

## COPPICE CRAFTS IN THE CHURCHYARD

### WHAT ARE COPPICE CRAFTS

Coppice crafts are the traditional skills used to convert all sorts of timber from woodlands into usable products for home, garden or farm. Most of the timber arose from coppicing. Coppicing is a programme of woodland management, in which areas of broad-leaved trees are cut in rotation, and the resulting timber harvested and used. The trees will then re-sprout producing a number of "poles" on each "stool", to be re-cut when the tree reaches the size needed. On a commercial basis large areas of woodlands were cut for charcoal, firewood, hop poles or bark for tannin. Household use included firewood, fences and hurdles, furniture, tools and tool handles, thatching and baskets.

This method of woodland management benefitted different species of wildlife such as the hazel dormouse and pearl bordered fritillary butterfly, many of which are now suffering declining populations due to a lack of active woodland management. There is a growing interest in coppice management and crafts, with novel uses for the produce, and this information sheet provides some ideas which can be used in churchyards.

### WHY USE COPPICE PRODUCTS IN A CHURCHYARD?

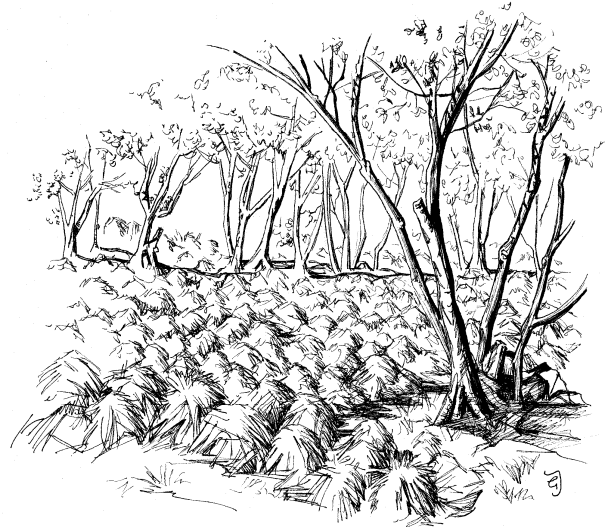
- Many churchyards contain trees and shrubs which need to be managed. It is more sustainable to use the trunks and branches from management within the churchyard, or to sell to raise funds, than to have a big bonfire.
- Natural materials blend well within a churchyard setting, and in the eventual rotting process provide homes for a variety of lichens, fungi, mosses and insects.
- Learning how to make things is a very enjoyable experience and can involve all members of the community.

### HOW TO USE YOUR TIMBER

- **LARGE TIMBER AND TREE TRUNKS:** Split, sliced or supported to create simple benches. Sold for firewood.
- **SMALLER TRUNKS OR SPLIT LARGE TRUNKS:** benches, gate hurdles and fences, compost bins, hay rakes, mallets.
- **HAZEL OR WILLOW WANDS:** woven to make wattle hurdles, plant supports, or trellises to hide fuel tanks. If there are large amounts then stakes and binders for hedgelaying are often in short supply locally and could be sold.
- **TWIGS AND THIN BRANCHES:** besoms, wreaths for graves or Christmas decorations, flower arrangements, baskets. If there are too many twigs, a chipper could convert them to wood chippings, to use as mulch on flower beds, to surface earth paths or to sell.

### WHAT KIND OF TREE CAN BE USED?

All native broad-leaved trees will coppice (sprout again after cutting), but the rate of re-growth varies with the species. Ash, alder and sweet chestnut grow straight and will split well. Hazel and willow are pliable to bend into hurdles.



## WHAT TO MAKE

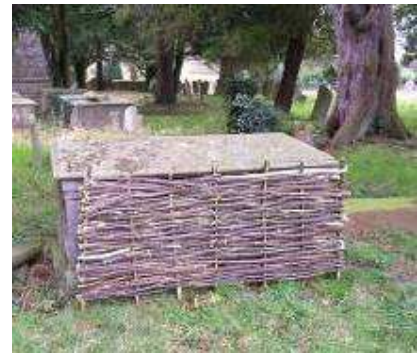


*Logs from felled conifer make simple seats in the corner of Clifford Churchyard*



*Simple bench from split logs, with wooden mallet on top*

*Woven hazel hurdle prevents access into collapsed chest tomb*



*Hay rakes made on course, the natural follow-on from scything*



*Mini hurdles mark out edge of wildflower area*

*Trimnings from holly, ivy and hazel can be used to make natural Christmas*



## REFERENCES

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