

Edition 11 / Spring 2020

The Full

£5

CIRCLE

The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers



SCOTTISH OAK WHISKY CASK PROJECT

by Gregg Glass

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL FURNITURE AWARDS WINNERS

by Simon Whatley



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Contents

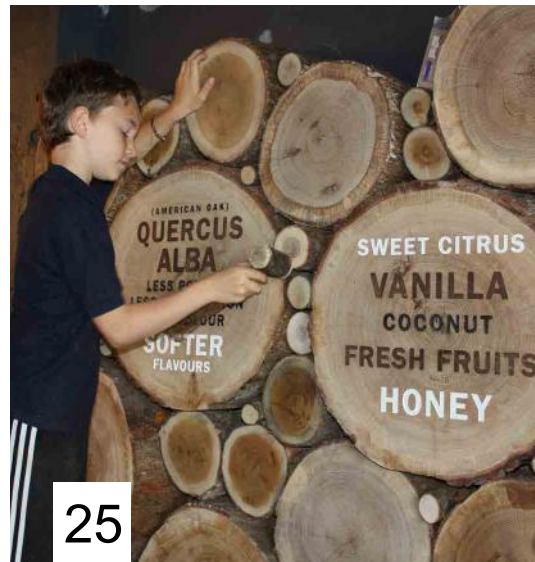
- 5 ASHS NEWS
- 6 SCOTTISH WORKING WOODS NEWS
- 8 SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL FURNITURE AWARDS
- 12 SCOTTISH FORESTRY - THE LONGEST JOURNEY
- 16 USEFUL PUBLICATIONS FROM ARCAMEDIA
- 18 THE SCOTTISH OAK CASK PROJECT
- 22 KILLEARN ESTATE WOODLANDS
- 24 BITHELL ASSET FINANCE SOLUTIONS
- 25 A HANDMADE LIFE
- 28 A SALT WALL IN AYR
- 30 SCOTTISH WOOD'S NEW TIMBER SHOP
- 31 LEALT GORGE VIEWING PLATFORM
- 32 AARON STERRITT GREEN WOODWORKER
- 34 CALEDONIA LOG HOMES
- 37 REDUCING SUFFERING FROM HARSH CHEMICALS IN REGULAR USE
- 38 ARGYLL SMALL WOODS COOPERATIVE



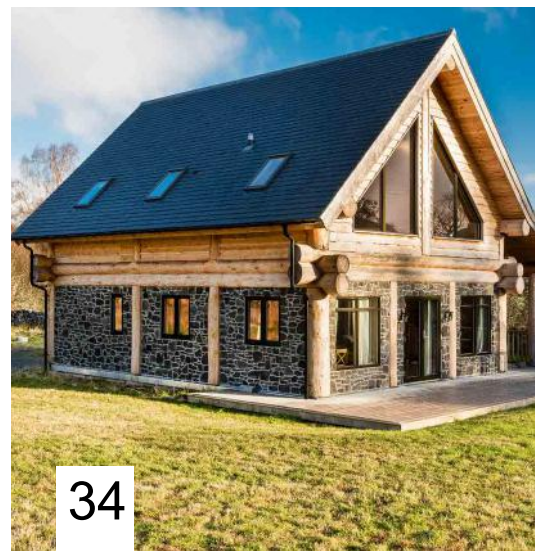
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18



25



34

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The Full CIRCLE

The journal of The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers

While the Full Circle's overall aim is to promote the diversity and vitality of the Scottish homegrown hardwood and quality softwood sector, there isn't usually a theme for each issue. There is often a leading article which is given higher profile and more space, but often it's difficult to choose one because there's such a fascinating range of businesses in this sector of industry and a lot of people with very different and interesting backgrounds. This issue's cover highlights Scottish oak whisky barrel making and Scotland's National Furniture Awards. Both of these are innovative and high-profile projects which have the potential to significantly raise public awareness of homegrown hardwoods and boost demand for the timber and its products.

While we have supplies of most homegrown hardwoods now, the outlook isn't so clear. Foresters will tell you that the second best time to plant trees is now, and the best time is fifty (or a hundred) years ago. With broader awareness of the importance of trees, there's now a great opportunity to plant much more of the right sorts in the right places. We need to be planting large areas of productive broadleaves to convert into long-lived products that fix carbon for hundreds of years. More high-quality softwoods like Douglas fir and Scots pine, and of course spruce on poorer sites. If we don't, not only will we be failing in our responsibility to future generations to sort out the climate crisis, but we'll also be failing to provide the raw materials for future generations of businesses in the Scottish hardwood industry.



PRODUCTION
EDITOR &
COORDINATOR
Nick Marshall



DESIGNER
Stephanie Christie

All the best, Nick
ASHS COORDINATOR

You can view all of our previous editions on our website...



2015



2016



2017



2018



2019



2020 Edition 11



DEADLINE DATE FOR EDITION 12

Friday 18th September

CONTACT US... Email - editor@ashs.uk Mobile - 07906129627

www.ashs.co.uk

ASHS NEWS

Most members will know Keith Threadgall, who became chair of ASHS at the last AGM.

Annual Survey

We're getting stuck in to the Members' Survey. It's absolutely crucial to make the case for government support for ASHS and for your individual businesses and all members are expected to complete it. All information is kept confidential and only summary data is given out. To lighten the burden on you, we intend to do members' surveys only every 2 or 3 years.

Open Day and Board meeting

The next ASHS Board meeting will be at Tayside Forestry, Dundee on Friday 24th April 2020 at 3pm. I'm organising Machinery Open Days on Friday 24th and Saturday 25th April 2020 at Tayside Forestry, with demonstrations of milling and firewood machinery as well as the christmas tree and firewood business at Tayside Forestry. All ASHS members (full, associate and retired) are welcome to come and spend as much time as you'd like at the Open Days and also to attend the Board meeting, where we'll be discussing exciting development for ASHS.

Woodland to Workshop Course

One of those developments is the Woodland to Workshop course which we are organising for October in Fife. Woodland Heritage runs these prestigious 3-day courses in Herefordshire and has for a long time wanted to have one in Scotland. So with their agreement and Gavin Munro's involvement, Jim Birley will host this course at Scottish Wood near Dunfermline. Email W2W@ASHS.CO.UK or visit the ASHS website for more information

AGM and Whisky (Barrels)

The oak for whisky barrels project is gathering momentum, as you'll see from articles in this and future issues of the Full Circle. In September, we'll hold our AGM alongside a visit to Strathspey Coopers at Craigellachie. There'll be visits to sawmills and other interesting projects in that area over the 2 day event. We hope to see you there.

Visual Strength Grading

We had hoped to provide bursaries for two members to go through Visual Strength Grading this financial year (ie by the end of March 2020) but this couldn't be arranged in time so we hope to do that next year. Meantime, we hope to produce a handy booklet for members as an introduction to the concept and importance of VSG and to help sawmillers prepare the right sort of sawn timber for graders to assess.

As more people are looking to use Scottish grown timber for construction projects, it's going to become ever more important to have a network of strength graders (visual and, in the longer term, acoustic) throughout the country. Scottish Forestry recognises this and has helped us to start to slowly build this network of expertise.

People who have helped ASHS get where we are

We're losing two stalwarts who have helped ASHS over many years, in fact from the days before ASHS was set up. Derek Nelson has been our contact with the Forestry Commission (now Scottish Forestry) since the start and you can read in his article in this issue about how



he helped get ASHS set up as well. He's also been a great advocate for ASHS and Scottish hardwoods and someone who understands and encourages small scale sawmilling at every opportunity. Derek may be retiring but we hope his involvement with ASHS and Scottish Hardwoods won't end there.

Gavin Munro, the unquestionable expert in hardwood timber grading and valuing, is retiring for the second or maybe third time. Since he retired from timber buying he's been leading grading, valuing and marketing courses throughout the country and at the same time promoting the qualities of Scottish hardwoods and ASHS members. We managed to get a good lot of his distilled knowledge in our Grading Booklet and expect to get some more at the Woodland to Workshop course in October. But we hope to see him at ASHS events even after he's retired.

Written by,

Nick Marshall
ASHS Coordinator

&
Keith Threadgall

ASHS Chair

POSTPONED



Local. Ethical. Sustainable.



FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY MEMORIAL

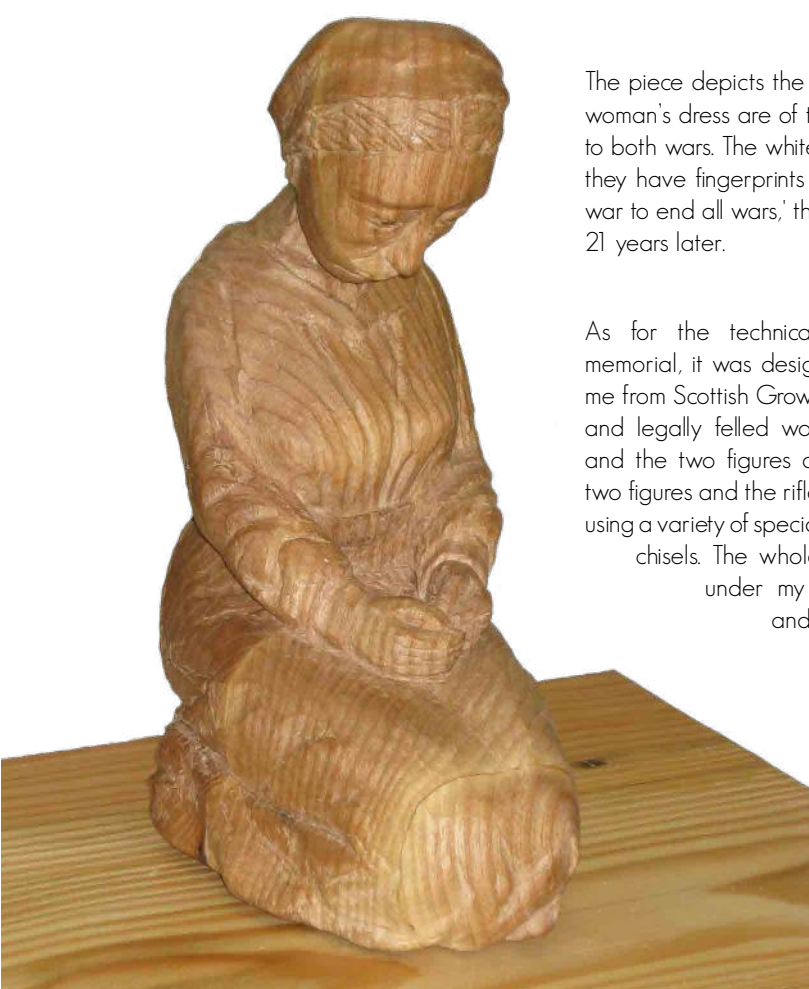
The Centenary Memorial was unveiled on Sunday 10th November 2019 as part of the Benholm and Johnshaven Remembrance Service. It was designed and handmade by Robert Lawrence.

Griffin Coe, Art Historian said: *'I feel that your memorial sculpture successfully represents both loss and remembrance, speaks for itself... There was a gasp of surprise when the sculpture was unveiled at the museum yesterday. I've been to a few previews and I have never experienced anything quite like that. I hope that you would take it as a compliment.'*

This centenary memorial is intended to honour the numerous men of Benholm and Johnshaven who died in the course of serving their Country during the First World War, and it remembers those who died during the Second World War. The memorial breaks new ground by drawing attention to the nameless and numerous women of our villages who were to suffer the consequences of both wars, in silence and whose pain remains unmarked, until now.

I would like to pay tribute to Don Marr of the Benholm & Johnshaven Heritage Society who had the vision for a memorial in the first place and who has worked tirelessly to consult the Community Council, School and other interested parties, throughout the design and creative processes. From a personal point of view, I am grateful to Don for his trust in me to complete the project, and his faith in my artistic vision - whether it is successful or not I shall leave you to decide.

It was agreed early on, that we didn't want to replicate the traditional template of portraying only male sacrifice. This centenary memorial is firmly representative of 2018 inclusive thinking. You will notice the woman has been left entirely alone, utterly bereft, and without the future she had once taken for granted. She has only poetry to comfort her, and who knows where she found the strength to cope with her debilitating grief. The soldier is under nourished, numbed by his experiences and emptied of emotion by all he has seen. He stands at reverse arms, paying respect to his comrades whom you will find remembered in the register that rests on the lectern, between the two figures.



The piece depicts the First World War and you may notice that the soldier's uniform and woman's dress are of that period as are the rifles below. However, the 'message' applies to both wars. The white painted rifles represent the futility of war, and if you look closely, they have fingerprints and signs of use by their former bearers. Despite the notion of 'a war to end all wars,' the rifles are ready for future action, which of course, took place only 21 years later.

As for the technical aspects of the memorial, it was designed and made by me from Scottish Grown 100% sustainable and legally felled wood, primarily larch and the two figures are lime wood. The two figures and the rifles are hand carved using a variety of specialist draw knives and chisels. The whole piece is certified under my 'Grown in Britain' and 'Scottish Working Woods' licenses.

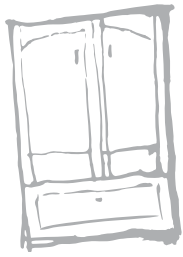


Written by,

Robert Lawrence

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Photo Credit - Griffin M Coe



Scottish
Furniture
Makers
Association

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL FURNITURE AWARDS - FIRST EVER WINNER ANNOUNCED

Designer Isabelle Moore wins both prizes with stunning oak stool and sleek folded metal chair



The Scottish Furniture Makers Association (SFMA) is shining a spotlight on the most interesting, experimental and supremely well-crafted contemporary furniture being made in Scotland today. Two prizes have been awarded, based on the selection of furniture displayed at the Visual Arts Scotland - Society of Scottish Artists (VAS-SSA) Open exhibition 2019-2020 at the Royal Scottish Academy (RSA), Princes Street, Edinburgh in December 2019 and January 2020.

The inaugural SFMA Annual Prizes in Craft Excellence and Design Innovation categories were awarded to Edinburgh-based, Isabelle Moore, for her Woven Oak Stool and Folded Metal Chair respectively. These designs will surely become recognised as classics of contemporary Scottish furniture design. The formal prize presentation event took place on Thursday 30 January at the Royal Scottish Academy.

The expert selection panel were unanimous in their decision-making and were struck by the spare elegance and subtle sophistication of Moore's exemplary designs. The perch-like, ebonised oak stool and deceptively simple metal stacking chair are exquisitely detailed and demonstrate a profound understanding of ergonomics, materials and mastery of artisanal craft technique. One is drawn to these quietly understated, but quite brilliant pieces of furniture - and it is easy to imagine either of them augmenting one's own home.

“When viewed closely, touched or sat upon, the subtle sophistication of each work reveals itself. Each achieves its goal by very different means - and it is remarkable that such vastly different seat designs were produced by the same person.” - Stacey Hunter, Local Heroes, Chair of Selection Panel

Moore's Woven Oak Stool is utterly compelling because each hand-crafted element is in a state of transformation along its length; for example, the four splayed legs that carry the Danish-cord woven seat are square in section at the top and imperceptibly taper to an ellipse / lens-shape at the floor. And the detailing of these surprisingly-shaped legs is echoed in the treatment of the T-backrest; a rounded middle to accommodate the spine, which tapers to the diamond-shaped ends.

By contrast, her Folded Metal Chair utilises the potential of precision, mass production methods to engineer a thrillingly poised and delightfully functional sculpture from the thinnest gauge, steel sheet. Folding metal - as one might fold paper to create an Origami structure - to achieve the required stillness and flexibility.



Craft Excellence 2nd Prize Winner was Daniel Lacey for his Still Water (console table) and Design Innovation - 2nd Prize winner was Nicholas Denney for his Polychromatic Concrete Coffee Table. Both win £100 and a year's SFMA membership.

SFMA Co-Chair Simon Whatley said ***“Scotland is home to many world class artists, designers and makers. SFMA is a members-led organisation of 60+ stretching from the Scottish Borders to Orkney & Shetland and for two decades has worked to promote and represent the interests of those in the industry.”***

The ingenuity, quality and diversity of the work displayed at RSA speaks volumes about the immense creativity within Scotland and demonstrates the profound benefits offered by one's choosing to commission a local designer-maker to create a unique piece of furniture for their home or place-of-work.”

SSA/VAS OPEN is the largest and most diverse exhibition of contemporary art and craft held in Scotland this year, giving an expected audience of 30,000+ the opportunity to discover and enjoy artworks across all mediums. The exhibition is produced and supported entirely by artists with no public funding.

Andrew Mackenzie, President of Visual Arts Scotland said, “Since their inception, both Societies have focused on the new and adventurous, the challenging and contemporary. We will continue this commitment by presenting an exhibition that demonstrates fully the diversity of contemporary and applied art created today.

“All artists and makers from anywhere in the world can apply to exhibit and all types of art will be considered. From painting and sculpture to moving image, performance and applied art, our selection committees look forward to considering every submission.”



President of the Society of Scottish Artists, Sharon Quigley said, “The Society of Scottish Artists and Visual Arts Scotland have much in common yet are very distinct organisations. Working together, our mission once more will be to celebrate our unique qualities, while confirming our individual identities as two of Scotland's leading art institutions.

“This exciting collaboration, fully rooted in common purpose will allow us to combine our expertise to present one ambitious exhibition. We anticipate receiving many hundreds of entries, yet this should not deter artists from applying as our selection process is completely anonymous so every proposal has an equal chance of success.”

The announcement of the call for entries for the 2021 show is expected to be in the summer and will be publicised by VAS and SFMA.



Written by,

Simon Whatley

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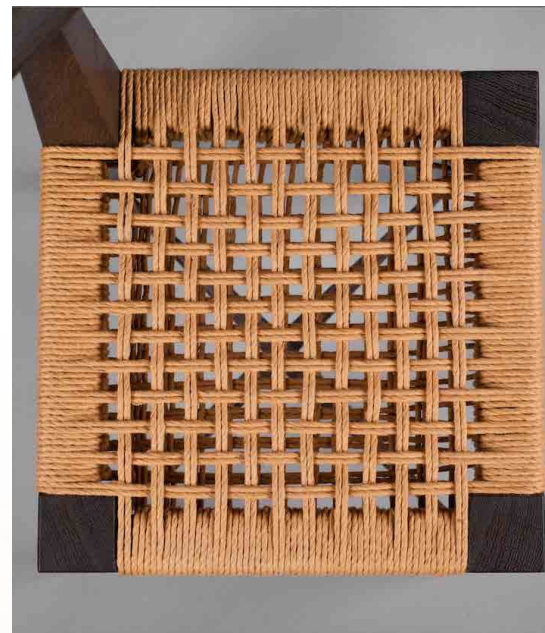
www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk



FIRST PRIZE WINNER ISABELLE MOORE

Functionality, ergonomics and a meticulous attitude to problem solving inform the work of Isabelle Moore, the Edinburgh based designer-maker and educator. She undertakes commissions and collaborative projects in her Albion Business Centre workshop, with the exploratory developments in her work owing much to the residency programmes and temporary teaching positions that she periodically undertakes overseas. These opportunities have offered Moore the privilege of focused time and workshop facilities to create new works inspired by the exposure to different cultures and a reciprocal exchange with myriad makers in many disciplines. She is passionate about hand skills, cross media craft techniques and uses furniture - specifically seating - to explore and express her ideas. Drawn by the intimacy and rigour demanded by chair construction she has honed her skills in a quest for minimal materials use through structural refinement and geometrical inquiry. Always seeking to celebrate and exploit the properties of the materials (with their related processes) employed in each new work.

She was delighted to have the opportunity to showcase work at the recent SSAIVAS



Open 2019 and for it to have been awarded the SFMA's inaugural prizes for Craft Excellence and Design Innovation. The Association supports and champions the breadth of Scottish furniture making, increasing the visibility of local, design-led commissioning opportunities to broader contract and residential audiences, while celebrating the wealth of talent and diversity of makers. As a sometime solitary profession, the presentation of the award at the RSA proved a welcome social opportunity to engage with other makers and the general public in the gallery that day, and share an insight into the processes that underpin the creation of new work.

The developmental journey in the workshop is an intuitive and fluid process where Moore generally iterates a series of full-scale models, 'quick and dirty'. Each inching closer to the conceived design idea - resolving aesthetics and technicalities as they arise - while tweaking the subtleties demanded by load bearing, physical use. With speculative exhibition work this can sometime veer into uncharted territories, unfamiliar materials choices and the pursuit of alternate lines of enquiry that these present. It involves a trust and commitment in the prototyping process, and at times, the production of many full-scale models. For Moore, the realisation of a project has always been heavily influenced by her curiosity for experimentation with new materials, in tandem with an access to indispensable workshop expertise, support and equipment in the environment in which she is working. This continued accretion of a wealth of craft skills over decades has broadened the design possibilities available to her and a tacit understanding required to articulate them.

The Folded Metal chair - initiated as a design for a stackable meeting hall chair - was realised in a sculpture studio where Moore had access to a full complement of metal fabrication facilities. It was the first time she'd built structures in metal and was captivated manipulating material outwith the rigid constraints (tyranny) of grain direction demanded by timber fabrication.

The Woven Oak Stool was made during a Windgate Scholarship Residency in SUNY Purchase where she'd been inspired by Peter Opsvik's observation in his book "Rethinking Sitting" that furniture is the intermediary between architecture and clothing. This has precipitated a shift towards integrating softer elements of textiles and woven disciplines into the work, a trajectory that continues to inform her current studio enquiry to date.



Written by,
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SECOND PRIZE WINNERS

NICHOLAS DENNEY -
Polychromatic Concrete Coffee Table

Nicholas graduated from the University of Brighton in 2006 with a BA(Hons) in Fine Art Sculpture. He has subsequently worked in garden design, surface design, manufacturing roles and arts production.

The work is a continuation of the painterly approach to making concrete which Denney has developed over two decades; the top is to be viewed as an artwork in its own right. The process is complex, time-consuming, physically demanding and analogous to Alchemy. A digital drawing is cast in relief into a sheet of concrete, then backfilled with up to eight layers of pigment-infused concrete that are repeatedly ground and polished until the full glory of the vitreous, surface pattern is revealed. The same concerns with abstraction of line, form, rhythm and pattern are shared with the Post-War Abstract Expressionists.

The other coded nod to Mid-Century Modernist pioneers, may be discerned in the approach to the cast concrete supporting framework that is component-based and demountable. Created using a different grade of concrete and aggregate, the angularity and dynamism of forms employed remind us of cantilevered bridges and Jean Prouvé's designs for architectural structures and mass-produced steel furniture.

Written by,
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info@gabionsurfaces.co.uk



DANIEL LACEY -
'Still Water' - A side table in sweet chestnut

Daniel Lacey is a graduate of the world-renowned Parnham College in Dorset and has been granted five Bespoke Guild Marks from the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers. Following 12 years in the south-east of England, Daniel returned to his rural roots in Scotland in 2010.



While Daniel was designing 'Still Water' southern Scotland and Northern England were experiencing another spell of severe weather with much flooding and damage. But after a storm, the calm. A renewal of bonds in communities.

'Still Water' seeks to imitate the re-strengthening of infrastructure and also the support that neighbours give each other as lives and homes are rebuilt, as well as the obvious bridge-like structure of the table.

The hand-carved table top represents a calming pool of water, something deep in human nature that always soothes the soul. The ripples delineate this near calm

pool, with the beautiful tactile nature of the carved ripples and the wood itself intended to further mend frayed nerves.

Written by,
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Scottish Forestry

Coilltearachd na h-Alba

THE LONGEST JOURNEY...

...is something of a metaphor for life itself, as well as a reflection on enabling the small scale wood processing sector develop to what it is today, with its own aspirations for what it will be in the future.

Back in the dark ages, say 1995, trying to buy Scottish hardwood timber locally involved a bit of a slog flicking through the Yellow Pages (remember them?) trying to work out whether you should be looking by company name or by type of product, and if the latter just what would it be called - and that might only work if the company was forward thinking enough to have bought some advertising space. And if you wanted to look for suppliers or products from outside of your immediate Yellow Pages area, that went into the extremely difficult box.

Against this background, efforts were being made by the then Forestry Commission to identify, encourage and facilitate the development of markets for timber from Scotland's broadleaved woodlands. It was hoped that this would in turn enable better (profitable) management of Scotland's broadleaved woodland resource by developing the harvesting and processing sectors for what was generally, but not exclusively, a medium to low quality resource. Markets for veneer and quality butt logs were not hard to find - but sadly that was not the bulk of the commonly available timber up here. The market for the best material, un-shaken elm was in England with good sycamore being exported. Mining chocks were still wanted and were being cut in Scotland & north England from Scottish logs, but firewood was seen to be more of a problem than a major realistic market opportunity.

Starting in 1996, drawing on input from members of the hardwood processing sector here and other interested parties, the Scottish Hardwood Timber Market Development Group (SHTMDG) was formed to:

"raise the level of understanding about hardwoods and niche softwoods amongst a wide range of sectors, from foresters through to architects".

Knowing what hardwood timber was being felled was very hard indeed, with early assessments suggesting that some 40,000 cubic metres was being felled annually in Scotland but about 85% of the log material went to England or the continent for processing. Against this background, the overall thrust of the work of the SHTMDG was to:

1. Encourage management of broadleaved woodlands by making people better aware of timber grades and values;

2. Find better markets for the lower grades of (Scottish) hardwood timber;

3. Ascertain how Scottish based, predominantly small, processors can access these markets;

4. Find out what information is needed to help maximise the "value addition" in Scotland.

Timing being everything, the following 5 years or so saw the loss of both the chockwood market with the closure of the deep coal mines as well as the hardwood chipwood market for panel boards. Thus there was plenty of scope for activity but the question was where to focus efforts.

The "brigading" of actions by the SHTMDG sought to address the issues in a logical and concentrated manner. This Group was no mere talking shop but a real delivery vehicle looking at:

- **Skills development** (Grading, valuing and marketing days; Promotion to architects);

- **Market research** (for Standard dimension blanks; for Hardwood Flooring; Adding value to low quality timber; selling into the Self build and Green oak markets.)

- **Business support** (Training Needs Analysis; forming ASHS and a web based e-sales facility; Business Development seminar for microbusinesses)

- **Promotion** (Scottish timber for the Scottish Parliament; Trade shows & Public shows; a Design competition; Conferences and regional workshops for architects; Magazines/publications; Furniture exhibitions.)

- **Information** (Info Note on Small scale kiln drying; CPD for architects; publications on timber cladding, guidance on appearance grading of sawn hardwood timber & the use of green oak in construction.)

- **Pure Research** (Tree breeding; Qualities of birch timber.)

As a result of the positive outcomes, the initial 3 year term of the Group was extended for another 3 years. Members of the SHTMDG were "demobbed" at the end of March 2003, and the sentiments expressed at that time are still relevant today:

"There does appear to be a growing interest in the use of British grown hardwoods in furniture, in contemporary architecture and in refurbishment work. There is an ongoing demand from architects and specifiers for good technical and market information about the specification, sourcing and use of hardwoods. The industry is now in a better position to address these needs and must be proactive if the momentum gained since 1996 is to be retained".

The efforts of the sector were being recognised by royalty: HRH Princess Anne commented positively about the dining table and chairs by Paul Hodgkiss when being showed round the Forestry Commission pavilion at the Royal Highland Show one year, and she wasn't alone amongst the circa 25,000 other visitors in appreciating the range of Scottish makers furniture which was on display. Through the efforts of Eoin Cox at the Woodschool, HRH The Prince of Wales sent a letter of support read out at the "Using Scottish hardwoods" conference in New Lanark in 2000:

"The combination of natural and human resources, through innovative designers and manufacturers working sympathetically with hardwood timber, should enable the Scottish traditions of good forestry and good design to move forward together".

Great credit is due to the members of the SHTMDG over its life for their input, and to David Craven and Guy Watt for Chairing it - at times it seemed like herding cats to focus on key outputs, but these then went on to form the building blocks for a lot of activity and subsequent business.

Information

"Scottish hardwood timber grading: A brief guide" (illustrated), (1997)

"Low technology kilns and drying schedules with particular reference to hardwood species" (1998)

"Scottish hardwoods for the Scottish Parliament" (1999)

"A short introduction to wood as a designer's material" (1999)

"Using Scottish Hardwoods - Structure, Shelter, Product" - lectures, design competition and residential weekend for winners (2000)

"Using Scottish Hardwoods conference and trade exhibition, (with endorsement from HRH Prince of Wales) (2000)

"Designing with timber", ARCAmedia (2001)

"A guide to the installation and maintenance of solid hardwood flooring" Robert Gordon University (2001)

"Scottish hardwood flooring" marketing leaflet. Robert Gordon University (2002)

"The supply of homegrown timber products to the building industry in Scotland", FC Information Note by Una Lee (2002)

"Timber Cladding in Scotland", FC Information Note (2002)

"Timber Cladding in Scotland", ARCAmedia (2002)

"Making the grade - A guide to appearance grading UK grown hardwood timber" ARCAmedia (2005)

"Green Oak in Construction", TRADA (2007)

Promotion

Stand at the Scottish Self Build show (1999)

Use of oak for the Scottish Parliament - options and promotion (2000)

Scottish timber and timber products display at the head office of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (2001)

FC stand at the Highland Show - furniture and building products (2000-2002)

The Scottish Woodfair (2002)

Workshops and seminars for regional architects group, supported by Lists of suppliers of Scottish hardwood timber and hardwood products.

Grading and measuring hardwood timber courses.

Leadership

Initially overlapping with the final years of the SHTMDG, ASHS has picked up the baton, run with it and grown from strength to strength. It has had a number of Chairs since its inception, each with their own unique style(s) and key interests. The pace has ebbed and flowed at times, with the direction taking many twists and turns, but the ball has never been dropped in seeking to achieve gains for the sector.

The original aims of the SHTMDG are still a sound overarching goal for ASHS:

"To identify, encourage and facilitate the development of markets for timber from Scotland's broadleaved woodlands."





Each committee works with members to help them help themselves - and each other - to be more productive, efficient and profitable businesses. The tree that pays is the tree that stays, so all sectors benefit.

Although great progress has been made in each of key areas (1) - (4) above, the need and the topics are as valid today as they were then. Indeed only two years ago the sector collaborated on production of the film, "Grading, valuing, measuring and marketing hardwood timber in Scotland", capturing the wisdom of Gavin Munro for posterity (<https://forestry.gov.scot/forestry-business/small-scale-wood-processing>). The information is still needed by a new set of owners, processors and potential customers.

One major change over this period is in the evolution from Forestry Commission through different incarnations to Scottish Forestry, and the change of role of the staff working with the ASHS Board from a member of the then "Policy Team" into the current "Standards, Evidence and Expertise" group. Thus, to enable Scottish Forestry to continue to be able to help the sector to help itself, there will need to be a greater emphasis on obtaining the evidence of progress and growth within the sector, providing details of the outcomes as well as outputs from the work programmes being supported.

Though pure research is perhaps outside the remit for ASHS in support of its members, five of the six "brigaded action areas" above still provide a sound overarching structure for activities.

The next programme being proposed by ASHS will be assessed by a different person as I am retiring this spring, but this "retrospective" of the sector over the past 20+ years shows the vibrancy that it can offer the new Scottish Forestry baton holder, and perhaps helps the sector channel its energy to maximum benefit.

And so its good night from him...



Written by,

Derek Nelson

Business Development Adviser,
Standards Evidence and Expertise
Group, Scottish Forestry: derek.nelson@forestry.gov.scot

Photo credit: Derek Nelson/Forestry Commission/Scottish Forestry




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USEFUL PUBLICATIONS FROM ARCAMEDIA

ArcaMedia have published a range of very useful and important books on various aspects of timber and its use in buildings. Here are some from their website (www.arcamedia.co.uk - reproduced with permission) which may be relevant to Full Circle readers.

Mass Timber - an Introduction to Solid Laminate Timber Systems.

Dr Robert Hairstans. 2018. £20.00

"The past two decades have witnessed an extraordinary upsurge in the use of mass timber products and systems in construction - a global phenomenon driven by greater emphasis on the sustainable use of renewable resources and by significant technological developments in the manufacture of solid laminate timber systems. The pace of this technological advance is such that the emergence of many of these new products and systems has not always been matched by the availability of independent, objective technical information on their physical properties or guidance for their use. Mass Timber - An Introduction to Solid Timber Laminate Systems fills this gap by offering full descriptions of the manufacture and applications of the various glued and non-glued systems as well as comparative data on their technical characteristics. For those new to the use of solid laminate timber systems, this publication provides a clear and informative guide to the various products available; for those more familiar with these technologies, Mass Timber - An Introduction to Solid Timber Laminate Systems offers evidence-based knowledge on their use and performance."

The Modern Timber House in the UK.

Peter Wilson. 2017. £35.00

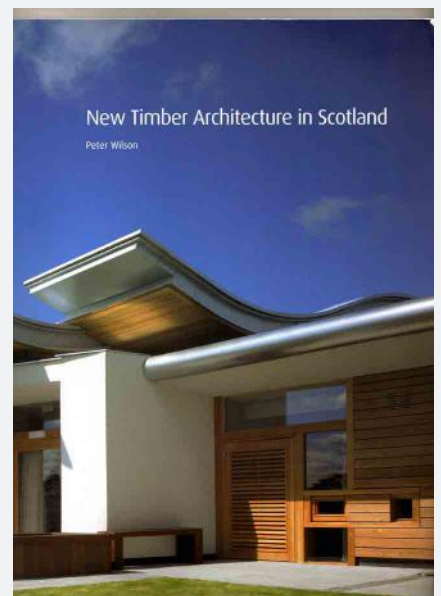
"The Modern Timber House in the UK highlights the many facets of timber technology being applied in construction today and the ways in which these have impacted upon the design of housing. The book explores the application of these technologies in almost 100 houses and housing projects built during the years 2007-17, a decade that, despite major national and international economic challenges, also witnessed a widespread expansion of interest amongst architects, engineers and other construction professionals in timber's unmatched sustainability credentials and new technical possibilities. This is an exciting time to be designing with wood and The Modern Timber House in the UK."

New Timber Architecture in Scotland.

Peter Wilson. 2007. £20.00

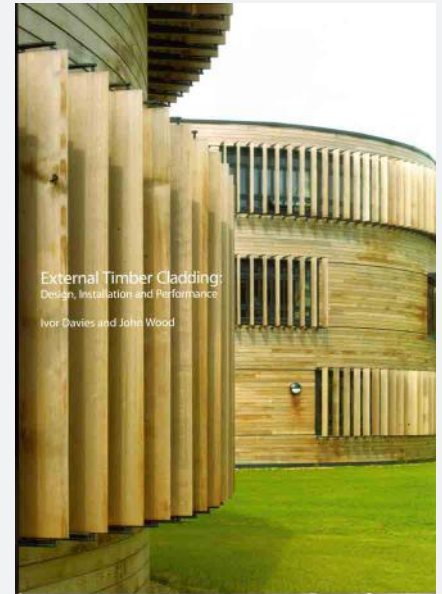
"Many different building types now unashamedly sport their timber credentials and not only on a domestic scale - whether on fire stations or offices, multi-storey car parks or medical centres, wood is now definitely seen to be good. New Timber Architecture in Scotland features 90 exemplar projects and demonstrates clearly that there is no single building type that is unsuited to the use of this adaptable, variable and infinitely renewable material. Too long out of fashion, timber is now widely specified and has become an important design element in some of the most innovative projects being built today. The projects selected for inclusion illustrate a burgeoning confidence in timber as an exciting, contemporary construction material."

arca
media



**External Timber Cladding -
Design, Installation and Performance.**
Ivor Davies and John Wood. 2010. £30.00

"No longer an unusual feature on buildings in the UK, the design, installation and performance of external timber cladding on new construction nevertheless continue to generate detailed questions from architects, specifiers and contractors. External Timber Cladding - Design, Installation and Performance is the result of extensive research, testing and detail development and provides the user with evidence based information on how to respond to the contradictory demands of moisture control and fire, the two biggest issues affecting the use of timber on building facades. Divided into six clearly distinguishable sections, the book offers easily referenced guidance to current legislation, detail drawings and answers to the majority of questions surrounding a subject that is technically more complex than it might at first seem. Referred to by many as 'The Bible of Timber Cladding' his publication is an essential reference source for architects and facade designers."



**Sustainable Construction Timber -
Sourcing and Specifying Local Timber**
Ivor Davies. 2009

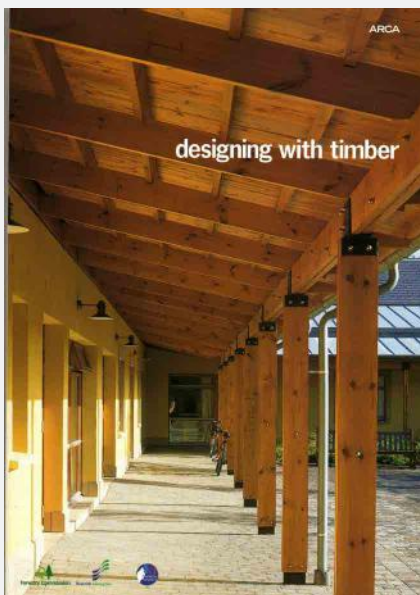
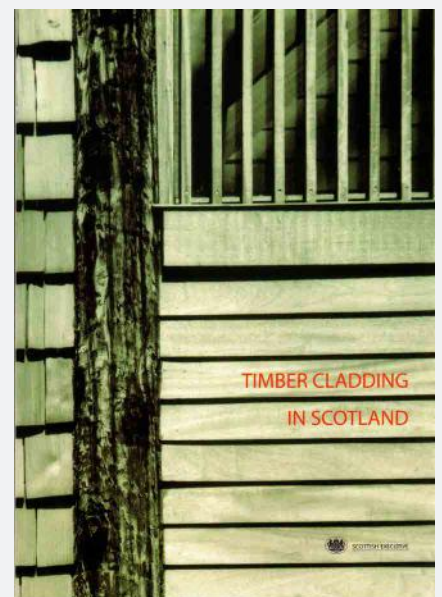
Available from Forestry Commission Scotland, www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk

"A versatile, high performance and sustainable construction material, there is ever increasing demand for the timber being used in UK construction today to have been grown in the British Isles. Sustainable Construction Timber provides valuable guidance for architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and building contractors on how to source and specify local timber products. For ease of referencing, the publication is organised in three key sections - the reasons why local sourcing of timber is important; a review of the range of UK timber species and products currently obtainable; and guidance on how local sourcing can be achieved in accordance with national and European construction procurement policies."



Timber Cladding in Scotland Ed. Peter Wilson.
Authors Ivor Davies, Dr. Bruce Walker, James Pendlebury
2002. £10.00

"The increasing popularity in Scotland of external timber cladding has created a need for accurate historical and technical information specifically relevant to Scottish conditions. The technical risks of using timber cladding in exposed maritime climate are manageable and no greater than in similar climates, such as the western coastal zones of Canada and Norway, where external timber cladding is widely used. There are also evidence of strong historical precedents for external timber cladding having been used throughout rural and urban Scotland. Timber Cladding in Scotland thus provides an invaluable reference for policy makers, architects, engineers, self-builders, planning and building control officers, contractors and cladding manufacturers."





THE SCOTTISH OAK CASK PROJECT

"Chop your own wood, it will warm you twice..."
Whisky Maker Gregg Glass on the new / old opportunity with
Scottish Oak

It is rare for a Whisky Maker and Blender to have opportunity to write for the sawmill industry. That said, it is a fantastic moment to share with you our industry leading Scottish Oak programme in which you are a vital part.

As an industry wood is vital. Scottish Oak is an up-tapped natural resource for Scotch Whisky. In my whisky making I really believe that innovation for our whisky starts with the tree. The programme created and further developed at Whyte & Mackay is built on a vision I first had 15 years ago to realise that potential to develop new Scotch Whiskies born from Scottish Oak.

My aim, to create great tasting and unique Scottish Oak aged and finished whiskies. In the whisky industry, there is a growing focus on the use of local ingredients. However, one of the missing links is local responsibly sourced oak.

As a whisky making programme a key objective was to establish the gold standard - and to share transparently how to approach the use of Scottish Oak in Whisky Making. The message from us is that this does not need to be complicated, providing you have the right partners to collaborate with.

From tiny acorns... how the idea became reality

Throughout my whisky making career - particularly in sourcing casks, working with cooperages and tree sourcing - the received wisdom was that Scottish Oak is not a suitable source material for making casks. The truth is different.

To create the perfect locally sourced cask, we need managed forests producing quality stock (clean, straight and knot free). We need sawmills with experience of cask making, in addition to cooperers prepared to work with the wood. Scottish Oak has a reputation for being too porous to work as a source wood for casks.

My view is that was all a challenge – but one we could solve.

The whisky maker often needs to be a creative problem solver. Challenging the status quo comes with the territory. Scottish Oak is the perfect example of that.

The way I've approached it first is to collaborate; with landowners, foresters, sawmills and coopers. As a team at Whyte & Mackay we then looked at how we in our whisky making treat Scottish Oak casks on their own unique merits and adapting to the particular local ecology.

Whisky Making takes time - a minimum of three years - the finished whisky itself often decades older. To develop a wood sourcing programme is not an overnight job. It needs to be something that has been created iteratively.

Throughout my experience I have had opportunity to experiment with Scottish Oak - in sourcing, building casks, filling casks through to the final expression. Time particularly 1-2-1 with landowners, sawmills, coopers, warehousing and in the samples room has been important.

The perfect pour – the importance of wood sourcing in whisky

For those ASHS members that I've been working with so far, the generosity of time has been immense. The wealth of advice, expertise and knowledge imparted has been critical to start the programme - and to identify how we can innovate right across the process.

The importance of your work is vital. As a whisky maker the contribution the wood makes to the whisky is key. The whisky we produce, that the consumer enjoys, is influenced by the decisions we take right back to the tree.

Working closely with sawmills has given me an appreciation for the craft and expertise in the industry. Our partnership offers mutual benefit too. We invest in Oak - and our purchase assists future reinvestment for milling equipment and for the benefit of the local sawmill industry as a whole.

Scottish Oak is not only an innovation. For Whyte & Mackay it is an important story across our whisky making - filling new spirit and finishing either part or 100% Scottish Oak. This is not just for our Single Malt Whisky, but also the other type of distillery we have in Scotland, Grain distilleries.

The public response has been extremely positive. The first of these whiskies 'King of Trees' that I created was launched by our independent innovation workshop, Whisky Works. I'd utilised virgin (new) toasted Scottish Oak, specifically as what we call "topper". This element adds a subtle sweet cinnamon and spice dimension to the core fresh and vibrant orchard fruit and vanilla cream characteristics.

The King of Trees cask used within the recipe was made from two wind-fell trees in the Highland's. It was expertly made by Cooper Darren Morrison in partnership with Kenny and team at Brodies Timber.

Scottish Oak can give a myriad of wonderful robust and interesting oak characteristics. Covering all categories of Scotch, Single Malt whiskies, Grain whiskies and blended whiskies. Watch this space for upcoming experiments from Whisky Works...

So, what is a cask and how important is it?

A cask is a generic term for the oak containers we use for aging spirit, within this the most common types are barrels ~190-200L, hogsheads ~250L and Sherry butts/Port pipes at 500-600L.

We talk of 3 ingredients, water, barley and yeast to make new make clear spirit at the distilleries. Creating the spirit is a real skill. At that point in the process we have room to create interesting flavours - and without great spirit we can't make great whisky. This spirit then moves to maturation in oak casks.

The influence of the cask is an important factor in creating great whiskies, some view that the "cask is king" and some styles of casks can even account for over 70% of the final flavour.



As an industry we are regulated in Scotland; we must age our spirit in oak casks for a minimum of 3 years. Here at Whyte & Mackay, we age ours for longer, often a decade and on rare occasion over 50 years! We can also use the casks to finish/enhance flavours.

The use of virgin fresh oak is not typical within the industry. Most supplies are "second-hand", coming from the Bourbon or Sherry, Port and wine industries. Supply partnerships are at the heart of our industry. The most prevalent type of casks are Ex-Bourbon Quercus alba barrels (~190L). We also source European oak, particularly from Spain and France, typically being *Q. petraea* and *Q. robur*. Factors such as the growing location, age, natural extractives within the wood, grain width, air drying locations of the oak all play their role.



In Scotland, I've been trialling different methods for Scottish oak casks for a long time now. I've experimented with the drying process - part air and kiln drying and to over 4 years of natural air drying. In Europe oak is typically air dried versus kiln drying for American oak in the Bourbon industry. Air seasoning the oak has two benefits, first to bring the moisture levels down in the oak to allow cask making, second to "mature" the flavour characteristics within the oak itself, which has an influence on the final whisky. The preference from a quality point of view is to air dry for 2+ years.

Then we come to the coopering of the casks. There are few coopers that can fully create casks from the timber to the final cask and for me this was something in particular I wanted to help change within our Scottish Oak Cask Making Programme.

A very close partner in this is Speyside Cooperage. In the early stages of the programme development I worked closely with Andrew Russell, Malcolm Munro and Darren Morrison. Engaging Speyside Cooperage in the programme helps ensure the whole industry can benefit from work we are doing.

One of my personal favourite elements of the programme was establishing cooper training programme as part of the Speyside Cooperage Apprenticeship. Typically coopers are trained mainly for repairing old Bourbon or wine casks. It's been a great joy to see the apprentices such as Iain, Charlie and Callum, now actively creating our Scottish oak casks from scratch with the expert oversight and tuition from Malcolm and Darren.

Together with Speyside Cooperage we're not only maintaining coopering skills but actively promoting this important craft. Our experimentation with cask construction is testing the art of what's possible.

After cask construction, typically American oak is charred at high temperatures creating an inner char layer in the cask. Typically European oak is more gently toasted. The process is similar to coffee roasting. The origin and provenance of the green bean is important to character of coffee. This can be manipulated through the roasting of the beans to different levels. With our Scottish Oak, this has mainly been traditionally toasted. We're now experimenting with other forms and levels of heat treatment.

So, to you the Sawmill experts...

How did the ASHS link come together?

In many ways I have come full circle. My first bench trial experiments with Scottish Oak started 15 years ago visiting my local sawmill Cromartie Sawmill near the Black-Isle.

I was delighted to revisit the sawmill 3 years ago and meet the new team. Dan and Nick Wormald greatly assisted in making connections with the ASHS group. Jim Birley of Scottish Woods, John Ferguson of Moyne Sawmill, landowner's such as David Young, Nick Marshal of ASHS and the Woodworkz Sawmill team were key characters too. Anyone I have forgotten - thank you - you know who you are!

Over the years I had largely worked with individual sawmills within and out with ASHS. Establishing the connection with ASHS and the Scottish Oak programme for me seemed a next logical step. In early 2019, I presented the concept to the ASHS group board meeting accompanied by Andrew Russell of Speyside Cooperage - the feedback was encouraging - and helped inform the programme we further developed. I hope to be back to seek your input on how we develop the programme for the future.

Key for me was to develop a sourcing approach that could be shared amongst different sawmills around Scotland. Provenance is an important aspect of the Scotch Whisky industry. Knowing the individual tree from which we create our cask, to produce our whisky is brilliant. As a whisky maker that all helps build a picture, incorporating sensory and technical data, that we can play with in our whisky making.

I am keen to work in partnership with nature - and much of the oak I have sourced is wind-fell, which in itself is fantastic as we are sourcing trees that are 150-200 years old - and beyond.

An opportunity for our precious Scottish oak to take centre stage

"Creative" and adaptable oak selection and processing can help drive added value to our oak. By retaining oak in the local economy we can multiply the benefits to local industry, often rerouting oak that was destined for firewood.

There is waste in our industry too. Scottish oak is too special for it not to play a part in the produce of Scotland. Processing quarter sawn or milled oak for whisky casks can produce excess wood. As a whisky maker we can make good use of that.

One of my favourite programme partners is the expert traditional tanner, Peter Ananin of Woodland Tannery. By supplying him with the bark and even the sawdust from my oak trees he's then able to traditionally tan

leather. By thinking differently and having a full circle approach, we are an input to his process we can also be an end commercially viable user to create a positive pull through to help utilise more of our "by-products".

To the future, "Trees for Life - Trees for all"

As part of the programme we are actively replanting trees for the future. This is something that is two-fold. Our policy is in responsible sourcing where often there is a management plan in place that stipulates replanting responsibly. But my vision is to go further...

Rewilding partners. Working with organisations such as Trees for Life and individual landowners in rewilding where appropriate.

Planting and managing oak specifically for future generations of foresters, sawmills, whisky makers, distillers, blenders, coopers and whisky drinkers. We have been planting oaks as well as working with nursery partners in selecting and establishing individual acorns with provenance, through to planting of oaks and managing younger plantations for the future. In future additions of The Full Circle I'll update you on some of the key partners and future developments.



Whisky is a craft that requires time and patience.

The truth is we are working with woodland that will be ready for harvest in 100+ years, to produce a cask that may mature for 50+ years. Quality Scottish Oak for making casks is a reality now but also a long-term investment, one I am deeply passionate about.

200+ year project, here we come!

As an overview:

The purpose of the Scottish oak programme is: Making great tasting and unique Scottish oak whiskies

- Scottish oak is unique in itself but there are many variables from the tree through to taste buds.
- Using our experience and expertise in sourcing oak from around the world and adapting for our own native oak.
- Scottish oak can be as good, and with close management can surpass qualities of oak traditionally used.
- Experimentation and proof of concepts
- Taste impact
- It can be great!
- Variables include a mix of grain, species, drying conditions, cooper techniques and heat treatment. This is a mix of nature and nurture as to particular flavours imparted and in reaction over time with the whisky.
- New oak can impart beautiful soft wood spice, sweet toasty characters and even fruitiness.. The possibilities with the variables are immense.
- Like with oaks sourced around the world we are balancing natural characteristics (nature) with what we do with it (nurture), such as drying techniques and heat treatment (charring or toasting).
- The Scottish oak impact and learning is and has been developed and is a continuous process of understanding. Looking forward to sharing more of the "geeky" detail in following The Full Circle issues.
- Industry wide availability
- To create a programme and positive momentum to upscale Scottish oak for the entire industry, ensuring responsible sourcing and to ensure correct balance of demand with supply.
- Utilise our natural resources responsibly to the best way we can
- Working cleverly and creatively to help retain quality oak in Scotland and retain secondary processing

- Save, Maintain and actively promote craft skills within direct and related industries
- Training programme plus continual hands-on cask construction with Scottish oak
- Replant many more trees than we use
- Working with rewilding partners such as Trees for Life through to individual land owners in replanting and managing oak forests for future generations
- Helping to support our local economy
- From working with landowners and sawmills to utilise locally and retain processing of the oak here.
- Partnerships with local sawmills around Scotland are key to this.
- Establish a gold standard including the above for the Scotch Whisky Industry as a whole

I look forward to welcoming more of you into the Scottish Oak Cask Making Programme in the future and keeping you informed in future editions of the magazine.

Cheers



Written by,

Gregg Glass

gregg.glass@whyteandmackay.com

Whisky Maker & Blender

Photo credit: Jon Purcell, Gregg Glass

Dedicated to "The Broon" and in the memory of Jon Purcell (1959-2020) whom many of you will have met in photographic documentation, working partnerships and development of The Scottish Oak Cask Making Programme.

Gregg Glass has over 20 years working in the Scottish Whisky industry and 15 years in making whisky. He is whisky maker and blender at Whyte and Mackay which encompasses Single Malts such as Jura, Fettercairn, Tannavulin and The Dalmore. A hands-on Whisky Maker - he's not only created award winning and critically acclaimed whiskies but has forged a new approach to whisky making including the creation of the Scottish Oak Cask Making Programme.

KILLEARN ESTATE WOODLANDS

“Visionaries, one might say, plant trees. They rarely live to see the result. They must take heart from seeing what men long dead have left for them to see”

Never has a truer statement been made than applies to the growing of oak trees and the production of high quality timber. More of that anon.

Messrs David Young t/a Burnlogs is a family run farming and forestry business based near Killearn on the doorstep of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. We sell approximately 350 loose cubic metres of seasoned firewood and approximately 200 m³ of primarily oak timber annually. All of our firewood and timber comes from our own forests which are managed under a Management Plan with Scottish Forestry. With the vast majority of our forests comprising native trees like oak, ash and birch our woods encompass four out of six of Scotland's designated priority woodland habitats.

There are around 11 distinct areas of woodland on the Estate extending to over 230 acres. Some are shown as forested in the Roy Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-1755 (one of the earliest national maps of Scotland) whilst a number are far younger, having been planted between 1976 to 1996.

We took advantage of the various legacy forestry grant schemes to plant areas of the Estate that comprised poorer quality farmland. Planting oak, ash, european and hybrid larch, scots pine, douglas fir, noble fir, and sitka spruce to name a few. The ash is now regrettably suffering from *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* fungus (Chalara) and we are restructuring the woodland to minimise the risk of getting *P. ramorum* amongst the larch.

Inspired by reading *Oak: fine timber in 100 years* translated from French by Bede Howell, we have adopted free growth of oak principles. This requires the final crop of around 70 per ha, of the most vigorous trees, to be identified at a fairly early stage in the thinning process, on which attention is focused to achieve half-crown radius clearance on each. We are under no illusions that on the west coast of Scotland the climate is markedly different from that in France but if we can reduce the time taken to get to 70cm dbh, even by a few years.

We pride ourselves in managing to utilise 100% of a tree. The brash goes for the production of biomass woodchip. The branches and the timber that cannot be milled, are logged into firewood, using a Posch firewood processor. The oak timber that is of a quality to go for milling is sold in whole tree lengths for sawing into beams, planks, flooring and now staves for whisky casks. With the high firewood prices, and we are the most competitively priced

in the area, it has given us a good base level so that we don't tend to sell much hardwood for the fencing market.

As the heart of an old Estate that covered some 2,500 acres, before being broken up in the 1930's, we have inherited the problem of rhododendron, seen at one time as an ornamental plant and game cover, that has grown unchecked for 100 years or more. The First World War saw great swathes of timber felled on the estate and rhododendron filled this void, to the extent that the bushes reach around 25ft high and are entirely impenetrable. Since 1961 over 65 acres have been manually cleared but there is still 20 acres to go, but what is left is in the wettest of ground conditions. And with the recent storms and lashing rain experienced so far this year, the ground conditions will not get any better unless we get a good dry summer. We used to cut out the big stems for firewood and burn the brash but a company has agreed to trial the use of whole bush rhododendron for biomass woodchip.

Following the clearance of rhododendron it takes around 3 to 4 years for the soils to recover leading initially to the significant natural regeneration of silver birch followed by oak and beech. Deer browsing is high and steps are being taken to address this.

Notwithstanding, the inherited rhododendron menace, we are fortunate that as part of the heart of the old Estate, the Estate had generations of foresters



We had previously sold timber to Jim Birley of Scottish Wood around 15 years ago and suggested that this would be the best route for milling our larger volumes of timber. We knew that Jim had a great set up with various Wood-mizers and would be able to saw the timber to exactly the specification required by Gregg. It has to be quarter-sawn but Jim can speak to this and the challenges faced in an article to appear in a subsequent edition of The Full Circle.

We have really enjoyed playing a part in utilising Scottish oak to age what is after-all an inherently Scottish product. Scotch.



Written by,
David A Young
www.burnlogs.com

Photo credit: Jon Purcell, David Young

managing its trees and woods. From growing seedlings in nurseries, the undertaking of management operations during a tree's life (what would now be called silviculture), to felling. The oak on the Estate was particularly prized for shipbuilding. With our farm being the Home Farm, the woods in and around would have been particularly well tended. So as a consequence we have a considerable acreage of oak woodland.

In 2018 we were introduced by John Ferguson of Moyne Sawmill, to Scottish Whisky Maker Gregg Glass, who was looking to source Scottish oak to make staves for the production of whisky casks. We had by that time a felling licence to clear fell three 1 ha coupes out of a 14 ha oak woodland and to thin the rest of the woodland by 20% -amounting to around 2000 tonnes. Gregg required to firstly be satisfied with the quality of the timber (Andrew Russell of Speyside Cooperage visited the particular woodland a couple of times alongside Gregg), the type of oak tree, the continuity of supply and our plans for re-planting and the continued management of the woodland. The investment required into this project is significant and it could not be undertaken if the volume of quality oak timber could not be guaranteed. He is looking in effect to create a brand new supply chain for Scottish oak, whereas with the long history of French and American oak being utilised for casks, the supply chain is already in place.





BITHELL ASSET FINANCE SOLUTIONS

Many ASHS members will know Jack Bithell, who runs Bithell Asset Finance Solutions with his wife, from an office in Dumfriesshire.

We're asset finance brokers - that means that we act as middlemen between businesses needing loans and funders who have money to lend. But we're not just middlemen, we get to know our borrowers requirements and what they want to do and discuss the best way for them to achieve their aims.

We have a carefully selected set of funders who each have different strategies and approaches to risk and we match up the best funders for each project. We specialise although not exclusively within the forestry and arboricultural sector and know a lot of the suppliers across the industries. Knowing what the equipment can do for our customers is really important to us. We often finance private sales of equipment between two businesses.

So we're different from other lenders such as banks who may be a bit more impersonal these days, have strict criteria and may not always be the cheapest option. It can be difficult to have your needs prioritised because they deal with thousands of loans to all sorts of different businesses. Our ethos is customer centric.

I've been in finance since 2004. At first I worked for a large retail bank specialising in mortgages and then as a mortgage broker. We set up BAFS in 2014 because we thought there was a genuine need for an alternative.

We have a good customer base and we get to know our customers. I don't spend all my time sitting behind a desk - I spend a fair bit of time visiting customers and learning about their businesses, at exhibitions and demonstrations and the likes. Some of my family are involved in forestry, so I already knew a bit about the industry and the equipment used, and sometimes I get the chance to use some of the kit myself. It's good to be able to help people do what they want to do, with bespoke packages of funding.

Most customers have a pretty realistic understanding about what they can afford and what a piece of kit can do, which helps with business planning. Our panel of funders are intentionally quite diverse, and have different approaches to risk or the types of businesses they're interested in funding, so we can usually find a funder for a viable project.

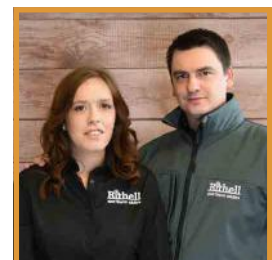
When we are working with a customer on a funding application, we get to know their business as well as the project proposal. Sometimes businesses find better ways to get

the results that they wanted from the project. In some cases, they discover other things about their business that could help improve its efficiency. We want to help them to grow their businesses and our job is to help them find the best way to do that, as well as to find funding to enable it to happen. One of the most useful things we've found is adjusting payment schedules so that they pay less in a quiet season and more at times of the year when they are busier and have more income to pay back loans.

We arrange loans for all sorts of things, including milling equipment, general farm/forestry machinery, dust extraction, commercial vehicles and buildings. The list really is endless. We deal with all sorts of businesses, from tree nurseries, through planting, management, contracting, harvesting, milling and processing to manufacturing and woodworking so quite literally throughout the whole process. There are no limits on the value of the equipment/loans we can facilitate. Whether you are a well established business, or just getting up and running we value your custom and are ready and able to help.

We have a lot of satisfied customers and get most of our business from customers' and suppliers' recommendations, something we consider the biggest compliment someone can make.

Looking back to our decisions and reasons for starting in 2014, I am really pleased with how the last 6 years have gone. It's a genuinely satisfying vocation where you really get to help people to take their businesses on to another level. I wouldn't change a thing.



Written by,
Jack Bithell

www.bafinancesolutions.com



That was 20 years ago in May and the decision taken that day would turn out to be life changing. I set up shop in my garage and invested what seemed to be a lot of money at the time on planers, table saws, spindle moulders etc with no clue how to work them. I remember the highlight of that first job was completing a dovetailed drawer I was finally happy with. It took me a full week to make and I still had 26 more to go. Despite the obvious lack of experience I completed that kitchen to my clients complete satisfaction, well they paid me at least! I continued to work from the garage for a couple of years before looking for larger, less domestic premises. The closest unit to home I could find was in Ruskie about a 35min drive away. The second big decision, taking on rented premises, a big financial commitment for a relatively new and yet unproven business. I took on an old stable building attached to a farm that was being used as a stone yard. I negotiated a deal that off set my

A HANDMADE LIFE

After 2 decades of designing and building furniture, specifically with Scottish Wood, and with a new decade just beginning, this seemed a good time to take stock of what can only be described as an 'interesting journey'.

For me it began in a tiny spare room in a terraced house in Alloa around 24 years ago. I had recently discovered a book by Anthony Dew on Making Rocking Horses. I had 3 young children at that time and worked as a jack of all trades on various building sites, doing whatever I could to pay the mortgage. The book appealed to my creative instincts and I thought I could make a fully carved rocker for my kids for Christmas. Although I made some successful carved heads from off cuts of roof trusses, I never did finish that rocking horse (well not yet!) It was clear that a lot more machinery would be required, a better knowledge of the wood and more money for all the bits that went with it! The seeds however were sown, and it was time for a change.



School had never really appealed to me and I left as quickly as reasonably possible. I now however felt ready to be educated and I signed up to a college course. As my dad had been telling me for years, 'it's time you got a proper job!' I like a challenge so I chose Civil Engineering due to its variety and discovered I really enjoyed learning after all. Two years later I had a good HND under my belt and an offer to go into the second year at Strathclyde University. I now had four children and a reasonable amount of student debt, so the choice was obvious but not easy. I moved back into the real world and worked wherever I could, mostly on small building contracts. After a couple of years, out of the blue, someone asked "would you be interested in building us a kitchen?" By this time we had moved to Fintry and I had built a lot of the furniture we had around the house. With 4 children at, or soon to be going to the local primary school our house was a busy one. It wasn't long before someone mentioned our child friendly, made to measure furniture and the word was out of a would be / could be furniture maker.



first years rent against the renovation costs to convert the stables into a usable workshop. By December it was complete and I had no enquiries, so I took on an 8 week contract to lay foundations for oil tanks and boilers and fit them ahead of a heating engineer team. This was for 24 police houses around the West Coast of Scotland, including the islands of Mull and Islay. My Civil Engineering training came in useful as I had to leave the sites clear and ensure correct quantities of materials were in place ready for me when I arrived. The schedule was very tight and I was working on my own, so long hours and hard labour. The highlight of the job came when I received a phone call while at the top of a ladder drilling holes in a wall. It was mid-February on Islay in a howling gale and I could just make out a faint voice asking about a handmade kitchen,

I was back in business...

I finished that contract in early March and arrived back at the workshop windswept, fit and raring to get started. Work started flowing steadily through the door and my Computer Aided Design drawing skills even got me some work producing templates for the stone company next door. Ten years passed in the blink of an eye and I had produced a varied portfolio of work as long as my arm. I had moved to larger premises at the same site, set up a saw mill and kiln, built dozens of kitchens and pieces of furniture, registered for VAT, deregistered, employed 3 people at different times, and let them go, Created the Glengoyne Distillery tasting room furniture, become a member of ASHS, the SFMA, SEDA, the Carpenters Fellowship, build oak frames, produced 2 major monuments for the SAS and the Forth Road Bridge as well as hundreds of signs and we had a son to complement our 4 daughters. The most significant decision made during this time however, was the one to purchase an Oak woodland near our home village of Fintry.



Our connection with the stone company became a useful one when it came time to build roads and a yard for our own workshop. Again my Civil engineering knowledge came in handy as I was able to lay out the roads and drainage required which saved a lot of money. I also did all the donkey work and compacted (on a road roller) the newly laid stone for a couple of hours each night, on my way home from the Ruskie workshop. Fortunately the stone yards owner was looking for a kitchen and suggested I build him one at cost in return for a road and yard at cost. Two years and 3,500 tons of stone later we finally had a finished access road and yard. Although we had planning permission for a barn style stone workshop the banks had just collapsed and were only lending to people who didn't need it. Unperturbed we found an old mobile doctors surgery in the form of 4 porta cabins which I managed to get delivered for £1,000. It took another £12,000 and 4 months' work to turn them into a humidity controlled furniture making workshop. Power was the next problem with the Scottish & Southern Electricity board wanting £25,000 for a 3 phase connection up front and in full. By this point we were running on empty and needed to cut costs and get back to work. We purchased an old generator from Ebay, moved the workshop across from Ruskie and started looking for work. This came in the form of a natural edged Elm kitchen, something I had long thought about but hadn't yet had the opportunity to design and build. It turned out to be my favourite kitchen and kept the wolves from the door (just). By this time, we had purchased the field above our woodland and in March 2016, after 10 years of wishing and planning we finally planted 24,575 mixed hardwood trees.





In June 2017 we sold our family home of 18 years in Fintry and moved into a caravan next to the workshop. Six weeks before we moved in, with all our credit cards at max, again, I took the time to set up a spring water system from the hill side, install a sewage system and set up the site for the caravan. With no mains connection, some research into how to survive off grid was also required. My civil engineering skills came in handy again and in the nick of time we managed to get everything in place for us to move in on the 1st June. Two containers now hold most of our household paraphernalia. The sale cleared off a lot of the building costs we had accumulated along the way and gave us a little well-earned breathing space.

It was clear after the first year in the caravan that it wasn't designed for long term living. All our cloths, in fact anything that touched an outside wall got damp or mouldy in a short space of time, it was full of vents, so very draughty and expensive to heat. Although by now we had planning for a house, it has been a lifelong dream to literally hand build our own home, so it will probably take a few years. Recognising this point, we laid hardwood floors throughout the caravan and timber lined and insulated the inside end to end. We rewired and re-plumbed as we went, ripping out all the built in furniture. We then rebuilt everything from the kitchen table and benches through to the beds and wardrobes. We fitted a new heating system and radiators and Jacqui (my long suffering wife) made all the soft furnishings. So it is now a comfortable, healthy and economical place to live.

In summer 2018 we set up a new sawmill which will be used to cut the oak posts and beams for the house from our own woodland. Research so far suggests that straw bales offer the cheapest and possibly the quickest way to build well insulated walls. Oak cladding is a durable and beautiful external finish and maybe we could make our own shingles for the

roof. This approach will give the project a tiny carbon footprint and more importantly make it affordable for a humble furniture maker and his family. So maybe with a little luck and hard work, we will finally complete our journey and move into our own hand made cottage on the hill.

This may also be the year I finish that rocking horse!



Written by,
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A SALT WALL IN AYR

Archie McConnell was one of the first ASHS members and is supposedly retired but seems to be busier than ever.

Q. What is a salt wall?

A. Its proper name is a salt reduction tower but that was a bit of a mouthful. It's basically a wooden frame packed with blackthorn twigs down which you trickle brine/seawater. Evaporation takes place and thus the salt begins to concentrate. Seawater is about 3% salt, and the salt wall concentrates that to about 20%. Salt starts crystallising at 23%, so the last bit is done in evaporating pans from which the salt crystals can be easily scraped.

Q. Where did this project come from?

A. I was contacted by Peacock Salt, a company based in Ayr (that among other things supplies salt for roads throughout Scotland) to build a salt wall for making high-quality culinary salt. This might be the first salt wall in Britain. They are common in Poland and Germany where some are massive structures and many are used in health spas. The story goes that, about 500 years ago, Poland was divided between two conquering countries, and one part has all the salt mines. So the other part of the country had to get salt from seawater, and worked out this ingenious way to speed up the process, and use less fuel.

Q. Can you describe this salt wall?

A. It's a small one. It's only (approximately) 25m long, but 8m high by 5 or 6 m wide. In Germany, some walls are a mile long, and if the client is happy with this one, we might build another a few hundred metres long in a year or two. There are two parallel vertical frames joined by a bridging piece. It's all made from 8"x8" beams, the long ones are Douglas fir and the rest is Larch.

Q. How did you build it?

A. We had a construction area next to the final location of the wall at Ayr harbour. The beams were delivered ready milled and we put them together using simple joints, held together with stainless steel threaded rods and nuts. It was quite quick to build the frames and then assembling them took 2 or

3 days. It's a simple design - beams on either side of a post bolted in place. Once it was in place, the client got blackthorn branches from Poland (they grow them specially for this purpose) and put them into the frame.

We had a great team of 6 self-employed people working cooperatively, with me coordinating everything. The most difficult parts were getting the concrete pad right and getting the troughs all level so that the brine flows evenly over the whole length of the stack.

Q. How does it operate?

A. You simply pump the seawater up into troughs on top of the bridging piece. These feed the brine into smaller troughs which have taps to regulate and spread the flow of water evenly dripping onto the blackthorn twigs. As it flows down the twigs it spreads along the smaller and smaller twigs before dripping onto lower twigs and finally into a collecting trough. The wind blowing through the stack evaporates the water pretty effectively even in cold and damp weather. It's



then recirculated two or three times to concentrate it more.

Q. Any problems?

A. Only the ones mentioned above. The clients will need to watch out because apparently timber can delaminate if it's repeatedly soaked in salt water and then allowed to dry off. So it needs to be kept wet all the time.

The other problem for the clients was that the first salt from the wall was an unattractive beige colour due to phytochemicals leaching out of the blackthorn twigs. Once they had leached out, the colour improved.

It was a great project and I hope we get the opportunity to build another bigger one soon.



Written by,
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ASHS

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SCOTTISH WOOD'S NEW TIMBER SHOP

At last... Scottish Wood's new timber shop is now open to the public.

Kicked off early last year with an exquisite wee model built by Douglas (my son), we laid the concrete slab before handing over to our energetic Barvarian, Bernd, who took on, single handed, the process of turning those drawings into reality.

Final touches were completed over the Christmas break (with Bernd's personal and particular design elements in plentiful evidence), and we opened the doors on our first day back in the New Year.

This beautiful and warm space (with its own quirky source of carbon neutral heating), provides a delicious environment for admiring, drooling and browsing through a selection of boards, chunks and lumps... evidence of our country's gorgeous and plentiful resource of home-grown hardwoods.

Space is more plentiful than our previous timber shop, allowing us another step towards our goal of supplying makers, craftsmen and hobbyists with a large enough range of timbers and timber sizes to be able to find all they need for their specific projects and commissions.

Our timber shop (or show room), has always been a strong part of the Scottish Wood business model. We built the first one to make it possible for anyone to access a piece of Scottish grown hardwood however small. And this, we decided, was - as a home-grown social enterprise and Scottish charity - a part of our responsibility.

So, come along, have a look, and tell us what you think. (But remember, we're still open only Mondays to Thursdays!).



Written by,
Jim Birley
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LEALT GORGE VIEWING PLATFORM

Geoff Freedman of Rural Bridges engineering consultancy designed and supervised construction of this timber and steel platform at Lealt Gorge on the Isle of Skye for Staffin Community Trust. It was completed in August 2018, using specified home-grown oak and larch.

This is the first structure of its type in Skye and provides spectacular vistas of the gorge, waterfalls, the Trotternish Ridge and across to Wester Ross. It is expected to be a focus for tourism, an important industry for the local economy. The overall project included a car park, footpaths and other improvements to the locality and is part of the Skye Ecomuseum.



AARON STERRITT GREEN WOODWORKER

I'm a furniture-maker, based near Forres, but over the past few years I have developed an interest in green wood-working, making furniture and other things and training people as well.

First, I'd better tell you a bit about green woodworking. All the work is done with traditional techniques and hand tools, especially tools like spokeshaves, and travishers (used for scooping out seats). We use the wood green, that is fresh wood still containing sap. Apart from anything else, green wood is softer and easier to work than after it's been dried. We use mainly short logs or pieces of branchwood - even bent branches can be used to make chair arms or backrests. Logs (generally 15-30cm diam) should be cleft (split) into smaller pieces rather than being sawn, as there are lots of stresses in sawn wood.

Green woodworking is ideal for certain components of furniture - for instance legs (of tables, chairs and stools), rungs, spindles and stretchers. I use air-dried heartwood from larger sawn or cleft logs for the tops - chair seats, table-tops and the like, although I have made a rush-seated chair with no sawn wood at all.

For the last 3 or 4 years I've been making pieces from green wood and selling through local galleries. I also work to commission and I run the courses every month. I spend about half my time teaching and half making. I started as a craftsman furniture maker in my own furniture-making workshop with all sorts of machines, before I developed an interest in green woodworking. Before I started in green woodworking, I did a course with Mike Abbott, who was a great teacher and made things accessible and practical. Green woodworking is accessible to anyone, but over time you can develop great skill.

I still use a few machines for finishing timber, especially the sawn timber used for chair seats and table-tops. But I find that if you use a machine to cut the timber it takes you down a path involving more machines, whereas if you cleave the log, it takes you down a path using enjoyable hand-tool working and reflecting the character of the wood. Hand tools are quieter and tend to produce more shavings and less dust than machines. And in fact, cleaving was widely used in making furniture up until quite recently.

On the courses, I try to get people to see the whole process through from log to finished piece, so that they can understand the whole process. I try not to get participants to do too much measuring, but rather work by eye and estimation, although I make simple jigs for people to use to get dimensions and positions of joints right - to help eliminate mistakes which could dishearten a new maker. I want to make the experience pleasurable for the new makers, but still help them to develop the skills they need to make furniture by themselves.

My courses are different from other green woodworking courses elsewhere in the UK because of the forests and woodlands we have around here - there isn't much straight hardwood (especially ash). But that makes it more interesting for the trainees, for instance chair legs might have a knee or a curve to build into the piece - we're developing a Highland Vernacular because of the peculiar bits of wood we have to use, harking back to the days when crofters on the west coast would make chairs from all sorts of bendy bits of wood. Local resources tend to define the products, although they are still quality products if well made.





During the courses, we mostly work outside, and participants enjoy this aspect - working away in a natural setting to produce nice pieces of furniture. I run a few courses in winter in the workshop when it's too wet and cold to work outside.

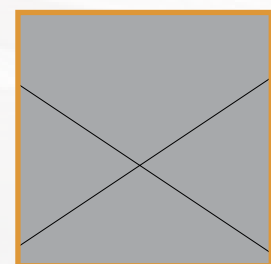
There's always plenty of demand for courses. The participants are a mixture of existing woodworkers learning new techniques and people learning a new skill for a hobby. I think that the more people working with wood in the green woodworking way the better, as it gives them a better awareness of where the wood in their furniture comes from and also of woodlands, woodland ecosystems and stewardship. But the making process is the key - working the wood is the core thing for me and the trainees. For me, it's less about what the finished product looks like and more about the pleasure of making while working with wood (note working with, but not doing things TO the wood). With green woodworking, the grain of the wood determines what's going to happen.

As we go along, I try to explain where the log has come from, why it's been felled (some due to road-building which would have gone to firewood, others from thinning of woodlands). Most of the wood we use comes from woodlands overlooking the River Findhorn at Logie Steading in the woods around Logie Timber. We sometimes use trees from Logie Estate and other estates around here - I used to be a contract tree-cutter so I know the woods and the foresters. Sometimes I work at tree-felling and take wood in lieu of money as payment. One time, I worked with another green woodworker to thin a local wood. It wouldn't have been financially viable for the owners to thin the wood using traditional contractors using a forwarder, but we could do it as we wanted the wood, not payment. That wood might have been sold for firewood or even just left in the forest which would have made the thinning a net cost to the owner.

Since all of the timber we use is local, that determines the range of species we use. Ash is ideal - it's easily worked, has low moisture content, so less shrinkage of joints. I can never get enough and now with dieback it's becoming very difficult to find. Willow is good if it's big diameter (8"+). It splits easily and straight but we avoid heavily branched trees as the knots make working it difficult. It's much wetter than ash so I split the logs a few days or weeks before the course to let it dry out a bit. Gean is soft, splits easily, but again is wet and so I put split logs in a drying box overnight before they're worked. Yew is mainly used for steam bending - I have a simple plywood steaming box and steam pieces of wood for up to 2 hours. We also use hazel rods from woods we coppice.

My courses evolve all the time - each year I add an extra chair course (1 week with 4 people) due to increasing demand and the way we use materials for making chairs evolves every year, which makes the courses more enjoyable for me and the participants. The social aspect of the courses is very important. We eat lunch and snacks together and it's great for trainees to socialise with people they never met before - you can see connections being made and people being more accepting of others' views.

I hope in future there'll be more green woodworkers and more foresters with experience of working with green woodworkers and other people who can use wood at a scale that wouldn't be financially viable using traditional contractors. I think that, where possible, woodlands should be managed slowly - taking a few selected trees a year and all the time improving the quality of the remaining trees.



Written by,
Aaron Sterritt

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Photo credit: Aaron Sterritt

CALEDONIA LOG HOMES

I'd been playing rugby in Canada in the 2004-2005 season after university, first on the east coast in Montreal and then on the west coast on Vancouver Island. My visa was coming up and I didn't want to leave, much less know what I wanted to do with my life. West coast British Columbia is an amazing, magical place and I knew I wanted to stick around a bit longer. I didn't have a trade, just a useless degree in American Studies so was finding it tough to get a work permit. I was toying with the idea of another university course (terrible idea as I can barely spell) and was looking through the University of British Columbia prospectus when I came across a handcrafted log building course that gave an introduction to industry certificate and a chance at a work visa. It was a eureka, life changing moment and I knew right then that I had found what I wanted to do. On further reading the course was taught by one of the best log builders in Canada and a real pioneer of modern-day log building techniques. I applied for the course, was accepted and managed to scrounge enough money to attend.

The course was 4 months long in interior BC and it was one of the best times of my life.



We started the course in spring of 2006 when there was still plenty of snow around, There were some basic bush huts nearby as accommodation with 12V car batteries to power the lights. For the first few weeks the pipes were frozen to the showers so it was a case of breaking the ice on the stream to get a pan of water to heat up on the stove for a brisk wash outside in the snow!

The course was a mixture of hands on building and classroom-based teaching and Del demanded the highest standards from us. I'd never used a chainsaw before and was pretty terrified when I fired up my Stihl MS361 for the first time. We built a beautiful 20 foot x 20 foot cabin from amazing larch logs which we had to hand peel ourselves. It was one of the most rewarding things I've done.



After the course I applied for a work visa and went further into BC to work for a quality log home business in the foothills of the Selkirk mountain ranges. The business was based right in the sticks and there were plenty of black bears, cougars and coyotes around. It felt like a right adventure, especially when the first winter came on and the daytime working temperature was about -18 to -25! Working at a small business was brilliant as I was in at the deep end and it was sink or swim. I'd come out of Del's school thinking I had a pretty good grasp of log building but quickly realised I knew next to nothing! It took me a year to find my feet and actually start to understand all the theory from Del's.

We built a lot of big houses, some of the garages are about the size of our 3 bed homes!



The company also had custom built band saw with a 50 foot bed and hydraulics that I was taught to use. I was mainly custom cutting for the log homes, sill logs, stringers, stair treads, top round plate logs and ridges and purlins. It's pretty technical and it's amazing what you can do with the hydraulics. It also gave a really good understanding of the craft of custom cutting log roofs, like cheating the peak up or down and putting in sag references.

I left BC at the end of 2009 and then worked for a time with a company in Austria and France before heading out to NZ to do my first build on my own.



The NZ build was in a place called Huia in the Waitakerie ranges outside Auckland, another beautiful place. It was a very challenging post and beam design but I was very lucky in that I got to spend a lot of time with the architects providing details as well as sourcing the logs. We got the Douglas fir logs from a horse logger down near Rotorua. It's a brilliant way of getting the timber out, leaves no damage to the ground, is very quiet, no emissions and a lovely smell of fresh cut trees and horses. Funnily when we were in the forest we heard a truck nearby and Jason the horse logger told us all to be quite and get down. I'm still not sure if those trees were stolen or not!



By this stage I thought I was ready to try and start my own business and came back to the Borders to give it a go. I started in 2011 with a tiny bit of a yard at Real Wood Studios with a handful of tools, no staff and no customers. What was I thinking! I started out building log picnic benches and built a small cabin for my folks and somehow managed to survive the first couple of years. I was very lucky with a few projects like 25 10 foot picnic benches to go down to a formula one team in Woking.

We've built a fair few houses now and have some great staff. I'm very lucky to now have a chartered architect on the books in Kevin Mackenzie and Neil Custard in the office keeping the business together.

We predominantly build larger projects now and have some stunning builds in some amazing places, most of them without a phone signal. Probably our 2 biggest have been a full scribe build up at Nairn and a massive post and beam past Pitlochry.

I didn't know if there was good timber around before I came back from my travels but we have some beautiful trees in Scotland and I love finding them and building beautiful houses with them. I predominantly use Douglas fir as it's such an amazing timber to work with. Really strong, straight and with beautiful colour. I generally try to buy 13 meter poles with top diameter of about 350- 400mm, straight and with minimal taper. Good luck! It's hard finding the right trees and even when you find them it's hard to actually buy them.



It's either pheasant season, the ground is too soft, there's nesting birds or the big sawmills are in there getting pushy. I've been stuck a few times sweating on logs to finish projects.

In the early days of the business we hired Keith Threadgall to do our cutting on his mobile mill. In 2018 we invested in our own mill which we use for custom cutting our post and beams on. It's a versatile mill and has more than paid for itself during this time.



We cut everything from sill logs to plate logs, stair treads, railings, flooring, internals finishings, work tops and massive ridges. Any falling boards are cut into decking joists or decking. It's amazing to see a beautifully finished build full of Scottish timber and to know that it has all come off the work horse that is the LT40.

We have a BMS 250 sharpener and a BMT150 setter purchased in 2019 which has been a great help in reducing down time whilst waiting for blades to come back from the sharpener.

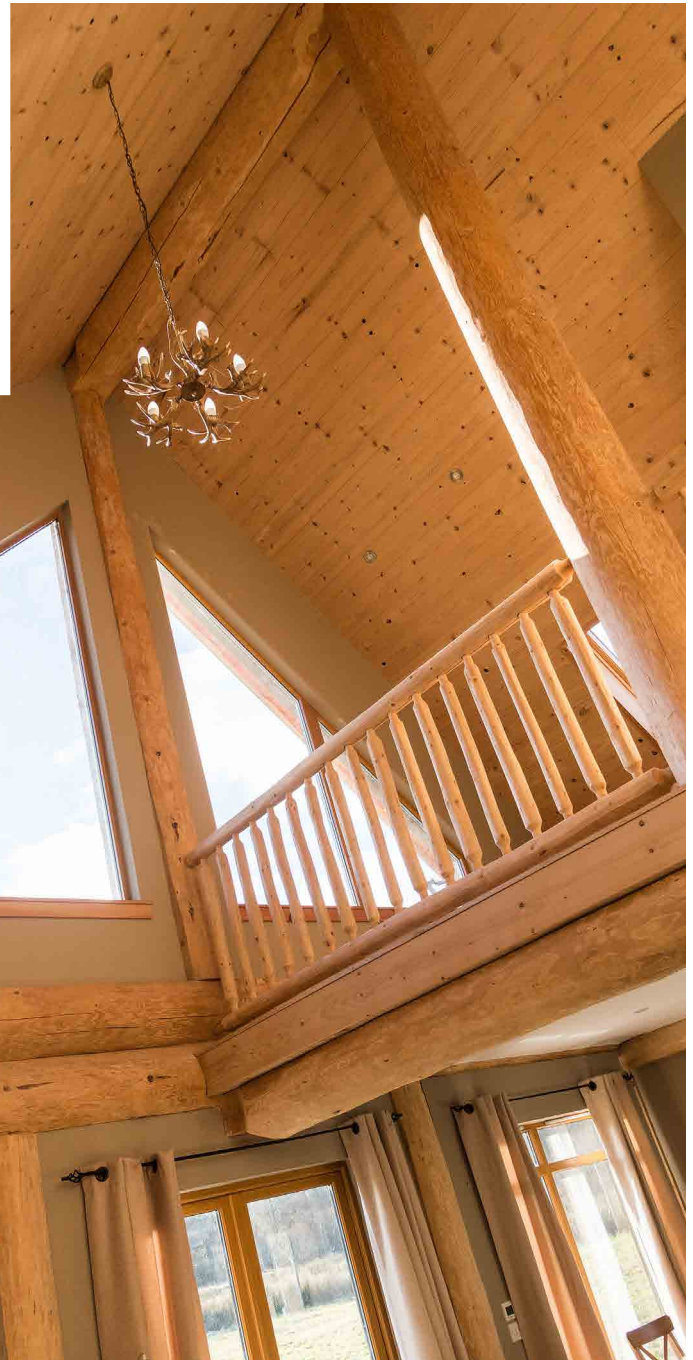
We currently send our timber away to Real Wood Studios to be kiln dried and processed but are planning on building our own kilns in our new yard and aim to raise finance to buy a 4 sided planer moulder so that we can complete the whole process in house. An upgrade to an electric LT70 is on the cards, giving us that extra throat for our bigger logs, while reducing emissions and helping us keep our carbon footprint as low as possible.

We're kind of going against the grain in terms of doing as much work as possible in house. All our staff are versatile which is

essential in a small business. It means we can tackle any project that comes our way and can adapt as a business meaning we always have plenty of work in front of us. I want to build a truly sustainable business where our goal is primarily to look after our customers and staff properly while building log homes that we can all be proud of. Although we need to grow as a business, we are not looking to be a massive company.

We have recently completed a deal with J & J Law Sawmill in Lilliesleaf near Melrose, purchasing the site and operational yard, which will become our new home in the spring. Jack and Bertie who currently operate the sawmill will continue to service their existing clients until the end of the year, whilst offering their expertise and support to the Caledonia Log Homes team. We hope to keep Jack and Bertie out of retirement for as long as possible.

It's a labour of love above all else, and even when the machines break down, the weather sets in and the bills won't stop coming I couldn't really see myself doing anything else.



Written by,
Chris Houston
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Photo credit: Chris Houston

REDUCING SUFFERING FROM HARSH CHEMICALS IN REGULAR USE

Pol Bergius of Black Dog Timber describes alternatives to some of the harsh chemicals used in sawmilling and ways to reduce the impact if you have to use them.

Allergic reactions have become a pain for me, triggered by unavoidably concentrated exposure to Douglas fir dust a few years back, and slightly careless use of resins and thinners in my work. So the allergy thing has become a bit of a crusade of mine since I discovered that a few easy precautions would have reduced all of these effects greatly. Luckily for us, there are now alternatives to the toxic stuff we've been subjected to all these years. For some of us, it is our duty as employers to make sure that the risks to our employees are kept to a minimum, too.

For some years now I've been using Plantocut, a "bio" grinding oil for blade sharpeners etc, available from Plantoil Ltd in Wetherby (sales@plantoil.co.uk). The mineral oil that we used was very hard on the skin and had a pretty nasty smell. This stuff has neither of those problems and is less harmful to the environment of course. We use relatively little so the per-blade cost is hardly measurable. You may already know Plantoil for their bio chainsaw oils.

In recent years I've been using Bio-Solve, a universal thinner/solvent that is plant based and a really good alternative to white spirit, turpentine, acetone etc. Over the years I have become sensitised to more or less all solvents, oils etc.. Itchy skin, headaches, dizziness... This stuff does all I want it to without any of the allergic reactions, even if I get it on my hands! Another great benefit and economy of Bio-Solve is that it can be used more than once for, say, cleaning brushes after epoxying. It actually smells quite fruity.



Bio-Solve comes from the same bods who supply MAS Epoxies which are castor oil-based resins. Also low allergy. Compared to most other old-fashioned high ratio epoxies it is a PLEASURE to use, (and I used to dread epoxy of any kind) the ratio is 2:1 making it so easy and... no nasty reactions in my case. And it won't eat its way through your yoghurt pot, your gloves and then overheat and burst into flames either, which is still a hazard with some of the "traditional" epoxy resins.

I buy Bio-solve and MAS epoxy from Black Bear Boating and Leisure (no relation to Black Dog Timber)
<https://www.blackbearboatingandleisure.com>

I also find that carbon filter masks (eg 3M 4255 Maintenance-Free Organic Vapour/Particulate Respirator) are very effective at removing fumes and dust. You have to use different filters for each, and I try to use the light weight dust filters when working on the mill or planer etc. The facemask is made of very flexible material which moulds well to the face and is many times more effective than a paper mask.

I use Showa Thermo 451 Work Gloves all the time. They're insulated for use in cold weather and water resistant (on the palm and fingers) as well. Douglas fir resin, in particular, still causes a reaction. Using gloves helps to reduce contact.

Finally, the damage that dust causes to our health is now well-known. We who put up with it every day can be too relaxed about this! You really need to remove it at source if you can, with a proper



dust extraction system. It's not so difficult to remove coarse particles but the fine dust (which is the most dangerous) can linger in the air for hours, and will get stirred up again days later. Some workshops have micro-particle filter extractors working all the time to remove these effectively and I'm sure it's worthwhile to avoid health problems. Being a retired tractor shed, my workshop isn't air tight or used enough to warrant such equipment!

Some of the symptoms of becoming sensitised to fumes or dust particles are itchy skin, breathing difficulties or an annoying phlegmy cough. If you get these then you need to clean up the way you work or change the chemicals you work with! The benefits for such a small effort are amazing.



Written by,
Pol Bergius
www.blackdogtimber.co.uk

Photo credits: Pol Bergius



ARGYLL SMALL WOODS COOPERATIVE

Background

The Coop was formed out of the membership of the Kintyre Farm woodlands Collaboration project.

The project facilitated a small group of woodland owners and workers in Kintyre to develop their understanding of small woodlands through training, workshops, study tours and practical demonstrations/case studies. Following the completion of the project this group of farmers and landowners set up Argyll Small Woods Cooperative in 2014.

The main aims of the Coop are:

- To coordinate woodland management activity in harvesting, planting, selling and wood fuel.
- To advise on and support the production of woodland/forest plans
- To encourage collaboration on advice, information, equipment and manpower
- To organise and run knowledge sharing events for woodland owners and workers
- To organise and run practical woodland/forestry skills courses.

Coop activities and funding

Although the Coop was set up in Argyll, membership is open to woodland owners and workers from all over Scotland. The Coop is administered by a part time facilitator which has been funded by Forestry Scotland. The Coop organises and runs around 5 knowledge sharing events and 2 forestry skills courses a year. A sample of the type of event and training run for small woodland owners and workers are:

- The Coop has put over 60 people through chainsaw training
- Run 6 assessing hardwoods events
- Facilitated 3 farmers and landowners install log boilers
- Run RHI awareness workshops
- Run milling demonstrations
- Run tree nursery awareness and seed collection workshops
- Run a series of woodland creation and management workshops
- Run invasive species control workshops
- Run MyForest woodland management workshops

The knowledge sharing events have been funded by Forestry Scotland and the Woodland Trust, Croft Woodland Project

Support for small woodland owners and workers

A key objective of the Coop is to support the implementation of a series of innovative actions that mobilise the social, environmental and economic potential of small woods. The Coop commissioned a survey of woodland owners and workers to gather detail of the kind of issues small woodland owners and workers faced. What we found was:

Woodland Owners, Farmers, Crofters:

- 50% don't manage their woods
- Those that do, main objectives are: timber/woodfuel, sport/recreation, NTFPS, livestock shelter and grazing
- Most that manage their woods do so themselves with 50% having plans in place
- Only 20% are working towards their objectives and felling timber. 45% working towards their objectives but not felling timber

- Barriers to management
- too small
- lack of skills
- poor access
- lack of grant support
- economics
- Main reason stated to plant new woods is for shelter
- Most respondents are likely to consider co-operative approaches to management but fewer would consider sharing machinery
- Qualitative answers saw common themes of woodland size, economics and wide range of objectives between different owners/managers

Woodland workers:

- Most respondents were sole traders offering woodland management and consultancy services
- The majority stated that their businesses had either increased or stayed the same in recent years in terms of turn over and number of employees
- The majority have relative confidence in growth over the next few years in terms of turn over and employment
- The main barriers to woodland management were identified as follows:
 - Lack of suitable machinery
 - Skills shortages
 - Terrain
- Actions to help address these barriers were identified as follows:
 - Grants and finance for machinery
 - Training
 - Co-operative approaches



This survey highlighted that the key issues for woodland owners and workers are lack of skills and funding. It also highlighted that cooperative approaches are seen as a way forward. The Coop continues to offer knowledge sharing events and training and is exploring how skills can be developed between 'clusters' of woodlands in a local area. The Coop is also keen to work in collaboration with other woodland organisations such as ASHS to pool resources and funding.

Promoting woodland management

Apart from running knowledge sharing events on woodland management, the Coop has promoted the MyForest woodland management platform.

MyForest is a free online woodland management toolkit that will help woodland managers gather inventory information on their woods and compile a Woodland Plan based on Scottish Forestry template. The Coop acquired funding from Scottish Forestry to develop a dashboard that will enable the interrogation of inventory data from small woodlands in a local area to facilitate collaborative management and timber sales.

Coop members generally have a range of woodland types, ranging from small conifer plantations to over mature hardwoods and undermanaged low-quality woodland. The Coop has supported woodland owners to identify quality hardwoods on their property through hardwood assessment training and facilitated to sale of hardwoods. The Coop is interested in being a partner in the Scottish Oak for whiskey barrel project

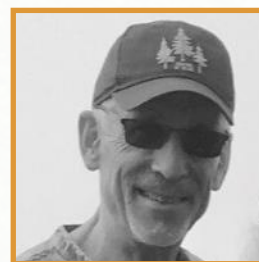
The Coop is currently running a feasibility study to explore the use of wood chip and wood fines as livestock bedding.

The study aims to:

1. Demonstrate if the use of wood fines as bedding can improve competitiveness and profitability of beef suckler cow production and the sheep sector by reducing input costs for wintering
2. Build a community of farmers who are looking at alternative systems
3. Build a community of small woodland owners who are looking for a market for low value timber
4. Increase economic activity in remote rural areas to help to improve their sustainability and resilience.
5. Demonstrate a reduction of GHG emissions from the agriculture and the related land use sector through reduced haulage.
6. Demonstrate an increase in sustainable farming systems and improvements in soil fertility, water quality and biodiversity through the use of wood as a bedding material.

Four farmers on the west coast are currently trialing the use of different types wood chip/ fines as bedding. The resultant dung and ground are being scientifically tested to assess the impact of the wood chip on soil fertility. A conference on the results of the study will be held in the autumn of 2020.

Coop membership is open to anyone owning, leasing or working with woods across Scotland. More information what the Coop does can be found on our website



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