

# BHMAT NEWSLETTER

Coppice Apprenticeships - training for coppice  
woodland futures.

No. 16 November 2013

Charity No. 1096755



## Crowd-funding Appeal

As some of you may know, we were unable to appoint a new apprentice last year due to rather a dry period funding-wise. We're still determined to take on 2 new apprentices early next year though and so are going to give crowd-funding a go in the hope that we can get enough spondoolicks to at least start the placements.

For those of you who haven't heard of crowd-funding, it's basically where a worthy cause (we're hoping you'll see us as one!) builds an online 'crowd' who offer support. The idea is that each member of the crowd donates a little, then they tell their friends who also offer a little then before you know it, the crowd makes it possible for the project to go ahead! It's not just the money we need so if you feel you can't help monetarily, please read on and please still get involved as we still need your support.

We need you to help us spread the word – the bigger the crowd, where most give a little, the more likely we are to reach our goal. There will be 'prizes' for those who give – different levels of prizes for different amounts given – from a thank you on our website to places on various woodland craft courses. We'll also have a time frame for the target to be reached.

We're just in the middle of sorting things out and we're not open for donations yet, but keep an eye out – we'll be e-mailing soon and asking you to spread the word and to donate a little if you can.

Thanks in advance – for any type and any amount of support you feel you can give us – it's an exciting thought that together we can make this happen!

Kath Morgan – BHMAT Administrator

AGM – 15<sup>th</sup> November, 7pm, The King's Arms,  
Hale.

Bill Hogarth MBE Memorial Apprenticeship Trust  
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# Woodland Pioneers 2013



ANOTHER wonderful week of creative woody fun was had by all at this year's Woodland Pioneers. The sun greeted us on Monday morning and the only thing falling from the sky was the occasional autumnal Beech leaf. Chapel House Wood became home to new and familiar faces, and it wasn't long before the air was filled with the sound of folk hard at work.



Twiggy spent her week guiding participants through the intricacies of treen, and there were spatulas, gypsy flowers and clothes pegs abound. Owen Jones was making riven oak panels with his groups (with surprisingly little blood shed deciding who got to keep the finished pieces). Sam Ansell claimed to be teaching coppicing at a nearby wood, but the abundance of teabags and cake

that went with them each day suggests otherwise. Very recent BHMAT graduate Lorna Singleton led her first WP course and had folk making their very own rustic stools (with woven sisal seats) in ONE DAY! Amazing.



The legend that is Rebecca Oaks found herself back in the woods teaching two-day course participants how to make willow creel baskets. It's not clear if it was her teaching or the sheer talent of her groups, but they spent A LOT of time in the tea tent and still managed to make a massive and very beautiful basket each.



Another recent BHMAT graduate Sam Robinson was teaching folk how to do his favourite thing – turn the biggest pieces of oak in the world into smaller, more useful bits using axes and other hand tools, and then constructing a much-needed boardwalk that led (very conveniently) to the tea tent.



As always, James Mitchell's furniture making students wowed everyone with their unique and incredibly high-quality creations.



Sam and Lorna kept us amused on the Monday evening with their end-of-apprenticeship presentations (something about "moving wood"...?), and Rosie handled the heckling quizzers well with the 'help' of her glamorous assistant Hywel on Wednesday. Apparently there was a big fire on Thursday night with music and merriment, although no-one can remember much about it, sorry.



Thank you to EVERYONE who came along and made it such a lovely week. Special thanks to Tony Morgan for doing loads, Lynn for keeping us so well fed ("where is my breeead?"), Rosie for keeping Lynn sane-ish, Mike and James for building the bread oven, Dave Noblett for lighting the tea tent fires every morning, all the Friday workshop tutors, and thank you too for everyone who stayed on to help tidy up in the rain on Friday! EXTRA SPECIAL ENORMOUS thank you to Kath Morgan for basically running the show. Congratulations also to Ian 'ten teas' Taylor for graduating from his Tea Tent apprenticeship. Ian proved that not only can he be left unattended with a tray full of flapjack, but that he also has the courage and determination to remain unflappable during the half-11 brew rush. Legend. Give him a hug next time you see him.

See you in the woods next year! – Grace Holland

## Moss and Heights Spring Wood – Update:

Over in the Rusland Valley nr. Bouth, work has been steady away at Moss and Heights Spring Woods. Owned by the Woodland Trust, but on a 20 yr lease to BHMAT, the woodland was once worked by Bill Hogarth himself. Last winter, BHMAT and the Coppice Association North West (CANW) were successful in obtaining a Woodland Improvement Grant for the site, so Lorna and Sam R were both asked if they wanted to take on a coupe each for cutting. Luckily, they both said yes and both have done a grand job, with Lorna getting sticks of all shapes and sizes out of hers, and Sam getting loads of firewood and some craft wood out of his. Both coupes have been deer-fenced so should be ready for cutting again in a few years' time! CANW runs monthly workdays in the woods, which can be a great opportunity to learn new coppicing and greenwood skills – like a mini Woodland Pioneers! If you'd like to come along, please contact CANW at [secretary.canw@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.canw@gmail.com) for more info.



# Apprentice Update:



My first year was mostly watching, learning and having a go at things, trying my best not to muck up, and doing my best to be as useful as I could be to Twiggy. This didn't always go to plan, a number of times Twiggy had to re-do jobs I had already done, but if you don't make mistakes you don't learn do ya?! Year two has passed just as quick, trying to set up my own business, attempting to sell things and make money, which is slowly getting there, and generally doing my best to help Twiggy as much as possible.



I'm Dave Noblett, and I am in my third year of the BHMAT apprenticeship.... Hang on where did the other two years go??? Well, time flies when you're having fun, and fun it has been! I've learnt a lot in two years from Twiggy, the legend that is, it was a steep learning curve but it's been worth it.



I've had a really amazing time working with Twiggy, she is a hard task master, but that's how I like to work, and even when I have messed up Twiggy has just told me were it has gone wrong and either helped me do it again, or done it while I watch. We have done a number of different jobs, from the day to day felling, to teaching, small jobs to huge jobs, working with volunteers and kids, and no two jobs are ever the same. I mean yeah some of the days are the same, like dressing out the felled coppice, but its all part of the job. And I love it!!!

Also it isn't just the job, it's the life style. I've changed a lot since I started, my ideas of the way things get done have changed, my time management has improved (ish), the way I am around people, loads of things. The way everyone in the coppice world is happy to help you with whatever it is you are doing is amazing. Whether it is something as simple as putting up a tarp in the rain with you, or a frantic job of felling and dressing out before the seasons change and you still have whole areas still to cut. Everyone I have met since I started has made me feel so welcome, and that as much as anything is why I love this job! It's like having a whole other family, they understand your little quirks, laugh with you (or at you) when you make mistakes, help you through rough times. Coppicing ain't just a job, it's a way of life!

**MORE APPRENTICE UPDATES ON PAGE 6**

# Visit to the Tree Station, Manchester with Lancashire Woodlands Project

– Rebecca Oaks.



A Thursday in October and I really should be working but I am booked on a jolly down to Manchester to the Tree Station. I don't often get to go on the trips that Paul Bullimore of the LWP occasionally organises but this one is a bit different. The Tree Station is where graduate apprentice Mike Carswell bases his Urban coppice business and this is too good an opportunity to miss. Urban it definitely is as we head through the centre of Manchester and out towards Chorlton. The yard is like Fort Knox with high metal walls and razor wire around the top. About twenty folk have assembled having car shared down the motorway, heading through the metal gates we are welcomed by Phil Benn the driving force behind this project. Phil gets us all kitted out in high vis jackets, takes our tea orders and gives us the low down on fire drill and emergency evacuation before launching into an explanation of the project. The Tree Station is a not-for-profit Social Enterprise constituted as a Society for the Benefit of the Community (BenCom) and is a type of co-operative enterprise. It is managed by an elected Board of Directors and owned by the members, who are community shareholders. Their website has more detail about their ethical policy

"The TreeStation is part of the growing movement towards living and working in an **environmentally and socially conscious** way. We believe that through the decisions we make we can take personal responsibility for shaping the world we live in and encourage others to make **positive changes**. We are genuinely driven by our values and don't do 'greenwash'."

Down on the ground there is a lot of timber the business involving contract work and arb work and the timber converted into furniture grade planking right through firewood and kindling down to high grade chip for biomass boilers and low grade chip for playgrounds and landscaping. Fascinating though it was to see the processed firewood stacked to season in one cubic meter cages and sheds full of kiln-dried planks, the main attraction for me was tucked away in rather a shady corner or coppice corner as it is known.

Here Mike has his own firewood stacks and stashes of chestnut for gates and furniture, peeled oak poles and a stack of reject hurdle rods. These are not wasted but stacked in more cages to season and destined to feed the woodfired oven of legendary Woodland Pioneers fame, which was parked up here. Mike has a large container for storing charcoal and tools in the dry and somewhere to retreat to when the weather is bad.

Mike talked about the work he has coppicing a number of urban sites where coppice was deliberately planted in the 90's and largely been left untouched since then. He outlined the pitfalls of working woodland that was planted on brownfield sites with high nutrient levels and uneven subsoils creating fast grown but often unstable woodlands that are ideally suited to being kept cut on fairly short rotations to minimize the danger of wind blow.

The group were all very interested in Mike's work and had to be prised away to see the rest of the site. The timber stacks seemed huge and out of proportion after the intimate scale of Mike's corner and constant noise from the firewood processor made Phil's commentary hard to hear. However, we could only admire the fact that he has created 7 full time jobs and all with fairly altruistic motives. His short term plan is to take a holiday and by the look of things this will be well deserved.

Thanks to Phil and Mike for showing us around and thanks to Paul for organising the trip.

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## ...apprentice updates continued.



Lorna Singleton has recently graduated from her apprenticeship and now embarks on a crafty life full of swilling, steaming and riving. Starting out under Rebecca Oaks' watchful eye, Lorna learnt the ropes spending time coppicing in Arnside and Silverdale. Rebecca's move to Cumbria Woodlands left Lorna in Sam Ansell's capable (and grubby) hands, which gave her space to explore other greenwood crafts. She started spending time with Owen Jones and quickly got quite excited about learning how to make oak swills - traditional baskets unique to Lakeland, where Lorna grew up - and her focus was found. As with most coppice workers, Lorna's business will include a range of products and demonstrations, but she plans to continue primarily as a basket weaver and has been experimenting with other styles and materials to make beautiful, high-quality woven things.



Sam has just graduated from his apprenticeship after spending 3 years as Ian Taylor's human logging-horse. He now knows many more ways to move wood from A to B than he ever dreamt possible. He spent the last year of his apprenticeship swinging axes at trees in coupes of his own and plans to continue racing against chainsaws as part of his business, as well as hand-hewing oak beams, teaching axe-felling skills and other woody bits and pieces. He's also a member of the newly founded Coppice Co-op, based in Arnside, which will keep him churning out firewood, charcoal and sticks for years to come.