

Edition 1 - Spring 2015

The Full

CIRCLE

The journal for The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

Featuring...

SOLAR KILNS IN SCOTLAND

Ulrich Leoning

FEATURE YARD VIST

Pol Bergius, our first sawmill profile...

SFMA INTERVIEW

Interview with Scottish Furniture Makers Association member Angus Ross...

FEATURE ARTICLE FROM FCS

Forestry Commission Scotland



The Full CIRCLE

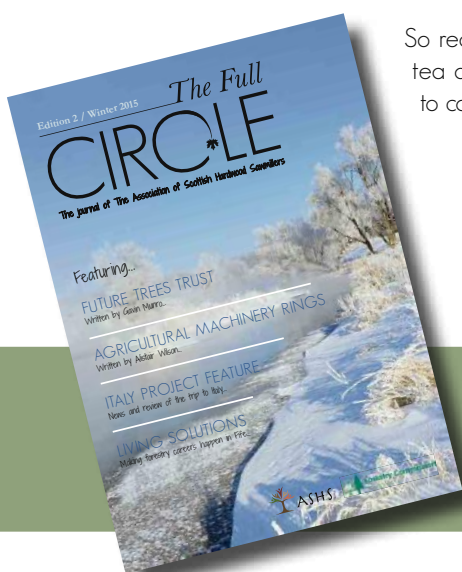
The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

WELCOME TO THE FULL CIRCLE

The premise of this journal is to provide a balanced look at the Scottish hardwood and premium softwood industry in the whole. We aim to make it as varied as possible across the working field, for diversity and interest. We hope to persuade as many people as we can within the industry to join us and put forward their views, thoughts and stories. This approach will make it fresh, interesting and informative to our readers. As the saying goes a picture paints a thousand words and this is something we will encourage and champion over the coming years. We wish to encourage everyone in both the ASHS and SFMA memberships to have a go.

In essence this is not your standard industry journal, it doesn't cater for one specific working group, rather it is designed to provide interesting insights into how other people work. The plan is to broadly inform rather than specifically educate, and in so doing encourage openness and a willingness to share knowledge and best practice. There has been very little editing within this journal and we wish to keep it that way, preferring an open discourse (within reason) for all those getting involved.

The most positive aspect of a publication like this is the possibility of an exchange of knowledge between likeminded people across an industry, who outwith this platform will have little opportunity of connecting. Over time we will all get an understanding of how each level within our industry works. This will surely lead to better business relations and connections. In turn this will provide employment opportunities and an increased turnover for all concerned.



So read on and enjoy. Gently educate yourself, along with a cup of tea or coffee. If inspired by what you read and think you would like to contribute, get in touch and be in the next copy of The Full Circle.

Happy Reading!

All the best, Steve McLean

ASHS Chairman

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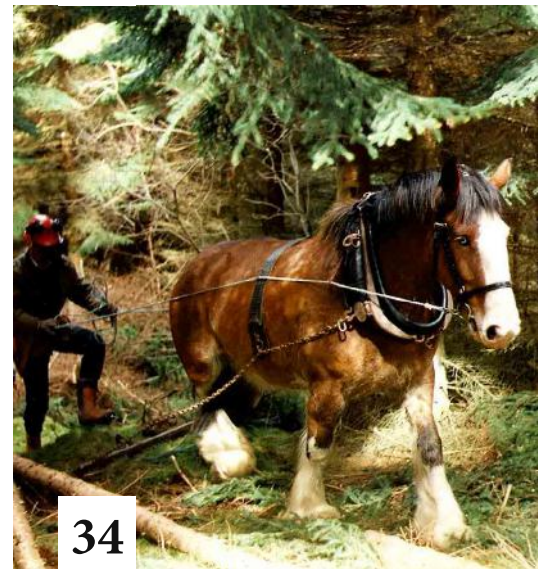
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www.ashs.co.uk

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Broader Membership.
New Journal. New Website.
New Beginnings...

Printed on Evolve FSC 100% Recycled paper
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ASHS NEWS & MEETINGS

April - October 2015

A lot has happened in the last year of the ASHS calendar! We have resolved our membership issues which had been dragging on for a number of years. We have developed a logo / brand which is clearly displayed here and within the centre spread of this journal. We have brought our website up to date. We have now fully developed the journal that you are now reading! We have set up the ASHS facebook page which will become the forum for our members to discuss our journal articles and forthcoming training events, and we are in the process of developing an 'app' on which to display the journal on various electronic devices. This is being developed by a team at Napier University. We have amended our membership structure to accept associate and retired members; Jim has a more detailed look at this on page 5. We have also set up our next overseas visit to Italy, the details of which are discussed in Jake and Malcolm's article on pages 14 & 15. The FCS has introduced a niche market officer, also discussed in more detail by Jim following our news page. Ulrich's article on page 16 on solar kilns in Scotland has brought some exciting news as Ulrich has offered ASHS the licence to develop and market these kilns (obviously much to be discussed before this can be finalised, but potentially a fantastic opportunity).

All in all it has been a busy year! Now, with a new financial year just around the corner, we plan to build on these positive moves with a number of ideas on the table for discussion. So watch this space and see where we are going from here in the winter edition of 'The Full Circle'.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1. **Friday 24th April:**
Next ASHS Yard visit & meeting will be held at Patrick Baxter's Yard, The Wood Place, Lanarkshire Hardwoods, Girdwoodend Farm, Auchengray, Carnwath, Lanark, ML11 8LL. The agenda with timings and details will be emailed to all members shortly. All welcome!



2. **Monday 1st June - Friday 5th June or Monday 8th June - Friday 11th June:**
Flying into Venice. Research trip to the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy to visit the Italian Chair District.
3. **Friday 31st July:**
Provisional booking for ASHS yard visit and meeting, details TBC
4. **Friday 11th September:**
Sawing course to be held at Scottish Wood, Inzievar Woods, Oakley, By Dunfermline, Fife KY12 8HB. Full details will be posted on our facebook page shortly. This course will include lunch and coffee and be free to full and retired members. Associate and SFMA members welcome for a small charge of £10
5. **Tuesday 2nd September:**
Article deadline for the Winter edition of The Full Circle.
6. **Friday 2nd October:**
Publication of winter edition of The Full Circle.
7. **Friday 16th October:**
Kilning course to be held at Scottish Wood, Inzievar Woods, Oakley, By Dunfermline, Fife KY12 8HB. Full details will be posted on our facebook page shortly. This course will include lunch and coffee and be free to full and retired members. Associate and SFMA members welcome for a small charge of £10



Written by,
Steve Mclean

www.dovetailscotland.com

ASHS OPENS UP TO ASSOCIATE & RETIRED MEMBERS...

Associate membership of ASHS is now launched.

People or organisations with an interest in the full circle of making best use of Scotland's woodlands and forests, can now get involved and be kept informed by becoming an Associate member of ASHS.

For many of us, joining ASHS and talking to other small saw millers, seeing their operations and the way they tackle the challenges of processing and marketing Scotland's broadleaved trees, has been an invaluable part of learning our trade and developing our business.

The Association has amazed new members with its openness, friendliness and willing to share knowledge and best practice. There is frequent collaboration: working on orders that are too big for single members, buying larger parcels of timber together, and cooperative marketing.

Other benefits include...

- Training Days - covering a range of operations, including kilning, timber grading, valuation, machining, and marketing.
- Meetings involving visits to a wide range of related local projects (including some weekends)
- A good working relationship with Forestry Commission Scotland including opportunities for joint working and lobbying.

Put all these together, and its easy to see why we get membership enquiries from people and organisations from either side of sawmilling: from the growers, landowners and foresters, right through to furniture makers, house builders and architects. With the new Associate Membership, we look forward to welcoming all those who are interested in using our local broad leaves.

What ASHS members say about the benefits of being part of a group...

“*ASHS membership has been invaluable for us. Chatting*

with other millers and bouncing ideas off them means I don't have to keep re-inventing the wheel. If I have a problem, the chances are someone else has already had the same problem.”

“*My business insurance was cut by more than 50% following the lead from another ASHS member.*”

“*I learned to saw from an ASHS member. Now I have my own sawmill.*”

Full ASHS membership; £100 per annum includes...

- Subscription to The Full Circle
- Business website listing on the ASHS website
- Subsidised access to ASHS training events and continuous learning visits
- Access to all enquiries via the ASHS website
- Occasional subsidised overseas visits
- Access to resources on members only section of the website
- Able to join the ASHS board and have a say
- Timber discounts from some ASHS members

Associate Membership; £40 per annum includes...

- Subscription to The Full Circle
- Basic website listing on the ASHS website
- Access to ASHS training events and continuous learning visits at a reduced cost
- Timber discounts from some ASHS members

Retired Membership; £20 per annum includes...

- Subscription to The Full Circle
- Subsidised access to ASHS training events and continuous learning visits
- Timber discounts from some ASHS members

How to join ASHS...

- Visit our website www.ashs.co.uk
- Click on the **Register** button on the top right hand corner of the screen.
- Fill in the registration form as requested and click register.
- Click **Membership Fee** in the menu on the left
- Choose one of the 3 membership options:
Full, Associate or Retired You will then be taken to our secure payment server.
- Fill in the registration form and the Bank Account details.

This will set up a Direct Debit which will be taken annually on the 1st of April. We will inform you by email 3 days before this happens. Print this and file it as your business invoice. Make a note of your username and password as you will use these to access the member's area on all future visits.



Written by,
Jim Birley



EXCITING NEW DEVELOPMENT:

Full time Niche Marketing Officer to assist accessibility of FES logs to small scale timber users.

Over the years, Forest Enterprise Scotland and ASHS have been looking at ways of improving the accessibility of FES logs to small scale timber users. It has always been challenging for us to secure small parcels of timber from the National Estates, who are used to working in thousands of tonnes rather than just the odd lorry load. So now ASHS welcomes the appointment of full time Niche Marketing Officer Douglas Halliday. An exciting move that builds on previous work, including Log Shops and small local sales

Based in Dunkeld, Douglas will act as the hub at the centre of the wheel, coordinating enquiries, needs and desires from ourselves, and marrying these with the myriad timber opportunities coming from a diverse range of felling and thinning operations throughout the country.

For FES this kills two birds with one stone; meeting demands to make Scotland's timber resource more accessible to small timber users, while at the same time getting better value from the many small scale parcels arising from management activities throughout Scotland.

To make this work, effort must come from both sides. FE have appointed Douglas, so now its up to us to make best use of him.

Both ASHS and FES recognise that the current bidding process, procurement laws, and a detailed administrative system, makes it difficult for FES to sell to the small guys. At a recent meeting, discussion between ASHS and Ken Sinclair (FES) and Douglas Halliday bashed around several new and exciting ideas..

- An easier payment system: simplification of the current contract and payment system by using on-line credit card portals, or an Ebay type bidding and buying process.
- A credit system; whereby timber could be paid for after it had been cut and sold. However, changes like these will take time to grind through the legislative framework of Government purchase and procurement rules. Watch this space!



Written by,
Jim Birley

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OAK FRAMES IN SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND

We have cut all sorts of material at the mill for all sorts of projects. One of the most fascinating was for Stirling castle Great Hall Roof. That project started my interest in historic framing. The fascination with oak frame was so great that we periodically put together teams to construct a variety of oak frames for a variety of uses. Studying frames both locally and further afield has yielded all sorts of interesting phenomena.



These days we expect to buy timber pretty much off the shelf and if we allow 4-6 weeks we even expect it to be here from the other side of the globe. We are spoilt for choice. We have been spoilt really since the rise of steam and the resultant explosion of trade in the 19th century. But let us take a little look before that. The Midsteeple in Dumfries town centre was originally finished in 1709 and we supplied oak timbers for the refurbishment.



When originally built roads were poor and the forest cover in the southwest was around about 1%. Choice was not too great. Before they even hired an architect the town council procured the most difficult commodities to come by; lime and timber.

The length of the timber acquired then decided the width of the building. If you bought the timber having built the walls you may well find that the timber was not long enough to span the building. Buying timber after making the plans is but a modern fad!

The oak construction layout was pretty much the same as had been used since the building of tower houses in the mid-16th century. The conversion was simple. The spanning timbers were roughly 8x8 inch and hewn. The rafters would be 8x4 inch being split sawn 8x8. Other members would often be 4x4" material split again by the hand held frame saw. This type of construction, although crude, was very effective for what was required and that building system remained until the roads improved in the middle of the 18th century.

Whereas the more populated east coast was busy importing material from Norway and the Baltic by the middle of the 16th century, Dumfries and Galloway kept its traditions of oak frame for a further 200 years. The reason was simply because we were further from the source of supply than anywhere else in Scotland and thus had to use home grown material or nothing. Oak of course was the best bet giving the most versatility in working as well as the best longevity.

Interestingly most of the constructional oak came from three main areas in the region. These were from up the Cree, up the Cairn or Clouden (a tributary of the Nith), and up Loch Ken side. All these areas were important for oak growing simply because they are also close to water which made the moving of timber so much easier. All of them too have good steep hills near the water so that the timber can be easily rolled down and into the stream.

The tower houses themselves would have grown their own material fairly locally so that no imports were required. Thus we find some of our oldest woodlands in the area are associated with castles and tower houses. Our oldest trees are oak around Lochwood Tower near Moffat that are over 450 years old. However places like Caerlaverock, Kenmure and Garlies are all associated with substantial plantings.

We still make the odd frame and oak still grows in many of the places mentioned above. As the roads are better timber can be gathered from further afield and we no longer float it down the rivers and burns as was once done not that long ago.



Written by,
Archie McConnell

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AROUND THE YARDS: BLACK DOG TIMBER



Working for a tree surgeon in Kircudbrightshire in the 90's taught me how so much valuable hardwood timber was wasted by being turned into firewood.

Then came a move to Dorset, and while visiting a show in Sussex what did I see but no fewer than three mobile sawmills doing demonstrations. Free demo of a Wood-Mizer LT40, a Forestor and a Trekkasaw! I was impressed, and the seed was sown. Note to self in the diary: buy a mobile sawmill. Yeah right!

A few years later I heard of a Wood-Mizer bought by a farmer nearby which was rarely used. Hmm, how about making them an offer? But no go, they wanted to keep it. Months passed... How about renting it by the hour run on the machine's Hobbs meter? Yes, they'd go for that, for what amounted to around £15 a day. And since they'd never opened the manual, and the machine was in quite a 'state', I had about 2 weeks of figuring out how it was meant to work, eventually getting it aligned and cutting straight.

So, in the last year of the twentieth century I had an open fronted shed belonging to a neighbour - the annual rent amounting to a couple of cases of Christmas cheer - and I was off. After a bit of practice for a local estate who had recently retired their old bench, "Black Dog Mobile Saw Milling" had ads in the paper bringing in requests to mill. Help and advice from

cabinet makers, timber framers and other customers was invaluable as I learned a lot at their expense. A year later I bought the machine from its farmer owner.

In the ten years that I was mobile milling down there, the value of home-grown timber became much more widely realised. Some big projects became well known for using - stop press - locally-grown and locally-milled timber! When we planned to move back north of the border, it seemed that we were moving from the centre of something really unique. The locally-grown timber scene had grown a lot in the short time I was in that area. A move looked almost foolish. But the trips up the length of the country for fun and family 'dos' were wearing a bit thin, so move we must, and the business would have to start again. The discovery of ASHS while all this thinking was going on was fuel to the fire, and in fact we have discovered a far more diverse range of customers than we ever imagined when we were ex-pats!



The hunt for a yard and somewhere to live - in that order - began. Trying to get a feel for where the competition was, cheekily I asked around and received great help and advice from ASHS members Frank Gamwell, Jim Birley and Trevor Bechtel, whose wife even went to check out a house for us on her daily bike ride! Joining ASHS was clearly a 'must do'. Perthshire seemed to be worth a look from the business point of view, and eventually, a series of coincidences landed us first the tenancy of a yard in Forteviot, and then a cottage in the same village.

"The hunt for a yard and somewhere to live - in that order - began."

Perthshire is central and Forteviot is minutes away from the A9 and the M90. Access to mobile work is as easy as it could be, and visiting customers have an easy time getting here. And good quality timber grows on our doorstep.

The Forteviot yard has a large steel-framed shed in which we store dry timber, tools etc, and keep our band-saw re-sharp equipment. There is a scrap of hard-standing and also two small paddocks. One of these, according to legend, has been called the Miller's Acre since the 11th century when it was granted by the king to the (flour) miller's daughter following the birth of her child - fathered by one of the royal princes! On this little field we very boringly store round and some sawn timber.

Much of the milling done at the yard is to order. Timber framers, construction firms, some furniture makers and boat builders have formed the majority of our customers. We also have a healthy local trade in beams or semi-finished slabs for domestic projects such as fireplace surrounds, garden benches and the like. Although much of our work is mobile sawmilling, we are evolving into a more home-based milling and supply operation, and I may need to take on more help as this process continues.

In the belief that kiln drying timber will increase its appeal to the market we built



a 5m long high density polystyrene 'box' in which to run a 4kw Sauno kiln (www.logosol.co.uk). This has proved effective, particularly as I get to know it better, and running costs are not excessive. However, I am keen to introduce some auxiliary wood-fired kiln heating into the system.

The pressure for any sawmill is finding more space. Although on this patch we are 300 yards from a warm fire at home (and late stints at the yard are rewarded with some great sunsets), a more permanent pad for the mill and some kind of basic under-cover drying facilities are needed for the next stage.

But an ever increasing interest in locally-grown timber is good for us, as is the potential for small suppliers such as ourselves to develop on-line sales for timber of all kinds. We can, just sometimes, feel optimistic about the future!



Written by,
Pol Bergius
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FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND

Helping to develop the niche and hardwood timber sector



Staff in the three arms of Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) - National Office Policy team, Conservancies and Forest Districts - are each delivering outputs which together help inform and grow the small scale timber harvesting and processing sector. ASHS and SFMA are two of the beneficiaries.

Derek Nelson (Policy Advisor, FCS National Office) and Douglas Halliday (FES Niche Marketing Officer) highlight some of the current and forthcoming efforts.

From the centre and with Conservancies

I recently regained the responsibility for National Office input to this sector, which has been interesting. My involvement started back in 1996 as Secretary of the Scottish Hardwood Timber Market Development Group, but then changed role in 2007. Since picking up the reins again in Feb 2014 we have been involved in the following areas

1. **ASHS Core Support** - to help co-ordinate and deliver a concerted, market/customer focused trade body which acquires, processes to a high standard and supplies sawn hard and niche softwoods. Additionally ASHS can bid for project based funding, to deliver activities which support the sector including expert led seminars on renewable heat, sawing & kilning (with related documentation), web redevelopment, marketing materials etc.

2. **SFMA Support** on the same basis. SFMA is a representative body for 60+ very customer focused individuals or small companies that can - and do - utilise home grown hardwoods. The quantities of timber may not be large but the quality of the end product and its related marketing offer help promote local timber. We want to work with the Association to increase the visibility of the product and hence a growing appreciation for Scottish grown timber.

3. **After the Storm Exhibition** - we are working with Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh (RBGE), SFMA and some ASHS members on an "After the storm" project. This is at the early stages, but will turn some high (and some not so high) quality hardwoods which blew down at the RBGE in 2012 into a display of fine furniture. An exhibition will be held for approximately 6 months at the RBGE sometime in 2017.

4. **Hardwood Grading, Valuing and Marketing seminars** for foresters and land managers are being restarted. The first of these one day events is scheduled for April near Dalkeith. We plan to work with Conservancies thereafter to roll these out across the country. This also builds on work done by colleagues, and being delivered by others, including: the Argyll Small Woods Cooperative & Regional Woodfuel events.

5. **Development Of Technical Notes.** "Scottish hardwood timber grading: a brief guide" is being reviewed, revised and (shortly) reprinted. (Technical Note 1/97) A guide to small and mini scale harvesting equipment, with a focus on safety requirements for the different types of small and mini systems on offer. This is scheduled for publication in late spring 2015

6. **Forest Research** we have commissioned FR to prepare and publish two guides, one each to growing oak and to growing sycamore in Scotland for quality timber. The oak report is due this spring



7. **SRDP Grant Scheme...** to support small scale harvesting and processing. The aim is to increase the number of small and farm woodlands, often broadleaved woodlands, under active management (from late 2015, first payments April 2016, part of the new SRDP)

8. **Field based demonstration event** - we are considering running a field based demonstration event to highlight good examples of the types of small scale equipment highlighted above which meets the Health and Safety requirements and which would be eligible for grant aid.

We are working with ASHS and SFMA to develop and deliver on three year programmes, but based on deliverables and it therefore requires all your support to achieve the outcomes. Collectively we also work with and support others active in this area. Success breeds success and support, but in hard financial times failure to deliver leads to critical resources of time and money being redirected.



Written by,
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FCS Policy Advisor,

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FROM THE “LOG FACE”

In January 2015, I started the role of Niche Marketing & Hardwood Development Advisor which is a new post within Forest Enterprise Scotland. My role involves building positive customer relations with the niche timber trade and serving as first point of contact for niche marketing enquiries placed with the ten Forest Districts covering Scotland.

I will also be responsible for co-ordinating niche sales events held in Forest Districts and updating potential customers in advance of future sales. From an internal perspective, there will be a strong focus on staff capacity building to increase knowledge by providing marketing assistance and facilitating formal and informal training events.

Currently I am working with Forestry Commission colleagues in Perthshire, Scottish Lowland and Aberdeenshire to market a range of niche sale events or Log Shops which are being developed for sale in February/March 2015. These niche sales mark a growing commitment from the Forestry Commission to generate more regular niche sales which will be of interest to ASHS & SFMA members and other processors with similar interests.

Every week, my role exposes me to another range of markets where there is a potential source for timber grown on the national forest estate to be used. It is very inspiring to be directly involved with such a broad range of dedicated people who add value to home grown timber in an array of creative and diverse applications. With a commitment to notably expand broadleaf species on the national forest estate, the future direction is to incorporate niche species within core business streams which is an exciting prospect for the future!



Written by,
Douglas Halliday
FCS Forest Enterprise Scotland Niche
Marketing Officer,

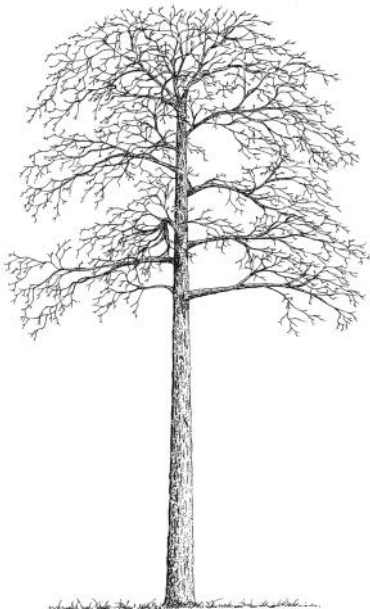
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“A FUTURE WITH BROADLEAVED TREES”

Future Trees Trust (FTT) is a registered charity dedicated to improving broadleaved trees by selective breeding to increase timber yield through better form, growth rate and disease resilience.



Since 1991, we have been identifying superb examples of seven species of broadleaved trees - ash, birch, cherry, oak, sycamore, sweet chestnut and walnut - taking seed or cuttings from these 'plus' trees and creating breeding programmes for each species.



The madness of importing hardwood timber

The UK currently imports around 95% of the hardwood timber it uses. There are many reasons for this, but foremost is the fact that many current broadleaved woodlands are of insufficient timber quality, climatic adaptability and disease resistance to provide an economically viable domestic timber resource.

It is environmental, economic and ecological madness that in Great Britain we have the climate, land, skills, experience and resources to grow many more of our own disease-resistant, healthy, wildlife-sustaining, productive timber trees, but do not do so. Our work aims to change that. FTT is trying to turn round the economics of broadleaved forestry. By selectively breeding for all the required traits - form, vigour, growth rate, apical dominance, climate adaptability - we aim to increase the amount of recoverable timber a tree produces by as much as 20%, shorten the rotation time and reduce the amount of silvicultural management needed during

a tree's lifetime. By achieving all these things, we firmly believe that more people can be encouraged to plant improved broadleaved trees, safe in the knowledge that the financial returns will be markedly increased in comparison to using current planting stock.

The madness of importing acorns

FTT were recently commissioned by Forestry Commission to undertake an assessment of 'Selected' seed stands on the Forestry Commission register of Basic Material for species of interest to FTT, to try to understand why so few of these excellent stands were actually being used from which to collect seed. The assessment highlighted a significant shortage of sweet chestnut stands and also identified much maintenance and access work needed to bring many stands back into effective production. A well thinned stand which allows for good crown development will result in greater seed production. Additionally, ground maintenance making access to trees for seed collection easier will make many of these stands economically viable from which to collect. Copies of the report are available at our website www.futuretrees.org

We are now working with Woodland Trust on identifying sustainable sources of seed from superb examples of 14 potential timber-producing species for which 'Selected' seed stands are not currently on the FRM register. Details of excellent individuals or stands of each of these species, including wild service, small leaved lime, aspen, yew, black poplar, London plane and others identified by a panel of foresters, nursery owners, saw-millers and researchers, will be sought by FTT and recorded on Forestry Commission's website.

Woodland Trust is also providing sites and maintenance for a number of clonal oak seed orchards using our plus trees. These orchards will eventually produce acorns of 'Qualified' status under FRM, will help

us address the annual problem of the chronic shortage of acorns adapted to UK conditions and help reduce our reliance on acorns imported from eastern Europe, where they are adapted to a continental, rather than maritime climate.

Improving resilience against disease

Another benefit to FTT's work is the increased resilience improved trees will have against a number of tree diseases. Because the trees in our trials and orchards are sourced from a wide geographic area, the genetic diversity of our breeding populations is high - significantly higher than in a typical forestry plantation - providing the trees in our seed orchards with an increased probability of resilience against many diseases.

Our work over 23 years on improving ash has proven to be especially useful in this respect. FTT in partnership Earth Trust, Forest Research and Sylva Foundation are working together on the Defra-funded Living Ash Project to ensure that ash remains a viable timber species for

the future by identifying resilient trees. You can help us with this work by looking for healthy ash trees, especially in areas where Chalara ash die-back is prevalent, tagging it and letting us know. Tags are free and available, with full guidance and instructions, from www.livingashproject.org.uk

Come and join us!

If you have an enthusiasm for our work or a specialist interest in any of the species we're currently improving (ash, birch, cherry, oak, sycamore, sweet chestnut and walnut), we'd like to hear from you. Membership is free but you'll be expected to attend occasional species group meetings and our annual Supporters' Day event, to be held this year at the Birnam Institute in Dunkeld on **THURSDAY MAY 21ST.**

Our members are drawn from across the forestry and ecology sectors and include forest managers, researchers, land-owners, saw-millers and nursery managers. Our co-chairs are Graham Taylor (Director at Pryor & Rickett Silviculture) and Geraint Richards (Head Forester, Duchy

of Cornwall) and our work is overseen by a board of Trustees chaired by Dr Peter Savill, former reader of Forestry at Oxford University.

So if you'd like to become a part of the work we're doing to ensure the survival and growth of broadleaved forestry in Britain and Ireland, do get in touch. You can contact me at tim.rowland@futuretrees.org or call me on 01453 884264.



Written by,
Tim Rowland
Future Trees Trust

www.futuretrees.org



THE ITALY PROJECT

Thanks to EU LEADER+ transnational co-operation funds, I was fortunate to take part in a number of professional exchanges to northern Italy since 2005, in the context of forest management and rural development. The Italian Alps and pre-Alps harbour a huge diversity of forest types, rich rural heritage, and strong wood-working traditions. These visits showed me how much small rural farms, wood processing and education initiatives can achieve when run by passionate people and supported by LEADER+ technical staff. The combination of collaborative marketing, technical input and targeted funding has been very effective.

During my involvement with ASHS and subsequently while chairing the association, it occurred to me that Italy could offer insights into collaborative working that would benefit the hardwood sector in Scotland. Naturally, there will be many aspects, such as the forest resource, geography and industrial history, that do not map neatly between our two countries. That said, from working with ASHS and also the Community Woodlands Association in Scotland, I think that collaboration is really about how people organise themselves around a common agenda to be more effective, expand markets and access support. In the community woodland sector for example, there are a number of successful models that can be applied widely with some tweaking to reflect local conditions. Seeing how the wood products sector has come together in northern Italy, and the collaborative approach they followed, would therefore be of great interest to us in Scotland and would also build on earlier learning exchanges by ASHS sawmillers to Ireland and Norway.

So, in consultation with forester friends at Italian consultancy Studio ForST www.studioforst.it/ on Lake Garda in Lombardy, we evolved the idea of a learning exchange focused on the 'woodland to workshop' supply chain in the Friuli Alps of NE Italy. The area has developed expertise in chair design and manufacture, with many SMEs specialising in providing timber or making components for the supply chain. Their recent collaborative effort is entitled Green District.

This is marketing the regional production's environmental credentials using FSC and PEFC certification:

The Italian Chair District is a production area lying at the heart of Friuli Venezia Giulia with over a century-long tradition of wood processing and manufacturing of thousands of chairs which are sent off to the most important destinations worldwide. Offering our customers an eco-friendly product with certifications stating that the materials used come from responsibly-managed forests is an important added value for our companies. It demonstrates that the manufacturing companies of the supply chain related to the Italian Chair District care for environmental issues and consider wood as an important resource to be protected responsibly. On these grounds the GREEN DISTRICT Project was born. It is an initiative which involves an increasingly high number of companies of the furniture supply chain and enables the world to get in touch with member businesses in a simple, direct and effective way.

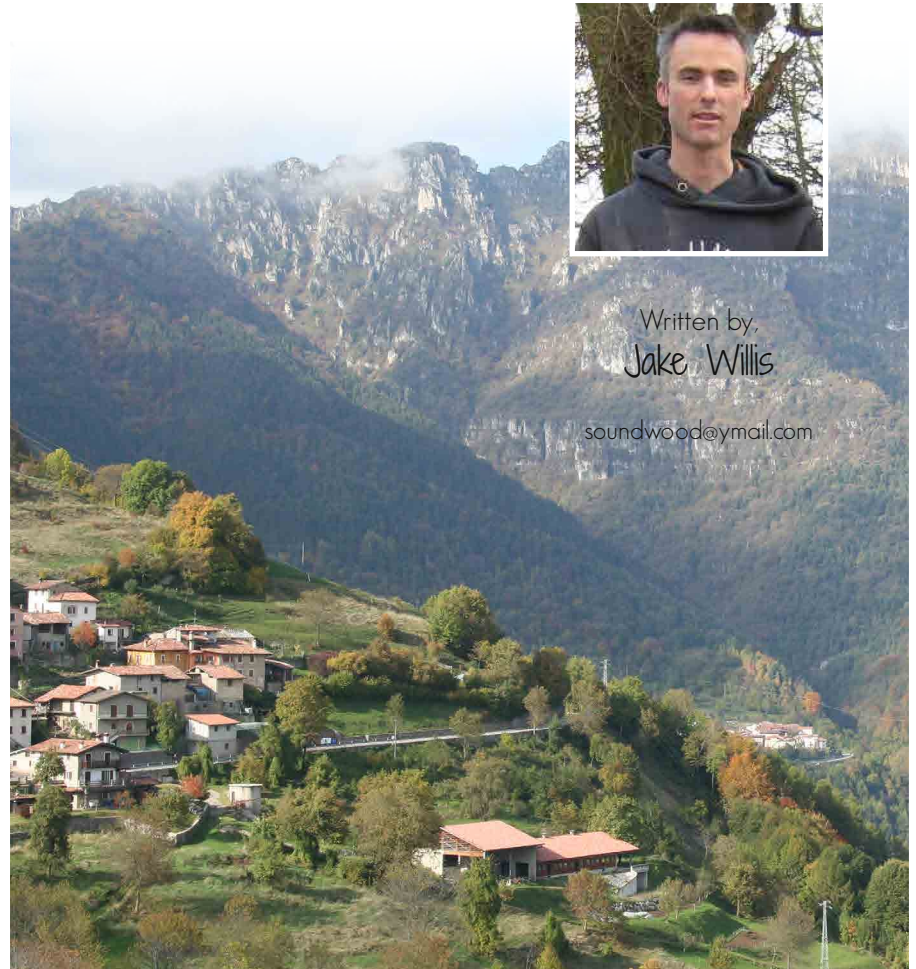
(source: www.greenidistrict.it/en/il-progetto)

We look forward to seeing this operating on the ground and putting Malcolm's questions to them.



Written by,
Jake Willis

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THE ITALIAN CONNECTION. PART 1

I was first made aware of the beginnings of this project at a recent ASHS board meeting at which I had become one of its newest members.

The basic premise was to arrange a trip to sunny Italy, specifically the northern areas which have a thriving forestry and furniture manufacturing sector supplying most of Europe with hardwood furniture among other timber products. My ears pricked up at the prospect as it would seem that this trip would complement an idea that had been growing in my mind for several years.

My background is very much based in design and specifically design for production. I have felt for some time that the wealth of talent and potential in both timber design and making in Scotland has never yet been fully realised in terms of production-based manufacture of timber goods. Through my recent membership, I have also become aware of the progressive and dynamic nature of the members of the ASHS organisation and could see that with their help and expertise this project could become a reality.

The Italy trip will be used as a research expedition to ascertain the potential for a similar style of manufacturing industry to be established in Scotland using the natural resources we have to hand as well as the reputation we have for quality Scottish products and Scottish design. We have already identified a number of potential product areas that could be developed over here but the main aim of the trip with regard to this project is to answer the following questions and come up with a strategy to implement them here:

- How did the industry start and what have been the key developments to build such a strong manufacturing and export position?
- What timbers do they use and why? availability? material qualities?
- What drying techniques do they use? is it standardised?
- How long from felling to production of components?
- Do the mills fell to order depending on end use or do they carry stock?
- Are there primary and secondary

processes before raw material goes to manufacture i.e foresters, millers, secondary processors (pre-production) final manufacture?

- Is the overarching organisation similar to ASHS? How does it operate?
- What is their route to market / is it led by the sawmills? manufacturers? designers? retailers?
- Where do they sell products to?
- What machinery do they use?
- What machinery is most vital to the processing?
- What sort of quality control do they employ?
- Do they have a code of practice?

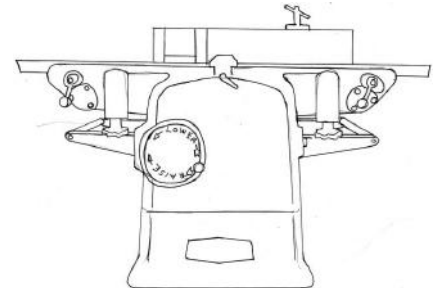
One of the main hurdles I have encountered over the years is the route to market for batch and mass produced items. Through ASHS and the Scottish Working Woods label we intend to set up a branding/marketing arm that actively promotes the manufactured products that our mills, makers and manufactures produce. The intention is that this will be a 'Red Tractor' style label that retailers and consumers will buy into from a marketing perspective.

We have taken the first tentative steps towards developing this but will be looking to gather as much data as possible from our Italy trip to help advise on this as well. A full report on the trip will be published in our next journal so please get your subscription in if you want to hear more!



Written by
Malcolm Mack

www.angusandmack.com



- Logo idea being developed...



TIMBER DRYING

The benefits of solar drying

I have never liked kiln-dried timber. Typically it suffers from internal stresses, which show up when you saw the boards lengthwise and the cut either opens up or clamps your saw-blade. Most people do not distinguish seasoning from drying. Seasoning takes time and relieves stresses in the timber. Drying, rather than seasoning, is what we all know about and measure regularly.

I have always liked solar energy. In the end, civilisation must come to live by the sun. It is mis-named renewable energy. It is actually perpetual, it goes on flowing whether we use it or not. Usage makes no difference to the supply, unlike timber which has to re-grow to be renewed.

So a life-time of wood working combined with decades of promoting more ecologically sound ways of living, led very obviously to designing solar timber drying systems. My efforts were stimulated some decades ago by meeting Dr Bob Plumtre, who had designed solar kilns for "3rd World" timber drying. He pointed out a crucial advantage of solar drying - that the sun doesn't always shine, even in sunny climes, there is always a daily night! Night-time cooling relieves strains induced in the timber during the day and yields higher quality dried boards.

Eventually I built a hot air solar panel system on our stables roof. Much easier to do than hot watersystems, because frost and leaks don't matter. On top of the sarking was a layer of foam insulation, then a space of 2cm and a layer of scrap perforated aluminium ceiling panels painted jet black, then another gap of 2 cm and then two layers of old standard garden frame glass. The whole thing was 4 glass panels high and 6 long, 24 doubled panels in all. Air could be blown through an opening in the sarking at one end from below the roof, flow through the air gaps over and under the ceiling panels, and back under the roof at the other end. Of course to hold all the panels and glass and allow air to flow along the whole length, demanded a somewhat complex framework holding everything in place. As the sun warmed the black panels, a thermostat switched on a fan

that blew the air through, and from the input into our main house through a 30cm square glued foam duct. This heated the kitchen for about 20 years. Air exiting from the panels could be at 90o on a sunny (not necessarily warm) day. A side duct also blew air down just below the panels, and through a heat exchanger to make hot water. The output from this, still warm, went through a plywood box large enough to take 3 meter boards of timber. Timber was stacked in the usual way; a splendid load of 25mm oak proved Bob Plumtre's argument, it was below 12% moisture and absolutely stress-free.

Eventually, after 20 years good service, this structure could not survive the weather and started leaking into the stables and rotted the rafters. By then we had given over our house to the 'children', and decided to do up the stables as a down-sized home for us. Historic Scotland didn't like the solarpanels because they spoiled the line of the roof, so to keep that line I decided to replace all the sarking (had to repair the rafters) with 4-layered polycarbonate sheet. In this way the whole loft becomes a solar-heated space. Warm air from there could be blown down into the house below, and complex solar structures were avoided. The fans were now 12 and 24V DC powered by 10-25W PV panels. This avoided the problems of a hot day mains power failure, which previously meant rushing up and opening air vents to let the heat out.



Vertical stacking of fresh sawn sycamore, Feb 2008. the stack was wrapped in card and warm air from the loft blown in until end of May.

This system started with mains electric fans while the house below was being built. For the upstairs large living room, I felled two sycamores (50 years old?) in our wood, in January, sawed them to 28mm in the mill, and stacked them on the chipboard floor vertically on their sides as in the photo.



Sycamore floor, 24mm boards up to 400mm wide, which after 5 years show max 5mm gaps between. These may need to be filled, or boards moved.

The whole stack was wrapped in cardboard, and the mains fan blew air from the loft continuously day and night. By the end of May the moisture was down to 12-14%, and we thickened and edged and grooved the boards to lay as floor, with tongues separately cut and the boards screwed onto runners with tongue flooring screws. We took a risk, with such quickly dried sycamore, notorious for warping, and boards up to 400mm wide. Now, after 5 years in this very dry solar heated room, the boards have shrunk a little, none have warped nor moved.

These experiences and others like them (not described here) lead to a heretical suggestion: That the high temperatures usually used in kilns are not needed, that very low humidity air, slowly flowing through the timber, is sufficient to dry it fairly quickly, and to allow sufficient seasoning to take the strains out. Very high quality boards result. Indeed, I argued about this with John Arrowsmith himself sometime in the mid-1980's. I wanted kilns to treat wood as though it was drying in a southern mediterranean atmosphere; John argued that this is not good enough and the more rapid hot moist air, carefully controlled, is faster and give better quality timber.

The next step was dictated by the need for dry firewood for our house. I used a gully between a brick retaining wall and a stone building, about 1m wide, to act as a log store. It was lined with chipboard and given a slatted floor 50mm above the base. A lean-to roof of chipboard was covered with a solar layer similar to but much simpler than the original solar roof of the stables. No insulation, merely black ceiling panels with 20mm spaces for air to flow above and below them, covered by a single polycarbonate sheet. Three 100mm holes near the top are fitted with fans to suck air through the warmed roof space into the store. The fans are driven by two PV 12V, 15W panels wired in series for the 24V fans. 100mm plastic pipes blow the warmed dry air down to the cavity floor slats on the floor. In this way, the air sucked in through the roof structure is warmed (even if only a bit on a cloudy day) and always at a low relative humidity, and is blown below the pile of logs in the store, and slowly rises between them. The temperature does not get above 40C even on a hot sunny day, presumably because of the total lack of insulation. But in the first trial year, logs of freshly sawn elm, from crown boards up to 100mm thick cut into firewood, dried to below 14% moisture during the summer. This was the best firewood we had ever had; my impression is that one gets much more heat from extra dry wood like this.

All this leads to the obvious need to build a full size kiln on the same principles. A container, as usually used for kilns, need not be insulated and would preferably be side opening, so that timber can be loaded with a fork lift. The fixed wall would have the solar system as described above. Expanded metal, sprayed black in two or three layers provides the simplest commercial heat absorber, being a nearly perfect black body and having a large surface to transfer the heat to air. The inlet would be at the bottom and 6 fans fitted at the top blow the warmed air into the kiln. Inside plywood sheet would divert the air downwards, and adjustable holes in the sheet allow even distribution to timber, stacked with stickers in the normal way. This wall would face South, and the opening doors, North. The doors have openings at the bottom to vent the air. A kiln like this needs no foundation, no electric connection, no wheeled trolley for the timber, no insulation, but a waterproof roof to which one or two 100W solar PV panels are fitted. No need to pre-air dry the timber.

So you can have an autonomous kiln that needs no power, nor attention, with easy to load side opening. It can be delivered, put in the yard, filled with fresh sawn timber by fork lift and then left alone for the summer. Strain-free beautiful boards should result by autumn.

Now I am looking for a manufacturer or engineer to build the prototype and then market it. Maybe an ASHS member is interested or has suitable contacts.



Log-drying kiln between stone building and retaining wall. Roof covered in chipboard, black panels and polycarbonate. Fans blow the air sucked in through roof layers, down white pipes to under floor slats. Firewood in the far distance, other timber in foreground.



Written by,
Dr Ulrich Loening
 Formerly Lothian Trees and Timber

Tel: 01875 340541

SWW - THE SCOTTISH WORKING WOODS LABEL IN 2015

The Scottish Working Woods Label was founded in 2007 initially by a small group of ASHS, SFMA & Reforesting Scotland members supported by Forestry Commission Scotland. The label promoted local 'low miles' produce, sustainably sourced produce, and it was, when launched, ahead of its time in these areas.

Now, with widespread interest in sustainable local produce, and with fresh interest and demand for identification labels like this one, there is a renewed push within the member organisations to further promote this label; to gain more licensees, to sign up more member organisations and to increase public awareness. SWHA (Scottish Wild Harvests Association) has now formally joined ASHS & SFMA as a third member organisation.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCOTTISH WORKING WOODS LABEL

What it means The Scottish Working Woods label is a guarantee for customers that the timber or product is produced by a small Scottish producer, in Scotland, and that the raw material (timber etc) is grown in Scotland. The raw materials are, as far as possible, sourced locally to the producer and are produced in an environmentally friendly way. The benefits of using local timber are...

- Amenity - supporting the management of woodlands that provide landscape amenity and wonderful places for walking and recreation.

Economic

- Creating value in the local economy - adding value to a local natural resource which is retained in the local economy
- Wise use of a natural resource - Scotland's woodlands can produce large amounts of these products, which can be harvested without damage to the environment. The natural qualities of these materials - beauty, durability and tastiness - make them suitable for many different uses, although they have been largely ignored in recent times.

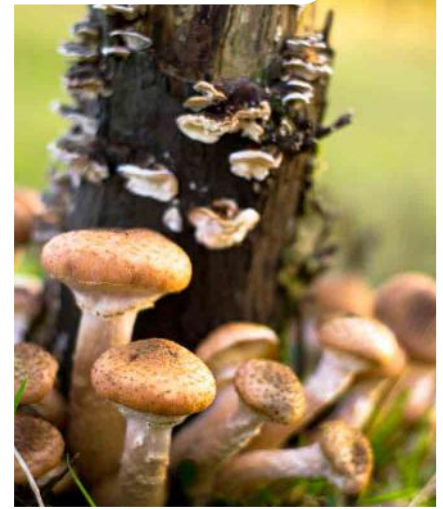
Environmental

- Biodiversity - encouraging interest in (and economic viability of) growing and managing native broadleaved woodlands which have a very high biodiversity value
- Cutting greenhouse gas emissions - reducing reliance on imports and long-distance transport
- Reducing waste - much locally produced hardwood timber would otherwise go to landfill sites.

Social

- Providing local employment - jobs in processing and manufacturing, and support jobs in forestry

Woodland Mushrooms



Oak dining set Patrick Baxter Furniture



Hollyrood Elm cabinet Dovetail Scotland

- Socio-cultural sustainability - traditional knowledge is often associated with woodland products, and by investing in these products that knowledge is maintained and strengthened in society. Similarly many woodland products are sourced from within remote, sometimes small, rural communities and therefore their sale helps to maintain these communities.

less than 50% of a company's products comply, then the label can still be used but only on individual products. When licensed, the business will receive printed labels and computer files to enable more to be printed or added to letterhead, website, leaflets, etc. The label can only be used on products which meet the label criteria. This means that the business can sell both labelled and non-labelled goods.



Sideboard TC Timberworks

How the label helps businesses

Label users have already found that customers interested in the source of their products are reassured by the messages carried by this label. It has had, and will go on having, publicity and marketing effort. The public is showing increased awareness of the importance of local sourcing, of minimising transport and of environmental sustainability, and this leads to choices when purchasing. Tenders often specify "FSC (or similar)" timber, SWW can - and frequently has - been used to secure these types of tenders. Often all that is required is a brief explanation of SWW's principles.

How businesses get to use the label

First a business needs to get a licence to use the label. There is a simple application form for this. There is currently no fee, although in future it may be necessary to charge a small annual membership fee. Products carrying the label must contain at least 90% Scottish raw materials. If the majority of a company's product lines comply with the label criteria then the label can be used on their generic marketing material and letterhead. If

How SWW is organised

Scottish Working Woods is a voluntary organisation that runs a label scheme. Its membership is composed of representatives from the sector associations; ASHS, SFMA & SWHA. SWW are keen to recruit more representative associations. Businesses wishing to use the label must be a member of one of these representative associations. This means they are known by their peers, and that way there is mutual monitoring which replaces the intrusive investigations of other label schemes. Businesses using the label get a licence and the terms of agreement are stated in the licence agreement. This is a legal contract between SWW and the licensee. The license can be revoked in the case of wrongdoing by a licensee.

Typical products and types of business that can apply to use the label:

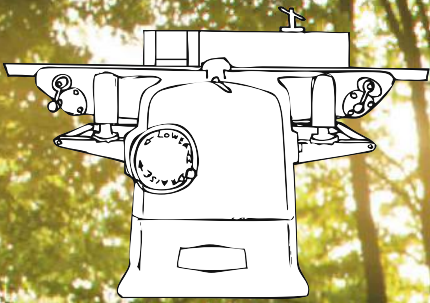
Wood, timber and timber products such as those supplied by most of the members of the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers who supply native and home grown timbers. Furniture and accessories,

joinery & building products. Increasing numbers of Scottish furniture and wood craft businesses are now using more and more Scottish timber in their products. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) - forest-derived edible goods, herbal medicines, decorative goods, aromatics, including makers of products using NTFPs eg dyers, decorative foliage products, food processors, charcoal makers, woodturners, woodcarvers, basket makers and allied crafts.

For further info and how to apply for a licence please see www.scottishworkingwoods.co.uk or www.facebook.com/scottishworkingwoods



Written by,
Patrick Baxter
SWW Chairman



Design Build project
Logo being developed

Training for members
Grading, SRDP, Health + safety
Visits to yards - sharing best practice
Visits elsewhere - get ideas from elsewhere
in UK and overseas



Innovation
Work with Napier
Develop Charred Larch Cladding
Hand held grading

Increasing number of members
Farmers days
Open days
Training leaflets
Mentoring new start ups



SFMA now has 62 members and
we often get involved in projects
together. Some furniture makers have even
become sawmillers.

Confirmed
ITALY TRIP
in 2015 to look at manufacturing ideas

Discussions always going on
WHERE WE CAN



National + international visits
to Norway,
Sweden,
Wales + Ireland

Our customers liked what they saw
and wanted something similar to
ASHS
SFMA

THE ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTISH HARDWOOD SAWMILLERS

Frank Gamwell's Kit
sawmillers, the Forest

ASHS IS B

ASHS Started off as 6 m
over 32 with a combined

STRENGTHENING THE INDUSTRY

THE JOURN

A

back to the kitchen table to see
AN GO NEXT...



App development with Napier University for
The Full Circle



NEW
Journal + Website
LAUNCHED



New
Membership Structure



NEW
Logo

Joint marketing
Website, Literature etc

Partnership working Forest
Policy Group FC + FE
Niche marketing Officers
Funding for Journal



ASHS
worked with the FC to develop
markets in Scottish larch Cadding

Hard-wood conversations
In 2008 + 2009 ASHS brought
together folk from all sectors in
the hardwood industry from tree
nurseries to architects and
craftsmen to explore the
opportunities and barriers in the
industry



Local yards are one of the
most efficient -
we supply more jobs per log
than the larger yards, if we
have limited resources we need
to maximise the jobs we can get



Need to assure customers that our timber is not
only sustainable, but benefits the community,
environment and local economy.

SWW

ASHS
NEVER SO FAR...

STRENGTHENING THE INDUSTRY

When table, a bunch of
Forestry Commission and cake.

BORN 1999

Members, now there are
turnover of £4.1 million



Written by,
Maggie Birley

www.scottishwood.co.uk

SFMA INTRODUCTION

What a tremendous idea, publishing a journal to bring together the various elements of the Scottish Hardwood Industry. From small acorns, great oak trees grow.



Scottish
Furniture
Makers
Association

www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk

Mind you acorns require simply the right weather, soil and protection from wild beasts to ensure they turn into fully fledged trees. The Scottish Hardwood industry feels like it is a niche market, which needs gentle tending, great faith that there is something worth striving to develop and a commitment to making it happen when the going gets tough. All members of the Scottish Furniture Makers Association depend on their ability to find buyers for what they make at the price they ask using the materials of their choice. This endeavor depends entirely on their partnerships; suppliers, the quality of their work and the things they make. So a journal which makes them feel part of a community, which enables experiences to be shared and perhaps gives some pointers along the way, can only be a good thing. In the following pages you can read about Gavin Robertson, Angus Ross and Ross Samson. All three are established in their business' and doing very different work. Enjoy the articles and don't be shy about contacting them, they will be very happy to share their experience in more depth; I'm sure a social pint wouldn't go amiss if you happen to be in their area. Working together is an underlying theme for SFMA this year. New members, new ideas and the concept of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. We have some collaborative projects starting which we have a chance of realizing with your input.

SFMA NEWS

SFMA had its AGM at the end of January, in a room hosted by the Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden. Thank you to Ian Edwards for letting us use this top quality space. We covered a lot of ground that afternoon and now welcome onto the committee five new people: Andrew Harvey, Tom Percival, Colin Semple, Max McCance and Euan MacKinnon and one returnee Ross Samson who takes up his role as treasurer. We have retained Dave Powell as secretary, Ali Easton, Chris Scotland, Alan Dalgety and myself as chair, with another year to serve.

Our outline plan for the next three years includes this journal, and a website refresh, plus a continuing presence at exhibitions and our own show. The journal is a starting point for ASHS and SFMA to do something together and we are optimistic as to what it could become. The ASHS trip to Italy has sparked some ideas about the Scottish furniture industry and what it would take to start a fully Scottish branded furniture product, marketed under the Scottish Working Woods label and attractive to consumers.

The annual exhibition last year at the John Hope Gateway gallery initiated a new project, which is starting to take shape. The timber felled in the Botanics by the great hurricane of January 3rd 2012 has been stacked safely for use in something more ambitious than firewood. These were trees planted during the last move to the Inverleith site in the late 19th century. The list includes much oak, some elm, birch, hickory, cedar and much pine. FCS is supporting the milling financially, which takes place in early March. I'm writing this before this happens and I expect some photos to be posted on facebook by the time this is published.

When we did this last time with the Edinburgh elms, the pictures at the milling yard showed a very happy group of makers in what looks like their natural playground. Opening logs to see just what is inside is always exciting. 'After the Storm' is the project's name and we are working with the Botanics to get it underway. Watch this space.

Our members' survey pointed very clearly to a desire for support in business growth and to share knowledge. The discussion pointed out some easy wins which Michaela followed up

with a New Battle Abbey workshops visit on Friday 27th February. Photos are on our Facebook showing what happened and what you could see. Colin Semple now has the brief for members and is developing some ideas to improve our member involvement. Ali has started a google groups chat network which will enable us to connect far better than we have. If you have been a member of a yahoo group, it is similar but better.

There is also business support available from members - nothing formal. In my experience of speaking to our members, it is clear there are many ways for a maker to earn a living, doing what you want in the place of your choice. So, one way to find out is to look though our website and find a member who seems to be doing something successfully and call them up; ask some questions. What is the worst that could happen? Men and maps I here a few of you say.

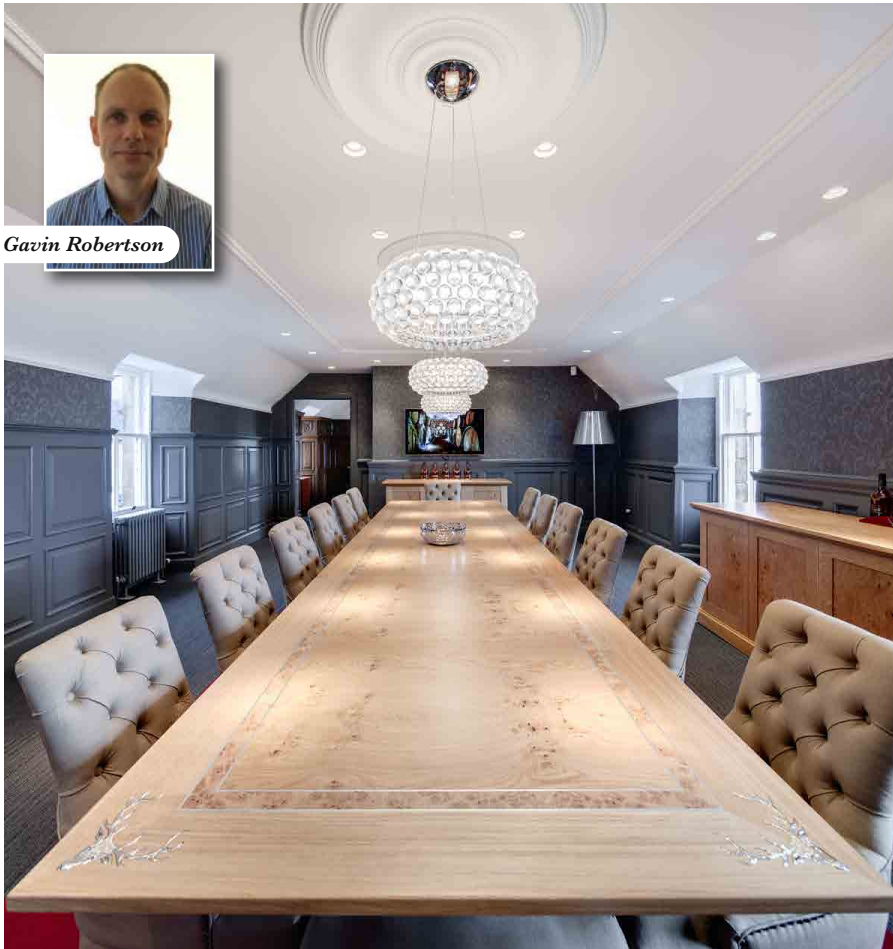
SFMA have two stands at the Glasgow Arts Fair from 24th to 26th April. This is an inaugural venture in the old Fruitmarket in the merchant city. GM Events Ltd is running it and if it is anythinglike their Aberdeen Arts fair it will be a huge success. Gerry is very exhibitor focused and wants it to be a success for you. Seeing 3D furniture amongst a room full of 2D pictures works very well. FCS is supporting us here and we are publicizing the event through H&I Scotland and Artmag. Keep an eye on our Facebook site and these publications on the news stand.

Six members have signed up for Aberdeen Arts Fair again this year, 4th - 6th September in the Music Hall on Union Street. We also hope our annual exhibition is in Glasgow this year. No venue secured yet but Ross Samson and Alan Dalgety are working on it.

I'm sure there will be more. I hope it is a good year for all of our members.

Written by,
**Jonathan
Rose**
SFMA
Chairman





Gavin Robertson

SFMA/ GAVIN ROBERTSON

One of the most satisfying aspects to making high quality, handmade furniture, is that every day is different. As a furniture maker who is constantly creating new designs and working with new techniques, Gavin Robertson particularly enjoys this side of the creative process, an aspect of the business that comes about through engagement with clients, and this is perhaps the reason that the work is so varied every day. When a client seeks a piece of furniture that is not mass produced, Gavin feels his job is to work within the brief each project presents. His work is by its very nature 'client-driven' as he is creating pieces that are personal and specific, according to each individual circumstance.

However, with clients based around the UK and well beyond, one might assume a business based in the Highlands might not be ideally placed. Quite the opposite is true, according to Gavin. A commission may start with a meeting, but the design process evolves using electronic communication. This way of working allows Gavin to design and make pieces for clients anywhere in the world, albeit there is often a Scottish connection. For example, the owners of a company in Antigua had a link with Scotland and knew they could source exactly what they wanted, which resulted in Gavin making office, reception and boardroom furniture for that particular company.

Gavin's interest in working with wood began in his final year at school in Inverness. He went on to study in Buckinghamshire, and later worked in London before going to make furniture in Australia. In 1993 he returned to Scotland and set up a workshop at Abriachan outside Inverness. After a few years, business was expanding at such a rate a bigger workshop was built so that larger pieces of furniture (boardroom tables, for example) could be created.

Nowadays, Gavin still produces domestic furniture in addition to corporate work. This corporate work continues to provide diverse challenges. He has recently been commissioned by a hotel to produce thirty-two chairs and fourteen tables, an unusual commission which sprang from the client's desire to create interiors that were carefully considered and unique.

Gavin has also designed furniture for a whisky company, producing a whisky cabinet for Harrods in London - in order to display fine whisky, he produced the cabinet from the finest Santos Rosewood with a contrasting white interior made of Scottish ripple sycamore.

Gavin says that while he often uses oak in his designs, the choice of wood is frequently inspired by the client and the setting. This can bring him to use ash, American black walnut, burr walnut, Macassar ebony, and many more. He uses imported wood that has been grown for this sort of purpose, but also home-grown timber where it is appropriate. For example, he used local timber in a commission for a church. He is always interested in trying new techniques, and often likes to incorporate veneers into his designs. He enjoys creating inlays using metals like aluminium, silver, copper or brass.

In addition to the workshop, Gavin has a shop in Nairn where the Interior Design side of the business is based. This space acts as a showroom dedicated to more affordable furniture, much of which adheres to an Arts and Crafts tradition. However, he believes that his business is primarily driven by word of mouth. In his case he feels it took five years to start the business and ten years before it was fully established. He used to exhibit at numerous exhibitions, but nowadays that is not as necessary as it was at the beginning.

While Gavin has created specific projects for corporate clients, he is keen to continue to produce domestic pieces too. He feels he designs within an Arts and Crafts tradition in that there is often detailing or elements from that style, alongside clean and simple lines, and good, honest construction. For a commission, he likes to personalise his work for each client..after all, in seeking out a master craftsman, the client is paying for *'the very best.'*

www.grfurniture.com

Written By
Jane
Robinson



SFMA/ ANGUS ROSS

'Design is the key.' So says Angus Ross, a furniture maker who has been running a successful business from his workshop in Aberfeldy for over twenty years. This commitment to good design is vital to Angus as he believes a quality piece of furniture must offer something unusual, something that is not only practical, beautiful and clever, but unique too. The context of a commission can be vital to a design where function, space, location, and history can provide a starting point which ultimately inspires the final concept.

With his own woodland on the banks of the Tay, Angus is fortunate to be able to harvest his timber himself. This timber is predominately oak, but he also has alder, ash and hazel. Being able to manage a woodland from which to select timber, he believes that using local wood for making furniture inspires new approaches to sustainable mixed native woodland. He is interested in the vernacular aspect of furniture and the regional differences that have occurred over time...the Orkney chair, Fife stools, high-backed chairs from Aberdeen.

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However, while this interest in the vernacular may inform him, innovation is essential to creating useful pieces within a modern context. Angus specialises in bending solid wood, using the ancient art of steam-bending, a technique which allows him to use local green (not dried) oak to create his pieces. In his workshop wood is bent, moulded, sculpted and folded using both traditional craft techniques and the latest technology. The results have brought him many awards and a high profile across the industry and beyond.



Angus Ross

As a small company which likes to offer personal service, there are now four people involved in the business. An apprenticeship scheme is run and every year two or three interns gain experience with Angus and his team. With a background in product design, he retrained in practical furniture making and is now committed to education, keen to pass on skills and knowledge to the next generation of furniture makers.

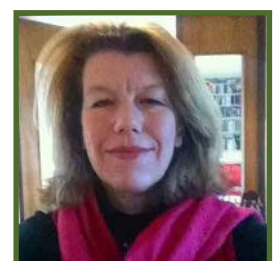
As his business continues to grow, Angus believes it is vital not to stand still. Business is often won off the back of exhibitions, and he continues to exhibit across the UK and well beyond. He recently took his Whisky Cabinet to China, a piece that was specifically chosen to create interest in the Chinese market. It turned out to be a popular piece, and not merely because the Chinese associated Scotland with whisky. In a nation where good craftsmanship is highly prized, the norm regarding furniture in recent times has been mass-manufacturing of standard pieces. To see the use of solid timber and high quality craftsmanship in a piece of furniture was refreshing and greatly appreciated.

Scottish heritage is important to Angus in that not only is he using wood from a sustainable local source, but there is a Scottish flavour to the manner in which he works. A knowledge of vernacular furniture informs his design every bit as much as his intimate understanding of how timber performs and reacts to certain environments and treatments. He emphasises the fact that wood is natural, non-toxic and biodegradable, so that if damage occurs, hardwoods can be repaired and resurfaced. A piece of furniture of this sort is a long-term investment which not only lasts but improves with age.

Despite the fact that high-quality, hand-made furniture is a relatively specialist field, Angus is optimistic that Scottish furniture-making is set to flourish and grow. He sees new people coming into the industry who are not only well-trained but have a youthful drive that he considers vital to the long-term future of the craft. As long as Scottish furniture can have an edge and offer something different in terms of design, the future looks bright.

www.angusross.co.uk

Written by
Jane
Robinson



SFMA/ ROSS SAMSON OF SAMSON'S JOINERY



There are moments when Fate deals a hand which at first may seem disastrous, but which ends up as a life-changing, and life-enhancing, event. Several years ago, one Scottish furniture maker experienced just such a moment, and has been surprised to find himself making furniture as a result ever since. It was thanks to a computer failure that Samson's Joinery was born.

Ross Samson came into the world of furniture making by accident when his computer broke down. Originally an archaeologist, he was publishing books and academic papers in the early 1990s when his old IBM computer crashed, leaving him unable to work until his 'trapped' journals and books could be recovered from a hard disc. To pass the time while waiting for the return of his computer, he sanded a floor for a friend, and immediately was asked to sand another floor. From that moment, everything changed.

With a life-long interest in archaeology, social history, architecture and particularly castles, it did not take long to establish a new career for himself. Based in Glasgow, Ross had a love of Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts movement which turned

out to be crucial to his future. He began buying and repairing furniture, which led to him becoming involved in the antique trade. Finding that he had a flair for working with this sort of furniture, he was soon given workshop space. However before long, the workshop owner hinted that a workshop was not merely for repairing...it was for making too!

Nowadays, Ross designs and makes furniture from scratch. His company began by making bookcases for archaeologists, and from there, progressed to tables, chairs, beds, cupboards, sideboards and more. Using innovative tooling and working with a variety of materials, in addition to furniture, Ross also designs doors, windows, stairs, banisters, built-in furniture, fire-places, radiator covers and even kitchens and conservatories. Often he incorporates stained glass, copper, pewter, and ceramic, always working within the spirit of whichever style has inspired each design. All 'Samson's Joinery' furniture is bespoke, and therefore hand-made. Most pieces are made using oak, the traditional wood used in Arts and Crafts design, although he does use alder, Douglas fir and some other woods to suit a client's needs. Business is flourishing and



Ross Samson

he says he is often looking for help from other skilled people. Ross gains particular satisfaction from finishing a piece of furniture, and makes his own varnish and linseed oil paint from natural plant sources in order to do so. He has three other people in his workshop who help to make his designs, a set-up which he feels reflects the manner and ethos of a traditional Arts and Crafts workshop.

Glasgow is a good place for a furniture maker working within this tradition to be based. Whether or not a client's home has Art Nouveau, Edwardian or Arts and Crafts elements, the style fits the city and continues to be popular. Ross can cater for a client's taste and can design a piece to look typically 'Glasgow Style' or more International, Viennese, or American. However, he feels that those who purchase Scottish furniture often do so because they like to own something local. Being 'local' is key.

He does not believe there is any such thing as one particular 'Scottish style' regarding furniture, but senses that the numerous designers and makers of furniture throughout Scotland can only benefit from being aware of how others work and the products, ideas and designs they produce. With this in mind, Ross founded the Scottish Furniture Makers Association fifteen years ago. He strongly feels that more openness and awareness amongst those involved in the profession can only be useful. And as he says, this sharing of knowledge is helpful to clients too...if his company cannot meet a client's needs, he probably knows somebody who can.

www.samsonsjoinery.co.uk



Written by,
Jane Robinson

IT'S ALL GO AT GALGAEL

In the heart of Govan there's a busy, busy workshop...

..It's hard to tell from outside and most who come in are surprised by the Tardis-like nature of the place and the variety of skills being applied. It's a tactile place where a visitor can engage and feel connected through an appreciation of traditional skills or simply the aesthetic of our products.

GalGael was established by the late Colin MacLeod on the back of his experience protesting the M77 route through Pollok Park. He was inherently connected to the land and so too the people who joined him. Despite losing the protest, he worked with what he'd learned and set about creating a place where all are equal, where tasks and skills are shared. For many it is a safe haven where they can express their creativity freely and in new ways as they learn new skills.

GalGael harks back to the roots of democracy, we meet for a monthly assembly and everyone's voice is respected, we make decisions together for the common good. It makes no matter whether it's your first day or you've volunteered for years, everyone has a hand in shaping our world.

A lot has changed in eighteen years and I can't tell you most of it. We've been at Fairley Street for ten years now and though the machine tools that Colin had lovingly stored prior to finding this location are still as he set them up the people who use them are new. What had been a twelve week course known as "Navigate Life" is now "Journey On" a twenty four week course with intakes of up to twenty participants every six weeks. The course still seeks to reconnect people with the best within themselves, initially teaching basic woodworking skills with only hand tools with a goal to build a jewelery box. There are then opportunities to work with volunteers and crafts people on our small products, bespoke commissions and alongside our timber team processing Scottish timber. These learning journeys are enriched by wider activities like cultural visits, community projects even giving skills demonstrations at public events.



Our social enterprises are growing, they began in 2012 with Journey On in an effort to sustain ourselves as funding becomes harder to secure and as our skills base has increased. Since then we have developed a small product range that recycles hardwood flooring, whisky staves and utilizes our milled Scottish hardwoods. Demand for our bespoke commissions has grown considerably and we have a dedicated space within the workshop where teams of volunteers produce worktops, benches, mantle-pieces and more.

A great deal of effort has been put into our timber business, this is our largest income generator and has been my biggest learning curve. We rely mostly on donated logs from a network of wonderful contributors that include Historic Scotland, Scottish Water, Glasgow City Council and some willing tree surgeons. We use our mobile Woodmizer sawmill to create dimensional timber which is air dried prior to kilning and these timbers can be machined in our workshop to any specification. The showroom has been transformed more than once to increase our capacity and has recently taken over the whole room that had been used for commissions as well as timber storage. The timbers are now vertical and may be pulled out with ease for selection by buyers.

One major advance we are hoping will streamline the business is the development of a database that tracks the wood from log form through eventual sale and provides an inventory at a glance. This was developed by two students from Glasgow Caledonian University as part of their Real World Employability competition. Graham Allen and Pedro Dos Santos won the competition and were put through their paces in every aspect of our timber processing as they came to terms with it. Our new Business Manager, Glen Murray, is taking this forward and a prototype is being worked up as I type.

Traditional boatbuilding has taken a boost in engagement too lately. GalGael's lead boatbuilder Ben Duffin and the Clyde Maritime Trust have created a partnership programme funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The "Anchor and Sail" project has four apprentices working at both GalGael and The TallShip at Riverside, many of our volunteers and participants are also getting involved, learning traditional skills and aspects of maritime heritage. Over the three year project they will build four new heritage vessels and restore a fifth. There will be community events throughout the project, celebrating milestones in each build and in the meantime it is a pleasure to watch these craft grow. I grew up a sailor and my background is in joinery so I have a great appreciation of the skills and the beautiful shapes they create, let alone the joy of mucking about in boats.



Our Voyaging Society try to get as many of our people out in boats on the Clyde, and elsewhere, either rowing in a four man team with cox in our St Ayles skiff or sailing our Drascombe Lugger during the summer months.

So it's all go at The GalGael these days and I'll finish with a quote from Colin Macleod:

It's not enough to have the Great Dream. We're interested in people who want to wrestle it into reality and that means getting your sleeves rolled up and dealing with the rough as well as the smooth.



Written by,
Alasdair Watson
Workshop Manager The GalGael Trust

www.galgael.org

WOODLAND OWNERS PERSPECTIVE

Reflections on Sawmilling from a Woodland Owners perspective or why do I bother converting timber as well as growing it?

Reflections on Sawmilling from a Woodland Owners perspective or why do I bother converting timber as well as growing it? The simple answer is that I had little choice. If I wanted to make a living from my woodlands, it was essential to add value to the timber, rather than sell it standing or at roadside. The woodland resource where I live at Abbey St Bathans in the Scottish Borders is typical of a medium sized Scottish estate. It consists of scattered blocks of immature mixed conifers, planted for amenity and shelter as well as timber production, and much of it on difficult terrain with long extraction routes to where a lorry can uplift it. Much of the output comes from thinning operations yielding mostly small diameter material of poor form. Ours is not a densely forested area, so there are few local processors and the cost of hauling timber to distant mills is high. Combine this with the historically low prices of the last 30 years and the result is a negative standing value i.e. the cost of felling and extraction to roadside is higher than the open market value of the timber. So that leaves the owner with two alternatives: abandon active management as has been the case with much small scale forestry in the area or develop alternative markets.

There was a tradition of sorts to build on as there has been an operating sawmill at Abbey St Bathans since the 1850s. 150 years ago the relative isolation from mainstream timber markets was much more pronounced as horse and cart was the only means of transport. Most of the houses and farm buildings on the estate were rebuilt during the latter half of the nineteenth century so there was a steady local demand for sawn timber. The sawmill was used very intermittently after 1945, as wartime felling meant there was little left to saw. It was operated by an old forester who had worked as a woodcutter and sawmiller all his life. He taught me much of what I know about timber after I came home in 1980 to manage the woodlands. The first step was to fit an electric motor to the old water driven saw and gradually production increased as timber started coming in from the woodlands replanted

after the war. It was not long before the site became too cramped and we moved to a new yard at our current location, where over the years the operation has gradually expanded with additions of new equipment and buildings.

There have been two game changers in my life time that significantly improve the prospects of small scale timber conversion. The first started about 30 years ago with the development of new safe, efficient low cost machinery designed for small scale operations which replaced traditional practices often unsafe and labour intensive. The first machines improved timber extraction using standard farm tractors to power winches and hydraulic cranes. Mobile sawmills were next to emerge with circular saws from Finland and bandsaws from North America. Then, and perhaps most important of all, equipment for secondary processing such as drying kilns and planers. It is these latter two that have really transformed our business by opening up a whole range of new products such as cladding,



decking and flooring. Sawing alone often doesn't take the added value process far enough. Sawn timber is still a relatively low value commodity whereas if dried and then machined to a custom profile it is transformed into a high value product. These new products have enabled turnover to more than double over the past ten years both by attracting new customers and retaining old customers who can buy more of their timber requirements from us. It not unusual for a customer to buy, for example, some fencing one year and come back to us a year later for a hardwood floor.

The second game changer has come in the last couple of years in the form of a local wood fuel market, thanks to the government financed RHI incentive scheme. From firewood being a fringe activity, suddenly we find ourselves supplying chips for biomass district heating systems with a combined capacity of over 500kW just within our own tiny community and a further 250kW nearby. Saw milling generates large volumes of offcuts which in the past have achieved little better than breakeven to dispose of and calling them co-products was a euphemism for waste. Chipping the offcuts for biomass heating and drying the chips on a purpose built drying floor is now an integral part of our milling process. The economics of converting the smaller diameter logs in particular is being transformed where the ratio of sawn wood to energy wood is about 50:50 by volume.

Looking back after 30 years, does it all seem worth it? Most of the negative

aspects are those common to starting up any business: recruiting and retaining a competent workforce, developing efficient production methods by trial and error, getting the price right and getting paid etc. Also matching the supply of timber from our woods with the demands of our customers is not easy to get in balance, which has meant buying in timber from elsewhere to get orders fulfilled in time. As a result our woodland management has been somewhat neglected, which has negated some of the benefits of having our own mill.



The more accessible areas of woodland are well enough managed but much of the steeper ground hasn't seen a chainsaw in the past 20 years if at all. But overall I am well satisfied and look to the future with optimism. The added value effect is real and this is most pronounced with larch, which comprises 30% of our woodland area. We now have markets for all grades of larch ranging from fencing slats to components for boat building and this means every part of the tree reaches its highest potential end use whether it be rough and knotty or clean and knot free. The average price we achieve for our sawn larch is nearly double that of sawn spruce, and yet the roadside value of larch sawlogs is significantly less than the equivalent size of spruce.

New technology can drive small producers out of business, but just as often it brings new opportunities. Two years ago we bought a small excavator to assist with installing the underground pipework for the biomass district heating schemes. This work is finished now and in a few weeks time the excavator will be fitted with a relatively new design of harvesting head that is affordable for our scale of operations. I am hopeful this will be the third game changer allowing us to harvest our own timber at greatly reduced cost and replace much of the material we are currently buying in.



Written by,
Willie Dobie
Abbey Timber

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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE NATIVES AND THE LOGGERS

Scotland's woods are facing a series of unprecedented challenges from climate change.

Some of these threats are direct, such as reduced growth potential and improved conditions for pests and diseases. But, paradoxically, some of the challenges come from government attempts to mitigate climate change through policy and grant schemes that favour woodlands that will not deliver the range of climate benefits sought. For example, fast-growing conifer forestry has become tied into inefficiently burning wood for electricity generation, with most of the heat lost to the atmosphere. The sector is also poorly adapted to reducing timber miles and increasing processing close to the forest. At the same time, we are planting new woodlands for amenity and conservation which will not supply timber, thereby committing us to carbon-intensive imports.

Under the last Rural Development Programme (SRDP), restocking and new woodland creation incentives reinforced this bizarre dichotomy in Scottish forestry, with new woodland creation focusing primarily on widely-spaced native trees for biodiversity conservation while woodland restocking in 'old-fashioned' 'production forests' continued to focus on 2-3 conifer species to feed fast-rising demand for timber and fuel. Neither of these reflects a joined up vision for forestry in the face of climate change. Is there an alternative? The Scottish hardwood and specialist

conifer sector is working to bridge the gap between these seemingly separate worlds of conservation-oriented native woodland creation and the industry and investor-driven production monoculture. This work is gradually becoming recognised as our sector refocuses attention on diversity, resilience, localisation, and long-term thinking. In this article, I will look at how the SRDP has hindered but may now be helping.

Let's take a look at what we have been planting in the way of trees and why. On a European level, Scotland's 18% woodland cover is relatively paltry (only a quarter of this is broadleaves). In order to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, the Scottish Government is aiming to take this to 25% of land area by 2050, with ambitious planting targets of 10,000 hectares per year. Forestry Commission Scotland has been employing a range of woodland creation grants to encourage uptake and influence the type of woodland that landowners will create.

But figures calculated from the last Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) gives real cause for concern about the way these grants have been worked out. From a total of 19,000 hectares of new planting approved between 2009-2013, only 0.2% or 38 hectares was for

productive broadleaves i.e. trees at a close spacing of 2500-3100/hectare, where spacing maximises leader development, reduces branching and produces sawlogs, with poles and woodfuel thinned out as the trees develop. By contrast, native woodland planting only requires tree spacing of 1600/hectare, which reduces growth and encourages branching. Native woodland made up 67% of the total area of new planting. On top of this was a further 28% of mixed woodlands, that mix spaced out native broadleaves with commercially spaced conifers. Added together, this means that 95% of our newly created woodlands under SRDP will have widely spaced 'amenity' broadleaves. In other words, none of these broadleaved trees will be suitable for making tables, chairs, dressers, beams, flooring, etc.

There is indeed a greater cost and challenge to establishing productive broadleaves and this option is not suitable on all sites. But even where a landowner may have been willing to create such a woodland, the grant was not sufficient to meet the added costs. But why was there not greater support for productive broadleaves when the rates were agreed? Why are we subsidising woodlands that will not produce timber?



In the absence of the kind of small-scale hardwood industry that exists in most of the rest of Europe, it is possible to envisage why most policy-makers, farmers, foresters and conservationists are not viewing broadleaved woodlands as suitable for producing timber or could even see conflicts with conservation objectives. Indeed, I met with this attitude when a few years ago I was involved in a small-scale oak felling in Argyll SSSI oakwoods, the notion that these are precarious relicts of ancient forests despite the fact that 'the modern oakwoods of Argyll, such as those in the National Nature Reserves at Taynish and Ariundle, have been profoundly affected by damaging forestry regimes in the past and bear obvious traces to this day. To find a wood that bears little or no trace of this kind of industrial management, one may have to visit some of the remote Hebridean localities. Arguably, the incentive to manage grazing in these types of woods (the main issue - not tree felling) is strengthened if the owner is getting income or timber from the trees.



The situation for productive broadleaves is hardly different when we consider the restocking of conventional clear-felled coupes. Here, the most fertile and sheltered sites are restocked with the fastest growing conifers, driven by a 20th century paradigm of volume maximisation. Where broadleaves are planted or regenerated, it is where the conifer production was poor or biodiversity concerns prohibit any restocking. Only the most enlightened foresters today are bravely bucking this trend and planting tightly-spaced broadleaves and minority conifers (e.g. Douglas Fir, Cedar, Cypress, Hemlock) on their better sites.

Encouragingly, the newly opened 2014-2019 SRDP is starting to address the problem. The intervention rate for productive broadleaves has significantly increased over the last programme. We will find out in a couple of years if it is working.

TC Smout, AR MacDonald and Watson F. (2005) A History of the Native Woodlands of Scotland. Edinburgh University Press.

Written by
Jake Willis

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REAL WOOD STUDIOS



Real Wood Studios is a collectively run, creative social enterprise and hub facility supporting local forestry and self-employed creative professionals, furniture makers, artists, craftsmen and timber workers. Based at Monteviot Nurseries, Ancrum, near Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, we provide workshops and commissioning opportunities for designers and makers living in the Borders who wish to work with sustainably sourced Scottish hard and selected soft woods. We're making everything from furniture and kitchens to artworks and architecture.

Through our Timber Business and working with a Wood-Mizer LT40 mobile sawmill, we procure mainly Borders hardwoods which we sell to the hub's designer/makers, to external makers and to customers, such as architects and builders and the general public, who are increasingly interested in using this high quality, sustainable wood in their projects. The mobile sawmill also provides a cutting service to farmers, landowners and other businesses throughout the Borders.

Working to build a complete and sustainable working model ("from tree to table"), our business focuses on supporting small local businesses to encourage creative design and production and on promoting the use and development of markets for high quality, locally and environmentally sourced wood. All profits from our commercial activities are re-invested into the infrastructure and programs of the business.

At the time of Real Woods Studio's inception in 2009, when the economy was in a serious downturn, we successfully raised significant funding (both public and private) that allowed much needed investment in new production facilities, a major machine shed/workshop and other high-spec equipment. This investment has significantly improved our makers' efficiency, production techniques, quality and, importantly, opportunity. Calling on the substantial

skills of our directors, makers and timber workers, we have worked hard to raise our profile during this time through our online presence, our showroom, exhibitions, targeted advertising, and attendance at many agricultural and county shows across the Borders and further afield. All this has proved successful with the business stabilizing during its first 2 years and gaining annual increases in turnover ever since. Alongside this, the increased commissions coming through the door are providing greater job security for the makers' own sole-trader businesses. Now incorporated for 6 years, Real Wood Studios has become a model wood enterprise for the Borders, winning Scottish Borders Council's 2014 Business Enterprise Award for Best Rural Business.

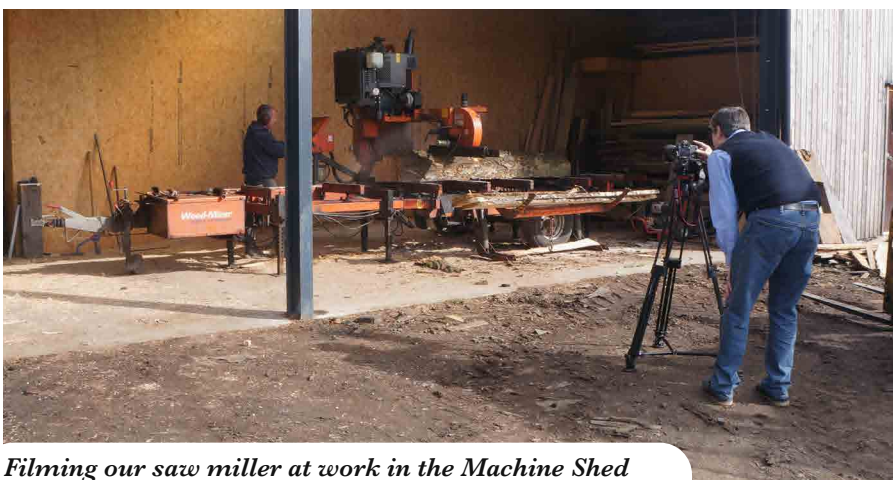
Having proven a market and need, we continue to encourage the use and sale of specialist Scottish Borders hard and selected soft woods by developing our Timber Operations business and the people to run it. The timber operation involves buying round wood (logs) and processing them on site. Coming almost entirely from Scottish Borders sources, they are generally hardwood species such as Oak, Ash, Elm, Beech and Birch as well as softwoods such as Douglas Fir and Larch. The cut planks are further processed via air drying, kiln drying and, where required, machining to specified dimensions.



Sourcing local hardwoods



Wood stacks in the Air Drying Shed



Filming our saw miller at work in the Machine Shed

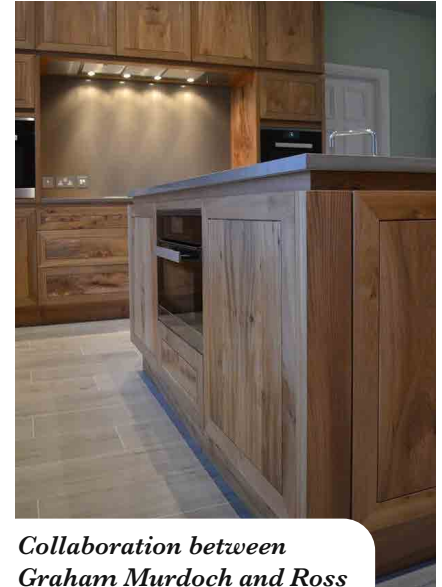
Round wood can be difficult to source in small packets with the larger timber companies able to pay premium prices for larger packets. Most of this wood is ultimately exported. At Real Wood Studios, we focus on developing relationships with landowners, farmers, tree surgeons, etc. who will have trees for sale. As a member of ASHS, we're working to develop better opportunities for smaller hard wood saw millers across Scotland.

Real Wood Studios practices and promotes a living tradition of wood culture and production in Scotland and internationally through art, creative design and production and timber processing.

Creative production is carried out in the workshops and machine room areas by a number of self-employed makers



Real Wood Studios at The Haining in Selkirk.



Collaboration between Graham Murdoch and Ross

Our ethos and the quality of work being produced by our makers, in turn, promote Real Wood Studios as the unique organization it is.



Wood stacks in the Air Drying Shed Demonstrating the Wood-Mizer LT40 mobile sawmill at a tree festival



Elm Dining Table and Chairs in the workshops and at the client's home Graeme Murray & Lise Bratton



(micro-businesses). Each maker pays a monthly bench fee and in return gets their own bench space and the use of the shared machine room and facilities. A Maker Commission Scheme helps Real Wood Studios cover the costs of the showroom and marketing program. The program, which showcases the talent of individual makers, is providing a growing order book of regular commissions for all makers.



The setup of the workshop, with all makers in a shared space, promotes a spirit of cooperation and allows each to help the other in various ways - from manual handling of large pieces, to advice on technique or problem-solving, to full collaboration on and development of projects, particularly projects that an individual maker would not be able to take on by himself.

It also, effectively, provides on-the-job training and exchange of ideas, skills and experience. There is real synergy and creative growth in the Real Wood Studios model.

Real Wood STUDIOS

www.realwoodstudios.com

Written by,
Graeme
Murray



“Bespoke furniture making has been key to Real Wood Studios’ success.”



HORSE LOGGING

In the forestry industry, machinery is judged by its horse power and usually the more you have of it the better, so perhaps it's strange to discover that there is still a present day role for the 1 horse power unit.

There was a time when all logging was done with horses and there is some remarkable old black and white film of woodmen skilfully using horses to roll large hardwood logs up timber ramps onto flat carts to transport them to the sawmills. However from the 1950's onwards machinery in the form of skyline, County tractors and double drum winches gradually replaced horses before they too gave way to the modern harvesters and forwarders. But there remained a core of old timers and younger enthusiasts who refused to abandon horse logging.

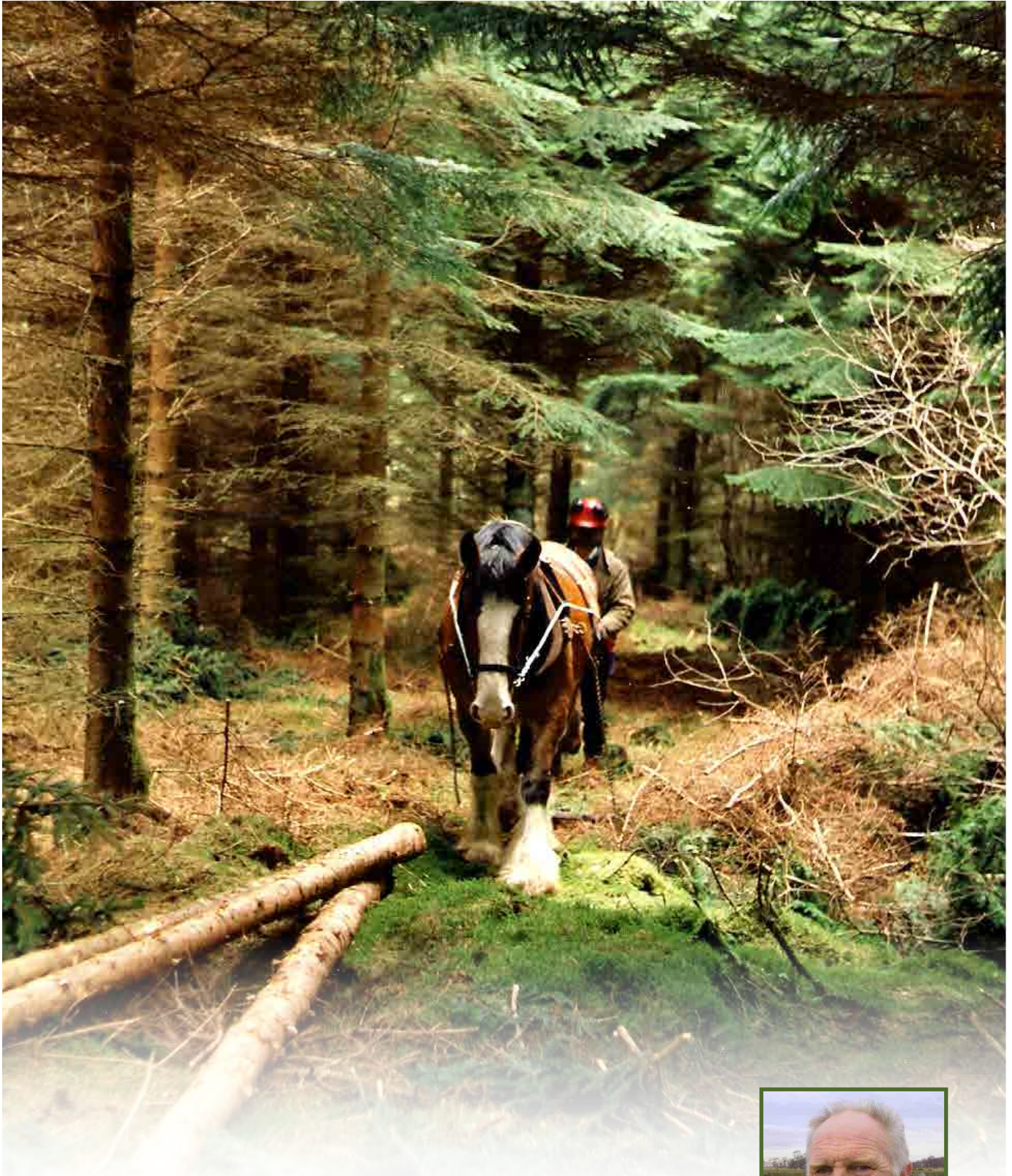
Today the British Horse Loggers website www.britishhorseloggers.org lists over 20 members operating horses in forests throughout the UK. These modern horsemen and women tend to have found niche markets, often specialising in extracting smaller environmentally sensitive sites which cannot be tackled by machines. Where a machine would gouge out a rutted track through woodland and leave a scar for many years to come, horses create drags which level themselves out and quickly grass over at the end of the operations, leaving a pleasant walkway through the trees.

Horse logging is not a cheap option. Forestry Commission trials in the 1990's found that horses can extract up to half a tonne at a time but output is closely linked to the length of the drag. Drags above 30m see a significant drop in output the further back they go from the landing, so a daily output of 10 tonnes extracted, cross-cut and stacked is at the top end of what is possible. Difficult sites can be much lower than that. Rates of over £200 per day are not unreasonable which means a fairly hefty cost per tonne extracted - uneconomic for commercial forestry operations. Horse logging on environmentally sensitive sites however can justify that cost when you consider the minimum of damage caused to footpaths, waterways and the forest floor.

Modern day horse logging shows a much greater diversity in the methods used to extract timber. In the old days the local heavy horse breeds would be used, typically Clydesdales, Shires or Suffolk Punches. Nowadays there are many different breeds used including some of the Continental types. The Ardennes is a popular horse logging choice for its compact size combined with great strength. One of the most impressive horses I ever saw was a small Fell pony working in the Lake District 20 years ago. It was yoked to the logs at the top of the drag and made its own way down the winding track to the landing at the bottom. It not only dragged what would seem to be an impossible weight of logs for such a small pony, it also sorted out its own problems when the logs snagged on roots or jammed going round the bends, heaving and changing angles till it got the load free and on the move again. Then it made its way back up to the top to get the next load. It was transported to the work site daily standing happily in the back of a Transit pick-up.

Harness and equipment also has several variations. The basic British method of dragging logs out by single tree and chains is simple and low cost but many of the present day horse loggers opt for a Scandinavian harness and logging equipment. The Scandinavian logging arch is a shaft drawn, wheeled skidder with several hand powered winches which allow the butts to be slung off the ground, lightening the drag on the horse while increasing the load that can be dragged out.





4 wheeled horse drawn forwarders are also available which enable logs to be loaded by small engine powered crane winch and extracted to the landing in larger quantities over longer distances.

Clearly horses cannot compete with large scale forestry machinery on a commercial basis but there is now a much greater emphasis on bringing smaller areas of woodland back under good management. Indeed there are often grants available to encourage this. Under these circumstances, involving relatively small tonnages over fairly short distances, horse logging may well be worth serious consideration.



Written by,
Alistair Wilson

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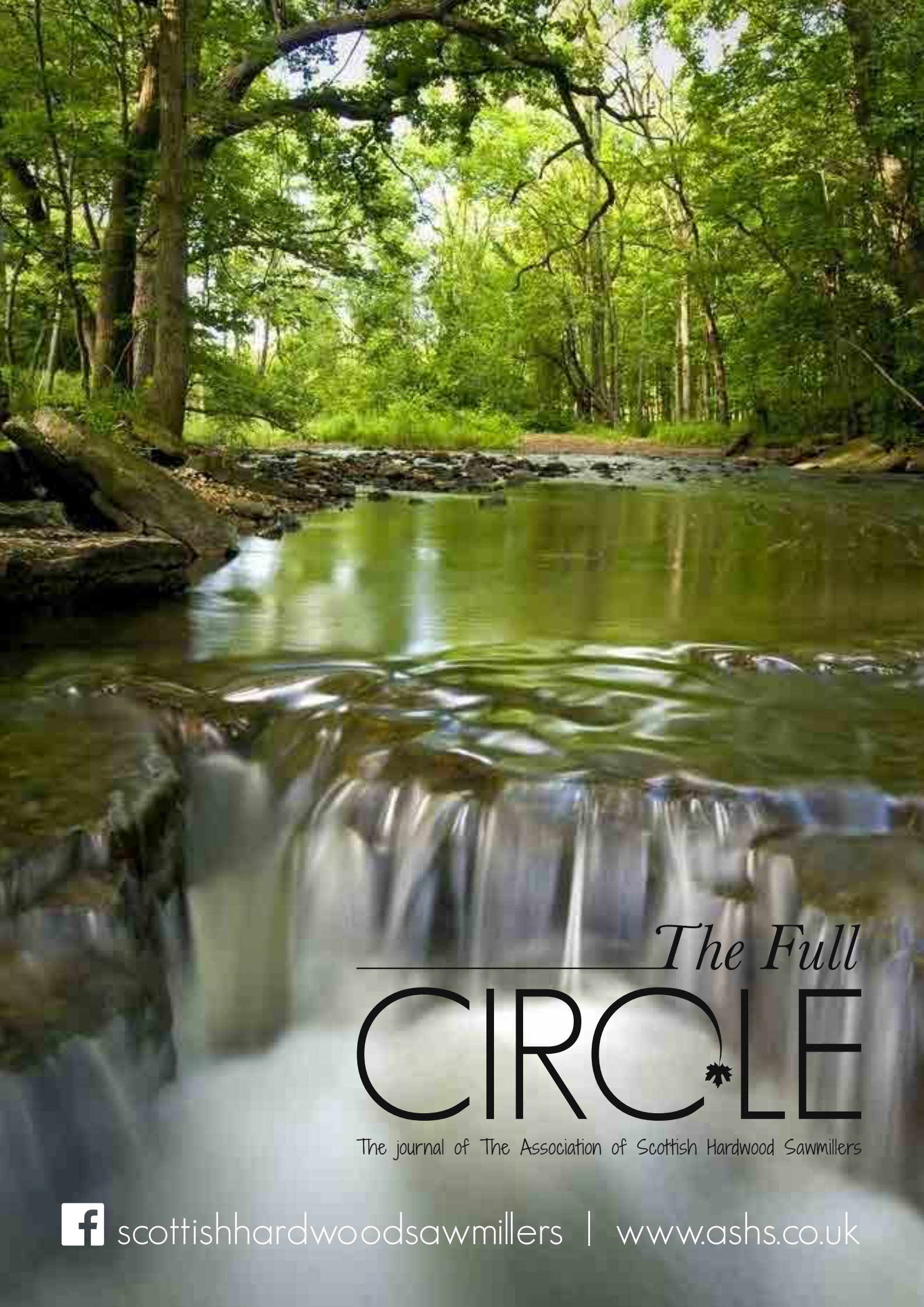
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