

ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY

Promoting wise management of trees and woods



About the:

RFS Excellence in Forestry Farm Woodland Award winners 2010:

Category Sponsor: Woodmizer UK

1st place: Upton Park Farms, Old Alresford, Hampshire

Upton Park Farm is a 1450 acre family-owned arable farm. Following tree losses in storms in the late 1980s, a restoration and planting programme was started using a FWAG Management Plan and new blocks of woodland were added under the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme.

The total woodland area has since doubled to about 100 acres, more than 25,000 mixed broadleaf trees have been planted, and about five miles of hedges reinstated. Spring cropping, wild bird feeding areas, beetle bank and rare arable weed margins have all helped to create diverse wildlife habitats, and derelict hazel coppice has been managed and Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland replanted or allowed to regenerate.

What the judges said:

Forestry judges Roderick Leslie, and Simon Hewitt said: "Upton Park Farms owner, Rodney Morgan-Giles, has become a real tree enthusiast since his first planting under the original Farm Woodlands grant scheme in 1989.

"His new woods have added immeasurably to the attractiveness of the open arable farmed landscape, extending to the farmland where he is deploying the full range of measures to help birds, as well as trialling downland reversion.

"He's been rewarded with lapwing, turtle dove and yellowhammer, all declining farmland species, as well as a host of red-legged partridge. Rodney is learning as he goes along – chalk close to the surface has led to lime chlorosis in some Oak, and, as young stands develop, light and shade are becoming more important, with some conifers added later as winter cover struggling to find their place in the sun."

Owner Rodney Morgan Giles said: "The main challenge in establishment has been deer damage. I have benefited from expert advice from the Forestry Commission and from attending RFS meetings. It is thrilling when a new plantation turns into a wood!"



Pictured: New woodland on former farmland at Upton Park Farm (Credit Simon Hewitt)

2nd place: Home Farm, Shelwell Estate, Bicester , Oxfordshire

Planting took place in 1991 on a site which had previously been ridge and furrow, on heavy clay over sand and gravel, and which had proved to be difficult to farm. The policy was to have a pure oak planting for an end crop of quality oak for planking and beams. Alongside the oak is a two-row windbreak of pine. In 2003 there was some major part-pruning, with the hope that formative pruning would benefit those trees where soil conditions were impacting on growth and form. First thinning began in 2009.

What the judges said:

“Shelwell Estate has a beautifully executed 19-year-old 4.46 hectare oak farm woodland. Following an excellent take, pruning to 8 feet in 2003 and a first thinning in 2009 has created a very attractive, quality stand. Owner Baron Von Maltzahn has cleverly kept a single row untreated to show how much difference this early intervention has made – and it is impressive. The untreated row a complete contrast of poorly formed and branchy trees. The wood is a haven for Woodcock and early thinning have sold extremely well air dried for woodfuel.”

Owner Baron Von Maltzahn said: “There has been a tradition on the estate of planting oak, we think for the shipping industry. These stands are now coming to the end of their lives and we wanted to keep the continuity. There will always be a market for good oak, not only for restoration of old buildings but also for new. We have used the annual grant for this wood for management to nurture the quality of the best stems. Although the original plants came from three different nurseries, trees being trees all grew in a variety of forms from extremely poor to very good, as the judges were able to see. Although this is a family shooting estate, there is a prohibition on shooting woodcock and this stand is now a favourite haunt of these remarkable birds.

“Unlike athletes who win or lose in minutes, the forester has to wait many years to see whether he can record a success. In gaining second prize I am particularly pleased that as an amateur forester my work has been recognised by such distinguished professionals.”



Pictured: Baron von Maltzahn amongst the oak at Home Farm (Credit Rod Leslie)