

## Trees beyond the Wood

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*It is fair to say that the recent “Trees Beyond the Wood: an exploration of concepts of woods, forests and trees” conference held in Sheffield, September 2012, was a great success. The meeting was attended by 150 delegates from 20 countries including Italy, Turkey, Spain, Hungary, Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Malaysia and Nigeria. The 3-day event was sponsored by IUFRO’s Forest Policy & Economics - Social & Economic History group convened by Ian Rotherham and Tomasz Samojlik. Keynote speakers included, Mauro Agnoletti, George Peterken, Peter Szabo, Charles Watkins, Paul Warde, Della Hooke and Ted Green.*

The conference, organized and chaired by Ian Rotherham, Mauro Agnoletti, and Tomasz Samojlik, brought together, ecologists, foresters, woodland managers, tree experts and enthusiasts, and historians to consider how trees and their landscapes were managed in the past and to discuss how to guide present and future management. It marked twenty years since the first Sheffield ‘woodland’ conference, and addressed key issues and paradigms from the on-going debates.

In particular, the conference considered the historic context and implications of medieval ‘woods’ in relation to other wooded landscapes, and the status and importance of ancient or veteran ‘worked’ and culturally modified trees (now mostly ‘retired’) in countryside outside woods and forests. Importantly though, the aim was to take the understanding developed in a global context over the last 20 years and to apply it to guide practitioner applications in the field.

Along with the need to understand past management to inform better, present-day understanding, there is the idea of extending contemporary wood pasture landscapes ‘beyond the wood’ as new biodiverse and sustainable ecosystems driven by grazing herbivores – exciting stuff indeed. Alongside the main speaker sessions was a poster symposium which brought together such diverse topics as the ‘Genetic diversity in ancient lime trees’, ‘A method for monitoring bat movements along linear features’, ‘Saproxylic beetles and veteran oak trees’, ‘Forest resource use and management in Nigeria’, ‘Forest, folklore and culture in Finland’ and ‘Voluntary group work – engaging local volunteers in managing urban fringe woodlands’.

Abstracts and proceedings from the conference are available and a post-conference book is in development. See the UKECONET website: <http://www.ukeconet.co.uk> for more details and updates. There is a follow-up event in May 2013 to address the fascinating issues of the discovery of ‘lost



*Photo by Ian Rotherham:  
Ancient multi-stem high coppice on old boundary at  
Chatsworth part (field visit)*



*Photo from field visit by Christine Handley*

woods’ – ‘shadows’ or ‘ghosts’ in the landscape and of the identification and recognition of smaller veteran trees and the almost undateable but bizarre ‘medusoid trees’ which have only recently been recognized. The pre-conference proceedings are available and the first volume of ‘Working and Walking in the Footsteps of Ghosts’, based on the landmark 2003 conference was launched. The British Ecological Society and IUFRO were thanked for their support for the event.