of most craftsmen, yet it has always been underrated and seen as a utility wood. My hope is that with its imminent demise we will take advantage and start to use it in furniture and interiors while we still have it. There should be a decade, starting from now, which will be noted for its use of ash for its strong grain and wonderful naturalistic appearance. I would hate to see it all go to firewood. 🌱



Ves-el: Zaha Hadid. (Petr Krejci Photography)



OLIVER RACKHAM RIP

Oliver Rackham, the leading historian and ecologist of British woodlands, dies in February 2014, aged 75. He set new standards for research linking ecology with history and archaeology. Considered a genius by his peers, he was able to combine original thinking with an encyclopaedic knowledge, and was often outspoken on important issues such as tree disease, globalisation, forestry and government policy.

Sean Sutcliffe co-founded Benchmark with Terence Conran in 1984. Sean cares deeply about environmental sustainability, craftsmanship and the regeneration of the British furniture industry.

Poet Matt Howard recommends poems about trees.

POETRY OF THE TREES



GRASMERE OAK
by HELEN MORT
from her collection
Division Street

REALISM
by REBECCA WATTS
from her collection The Met
Office Advises Caution

TREE
by TED HUGHES
from his collection
Remains of Elmet

SONG
by SEAMUS HEANEY
from his collection
Field Work

THE WISHING TREE
by KATHLEEN JAMIE
from her collection
The Tree House

THE COMBE
by EDWARD THOMAS
from The Annotated
Collected Poems

SPRING HARVEST

Beech leaf noyau

700ml Gin
400g Young beech leaves
(enough for gin to cover)
400g Sugar
A sprig of
sweet woodruff
(Optional)

1. Pack a large jar with young, clean beech leaves. Press down and fill with gin. Leave in a dark cupboard for at least two weeks.

2. Strain off the gin into a measuring jug. For every 700ml gin, take 400g of granulated sugar and dissolve in 300ml of boiling water. Cool, and add to the gin when cold. You can add a small sprig of sweet woodruff (*Galium oleratum*) if you wish.

3. Pour into sterilised bottles. Make sure you keep the bottles in a dark cupboard if you want to keep the green colour. If you store them in the light the gin will turn brown, but this does not detract from its taste.



Flavour to savour: wild garlic gives a piquant kick to savoury cheese and garlic scones.

Tiffany Francis goes foraging for this season's freshest treats

WILD FOODS FOR SPRING

While the poet TS Eliot claimed April was 'the cruellest month', I secretly suspect he found little time to get outdoors and clear his head of London air. A spring voyage into the woods is one of nature's greatest treasures, and for the common-or-garden forager, spring marks the beginning of a bright and tasty year; beneath the rustle of fresh woodland foliage lies a carpet of plants, ripe for the harvest and ready to jazz up your supper.

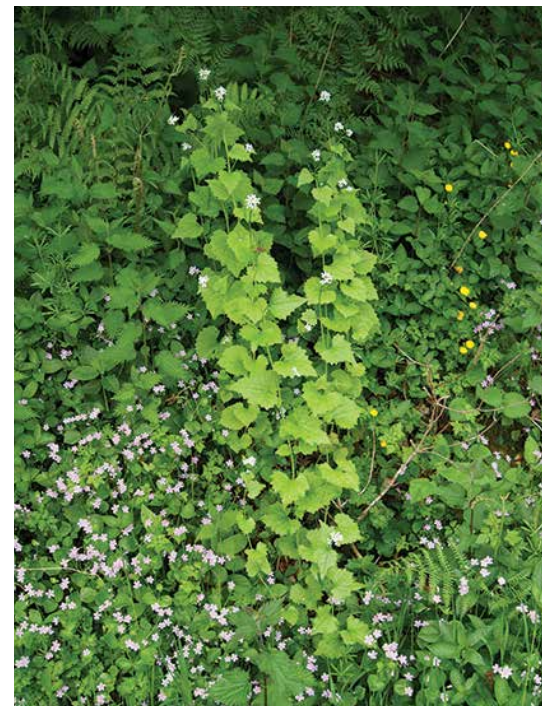
Both the cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) are among the first species to spring from the ground, the former so named for blossoming when the cuckoo begins its call. The pale, pink flower is a favourite food of the orange tip butterfly, but the young leaves have a peppery flavour similar to watercress, and make a wonderful addition to egg sandwiches and green soups. Ground ivy is another punchy character and was once used by the Saxons to flavour, clarify and preserve beer. The leaves are kidney-shaped and best collected before the plant flowers; try sautéing with butter and garlic for a delicious side dish.

You'll want to keep a keen eye out for garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Although it continues to grow throughout the spring and

summer months, the leaves will hold the richest flavour if picked before May. Known to rural folk as Jack-by-the-hedge due to its tendency to grow along hedgerows, the foliage is bright pea-green, and sprinkled across the plant tops are small white flowers. Historically it was recommended as flavouring for salty fish, but I like to capture its garlicky flavour in homemade pesto or stir it into fresh goat's cheese.

Like garlic mustard, the nettle is another plant that grows all year but is best harvested early. There are few in Britain who won't be acquainted with the nettle, and it's almost a rite of passage for small children to fall into a nettle patch and reappear covered in a blotchy rash. While the common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is the real villain here, both red dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*) and white dead-nettle (*Lamium album*) are also edible but do not sting – although gloves are always recommended. Nettles make an excellent homebrewed beer, and when left to settle will produce a clear, russet draught with a wonderful wild tang.

Lastly, no woodland wander is complete without the unmistakable aroma of wild garlic, whose Latin name *Allium ursinum* refers to the brown bear's habit of digging up their bulbs for a pungent snack. The flowers appear as beautiful creamy clusters in the undergrowth, creating a forest floor that seems almost sprinkled with stars. Wild garlic is another cracking ingredient for homemade pesto, but it can also be used in any dish that would usually contain garlic or spring onions. My favourite recipe is warm cheese and garlic scones, oozing with flavour for a perfect afternoon treat. 🌿



Garlic mustard: Also known as Jack-by-the-hedge.

Read the blog

Tiffany Francis is a writer from rural Hampshire who works at Butser Ancient Farm. In 2016 she completed her Masters in English at UCL, her second best achievement after winning third prize at the Singleton Rare Breeds Show with her English goat, Sorrel. Her first illustrated book on foraging will be published next spring by Bloomsbury. Meantime, you can read more on her blog: tiffanyimogen.com

6. ENHANCING NEW DEVELOPMENTS WITH TREES

FIONA SHARES HER TREE STORY:

Trees lift our spirits at the end of winter with their blossom and bright-green leaves. They make a view more interesting. They provide the stage from which nature's feathered choir sings its varied tunes. They give us a dappled parasol for our picnics. They convert bad gases into the good gases we want to breathe. They absorb noise from our neighbours and water from our streets. They soften the wind. They smell nice. They provide fruit for many species, humans included. They are a source of heat for our fires. They improve the quality of soil. They provide a balance to hard, man-made structures. They are smart – they know when it is time to wake up, what to do while they're awake and when to go back to sleep. Trees work hard and they give us much more than most of us know!

Sign the Tree Charter: treecharter.uk/sign

In an extract from *Arboreal*, a new collection of woodland writing, the acclaimed novelist Sara Maitland gets the fear in the Wood of Cree Scotland

FOREST FEAR

Wood of Cree delivers almost everything you would anticipate from ancient northern oakwood – oak trees of course and birch and rowan and hazel and crab apple; erratic boulders shoved into position by glaciers as well as the rocks pushed down more recently by the burns; an understory carpeted with thick green mosses and draped with honeysuckle and lichens; and in season bluebells.

But, at the same time, and like every other bit of ancient woodland, Wood of Cree is not like every other bit of ancient woodland because it, like them, has a long and complex relationship with people. Wood of Cree has been heavily managed, mainly for oak coppice, since at least the 17th century; probably because of its steepness very few oaks were grown on as maidens for timber – clear-felling was the traditional method of managing this wood. In the early 1920s it was clear-felled for the last time; but it was never grubbed up or replanted extensively with larch or spruce. This means that almost all the oak trees are the same height and age; but growing on much older roots; many of them are multi-trunked and they are very thin and tall. This gives the place a rather different atmosphere from more usual oakwood, and in particular it feels more

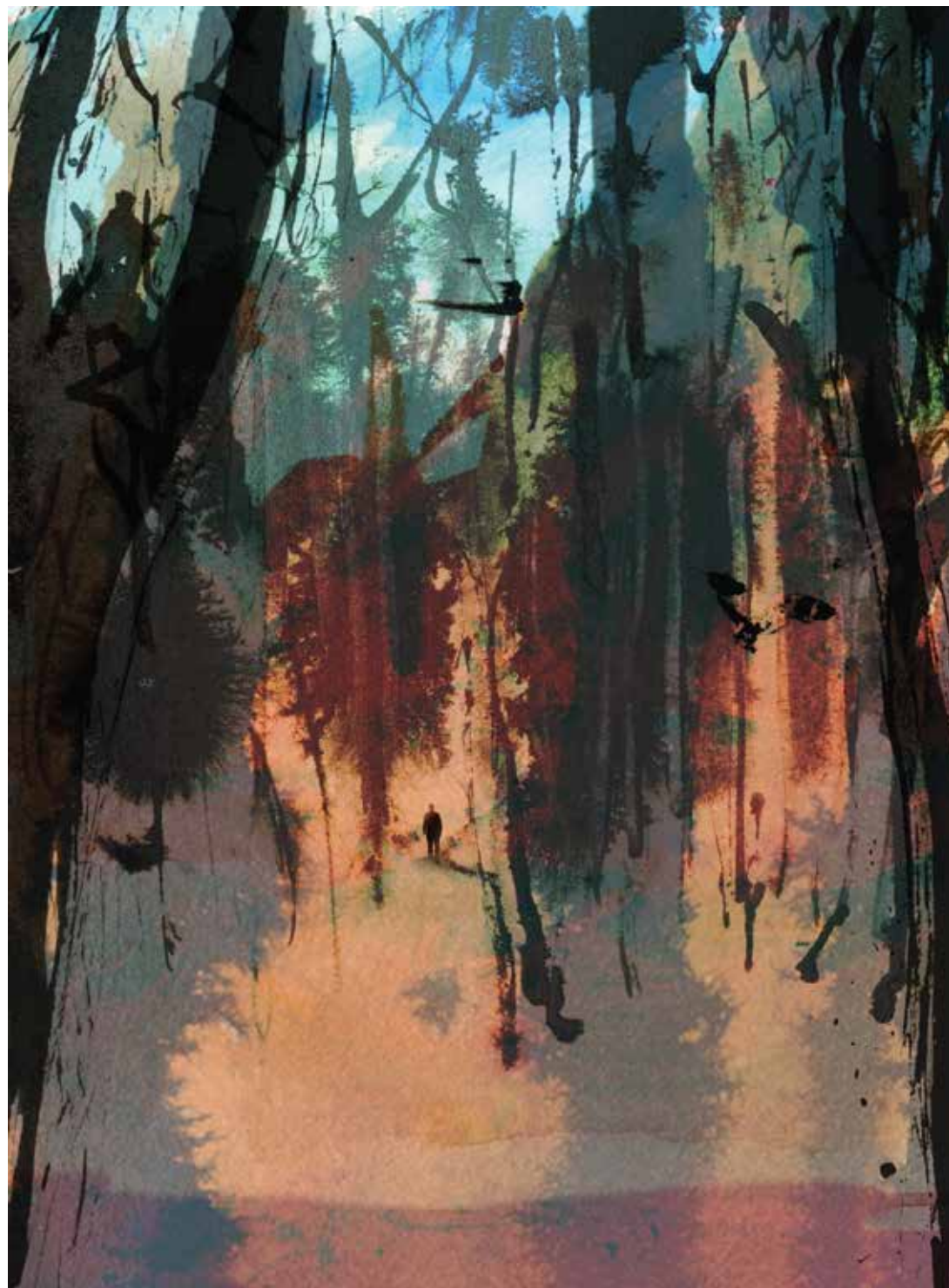
‘I can feel my heart
thumping; the
taste of the fear is
itself fearful’

fairy-tale than ancient; more frolicsome than awe-inspiring. It also has an unusual ‘soundscape’; not only is the sound of running water very loud and coming from all directions, but in addition the tall, thin trees are very ‘creaky’, even moaning.

Last January I went for a walk in Wood of Cree with my small golden-coloured dog. She has an exceptionally joyous and ebullient character. Like many terriers she likes to be The Leader and she barges past me and heads out up the path. I follow her, wondering somewhat at the signs of preposterously early spring. The moss seems denser and more luxuriously green than I have ever seen it, ramping over the rocks and up the tree trunks. The wind drops abruptly. And I hear her howl, above the crashing sound of the burns; a long howl followed by a strange, loud whimper. I start to run up the path, but it is very muddy and steep and I am unfit from the long spell of wet-confining winter. I stumble. Suddenly, she comes hurtling down the slope, throws herself against my legs and I can feel that she is trembling. I bend down to her and realise she is half wild with fear.

And then I am too. I am consumed, abruptly, breathtakingly, totally, by terror. Some atavistic bitter flavour that I cannot identify rises in the back of my throat. I am unable to move – this is something way beyond the adrenalin rush of ‘flight or fight’; this is something very dark and primitive; above the sound of running water I can feel my heart thumping; the taste of the fear is itself fearful.

It does not last long, moments rather than minutes. Then the dog relaxes, looks at me almost slyly, shakes herself vigorously and turns and trots off up the path again. I straighten up; wilfully



Spooked: Why do our fears become entwined in the forest? Illustration by the artist Simon Pemberton.

unclench all my clenched muscles with a sort of shudder rather closely akin to her shaking; take a deep breath. Think, ‘What was that?’

And indeed, what was it?

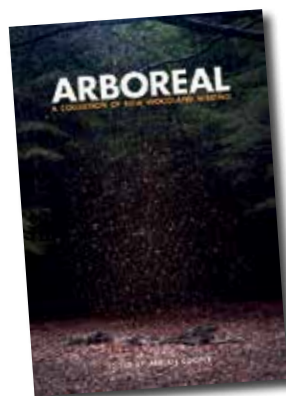
I have felt it before, this forest fear. Older sections of the great Caledonian Forest have produced a very similar sensation, with a background awareness of the ghosts of long-gone wolves; and coming down from a long, high hill walk, through plantation forestry and realising that it will be dark before I reach my car has had the same effect. But on most of these occasions I happened to be in a wood when something frightened me. In Wood of Cree I was frightened by the wood itself. Forest fear. And yet Wood of Cree is such a very pretty wood.

When I encounter something mysterious and profound in the forest I go back to the Grimms’ collection of stories; I have argued elsewhere that these stories took shape from and emerged out of forest cultures – northern European forests; instinctively one thinks that fear and the forest are closely entwined; that the stories are driven by the Terror of the Wild Wood and the deep magic of dusk and the long, green shadows that move and stir, the strange pattering hush which is never truly silent, but still hard to hear properly.

But the true forest fear, the Terror of the Wild Wood, comes from

somewhere lower and deeper than the fairy stories. It is a darker, more chthonic, horror than any ghosts or demons we want to play at being frightened by, or that we use to make children behave. There is a revealing name for this fear – what I felt in Wood of Cree was ‘panic’. The word panic has a very simple derivation – it is the fear induced by Pan, the Greek god of wild places, of mountainside, high moor and above all of woods and forests.

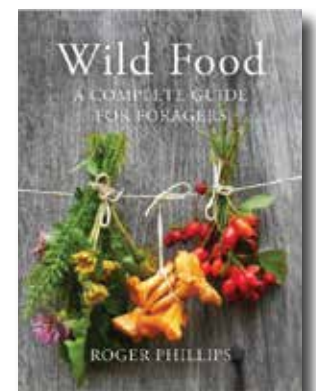
Woods are very beautiful, they are embedded deep within our imaginations and our hearts – and we should walk in them with delight and preserve them with a passionate tenderness, but we should never forget that they hold terrors too. They contain a dark indifference and a dispassionate contempt for all the forces of so-called civilisation. There is no escape from that deep uncanny terror. Let yourself be afraid, very afraid. 🌿



ARBOREAL at the Hay Festival

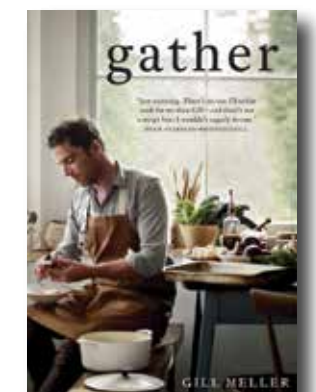
Writers from *Arboreal*, including Tobias Jones, Zaffar Kunial, Germaine Greer and Fiona Stafford, will be taking part in a series of talks curated by Common Ground and the Woodland Trust at the Hay Festival between 27 and 31 May 2017.

ON THE WOODSHELF



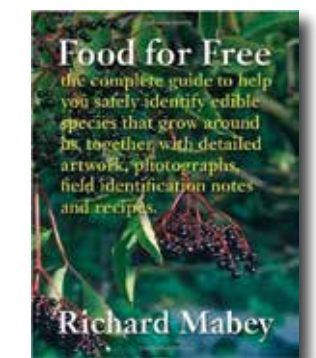
WILD FOOD: A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR FORAGERS

by Roger Phillips



GATHER

by Gill Meller



FOOD FOR FREE

by Richard Mabey



THE FORAGER HANDBOOK

by Miles Irving



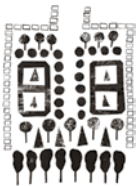
MARCH



AN ALMANAC for Trees, Woods and People Spring 2017

SPRING
EQUINOX
20 March

WILLOW WORKSHOP
17 - 19 March
Kingcombe Centre,
West Dorset
The ancient craft of
willow weaving
kingcombe.org



EARTH HOUR
STAR WALK
25 March
Grizedale Forest,
Hawkshead
Celebrate Earth Hour with
astronomer Robert Ince
forestry.gov.uk



APRIL



ST
GEORGE'S
DAY
23 April

EARTH DAY
22 April
Support the Earth
day movement and
its Trees for the
Earth campaign
earthday.org

PRIMROSES
LOOKING THEIR
BEST
Mid April

THE ARBOREALISTS
A celebration of Trees
11 - 14 May
Nature in Art Museum,
Gloucester
A group show of artists
who promote trees in
contemporary art
arborealists.com

EASTER
SUNDAY
16 April

BLUEBELL WATCH
3 April - 21 May
woodlandtrust.org.uk/
bluebellwatch

WHAT'S YOUR
EVENT?
Share your local
celebration or find
out more about what's
happening near you
treecharter.uk/events-
calendar



BARN THE SPOON
23 April
Stepney City Farm,
London
A full day of making
with one of the world's
most knowledgeable and
respected spoon-maker
barnthespoon.com



FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT EVENTS
treecharter.uk/events-calendar



JACK IN THE GREEN
28 April - 1 May
Join a traditional
May Day parade in
Hastings old town
hastingsjtg.co.uk

DOWNTON
CUCKOO FAIR
29 April
On the greens at
Downton village,
Salisbury
Maypole and morris
dancing
cuckoofair.co.uk

EASTER
EVENTS
we have lots so
find one near you
woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-
involved/events/

MAY

MAY DAY
1 May
Celebrations
across the
country

TREE COUNCIL'S
WALK IN THE
WOODS FESTIVAL
1 - 31 May
Woodland events
across the UK
treecouncil.org.uk

SPRING IN
SALTBURN GILL
3 May, 1pm & 4pm
Explore the effects
of seasonal changes
on the appearance of
ancient woodlands
teeswildlife.org



DREAMING OUR WOODS
5, 6, 7 May
Corby
Multi-media
transformation of
space, time and
place inspired by the
woodlands of Corby
deeprootstalltrees.org



OAK
APPLE
DAY
29 May

LONDON TREE WEEK
27 May - 4 June
Come and celebrate
London's trees and
woodlands with a week
of special events
london.gov.uk

WHAT'S YOUR
EVENT?
Share your local
celebration or find
out more about what's
happening near you
treecharter.uk/events-
calendar

HAY FESTIVAL
25 May - 4 June
Hay-on-Wye, Wales
For 10 days, Hay is
full of stories, ideas,
laughter and music
hayfestival.com

WHIT
SUNDAY
15 May

WEIRD AND
WONDERFUL WOOD
13 - 14 May,
Haughley Park,
Suffolk
A celebration of wood
and wood workers
weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

OLIVER RACKHAM
MEMORIAL EVENT
13 May
Marks Hall, Essex
rsvp@woodlandtrust.org.uk
corpus.cam.ac.uk



JUNE



SIGN THE
TREE CHARTER
treecharter.uk/sign



WORLD POOH STICKS
CHAMPIONSHIPS
4 June
Largest Common in
Witney, Oxfordshire
pooh-sticks.com

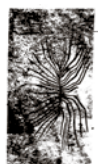
THE GREEN
SCYTHE FAIR
11 June, 11am - 11pm
Thorney Lakes, in
Machelney, Somerset,
is home to the West
Country Scythe
Championship
greenfair.org.uk

SUMMER
SOLSTICE
21 June

ROYAL HIGHLAND
SHOW
22 - 25 June
Scotland's annual
countryside showcase
in Edinburgh at the
Royal Highland
Showground
royalhighlandshow.org



FOREST OF THE
IMAGINATION
29 June - 2 July
Bath Abbey
Sensory installations,
artworks, outdoor theatre
and participatory
creative activities
forestofimagination.org.uk



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