

Chestnut Coppice

The area you are in is known as Tankersford Copse and is planted with sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). Pierrepont Farm was generously donated to The Countryside Restoration Trust (CRT) by Jo Baker in 2006 and volunteers from the farm's conservation group began to coppice the trees here (and some hazels a little to the west) in 2009. Judging from the tree-rings, the trees were last coppiced about 18 years previously.

Coppicing is an ancient method of managing woodland, with examples of its use in Britain found in trackways (wooden paths) dating back nearly 6,000 years. It involves trimming a tree back to a stump ("stool"), from which new shoots will emerge. If the stool is of an established tree, the new shoots will benefit from the mature root system. Competing with each other for light, the shoots will grow up straight and without forks. They will also grow more quickly than uncoppiced trees, reaching a given diameter in half the time, or even less. Depending on the species of tree and the intended end use of the wood, coppicing will occur in a cycle of between five and 20 years. Trees that are coppiced live longer than those not coppiced.

Chestnut is ideal for making fence posts that last around 20 years in the ground, so that their replacements obligingly come along just as the posts are due for renewal. The CRT volunteers also use chestnut from this copse for making charcoal.

After coppicing, the stools will be protected from browsing animals, such as deer, by covering them with "brash" (the trimmings of branches) or by erecting a fence around them made from stakes woven with brash.

The photograph shows chestnut fence posts made in Tankersford Copse in November 2011, with a pile of brash in the background. New shoots will have appeared from the stumps in the following spring.



This sign was first published in 2012.

Pierrepont Farm

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