

Launch of the National Coppice Federation

(I am most grateful to Ian Wallace, NCFed Director representing Sussex and Surrey, for allowing me to plagiarize his report written for the latest newsletter of the Sussex and Surrey Coppice Group).

The National Coppice Federation was launched on 16th October, 2013, in Westminster, not far from the Houses of Parliament.

Richard Thomason from the Smallwoods Association and Federation Secretary collected a number of coppice related items from individuals in the weeks preceding the Launch. These formed the basis for a suitably impressive display to use as backdrop for talks to the 100 or so audience of coppice workers and invited guests. Guests included a few MPs, representatives from the Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts and various other relevant organisations as well as individuals.

Rebecca Oaks, NCF Chairman from Coppice Association Northwest opened the proceedings she was followed by:

Julian Evans from the Institute of Chartered Foresters who gave an enthusiastically academic talk on 5000 years of coppicing;

Ed Suttie from "Grown in Britain" spoke about this government-backed scheme which had been launched the day before (the NCFed being represented by Rebecca Oaks, we foresee useful links with this organisation over the next few years) - www.growninbritain.org;

Pooran Desai from Bio-Regional gave an informative talk on the pitfalls of dealing with large corporations, quoting from his own experience with B+Q and Sainsbury's, and more than hinted that the best direction for sales is via small local independents, rather than targeting the large supermarket chains. www.bioregional.co.uk;

Dr. Martin Warren from Butterfly Conservation detailed the conservation benefits of coppicing, not just for butterflies but for many other plants and animals. As most coppice workers are aware, many species are dependent upon gaps being created in the canopy to let light in.

Rebecca Oaks rounded off with a keynote speech, saying that we're going to use our national voice for best effect.

The speeches were followed by an informal session of mingling so that views could be shared and the uninitiated introduced to some of the products produced from coppicing.

The attached photo shows the Directors of the National Coppice Federation. It had been intended that we would be joined by Sir George Young MP but he was unavoidably detained.

As you will see it was a wet day but I can report that the event itself represented a positive step forward in the development of the National Coppice Federation and the coppice industry in general.

