FACULTY OF ENGINEERING & SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH

WP5: The People in the Woods:
Coppice Ownership and Governance

Debbie Bartlett

COST Euro-coppice meeting Florence February 2014

COST EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Work Group 5 is currently small

We have only just had our first meeting

So this presentation is based on my work in England

Coppice is mostly found in the South and South East

The word ‘Forest’ in English does not necessarily mean a large wood ……..

Sometimes it can be land without trees

UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH

UK woodland area estimated at 2,982,000 hectares
= 13.0% of total land area
England woodland estimated as 1,294,000 hectares.
= 9.9 % of total land area; 61% is broadleaved

South East 322,682 hectares = 17% total land area

Coppice	1,624 ha	1%
Coppice with standards	103 ha	0%

Woodland is defined: *"as areas with a canopy cover of 20% or more (or the potential to achieve this) and over 50 metres in width*".

(National Forest Inventory 2010; 2013)

EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Royal hunting forests set up after the Norman Invasion (1066) open areas subject to ‘Forest Law’

The first records list woods only as ‘pannage’ (autumn forage for pigs)

Early documentation for woods in Church ownership

The right to cut ‘underwood’ sold annually C13th

Continues today

Woodland Ownership

Crown hunting forests

Private Estates – still remain important

C20th

- 1919 Forestry Commission
- increase in smaller scale ownership
- 1970s Nature Conservation and Local Authorities

Emergence of the Coppice ‘Problem’

Nature conservation lobby concern about wildlife

1980s

change of Forestry Commission policy from self sufficiency in timber to re-instating native trees

Forestry Commission surveys showed decline

Land owner’s incomes falling

Anecdotal reports of elderly workforce

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Research Questions

How much woodland was managed as coppice ?

Who were the workers?

What were the issues for them?

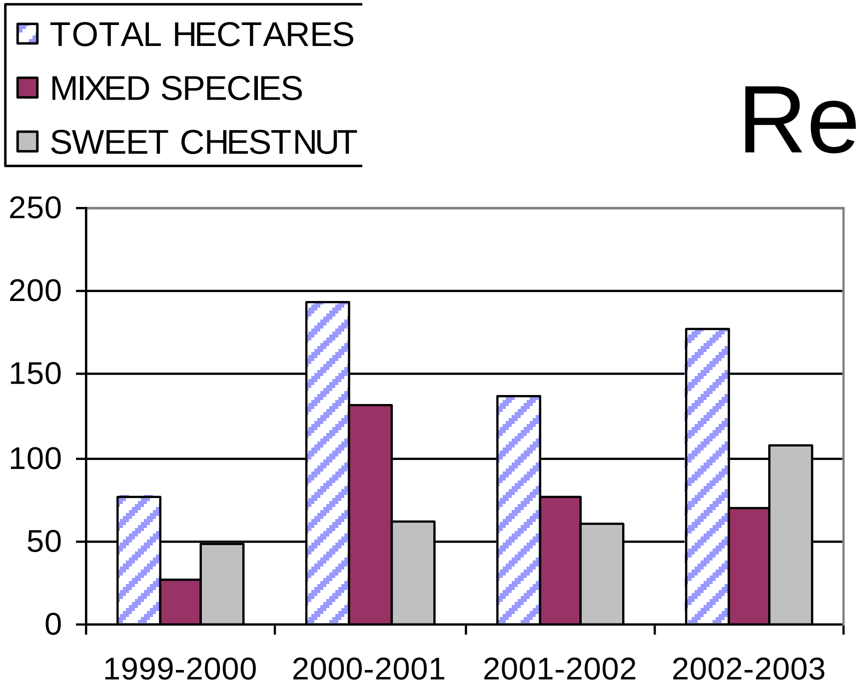
Why had the area coppiced fallen?

(Was there a coppice problem' ?

and how could it be solved?)

UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH

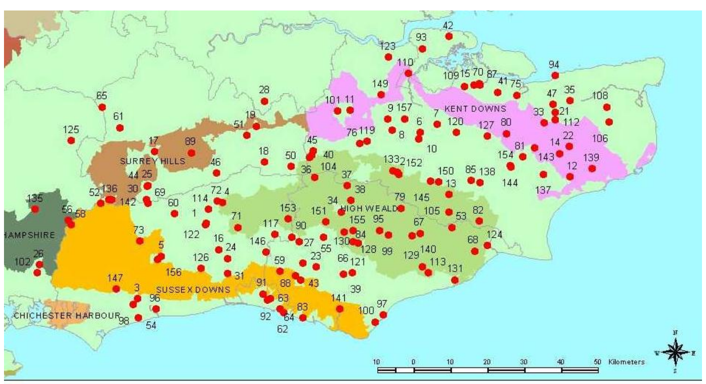
Results



Annual area cut:
If rotation is about 15 years a significant area is in management

No drop off in later surveys

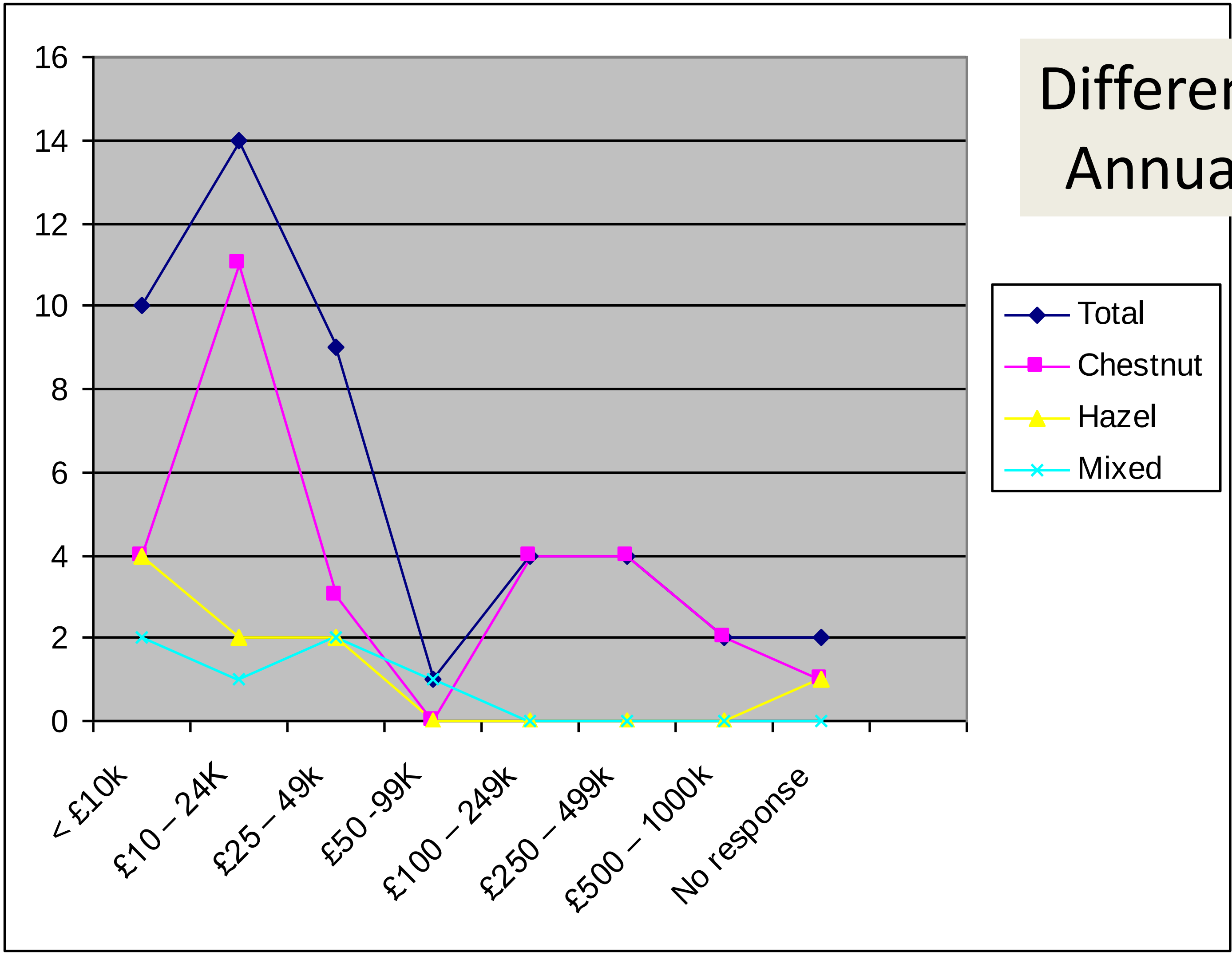
Increase in chestnut area

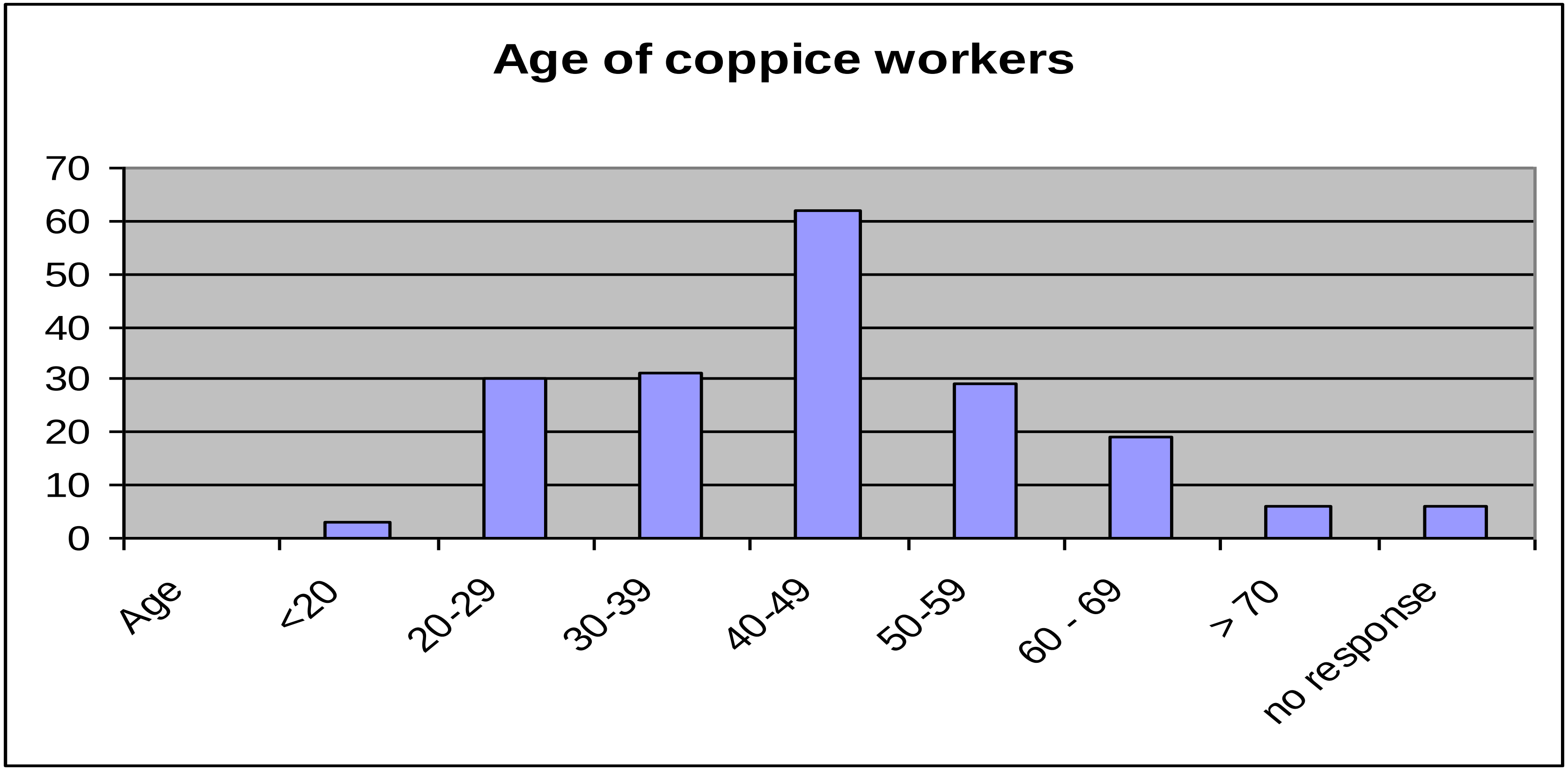


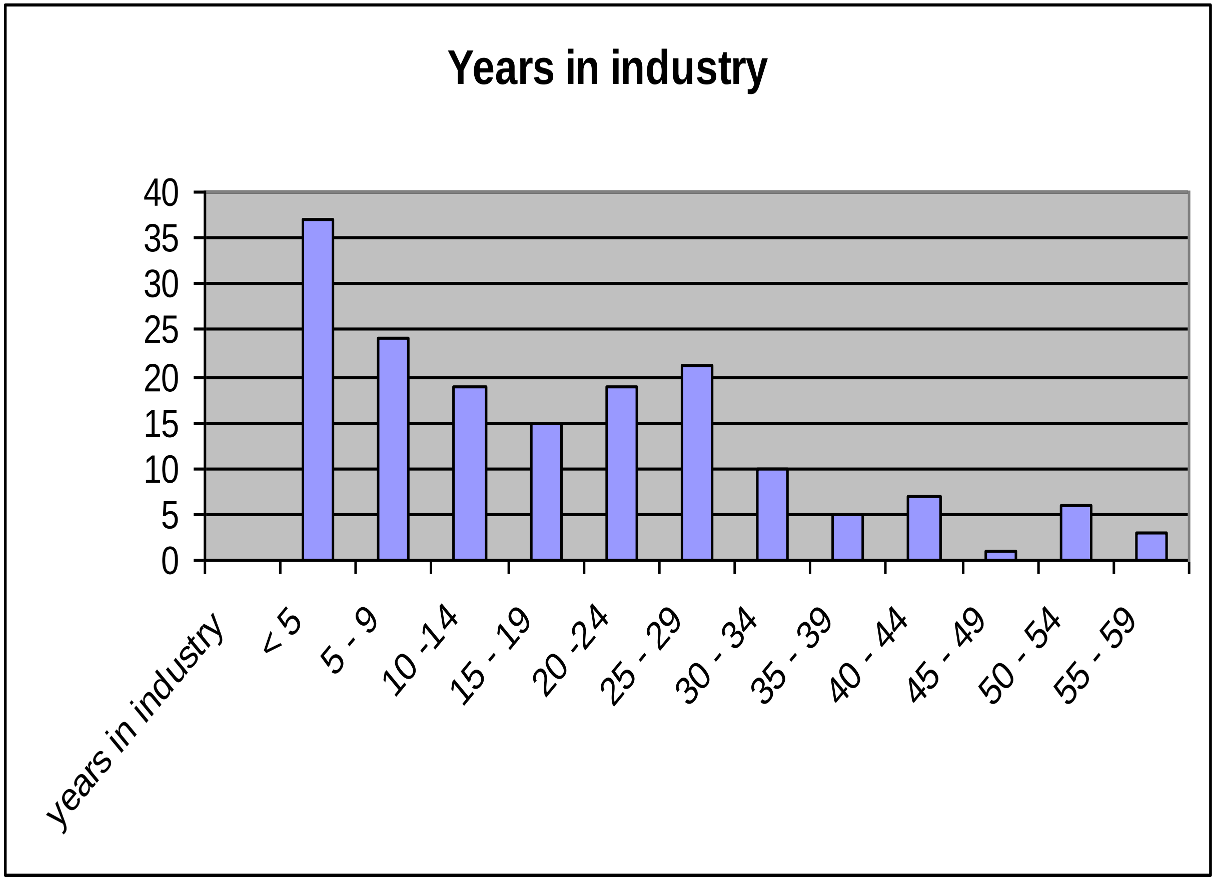
Survey repeated 2008 - 2011

EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

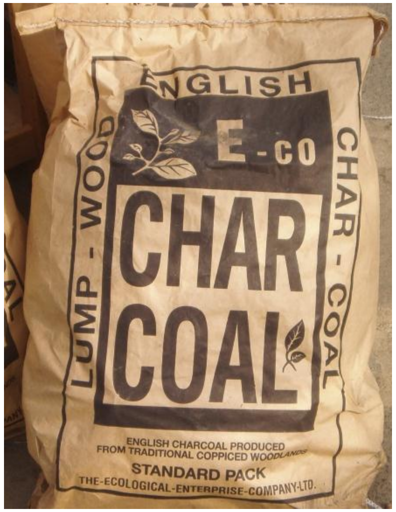
Different Industries Annual turnover




Age of coppice workers
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Age
<20
20-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60 - 69
> 70
no response



Over 200 responses from established workers (mushroom cutters excluded)



Products – most cleft chestnut

Principle Products – 2010 study

Firewood	126	Hurdles	21
Fencing	111	Rustic	20
Charcoal	37	Thatching	10
Hedge laying	29	Chip (wood)	10

Methods of selling products:

1. word of mouth
2. local shops/parish magazines

very few use the internet

Industry segmentation

Three distinct groups:

- Chestnut
- Hazel
- Mixed species

Each has:

- Specialists
- Generalists
- Seasonal and part time workers

So ……

A lot of woodland is managed as coppice

There are many workers, including new entrants

The area coppiced **has** fallen

BUT there are still viable value added markets

Difficulties: housing costs and yards security are particularly severe in the South East

Policy Instruments

To retain woodland*:*

Ancient woodland inventories – pre-1600

‘Keepers of Time’ - Ancient Woodland Strategy

Increase coppice management:

Woodland Initiatives > 100 but not commercial

Woodland Grants for butterflies

2007 Woodfuel Strategy for England:

Reduce emissions + increase woodland management

2012 Independent Panel on Forestry:

Re-valuation for multiple benefits

2013 Forestry Policy Statement:

Woods to be managed for the long-term benefit of people, the economy and the environment.

Current Woodland Ownership

Forestry Commission – 17% (11% South East)*

lack of resources, focus on softwood harvesting, recreation and wildlife

Private Estates - shooting, long term management

Nature Conservation NGOs/Local Authorities

restrict harvesting period; require insurance

*Source: National Forest Inventory 2013

Challenges .....

Increase in non – farming landowners:

Result of estate break up; farm amalgamation

Often from urban background

Feel trees should not be cut

Unaware of issues

Difficult to access for knowledge transfer

Woodlotting: multiple owners

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.

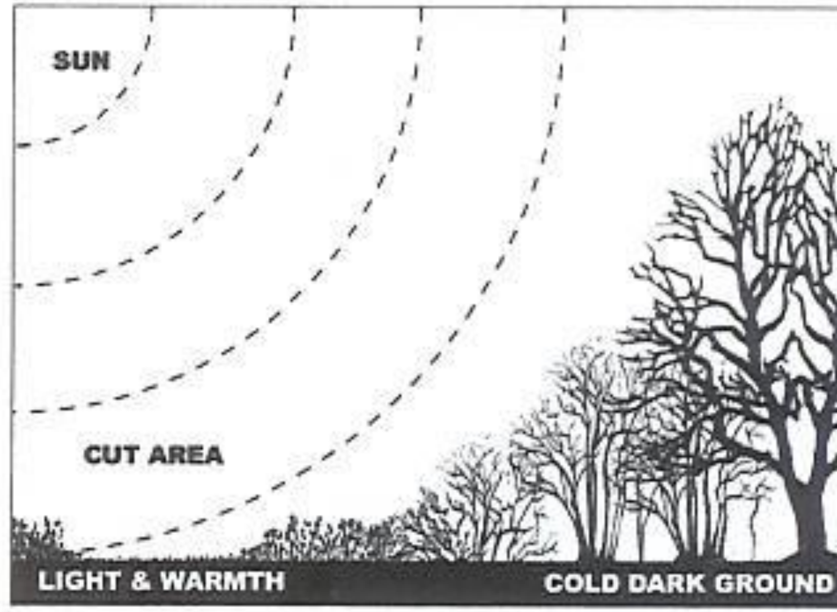


Diagram showing how coppicing affects ground temperature and light levels

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

Local Stockist

ENGLISH NATURE

Forestry Commission England

WOODLAND TRUST

RSPB

SEEDA South East England Development Agency

PRODUCED WITH SUPPORT FROM

Local Heritage *initiative*

Heritage Lottery Fund

Nationwide

The Countryside Agency

The Future

Perception: new markets required so biomass installations are funded to 'drive' coppicing

BUT: there is a VALUE ADDED chestnut industry,

Wood fuel – a bulk commodity - DOES NOT PAY

Suggested Strategy: include stakeholders in decision making and research to enable capacity building in the traditional workforce

Work Group 5

We will explore these issues for other countries

- Find the common factors
- Examples of good practice
- Identify gaps in knowledge
- Stimulate research and development
- Disseminate the results to inform future policy
  - from the woodland floor

Faculty of Engineering & Science
University of Greenwich

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

University of Greenwich is a charity and company limited by guarantee, registered in England (reg. no. 986729).
Registered office: Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, Greenwich, London SE10 9LS