FACULTY OF ENGINEERING & SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH

Traditional coppice in South East England: the importance of workforce engagement for development

- The coppice industry in south east England
- Changing socio-economic context
- Implications for rural development
- The European perspective

  is the situation the same or different?

A dynamic industry

- The South East is the most wooded region in the UK
- High proportion of ancient woodland
- Species composition/management has varied over time
- Busy places - responding to market forces

- Combined with other agricultural activities

1920s survey of the underwood (or coppice) industries 2004

review of Rural Crafts in the Countryside

Focus on the hazel industry

Both concluded chestnut sector in terminal decline as they

failed to make significant contact with workers

Two coppice systems

Coppice with standards

Simple coppice


Varied rotations: 3 to 40+ years
Chestnut on a 12 year rotation for pales

Can the coppice industry be considered as a whole?

In England we have three distinct industries

1. firewood - historically most important

- usually mixed hardwoods

Now huge domestic log production

part time, seasonal, profitable

Limited success in bulk biomass

very low returns

only viable if by product or grant aided

2. Hazel (*Corylus avellana)*

harvested on 5-8 year rotation

sheep hurdles , woven fencing

no link to tradition

undergoing a revival

new entrants attend short training courses

work individually

most sell direct at Farmers markets

additional income from demonstrating at events

essentially a craft based activity

Hazel products

3. Chestnut (*Castanea sativa)*

harvested on 3-40+ year rotation
south east
traditional industry based on family groups
durable wood cleaves easily
new entrants learn from older workers
significant export market
individuals/small groups sell to 'merchants'
these negotiate sales and may buy wood
very few are employed
harvesting all year – additional workers in winter

industrial scale - the BIG MONEY

Chestnut products




There is no single ‘industry’

Government policy is to reverse the trend for woodlands to be unmanaged:

for biodiversity

to increase carbon neutral energy

for rural development

BUT **are coppice woodlands under-managed?**

if so what can be done to reverse this?

Are markets the answer?

> 20 years of research shows this is not the case

Attempts to create new markets have failed

WHY?

Value added markets are still under supplied

Demand for chestnut pales is still not being met

SO: maybe wider supply chain issues need to be considered

Lots of wood to cut + outlets

money good (for some)

What is missing?

What are the issues for the workers?

CHESTNUT

Affordable housing/yards/workshops

Insurance, VAT, tax, complex contracts

Landowner cooperation

Micro-credit

HAZEL

Neglected woods - need restoration

Grant dependant

Poor quality products

Deer numbers

QJF April 2011 105 (2) pages 131-134

Workers complained of the 'Amazon' effect

Non farming landowners and new rural objecting to felling

MANAGING WOODLAND AS COPPICE IS IMPORTANT FOR WILDLIFE

Coppicing may look drastic but is essential for much of our best-loved woodland wildlife which may be threatened with extinction if this is not continued.

In this traditional management system, trees are regularly cut to the ground and re-grow with several stems, providing the wood needed for a wide range of products.

Time between cuts varies depending on the intended use of the wood but needs to be regular so that there are always some open areas. Here warmth and light can reach the ground.

This encourages plant growth and insect activity - but this effect decreases yearly as trees re-grow until branches meet overhead, and light can no longer reach the woodland floor.

So coppice cycles, with some cut each year, must be maintained, to ensure continuity of open space.

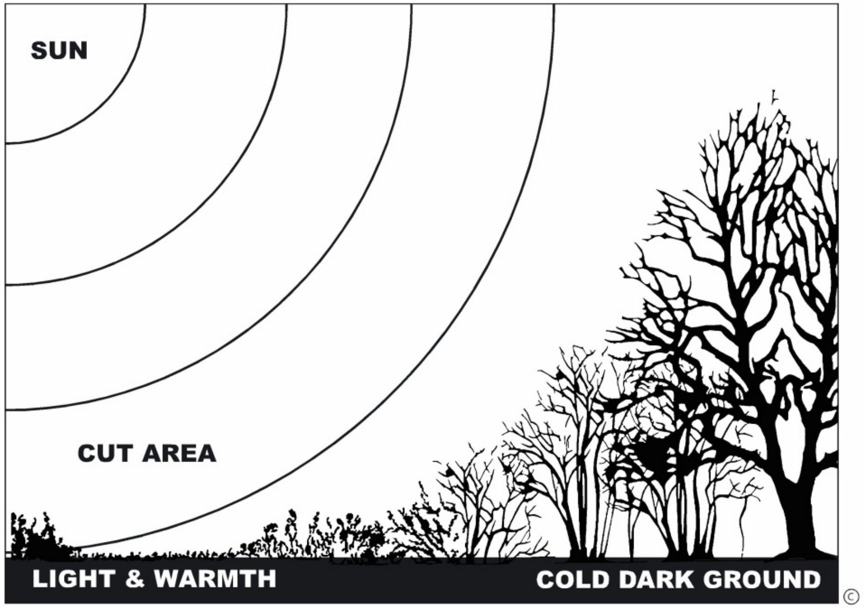


Diagram showing how coppicing affects ground temperature and light levels

Help wildlife by supporting the coppice industry buy local logs, charcoal and other wood products.

Local Stockist

3000 produced

Given out free

Forestry Commission England

The wildlife Trusts

WOODLAND TRUST

rspb giving nature a home

Butterfly Conservation

National Trust

Working with the Chestnut industry

Harvesting efficiency
- research led to training courses

Business skill checks

Training needs analysis
- menu of funded training options

Support for new entrants

Housing needs survey – key worker status adopted by one council

All aimed to increase workforce capacity

Funding: mostly EU, some via ERDP (CAP), some local/regional

Research/industry partnership
David Rossney of Esus Forestry & Training delivers

Kent Coppice Workers Co-operative newly set up

COST FP1301 EuroCoppice

"Innovative management and multifunctional utilization of traditional coppice forests - an answer to future ecological, economic and social challenges in the European forestry sector"

WP5: Coppice forests ownership and governance

The social aspects:

who owns the woodland ?

who does the work ?

how do these interact ?

Milestone 9: Conference about coppice forests ownership and governance – what can we learn for small scale forestry conference?

People and Forests Conference University of Greenwich

November 2014


Ear protection must be worn

Data gathering: flip charts

- Firewood, biofuels, low price chip
- Some +-ve about mechanised felling but more -ve
- Scale issues
- Restrictive legislation – including biodiversity
- Transport costs and distances between producer and consumer

Denmark reported no problems

No value added products mentioned

Conference structure

Session 1 **The Resource**

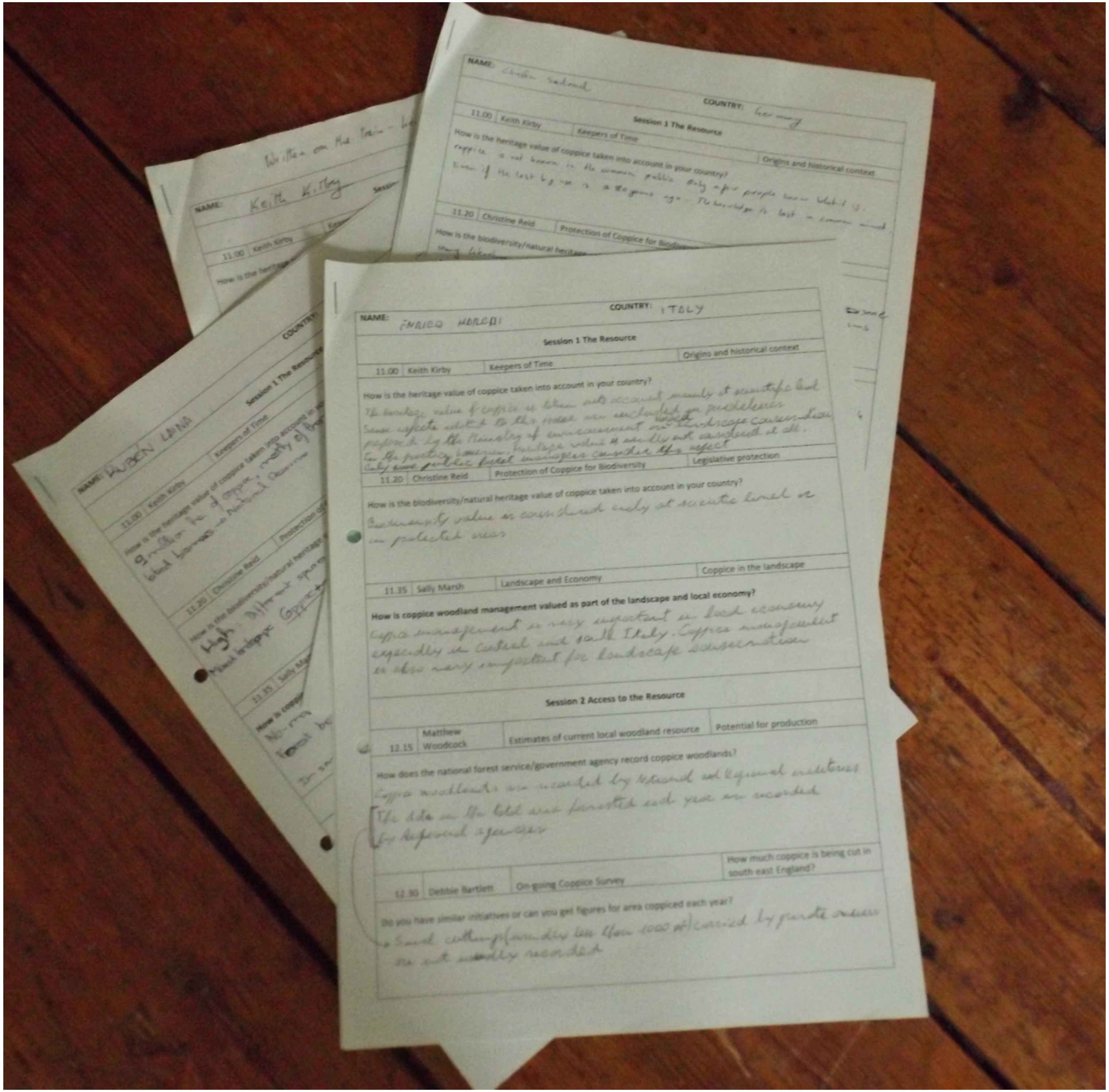
Session 2 **Access to the Resource**

Session 3 **The People Involved**

- **Landowners**
- **Managers**
- **Workers**

Delegates were asked to fill in the sheets commenting on the situation in their country

is it the same or different?


NAME: ENRICO MARCHI
COUNTRY: ITALY
Session 1 The Resource
11.00 Keith Kirby Keepers of Time Origins and historical context
How is the heritage value of coppice taken into account in your country?
11.20 Christine Reid Protection of Coppice for Biodiversity Legislative protection
How is the biodiversity/natural heritage value of coppice taken into account in your country?
11.35 Sally Marsh Landscape and Economy Coppice in the landscape
How is coppice woodland management valued as part of the landscape and local economy?
Session 2 Access to the Resource
12.15 Matthew Woodcock Estimates of current local woodland resource Potential for production
How does the national forest service/government agency record coppice woodlands?
12.30 Debbie Bartlett On-going Coppice Survey How much coppice is being cut in south east England?
Do you have similar initiatives or can you get figures for area coppiced each year?

Session 1 **The Resource**

KNOWN:

- The areas in state and private ownership
- Increase in private to public early C20th
- Now reversing in some places

UNKNOWN:

- Management status
- Area of coppice

Session 2 **Access to the Resource**

Clear systems for public forests

Leading to records of areas cut

Impact of different private ownership types

- new rural
- inheritance patterns splitting woods
- nature conservation/amenity

Session 3 **The People Involved**

Far fewer comments

Most focused on the innovative approach of inviting workers and land agents to take part in conferences

Leads to the question:
Is this an area where academics and state forestry authorities need more knowledge?

I began by describing how ‘research’ had demonstrated the chestnut industry hade virtually disappeared …….

Nothing is further from the truth!

a ‘modern’ coppice industry

Do we understand what this is?

EU and national policy drivers

Are mechanisation and biomass markets delivering?

What are we really wanting?

Biodiversity? Profit? Jobs?

The Coppice Industry

Markets

- Quality
- Old v New
- Advertising
- Salesmanship
- Web Brochures
- Partnerships

Resource

- Quality
- Extent
- Owner's attitude
- Grants
- Policies
- Deer

Coppice Workers

- Recruitment
- Training
- Housing
- Wages
- Health & Safety
- Representation

All these are vital components

Is the work force the neglected area?

Please do let me know what you think

It would be really interesting to explore these issues in different countries

Dr Debbie Bartlett
d.bartlett@gre.ac.uk

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Faculty of Engineering & Science
University of Greenwich

Thank you for listening