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Edition 7 / Spring 2018

*The Full*

# CIRCLE

The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

Featuring...

TIME TO DISCOVER  
THE ART & CRAFT OF  
BUILDING HUTS

Written by Ninian Stuart

NORDIC CABIN  
TRADITIONS

Written by Lesley Riddoch

THE ORKNEY  
FURNITURE MAKER

Written by Kevin + Emma Gauld







## Wood-Mizer Open House

*You are invited....*

**27-28 April 2018**

**WHEN**

27 April - Friday 9.00-5.00  
28 April - Saturday 9.00-4.00

**Linlithgow, Scotland**

**WHERE**

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Linlithgow  
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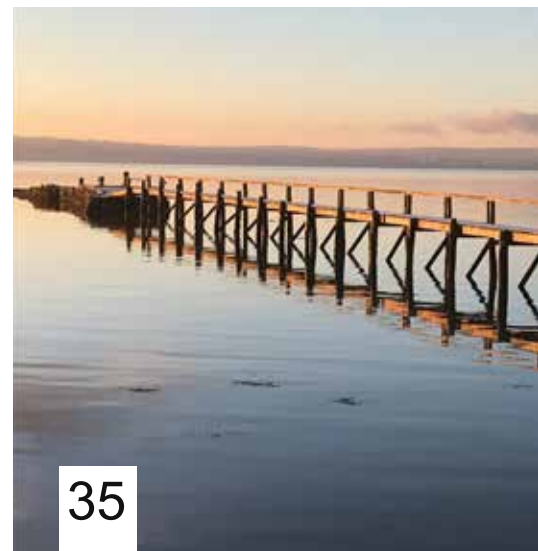
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# The Full CIRCLE

The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

Welcome to the 7th Issue of The Full Circle. I have taken on the Editor's role for the time being as Steve Mclean takes a well-earned rest after editing six excellent issues and establishing the Full Circle as an important and widely read journal of the small-scale home-grown timber and woodland industry in Scotland.

The pace of change in our industry (as well as more widely) has accelerated recently, and new opportunities have opened up, even as others disappear. Hut and small-scale house-building are likely to be an increasing feature of Scotland in the near future and several articles discuss how this might develop, learning from the experience of other countries. We're very fortunate to have an article from Guest Contributor Lesley Riddoch, comparing the Hytte tradition in Norway with Scotland. Donald McPhillimy and Ninian Stuart round out the discussion with current developments with hutting in Scotland and at Falkland Estate.

ASHS members have long been considered a niche in the massive timber industry, but are becoming an increasingly important part of the economy. We're beginning to see that, if you put all of the niche businesses together, they make a significant contribution to employment and the rural economy. There are hundreds of small businesses sawmilling, making furniture, building houses, making musical instruments, contracting and using woodlands and woodland products in many different ways. The Full Circle seeks to reflect this diversity, and this issue features, in addition to a diversified sawmill about to ramp up production, three businesses using timber in diverse ways - two bagpipe makers from the Lowlands/Borders and a furniture maker on Orkney.

It also reflects the diverse work of ASHS, which identifies the new challenges faced by the industry and seeks to find solutions in training, information and building networks, with the support and collaboration of others, notably Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Furniture Makers Association and Napier University.

**The next issue will be  
Winter 2018**

There was uncertainty about whether the Full Circle would continue, but it has become too important a part of the industry to stop now, and we hope there will be many more interesting and diverse issues.

If you have news, views or an article you would like to contribute, please email [editor@ashs.co.uk](mailto:editor@ashs.co.uk).

All the best, Nick  
**ASHS COORDINATOR**



PRODUCTION  
EDITOR &  
COORDINATOR  
Nick Marshall



DESIGNER  
Stephanie Christie



**DEADLINE DATE FOR EDITION 8**

Friday 7th September

**CONTACT US... Email - [editor@ashs.co.uk](mailto:editor@ashs.co.uk) Mobile - 07906129627**

# [www.ashs.co.uk](http://www.ashs.co.uk)

## ASHS NEWS

### *Spring is in the air and the birds are in song..... but who cares about Snow Drops when I have a shiny new saw!*

Following the successful visit to ASHS by Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing, a new grant scheme was put in place for micro businesses by Forestry Commission Scotland, which included support for secondary processing.

Several ASHS members were successful with applications, and new toys have been falling thick and fast (actually, it was just two... I've just read Derek Nelson's article on page 28. It would be good to know why more people didn't apply for this. I know timing was short, but there will be other reasons. And we can feed these back to the Powers.

The ASHS Sawing Day will be held on March 23rd at the Scottish Wood yard (you should have been emailed). Running from 10.00am to 2.30/3.00pm, Keith Threadgall (Wood-Mizer & ASHS) will be leading and demonstrating the importance of good blade-guide alignment along with some general maintenance issues.

Scottish Wood will demonstrate its new Small Log Processing Line (if the teething glitches are sorted by then!); and we will have some general discussions on sawing techniques, outputs and marketing options.

And if timing works out (and FCS allow it) you may be treated to a viewing of the latest soon-to-be YouTube sensation... Grading and Valuing Scottish Hardwoods, starring ASHS member, Gavin Munro. Book a place for this day - if you plan to come - by emailing Nick Marshal: coordinator@ashs.co.uk

The acoustic grading of timber has returned to the ASHS agenda with Willie Dobie and Nick Marshall meeting recently with Dan Ridley-Ellis of Napier University. Timber grading has always been a tricky one for ASHS members that work in this area. Mechanical grading, with its high-tec kit and associative cost is beyond our reach, which leaves visual grading as the only alternative. Visual Grading is fine, but for most of us this involves tracking down a self employed and qualified Visual Grader (rare breed); arranging a time to suit (rarely does); swallowing the unanticipated level of rejections (wider safety margins); and thereby not having enough for the job. Repeat!

And so, when people talk about wee acoustic hand held graders, small enough to pop in the post and cheap enough to buy - or at least buy collaboratively with a few other ASHS members, it sounds too good to be true! And it is! Thanks to Acoustic Tables. And you can find out more about those in the next issue of Full Circle!

Construction of the new ASHS Solar Kiln is... all but complete!

Malcolm Mack has been fortunate in having had a very busy time lately, and we all know what that means.. the pet project has had to wait (and before anyone points a finger.. what pet project do you have tucked away in the corner of your yard (and I'm not the only one with a boat!)) However, a Training Day on the design, construction and running of this kiln - along with an info booklet, will be held shortly for those who are interested. You will be kept informed.

### *Other news...*

Dan Wormald of Cromartie Timber has taken over the role of ASHS Treasurer from Steve McLean. Thank you Dan. And Pol Bergius of Black Dog Timber has been having fun with his saw lately: cutting six meter baulks of slow grown European Larch for the deck beams and planking of a Shetland Fishing boat. Along with - for another boat, a twelve meter laminated Douglas Fir mast for an un-stayed Chinese junk rig! Phew! And while on the boat theme... we have just sent off sixty number, five by twenty four inch Oak beams, ten and twelve foot long! They are also deck beams, for restoring the Anstruther Reaper, a Sailing Herring Drifter built in 1902. (Will it still float with those inside it?). Restoration is being carried out by boat builder Adam Way at the Rosyth Dock Yard.

*As always, we would love to get your feedback on this magazine. It helps us to plan its future.*

## Members / Directors

### **JIM BIRLEY**

*Scottish Wood (Chairman)*

### **KEITH THREADGALL**

*Keith Threadgall Mobile  
Sawmilling  
(Director)*

### **MALCOLM MACK**

*Angus and Mack (Director)*

### **JOHN FERGUSON**

*Moyne Sawmill (Director)*

### **JORDAN WORMALD**

*Cromartie Timber  
(Treasurer)*

### **WILLIAM DOBIE**

*Abbey Timber (Director)*

### **MAGGIE MITCHELL**

*Falkland Centre for  
Stewardship (Director)*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (2018)

*March 23rd - 10am*

Sawing Day at Scottish Wood

*March 23rd - 2.30pm*

ASHS Board meeting at Scottish  
Wood

*April 6th & 7th*

Logosol Open Days at Abbey Timber

*April 27th & 28th*

Wood-Mizer Open days at Sandy  
Crook's yard near Linlithgow.



Written by,

*Jim Birley*

ASHS Chairman | Scottish Wood



# Scottish Furniture Makers Association

## SFMA LATEST NEWS...

*At the beginning of November 2017, SFMA had their Annual Show at Custom Lane in Edinburgh.*

A new venue for SFMA located near the Shore in Leith, Custom Lane is a collaborative centre for design and making, conceived by GRAS a Scottish design studio, which is a conservation practice Groves-Raines Architects Ltd.

The venue was bursting at the seams on opening night. Jo O'Hara the head of the Forestry Commission opened our Annual show with an inspiring speech. How the Forestry Commission and Scottish Government would like to help our community through future funding. But they require information from our members, so they can understand our industry better.

The SFMA Committee also presented a gift to our previous Administrator Hazel Wilson. To thank her for all her hard work for SFMA.

At this year's Annual show we ran a vote to find the favourite 'Maker of the day'. Visitors were encouraged to view the pieces on display and then vote for their preferred piece/maker by placing a numbered counter into a box. We really engaged the visitors at our Show this year and they found it very difficult to decide between the beautiful furniture on display. Everybody was a winner!!



The results collated by our committee in the end were as follows.

**OVERALL FAVOURITES: 1ST Angus Ross, 2ND Jonathan Pang, 3RD Stephen Finch**

Angus Ross's Unstable Stool proved extremely popular - especially with the younger visitors who enjoyed 'balancing' on the seat. Jonathan Pang's pieces were admired for the detail and precision of his work and the architectural quality to it. Stephen Finch's lamp proved popular for its woody glow and his chest of drawers for the making skill.

Notable mentions should also go to Daniel Lacey, Ross Samson and Anna Nichols who were all close in the running. Angus Ross was the clear winner overall coming first on four days and third on two days with a total of 17% of the votes.

The Facebook vote was much closer with tied positions for the top three places:

**JOINT 1ST: Angus Ross, Daniel Lacey, Ross Samson, Janie Morris**

**JOINT 2ND: Stephen Finch, Anna Nichols**

**JOINT 3RD: Gavin Robertson, Michaela Huber**

*Thanks to everyone who came to the exhibition and we will see you next year.*





We also had our AGM the afternoon before the open evening of the Annual show. Our new Constitution was signed off and we also discussed future projects for the SFMA that are in the pipeline.

**THE COMMITTEE ROLES FOR NEW YEAR ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

***Anna Nichols* – CHAIR**

***Angus Richardson* – TREASURER**

***Michaela Huber* – SECRETARY**

***Stephen Finch* – DEPUTY CHAIR, MARKETING & ADVERTISING**

***Janie Morris* – ANNUAL EXHIBITION COORDINATOR**

Other committee members include ***Simon Whatley, Chris Scotland & Mike Whittall***

Wednesday 22nd November, we had our meeting at Angus and Mack's workshop with Fergus Ewing MSP Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy & Connectivity and The Forestry Commission. Apart from the very wet weather, it went quite well. We discussed the current funding they set up for secondary processing after discussions they had with ASHS. Angus Ross was able to give his feedback as being the only person from SFMA that has applied. This has led to The Forestry Commission being instructed to refine the application process and open it up again for applications this year to give people more time to apply. We will keep all our SFMA members up to date on future funding opportunities.

We also did discuss future branding and potential marketing. How ASHS, SFMA and Scottish Working Woods can collaborate together. To not remain just below the radar as it has been implied.

In our latest survey that we produced prior to the meeting with Mr Ewing, we found the following points out from our members.

There is an even split between members buying International hardwoods instead of Native Scottish hardwoods. The question is why and how can our local sawmills encourage our members to buy locally? Would Grading of wood, standard thickness etc... through the ASHS members be a benefit?

To keep up to date with SFMA see the news and events link on our website [www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk](http://www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk) or our Facebook page.



Written by  
**Anna L Nichols**  
+ the SFMA Committee





*Local. Ethical. Sustainable.*



## SCOTTISH WORKING WOODS NEWS

The SWW label continues to expand with more licensees and a new trade association member - Scottish Basketmakers Circle. Some SBC members grow willow as well as making baskets and some weave willow sculptures for indoor and outdoor locations. We look forward to seeing baskets from Scotland carrying the label and encouraging the growing and use of willow, as well as other trees, on sale soon.



In a first for Scottish Working Woods, licensee Malcolm Mack of Angus and Mack, near Edinburgh, has created a special product for the label - a range of wooden climbing grips. These are normally made of plastic but Malcolm makes them from Scottish Ash wood with his CNC router. The Scottish Working Woods logo is branded into each grip and they are selling well. He is planning to expand the range to include other climbing products.



To take Scottish Working Woods on to the next level, the Board is considering running a seminar for licensees. This would encourage networking and collaboration between licensees and also provide feedback to the Board about directions for new work. It would let licensees learn about the very different types of products encompassed by the SWW label.

To get involved or learn more, visit the website:  
[www.scottishworkingwoods.org.uk](http://www.scottishworkingwoods.org.uk) or  
 email [nick@scottishworkingwoods.org.uk](mailto:nick@scottishworkingwoods.org.uk)

Written by,

**Nick Marshall**  
 ASHS Coordinator







## ASHS MEMBERS SURVEY 2017

Each year, ASHS carries out a survey of its full members. All members are supposed to respond but we usually get between 1/3 and 1/2 which is still enough to draw robust conclusions. This is the only survey of small sawmillers in Scotland and, with results going back over 10 years, is becoming an important record of the development of the small sawmilling sector here. The Forestry Commission require this information as part of the justification for providing grant support for ASHS, and it has been instrumental in getting grants for individual sawmilling businesses as well. It also helps inform ASHS plans for work to help its members.

A wider survey of the whole small-scale timber industry (which would include ASHS full and associate members as well as other small timber and woodland businesses) has been suggested and we may carry that out next year.

This year's survey was on Survey Monkey as usual, and 11 of our 33 full members responded between Nov 2017 and Feb 2018.

**Business turnover** averaged £213,000 (2016=£160,000) making estimated aggregate turnover for 33 members £7M (2016=£5.4M). 7 (63%) of the respondents had increased turnover compared to the previous year and 8 (73%) expected it to grow next year.

This reflects the fact that the small-scale sawmilling industry is on a long-term growth trend, with both individual businesses' turnover and the number of businesses increasing year on year.

**Employment** averaged 4 Full Time (2016=2) plus 2 Part Time (2016=2) per business. Aggregate employment based on this average would be 135 FT (2016=68) plus 50 PT (2016=68).

**Investment** was an average of £17,500 per business (2016=£38,000); which would make an aggregate investment of £580,000 (2016=£1.3M) based on this average.

Interestingly, only 5 of the investments were for sawmilling or associated equipment and 5 were for secondary processing or manufacturing equipment.

**Timber consumption and sales** were more a more complex picture.

Respondents bought in an average of 39 tonnes of **hardwood** logs (2016=81) and sold an average of 23 tonnes (2016=33) of sawn wood, making the aggregate figures 1,280 tonnes (2,800) of logs in and 770 tonnes (2016=1,100) sold.

Respondents bought in an average of 162 tonnes of **softwood** logs (2016=141) and sold an average of 78 tonnes (2016=88) of sawn wood, making the aggregate figures 5,400 tonnes (4,800) of logs in and 2,600 tonnes (2016=3,000) sold.

Timber made into end products is generally not included in sales figures. Coupled with the investment in secondary processing equipment and the higher turnover, these figures suggest that ASHS members are increasingly moving beyond sawmilling to producing finished timber, mouldings and manufactured products. The increased value of their sales more than compensates for the reduced volume of timber milled. This trend has been going on for several years.

ASHS members report that the **main strengths** of their businesses lie in being small and flexible, delivering high quality products and a personal service with experienced and knowledgeable staff.

The **main barriers** to business development included being small businesses - lacking capital for investment, limited space, dependence on a small number of people with

not enough time - as well as remote locations, competition from cheaper suppliers and uncertainty due to Brexit.

**Key areas for ASHS** to tackle included training, marketing and help with business management.



Desired **training and skills** included: secondary processing, timber grading and health and safety as well as improving business management and sawmilling techniques.



Written by,

Nick Marshall  
ASHS Coordinator



## REBUILDING RAASAY SAWMILL

*It will be 3 years in May since I bought the derelict sawmill on the Isle of Raasay and 5 years since chance brought me the dog and my tent to the island. I've seldom left since...*

The main shed is nearly rebuilt, the old yankee and Stenner are out but the sawbench remains. The long opening on the shed has been moved to allow the Woodmizer into the shed. There's 120 tonnes of 60yr old larch stacked behind the mill courtesy of the latest Ramorum outbreak on the island. We (me the dog and the cat) have the original and working Forestry Commissions 1961 Fordson Major with 6 tonne Boughton winch and an almost functioning 1975 Major with a set of forks on the back (its lifted nothing yet...). The 1981 Gremo escaped on the back of a loader that was delivering plant for our new distillery - maybe a mistake as I wonder how to shift timber around the yard now!

I have a great Husky 266 that was given to me having been refurbished by Willie shortly after I bought the mill. Willie used to work in the mill under previous ownership and it was Willie who I asked to help me when I brought the Woodmizer back to the island. Willie is 74 and has frontal lobe dementia. He's a big part of life here, whether chopping kindling meticulously for the shop or beveling planters with the grinder or helping me with whatever I'm up to. The money I get for 'looking after' him for 12 hours a week these days has been crucial in finding the balance between sufficient income and still making progress on clearing and rebuilding the mill. It's also been great fun.

When Ramorum first hit Raasay in 2016 I managed to get my hands on about 30 tonnes of larch and 7 tonnes of oversize Spruce logs (7 logs) - just around the time I was trying to import my first load onto the island. (The 7-mile ferry crossing adds around £400 + time to the cost). The spruce became the new roof for the shed and framing for the sunpiece on the caravan, the larch had to rebuild the shed and generate an income. Squeezing every penny out of every log meant making all sort of things from sheds to composting toilets to dog kennels to lovers benches still covered in bark. Lacking a proper finished workshop and lots of one off projects, which is everything till you've done a few, makes it hard to get your hourly rate up though.

*I've always enjoyed making things out of wood. My father is a builder and engineer and I grew up on building sites in the Scottish Borders and messing about in his workshops.*

I've always enjoyed making things out of wood. My father is a builder and engineer and I grew up on building sites in the Scottish Borders and messing about in his workshops. I didn't buy the sawmill to have a sawmill however. I needed a place to live and a place to work and the mill was the only serious contender. I considered a few different options from developing smaller business units for rent to using hydroelectric power to grow algae to rear oyster spats. It was only when I was considering the costs of replacing the main shed that reviving the sawmill became a no brainer. Lots of enthusiasm from Sandy MacDonald ([ardslignish.uk.com](http://ardslignish.uk.com)) and James Nairn ([www.jamesnairn.com](http://www.jamesnairn.com)) led me to take the plunge and buy the biggest Woodmizer I could find/ afford(LT40). Keith Threadgall ([keiththreadgall@gmail.com](mailto:keiththreadgall@gmail.com)) and his colleagues were a huge help in checking the machine before I bought it and teaching me how to use it on the way back to Raasay. I think it's an amazing machine. I'd never heard of it 3 years ago but by the time I've finished rebuilding the shed it will have paid for itself.





It's been interesting building a relationship with the Forestry Commission on Raasay, we are working well together these days (in part thanks to ASHS) and I'm hopeful that we can continue to work as closely together in the future. It can't be easy managing as many stakeholders (and I certainly can't have seemed a credible partner in the early days). As of now though the ball is firmly in my court.

Moving forward these are the big challenges rattling about in my head (answers in an email to [callumfindlay@googlemail.com](mailto:callumfindlay@googlemail.com) please):

- Best way of shifting logs around the yard
- Selling the right thing (finding the right customers)
- What stays on the island?
- What goes off and how?
- Revenue Streams
- Recurring - Use the timber to build another business
- Traditional - sell today and find more tomorrow
- Logs today v's logs tomorrow?
- Ramorum has worked in my favour this time, next time costs could be very different
- How to lay out the shed to maximise profitability subject to above
- Keeping any machines running not rusting



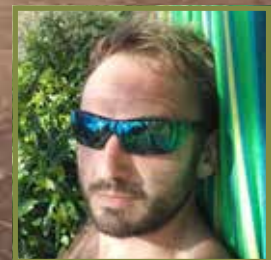
Short term my focus is on getting the main shed finished so that I can concentrate full time on the Sawmill. The island is unlikely to generate enough orders for basic sawn timber and anything going off the island would be better with a degree of secondary processing to offset delivery costs and maximise profitability. Smaller sheds are fiddly, bigger sheds mean bigger timbers and in a world of grant funded crofters maybe the way to go.

The new hutting definition raises some interesting possibilities, a network of off grid huts/cabins dotted around the island could work well given the current tourist boom in these parts. Losing so much of the forest so quickly to Ramorum has been a shock to many people, so it would be nice to see a lasting useful record of the timber grown on the island and used on the island.

### Notes

Total investment to date: £68k  
(including Mill, plant, machinery, logs living expenses pre revenue)

Sawmill revenue  
15/16 £4k  
16/17 £8.5k  
17/18 £15k est.



Written by,

Callum Findlay

[callumfindlay@googlemail.com](mailto:callumfindlay@googlemail.com)





## GRADING OF HOME-GROWN TIMBERS FOR STRUCTURAL PURPOSES

*Strength graded timber is increasingly being asked for by customers looking for structural components. This is an important part of encouraging a wider market for ASHS members' timber.*



Strength grading (in very general terms) can be done in three ways:

(a) mechanical (in big mills, expensive machines bend lengths of timber - resistance to bend is proportional to strength)

(b) visual (a grader is trained to look for weaknesses and assess growth rate which can be proportional to strength)

(c) acoustic (a hand-held machine hammers the piece of wood - the speed of the sound wave is proportional to density and hence strength)

Mechanical gives a pretty accurate idea of strength, acoustic less so and visual much less. This means that, using visual grading, a much greater proportion of pieces of timber must be rejected to ensure that all approved pieces are strong enough to meet the required strength standard.

Because of our different growing conditions, UK timber has different acoustic properties, and so needs different acoustic

tables, as compared with European timber. Tables (for the UK) have been prepared for spruce and larch, and are in progress (at Napier University) for Birch and Douglas Fir.

The priority species is Douglas Fir. House builders and architects are keen to specify it. Several of the bigger sawmills and most ASHS members will mill it from time to time. The current visual grading rules limit the strength classes to C14 and C18 for normal cross sections. It would be a game changer if Douglas fir could be visually graded to the same C16 and C24 grades as larch. If current tests in Ireland prove positive, then further testing could take place later this year with a view to reassessing the visual grading standards. ASHS members across Scotland may be asked to contribute samples for testing to ensure a wide geographical spread.

Another ongoing program is testing the strength properties of a wide range of species that may become important in the more diverse forests of the future. Birch and sycamore are the two hardwood species under consideration and again ASHS members may be asked to contribute samples for testing as and when they are needed, although these timbers aren't often used for structural purposes in the UK yet.

The benefit of acoustic grading is as much about speeding up the grading process as being able to assign a higher strength class. Visual grading still has an important role until economies of scale can justify the expense of acoustic grading equipment. A wider understanding of the strength properties of British timbers and the system for grading them would benefit both sawmill operators and timber specifiers. ASHS could help facilitate that.

ASHS members are currently being surveyed to assess demand for grading services. We will take other steps to ensure that grading services are available to all members, and work with Napier University, Forestry Commission Scotland and other bodies to make sure that there is adequate grading information for the structural timbers ASHS members sell.



Written by,  
Willie Dobie + Nick Marshall





## THE ORKNEY FURNITURE MAKER

*Many visit the Orkney Isles for its iconic coastlines, picturesque winding streets and the amazing history, but what can also be found in these isles is the craft of Orkney Chair making.*

Kevin Gauld, *The Orkney Furniture Maker*, has made his career based around this traditional craft but has more recently made a name for himself as a skilled designer and master craftsman with a portfolio boasting creations from the traditional to the more contemporary with his work being exhibited more recently in Japan.

Woodworking has been Kevin's passion since he was a boy at school with much influence coming from his own family history with both his Grandfather and Great-Grandfather working with wood through furniture making and traditional boat building. Following years of tinkering with wood in his garden shed, Kevin left school in 1996 at the age of 16 to kick start his much desired career as a craftsman with an apprenticeship with a local Orkney Chair Maker. Here he learned the traditional craft of chair making as well as focusing on other traditional designs; even taking some inspiration from Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

Although he got off to a good start, Kevin's journey to reach where he is today has not been without its trials. In 2005, nine years into his employment with Traditional Orkney Crafts, he found himself being made redundant due to his employer's ill health. It was at this point that he found himself at a crossroads; whether to turn his back on his passion and choose a different career path, or to actually pursue a career as a craftsman under his own name and brand which was not something that had ever been part of his ambitions. Living in a rural, island community, the employment options in his craft were limited so knowing that he wished to make furniture for the rest of his life, Kevin made the decision to embark on his own path through self-employment. The Orkney Furniture Maker was born!

As with all business start-ups, it was a time of trials. Kevin was building his own home at the time and had been working towards the completion of his garage - this went on to become his new workshop. He worked full-time in a local bar in order to keep earning whilst

his new business was in its infancy before being offered work at a local builders merchant. It wasn't ideal and it was a frustrating time for Kevin as it was a far cry from the craft he was passionate about, but this brief time allowed him the means to complete his garage and purchase the expensive machinery and tools needed to really get The Orkney Furniture Maker off the ground.

Gents orkney chair (Scottish Elm)





Working from his single car garage was cramped to say the least and as his business grew and demand for his work increased, Kevin started converting an old outbuilding on his uncle's farm into a new workshop where he would have more space to work. His Great-Grandfather who had been a furniture maker, actually built this outbuilding when he returned from WW2. He found that he was unable to return to furniture making and so took on the family farm instead. Kevin often wonders what his Great-Grandfather would think today if he could look down and see his old outbuilding being used for the very same passion that he had during his years.

In his early years as The Orkney Furniture Maker, Kevin created mainly smaller items such as stools and side tables, starting to explore his own ideas as time and space allowed. As the demand for his work increased, he moved into his new converted workshop and has since expanded it with plans to extend again in the near future in order to meet demands. Today, Kevin employs one workshop assistant and three skilled straw workers and a seat weaver who assist in the completion of his furniture. In the future, Kevin is keen to employ another worker and knows that an important part of his business will be to employ an apprentice someday and pass on his skill.

Throughout his career, the Orkney Chair has remained a big part of his story, and a range of his chairs can be found in his portfolio. The Orkney Chair has become a design classic that tells the story of people, place and time. The design was born from materials readily available to local crofters who built them to provide warmth and shelter in their crofts.







'Together as one' made from locally felled antartic beech and Scottish elm



'Burn' made from locally felled antartic beech & Orkney stone



'Bairns chair' Scottish elm, oat straw & seagrass seat



Standing stones table

Orkney is not famous for woodlands and original early chair frames were made using reclaimed wood and driftwood as opposed to the high quality woods that are used today. It was a simple chair design, onto which an Oat straw back was hand-stitched. The curved, and sometimes hooded, shape of the Orkney Chair was designed to shelter the sitter from the drafts that were common in the crofts houses. The hood was an added feature which provided further protection and shelter from drips through a leaky roof or falling soot from the ceiling.

As well as having his workshop based on his family's farm, Kevin also grows and harvests oat straw using traditional techniques and machinery for the iconic hand-stitched backs on his chairs. Although much of his work is based on traditional designs and techniques, the machinery and hand tools in his workshops sit alongside more modern machinery and a CNC router. Kevin has a real appreciation for how traditional skills and techniques can still be used in partnership with modern tools to produce beautiful work.

Running a business that's main material is wood from an island that does not have many trees can be challenging, but the beauty and inspiration found locally more than makes up for this. Originally, Kevin relied heavily on the import of hardwoods; mainly American Oak, however it never made sense to import wood from such a distance when it was often being shipped back to the States for a client, in chair form! It makes the carbon footprint of a single chair, huge! This developed Kevin's passion for where his material is sourced and today, he uses Scottish grown hardwoods which he feels really suits his work. Kevin will also source locally felled timbers, milling it himself, and air drying it to create pieces with a more personal and Orcadian touch. Most locally felled timbers are victims of storms and can include Sycamore, Elm and Beech.

Living on an island means that it is essential for Kevin to have a good relationship with his timber suppliers when sourcing material. Without the luxury of being able to hand pick the perfect piece of wood every time for his latest commission, he has to rely on his suppliers to provide him with the right pieces for what he is making. Relying on Scottish mainland based suppliers is not without it's expense unfortunately, as the costs of shipping materials to the islands and then shipping the finished commissions from the islands adds extra expense to him and his clients.

Alongside his Orkney Chairs, Kevin also designs and creates a range of furniture often taking inspiration from his island home. He enjoys experimenting with different materials and techniques all to give him his individual style.



Orkney elm and oat straw



The Stoot chair. (clinker built)



Written by,

Kevin & Emma Gauld





## NORDIC CABIN TRADITIONS AND THE CURSE OF THE INDOOR SCOT

Norway has one of the highest rates of second home ownership in the world with a holiday home for every ten Norwegians. There were 429,093 holiday homes in 2010 (plus 55,000 owned by Norwegians abroad) amongst a population of just 4.9 million people. More than half the Norwegian population has access to a hytte for relaxation, connection with nature, exercise, escape from city pressures and strengthening family ties. Some are very fancy - many are very basic wooden huts.

Grieg composed in a hytte. King Haakon rallied public spirits in the post-war rationing years by taking the public tram to the ski slopes above Oslo. Gerhardson Norway's first Prime Minister was regularly pictured in hiking gear.

The father of the nation, explorer and humanitarian Fridhof Nansen articulated the national preoccupation with the great outdoors;

***"The first great thing is to find yourself, and for that you need solitude and contemplation: at least sometimes. I tell you, deliverance will not come from the rushing, noisy centres of civilization. It will come from the lonely places."***

Hiking, fishing, skiing, picking cloudberries and hunting are all part of the Norwegian ideal which is to lead a simple life outdoors (friluftsliv). That ideal is embodied by the hytte which ranges in building type from the original inter-war basic wooden hut, to the well-equipped, luxurious and expensive second home at one of the ski resorts which sprang up after the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics.

In the rest of Scandinavia and across the Northern latitudes the same attachment to cabins exists.

In 1991 there was one cabin per 12 Swedes, one per 18 Finns and one per 33 Danes along with relatively widespread cabin ownership in Russia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain and other parts of central and Southern Europe as well as the northern states of America and Canada.

By contrast, in Scotland in 1999 (the most recent date with accurate figures) there were 29,929 holiday homes of which 630 were wooden cabins and 29,299 farmhouses were used as second homes in a population of roughly 5 million. That's one holiday home per 169 Scots and one wooden hut per 8035 Scots.

So Scots have 6.1 per cent of Norway's holiday home total, 0.14 per cent of Norway's hut total and a very different pattern of second home use. Moreover in Scotland, second homes are generally regarded as elitist and problematic.

Why?

***Five weeks of paid holiday, extending to six for those over 60 years old, and the opportunity of exchanging overtime work for extended weekends, means that there is plenty of time available to spend in the second home.***

Thor Flognfeld Jr (2004) articulates the classic explanation offered by most writers on the exponential growth of second homes in Norway. The combination of holidays, flexible working patterns and more disposable income inevitably and unsurprisingly results in high demand.



The Scottish situation demonstrates that these factors are necessary but not sufficient to result in a “cabin culture”. Income and disposable income levels in Scotland today are indeed lower than in modern Norway. But Britain is still within the top ten economies of the world by GDP. And when the first post war expansion in cabins, summer houses and hytter began across Norway and the rest of Scandinavia, Scotland was in much the same position as pre-oil, war-torn Norway.

The difference in rates of hut ownership and attitudes towards second homes in the two countries therefore raises questions about two sets of national assumptions.

In Norway, it's assumed any right-minded person would own a hytte if they could. In Scotland it's assumed no right-minded person would consider owning one - unless it was a timeshare located in Spain or Florida.

The biggest point of distinction between the two countries is the pattern of land ownership. Scotland is easily marked out as unique in Northern Europe because of its feudal and historically concentrated pattern of land ownership. And even where land acquisition has become easier, Scots still don't rush to build cabins, hytte or second homes.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice may be useful in analysing the lack of curiosity in both Scotland and Norway about the origins of each others dramatically different experience of second home/cabin living. The French sociologist argues that judgments of taste are related to social position and that differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes.

Thus habits, attitudes towards cultural goods and even the development of an aesthetic outlook are all largely determined by social origin rather than accumulated wealth and experience. The acquisition of cultural capital depends heavily on “total, early, imperceptible learning, performed within the family from the earliest days of life.”

Is it possible that positive attitudes towards land ownership and engagement with nature explain the hytte phenomenon in Norway and that these inherited social attitudes have played a much more important role than technical factors - more holiday time, better roads and higher income levels - to which the growth of the Nordic hytte phenomenon is normally attributed?

Across the Nordic countries - but particularly in Norway - a long tradition of easy access to land, an absence of large aristocratic estates, a development-oriented local planning system and relatively low property taxes have all combined to create a powerful shared mindset across Nordic society which makes hutlife (hytteliv) possible.

The Norwegian experience of industrialisation also differs dramatically from the Scots - it was a century later, was less focused on one city and was often “part-time.” The smallest Norwegian farm units kept increasing in number until 1949 (Brox 2011) and many workers in the ten urban centres developed as a matter of policy by the Norwegian government, still kept a small farm - and with it a high summer cabin (setre) where women and children often spent the summer with cattle on the high pasture.

Relatively recent memories of life in the setre amongst urban workers and its portrayal in the romantic landscape art of Norway's “nation-building” period added to the positive inherited “cultural capital” of the holiday home in the mind of most Norwegians.





In Nordic literature and current everyday life, the hytte is widely regarded as a vital mechanism for achieving the experience of being "in nature" or even "truly human." Yet it's almost completely missing in Scotland. Even though some of the same triggers - more leisure time, statutory holidays, better infrastructure etc - all occurred at roughly the same time.

The result is that modern active, outdoor Scots don't seem to want cabin life - they think a fixed location in nature would inhibit their mobility at a variety of locations around Scotland. They also know how much difficulty and expense a second home entails - even if the massive hurdle of getting a piece of land from a Scottish landowner is overcome. As a result it appears more Scots rent static caravans as holiday homes because they attract no council tax and are easier to site (on seaside parks at least).

Norway is one of the world's most equal societies, but having a second home isn't regarded as elitist, greedy or wasteful. The hytte is the permanent family home - in contrast to "temporary" first homes which change many times over a lifetime to suit the changing demands of work, family and finance.

In Scotland, second home owners are generally regarded as "other" - greedy incomers who care little about pricing local young people out of the housing market.

This has always bothered me - not least because I rented a cabin for 7 glorious years after a series of professional accidents brought me to Glen Buchat, 45 minutes inland from Aberdeen.

My "bothy" was owned by a local farmer and had been occupied by a farm labourer and his family until the 1940s. It had a great roof but no electricity or running water. Without human occupation it had become the domain of animals -- it took years of weekend and summer stays to learn how to share that space with them. Eventually I realised that rabbit fur and bones under the duvet just meant the polecat had been in again. A herd of elephants dancing in clogs on the grey slate roof at night simply meant the mice were back in the attic. A wedged shut door meant there'd been heavy rain before my arrival. Cows wandered outside day and night - part of their cattle trough also served as my makeshift fridge.

I loved the freedom and the adventure. And I knew only a handful of people who felt the same. When I was sufficiently persuaded of the merits of country life to move permanently from Glasgow to "the country," I let go of the bothy and moved to a small house with a garden in rural Perthshire. It was filled immediately with my responsible, serious self and worldly possessions. My Norwegian balance of tame urban dwelling and wild country living was over. I had once again become a sensible, tamed Scot. But the experience never left me.

***Since then I've always wondered why so few Scots have huts, cabins, bolt-holes and mountain retreats.***

Part of the reason - of course -- is guilt. How can anyone justify owning or renting a second home when so many young locals struggle to find their first home? Isn't it greedy to have two places to live - even if one is almost uninhabitable by "civilised" standards?

Eventually I started to see the "problem" differently. In a relatively empty landscape Scots are reduced to fighting over margins of land while large estates remain ignored and un-occupied - whether owned by the Forestry Commission or the Duke of Buccleuch.

Scotland contains enough land to accommodate every family in huts, cabins, mountain cottages and seaside shacks. So why won't Scottish landowners sell small patches of land? Why won't Scots demand it? Why do Scottish councils still discourage hutters with planning policies that echo the aesthetic of the "empty glen" and rely for justification on the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and its post-war determination to restore food production by excluding "urban" development from country living?

***There are other traditions.***

During the 1920s and 30s working people from Norway and Scotland tried to escape the pressures and squalor of urbanisation by building huts around the big cities.

Norwegian efforts blossomed into a mainstream national "cabin" culture by the 1950s. In Sweden the state even awarded grants for hut building -fearing workers with newly acquired holiday rights might otherwise spend their spare time drinking. Scottish cabin efforts fizzled out. In 2000 a Scottish Executive survey found 630 huts remained - most without rights of tenancy or improvement.

“

***My Norwegian balance of tame urban dwelling and wild country living was over. I had once again become a sensible, tamed Scot. But the experience never left me.***

”



Since then almost all have been evicted with the exception of Carbeth whose hutter residents had to raise almost £2 million to achieve a community buyout of their land. The wider issue of holiday homes in Scotland is considered so unimportant a planned question in the Scottish 2011 census was dropped.

*There has been landowner resistance to cabins and huts in the Scottish landscape for centuries. That resistance has now generated indifference and even self-harming hostility to the countryside and any direct experience of nature amongst many urban Scots. Is it a coincidence that Scots have the lowest rate of hut ownership in Europe and the highest rates of problem drinking? How else can urban Scots “escape” the pressures of modern urban life? The majority of Glasgow pupils aren’t sure that eggs come from hens – is lack of connection with nature to blame?*



Written by,  
*Lesley Riddoch*





## TIME TO REDISCOVER THE ART AND CRAFT OF BUILDING HUTS

At Falkland Estate, in Fife, we've recently been discovering that Falkland was once home to hut builders and dwellers for thousands of years, with evidence of various Iron Age and Bronze Age hut circles around the hills. In November 2017, BBC's Digging for Britain series featured a recent archaeological dig by Centre for Stewardship below the summit of East Lomond. One discovery was the foundations of a significant rectangular timber building from the time of the Picts, making it the earliest of its kind in Scotland, other than one of a similar period at Edinburgh Castle. Other finds suggest that Falkland was once a powerful centre where the Picts practised various crafts, interested in design techniques of diverse cultures and even trading with Romans. This picture is somewhat contrary to more typical views of the Picts as un-cultured barbarians.

Architect philosopher Christopher Alexander writes beautifully in his books, *The timeless way of building* and *A pattern language*, about a "way (that) will lead anyone who looks for it to buildings that are themselves as ancient in their form as the trees and hills and as our faces are."

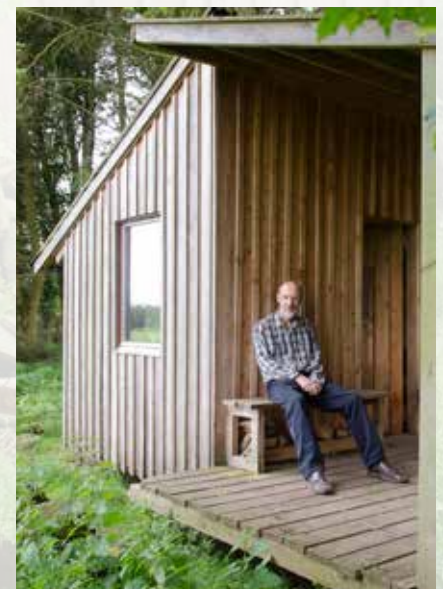
He describes age-old processes by which people of a society have always pulled the order of their world from the nature of the places they inhabit, as well as from their own inner being. He also speaks of "the quality without a name" that is found in many places in the world that we inhabit as humans and that somehow distinguishes them.

### From one to A Thousand

When, in late 2010, I first discovered the joy of building my own hut with help of local carpenter Jim McKeen, I knew I'd stumbled on something special. However, I did not appreciate how significant the discovery of a tradition that's been practised here for centuries might be for Falkland and beyond.

Within days of the campaign launch, people were rallying to the idea of huts, drawing from Scottish traditions of hutting, crofts and bothy culture or inspired by Nordic countries where most families have a cabin, or hutte, where they relax and play. By 2014, we had persuaded Scottish Government Ministers to initiate changes to planning and building regulations that will make it easier for many more people to enjoy a small, simple country retreat. In July 2017 we secured those lighter touch building regulations. So we now have a much lighter regime of government regulations for building a hut, enabling contemporary Scots to turn those early dreams into reality.

As well as the lack of enabling legislation and regulations, 20th century industrialisation has also reduced opportunity for ordinary people to learn skills with which to build our own places. The last 20 years have even seen the opportunities for children to build dens or tree-houses coming under threat from a risk-averse attitude to outdoor play which, counterproductively, results in young people growing up to be less resourceful and resilient.



Like the best of whisky, it has taken time to come into its own. Within one year, Reforesting Scotland had feistily declared my simple hut to be the first of "a thousand huts" in a campaign with three aims:

1. to inspire people with the simple beauty, relevance and greater affordability of huts;
2. to persuade Government to change planning and building regulations in order to enable more people to enjoy temporary accommodation in huts;
3. to encourage more hut-building using local wood and natural materials.

### Simple Shelters

Our big idea for 2018 is to pilot a new model of social enterprise that will involve creating opportunities for people who have been disadvantaged to benefit from the building, enjoyment and use of huts or simple structures.



This will build on various events that we have hosted here over recent years, starting with a SEDA-led training event for Big Tent 2008, led by Duncan Roberts. Then a cabin built for Big Tent 2010, using "massive structure" technique led by David Blair of Tighnabruich.

Next was a training event at Falkland in 2011 led by Nigel and Stuart of Hill Holt Woods, a social enterprise near Lincoln who have long been designing and building timber structures for many years.

Then came the remarkable "hut on the hill" built for Big Tent 2012 by local architect Alasdair Baird with a team of local volunteers plus some veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress. This hut received a local design award that described it as "...brilliant, pure poetry in wood, lovely combination of sawn and 'as found' wood elements, great shaded balcony, nice touches of humour."

Finally, a recent WoodWorks taster day that we ran in 2017 for young people who wished to design simple shelters, sold out (all 24 places) in 36 hours. So there is clearly a thirst for such events.

It is a joy to be alive and working on Falkland Estate at a time when the woods are coming alive again with people living and working together.

So 2018 is shaping up to be quite a year as the tide turns with revival of interest in micro-living and self-build as well as the surge of interest in 'A Thousand Huts', amongst young people in particular.

By the time this journal is out, we hope (touch wood) to have secured planning consent for a hut site of 12 - 15 huts in a small woodland with great views over the hills. With support from architect Peter Caunt (adviser of A Thousand Huts), the Falkland hutters group, who have emerged organically over the last few years, will be gearing up to build their huts.



Finally, thanks to some generous support from Scottish Government's Social Innovation Fund, Falkland Stewardship Trust are about to embark on a new pilot project called Simple Shelters. Our aim is not just to build beautiful and useful small structures but also to develop a social enterprise model that will provide employment opportunities, skills training and enhance the wellbeing of people who have experienced disadvantage of one kind or another. With the support of the European Social Fund we will be



testing this model in a local woodland setting at Falkland - with the intention that this may then be replicated further afield. So watch out for training opportunities, hut building events and maybe even a small summer school over the coming year.

Contemporary interest in the value, beauty and usefulness of small buildings, combined with the carbon and sustainability benefits of using local wood and other natural materials, means that the time is ripe to explore new economic models for local processing and adding value to timber, and to develop opportunities for learning and teaching the art of building for the many, not just the few.



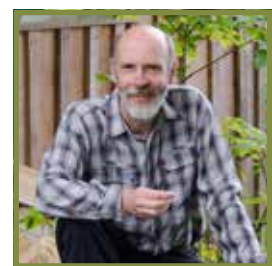
Falkland Centre for Stewardship recently hosted a visit, in collaboration with Napier University, of about 30 students from Harvard Design School who want to find out about Falkland and Scotland's plans for huts and hutting



We are keen to initiate some such opportunities at Falkland and would love to hear from others who are journeying down a similar path.



Ninian Stuart is a director of Reforesting Scotland, a member of the Thousand Huts core team, and co-founder and director of the Centre for Stewardship. For more information, visit [www.centreforstewardship.org.uk/simple-shelters/](http://www.centreforstewardship.org.uk/simple-shelters/) or email [huts@centreforstewardship.org.uk](mailto:huts@centreforstewardship.org.uk) or [www.thousandhuts.org](http://www.thousandhuts.org)



Written by,  
Ninian Stuart





## HUTS IN SCANDINAVIA

Once when I was on holiday in Norway, I saw a pile of timber sitting beside a small building plot on the edge of the forest. Looking closer I could see windows, doors, pre-formed wall panels, roofing materials. Too small for a house, I clocked it as the birth of a hytte, a summer house much loved by Norwegians. One of 400,000 hyttes in Norway I was to discover later. I made some enquiries and found out that the hytte was to be built by a member of the extended family, second cousin thrice removed or suchlike, on a typical Norwegian forest farm. The building components came from a small industrial unit a few miles away, run by the brother and sister of a neighbour. This business built components for houses and hyttes indoors and then built the structures in the surrounding area. Each was put together in a matter of days. The timber was largely sourced from the local forests, all owned by farmers. This is quite normal in Norway and throughout the Nordic countries and eastern Europe.

Back in Scotland, it's not normal at all. There are difficulties in getting hold of land, timber, builders and permissions. Up until recently, there wasn't even a formal recognition of a hut even though they had been built at Carbeth and other sites in Scotland up until the mid 20th century. Instead of 400,000 huts, Scotland, which has a similar population to Norway, has around 500 huts and the number has been decreasing.

All this is about to change, thanks to the Reforesting Scotland Thousand Huts campaign which started in 2011. One of the first achievements was to have huts recognised by the Scottish planning system for the first time. This means that people can now apply to have a hut built and already several sites have been approved. Planning is planning and there is a process to be navigated. Reforesting Scotland was largely responsible for the definition of a hut (Scottish Planning Policy 2014) which is:

***“A simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (ie. not a principal residence); having an internal floor of area no more than 30m<sup>2</sup>; constructed from low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace at the end of its life. Huts may be built singly or in groups.”***

With Planning comes Building Control which has extremely detailed regulations for houses in order to protect property owners and neighbours. The campaign argued that huts don't need to be as vigorously controlled as houses. Amazingly, the Scottish Government's Building Standards Division agreed. After consultation, which was overwhelmingly in favour, the situation in law now is that huts as defined above qualify as the newly defined building type 23A and don't require a building warrant so long as the building complies with 3 building regulations for structural stability, stoves and rails along sleeping platforms. It is a complicated area and Reforesting Scotland will be producing a Good Practice Guide to show what can and cannot be done. Planning is already covered in the publication New Hutting Developments which is available on the website [www.thousandhuts.org](http://www.thousandhuts.org)



There are many great reasons to encourage huts and hutting. Reconnecting with nature has been shown to be very positive for your physical, mental and emotional health. It is about creating little communities in rural parts of Scotland, interacting positively with the existing communities, supporting each other. There will be benefits for local biodiversity with trees being planted and woods managed. It will give many more people a stake in the land and an understanding of land use issues. Above all, from the point of view of ASHS members, it is a great business opportunity.


Some people will want to build their own huts, many will need help. Some will want off the peg huts, pre-fabricated as in Norway, and built for them. Most huts will be made of wood, from structure through to cladding. The more local the raw material the better as many hutters are aware of their carbon footprints. Some huts will be very basic, others will be ornate and hardwoods could be used to finish off the interiors. Hut furniture will be required.

The Thousand Huts campaign would like to work with ASHS to link hutters with sawmills and building companies. A hutters' trade fair is one idea which is being considered. The Reforesting Scotland Journal regularly carries articles on hutting. Many hutters are members of Reforesting Scotland and receive the Journal twice a year. The Facebook group has a healthy discussion of ideas and now has nearly 6000 followers <https://www.facebook.com/groups/118307858251185/> You could be amongst them if you aren't already.



Written by,  
Donald McPhillimy






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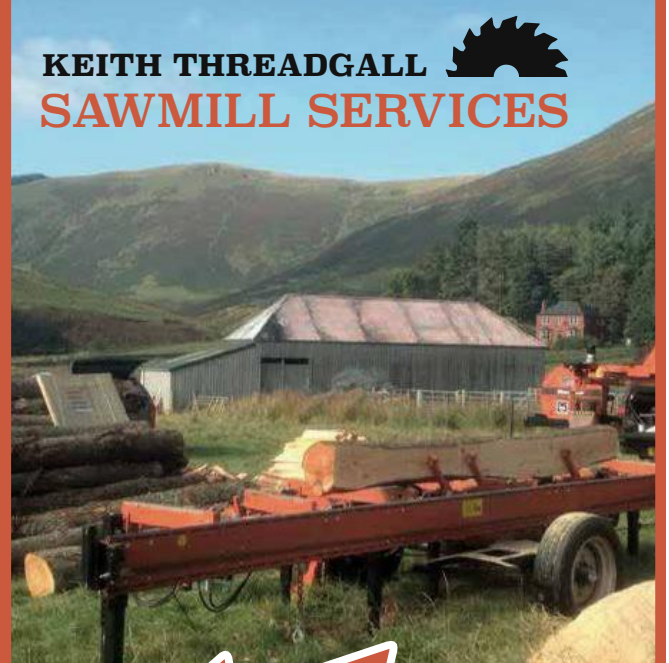
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## YARD VISIT - TREESHAP

Sandy and Fiona now live in North Connel near Oban after moving there three years ago for a lifestyle change but spend most of each week at their yard on a smallholding near Linlithgow. Sandy ran a successful tree surgery/forestry business employing up to 14 people for many years, he still carries out tree surgery but now is also contract sawing, selling firewood and planks and making furniture from large pieces of timber. He still carries out tree surgery and fells and extracts timber using his Unimog and timber trailer and has a large log stack awaiting sawing. Before he starts milling in volume, he's planning to build a drying shed and a solar-powered kiln. Not forgetting a house to live in.

He started in tree surgery in Aberdeen after leaving Clinterty college with student of the class award, working at Balmoral and National Trust properties among others. Like many other tree surgeons, he worked for a time in Germany and New Zealand perfecting his skills and learning new and traditional techniques.

Sandy's decision to dramatically reduce his business was due to an injury claim by an employee. No health and safety rules were broken, but the risk of another claim was too great to continue employing staff.

His yard has two agricultural sheds (built for tree surgery equipment) and he has one of the biggest bandsaws in Scotland, a static (electric) Woodmizer WM1000, with a 1.7m throat, which he uses mainly for contract sawing of massive logs. He also runs a mobile Woodmizer LT40 for general cutting jobs. He uses a telehandler for moving logs about the yard and the Unimog with its crane is also handy for this.

He does his own sawdoctoring with a Woodmizer sharpener and setter, which is particularly useful for the big bands on the WM1000.

Like many in the tree business, his company is vertically integrated, felling tree, extracting and transporting logs, milling, chipping and firewood processing, selling planks, beams and bespoke furniture. Sandy also intends to produce finished timber, and will soon acquire a planer-moulder.

The tree surgery business required investment in machines, equipment and sheds, and this means that his timber business can move quickly, rather than having to wait for capital to invest in essential kit.

A friend helped set up a small workshop in one of Sandy's sheds, he was a cooper by trade and retired but still made smaller barrels which were shipped world wide. Sadly, he died recently, and so the workshop is unused for the time being. Sandy hopes that it will be used again soon, adding value to some of the timber that he will produce.

As a result of his tree surgery work for Edinburgh Zoo for many years, he has supplied them with 50 tons of larch cladding for the tiger enclosure and climbing logs for the gibbon enclosure. He expects more unusual orders from contacts made during his years as a tree surgeon.

Being close to the M9, handy for Edinburgh and Glasgow, and close to a popular garden centre, Sandy hopes to set up a showroom for direct sales of furniture and finished timber to the public in addition to larger-scale milling to order. His yard and sheds, which are relatively quiet now, will soon be full of bustle.

Sandy is hosting Woodmizer open days on 27 & 28th April. His yard is well worth a visit.



Written by,

Sandy Crook & Fiona Davidson







**Forestry Commission Scotland**  
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

## FOREST ENTERPRISE SCOTLAND NICHE MARKET NEWS

As reported in the winter 2017 edition of "The Full Circle", Forest Enterprise held its first "niche" electronic timber sale in December featuring large diameter Douglas Fir, oak from Primrose Bay in Invernessshire and hardwood firewood from Perthshire.

The electronic sale or "ESale" as it is referred to on the Forest Enterprise Scotland webpages, marks the adoption of a more structured and open marketing approach which seeks to engage existing and new customers to specialist timber from the National Forest Estate.

It is necessary to register in advance on the website to bid for timber parcels on ESales land in the run up to the December sale event a number of new businesses signed up including some businesses from England, clearly indicating that the Specialist Timber market place is not restricted to Scotland. Once registered, customers will receive notice of all future Forest Enterprise Sales as they come to market and, where Specialist Timber is concerned, additional information will be provided to promote roadside or standing timber with unique qualities.

There was a positive market response to the December Sale which saw 400 tonnes of Douglas Fir and a 140 tonnes of hardwood being sold to a range of Scottish based businesses, including Scottish Wood based at Inzievar.

It is planned that two further Specialist Sale events will be held in May and December 2018, with the intention of offering customers a growing selection of timber for a diverse range of processing applications and end uses. The hosting of ESale Specialist Timber events signifies a clear commitment by Forest Enterprise to increase availability of specialist timber in parallel with its core business of softwood supply to industrial scale processors.

A growing component of Forest Enterprise Scotland's hardwood management is its resource of native birch woodland which extends in terms of non designated and to over 7000 hectares. Much of this resource is juvenile or semi mature, is partially stocked and is often located on challenging terrain. That said, a potential exists for productive management and producing home grown hardwood firewood and future saw logs. As a first intervention in what is often naturally regenerated birch, respacing is a standard practise for trees of between 7 - 12 years old and followed by either a second respacing or early first thinning where minimal timber is recovered.

This type of approach done "at cost" is being challenged by a Forest Enterprise Project which is seeking to reduce costs for early management interventions while still securing silvicultural benefit. While the purest vision might be a proliferation of non forest products such as race hurdles, brooms etc coming from these woodlands, a more industrial solution in the form of biomass could be the answer for early intervention given the scale of woodland areas. During a recent industry survey it was found that trees down to a diameter at breast height of 2cm were suitable for harvesting and biomass markets. Coupled with the increased availability of medium sized forest machinery able to work on more sensitive sites and reduce ground damage this could open up new possibilities for cost effective management of native birch woodland.

If it were possible to secure a positive return from early management interventions in birch woodland this would serve as an effective primer for unlocking future timber to serve Scotland's growing firewood and processing sector. The first open market sale of small diameter birch is planned to be advertised on ESales in 2018 and I will feed back to readers of The Full Circle how this initiative is progressing, along with other features.



- An exemplary stand of birch at Drumchapel, Glasgow



- Pole length Douglas Fir extracted by Duffy Skylining at Primrose Bay, west of Inverness



- 8.0 meter Douglas Fir logs waiting for uplift at Primrose Bay



Written by,

Douglas Halliday

FCS Forest Enterprise Scotland Niche  
Marketing Officer



## DELIVERIES AND DEVELOPMENTS – FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND

### Visits by the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity

As reported in the last edition of Full Circle, Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity (whose portfolio includes forestry) had an informative and enjoyable visit to Scottish Wood on 14th June to learn about the work, outputs, aspirations and hopes of small scale processors under the ASHS umbrella. Many thanks to Jim and Maggie Birley for hosting. Clearly also impressed by the finished products from SFMA members displayed and the enthusiasm of Malcolm Mack whilst at Inzievar, he then arranged to visit to the premises of Angus and Mack on 22nd November to see at first hand the quality and beauty of Scottish hardwood timber products along with the design and care taken in their production. Those aspects alone however were not the only important points he took away from these meetings – the clue is in the Cabinet post title, namely Rural Economy. Hard facts on sectoral employment, investment, turnover, growth potential and aspirations are what really makes an impact on him. It is therefore vital that you continue to support efforts by the ASHS and SFMA Chairs when they seek to gather such information, keeping it as accurate and up to date as possible to enable them to lobby most effectively on your behalf.

Continuing Government support, through FCS currently, is directed towards the key goal of sector growth, and hence the ASHS committee is asked to specify focused products for delivery each year e.g. training days with supporting written material, promotional items (such as Full Circle) and events (such as After the Storm exhibition in conjunction with SFMA and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh) to seek to enable more efficient processing of, and potentially product innovation using, Scottish hardwood and niche softwood timber. In this way your growth helps the growers by providing an expanding market for their raw material allied to a greater capacity to pay for quality.



### The Solar kiln project

The current design and creation of a large solar kiln is an example of what can be achieved in partnership. It combines a good idea, practical experience & business acumen with some financial support from the public sector. Whilst a finished product was not available for Mr Ewing to view in November he was made aware of it as a “work in progress”. The idea and initial groundwork came from Ulrich Loening, scaled up by Malcolm Mack and other ASHS members with financial support approved through the Harvesting and Processing (H&P) Grant element of the Forestry Grant Scheme. Though it wasn't a straightforward product to apply for, with careful thought by Malcolm and good support from the FC Scotland Case Officer in Central Conservancy, the H&P application was successful. I look forward to seeing it fully operational over this summer and learning more of the outcomes from the proposed monitoring to seek to explain just how, and how much, it helps the drying of difficult timbers such as oak - then to hear of it being replicated in other yards.



### The Harvesting and Processing Grant Option

The benefits of the H&P Grant option of the Forestry Grant Scheme to the sector were acknowledged at both meetings, but the desire to extend it to support a degree of secondary processing and add greater value to Scottish grown timber were conveyed eloquently to Mr Ewing. Following this, FC Scotland was able to draw on the published output of “The ASHS Guide to Secondary Processing of timber” (March 2017), and close liaison with the sector, to offer up an additional “Secondary Processing” element to the H&P Grant for the first time in late Sept. This was always going to be more niche, but is important none the less to those who want specific equipment to help them develop and grow their businesses. Having been able to get this new element approved quickly it was possible to be included in applications to a bidding round closing at the end of October.



Despite the very tight turn round time I was delighted to see that two bids were submitted, and am very pleased to say that both applications were successful - so congratulations to both Angus Ross and Scottish Wood. Rome wasn't built in a day and so refinements and improvements are always possible in light of experience. I met with Anna Nichol, SFMA Chair, and Malcolm Mack towards the end of January to discuss lessons learnt and suggestions from those who had looked into or applied for the secondary processing element of the H&P Grant. I am also happy to hear the views of ASHS members on either element of the scheme with a view to refining and improving the process.

The latest round closed on 31st January for spend in 2018/19. Though it is the intention that there is only one round per year for receipt and consideration of bids, it is always possible that an additional round is opened up later depending on the level of interest and the availability of finance. Be aware that this general pot is also open to the forest nursery sector (with a different set of criteria) so there is no guarantee of another round later in the year. I will keep the ASHS and SFMA Chairs informed if there is to be one.

### Hardwood Grading and Valuing - the movie!

Picking up on a good idea from Jim Birley, FC Scotland recently commissioned a short film on grading and valuing hardwood timber to capture Gavin Munro's expertise. Shooting took place over two very bright but cold days in December with release scheduled for March or April 2018. It was no surprise that Gavin proved an excellent lead male (Oscar nomination to follow no doubt), but I don't think that the "supporting actors" have much of a chance of any honours! The short film is aimed at forest managers, owners or new entrants to the small scale hardwood sawmilling sector to give them an understanding of what adds or reduces value, options on when and how to sell and a short look at some end products.

I am still on the lookout for a good launch opportunity in March or April, after which it will be available on the web through FCS and ASHS websites. Ideas for a suitable launch event and other promotional opportunities are welcomed.



will be a new Forestry Bill (currently going through the Scottish Parliament) supported by a new Scottish Forestry Strategy so it is incumbent on the sector to contribute its views when called upon and to continue to prove its worth to the Scottish Government. ASHS is fortunate in having a very "can do" committee, but they need every member to offer to do a bit more this year - and into the future - to make the best of the opportunities, maintain activity and hence maximise the support available to enable delivery.

This includes submitting bids for equipment to gear up for the future through maximising draw down of available grant money, as well as engaging with timber sellers and collaborating on timber purchase if required and working together on training and peer support. Other Government bodies may be the best place to look for assistance in the future so time must be spent this year looking at the wider support landscape.

There have been a lot of bids for mechanical firewood processing equipment under the H&P Grant since it was opened, so poorer quality timber is clearly being brought out. The challenge is for you to access and add real value to the better quality log material. Where this firewood comes from thinnings then everyone can benefit, but you will need to be proactive in finding new products, new markets and the right timber.

"If you aren't moving forward you are going backwards", so the saying goes, and I hope that other articles in Full Circle will provide you with some pointers: the impetus for change however must come from within.



Written by,

Derek Nelson  
FCS Policy Advisor

[www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk)

### Looking Forward

The level of Ministerial interest made 2017 a note-worthy year for the sector, and as 2018-19 is scheduled to be the last year in which FC Scotland exists the next 18 months are likely to be extremely "interesting". The proposal is for Forest Enterprise to become a new stand-alone Agency, with the policy and grants side being absorbed into the Environment and Forestry Division of the Scottish Government as a Forestry Division, or similar. There





## NEW TOYS AT SCOTTISH WOOD!

### *At Scottish Wood we use our Edger a lot!*

With its twin blades - one moveable on a slide and easily changed for different board widths, we use it for parallel edging some of the off-saw boards, but more than that, its great for prepping the cutting lists that we do from our stocks of random width kiln dried Scottish hardwoods. If boards are blanked accurately through an Edger, they are then a doddle to finish off through planers or four-cutters.

We learned early on that cutting hardwoods to standard widths doesn't work. Its done in the softwood industry (and we do it with Larch), but for home grown hardwoods any twitch or movement in the drying process from internal stress (or bad drying) renders that nice straight six inch board that came off the saw useless as a nice straight six inch kiln dried board.

So we do wide boards, mostly cut through & through, and having an Edger to break these dried boards down is invaluable.

But it's tired now, less accurate, and limited in what it can do. So, when Derek Nelson of FC Scotland announced a tag-on to the existing Harvesting & Processing grant to include support for small businesses in secondary processing (a result of the Cab Sec, Fergus Ewings's visit to ASHS last year), an application to replace this machine was a no-brainer.

But... when an opportunity like this comes up, your mind begins to wander and the horizons expand!

One thing that has always bugged me during various timber viewing travels, has been the sight of big racks of hardwood logs prepped for the burgeoning firewood market, and often mixed in with these are oodles of drool-worthy, dead straight, whistle clean three meter lengths of... Ash, Sycamore, Birch... and even Oak and Elm. All destined for the firewood processor.

Now, a Wood-Mizer is fine for breaking down the medium and large hardwood logs, but when it comes to smaller stuff they're slow, and sawn volume cost goes up.





So we wondered... would the H&P grant consider helping us take on a new challenge? Well, as it turned out... Yes!

Maggie and I had recently paid a visit to Novar Estate near Tain, and seen their new Wood-Mizer Small Log Processing Line in action. It looked the biz. So, to cut a story short, in mid February two lorries arrived from Poland, and we took delivery of... a log infeed deck, a remote head LT70 Saw, an incline conveyor and a transfer table. AND, a new EG300 Edger/Multirip. New Toy seventh heaven!

If all goes to plan, this kit will allow us to profitably source, cut and kiln these better-than-firewood smaller hardwood logs and turn them into product.

And this should fit into our current policy of trying to coax, steer and nudge people away from Oak and more towards the beauties of Scotland's other hardwoods.

Oak is clearly the trend... its all Oak, Oak, Oak. Can't think why when you compare its looks with some of the stunning colours, character and grain of... Ash or Elm or Sycamore... and my personal favourite, Beech.

Beech is often written off as being dull, probably because the industry has traditionally demanded white Beech, and anything with colour is rejected. But if you source your Beech from some of these massive "senators" of trees that have reached their life end and have either blown down or are losing limbs and require felling, the "flamed" pattern of colours you can get from these, mixed with a touch of spalt, is stunning. Boards from these can look so delicious that people just hang them on the wall. But the sad fact is these old trees are generally not considered to have commercial value, and so very few of them ever make it out of the woods or beyond where they drop (they're also often huge, and difficult to move).

So, I'm sorry you Oak lovers, but the cost of Oak at Scottish Wood has been creeping up-the-ways over time, whereas the other timbers have stayed the same, and may even go down! (I never said that!!)

Before I bang on any more, please, if any of you would like to come and have a drool over new toys, get in touch with Nick, [coordinator@ashs.co.uk](mailto:coordinator@ashs.co.uk) and book a place on the ASHS Sawing Day on March 23rd.

***See you then***



Written by,

*Jim Birley*

ASHS Chairman | Scottish Wood







## LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BACK ROOM GANG/MOB/TEAM

Stuffed away dusty backrooms across the country a very different type of sawmill lurks. Not for them the adrenaline of marching through the mud to whisper tenderly to the latest bit of kit. The overflowing in-tray complete with its dreaded bottom layers of stuff, even they do not want to touch.

But in truth they are equally important (more so really) as the PPE\* clad folk who make round logs flat. Also in truth they are largely unappreciated. From accounting to IT networking, tax returns, human resources, marketing (I think I might scream the next time a certain sawmill says we have never had to market) - many jobs they have no idea they do, or how to do until they Google. They do all the work that the more stereotypical sawmill does not want to mess his new working gloves with.

But who are these people - some we may know, many we don't - so its time to break open the doors and claim our rights, as sawmillers, as backroom folk, as the CEO's that we actually are.

This year one of our own has been recognised and will be part of an exhibition on international woman's day. Maggie says "the interview itself was great and helped me recognise not only the work I am doing, but also how many strands of my previous lives came together to shape the business."

### SIDE BY SIDE INTERVIEW MAGGIE BIRLEY

This text will also appear in the story exhibition, Faith in Gender Justice, curated by Side by Side Scotland.

Maggie Birley is the Co-ordinator of a small team running a sawmill in Fife. It's a social enterprise; the profits from its trading arm are covenanted to Dynamic Woods, a charity set up to revitalise local woodland culture, and to develop sustainable uses

for Scottish hardwood. It supplies Scottish homegrown timber and promotes ethical Scottish timber as a renewable resource. Much Scottish hardwood is labelled as 'waste' and is underused or dumped. But there are many uses to which these native species can be put, creating jobs and training, and securing the future of local woodlands.

Maggie describes herself as an 'accidental sawmillier'. She and her husband Jim went to work in El Salvador in 1992, during the peace process at the end of El Salvador's civil war. They worked with returning refugees, who were setting up community-based social enterprises which had taken over plantations. Previously these had been sugar-cane fields, an industry which was unhealthy for the workers, badly-paid seasonal employment where the profits went to mostly foreign multi-national corporations. Now the local people were planting and growing trees to serve the community. Maggie was particularly inspired by women community organisers setting up local shops more geared to people's needs, when those run by men sold mostly alcohol and tobacco!

When they returned to Scotland, Maggie and Jim were eager to raise awareness about the importance both of sustainable planting and of community organising. They found a piece of land which was going cheap because it was a former open cast mine, and very polluted. For two years they lived with their children in a caravan while they built their own house-the trees that were dying because of the bings, and which they couldn't sell were used to floor their house. Maggie describes how they reclaimed and rehabilitated land surrounded by ancient woodlands which had been used for open-cast mining. The sawmill provides timber for boards and kilning from primary sawing, and for craft use from secondary sawing. Their IKEA-style on-site showroom means that costs can be kept down and customers do not impede the work of staff. So people can visit, spend as long as they like, see the mill at work, and buy beautiful hardwoods and realise that it is not just a possibility for rich people.

The mill was set up on an ethical basis, but is actually very successful commercially. It employs nine people, has an apprentice scheme, links with local craftspeople and uses its profits to make grants for such things as giving children from local schools a forest school experience. As a woman in a traditionally very male work environment, Maggie found that initially the large industry insiders were patronising and dismissive, and not inclined to take her seriously. However, they now pay attention, because they have seen that Scottish Wood is able to be not only sustainable and local, but also efficient and profitable. She believes that she has been able to challenge and begin to change the language of the status quo, which is often risk-averse and scared of doing the wrong thing. Her confidence in speaking to 'professionals' about different economic models has grown considerably.

Maggie doesn't want the business to get much bigger, and lose its local rootedness. Rather, she would love to see 'a sawmill in every parish', and for people to see the potential in Scottish hardwood and in forest radicalism.

For Maggie, faith inspired the whole thing. In El Salvador, sent by Scottish Churches World Exchange, and working with a Baptist church motivated by liberation theology, she found that, freed from western cultural expectations, the Bible came alive in Spanish, and gave a voice to people who had been silenced and oppressed. This experience was then, and remains still a huge inspiration.

I would like us to talk and share more.

- Best advice I was given on start up - use Accounting Plus\*\* (its been great, does every thing from invoicing to PAYE)
- When our business nearly got closed down because our insurer pulled out of the market- use NFU Mutual\*\*

\*PPE - Personal Protection Equipment

\*\* This is a personal view - ASHS does not endorse specific companies



Written by,

Maggie Birley  
Scottish Wood



## REBUILDING THE WOODEN PIER AT CULROSS

***When Culross was granted Royal Burgh status in 1592 it was its strategic position on the River Forth that was key.*** The Charter from James VI states that Culross “is situated on the water of Forth in a situation most suitable for shipping, and was the best port in those parts of the firth for the export and transport of salt and coal, with the result that the said town of Culross has increased our taxation, augmented by coals, customs on coals and salt to the annual sum of £200, and also conveniently provided an ordinary crossing, the ferry, at the same town for our lieges on their travels, between our burgh of Stirling and Queensferry, “



Culross harbour is far older than this. The miraculous journey of St Mungo's mother Queen Thenev to Culross in a coracle suggests it was known as a landing place in the 12th Century or earlier. St Mungo went on to build a new settlement at Glasgow but Glasgow's coat of arms all relates to events at the Abbey and harbour in Culross.

The Culross piers are gradually being restored by a local group of volunteers and whilst most of the work involves dry stone walling and barrowing large volumes of concrete the work also involved the reconstruction of a 52m long timber platform in the intertidal Culross foreshore. It is thought that this timber platform was constructed around 1820 and linked the landward pier to the seaward Old Pier. Before this, the Old Pier was an isolated loading platform used by larger boats.

Some excavation revealed that the timber upright posts had been nailed to sawn 10"x2" cross ties and set in deep trenches. These cross ties had been weighted down with stone rubble. With difficulty, we removed the old timbers from the mud and found them to be perfectly preserved below the surface.

Experiments with 14" diameter larch logs from Scottish Wood at Inzievar were successful although putting the built-up frames into place was very difficult. An elderly JCB minidigger was brought out of retirement to dig trenches at low tide and the frames were built up on the foreshore and wrestled into place. The worry with using the digger was that a track would slip off or the engine fail on an incoming tide leading to a sorry end for an old excavator. Tracks did come off and fuel filters did block but blind panic is a useful accelerator.





The frame height varied considerably depending upon the depth of mud and bedrock but by the end of summer 2015 all 20 frames were in place, replacing the old timbers. The next Spring, all the frames had settled into place and a laser level allowed a reasonably accurate datum to be established for the walkway height.

We received funding from the Common Good Fund (available to former Burgh towns) so were able to purchase 10"x2" larch to build the rails, deck and handrail so the construction of the walkway was relatively simple using stainless steel fixings and cordless tools.

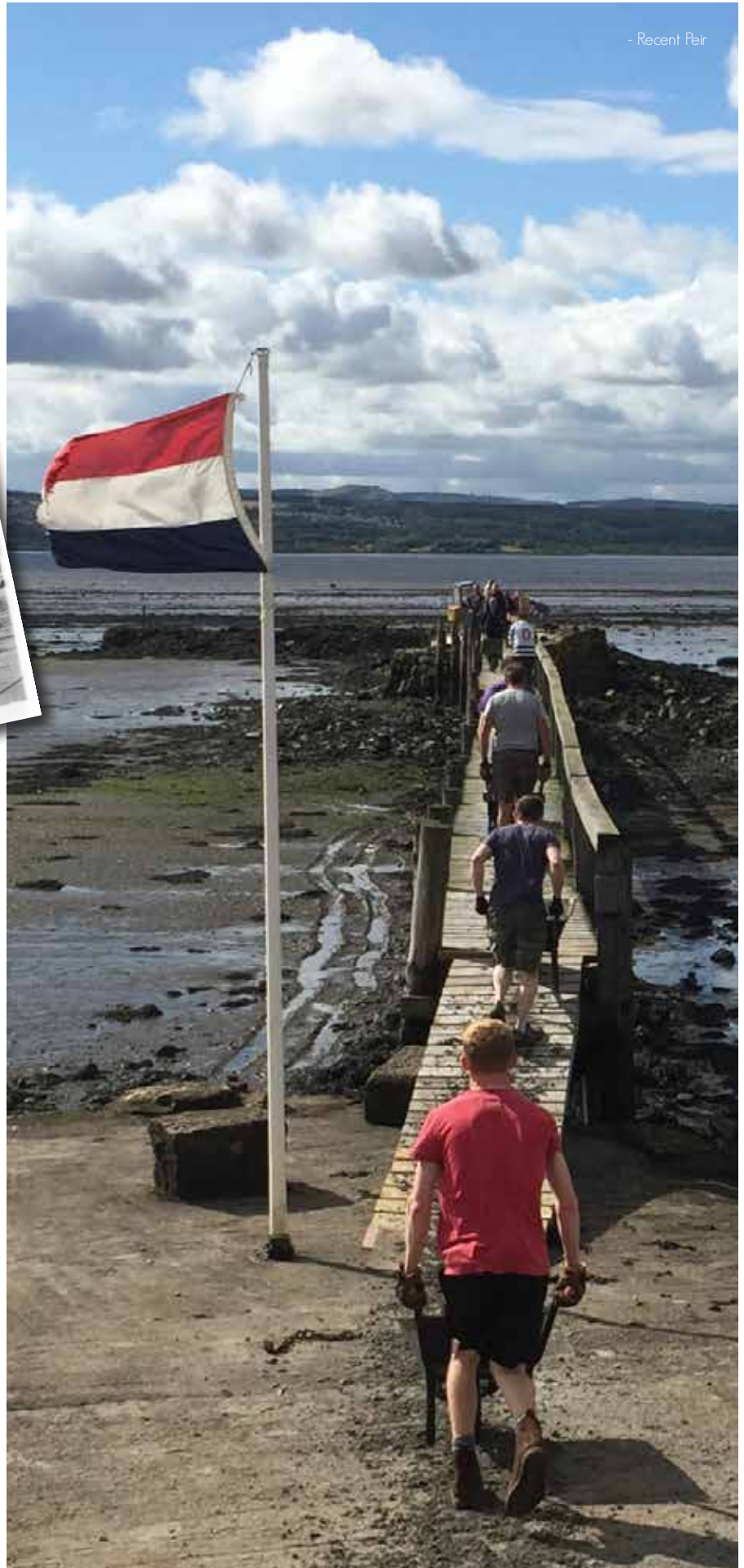


- Postcard from approx 1905

This allowed access to the seaward Old Pier and reconstruction of the oldest part of the stone structure could begin.

A post card from around 1905 shows a group of ladies in bonnets on a day trip and a man seated on a large mooring post. Three yachts lie afloat next to the pier with the timber walkway in the distance. The pier is clearly no longer for export of coal and salt. Those in camera clearly have leisure in mind. The OS map of 1861 shows three mooring posts but when restoration works reached the old pier they had all gone. We decided to purchase three replacements in oak from Scottish Wood. They were too heavy for the minidigger to lift so the simple solution was to push them into the river on a spring tide with a rope attached and float them into place.

Photographs also show that the Old Pier had a top surface of stone but by the time we began work the mortar had washed out and the top courses of stone were gone. Without the labour or skills to lay a



- Recent Peir



stone surface we built up the stone walls but have used concrete reinforced with glassfibre strands to cap the pier. It is certainly less attractive than stone but it is easy to give concrete a non-slip texture. Some future generation can tackle the job of capping the pier in stone!

There is still at least three years work to finish the work on Culross Pier but it is most definitely back and in use. We have a large number of visitors drawn to the southernmost point- just search culrosspier on instagram-so we have signs asking visitors not to push stone off the unrestored part and instead to put stones onto the pier if they can. Coal is not likely to return- even the Longannet power station chimney is due for demolition- but the pier endures.



Last spring, the BBC was making a series on the human body and brought in cycling legend Danny Macaskill to demonstrate proprioception, the ability that gives humans the ability to be aware of our limbs position in space. A perfect chance for Danny to cycle on the handrail. For the camera he made it look tricky, fighting for balance. When the filming stopped he cycled the handrail as though it was 4 foot wide. He happily stopped and waited until the drone got into position in the fresh breeze.



***What would the 16th century burgers of Culross have made of it?  
Is this another of St Mungo's miracles?***

Written by,

Ken Munnoch





## TWO BAGPIPE MAKERS

### Nigel Richard

Nigel is a bagpipe maker with a workshop in Pathhead. He started out by himself and built up the business to 4 people - 2 full-time, 1 part-time and himself - but it's now back to just himself and he's hoping to cut down further as he's well beyond retirement age. One former employee now has his own bagpipe workshop and another is planning to set up on his own.

Nigel set up 30 years ago, and he says he's still learning. There are a multitude of techniques and tricks in making all of the parts for a bagpipe. He makes bellows-blown pipes - Scottish small pipes and Border pipes, rather than the better known Highland Bagpipes. Interestingly, Pakistan is the country which produces the most bagpipes, however the bulk of these are exported for the tourist trade in Scotland and elsewhere, and are not considered to be serious musical instruments.



He uses mainly Mopane and African Blackwood plus small amounts of boxwood, pear, plum and satin bloodwood for various parts of the pipes. Bellows boards are made from elm, cherry and maple, which are suitable for routing, boring stitching holes and inlay work. He avoids laburnum, because its dust causes irritation. Recently he has been using more home-grown timber especially cherry, although it's still small amounts - about 12 boards a year, mostly from ASHS members. It's good to build a relationship with suppliers so that they know what you want and you know what they can produce.

He reckons to have sold about 1000 sets of bagpipes over his career and, between his reputation and website, has no problem getting orders. The market for small pipes has been growing for many years, with the odd dip, and he sees that trend continuing. He is in the process of retiring this year, but knows that it will be difficult to disappoint the many people wanting a set of his bagpipes.







Julian started out as a musician, and so has a deep understanding of how the shape of a pipe affects its acoustic qualities. In 1984, he set up a workshop in Edinburgh (where he lived at the time), concentrating on making English smallpipes, but soon became involved in the Scottish smallpipe revival which started over 30 years ago. He moved to Peebles in 1993. He is a self-taught woodworker, having learnt the basic skills at school and has expanded his skills to leatherwork, metalwork and even tool-making in order to make his instruments.



He works by himself, but collaborates with others, especially Callum Armstrong in England, in researching and developing new and old designs. Some English regional pipes have been entirely lost and so he and Callum have worked from drawings to recreate them. Apart from a bellows-maker, who comes every year for a week and makes enough bellows boards to last for the rest of the year, he

## Julian Goodacre

Julian Goodacre operates out of a small workshop in Peebles, its walls lined with boxes of chanters, pipes and all the parts that go into making bagpipes. He makes a variety of the less well-known bagpipes, like the Leicestershire smallpipes and the Cornish Double pipes. There are many, many different types of traditional bagpipes throughout most European countries. Indeed, bagpipes were introduced into Scotland later than the rest of Europe. The earliest written record of bagpipes is 150 years before any mention in Scotland.

He occasionally buys wood from sawmills and also acquires it from his brother's farm in Leicestershire. He uses a wide variety of species, nearly all being selected for hardness and suitability for turning and carving, although having a beautiful grain is also a consideration. His favourite wood is plum, but other fruit woods like apple, pear, cherry and even mulberry (when he can get it) are much used. Also, yew, blackthorn, hawthorn, hornbeam, almond and holly. Boxwood is a substitute for ivory (as is animal horn when available in bigger pieces), and bellows boards are always walnut. He avoids laburnum (traditionally used for bagpipes as a substitute for African Blackwood) as it gives him a nasty cough.





makes every part of the pipes. He aims to produce one set of pipes per month - and limits his output to maintain quality. All his bagpipes are bespoke- each customer may have special requirements which can be incorporated. Julian offers a choice of wood and of colour for the hand- sewn leather bags. He also carries out after- sales repairs and maintenance.

The wood is used to make drones, chanters, blowpipes, stocks and bellows but boxwood and animal horn is used for inlays, mounts and ferrules. The smallest piece he uses is a tube pipe 3 1/2" long and 5/8" in diameter, so he can make use of very small pieces. Tension wood from branches and uneven (especially spiral) grain can be a problem. He cleaves logs to follow the grain rather than sawing them into planks as this helps with stability. He seasons wood in a small gently heated cabinet for long periods and submerses each finished piece in a tank of linseed oil and turpentine giving it a vacuum and pressure treatment. This stabilises the wood and makes it less liable to movement from heat or humidity. It also improves the tone and imparts a lovely deep sheen to the wood

He finds selling is not a problem, and always has a waiting list. Orders come from all over the world. Word of mouth recommendation brings most customers and he has an informative website. He also exhibits in France at an annual show which brings pipe-makers from across Europe, including France, Spain, Italy and even Lithuania. He reckons that there are about half a dozen smallpipe makers in Scotland and a similar number of Highland Bagpipe makers (although these latter are much bigger companies).

He is past the age at which most people retire but is happy to carry on doing what he loves, making pipes, developing and perfecting new designs and resurrecting lost pipes. He doesn't use a lot of timber, but what he makes is exquisite and shows off the beauty and variety of home-grown hardwoods.





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