Issue 1 February/March 2026

world of woodlands

In association with:

woodways woodlandinsurance

Cedarwood TREE CONSULTANTS

MEDIA & YOU



INSIDE:

Forest Schools
The Future for Learning

Kevin Martin's View From Kew – interview on page 6

Insurance reassurance



Nigel West, Managing Director of Fiveways Insurance Group - including Woodways Woodland Insurance

Did you know that 73% of the UK's woodland resource is privately owned by individuals, family trusts, charity trusts or organisations?

There are various uses for these woodlands, but they all benefit from one thing - woodland insurance. So, why choose Woodways?

Woodways Woodland Insurance was set up in 2024 to take on a scheme for the insurance of private woodlands that had been running for the past 24 years under the previous ownership of RAP Ltd.

We consulted with our insurance providers and settled with Geo Underwriting who have long and extensive knowledge and experience in Farming and Countryside insurances and together we created our Woodways Insurance scheme for owners of woodlands all around the UK.

Woodways Woodland Insurance aims to protect woodland owners against claims for negligence leading to damage or injury that may occur to third parties, or their property within or bordering a woodland.

We have the knowledge and expertise available to us to provide you with all the covers that you might require. The scheme caters for all woodlands in the UK, up to 150 hectares in size, for anyone who owns a woodland for their own private enjoyment.

Woodways Woodland Insurance is part of Fiveways Insurance Consultants Ltd, a Shropshire based family run insurance brokers that has been providing professional insurance advice since 1967.

"Woodways Woodland Insurance is a new division within Fiveways, dedicated to protecting Woodland Owners," says Nigel West, Managing Director of Fiveways Insurance Group, which has offices in Shropshire and Staffordshire.

"With our own scheme designed with you at the heart of it, Woodways provides the specialist advice on the insurances required as woodland owners.

"As part of Fiveways Insurance Group, a full service broker, we are able to offer a full range of other insurances for you as an individual (your cars, your home and your travel insurances) and for you if you own and run a business (your business liability, property, commercial motor and fleet insurances)."



What's your favourite woodland walk? Nigel West of Fiveways Insurance Group has a great rural escape right on his doorstep

Heritage and more





The country park has some wonderful examples of Industrial Heritage - courtesy of the Friends of Granville



An aerial view of the setting, courtesy of Google Earth

Granville Country Park is a large local nature reserve and heritage site in Donnington, Telford.

Nigel West, Managing Director of Fiveways Insurance Group - which has offices in Newport, Shropshire and the county town of Stafford in neighbouring Staffordshire - loves to visit the country park for many reasons.

"It's very handy for me, as I live not far at all from Granville," says Nigel.

"That said, it is worth coming from some distance too.

"Visitors can explore remains of the industrial revolution, including the Lodge Furnaces which date back to the 1820s, plus there is an old winding house, and the Donnington Wood tub boat canal. Fine industrial heritage.

" I love to view the north Shropshire Plain and The Wrekin from what is known as the "Top of the World" bench, situated on a former pit mound.

"The site includes Muxton Marsh, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and varied habitats like woodlands, flower-rich grasslands, and pools.

"For me, a network of footpaths, including the Granville Heritage Trail, is great. It is part of the 50-mile Telford T50 trail. It is highly popular for dog walking and geocaching."

Visitor Information

Address: Granville Road, Donnington, Telford TF2 7QG.

Opening Times: The park itself is accessible at all times, though the main car park gate typically operates from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Facilities

Parking: Free parking is available in a large lot off Granville Road, with additional roadside parking near the Canal Basin.

Toilets: There are no toilet facilities within the park; the nearest are located at the nearby Asda supermarket.

Access: Trails are generally easy to walk, though some paths can become muddy, and some optional routes include steep inclines.

- **The park is managed by Telford & Wrekin Council in partnership with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Granville.**

Warmer days are on the way – seasons are changing



Keep an eye out for nesting birds in the months ahead

As winter transitions to spring, days get longer and warm afternoons can stir nature from her slumber. There can be weeks when little life is evident, and days when much happens. It is a fascinating time to observe, note and record.

You could keep a diary of events this spring, recording highest and lowest temperatures, which trees and shrubs come into bud first, and listen for the arrival of the dawn chorus.

Note which trees come into leaf first. Is this uniform across the species? Does the ground cover vary among woodlands and the different species present? Can you see nesting birds? When are they?

Following the seasons is an important part of the National Curriculum. It is also a science that can fluctuate on a weekly and monthly basis and from year to year. It can be fascinating comparing notes of nature's activities from one year to the next. Each year can tell a different story.

It's a breath of fresh air

As owners of woodlands, and those who enjoy walking in them and exploring the treasures within, time spent in these environments is good for health, in numerous ways.

Trees help to calm us, connect us with nature, and to reduce levels of stress. Children can find their ability to learn is enhanced by spending time walking in woodland. The time spent in these environments isn't just good for health; with guidance, children, and their teachers, can use the resources in woodlands to learn, and to actively progress within the National Curriculum.

Trees can inspire through observations, creation of artwork, story telling and connecting with nature. An initiative from the education social enterprise Oscar's Tree Academy CIC is working to help children, parents, teachers and others involved in education to get more from the experience.

Children can engage through identifying some of the trees commonly found in the UK, colouring in characters based on these trees, and taking part in activities in their local woodland.

There are also resources to help teachers and woodland owners to learn more about the environment within our woodlands.

There is opportunity for woodland owners to both host and run Forest Schools, where the learning experience can be enhanced to enable active learning. For those seeking to run Forest Schools, but without access to their own site, there is the potential to connect with woodland owners.

The resources of Oscar's Tree Academy can then be purchased by the woodland owner or donated to those running a Forest School.

Oscar's Tree Academy CIC is an educational resource for children from pre-school to Keystage 2. Discover more by visiting the website: **www.oscarstreeacademy.org.uk**



Mark Chester, owner of Oscar's Tree Academy CIC, during a forest school session



"Who wants to use the tapping hammer?"



Counting the circles in a tree cross-section

Oak – fascinating facts

After the crushing defeat of his Royalist forces by Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651, the 21-year-old King Charles II became the most wanted man in England.

Three days later, Charles sought refuge at Boscobel House in Shropshire. To evade nearby Parliamentarian patrols, he and a loyal officer, Major William Careless, spent the entire day hidden in a "pollarded" oak tree in the surrounding woods.

While concealed in the thick branches, Charles later recounted to Samuel Pepys that he watched Roundhead soldiers searching the ground directly beneath him.

To blend in, Charles was dressed as a common countryman in "green breeches" and a "coarse hemp shirt," with his long royal hair cropped short and his face darkened with soot.

The original tree was eventually destroyed by souvenir hunters in the 18th century, but a descendant known as the "Son of Royal Oak" stands on the site today. This event inspired the naming of hundreds of "Royal Oak" pubs across Britain.



Archie Miles, author of The British Oak, pictured at The Royal Oak, Shropshire

After six weeks on the run and nine years in exile, Charles was restored to the throne on 29 May 1660. This date became Oak Apple Day, a public holiday where people wore oak leaves to celebrate his survival.

Did you know?

- Oak wood is highly regarded for its strength, durability, and resistance to decay, making it a premier choice in both the furniture and construction industries. Its high density, often ranging between 600–900 kg/m³, and high tannin content make it naturally resistant to insects and fungi.

- Oak trees are renowned for their longevity, with many specimens in Windsor Great Park exceeding 500 years and some reaching over 1,000 years, such as King Offa's Oak. These ancient trees thrive in open, parkland environments.

- Oak trees generally thrive in heavy, damp clay soils, preferring moist but well-drained conditions rather than permanently waterlogged ground. While some species like Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor) can handle temporary flooding, most oaks are susceptible to root rot and reduced oxygen intake in saturated, compacted clay.

For all your graphic design needs and short-run publishing

MEDIA & YOU



Shropshire-born, Paul Naylor specialises in the creation of newsletters, magazines and books, Paul is equally at home putting together all manner of business essentials, including:

- Product Catalogues
- Media Packs
- Posters
- Advertisements
- Brand Design/Redesign
- Roller Banners
- Rate Cards
- Business Cards
- Information Cards
- Promotional Materials

Email: paul@mediaandyou.co.uk Call: 07914 304 504 Visit: www.mediaandyou.co.uk



Keeper of the collection

Kevin Martin has become used to being a pioneer at Kew Gardens. The youngest manager and then keeper of the collection in the gardens' history is now charged with securing the future of the internationally important plant collection for future generations. Here, he shares thoughts on his journey with MARK CHESTER...

When I joined RBG, Kew, nearly 15 years ago, I had little idea of the journey ahead. Having spent ten years as a climber, my role was to lead the team undertaking maintenance work of pruning and felling.

Soon, I was spending time surveying some of the more than 12,000 trees in the collection. I was then promoted to Tree Manager, focusing on ensuring the safety of the trees and preparing programmes of work for coming years.

With a collection of trees as large and as diverse as at Kew, it is inevitable that some trees will die each year. There is a great propagation unit at Kew, which can provide a replacement tree for most of those within the collection. There is a full, detailed history for most of the trees, including where and when the original specimen was found, and when it was brought to Kew.

When a tree died, the approach was to plant the replacement in the same spot. I realised that some of the replacement trees were dying sooner than expected. It then became clear that some of the original trees had been collected from climates very different to the one at Kew. Kew has a free-draining, sandy soil and about 1200mm of rain each year.

The drought year of 2020 was notable for the extended period without rain, and the extreme dry heat

Some of the trees, especially those from parts of China and Japan were originally growing in much wetter settings. One tree had been taken from the side of a river, in a valley of lush growth with 1800mm of rain and wet summers. It wasn't surprising that the species was finding conditions at Kew quite difficult.

I saw little purpose in replacing those trees with new trees of the same species in the same location. I began to explore what species would suit the current climate of Kew.

The drought year of 2020 was notable for the extended period without rain, and the extreme dry heat. I was already seeing themes within the collection, as even some native species were struggling to cope with the changing conditions. The Common beech (Fagus sylvatica) is becoming increasingly rare in the south east of England. The Oriental beech (Fagus sylvatica 'Purpure') seems much better suited.

By the end of that summer, 400 trees within the collection had died due to drought stress. This is serious for the collection. I was given a new task of identifying the trees for Kew to 'future-proof' the collection. My job also changed, as I became the Keeper of the Tree Collection.



Kew Palace is the smallest royal palace in the world and family home to George III during much of his reign



This tree was suffering from compaction stress until Kevin provided a much-needed helping of mulch and it is now thriving



Formal gardens viewed from the rear of Kew Palace. Just one of the many attractions on-site

To plan for the future, I have needed to identify two factors: what the climate at Kew could be in the coming decades, and which trees would be best equipped to thrive in this. Both of these factors have involved research. I have developed a passion for research and studies at RBG, Kew. I took a BSc in Arboriculture, and explored drought resilience in species of Lime.

I was surprised to find that there was little research on climate modelling, with models being quite basic

Some are much better equipped for a hot, dry climate, than others, and those are the one for the future at Kew. I now wanted to explore how the climate at Kew could change.

I was surprised to find that there was little research on climate modelling, with models being quite basic. I like to find solutions to problems, and so decided to develop a framework for climate modelling. I completed this in 2025 which explores 26 elements – previous models focused on just two. I have used it at Kew, and in a number of other places, including across London and at sites as far as the US. What is interesting is that the climate at Kew already has more in common with Pakistan and Afghanistan than with most of the UK, in terms of temperature range and annual rain fall.

The team at Kew have already travelled to these countries to explore the trees found there, and to bring back some samples to see if they thrive at Kew. We will be exploring that over the next few years.

This work will be useful in informing the selection of species for the future.

- *Who would you like us to speak to in future issues of World of Woodlands? Send email to* ***mark.chester@treeconsultants.org.uk*** *with your suggestions*



Kevin Martin, Keeper of the collection at Kew

Do you know your woodland?



Taking a walk through your woodland for the first time can excite and raise questions. A Woodland Management Plan is recommended to help inform future ideas for the land.

Some members of Woodways Woodland Insurance scheme may have owned their woodland for generations, and be familiar with the boundaries, features and quirks. For others, woodland is a new venture – a place to visit and explore during leisure time, and even a place of mystery.

Woodlands can differ widely depending on factors such as the soil, the surrounding landscape and recent history. Some may have existed for generations, others to be the result of recent planting.

A survey and Woodland Management Plan can help to inform future uses of your woodland. It may identify features such as areas suitable for open spaces, for family activities, and zones of higher usage requiring more careful consideration of safety.

The plan can also guide future use of your woodland, habitats that may require careful management, and even the potential to create.

A Woodland Management Plan is a working document to inform the future. It can become a great asset to help you enjoy your woodland and gain from the experience.

Cedarwood
TREE CONSULTANTS

- Tree Safety Assessments
- Trees & Planning
- Help with Planning Appeals
- Expert Witness Support
- TPO Submissions and Advice
- Planting Schemes Designed
- Amenity Tree Valuations
- Help with Boundary Disputes

Telephone
01981 570426

E-mail
enquiries@treeconsultants.org.uk



www.treeconsultants.org.uk