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2010 STUDY

‘Thinning: principles and practice’

There are over a million hectares of woodland in England in which the species composition and initial planting density was fixed when they were regenerated. Much is now expected of these woodlands in terms of the economic, environmental and social objectives of current forestry policy. How can forest managers respond to these new challenges in existing woodlands? The answer, which is obvious to a silviculturist, is by influencing the development of woodlands through thinning. Variations in the type, intensity and cycle of thinning can dramatically alter the structure of woodlands: this is the focus of our study in 2010. Each of our four visits will have a theme and these are described in the programme below. Invited speakers and practical exercises have been incorporated into the programme to add interest and value to each of the visits.

We will aim to provide information notes and general reading to members prior to each of the meetings. The information will be available in PDF or by post from the Secretary.

Meeting 1. Tuesday 20th April - Stowell Park, Cirencester. Joint meeting with ICF

Theme: Thinning of ash

The focus of this day will be to study the thinning of hardwoods, particularly ash, in the context of a traditional mixed private estate in the South of England. Are standardised thinning prescriptions and management tables relevant in this context and if not what factors define thinning practice? How does rate of growth affect the physical and mechanical properties of ring porous hardwood species?

Access to Stowell Park is by kind Permission of Lord and Lady Vestey.

Meeting 2. Wednesday 16th June - Stourhead (Western) Estate and Clifton Wood, near Yeovil. Joint meeting with ICF

Theme: Thinning to achieve transformation and restoration

At Stourhead (Western) Estate we will visit a larch dominated stand situated on the Upper Greensand plateau (Berridge) and a mixed conifer stand known as Castle Wood. Both stands have been thinned to take account of species, site and the owners' objectives. Also, we will visit one of the permanent plots within the forest in which tree measurements and associated software are linked to provide a framework for in-forest training in marking and selection. This training aid for improving marking skills in stands undergoing transformation is known as the *Marteloscope*.

At Clifton Wood, transformation to a permanently irregular structure is being combined with restoration to native species. Clifton Wood is a 80 ha Ancient Woodland Site, largely converted to Norway spruce plantation in the late 1960s. There are significant semi-natural elements within the coniferised blocks, including a significant population of small-leaved lime.

An active thinning programme since the purchase by the current owner in 2000 is beginning to achieve structural diversity and regeneration of native species is appearing.

Meeting 3. Thursday 15th July - Micheldever

Theme: Thinning research

Invited guest: Dr. Ralph Harmer, Forest Research

Research experiments offer an excellent resource for the study of thinning as they usually contain plots of the same species on a uniform site that have been thinned in different ways. At Micheldever forests we will examine oak sample plots managed at four thinning intensities, a 'free growth' of oak experiment and early thinning of oak with understorey planting of western hemlock. There will also be an opportunity to look at the latest research into PAWS restoration including the effects of different levels of canopy removal. Visits may also include a permanent sycamore sample plot in stored coppice (Black Wood) and poor responses to late thinning (Northdown Plantation).

Meeting 4. Thursday 21st October – Bedwyn and Chisbury Woods, Marlborough followed by AGM

Theme: Thinning stands with pests and diseases/ Continuous cover

Invited guest: Dr. Anna Brown, Forest Research.

At Bedwyn and Chisbury Woods the day will focus on responding to pests and disease through thinning treatments. Noke Wood is a Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site. The current species are primarily conifers. *Dendroctonus micans* is a problem and Red Blight Needle Blight has severely affected all stands of young Corsican pine. The morning will consider how thinning practice might mitigate the impacts of these diseases and what silvicultural options are open to the woodland manager.

In the afternoon we will view stands of Douglas-fir and larch that are in the process of being transformed from plantations into mixed age class structures.

We will only send full details of meetings to paid up members. If you wish to receive these or attend meetings this year please send your £15 membership to Ben Lennon at the address above as soon as possible. Cheques made payable to 'Wessex Silvicultural Group'. Thank you.

Please find enclosed my £15 Wessex Silvicultural Group Membership for 2010

Name.....

Please send future meeting notes by email to

I do not have email. Please post meeting notes to me at the address below:
