

Edition 2 / Winter 2015

The Full

CIRCLE

£5

The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

Comann Sabhadairean Fiodha Chruaidh

Featuring...

ITALY PROJECT FEATURE

News and review of the trip to Italy...

AGRICULTURAL RINGS

Written by Alistair Wilson...

GLENFARG OAK FRAME PROJECT

Written by Steve Mclean...

LIVING SOLUTIONS

Making forestry careers happen in Fife...



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba



ASHS

The Full CIRCLE

The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

WELCOME TO ASHS SECOND JOURNAL...

In this edition and in keeping with the ethos outlined in the Spring edition, we have brought together an interesting mix of articles. The introduction of the Associate membership at the beginning of the year has already begun to deliver the diversity we had hoped for. An excellent article from Sheena Laurie & Bill Kelday of The Fiddle & Guitar Shop see page 34, has set an interesting question for our saw-milling members! Are we missing an important market?

We started the journal, hoping to establish some regular features that all our members could relate to and get involved with. We also anticipated an organic type growth as we evolve to fit the requirements of our developing and diverse membership. In line with this concept our feature 'from around the yards', has now expanded to 'from around the yards and workshops', encompassing makers as well as processors.

Fraser Dodds (The baldy Carpenter) our first associate member, writes an intriguing article on his personal journey to date see page 10. It is also encouraging to see the 'Scottish Furniture Makers Association' getting more involved with a personal project insight from Tom Cooper and Jonathan Rose's From the Bench, which looks like it could become a regular feature.

This is still early days for our journal and there are many elements of the Scottish Timber Industry that are not covered as yet. Estate owners, tree surgeons through to Architects, they are all in the 'Circle' and it would be great to get them onboard and hear their stories. So if you're reading this and think you would like to get involved and share your experiences, get in touch and help us make the industry better for everyone.



CHAIRMAN
& EDITOR
Steve McLean



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& EDITOR
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All the best, Steve McLean

ASHS Chairman

DEADLINE DATE FOR EDITION 3:

Friday 4th March 2016

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

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ASHS NEWS & MEETINGS



Since the launch of ASHS new website and journal in April 2015, combined with the introduction of an Associate membership status, ASHS has experienced a remarkable growth. Despite losing five members at the start as we tidied up our unpaid memberships fees, we have more than doubled our membership to 64, with an equal number of full and associate members. This certainly indicates an appetite for associated businesses to join together and will surely lead to better communications between the various business groups.

Our facebook page has also seen a lot of traffic as we use it to promote our workshops with our fantastic posters courtesy of Stephanie our designer as well as our members uploads.

The Sawing course hosted and led by Jim and Maggie Birley at Scottish Wood was a great success. Gavin Munro was enticed out of retirement for the morning and gave the group of more than 30 a talk on log valuation. There was a good mix of existing and new ASHS members, a few SFMA members and a few who were just interested. There are plenty of photos of the event on our facebook page for anyone interested. At the time of writing it looks like the Kilning course is heading for a similar attendance with around 22 booked. We will be producing an information leaflet on both sawing and kilning which will be available to our members through the website early next year.



The Italy trip was also a great success with our seven intrepid adventurers led by Jake Willis gathering as much information as possible in the short time they were there. You can read all about it in the centre pages 20 -26.

The app development meetings with Napier University came to a conclusion in August. We received £5,000 funding through Scottish Enterprise on the basis of a balanced input, through time from ASHS members. Myself, Patrick Baxter, Maggie Birley, Nick Marshal and Malcolm Mack all put time towards it during its

development. Two ideas were put forward; the first being an app to advertise and view the journal which would in turn direct people to the ASHS site and ultimately develop our membership. The second was an idea from Jim & Maggie Birley for a hoppus foot calculator, which could be used on ipads, android devices and smart phones. Unfortunately these were only partially developed within the budget we had. It would seem that if we wished to take them to the point of being commercially usable it would cost a further £10 -15,000. We have therefore decided that we will not be taking these forward, however if there are any members out there who have a knowledge of apps and are looking for a project please get in touch.

The Solar kiln development is also moving forward with discussions at a recent meeting leading to the possibility of setting up a few test sites next year. The plan would be to put together 2 or 3 test kilns under Ulrich's supervision and collect data for a 12 month period at sites on the East and West Coasts and possibly a more Northerly site around the Inverness area. With a years data from various parts of the country we should be able to put together a package with Construction specifications, plans and the collected data from across the country. We will then be able to sell it through the website as a downloadable package.

Both Ulrich and ASHS will then receive a small fee from the sale of each solar kiln plan download. Follow it's development in the Spring 2016 edition of The Full Circle.

DATES FOR DIARY...

- Friday 16th October**
Kilning course at Scottish Wood, Full details on our facebook page.
- Friday 4th & Saturday 5th Dec:**
ASHS AGM will be hosted by Angus Ross at his workshop in Aberfeldy. We will be staying overnight at the Weem hotel with an evening discussion from some members of the Italy project group after dinner. Saturday will be a guided tour of the Great Tree Trail at Dunkeld. Full members will be required to pay 50%, estimated to be £32.50 for Lunch, Dinner, bed & breakfast. Associate members welcome but will have to pay full cost and be on a first come first served basis. Full details including agenda will be emailed shortly.
- Friday 4th March:**
Article deadline for the Spring 2016 edition of The Full Circle
- Friday 25th March:**
Provisional booking for ASHS Yard visit and meeting. Details TBC
- Friday 15th April:**
Publication of Spring 2016 edition of The Full Circle



Written by,
Steve Mclean

www.dovetailscotland.com

SWW UPDATE - September 2015

Now is the time... we are in the era of widespread acceptance of the need to ensure that wood, furniture and woodland produce are supplied to the public with a local low miles provenance in terms of both woodland origin and the location of the craftspeople involved in the production.

With that in mind, last year's plans to bring the Scottish Working Woods Label to a wider audience are now taking shape; we have a striking new logo...



Local. Ethical. Sustainable.

...a new edition of the website (note slight change to web address - (www.scottishworkingwoods.org.uk) and a glossy new leaflet. The logo and other info will shortly be made available to download digitally for marketing & merchandising purposes for license holders. The facebook page is attracting considerable interest www.facebook.com/scottishworkingwoods.

A comprehensive survey of existing licensees has been carried out and comments absorbed. In particular we will be pulling out all the stops to make applying for a licence a far simpler process, but not



- Our new glossy flyer

- We now also have SWW stickers to add to members work

one which skimps on maintaining the quality & integrity of the label. We are at the start of a fresh recruitment drive for new licensees and a campaign to bring SWW and what it can provide to a greater proportion of the buying public.

Opportunities abound for anyone supplying timber, furniture, woodland produce etc known to have come from our local woodlands to sign up for a licence and start benefitting from the added value the label brings. For more details on the criteria required for joining please visit the website.



Written by, **Patrick Baxter**
SWW Chairman

SUCCESSFUL USE OF SCOTTISH WORKING WOODS LABEL

Scottish Wood was set up in 1999 to promote the use of local hardwoods. Our aim was to help revitalise the local woodland culture, and to encourage wider use of home grown hard wood timber. Using local timber is good. It contributes to the local economy. It benefits the environment - leading to better managed woodlands, and reduced transport. And it generates local jobs.

When Scottish Wood started up, much of our local hard woods were unused or even wasted - some ending up in landfill. Now, 16 years on, there are many more small hardwood sawmills operating in Scotland - and room for more still.

Scottish timber is a valuable and beautiful resource, and so are the woodlands it comes from. Yet there are always questions about the sustainability of using timber... "Will the use of wood promote the deforestation of our land?" And across the world there are devastating stories about the loss of habitat and huge scale deforestation from illegal logging.

Could that happen in Scotland?

Scotland's forests are covered by protective legislation. In order to cut down a tree you will normally require a felling licence. (1) To get that felling licence you will need to state what the felled trees are getting replaced with, and the usual requirement will be for the planting of more trees.

On top of this our government has a woodland expansion strategy... 100,000 hectares of new woodland by 2022. This puts Scotland at "Low risk" on an international scale for the possibility of illegal felling.

A reputation we should be proud of!

So timber that is legally felled in Scotland is not destroying our environment. On the contrary, it makes up part of a sustainable and local resource, and the more we can add value to this timber at source (i.e. near to where it is grown), the better it all works. (2)



Local. Ethical. Sustainable.



However sustainability is not just about the environment, it is also about local communities and the economy. To be truly sustainable we have to make the most efficient use of our natural resources, and this is something ASHS members excel at - adding value at source, and creating the most jobs per log, contributing to a vibrant and diverse local economy rooted in our environment.

This is why at Scottish Wood, along with other ASHS members, we use the Scottish Working Woods label.



It's all about local... doing as much as possible with our local woodlands in a local context. True, it isn't hugely known about, and it cannot hope to compete with world wide brands such as FSC (The Forest Stewardship Council), but it plays an important role for small yards and workshops in both promoting our ethos and fulfilling criteria for public procurement contracts.

UK Public Procurement Rules state that



“timber must come from a legal and sustainable source”. This means that most large company or Local Authority timber specifiers simply make a blanket demand for all timber to be supplied as FSC certified.

This is where the SWW label comes into its own...

When a specifier or customer calls with a requirement for FSC Certified timber, we take that as a starting point for conversation, not an end point. We explain that we support the Scottish Working Woods label as a better and more appropriate alternative for Scotland's woodlands; outlining its benefits of sustainable timber, reduced carbon miles, support for local communities and making best use of an otherwise often under utilised resource. Many customers and specifiers are more than happy with this and welcome the additional elements that the SWW label promotes. And as a result, we have been able to supply timber to all sorts of large scale projects with blanket demands for FSC timber.... the Olympic Village, the Commonwealth games, and many Local Authority regeneration projects.

The Scottish Working Woods label is open to members of ASHS and SFMA. To find out more check out the website <http://scottishworkingwoods.org.uk>

1. There are specific cases when a felling licence is not needed. This is normally for small volumes of timber, or for trees that are covered by planning legislation. scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting/grants-and-regulations/felling-licences/exemptions

2. Money made in local economies tends to be “sticky” - its stays locally and circulates more often

Every £1 spent with a local supplier is worth £1.76 to the local economy, compared with 36 pence if it is spent out of the area. That makes £1 spent locally worth almost 400 per cent more (New Economics Foundation). For an interesting article on sticky money see <https://edmayo.wordpress.com/2013/02/23/sticky-money>



Written by,
Jim + Maggie Birley

www.scottishwood.co.uk



LIVING SOLUTIONS – MAKING FORESTRY CAREERS HAPPEN IN FIFE

Based in Cowdenbeath, Living Solutions' development managers Paul Cruise and Alice Berry head up a dynamic social enterprise dedicated to conserving and protecting the natural environment, reducing unemployment, promoting the use of Scottish timber in affordable sustainable housing, creating wooden products with enterprising plans in the pipeline for 2015/16.

The company has an impressive workshop on the Thistle Industrial estate with cutting gear, heavy forestry machinery, timber drying facilities and highly specialised areas for creating multi-layer wood panels with great plans for 2015 to build wilderness cabins. The Living Solutions team started out on gardening projects for local Ore Valley Housing Association with a small team of volunteers, then went on to develop their woodland maintenance skills for local landowners, councils and Forestry Commission carrying out work, such as, selective felling, dealing with windblown trees and woodland path maintenance.

Paul and Alice are keen to promote the importance of forestry and rural skills and bust the myth that this is in any way an easy option career and now have a team that can compete for commercial forestry contracts.

Young foresters making their mark in Fife

Living Solutions' forestry training programme targets unemployed young people aged between 16-25 and is going from strength to strength. Led by Les Kyte, the forestry team has now been running for 6 years working predominantly with Forestry Commission Scotland delivering the Forest Skills Training Programme as well as carrying out work for local land owners, councils and Housing Associations.

With support from Fife Council and funding by lottery coastal communities' fund, Living

Solutions latest batch of trainees are now moving on to their SVQ2 - Trees and Timber Apprenticeships with the company. They have already completed a range of forestry training and are qualified to fell small, medium and windblown trees, use trimmers/brush-cutters and clearing saws for woodland maintenance work and treat weeds and invasive species (PA1 & PA6w chemical spraying). They now have the opportunity to put this training to work on a variety of sites and jobs while studying towards their apprenticeship.

Training takes place onsite in public woodlands and includes; selective felling to safeguard native species, clearing overgrown shrubs & fallen trees from pathways and access points and dealing with windblown or otherwise dangerous trees.

Tendering for new contracts

The Forestry team are all highly skilled and are FMO trained working out of Cowdenbeath within a 50 mile radius. Skills they can offer woodland owners include - selective felling, thinning, pruning, skidding/forwarding, spraying, planting, dealing with wind blow and multiple wind-

blow. We work with landowners to maximise the potential revenue from any felled timber through sales to biomass and small sawmills.

As well as Forestry training, Living Solutions has a horticulture team led by Mark Monaghan whose team carry out a range of skills including green-space maintenance along with grass-cutting for disabled and elderly for Ore Valley Housing association as well as work for Fife council on 2 wynds in Kirkcaldy. Mark also has plans in play to win more contracts.

Leuchatsbeath Leaf Art Project - where forestry meets design

Living Solutions put their expertise to the test when they pitched for a highly complex art design early in 2014. Local landscape architects Urban Pioneers, commissioned by Fife Council, were looking to enhance the area at Leuchatsbeath Community Woodland near Cowdenbeath to encourage visitors to the area.

Paul Cruise said: The final design comprised of several large unique leaf profiles made up from individual pieces of sourced wood. We tendered for the work and won the contract to source, build and install the structures which people can enjoy at first hand. It was a real testament to the teams' forestry and group skills - showing they were able to cope with working to a design brief involving difficult and often complex tasks."

It was a great challenge and no mean undertaking as there were no existing templates for the large leaf designs that now make up really special pieces of art. It was an exciting concept and we really wanted to show the team could take up the challenge and go that extra mile to improve on elements where we could.

It was a real testament to the team's forestry and group skills - showing they were able to cope with difficult and often complex tasks working within a tight budget and design brief.

The leaf art structures can be seen in Cowdenbeath and share unique phrases on them - so inspiration was the name of the game all round. For example a more philosophical phrase: **"Without trees we could not breathe" and one more for the kids - "Jump in puddles; Climb trees; Lie in the grass; Imagine; Build a den; "Train a dragon" and of course a nod to John Muir "Going to the woods is going home"**.

Wilderness Cabins

Living Solutions are expanding their timber processing and products in 2015 to include "wilderness cabins". They have been working with Sam Foster architect and Nick Farr a cabinet maker on prototype designs for a "wilderness cabin" made from cross-laminated timber panels using home grown timber. Nick will be working alongside Living Solutions where he will be prototyping panels and making small orders for benches as they arise. Paul commented: "We can see real interest in cabins as more and more people want to get away at weekends. There are already a number of "glamping" sites across Scotland and the wilderness cabins we are creating will be ideal for this market.

St Andrews University - Biomass Project

The major new St Andrews University biomass development at Guardbridge was given approval in October 2014. The former paper mill will be developed for both university and business uses and will generate clean biomass power and hot water that will be pumped underground to St Andrews to heat and cool its labs and residences at North Haugh and Fife Park. Living Solutions has worked with the university to clear a large area there and were complimented on their work by Dr Roddy Yarr, Environment and Energy Manager at University of St Andrews who said: **"The University is delighted to be working with Living Solutions. The support of local enterprises, especially those that create local employment and help develop apprentices and skills training forms part of the University's sustainability strategy and the work that Living Solutions**



"The University is delighted to be working with Living

carried out for the University of Guardbridge was of the highest quality"** and added **"I was very impressed by the team's equipment and the professional approach they adopted in tackling what was a very challenging steep bank adjacent to the Eden Estuary. They played their part well in this process leaving the site in a very tidy and orderly condition."

For more information on forestry contracts
- visit Living Solutions at:
www.living-solutions.org or call:
0845 222 0418



Written by,
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YARD VISIT TO THE BALDY CARPENTER

One door closes and another door opens...

“One door closes and another door opens” ...We have all heard the above saying but does anyone actually believe it? Well I hadn't really thought about it but over the past 6 years I can now confirm that it really is a true statement.

Since leaving school I was employed in the Rail industry as a signalling engineer. I started at the bottom and worked my way up to finally becoming a signalling test engineer. A responsible role in where as a tester you attempted to break new installations in a hope that you couldn't and as such became happy for it to be signed into service and allow the passage of traffic through it.

After 18 years in the industry I was approached to move roles to a consultancy company as a signalling testing manager. I had finally made it. 18 years of hard work had set me up to a good role with a fabulous pay scale and excellent benefits.

After 11 months another well-known saying crept into my life...

“It must be too good to be true” as I faced redundancy, a prospect which I had never encountered or even thought about in my 18 years of full time employment. I had 6 weeks while the company tried to relocate me but this process is merely a paper exercise to allow the company to remain in the laws of business. In reality I was off. My immediate boss at the time gave me the best piece of advice ever.

“You have two options, go to the pub and get pissed or go and do something else. I did the first one and it didn't work”

This gave me 6 weeks to think of option 2. I had always had a huge interest in all things woodwork and had constructed a few small projects in my garage using the limited DIY Tools that I had. Being practical helped and it was this thought process which led me to thinking that I could try woodwork as a full time occupation. Again the thought of lying in my box at the end of all this and thinking **“what if?”** pushed me to give it a go. If it doesn't work then at least I can stand with my head held high and say that I tried it.

Of course where do you start? Name, workshop, Tools, what to produce. In fact all of the above all at the same time. The name was first and after 3 bottles of Red with good friends the Name of The Baldy Carpenter was born. Some say foolish but most say unforgettable. Workshop was next and with one son at 2 and the second son at 13 months the integral garage to the house was not the most practical. All the garden could take was a 10'x10' shed but it was going to have to work. Tools followed and a good bit of begging, borrowing and a small amount of spending I was up and running. Within two months of starting I had been to see Patrick Baxter at The Wood Place (formerly Lanarkshire Hardwoods) for some timber, created some items and I was holding my first sale to the public in a marquee at

the local Reindeer day celebrations. The public response was amazing and my venture was on the go. The dining room of the house became a showroom and a slow but steady growth was in reach.

The shed worked well however I struggled one day with trying to clamp up a table. 5' sash clamps in a 10' shed just didn't work. Being a small town (Strathaven) the news travelled fast and I was made aware of a disused workshop lying free and available to rent. This was a major change. Rent was required which meant production had to improve. Still being only self taught and only on DIY machines the prospect of using industrial machines was a whole new concept. Bring on the books.

This workshop served me well and it allowed the business to establish a name in the town and for me to get to grips with how to run a business.

A brief conversation with a chap who could supply me with timber resulted in him offering me two machines which he had bought at auction when a local sawmill went bust. He had no idea what the machines were but under the covers in a dark container I found a 24x9 Planer thicknesser. He offered it to me for the princely sum of £300. A quick online search discovered that it was worth £3000. With the current arrangements I was renting the workshop and machinery hence I was very conscious that as a business I owned basically nothing.

Another reason to put the feelers out and yet again the town came up trumps. Ironically one of the old disused railway buildings within the town had become available. I knew the landlord and after a quick round of discussions the move was confirmed.

Things were getting serious now and I was getting close to this becoming a real business. The learning curve in both running a business and in producing high quality items was steep. Again I had that sense that I had finally done it. From a 10'x10' shed I was now in a 30'x30' industrial unit with yard space and making a small but reasonable living. Finances were tight and as a family we called upon all the reserves that we had. Three years since moving into this workshop and 5 years since starting the business I was finally able to enjoy the





fruits of my labours and the turnover was beginning to show very positive signs of growth.

That was until Friday November the 14th 2014 at around 9pm.

It started with a phone call from my father to say that he had heard that there is a fire beside my workshop. This was quickly followed by people at my door shouting that the workshop was on fire. I ran down and to my shock the row of four units was well ablaze. In the hours that followed it became apparent that the workshop was gone. 5 years of hard work gone in 2 hours. Devastated does not come close.



It was the Sunday night that as owners and tenants we were handed the units back. At this point it became very clear that everything was gone. Not a single item was salvageable. The insurance company took a whole 3 minutes to declare it as a total loss which for many would seem a great result as there would be no debate on what the payout was to be but it just cemented the extent of the loss. A new learning curve had begun.

The town yet again rallied round me and I was flooded with offers of help in terms of manual help in clearing up, sourcing tools and sourcing alternative premises.

January 2015 I found myself standing in a new workshop buying tools and machinery and trying to put the past behind me. I could have taken the money and ran but it is not in my nature. I had spent 5 years building a business and if it was going to close then I would close it, not a fire.

9 months further on and 11 months since the fire the business is healthier than ever. Sheer determination has got me this far and will continue to take me on my path.

I have learnt many lessons in this process, too many to write in this article, but I have learnt to listen to that first statement, One door closes and another opens.

Whatever happens in life it may seem a disaster at the time but with a positive outlook you can turn disasters into successes.



Written by
Fraser Dodds
www.thebaldycarpenter.co.uk

SFMA NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

September 2015 - April 2016

The first copy of The Full Circle has opened my eyes to the knowledge, energy and commitment of the hardwood industry in Scotland to what it does. I hear first hand that makers of top end furniture want quality timber at a reasonable price, reliable in its supply and I read we have the skills materials and ideas to make this happen. One example is on the 16th October when a kilning course is being run by ASHS, at the modest cost of £10 for SFMA members at Scottish Wood, in Fife. This is also an opportunity for makers to have input and influence into the supply side of their business.



Scottish Furniture Makers Association

In my workshop and design studio, quality means no drying related shakes, minimum wastage in milling, uniformly dry wood and consistent colouring between boards. It also means understanding the provenance of the material, even to the exact tree, and having the confidence to specify local material for medium volume production. I think I live in the right place.

One of SFMA's main roles is in promoting its members through the website, exhibitions and advertising. The creative process and furniture making in particular demands long periods of meditative, repetitive operations, exacting cutting and being sure you can accomplish what you had in mind without a costly slip. The marketing side of the business is something that requires a different set of skills and is where the association can help members.

A visit to the Clerkenwell Design week in May showed a lively marketplace of furniture by crafts people and designers, using materials we are familiar with. The Invisible Store of Happiness <http://www.theinvisiblestoreofhappiness.info> had a stunning centrepiece made as collaboration between a sculptor and furniture maker using imported hardwood. It was a purely promotional piece and it got tremendous coverage in some of the national craft and design magazines, weekend papers and festival literature. I was left wondering why materials from our own country were not being used, given their availability.

The Glasgow Contemporary Art Fair was a fun and busy event at the Old Fruit market in the Merchant city. Eight members received around 4000 visitors and commissions were secured for several pieces. By the time of publication six members will have exhibited at the Aberdeen Arts fair where a similar number of visitors are expected.

Our website refresh has started and we're working with Designers on the Run from Leith, who have experience in working with creative organizations. The aim is to provide a focal point for the association; market the best of members' work and enhance their visibility; have a place to generate opportunities and for external enquiries, and to tell the world how to belong to us. Hopefully all before Christmas.

Google members group is providing a way for instant networking where members can communicate and share issues. Requests for workshop space, sales and technical advice and information are some of the posts to date. It is a way of breaking open the walls of the workshop and sharing things. Technology was also used for the first time for our July committee meeting. This was done on Skype and meant we didn't have to give up a whole day from our businesses.

The After the Storm project is progressing and we hope to have more detailed news in October. Suffice it to say the budget is being put together.

The run up to Christmas is usually demanding on our time with a clear and present deadline for all makers of beautiful things. Events where you can see SFMA members exhibiting some of these items are: [The Family Tree Gallery Darach Mor, Fintry G63 0LP 3rd October to 10th October](#), [the Tweed Valley Forest Festival in Peebles 24th and 25th October](#) and [Springwood Park in Kelso 21st and 22nd November](#).

If you are interested in the Kiln drying course call Jim Birley 01383 851328. The google members group is open to all SFMA members for free.

Finally, thank you to our supporters over the last 6 months, particularly FCS, as without this help we could not do as much as we do.

www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk



Written by,
Jonathan Rose
SFMA Chairman





SFMA / DUKE CHRISTIE

For a furniture maker like Duke Christie, inspiration comes from wood itself. He feels his favourite way of approaching a project has evolved over a life-time of working with wood. As a furniture maker who has evolved into creating art, ideally he likes to open up a tree to see how the grain is formed, and to continue as though the tree itself is dictating the ultimate shape. This is a highly organic approach, inspired by the raw material itself and enhanced by natural surroundings. Duke's designs are profoundly influenced by the landscape in which he lives...hills, fields, rocks, seascapes and the local timber he uses. The results are highly sculptural pieces, some of which have taken the concept of 'furniture' to new levels.

However, Duke's training and experience is firmly rooted within a furniture making tradition. Having always enjoyed working with wood as a child, rather than train as a joiner he chose to concentrate on furniture design and cabinet making. He studied in Herefordshire and went on to work in various places around the world before returning to Scotland and setting up his business in Moray.

While Duke's current passion lies within the more sculptural pieces he produces, furniture making still lies at the heart of his business. He uses local timber and knows that clients are keen to seek out not only local materials but often local craftsmen too. For example, he recently made a dining



room table and a coffee table from a tree that had come down in the customer's own garden. He uses local ash, oak and elm as often as he can. However, there are times when it has not been possible to source his (preferred) homegrown timber suitable for the design in hand...when he made a four metre long bookcase for a building with underfloor heating, for example, he had to use imported quarter sawn European oak as he could not find wide kiln dried boards at this length. Although this did make it very difficult to try and marry up the grain of the different planks as imported wood can often mean using planks that are not from the same tree, which, for high-class cabinet making makes book matching panels impossible.

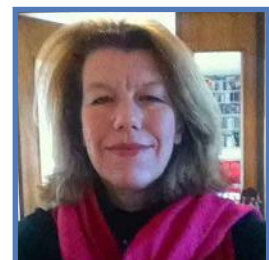
In addition to making furniture, Duke is interested in restoration, and has found that a knowledge of older techniques and traditions informs his work. He carried out restoration work on a 17th century castle, restoring panelling that had been 'worked on' during the 1980s...this meant bringing the original panelling and the 'attempted rescue work' together in a proper restoration. Often

this sort of job leads to other work, and in this case he was commissioned to make furniture for the castle.

Duke used to carve particular pieces, a skill which is useful in restoration work. Now, however, he sees little point in carving something life-like when the wood itself already suggests a natural design. He likens this way of working to the thinking behind an abstract painting. Indeed, much of his work is closer to art than furniture. He continues to experiment with different techniques and materials, for example, burning parts of an object to create variations in texture.

Duke's business is busy, and while he would like to spend more time creating his sculptural pieces, he continues to make furniture and carry out restoration. As he chooses projects that particularly interest him, he only has one person working with him, partly because it is hard to train someone when he has little idea of what the next job might entail. He likes to express his own personality in his work, and that of the client when a commissioned piece is being created. A commission will depend on the client's wishes and the location for which a piece is intended. After an initial consultation, Duke may produce sketches or make maquettes to enable a client to understand the working process in addition to the intended outcome. This means that clients are always welcome to come and see the work as it progresses, or photographs can be emailed when this is not possible. He rarely works from rigid blueprints and likes a piece to evolve naturally.

Duke's work, with its continual element of experiment and exploration, is an evolving process in itself. As he says, he does not like to force a material to 'go against the grain'...the wood itself acts as his initial inspiration, which means something unique is created with every project.



Written By
Jane Robinson

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NOTES FROM THE BENCH

Introduction

The 10th anniversary exhibition at the Dovecot in 2011 was a good reason to make something new and if it was a speculative piece, then it offered a learning opportunity. This usually means some risk in the job, either from a time or materials perspective.

A friend who runs a restaurant in Aberdeen seeded the idea of a table for a Sunday brunch environment; somewhere to read newspapers, drink coffee and meet people. She had seen it in Germany and enjoyed the experience, so why not here in Aberdeen? Space was limited so the idea of a table which could be reconfigured sounded attractive.

Could I do something?

Out of this idea came [Segment 1](#), a table made as one of three segments of a circle based on an orange segment. As each standard place setting is approximately 60 cm wide, the diameter would have to be at least 2.5 metres for the full circle. It turned out to be 3 metres.

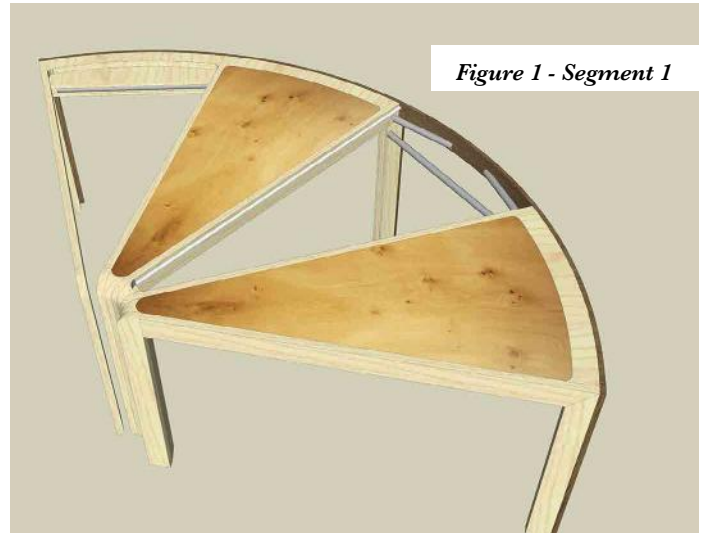


Figure 1 - Segment 1



Photo 1

Here is the finished product. Perhaps this could be my statement piece?

The challenges

I prefer working in solid material rather than veneer, as it gives that distinct quality feel if the piece is well made. For a circular table using these materials, expansion and contraction will have to be accommodated, particularly in the high stress environment of a restaurant. From an aesthetic point of view the 1:5 scale development model

showed that the corners of the segment panels were most convincing if they were curved, so I had to come up with a method to cut these curves. The radial grain direction should work to reduce the risk of cracking but would need extra strength around the perimeter to support vertical loading. How do you glue up a radial piece - cramps are not made in that way. There were many other challenges which are for another article, or a beer.

Realization of the idea

The materials were pippy oak for the panels, sycamore for the frame and fumed oak for the outer rim. The pippy oak and sycamore were supplied by Julian and Malcolm at Angus and Mack, and the fumed oak came from my own air dried stock.

Sufficient vertical strength came from 1" steel tubing, inset around the edges, as in [figure 1](#) and [photo 2](#). Gluing each tube in its centre to the table frame or panel allows the wood to expand and contract independently of the steel. A small allowance was needed at the end of each tube for heat expansion.

The method for cutting the curves in the matching panels lent itself to a template system with a router and bearing cutters as shown on [figure 2](#).

However it would not be good enough to cut a line through ply and sand it off because the thickness of the blade would introduce a major inaccuracy. A master template and inverse master template was needed as shown on [figure 3](#). Looking at my collection of 1/4" router cutters and the Wealden catalogue, I found a wide enough selection to do the job outlined below.

To make the matching templates, I made the master template using a bandsaw and

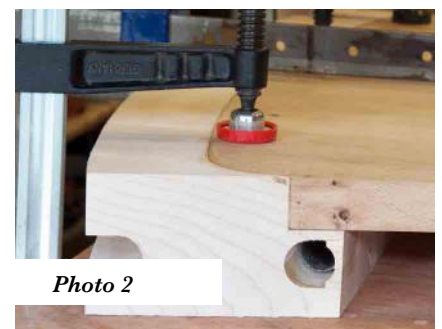


Photo 2

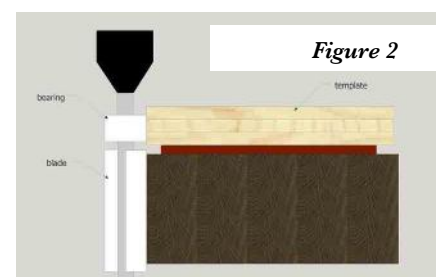


Figure 2

sanders. The master template is green in the diagrams and smoothness and squareness of the edges is the critical point. Using a 16mm guide bushing and a 12.7 straight bit, I made a guide template as shown in [figure 4](#) by running the bushing

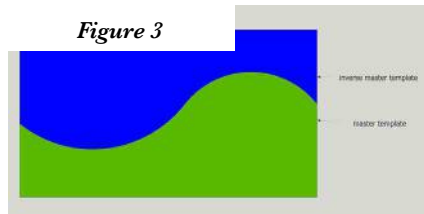


Figure 3



Figure 4

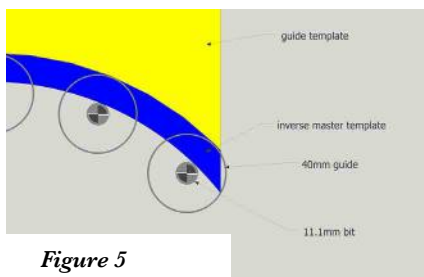


Figure 5

along the master template and using the outside edge of the cutter to do the work. The guide template is shown in yellow. With an improbably sized 11.1mm cutter (7/16" from wealden) and a 40mm bushing I used the guide template to cut the inverse master template running the bushing on the guide template and the inside cutting edge of the bit as on figure 5. It worked for me and felt somewhat miraculous when the two templates fitted snugly together. Photo 3 shows two template pairs used for the table and photo 4 shows one in use. There are limitations to this method; for example the thickness of the templates has to be greater than the guide bush length - 10mm ply is OK for this; the inverse template cannot have curves with a radius less than 20mm which in this case was not a limitation.

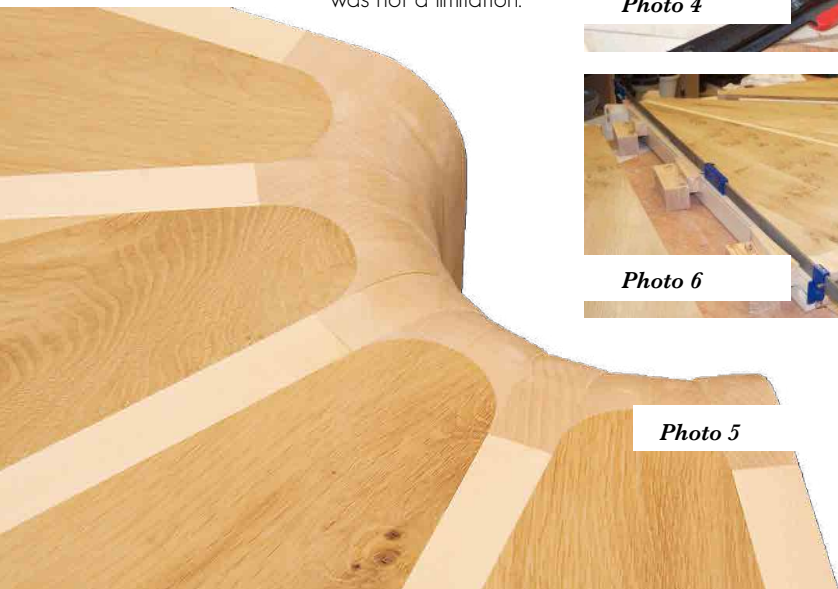


Photo 5



Photo 7

For those interested, this method works because the gap between the bushing bearing surface and the cutting edge of the two combinations of cutters and bushings is the same - 14.4mm. There are other size combinations which can overcome these limitations but this worked at the scale of my table. I have subsequently found out this is not the only way of carrying out this operation. Photo 2 and 5 show the results of the work of these templates. A special table for assembly and glue up was essential for a piece like this. It allowed the top and central leg to be worked together when glued. It could also be used as a clamping surface for the radial panels, with wedges and blocks. Photo 6 shows it in use.

The table is now installed and well loved by staff and customers in our local bistro www.buchananfood.com, here in Banchory. It is showing some signs of heat stress at the end of one panel, which has required strengthening from below. 6mm feathers attaching the panels to the ribs were not strong enough right at the extremities. The three coats of lacquer are standing up well to the constant use.

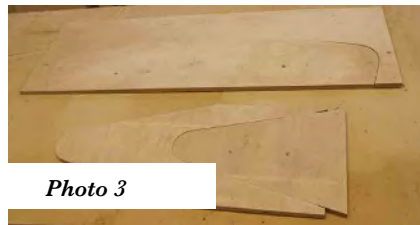


Photo 3

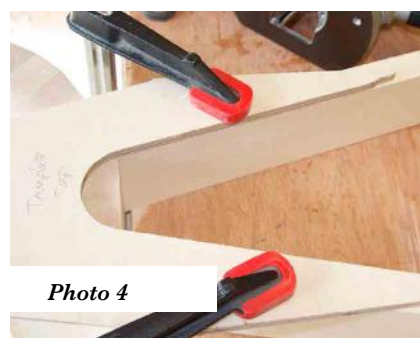


Photo 4



Photo 6

Conclusion

It was an intense 5 weeks to build this and deliver on time for the exhibition (excluding the modeling). In hind sight based on the performance of the table over 3 years, I would work with dryer wood - say maximum 8% moisture content, so the table was only dealing with expansion for it to stabilize its moisture content - tension is not so easy to accommodate.

Power tools are essential to make this in the time available. But because of the fine tolerances for the templates, they were used more like hand tools. Each cut was planned and tested to ensure it would all fit together perfectly.

Please contact me if you try these methods and let me know what it enables you to do. It has gone open source on many occasions and it's something the furniture maker's world is starting to get used to.

Written by,
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LOCAL WOODS PROJECT GAINS INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE



When I was approached by The Royal College of Surgeons to design and make a bespoke lectern as a gift for the American College of Surgeons, they were keen for the piece to have a truly Scottish, but better still a real Edinburgh connection.

I told them all about The Local Woods for Local Makers Project, and how Dutch elm diseased trees from The Meadows in Edinburgh were being given a new life in the form of beautiful hand crafted furniture. They were immediately enthused about the idea, and were very keen to have the lectern produced using timber from these magnificent trees.

I set to preparing a series of design sketches to present to the College of Surgeon's office bearers, which were then discussed and deliberated over, which for me was an interesting experience of design by committee.

Of course the final design choice was the most complicated, but I rose to challenge, producing working drawings, a scale model and then the final table top lectern, which was flown out to Chicago and warmly received by the American College of Surgeons in celebration of their 100 year anniversary.

A year later The Royal College of Surgeons were back in touch, this time with something even more interesting. They wanted to present 'something' to The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of The Battle of Gallipoli, and the Anzacs.

They had no idea what it was to be and just left it in my 'artistic' hands?? I hadn't a 'Scooby doo!!'

Anyway, after much pondering, head scratching and a whole sketch book (as well as a few whiskies!) later I came up with what you might call a sculpture.

The three carved rifle butts leading into engraved scalpels at the base represented the world war one and medical connection as well as the bowl on top symbolising a surgeon's crucible where they would wash their instruments. The triangular base and three rifles then represented the three countries from which each college of surgeons came from, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand.

The two different timbers then completed the unifying connection, with elm from The Meadows in Edinburgh, and



-Tom Cooper with Fern Chair



reclaimed Australian Jarrah wood from some very old railway sleepers.

Crests from both colleges were engraved onto boxwood medallions and set into the base, along with an engraved silver dedication plaque.

It didn't stop there, as only just recently I delivered to the college of surgeons a wooden Quaich to be given to The Hong Kong College of Surgeons to commemorate their 25th anniversary.

This again required a symbolic connection, which took the form of the bowl being made from four ying yang shapes, contrasting burr elm with straight grain elm, and tear drop handles bearing the crest of both colleges.

All the gifts were accompanied by a book of provenance which explained and illustrated the whole Local woods project, demonstrating the entire process from standing tree to finished, hand crafted item, potentially a good advertisement to an international audience of how in Scotland we put our diseased and declining trees to good use.

Written by, Tom Cooper
www.tcfurniture.co.uk

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LANDSCAPE SCALE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO 200 YEAR PROJECT

The Great Trossachs Forest (TGTF) - a native woodland and habitat restoration project that is creating one of the largest native woodlands in the UK has recently (Aug '15) been declared a National Nature Reserve and as such is now the biggest NNR in the UK.

The accolade is testimony to the unique and exemplary approach taken by the three collaborative partners - Forest Enterprise Scotland, RSPB Scotland and Woodland Trust Scotland - which have each committed to manage the land for native woodlands for 200 years.

Sue Morris, who is managing the project for the partners', said;

"It truly is a unique undertaking and one that we think is showing other land managers how working together at a landscape scale can deliver so much more for wildlife, communities and people. To have been awarded this accolade is a great tribute to the partners efforts.

"A large part of what we are about is native woodland restoration and we aim to create a woodland corridor across the whole project area, restoring a landscape by reconnecting, protecting and enhancing native habitats.

"Ultimately 4,400 ha will be wooded and that will help create ecosystems with high biodiversity value as well as woodlands that are more resilient and adaptable to the impact of climate change."

The Great Trossachs Forest is the legacy project of the Scottish Forest Alliance, now the Sustainable Forestry SCIO, formed in the year 2000 with the three collaborative partners and backed by £10M funding from BP. It was Scotland's biggest ever corporate

commitment to the environment and it funded programmes of work on 14 SFA sites across Scotland, three of which make up The Great Trossachs Forest.

Officially launched in 2009, The Great Trossachs Forest spans 16,500 hectares - an area the size of Glasgow - and comprises three separate sites surrounding Loch Katrine; Glen Finglas (Woodland Trust Scotland), Loch Katrine (Forest Enterprise Scotland) and Inversnaid Nature Reserve (RSPB Scotland). Within The Great Trossachs Forest area there are also four SSSI's(1), two National Scenic Area's (2) and three Special Areas of Conservation (3).



The project has four clear aims.

Habitat management: to create a native woodland habitat network, a natural mosaic of habitats and to enable as many species to adapt to the threat of climate change.

People engagement: to be a key destination in the national park, to improve recreational opportunities, to engage local communities and business, to produce innovative interpretation and to host a variety of events

Life-long learning: to involve schools, universities, research institutes and volunteers and provide opportunities for people to learn about cultural landscapes, forest ecosystems, sustainable land management, biodiversity and wildlife and to become a living laboratory for research

Partnership working: to be a flagship partner project setting an example and encouraging other land managers to work across boundaries to benefit wildlife and people.

Sue added: "The Great Trossachs Forest is a fantastic focal point for celebrating the beauty and rich cultural heritage of the area.

"We have very clear aims for the project and we are already well on the way to making this a showcase for wildlife, tourism, outdoor leisure, learning, research and partnership working.

"There are many layers to it and everyone who finds out about it or comes to visit generally always finds that there are more things to discover than they initially thought."

As well as protecting an iconic natural and cultural landscape, the project is also protecting the water supply for Glasgow: following an outbreak of *Cryptosporidium* in Glasgow in 2002, it was recommended that all the sheep be removed from the Loch Katrine catchment and that the area be managed for native woodland and biodiversity.



Forest Enterprise Scotland signed a long term lease with Scottish Water to deliver this and - with the final piece of the jigsaw in place, along with £1.8M of Heritage Lottery Funding - The Great Trossachs Forest was born.

So far (mid 2015) over 1.5 million native trees have been planted, non-native trees felled and removed and invasive species, especially *Rhododendron*, cleared from large areas. As well as including a range of important habitats such as ancient woodland and wood pasture, a host of protected species can also be found here including golden eagle, pine marten, otter and red squirrel.



But the environmental work is only part of the picture: two new Visitor Gateways have been built, a new long distance route constructed - and now one of Scotland's newest Great Trails. Creation of new paths (Old Military Road, Primrose Hill, link path from Brig o' Turk to Kilmahog). An Art & Nature trail has been installed, along with a Natural Play and Sculpture Trail in Little Druim Wood and a short film series, a smartphone app and an interactive photo tour have been developed to showcase the project.

Sue said: "The project really speaks for itself and it is beginning to develop a substantial reputation, which we do all we can to augment through presentations, website, tours and a variety of hosted events.

"We're also cultivating a reputation as a place to carry out environmental research and to pursue opportunities to learn, with research and education playing a big part in our work.

Several legacy projects started under the SFA banner continue to provide data for researchers on subjects as varied as the development of ecosystems, carbon sequestration and climate change, monitoring key species and assessing the positive impact of cattle grazing on new woodlands. Extensive habitat modelling research work is also planned.

For school-aged pupil (mainly secondary school) The Great Trossachs Forest team has



worked with Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority to produce an education resource pack linked to Curriculum for Excellence. Usable in the classroom or 'on site' the resource has elements of art & design, geography and biology, and serves as a good source of inspiration for environmental, literacy, numeracy and cooperative learning themes.

Sue added; "It's a very busy, beautiful and multi-faceted place and there is always something happening somewhere. We're formally only six years in...so only 194 years to go!"

Other useful facts:

- Loch Katrine has the oldest dated ash trees in Scotland.
- Rob Roy, Sir Walter Scott, the Wordsworth's, Ruskin and the Glasgow Boys are all key figures in the cultural heritage of the Trossachs.
- There are many rare, special & endangered species within TGTF including Golden Eagle, red squirrels, pine martens, otters, short eared owls & small headed wood ant.
- Black grouse numbers are stable across the whole TGTF area.
- 2011 the Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterfly was positively identified at Loch Katrine- first time in 25 years. In 2015 the rare narrow bordered bee hawk moth was identified



Written By
Sue Morris

Project Manager
The Great Trossachs Forest



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THE NEW HARVESTING AND PROCESSING GRANT FROM FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND



On 16 July this year details of the "Harvesting and Processing Grant" were published. This new grant is one of the suite of options within the Forestry Grant Scheme under the Scottish Rural Development Programme. This is an exciting opportunity for the sector, with the aim being to:

"Support investments in new specialised equipment which will increase the local small scale harvesting and processing capacity..."

Publication and opening of this grant scheme was brought forward to provide an opportunity for spend this financial year. There will be around £250,000 available each year through till 2020, though there could be more available in this first year, 2015.

Through this grant we hope to:

- Help bring woodlands into management;
- Promote the economic and sustainable production of timber and timber products through processing;
- Add value to local economies on a non-industrial scale (less than 10,000 tonnes per annum of roundwood for harvesting or extraction equipment, or less than 5,000 tonnes per annum of output for timber processing equipment);
- Provide support to facilitate and enable diversification and to assist with the creation of new small enterprises and related employment.

What is eligible?

Full details can be found at: [https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/harvesting-and-processing/...](https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/harvesting-and-processing/)

Key elements are:

- Small scale mechanised harvesting equipment to work in small, undermanaged conifer and broadleaved, predominantly farm, woodlands;
- Equipment to facilitate local timber primary processing at a non-industrial scale (excluding wood chipping) eg. small scale mobile or static saw benches for primary processing of felled trees, handheld timber strength graders, timber drying kilns and firewood log processors
- Work to promote development of markets (including co-operative marketing) for the products from these woodlands generated from the small-scale primary processing.
- The purchase of second hand equipment will not be supported.

Grant support available

Grant support is based on actual costs with a maximum contribution of 40 per cent. In any single application, the minimum grant award total will be £2,500 and the maximum grant award total for each application will be £35,000. You may submit more than one application in each round or over the life of the grant scheme, with each being assessed on its own merits.

The application process

There will be only one funding round each year. The process is all online and your business will need to be registered for FGS before you can apply. The first deadline for applications was 14th September and to help members, details of the scheme were emailed to ASHS shortly after it was opened.

For next closing date is 31st March 2016. From 2017 onwards the closing date for submission of applications is 31st January. The assessment process is described in the FGS section of the

SRDP web pages. Applications from eligible bodies eg. fewer than 10 employees, turnover less than EUR 2m and processing less than 10k tonnes of timber per annum, must be accompanied by a clear and sound business plan. This should be relevant to the amount of money sought.

They are assessed by a member of the local Conservancy staff, using set scoring criteria for which points are awarded, with a minimum threshold set before an application is considered for approval. A Technical Support Advisory Group will look at applications which pass this assessment to ensure that the equipment proposed is considered safe and fit for purpose.

If approved, the equipment must be purchased and the grant claimed within a timescale which will be specified in the award letter. There will be a requirement to record data on levels of use and production from the equipment we have grant aided for a number of years, and have both the equipment and the data available for inspection by Forestry Commission Scotland staff.

The first / next step

If you are interested, then speak to your local Conservancy. This Grant is here to help your sector so make full use of it. Be aware that it is a competitive process - so good luck.



Written by,
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NICHE MARKETING OFFICER UPDATE



It has been an interesting start to the year with steady progress made in terms of securing sales and building capacity within the Forestry Commission to engage with specialist timber sales. Over the past few months, we have sold a parcel of mixed hardwood at Newbattle, supplied masts for the Waverley paddle steamer and supplied western red cedar to a specialist sawmill.

As momentum continues to grow, it is worth explaining the current mechanism under which we operate to market and administer the sale of timber. For niche sales which as a rule fall under 50 tonnes, our main approach is to advertise log parcels via a tender catalogue which is advertised collectively to ASHS members, individually and often also in local papers such as the Press and Journal or Oban Times depending on location. The sales catalogue will contain a bidding form for potential customers to place bids for specific Lots which could be individual logs or for a parcel within a given time period. Received bids are compared and the winning bid secures items in a specific lot. A sales letter will be sent to all who have responded to confirm that a bid has either been successful or not. For the successful bidder, a contract will be sent to confirm the sale condition and formalise collection arrangements such as access protocols and timelines for timber uplift.

- For customers who have purchased timber for first time from the Forestry

Commission, the following requirements are required to complete the transaction;

- Two copies of a timber sales contract, location maps and risk assessment would be issued and a signed copy returned to the relevant Forest District
- Before any uplift of timber can be made payment via cheque, credit card or BACS has to be made.
- For lorry uplifts, as part of FC security protocol, a PIN number for individual lorry loads would be issued by the local Forest District using a designated telephone number system which confirms authorised collection or other local arrangements where appropriate
- Payments for timber can be made by lump sum or pre-paying each load or for individual logs
- The FC will issue a receipt for payment
- Payment by credit card can be made at District Offices or over the phone
- For returning customers who wish to secure a credit facility, an application form can be sent to capture necessary details. The benefit of having a credit facility means that a 30 day payment period can be applied for a specific order

Enquiries on sales procedure or progress can be made by contacting local District Offices or through the sales contact for specific sales.

Looking ahead, our intention for niche sales is to utilise a modified version of our current e sales marketing platform which operates 5 times a year and will be applied to timber parcels

of a lorry load or more. While we try to accommodate requests from customers, for a large organisation like ourselves, having a structured sales approach is more sustainable for delivering specialist timber sales. Once this system is in place and coupled with market intelligence, it will give customers a clear picture of product availability at points in the year via a regularly updated sales portal and advertising. For smaller sales parcels ranging down to individual logs, we are seeking to apply a sales approach where by payment can be made via credit card at a District Office or even on line to make the process quick and short on paperwork.



Written by,
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ASHS STUDY TOUR TO ITALY AND SLOVENIA 1ST - 5TH JUNE 2015



Participants

Malcolm Mack - Angus & Mack
 Graeme Murray - Real Wood Studios
 Jake Willis - SoundWood
 Neil Sutherland - Makar
 Angus Ross - Angus Ross Furniture
 Archie McConnel - McConnel Wood Products
 Gavin Munro - Future Trees Trust, Woodland Heritage, hardwood specialist
 Elisa Carturan - Freelance forester, facilitator and interpreter, Lombardia
 Paolo Federicis - Freelance forester, Friuli Venezia Giulia
 Marko Štefancic - Arslogica Technology Consultants (www.arslogica.si)

All the participants would like to extend a huge thank you to Elisa for her work in setting up the visits, finding contacts, organising interpreting, and accompanying us during the tour. It is impossible to arrange an international exchange without such dedicated facilitation.

Annotated itinerary

MONDAY - Slovenia

Nova Gorica - we met under a giant *Quercus robur* with the Tolmin district of the Slovenian

Forest Service. They introduced the region's forest resource, forest history, and some current challenges such as conflicts between boar and recreation, difficulties with access roading for extraction on steep ground, the challenge of adding value to their timber in-country (much is exported in the round and sawn in Italy and Austria). They also described the dramatic 2013 ice snap and that same evening, during a walk through the famous Slovenian meadows, we dipped down into some mixed woodland (there are so many oak species in southern Europe!) where we saw for ourselves how the ice had ripped and shredded tree canopies. The afternoon with the foresters ended with a range of alcohols being produced from somewhere - one forester even drove home to pick up a bottle of his own wine for sampling. We learned that this is how most international meetings proceed in Slovenia...

TUESDAY

Postojna - we toured the Tajfun crane factory where components are prepared from raw Swedish steel, with machinery exported worldwide, including to the UK. We watched a demonstration of a timber crane, a firewood processor and a tractor-mounted winch with remote control. The timber crane also gets sold into the expanding recycling sector - we were impressed by its smooth operation.

Kobarid - we visited the family run Ohoja sawmill which processes 10-12,000 cubic metres of softwood per annum, selling untreated spruce carcassing into North Africa and the Middle East out of Trieste via Austrian agents.





Kobarid - we toured an ASHS-scale furniture workshop run by Peter Koren, who utilises locally sourced Ash, Walnut, Oak, etc. to make bespoke items with vacuum kiln drying and biomass heating using the workshop's wood waste.

WEDNESDAY - Italy

San Giovanni al Natisone (Udine) - Martina, a marketing officer of the Italian Chair District, gave us a presentation on the joint marketing and branding initiative she works for. The Chair District initiative is linked to a wider Green District that regroups three municipalities around the town of Udine.



Manzano (Udine) - we toured the Stacco sawmill and chair component manufacturing, with components being roughed out on bandsaws with incredible speed for sending on to another business in the production chain.

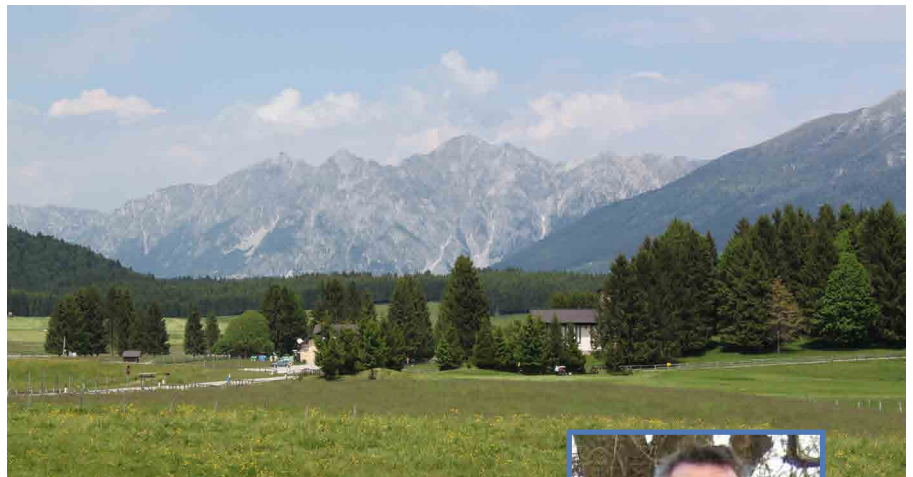


San Giovanni al Natisone (Udine) - we toured the Petruzzi-2 plywood chair factory to see chair assembly. We were impressed by two pieces of laser cutting and engraving technology, particularly when the owner told us he had invested in these around the time of the recession, underlining the confidence in the market that these family manufacturing enterprises all seem to share.

Manzano (Udine) - we toured the Pentalegno solid wood chair assembly plant, which manufactures a huge range of chair designs from bought in unfinished components. The high capital investment in the huge airy building, acres of engineered concrete floor and latest CNC machining were impressive. The owner, while leafing through our first ASHS The Full Circle, was genuinely impressed by Angus Ross' steambent chair. So a good eye for design as well as manufacturing - indeed Italy's industrial design culture really is a great asset, something that we can learn a great deal from in Scotland, be it scaling up from bespoke furniture designs or developing outlets for Harris Tweed, for the wealthy and the non-wealthy alike.

THURSDAY

Foresta del Cansiglio - The regional forest and agricultural service Veneto Agricoltora gave us a presentation on the management of this famous 3300 hectare beechwood and mixed beech-Norway spruce-Silver Fir forests at around 1000 metres above sea level. We then headed off on a forest tour to see tractor-skidder timber extraction and see the Beech stands at successive stages of thinning and regeneration (shelterwood system). Some of the Beech sawlogs are sold to the ITLAS wood flooring plant we would visited later in the day. It was truly refreshing to stand in a beechwood with an Italian forester who was so proud and satisfied with his low yield class of 3.5 because he knew the quality was good and it would sell when it was ready to harvest! What a contrast with Scotland where a forester will only get excited if he can grow something with Yield Class 18 or above.



Cordignone - We were given a sleek presentation and tour of the ITLAS solid and engineered wood flooring, seeing their sawmill and factory, marquetry and high-end massive oak furniture. We often think that continental yards have access to a higher grade of hardwood timber. It is certainly in larger volumes and lower priced than ours. But we were surprised to see the low grade of some of the oak going into the flooring plant*. Some of the bigger section was being squared off, air-dried and with a minimum of planing and routing, was being sold for 4000 euros/piece as massive furniture.

Written by
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SLOVENIA / ITALY TRIP JUNE 2015

Slovenia appeared similar to other alpine areas of Europe, from Austria and Switzerland to Norway, small scale low input low output land management. In early June haymaking, bee keeping, well ordered piles of firewood, and orchards everywhere, and once we worked out that the two metre poles surrounding the potatoes and vegetable gardens were for climbing beans, it struck me that there was no need for fences, clearly no deer problem here. This country of 50% forest cover, forest to the high tops, is the sort of re-wilded bear, boar and wolf place which makes one wonder how our own Cairngorms could be without a dominance of heather moor wet desert. The part time agriculture lends security and stability to a population and supports part time working in industry. We saw a number of examples of the kind of workplace and domestic house integration we would find surprising in Scotland. A furniture maker workshop on the edge of the village, employing a handful of people engaged in a range of finishing work but also heating a portion of the settlement with biomass co-product. The neat gardens and espalier fruit trees everywhere say a lot. Yes, the climate is

warmer, but there was something else going on.

Up the road the sawmill was purely focused on conversion of logs and they seemed in a hurry to load the un-stickered boards, slab-wood on to articulated lorries for delivery to Austria or Italy. Financial success was the mark-up on primary processing counted in a few euros. The whole operation clearly lacked vision or investment or both, leaving the adding of real value to others out with the country's borders. We enquired about networked industry making use of the timber products, but were told there was no timber house manufacture to speak of using local materials. This seems a bit illogical and unfortunate, but is it much different from what we find in Scotland?

There was a stark contrast between the primary processing limited focus of the Slovenian sawmills and the





confidence of the Italian approach to adding value. In business we are nothing without a market. The flooring company we visited had a different approach. It pulled in a wide quality range of round logs from across Europe, the ones we saw were French of dubious quality, to turn out Italian design satisfying perhaps exaggerated customer expectation. The showroom, marketing brochures and fashionably late salesman exemplified a furniture porn approach to marketing with lifestyle to the fore.

How does Scotland measure against these contrasting approaches and how will it perform in the future?

It seems clear that we have fitted with the Slovenian model of an ambitious raw product material production, minimal processing and allowing others to cash in on the eventual high value, across a range of sectors - salmon, livestock, food. Yet there are counter examples - whisky?

It is clear to me that we need a vision of where we want to be in our sector in say, 25 years time. What do others think of Scotland and what do we represent on the domestic and international stages?

We need the long-term desire, ability and tenacity to grow and maintain a market. My own feeling is that this is best built on cultural values deeply engrained, but which by their nature are dynamic; pragmatism and practicality, robustness and elegance, natural and healthy, wholesome and timeless.

We need to build a reputation for quality and value and we need customers with desire for our vision who support and desire this work.

For this to happen we will need some or all of the following:

- Investment in a long term trajectory based on confidence and vision
- Progressive business organizational approaches which represent future ways of making and trading
- Face up to the Conundrum of IKEA and understand changing customer behaviour
- Cooperative alliances - flexible ways of networking and generic marketing
- Branding - convince the specifier, architect or others, to believe in the product and influence the less than informed often urban, customer.
- Capital, People and Process Investment

In the early 1990's when I was getting started it was very difficult to build a timber house in Scotland that looked like a timber house. There was no authenticity. There were plenty of new timber panel houses, but the customer and the regulator in the form of planning authorities preferred them looking like mock masonry buildings. Now the perception has changed significantly, and authentic houses making use of local timber, and with an ecological label are not only the best in relation to health, wellbeing, thermal & carbon performance, but they are now held up as such by local authorities, national parks, wealthy and non wealthy customers. Is this state of affairs an expression of a general deeper environmental cultural tendency?

We at MAKAR have learned that the customer does not share our enthusiasm for technical or process driven progress - they want a nice house that feels and looks good. It's the tactile stuff they really appreciate (and I'm not being cynical here); the clunk of a well made door, flooring with character, staircase with expression, integrated storage, a delightful kitchen - to look at and appreciate as well as use. The customer also requires certainty over design quality, workmanship, program and cost. This suggests there is a residual market ready to engage with what the ASHS Brand has to offer.



Written by
Neil Sutherland

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION PART 2

The volume of information and ideas that were developed from our trip to Italy to study the Italian Chair District and the systems of timber processing from tree to chair employed there will likely lead to many more articles and questions for our journal to explore in the future but in the first instance I will attempt to answer the questions put to the group before we left which were;

How did the industry start and what have been the key developments to build such a strong manufacturing and export position?

The 'Italian Chair District' (ICD) itself is a brand that was set up less than 10 years ago with the aid of public funds to try and promote a large range of disparate companies that operated within the north east of Italy between Venice and the Slovenian boarder. These companies were primarily involved in the production of timber based furniture and range from sawmillers and primary timber processors to upholsterers and chair assembly specialists. The role of the ICD is to represent and promote the capabilities of the companies that sign up to the group. This was primarily done through international exhibitions such as 100% design in London and the Milan Furniture Fair amongst others. They are active throughout Europe and trying to break into the middle east as well. ICD took no commission nor charged fees for this service and relied entirely upon government funding which was set to run out at the end of this year. In my opinion a marketing and branding organisation such as this that is capable of shoring up a manufacturing industry employing thousands of people should be owned and paid for in part by a public funding body to initiate the project as well as receive funding from those that it represents too. It seemed to me that the companies the ICD represented have little or no real representation in terms of branding and promotion of their own.

What timbers do they use and why? Availability? Material qualities?

Beech. Almost everything is made from beech and the reason for this is that they have a fantastic supply of very high quality beech timber from local forests. They are using the natural resource they have to hand because it is there. The forests have been expertly managed for the last 500 years or so meaning they need very little heavy management. I'm not going to go into the details of the forestry that they have as its not my field of expertise and there are more qualified members of our group that can describe this infinitely better than I. What I would say is that the mills we visited used every part of the trees they were buying, there was no waste. Even on the forest floor brush was logged in neat bundles for firewood. One of the flooring manufacturers we visited was clearly buying mixed loads of oak from France and had a product and market for every conceivable part of the tree. This included making exterior benches from some of the worst star and ring shake oak i've ever seen which were sold at an impressive price. This idea of having specific products that can be made from the various grades of timber that we all come across and selling them through a centralised 'shop front' or point of sale which could simply be a website as well as being able to sell through our own means would be a powerful tool for ASHS members to have. The standardisation of their sawn timber is also something that I think ASHS members need to take a look at as it makes it a lot easier for our customers to purchase/use. There are Europe wide standardised thicknesses and quality grading that I think we could find inspiration from.

What drying techniques do they use? Are they standardised?

One of the side effect of the warm dry climate is that timber dries out very quickly which is great for beech and ash but not so good for oak. We found that 2" beech could be milled and dried within 8 weeks however we did see sprinkler systems operating where oak had been cut. Something I have experienced in Scotland believe it or not! There didn't seem to be standardised drying techniques used. However for European hardwoods to be considered kiln dried they need to be between 12% and 15%. Again, something that I would be keen to discuss for ASHS members to follow too.





How long from felling to production of components?

Some of the mills visited incorporated initial processing of dried timber to produce blanks such as chair legs and seats. In these companies they were milling and drying to order and the only stock held was air drying.

Do the mills fell to order depending on end use or do they carry stock?

On the most part they would carry a minimum of stock in air dried form and buy in logs to order.

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

There were several companies involved in the production of each chair that would range from sawmill/blank cutting, primary component machining, secondary component machining, finishing/spraying and finally specialised assembly companies.

Is there an overarching organisation like ASHS?

Not really. The FSC and PEFC stamp is used by all the companies in the supply chain however it seemed that the only attempt to create an organisation that oversaw the branding marketing and management of their industry was the ICD.

What is their route to market / Is it lead by the sawmills? Manufacturers? Designers? Retailers?

It is primarily led by the ICD brand. Some of the larger manufacturers would employ designers and architects to come up with products specifically suited to their manufacturing capabilities or to utilise their waste products (the star shake oak bench was an example of this).

Where do they sell products to?

Nationally and internationally to both domestic and commercial clients.

What machinery do they use?

Their sawmilling capabilities are impressive, however the machinery and tooling used to manufacture the end products are no different to that of many of our high spec joinery manufacturers and furniture makers. Some 3 and 5 axis CNC machines were used for the more complex components, but a great many components were made using spindle moulders and jigs.

What machinery is most vital to the processing?

Efficient log handling and processing, CNC routers and machining centres, rows and rows of spindle moulders. The hardwood millers there are similar to our softwood mills here in terms of machinery and scale.

What sort of quality control do they employ?

The ICD don't vet the products that designers and makers put to them. The market dictates what sells and because of the system of manufacture that is already there they are able to guarantee continuity of supply.

ASHS is currently working with SWW on a similar branding arm to help promote the use of Scottish timber alongside our wealth of designer makers and my next article for the journal will be a progress update on the practical application of our findings from Italy.



Written by
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GLENFARG OAK FRAME

Oak framed buildings have been around for thousands of years and the joints used in their construction have changed little in all that time. Their durability and strength is well documented even in earthquake zones like Japan.

I first developed an interest in these grand structures while traveling around America, experiencing both log and post and beam frame construction at first hand. On returning to the UK and during my studies as a Civil Engineer my interest developed and I was fortunate enough to meet a number of people working within the British Industry. These included Carpenter Oak & Woodland, who were working on the Great Hall hammer beam roof at Stirling Castle at the time, and Border Oak to name a couple. Over the years following this time I attended several courses and built a selection of smaller frames and roof trusses as I developed the required skills.

In the summer of 2011, I was asked to design and build a complete Oak roof structure with Purlins for a new build property in Glenfarg. This was to be open internally and capable of supporting a traditional slate roof. It was clear early on that the provenance of the timber was important to my client and acting on this I managed to source suitable logs from an estate in Haddington, East Lothian. This worked out well as it turned out he had spent time at this estate earlier in his life and knew it well.



company made these up to my drawings and specifications. Once the design had been fully agreed with both the engineer and the client, we ordered all the required oak beams, which were cut by Scottish Wood. These were visually graded in accordance with Trada's book on Oak Frame Construction and a few of Jim's beams were rejected before they came to my yard. This is standard in this type of construction with more beams being cut than required for this purpose.

Due to the wet summer of 2011 we set up a marquee tent at the workshop, allowing us to work unaffected by the weather. Once we had the oak beams in our yard we set up the beams on trestles, sanded each beam with a belt sander before cutting all the required mortise & tennon joints. During this process the frame was assembled and disassembled many times as each component is slowly and carefully fine tuned to a perfect fit. Unlike furniture making a little play is allowed in the joints to make it easier to put together and take apart quickly. We used 25mm kiln dried oak dowels to secure the frame, all of which we turned on the lathe. Turned dowels are much stronger than traditional cleaved dowels and being dry they absorb moisture from the green oak beams, creating a tighter finished frame.

We designed our trusses with all the relevant criteria such as roof pitch and span as well as their visual impact taken into account. After structural analysis and consultations with our clients we finished with an oak structure with a raised collar tie, two arched braces below and two above. The section size worked out at 275mm x 180mm with the centre two trusses having steel brackets fitted for additional strength. These were fitted in such a way as to be virtually invisible from the ground. Because of the corrosive nature of green oak all the steelwork had to be galvanized and the bolts were stainless steel. A local steel fabrication





Offset peg holes are critical to the final strength and tightness of the frame. This is done by offsetting the tennon hole with the mortise hole by around 5mm. This technique creates a pre-tensioned joint which keeps the frame tight as it dries. Because the peg has to curve through the offset peg hole it is tensioned and so, as the timber shrinks as it dries, the tension pulls the joints together, keeping them tight. Once the truss was complete we finished them with three coats of Danish oil which sealed and enhanced their appearance. We repeated the process for the other three trusses, each weighing in at approximately one metric ton. We stacked them in the corner of the yard and then prepared the six purlin sets.

The purlins, also in oak were 175mm x 150mm, with three per truss pair = 24 in total; these were notched into the top chords of the trusses with a shaped support bracket at each joint. They were all stop-chamfered, a detail which we also used on the main truss sections, then sanded and oiled. When all the component parts of the roof were complete we arranged for them to be transported to the site at Glenfarg. A crane was organised by our clients and with the help of the site joiners all the trusses were lifted into place and secured. It is always a nerve-racking moment when the first truss is lowered onto the timber frame, knowing that there is only a 5mm tolerance and getting it wrong will be both embarrassing and costly! Conversely it is a great relief when they fit perfectly. Each purlin was then lifted into position, drilled and secured with a long wooden dowel. The whole structure was erected and secured in around four hours and everyone involved breathed an audible sigh of relief. As is tradition, a small oak branch, which I had cut from an oak tree before I left that morning, was fixed to the apex of the front truss and everyone involved toasted the Great Oak, in this case with a glass of champagne!

A traditional softwood roof was then constructed on top of the oak frame, completely enclosing it and leaving the trusses fully exposed inside. Our clients were interested in contributing in some way to the frame so I suggested they come along to the workshop for a turning lesson. They each produced a unique oak peg, which now hold in place the centre arch braces of the most prominent truss.



Home wasn't built in a day.

Written by,
Steve Mclean

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WOODLAND HERITAGE

Woodland Heritage is a registered charity founded in 1994 by a group of traditional cabinetmakers that wanted to improve the way in which trees were grown and cared for in the UK. They believed that as consumers of wood they should help to 'put something back', so that future generations can enjoy our beautiful, renewable and natural resource.

Woodlands are capable of producing high quality trees and timber, whilst providing other environmental benefits, but only if properly and continuously managed

for and by future generations. Woodland Heritage is dedicated to helping like-minded individuals and other organisations by supporting tree related projects, study bursaries, research, education, awards and spreading the word through our annual Journal, Field Weekends and courses.

In our 21st year, we continue to go from strength to strength tackling many issues and striving to contribute to well-managed sustainable British woodlands. We have co-operated with other organisations and individuals to help develop forestry good practice and an effective wood chain, whilst embracing a wood culture and forging links. Many have expressed the sentiment that they would not have been where they are today without this help.

Our unique three-day "From Woodland to Workshop" courses at Whitney Sawmill and in the Duchy's Herefordshire woodlands are established and continue to be oversubscribed. September 2015 will mark our 200th student and we have been delighted to welcome participants from ASHS over the years.



The wonders of the Hoppus foot



... and now the sawn boards



Beautifully stickered boards.

Our aim to link tree growers with wood users, broaden horizons, raise awareness and pass on the knowledge, skill and respect for trees to the next generation is so essential for a sustainable environment.

So, what more can Woodland Heritage do over the next 21 years?

After 21 years we have our first employee! In July this year, through the vision and generous support of a Scottish based benefactor, we appointed Guy Corbett-Marshall as our new

Development Director to help our charity step up and look to the future. He comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and we very much hope that you too will have the opportunity to meet him before too long.

So, look out – Woodland Heritage is coming!

Back in 2006 we held our first Scottish Field Weekend in The Borders where over 85 of us enjoyed memorable visits to The Hirsell, Bowhill Estate and Eoin Cox's Woodschool - finishing off with an afternoon in Maggie Stead's workshops and of course, tea in Tim's famous Elm kitchen! The sun shone all the while and by the last day it was almost tropical heat.

Bowhill Estate 2006



So in 2014, clearly emboldened by our knack to control the Scottish weather, we led our members up to the Big Tree Country in Perthshire for another Field Weekend at Craigvinean, Dunkeld, Bolfracks Estate and Murthly Castle Estate.

Craigvinean Forest



**Extraordinary
Hornbeam at Murthy
Castle**



Maybe we were "pushing our luck", as one of our group surmised whilst grabbing his full waterproof gear.

And so it turned out. Now we were to find out why the big conifers thrive in this beautiful landscape. The writer, coming from Suffolk, (where in a wet year some 20" of rain can be expected), underwent a sharp shock and quickly understood why Charlie Taylor and his Perthshire foresters always have a pair of wellies close at hand.

But let it be said, we all had a great time and headed back South with more fond memories of some truly wonderful forests, phenomenal trees and having made many new friends.



We are determined to expand our links with Scotland and have recently had the pleasure of welcoming Tom Christian, as a trustee. Tom's immense knowledge of trees is staggering. He is based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and manages the National Tree Collections of Scotland initiative, as well as the iCONic Project.

Next spring, with support from Woodland Heritage, he will be launching and installing the new signage beneath the magnificent trees on "The Big Tree Trail" by the banks of the River Tay at Dunkeld. This unique tree collection is of vital national importance and whilst available to the public - and school children in particular, it lacked educational signage and publicity. This project would have not been possible without the support from one of our long standing members, the wonderful Sydney Draper (who recently passed away in his 90th year) and who was keen for us to develop our ties with Scotland in a permanent and practical way.



Tom Christian

There is so much more for us to see and do in Scotland and with Tom's help we would like to meet Scottish foresters, land owners, scientists, furniture makers, craftsmen, students and of course the timber trade to look for partners and discuss ideas.

We may be a small charity, but we are known for getting things done and we hope to make our mark and help wherever and however we can. Our links with the ASHS group are already well established and we would like to come and see you on your own "patch" very soon. Our much treasured Gavin Munro has plans afoot to make this happen.

Meanwhile, may we congratulate you on your excellent Journal - keep up the good work and massive enthusiasm for which you are renowned.



Written by,
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INDIGENOUS TIMBERS FOR MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MAKERS

We are always saddened to see beautiful flamed sycamore in the log pile for burning. This fairly rare and striking figure is valued amongst violinmakers and most of us would gladly pay a reasonable price to ensure that the highest quality wood is preserved for future use.

In the modern world of high production and purchasing on an as needs basis, instrument makers are an anachronism. We purchase, store, season and log all our timber by date, species and source with little regard for short term profit or production values. We then store our timber for at least ten years to season naturally taking great care to seal the ends of cut wedges and stack properly.

Timber bought now will probably be used by another generation of our family. I will not live long enough to see it reach maturity, but someone else will, hopefully my partner or offspring.

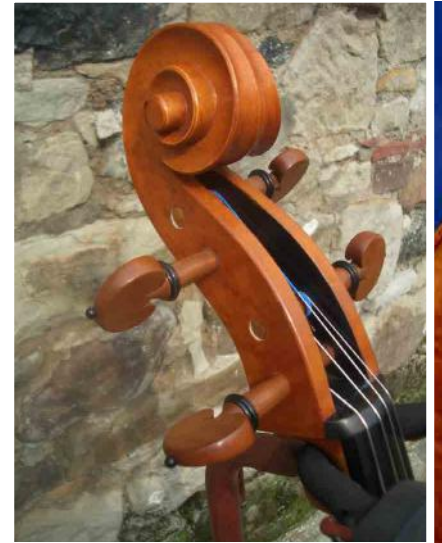


For us there is immense joy in finding a timber yard with stocks of wonderful woods that have the potential to make fine instruments. One of our abiding memories is of grubbing about in a shoggy timber loft in the Highlands, Sheena six months pregnant and both of us enthusiastically heaving planks around to find the best ones!

There are sustainable local timbers available for makers, if only woodcutters knew how we value and appreciate our own woods, we could each profit from sharing this rare resource. In some of the photographs in this article there are instruments made from local timbers bought in Scotland, unfortunately this is not the norm.

Guitar and violin family instruments can be made from Scottish sourced timbers like sycamore and yew. There are others too; laburnum and boxwood can be used for fittings, willow and lime for the internal structure.

Although sycamore is the most valued timber for making the back and sides of the violin family, poplar has also been used especially on the larger instruments such as cello and double bass. Both woods are stable, attractive and produce a good tone that projects well. Yew has been used for centuries in the making of lutes and Baroque instruments; it has re-emerged in the last twenty years or so in Guitar making. Yew produces a more "harpsichordal" sound than rosewoods or sycamore and it can look stunning. It is hard to



find decent pieces without cracks, knots or shakes, but it is worth the effort.

Although small in stature, laburnum has been used to make violins. I have still to see any pieces of sufficient size for this, but perhaps one day...

Willow is a bit elusive but I do prefer it to lime for its bending abilities when making linings, which are the strips of wood that support the front and back of the instrument.

Boxwood again is small and fairly rare, it makes lovely tuning pegs and fittings for early instruments but it must be well seasoned. Unfortunately our temperate climate does



not allow for the slow growing spruces that we use for soundboards. This summer we travelled to northern Italy where the Corpo Forestale (similar to the Forestry Commission) have an enlightened policy of harvesting, converting and storing the finest spruce for selling directly to violinmakers. This allows us to buy quality log wedges at a reasonable cost and provides revenue to be reinvested into the forests. We would love to see something similar here with our timbers and woodlands being properly cared for.

Converting timber for instrument making entails the quarter sawing process for many of the instrument parts. This is time



consuming, but is offset by a much higher premium on price.

The most difficult part of selecting fine timber is recognising natural and seasoning flaws inherent in wood which is cut and stored without due regard to its future use. A wedge of sycamore is completely wasted if a drying split travels through the piece. Sealing the end grain is essential if the timber is to be air dried in an uncontrolled environment. We have seen stacks of wood with sealed ends stored under an open walled shed, most of which were absolutely fine. Conversely we have witnessed a timber selling business with pristine racks of ordered pieces; many containing splits and shakes due to lack of sealing. There is a huge investment in time and labour in the cutting and storing of timber. A little more care would result in a lot less waste. Waste is not only a monetary issue, but also one of awareness in caring for a finite resource.

Another common problem with sycamore is "bluestain", caused by fungal spores attacking the wet wood. This results in an unsightly stain, rendering the piece useless for instrument making. The simple remedy is to convert the tree and stack the planks as quickly as possible under cover, sealing the ends. An application of Borax solution is a useful safeguard in a wet climate.



Of course all this is fine in theory. A timber cutting business probably makes most of its income from structural timbers or pulp

or fencing and the desires of instrument makers are of little consequence to most, but there is a small space in the world of wood for someone who values what is made from their labours.

I recall an episode twenty or more years ago in a timber yard where the owner kindly let me root around for special pieces of Brazilian mahogany to use in guitar making, the huge stack of timber was destined to make trophy bases for all sorts of sport and competition prizes. The owner recognised and supported an alternative use for some of this wood. Brazilian mahogany is now almost gone in that quality. I feel sadness for the loss of a beautiful wood, which could have been more carefully exploited. I remember that man with fondness as he allowed an impoverished instrument maker the opportunity to use a fine timber to make something long lasting and of value.

If I were a much younger man I would have my own woodyard, as there is an ethical value in making the best of what we have, not only for ourselves, but also for future generations of craftspeople and a business case in supplying high-grade timber to the market. Perhaps someone knowledgeable in tonewood can expand on the few suppliers that exist already and save our wood from the fire.

The Fiddle and Guitar Shop in Fintry is a local business specialising in the making and restoration of stringed instruments. Bill Kelday makes and repairs guitars, violoncello and double bass. Sheena Laurie concentrates on violin, viola and 'cello. Both are ardent wood admirers.



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AN INSIGHT INTO AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY RINGS



One of the most successful co-operative ventures in recent years has been the growth of agricultural machinery rings. First set up in Scotland just over 20 years ago, the Rings were originally almost exclusively for the benefit of the farming industry but today they offer significant opportunities to the forestry industry as well.

For a yearly subscription of around £120, members can offer their services to the Ring or demand services from it. For example; Farmer A joins the Ring and offers ploughing and combine harvesting services to make maximum use of his machinery once his own work is done. He is shown on the Ring database as supplying these services. Farmer B is getting behind with his ploughing and could do with some help. He calls the Ring office and they arrange for the nearest available member offering to supply ploughing - Farmer A - to undertake some of this work for a fixed contract rate. The same would apply to combine harvesting later in the year. If farmer C had a combine breakdown and called the Ring for help, farmer A could be called upon to step in.

Farmer A would also be a demander. If he needed extra tractors and trailers at harvest time he would call the Ring office and, again, the nearest available members seeking tractor work would be dispatched to assist him. The Machinery Rings fix a fair rate for all the contract options they undertake and these are published in annual booklets. Ploughing for example would be undertaken for around £20/acre. However the Ring would charge Farmer B £20

plus 2% levy and Pay Farmer A £20 less 2% levy. That levy funds the central office where each area's Ring is co-ordinated.

So what does this have to do with the forestry sector. Well the three major Rings, Borders, Tayforth and Ringlink which covers the North East, have expanded their services to include many additional benefits available to all members.

Without doubt one of the most successful developments has been the bulk purchasing of fuel. Individual fuel companies, who have joined the Rings, send in their fuel prices daily and the Ring places orders with the cheapest on the day. As an example of how well this system works, I order all my fuel through the ring now and recently ordered 1000 litres of kerosene stating that I would prefer the order went to a local supplier. The Ring co-ordinator was happy to place the order with the local man if I wanted but pointed out that the local man was at 36p/litre that day while another supplier within the Ring was at 31p. I went for the 31p supplier, saving £50. The Ring do not charge levies on fuel supplies.

The Rings have also started offering training courses in a wide range of subjects



including fork lift operation, chain saw use and maintenance and fence erecting. Each Ring has several fencing contractors available to supply and erect fencing and post drivers are available to hire through the Rings either with or without operators. A recent machinery ring newsletter warned members that additional Health and Safety officers had been employed to undertake inspections on farms with fork lift trucks one of their main interests. These are supposed to have an annual MOT type inspection to ensure they are being operated safely. Often ignored, the clampdown on this can be expensive with HSE charging £124/hour if they find an infringement. The machinery rings have mechanics who can undertake these inspections for £90.

Increasingly services such as tyre fitting, all forms of haulage vehicles, excavators, plant hire, ready mixed concrete, skips, portable

toilets, security containers and quad bikes are becoming available alongside a clear move towards embracing forestry through offering grant aided woodland management visits, tree planting, wood chipping and log processing. Tayforth Machinery Ring has a member who has a Bobcat based forestry mulcher which I used last year to chop down areas of scrub and gorse on our farm at a cost of £350/day for three days. This Ring also has a member offering forestry harvesting and forwarding services and there are many woodchippers available. A typical joint venture between farming and forestry could involve the recovery of one or more large windblown saw logs from a field somewhere. Often abandoned or just sawn up for firewood because of the cost of recovery, these logs can be available "free for uplift". A call to the local Machinery Ring office can arrange for a local farmer to uplift the log using a telescopic fork lift towing a long bale trailer. At a current Ring rate of around £30 per hour for this service, a local log could be brought to the sawmill yard for under £100.

The Machinery Ring concept is growing rapidly within the rural community and now embraces a very wide range of trades and services for the benefit of its members and, with services like snow clearing, a wider society as well.

If you have a logistics problem which you are struggling to solve it might just be worth giving the Ring a ring.



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Tayforth Machinery Ring Ltd
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