

## **Moss and Height Spring Wood**

After the demise of Bill Hogarth in 1999 and the end of the foot and mouth disease restrictions, in 2002 a CANW visit to Moss and Height Spring Wood was arranged. It started at the Colton Church Hall with a talk by Heather Swift and Jackie Dunne of the Woodland Trust followed by a visit on foot along the old byway into the wood where they showed us the work which Bill had done. After their purchase of the wood in 1989 Bill had persuaded them that the overstood coppice needed some attention. The attached article from one of their magazines explains what Bill was doing for them in MAHS. They were very impressed with the re-coppicing which he had been doing for them mainly in Height Spring.

We were just coming to the end of our fifth year of grant work for the Forestry Commission in Sales Bank Wood when we had a very unexpected visit from Edward Mills who informed us he was just purchasing the majority of Sales Bank Wood from the owner with whom we were contracted. He was happy for us to complete the coupe on which we were working and take out the stack of firewood material which we had accumulated. Another look around for another wood to work. We had a quite good relationship with the Woodland Trust people who had shown us round Moss and Height Spring and after a visit to Sales Bank by Jackie she was very pleased to ask us to continue the same coppicing process in Moss and Height Spring as contractors to the Woodland Trust!

A short move of all of our tackle across the Colton valley and over the byway into the new wood was soon accomplished. An old pitstead just above a useful vehicle parking place on the byway on the edge of the area of the wood needing the next coppice work was very fortuitous. A charcoal kiln was installed on the pitstead and a bender (shelter) was built in a lovely alcove close to it. The condition of the BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic), access into the wood from Bouth, was not good but the local Lake District Planning Board warden acknowledged responsibility for it and supplied a load of gravel from the dredgings of a nearby stream for a new surface and replaced the 2 gates. The BOAT was also known locally as the 'coffin road' because there was no church in Bouth and coffins were taken over the road to Colton church and graveyard. It is believed that Colton is derived from 'coal town' when the area was full of the smoke from charcoal making clamps. The Woodland Trust put a small notice at the entrance to the wood about our work (copy attached).

Louise and I had happy memories of walking the many fascinating footpaths in Moss and Height Spring in the 1970s before it was owned by the Woodland Trust. The west side of Moss Wood at that time was a plantation of fir trees which the Woodland Trust felled and had the area replanted with native woodland trees which is why it was a fenced area when we moved into the wood. A small section of the fir plantation on a small knoll in the middle of this area (Noblet's knoll) was not felled at this time which is why it was still there many years later in BHMAT days.

The first part of our work was the felling and extraction by Corrie of the area of oak saplings a little way from our new base which Bill had not got to before his demise. These were our first oak bark peeling operation in our new location also producing a useful batch of peeled oak for rustic furniture making. The Woodland Trust had decided to put an article in their magazine about some new contractors coppicing in one of their woodlands. They sent a well known local countryside photographer to get some pictures of us to accompany the article. The photographer turned out to be David Jones who had, a few years previous, given our daughter Helen some photographs from a book of his of a charcoal earthburn being performed in a woodland in the Rusland valley. (The earthburn location eventually turned out to be the site of the Jack Allonby earthburn film and the filming of the visit of the Swallows, from the Swallows and Amazons, to the charcoal burners). Sadly, although he took many photos of Corrie extracting oak trees from Bill Hogarth's last coupe the photo which was used in the magazine was of Louise peeling bark (she was not pleased in spite of bark peeling being one of her favourite jobs). This photo may have been chosen to reflect the earlier article which showed Bill peeling bark which we were told was his favourite job.

Our first new coppice coupe was adjacent to the BOAT and next to a coupe which Bill had cut a few years previous which was fortunately where our charcoal kiln and the bender had been installed. Whilst we did not have a grazing area for Corrie when she was not being worked we had recently moved our storage area to a site close to our home in Ulverston where we had a storage barn with a fenced inside area for Corrie as well as a small paddock for her to graze. We had also changed our vehicles and then had a medium sized horsebox, with living accommodation, a 4-wheel drive Lada Niva and trailer for moving the kilns and suitable quantities of wood and charcoal. The horsebox travelled up the BOAT to our place of work quite well and was very useful for overnight stays.

Coppicing of the first coupe was carried out using our process from Sales Bank Wood of dead hedging around the cut stools with the brash from the cuttings. Useful regrowth was achieved and the resident deer were not too upset. The main product was barbecue charcoal but others were being developed all the time.

Away from MAHS many fascinating visits to perform demonstrations at shows continued with particular ones like the Royal Show at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire with the Country Landowners Association and Chopwell over in the North East. The icing on the cake was with the Country Landowners Association charcoaling and besom broom making at Blenheim Palace.

Charcoal making courses were still being run for Cumbria Woodlands with students from the likes of the YMCA (with their song) and Muncaster Castle.

One significant student was Mike Wallwork who a few years later was to buy the very kiln from us.

A visitor to see one of our charcoal making events was Jennie Dennett from BBC Radio Cumbria who gave a broadcast of the event on the radio programme. We treated her to a charcoal barbecued bacon sandwich while we waited for the kiln to light which she seemed to enjoy. All good publicity for locally made barbecue charcoal.

Another significant visitor was the Director General of the Woodland Trust who came with the owner of the commemorative bench which overlooked the small field at the north west corner of the wood. The bench's ownership related to his donation to the Woodland Trust which gave him the responsibility of controlling what operations were carried out in that corner of Moss Wood. We did not get to work in the part of the wood.

An unusual visitor was very interested in Corrie doing her great job of snigging in the wood. He took a photo of her and took it to the artist Marianne Birkby in Kendal who produced a beautiful painting for him which hangs above his fireplace. He gave me a photograph of it but I saw it in reality at an exhibition of her work at the Brewery Arts Centre. A not very good reproduction of it is attached.

Another interesting visit which was arranged by a friend of mine from Ulverston was a group of orienteers from Norway who were visiting our country.

Many visitors continued to us in MAHS, some organised and some random like Jim Miller who appeared one day in his old Land Rover. We had met Jim's father many years previous through the Rambler's Association and had learned that he, Jim's father, had been the landlord of the Ormsgill Hotel in Barrow in Furness close to where I lived in my early years. I had not known Jim at that time but it transpired that he attended school with my elder sister. He eventually retired from his final job as a merchant navy chief engineer. Having bought a house at Lowick Green Jim became Lord of the Manor of Lowick Common (or something like that)! His wife was a teacher at the Lowick school. He was a wonderful experience for me formed from our relationship as many of you will remember and his dog Tilley.

One additional job which we did for the Woodland Trust was the clearance of dangerous trees and branches from the network of footpaths in the wood. Jackie would survey the wood and give us a list of obstructions for which we were duly compensated after their safe removal.

Much more of this to tell you about but it will have to wait for another article.

Brian Crawley  
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