

# Woodland Heritage 2005



64 pages of topical articles about silviculture, research and education

## Putting Something Back

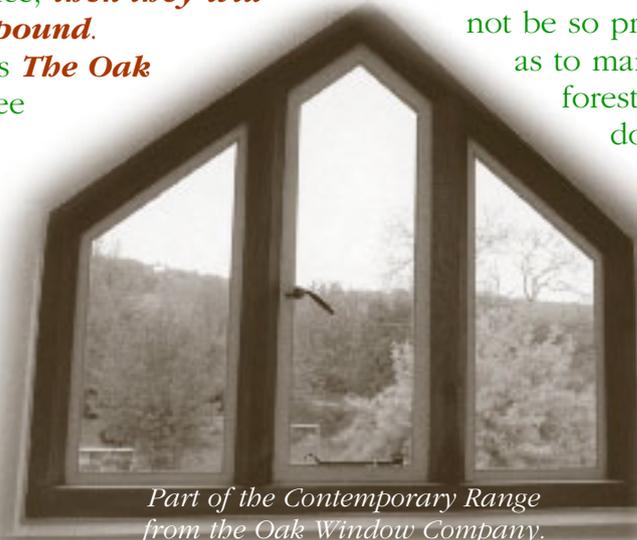
**W**oodland Heritage was started as a vehicle for consumers of wood to put something back into our environment for the future.

Many wood users, led by furniture makers, timber merchants and private tree growers, signed up to the principle of helping to replenish our native woodland resource. These founding members were swiftly joined by hundreds of individual members, passionate about trees and how our woodlands are being managed.

However, **retailers** of furniture and other wood-based products such as DIY stores have generally been slow to recognise the link between the products they sell and the need to grow high quality trees in a sustainable way to assure future supplies. **Many retailers do not appear to see themselves as a part of the supply chain.** We believe that retailers have a vital role to play. They are at the *"sharp end"* of the supply chain and as such are the ones who interface with consumers. They are in a position to help raise public awareness of the need for putting something back.

There are always exceptions to the rule. One enterprising retailer is developing a scheme whereby if the consumer will contribute one percent of the sales price, **then they will match it, pound for pound.**

Another contributor is **The Oak Window Company** (see below) who, as the name implies, are manufacturers of traditional solid oak windows and doors. They are a relatively new start-up company who *"adore working with this beautiful natural material"*



Part of the Contemporary Range from the Oak Window Company.

(their words) and who approached us saying they would like to contribute to WH on the basis of oak timber sales. It is their intention to plant at least one tree for every order they take, therefore not only replacing woodland, but also increasing the total area of woodland. I believe such innovative approaches are to be applauded.

**NHG Timber Ltd** is another example of a welcome new WH supporter. As an international timber merchant, they source from 65 countries across the world and have real concerns about sustainable development, but equally, they see the importance of putting something back *"at home"*.

So, I asked **Tim Rollinson, Director General of the Forestry Commission**, if he would contribute his thoughts on the same theme and he kindly agreed to do so (see pages 4 & 5). I know that some of our private woodland growers may not agree with all of his views – in which case, I hope they will enter into a constructive debate. Tim has certainly proved his willingness to engage with the industry as a whole.

One of the things that I do agree with Tim on is that we must not be sidetracked into simplistic debates of **"continuous cover versus clear felling"**. Certainly, WH would not be so presumptuous, or prescriptive, as to maintain that any particular forestry system is a panacea. We do think that continuous cover systems offer a viable alternative **on appropriate sites**. But overall the UK surely needs a judicious mix of management systems, depending on each particular environment. Likewise, I agree that a

Continued overleaf ►

► *From front page*

“**broadleaves versus conifers**” debate is equally sterile and misses the point entirely.

Accordingly, Woodland Heritage, being a broad church believes in keeping an open mind. We can all learn from others and hence the importance we attach to our **Garthwaite Travel Bursaries** which allow forestry students and practitioners to look at alternative management systems across the world that

might add to the sum of our knowledge and encourage best practice. The only condition we attach to the bursaries is that the recipients must share the knowledge they have gained, by way of a short report for publication.

I hope you will enjoy reading some of these reports in this issue of our Journal.

■  
Lewis J. Scott

*“The aim of Woodland Heritage is to promote the management of woodlands for the production of high quality timber in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner - and to encourage British woodworkers to respect and use this resource.”*

## *Field Weekend 2005*

*Welshpool, Wales*

*Saturday 25th June a.m. – The Powis Castle Estate Woodlands*  
(by kind invitation of The Trustees)

*Saturday 25th June p.m. – The Gardens and Woodlands of Powis Castle*  
(by kind invitation of the National Trust)

*Sunday 26th June a.m. – The Redwood Grove, Leighton*  
(by kind invitation of The Royal Forestry Society)

*Sunday 26th June p.m. – The Leighton Estate Woodlands*  
(by kind invitation of Mrs Lucy Shakerley)

*Why not stay and make a weekend of it?*

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# NEW WOODLAND HERITAGE TRUSTEES

## Gabriel Hemery

**G**abriel Hemery developed a strong love of the countryside from an early age. He studied physical geography at the University of Wales, specialising in Biogeography, afterwards gaining a post-graduate qualification in Nature Reserve Management. He worked for the Northmoor Trust from 1992 to early 2005, being chiefly responsible for the planning and planting of a new research centre dedicated to hardwoods and a new farm woodland with some 50,000 trees. He completed a Ph.D. at the University of Oxford, aiming to inspire a revival in British walnut growing, where his research took him to the walnut-fruit forests of Kyrgyzstan. He soon earned the enviable title of 'Dr. Nuts' amongst colleagues.

Gabriel is a Chartered Forester and held the post of Secretary of the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme from 2001 to 2004. He has delivered talks to audiences here and abroad, and has been responsible for establishing dozens of collaborative research programmes with national and international organisations, his work being widely published. His current research interests include silvo-poultry and climate change.

Gabriel is a Director of the Walnut Tree Company and from March 2005, Director of Development for the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

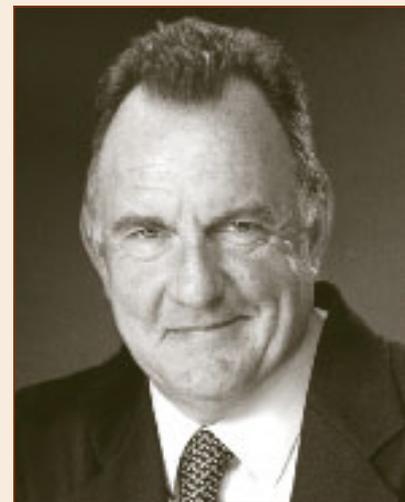


## Nick Goodwin

**N**ick has spent his entire working life in the timber trade, initially working for Sandell, Smythe and Grayson, followed by seven challenging and enjoyable years working in Ghana and Liberia. In 1981 Nick founded NHG Timber Ltd which is now a well-established del Credere agency, trading in hardwoods and clear softwoods, selling to an ever-widening range of customers worldwide. Whilst the UK and Ireland remains NHG's core market, they are now selling in over 65 other countries around the globe increasing export sales year on year. NHG has a particularly strong presence in the Middle East where they sell a range of species, both tropical and temperate.

Nick has had a long love affair with the African continent. He resided there for 7 years and has continued trading in the region since the early 70s. Forestry practices worldwide, in particular in relation to hardwoods, are at the heart of Nick's concerns for the industry. Regeneration and sustainability are the top priority for all concerned.

Nick is the Managing Director and has recently been joined by his son Guy in this family business.



*"We are indeed fortunate to be able to call upon both Gabriel and Nick's expertise and experience – they are valuable additions to our dedicated team and we are delighted to welcome them as Trustees."*

Peter Goodwin – Chairman of Trustees

# PUTTING SOMETHING BACK

T.J.D. Rollinson

*Director General of the Forestry Commission*

I chose my career in forestry out of a deeply-felt desire to 'put something back'. This theme is one that recurs continually as I lead an organisation that operates across the whole of Britain. The Forestry Commission was originally tasked with restoring the nation's timber resources following the First World War – putting something back on a huge scale. The Forestry Commission now looks after more than one million hectares of public land, many located in some of Britain's most beautiful and special places. They are hugely popular, making us the largest provider of public access and countryside recreation. We are also the largest producer of wood – a renewable and sustainable raw material.

Our aim is to manage our estate as an exemplar of sustainable development, which I think of in terms of what we pass on to future generations. I believe passionately that we are genuinely in a position to pass on forests and woodlands that will actually be **better** than those we inherited. That belief, and a determination to make it happen, is enough to 'sustain' me in my work.

As the theme of this piece is about putting something back, let me use one of the most exciting and personally satisfying examples of our work. The Forestry Commission is currently involved in putting trees and woodlands onto land around the fringes of some of our most damaged urban areas. These include areas that are blighted by their industrial and social past.

Today, the Forestry Commission is at the forefront of the development of multi-purpose forestry and we are expected to manage our forests to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits. The expectations of society, and the politicians we serve, are continually increasing. We have to respond continually to what individual groups want, and this is constantly changing! One of my first acts as Director General was to commission Richard Worsley's *'Tomorrow Project'* to look at the changes that are taking place in society and how things might look like in the next 20 years. What role will a future Forestry Commission have? What services will be expected of it? How will our staff need to develop to deliver these future services? What skills will they need? Answering these questions is essential for an organisation with a record of delivery, professionalism and expertise. But this is something we can't take for granted.

Addressing the 'skills gap' is a key issue. Underpinning this is a need to be both innovative and enterprising. Forestry, like agriculture, has relied in the past on a 'productivist' rather than an 'enterprise' approach. The historical emphasis on volume production alone has had to change. Today, research and innovation are pre-requisites and I am putting a new focus on Forest Research to support greater innovation and development.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Forestry Commission is to balance our books. We are expected to meet social and environmental objectives and have developed new programmes on the land we manage. But while the woodlands and forests make important contributions to social and environmental sustainability, none of them can be delivered unless we are also financially sustainable. A key challenge is to improve profitability. The decline in world timber prices has hit the sector hard, but hit the Commission's budget the hardest. Producers, growers and processors must expect to operate in tougher conditions still. World forecasts suggest that the next 20 years will see increasing global competition in wood supply as highly industrial plantations in Asia and South America increasingly supply world markets. As its economy booms, China is now a bigger importer of wood than the UK, but China is also manufacturing furniture on a huge scale, leading to reports of the closure of traditional furniture manufacturers in the US.

While the challenges are real, I am very optimistic about the outlook for British forestry and the wood sector. This optimism rests on the fundamental sustainability of what we do. Our forests, properly managed, can be infinitely sustainable. The products from them – whether wood, recreation or clean air and water – contribute to the quality of everyday lives, and can be produced sustainably.

However, I do think that the sector under-exploits this natural advantage. With political momentum to pursue sustainable development, we have real opportunities to promote the potential of wood and woodlands in delivering sustainable solutions. We need to do more to exploit these advantages, whether in developing new markets and products, or developing the traditional markets. But while we now have a new awareness that wood is renewable and sustainable, wood products are still losing

ground to concrete, steel and plastic. So how do we go about developing these natural advantages?

Technical innovation is clearly important, to reduce manufacturing or production costs; to improve product quality and create new uses and markets. But what else needs to be done?

First, we need to demonstrate that our wood comes from sustainably managed sources. Simply claiming this is no longer good enough. It needs to be backed up by real evidence. This is as much a marketing issue as an environmental one. It is a challenge that we've risen to in developing the UK Woodland Assurance Standard that is the envy of many countries. The Standard has been developed by – and therefore has the support of – industry, government and environmental groups. With the introduction of a chain of custody schemes, we are now able to verify that wood comes from sustainably managed sources, backed up by third party, independent audits and product labels.

Second, we need to get government to take wood seriously, and procure only from sustainable sources. That is now happening, and the government is implementing policies for sustainable buildings. The natural advantages of wood as a sustainable raw material can now be exploited.

Third, we need greater investment in research and development. The Forestry Commission currently spends about £2.5 million a year on research on forestry resources and industry. About £200,000 of that is spent on wood quality work. This levers in quite a lot more funding, but other sectors are spending substantially more on innovation. The Forestry Commission will continue to play its part but the sector needs to do a lot more.

Fourth, and perhaps more important than anything, we need to raise the profile of wood as the sustainable solution: the natural material of choice. The Forestry Commission supports the Wood. for Good campaign, which is getting the key messages across, targeting retailers and specifiers, especially architects. The current budget for **Wood. for Good** is around £2 million a year, but the concrete industry is spending about 3 times that and promoting

concrete as a sustainable solution!

Having done these things, we need the whole sector to work together more cohesively to exploit this natural competitive edge. This has not been happening. The sector has often been pre-occupied by internal debate, and sometimes conflict, for example, broadleaved forestry supporters take on supporters of coniferous forestry, or supporters of continuous cover do battle with supporters of clearfelling! **We need a much more co-operative**

approach, not only to ensure that key messages are coherent and consistent but also to avoid wasting resources on infighting rather than promoting the sector.

I want to finish with a few words about our standing internationally. UK forestry is held in high renown around the world for our lead on issues such as sustainable management, forest certification and research. One of my aims is to enhance this reputation. In October 2004 I spent a week chairing a meeting at the United Nations about the shape of future international arrangements on forests. Should we have a global Convention on Forests to tackle issues such as deforestation? Our task was to prepare advice to the UN Forum on Forests, which will meet in 2005 when Ministers



*Tim Rollinson  
Director General of the  
Forestry Commission*

from all countries will make decisions on the future arrangements. I was invited to chair the meeting, in recognition of the high standing of the UK internationally. I also chaired a further meeting in January 2005 and will report to governments when they assemble in New York in May.

Also internationally, there is perhaps no better example of the theme of 'putting something back' than the Forestry Commission's involvement in the WWF's and IUCN's global Forest Landscape Restoration programme. It is now supported by many governments and international organisations. We were approached because, in addition to our high international standing, we also have nearly 100 years of experience of restoring forest cover. This, and the lessons we learned are highly valued where people are working to restore forests - 'putting something back' – for future generations.

# Walter's Wood

## "Early days"

Walter Start is delighted with progress in the Woodland Heritage sponsored wood, which he planted in November 2003 (and which was reported extensively in last year's journal). He described the 95% uptake of the young trees as "remarkable".

Nevertheless, as the photo shows, Walter is concerned about the dominance of the wheat and grasses on this former agricultural land, and will soon be treating these with "Kerb" granules. If they don't do the trick he will spray them off in the early summer.

Walter is not concerned with the presence of herbaceous weeds at this stage because "they will create shade around the roots of the young oaks and help them through a dry summer – if there is one."

Next autumn, Walter is planning to remove the spiral tree guards because they tend to trap leaf debris around the root collars, which then causes them to get too wet in winter. "They will have done their job by then."



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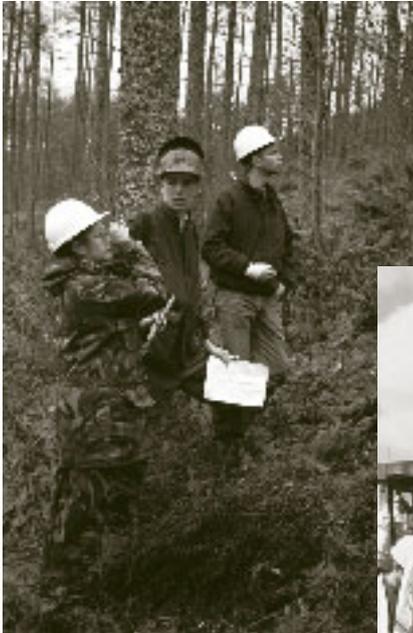
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# A unique educational environment for a unique group of young people!

*National School of Forestry, Newton Rigg*



◀ *Three first year students developing skills in woodland survey. Within the first week of classes, students are in the field observing nature and learning how to use survey equipment.*



▲ *Looking to the skyline to determine the topographic exposure of a site. This skill is an essential component of the windthrow hazard classification (WHC).*

*Forestry students inspecting a harvester head. An understanding of the machinery and its limitations is essential when planning and managing a commercial harvesting operation. ▶*



*Vole guards supplied by Woodland Heritage being wrapped around each seedling in the oak genetics trial plot. ▶*



◀ *Horse logging is increasingly popular. Both the horse and student are learning the ropes, under instruction from Derrick Byas (left). The student in this picture, Chris Seymour, has gone on to establish his own successful contracting business.*



*Using a Global Positioning System (GPS) to locate a permanent sample plot in the forest. The GPS is locking in to six or more satellites to direct the forester to this spot. Foresters increasingly call on such technology to monitor forest health and stand conditions. ▶*



▲ *Field trip to a continuous cover forest at Thirlmere, Cumbria. Silviculture students have to consider the stand structure, appropriate conditions for natural regeneration and the full array of forest operations required on this site.*

Photos and text by Ted Wilson, Senior Lecturer.

# CONTINUOUS COVER FORESTRY

## Training and Education

by Ted Wilson

*Two recent grants from Woodland Heritage have helped in the development of teaching and training initiatives at the National School of Forestry. In this article, Ted Wilson outlines some of the projects currently underway and the future direction of forestry education.*

### Introduction

The National School of Forestry, known widely by its location at Newton Rigg, in Cumbria, has earned a well-deserved reputation for excellence in professional and technical forestry education, stretching back over 40 years. Since 1998, the school has been part of the University of Central Lancashire, and with this change has come a greater emphasis on graduate, postgraduate and research provision. Our objective in the department is to target areas, such as continuous cover forestry and hardwood tree improvement, which are of current relevance to both the forest conservation movement and the forestry industry. Applied research and technology transfer are additional, and unique, priorities in our mission to help develop forestry practice in Britain and beyond. Thanks to financial support from Woodland Heritage we have managed to take forward a number of projects that integrate learning, teaching and research.

### New Directions

For several years the National School of Forestry has been developing a new range of courses and training opportunities. This has come about in response to changes in the education and forestry sectors. The School now offers an unparalleled range of courses, from short training courses in forestry skills, such as chainsaw and tree climbing, all the way through to the PhD in Forestry. The most popular courses are the part-time and full-time Foundation Degree (FDSc) and BSc (honours) in forestry. Students are looking for more tailor-made qualifications and so joint honours and combined courses with game and wildlife management, or recreation management are increasingly attractive. This gives our students more responsibility for choices and options, helping them achieve their own goals and ambitions. The majority of our students are looking for management and technical positions in conservation, government, or commercial areas of

forestry. Newton Rigg, therefore, offers a unique educational environment where skills, academic training and work experience all go hand-in-hand to give our students a competitive edge in the job market.

### Continuous Cover Forestry

Since 2002, the National School of Forestry has been developing a programme of professional and continuing education courses. So far, we have delivered courses in ancient tree management, native woodland conservation, and management of rare and endangered plants. Much of this work has been undertaken in partnership with other agencies or organisations. High on our list of priorities is the need to develop our capacity for training in continuous cover forestry. We realise that this must be done both for our current full-time and part-time



*Jon Murray (BSc Forestry student) uses a Biltmore stick to measure diameter on a large Douglas fir, as part of a project on stand dynamics in continuous cover forests.*

students, just entering the forestry profession, and for those already established in their forestry careers. Woodland Heritage has been instrumental in supporting the following initiatives:

- 1. Certificate in Continuous Cover Forestry.** This new qualification will be the first of its type in an English university. It is designed to complement the work of organisations such as the Continuous Cover Forestry Group who have been instrumental in hosting and delivering workshops on CCF for many years. The course will last for approximately 4 days and will include both theoretical and practical exercises. First delivery is planned for 2005, subject to a successful review and validation within the university.
- 2. Survey of Professional Forestry opinions about CCF.** In winter/spring 2004 Peter Wood undertook a timely survey of professional foresters' opinions about CCF. This was the first survey of its type, specifically looking at what foresters perceived CCF to be about, what are some of the key elements in CCF management. Significantly, the project also investigated the perceived barriers and training needs for CCF in Britain. The target group for the survey were all foresters, mostly with over 20 years' experience in professional practice. Peter wrote up and successfully defended his work for his BSc (Honours) dissertation. The full results of this work are currently being written up for publication in the Quarterly Journal of Forestry. When asked to define the key components of CCF, the majority of respondents identified the philosophy of maintaining a continuous forest cover on the site and the need to sustain a diverse stand structure as being the defining concepts. Natural regeneration was seen as an important aspect of CCF systems, but was also an area perceived to be in need of more training and research. Other findings highlighted the general enthusiasm for CCF management in many parts of the country, and for a very wide range of species and forest types.
- 3. CCF Workshop.** On 12 October 2004 we organised a CCF workshop. The theme was "Monitoring transformation" and was based at Wythop Woods, part of the Forestry Commission North Lakes CCF Trial Area. Gary Kerr, from Forest Research, introduced a new software package that is designed as a decision-support tool for transforming stands to CCF. Jon Bates and Gareth Browning, of the Forestry Commission, provided access to high quality Sitka spruce and Douglas fir stands for demonstrating the monitoring procedure. Rik Pakenham provided much appreciated insights from the private sector. This successful event was over-subscribed and will now form the template for a series of "roadshows"

throughout 2005, as part of an emerging partnership between the Forestry Commission and the National School of Forestry.

- 4. Teaching and Learning.** In addition to the above projects, we are developing our own educational software and training expertise. Some aspects of this were piloted in November 2004. A report on inventory techniques, co-authored with two students, will be published in early 2005.

## And Finally ...

The future of forestry education is a common subject for debate at the present time. Making forestry an attractive career, providing an enlightened educational environment and nurturing the next generation of foresters is very much a shared responsibility. New ideas about continuous cover forests are part of the evolution of the woodland landscape in Britain, now and for the foreseeable future. Thanks to Woodland Heritage, and a spirit of partnership, we are embracing the challenges with enthusiasm and vigour.

**Ted Wilson is Senior Lecturer in Silviculture at the National School of Forestry. He can be reached at [erwilson@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:erwilson@uclan.ac.uk) or 01772 894165.**

**Website: [www.forestry.org.uk](http://www.forestry.org.uk)** ■

# Forestry

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**FORESTRY**

# Bog Oak

Farmers and landowners in the East Anglian Fens – and their counterparts in Leyland, Lancashire – often unearth this extraordinary timber in the course of their work. They will be heartened to know that there is an increasing market out there, as furniture makers see this as a viable timber.

Carbon dating work shows that the English Bog Oak is between 2000 and 5000 years old – that in Ireland is sometimes found to be over 7000 years old!

The theory is that the trees became swamped by rising water levels caused by climate change. The interaction of the tannins in both the oak and the soil caused the black effect which is so prized. If owners of bog oak timber would like to be put in touch with furniture makers, then they should contact the W.C.F.M. with details.

*With thanks to Ian Tyers of Dendro Labs in Sheffield for his guidance.*

***\*W.C.F.M., Painter's Hall, 9 Little Trinity Lane, London EC4V 2DB.***



*The Worshipful  
Company of  
Furniture Makers\**

# Roman Oak



Craftsmen in Ipswich are working on a massive table made from oak more than 2,000 years old. The table is being made in a cabinet-makers' workshop, using oak which the owner claims was cut from a tree seeded in 150BC, and felled in 63AD.

Dendrochronologists (specialists in dating wood), suggest the tree was felled in London.

For 2,000 years Thames silt and gravel protected the oak timbers of London's first Roman port, sealing and preserving them. Now they have emerged with beautiful contrasting colours. ■

# The Solar Wood Drying Kiln

by Tino Rawnsley

This spring we realised a long held ambition to build a functional and efficient Solar Kiln.

Following much research, a trip to Wisconsin to see Jim Birkemeier's great kilns, and interminable (it seemed) wrangling with planners we finally did it.

A huge thank you to all those who helped, with encouragement, labour, knowledge and financially, including Jim Birkemeier, Working Woodlands, **Woodland Heritage**, SW Forest, SWARD, Cornwall County Council and Duchy of Cornwall Woodlands.



*The Pencarrow Beech butt on the Wood-Mizer saw.*

Over the winter, with the stalwart help of a trusty band of volunteers and the invaluable assistance of ace shipwright Fran Browne, who kept the figures and measurements clear in his head, we made a start, while I ran around like a headless chicken organising materials and equipment.

We cleared the ground and laid the concrete base in late November and apart from a couple of hairy nights wrestling polystyrene insulation in a full gale (the site is pretty exposed) the build went swiftly. The solar collector was covered and we were ready to load our first charge by mid February, a mixed bag of species, Ash, Oak, Beech, Sycamore and Cherry. The Spring was dry and sunny and by mid May we were able to open up the chamber and we were delighted to find that we had an average moisture content of less than 10% (starting out at 22%mc +).

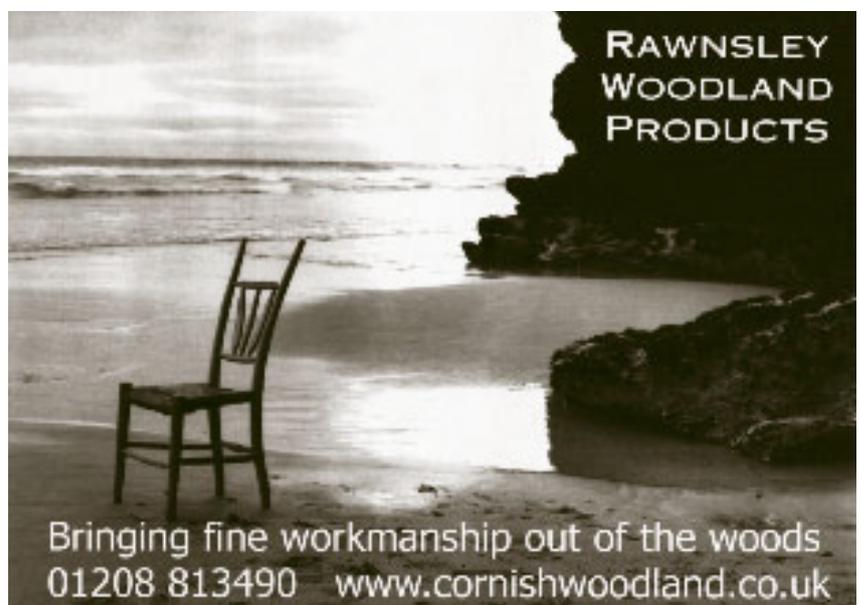


***The Kiln really worked! The wood was dry, stable, and well behaved with a lot less degrade than expected.***

Much of the Ash from this load was used for a large staircase by local joiner David Hutchins. David was very happy with the wood and is usually first to check out what's in the kiln loads we have had since then.

Our next load again had a mix of species including some 1/4 sawn Turkey Oak, which although notorious for moving as it dries, has stayed flat and stable. We also dried Holly, Ash, Poplar and plenty of Beech, much of it from a magnificent tree from the Pencarrow Estate. This yielded board after board of splendid coloured wood, streaked with rich tans and chocolate flames.

So come and have a look before it all gets snapped up. ■



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# Colin Milburn

## *A success story for Woodland Heritage*

**H**ereford is where this all started, training with Mike Abbott in Clissett Wood in 2000, with much appreciated support from Woodland Heritage.

Then, after finishing my apprenticeship with Tino Rawnsley in Cornwall, I set up my own business in 2002. The romance of green woodwork has evolved rapidly into realism as I figure out how to make a living doing what I love most.

***The commitment to using traditional techniques, local resources and craftspeople so that money on projects is spent locally, is close to my heart and I have been trying to put it into practice.***

Individual green wood furniture commissions led to making 3 oak benches for the new Redruth Mental Health Facility. I used one oak tree, which had been struck by lightning and would otherwise only have had a firewood value. From being able to extract, mill and prepare the timber myself using my horse and Tino's wood-mizer, I increased the value of that tree 10 fold.

A steel security fence was going to be erected around the hospital. One of the architects asked if I could make a wooden fence, which would be as secure, but aesthetically more pleasing and a less hostile environment for the patients. I engaged a

small team to help me do this. The fence was 110 metres long and 2.5 metres high with vertically lapped larch/western red cedar boards, a sweet chestnut shingle roof and 8 oak doors.

***In 2003 I undertook a study tour to Northern Spain with support from SWARD to research their woodland management and traditional carpentry skills. The regional government have a commitment to using indigenous timber sourced from within a 50 mile radius. There was a willingness to teach youngsters through a serious apprenticeship scheme and by using the promotion of traditional crafts as a magnet for tourism to benefit the local economy, there is sustainable employment for the woodworkers. It was an inspiration to see what they were achieving and very useful to compare notes with other carpenters.***

I have made a large oak bench for the main entrance to the new Liskeard Community Hospital. I based my design on St Piran's flag, using blackened oak and ash with a carved inscription in Cornish. I asked the architect of the new building if the panels on the hospital walls were local timber and he replied: "Yes, they are from Jewsons."

I talked to him about what was available through local woodlands and he asked me to make a timber-



*Timber frame,  
Shevishayes barn.*

framed bike shelter/bus stop for the hospital. James Lovekin, a highly skilled timber-framer, worked with me on this and we used locally sourced larch for the frame with cedar panels.

***Tino supplied his FSC certified western red cedar shingles for the roof which were secured with oak pegs.***

The large construction firms use mostly imported timber. It has been very rewarding to increase their awareness of local timber and its applications. Many people visit these hospitals and there has been a lot of positive feedback to the pieces I have made. ***I also initiated a feature on green woodwork for the local BBC "Inside Out" programme which, along with some horse-logging demonstrations with my horse Elvis, has sparked a lot of interest in our work.***

With James, I worked on a 40 ft x 20 ft green oak frame for a traditional cob barn renovation in Devon for the Duchy of Cornwall. The timber came from thinnings on one of the Duchy's forestry blocks in Hereford, it was milled by Mr J Tomms here in Cornwall, was prepared and erected using traditional skills and has subsequently been thatched.

All these projects were prepared in the workshops on the farm where I live. During these years, we have settled into the farm and there are now two young Milburns to raise as well as a (hopefully) expanding herd of Traditional Hereford cattle with the arrival of "Postman" the Bull last week.

I have been able to offer William Gilchrist an apprenticeship with support from the Job Centre and the Silvanus Trust. I was pleased to be able to pass on to him some of the opportunities that Mike and Tino afforded me.

***Most recently, I have acquired a small glebe woodland of mixed oak, beech and ash here in North Cornwall. I'm thinking long and hard about the management plan for the wood and my work. I don't want to mass produce furniture, nor do I want to become a construction company. I've learned first hand how managing bigger projects can distance you from the core skills of working with the wood.***

What I most want is time – time to be in the woods, tending the trees, working with Elvis harvesting the timber and crafting it into furniture and structures that are both practical and beautiful. Yet time is such a precious commodity.



*Bus shelter/bike shed, Liskeard.*

Our world is a long way from Adam Bede, where the life of a green woodworker was an integral part of a community and when a simpler, slower existence was possible.

To survive today, the skills have to be applied in different contexts. I recently attended a course at Tate St Ives for "Arts in Health" and after working on the hospital projects, this is one area that I would like to further develop.

I've also attended some of the Small Woods Association's meetings which have been very helpful. It was great to see Peter Goodwin (WH) at one of their events in Cornwall recently.

***The original inspiration that I got from Mike and Tino continues to keep me going when times are hard. A rhythm of work across the year is emerging as I integrate the different things I have learned to make a sustainable living from a small woodland.***

Right now, I am doing some work for English Nature on the management of the SSSI sites on Bodmin Moor in order to supplement the green woodwork and support my family.

***I've grown up amidst some of the most ancient coppiced woodlands of the Celtic kingdom. Above all, I want to look after them for future generations to work and enjoy.*** ■

*Colin Milburn*



*Elvis.*

# Association of Pole Lathe Turners

**K**entwell Hall in the rolling Suffolk Countryside was the setting for the 2004 get together of the APT (Association of Pole Lathe Turners), when over 160 members came together for a packed event.

*As has been seen previously in this Journal, Pole lathe turning and the whole sector of greenwood crafts has seen a resurgence in the last decade and pole lathe turners, burdle makers and rustic woodworkers are now a regular sight at most country shows. They can even be seen amongst the machinery stands at conventional woodworking shows.*

The APT was founded 13 years ago in order to revive the traditional skills and use of the pole lathe. Since then it has seen a huge upsurge in popularity and membership currently stands at 560 throughout Britain with a few overseas members from as far away as New Zealand and Australia as well as Germany, France and Belgium. Members receive the *Bodgers Gazette* 4 times a year; a magazine full of useful tips, techniques and reports on what is going on in the world of greenwood crafts. Once a year the APT holds its AGM over a weekend when all members are invited to attend two days of



*Jim Steele (left) won the Woodland Heritage trophy for his Yew wood rocking chair and was presented with the trophy by last year's winners.*

workshops, competitions, demonstrations and share ideas. This annual event moves around the country to different venues and locations.

In 2004, during a packed event, there were workshops on rush seating techniques, arbortecing seats, bowl and goblet turning, as well as talks on the problems of wood boring insects and the history of woodware.

**Robin Wood**, Britain's only professional pole lathe bowl turner, gave an amazing demonstration of turning a ladle on the lathe, definitely not for the faint hearted as the handle swung by within an inch or two of his fingers. Robin has studied the history of English wood ware in great depth and is currently researching and writing a book on the subject.

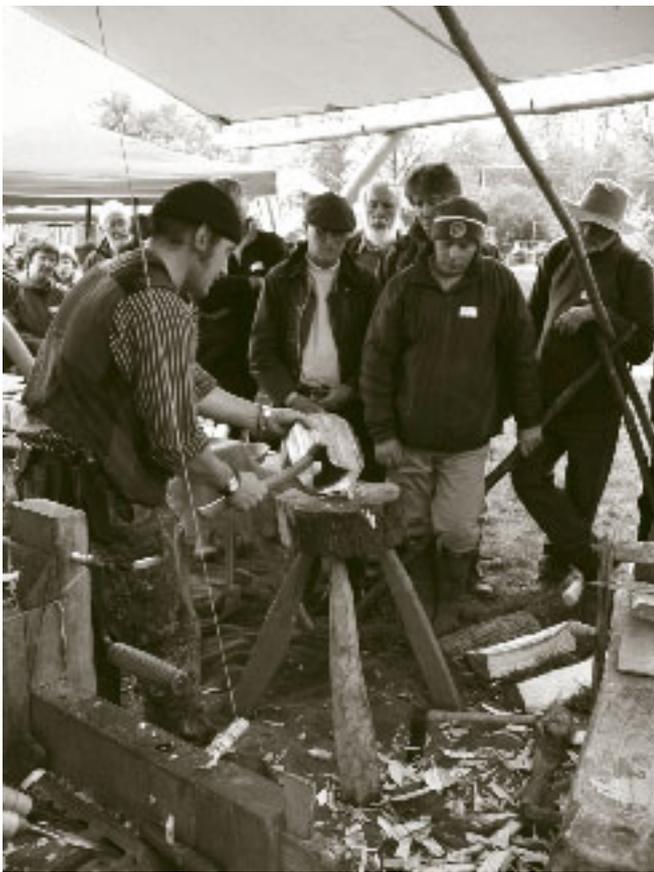
**Nick Abbott** caused a few mutterings by demonstrating how to dish a chair seat using an Arbortec, something that would once have been considered heresy among the non-power tool brigade only a few years ago. This highly effective tool certainly takes the "back-break" out of adzing seat bottoms. Was this the moment the APT came of age by embracing technology? Shock Horror!

*The Woodland Heritage prize for the Best in Show was won by Warwickshire, Windsor chair maker Jim Steele for his amazing rocking chair in Yew. This was the fifth year that Woodland Heritage have sponsored this event and Jim was presented with the trophy by last year's joint winners Mikhail Schutte from Germany and Pete Wood (as featured in last year's journal).*

As always there was an extensive exhibition of work from members, chairs, stools and a host of other turned work proving that you don't have to have a fancy, costly electric lathe to produce top quality turnery.

However, the question always asked of the APT is why a band of enthusiastic pedal powered wood turners are known as Bodgers? Well the answer is that no one is quite sure. The origin of the term 'bodger' is unclear, but it is said by some to come from the similarities to the word 'badger' – as the bodger worked out in the woods in rough conditions, was often unshaven and like the animal, emerged from the woods at dusk.

The modern and rather derogatory use of the word 'bodge' may well derive from the fact that many bodgers made only chair legs, which were then taken away to be assembled in the chair factories of High Wycombe. Thus, the bodger only partly made the chair, hence a 'bodged job' of



*Ben Orford shows how to prepare a bowl blank for the pole lathe.*

something not being fully done.

But then again, 'Bottcher' was a German word for a cooper, or travelling craftsman so the origin may lie somewhere in our shared Germanic language.

***Despite the corruption of languages, the true bodger was (and still is) a highly skilled craftsman, able to make a range of round wooden components. Traditionally he led a nomadic life travelling from site to site working a wood before moving on. The cut, or coppiced wood was then left to regenerate until such a time as the regrowth would yield another crop of useable timber.***

The true bodgers of old are an extinct breed belonging to an age long gone, and rightly so, for the romantic image of the noble craftsman making his living in the woods is far removed from the poverty and drudgery of a real bodger's life. Paid a pittance for his work, he had to work literally from dawn till dusk to earn the meagrest of livings, whilst the thousands of chair legs he turned out were bought by the Wycombe chair factories and made into Windsor style chairs which went all over the Empire.

The majority of today's APT members are hobbyists and interested amateurs. However, a few are professional chair makers, but unlike the original

bodgers who made only the legs and rails, today's makers build the entire chair. The pole lathe is one of those beautifully pieces of technology with a mesmerising action, so simple yet effective. The APT is almost solely responsible for keeping this craft alive and introducing a significant piece of our history to a new generation. How many of those electric turners of today are aware that their heritage comes from the men and women who turned their wares by leg power alone.

***For more information about the APT contact: Richard Charles, Hillock Cottage, Buckland Common, Tring, Herts, HP23 6NQ. Email [charles@hillockcottage.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:charles@hillockcottage.fsnet.co.uk) [www.bodgers.org.uk](http://www.bodgers.org.uk)***

The APT committee would like to thank Woodland Heritage for its continued support and for sponsoring the Annual Best in Show prize at the AGM. ■

*(Adapted from an article that first appeared in Traditional Woodworking magazine and the Bodgers Gazette)*

***Wade Muggleton***



*There's a guy turns down the APT swears he's Elvis.*

# A training day with Esmond Harris

## — Ferry Farm, Calstock —

by Dr Tim Cuttler

**O**n Saturday 30th October 2004 I accompanied Peter Goodwin to a meeting of the Small Woods Association. This meeting was held at Ferry Farm Woods near Calstock in Cornwall. I usually need a fairly good reason to drive 700 miles in one day (Cornwall and back from Suffolk) but this meeting more than justified the effort. This turned out to be one of the finest autumn days of 2004.

We were the guests of Esmond Harris (erstwhile director of the Royal Forestry Society) and his wife,

*Bill Durlacher from Essex admires the view of Morwelham Quay across the river from Ferry Farm.*



Jeanette. It was such a pleasure to be surrounded by such enthusiastic and knowledgeable foresters. Esmond told us how his farm was purchased as a retirement project in 1987 but at least 5 years elapsed before he commenced work on his woodland. We thus had the benefit of seeing a decade of work that he initiated and has carried out since then.

Ferry Farm is located on the west side of the Tamar Valley and the woodland is largely planted on the valley escarpment. The house and surrounding farmland are within an 'S' bend of the River Tamar, and on the other side one can see Morwelham Quay, which is a historic copper mining site.

Esmond first described his objectives in woodland management, which he set out in 1994 and has tried to adhere to ever since. His primary objective is to manage the woodlands for the combined aims of wood production and wildlife enhancement. Secondly he has attempted to improve the appearance and landscape value of the woodlands, which is made even more important by the fact that large numbers of visitors to Morwelham Quay can see his landscape across the river. He has tried to increase the area of woodland by planting trees on what was old farmland, which has meant establishing

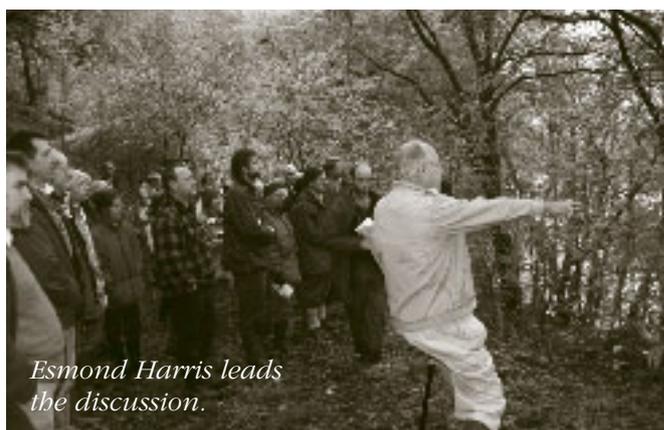
new areas of trees on previously cultivated land and/or pasture. His project has provided work for local people, both skilled and unskilled.

His wife is a very experienced biologist and zoologist, who has maintained records of all the wildlife species seen on the farm over the last decade, noting especially unusual species and new arrivals which they hope might have arrived because of his conservation practices. Lastly, he has taken great trouble to make his woodland available for educational purposes to demonstrate to all interested parties his principles of both woodland and wildlife conservation management.

***Esmond is lucky in that the Tamar Valley is probably one of the most favourable places to grow trees in Britain. He emphasised its primary characteristics of shelter, moisture and warmth, which those of us living in East Anglia must envy!***

His main interest is with oak, although he has planted many other species on his land as well. Our walk to the first compartment, on the slopes overlooking the Tamar River, took us past a very special and extremely rare 150 year old *Ulmus laevis*, of which there are very few in the country. We were to see another magnificent specimen later on in the afternoon on the other side of the river. Both are showing strong resistance to Dutch elm disease. For me this tree was one of the highlights of the day.

Those of us who have had difficulty in distinguishing sessile from pedunculate oak have no difficulties any more. Esmond was able to demonstrate the very clear differences in the two varieties of these trees, as both are well established on his land, planted approximately 1920. He pointed out the wildlife value of these older trees as oaks



*Esmond Harris leads the discussion.*

harbour many insects, although he pointed out later in the day that willows come close in this respect, a fact which few of us knew. We moved on to an area where much more light was available and we immediately noticed the improved growth of young oak trees.

Higher up the hill we came to a most impressive stand of *Nothofagus procera (nervosa)* and *Japanese larch*. The conifer nurse trees had been largely removed after 8-9 years, allowing the *Nothofagus* to go on, hopefully up to 12 metres or so. This is a faster rate of growth than any other broad leaved tree, except poplar. Esmond pointed out the problems of tree extraction on difficult terrain and how this site had suffered compaction from heavy machinery which had led to a certain amount of losses. Other plots had been cleared by horsedrawn equipment, so avoiding this compaction, and were generally considered much more successful with fewer related losses.

We had an interesting discussion about early pruning of *walnuts* to try and improve their growth characteristics. Further on down the valley we were able to compare the growth of both European and American black walnuts, and the absence of frost in the Tamar valley is certainly an important factor in the successful establishment of these species. We also discussed how walnuts seem to respond better in their early years if interplanted with nurse trees such as Western red cedar.

The next two plantations were both uplifting and upsetting. A superb mix of sessile oak, chestnut, cherry and *Nothofagus obliqua* looked magnificent until we noticed the severe grey squirrel damage that was already occurring on trees that are not more than a decade old. *Nothofagus obliqua* seems to be more vulnerable than its relative that we had seen before lunch. Higher up the same side of the valley we saw a compartment of American conifers, consisting of Douglas fir/Grand fir/Red cedar/Coast redwood/Western hemlock. These had all established extremely well and the redwoods are now most impressive. However, to see grey squirrel damage already on these trees is so upsetting and one



*Coast redwood suffering grey squirrel damage.*

wonders at the end of the day if it is really worth all the effort to establish these magnificent plantations in the United Kingdom when, just as the trees are looking established after their first decade, they are to be destroyed by the relentless attack of the grey squirrel. ***If there was one single message which I came away with from the Tamar Valley on 30th October, it is that no effort should be spared to eliminate the grey squirrel from our country, if we wish to grow trees of any economic importance.***

The last compartment that we looked at was an 11 year old plantation of European walnut and ash with some Norway spruce in between. The walnut had grown fantastically well with these nurse trees, and it was interesting to note the poor form of the ash which had been planted from very good provenance but Esmond pointed out that the ash is very promiscuous and one cannot guarantee its paternity!

***What a wonderful day it was! I cannot remember ever learning quite so much about forestry in such a short space of time. Esmond proved to be an amazing source of information on both forestry and wildlife. He has carried out an enormous amount of work in 10 years on this small farm, and it was a privilege to visit it. I only pray that the European Squirrel Initiative can bring about the total removal of grey squirrels from this country in time to allow his planting efforts to be seen and enjoyed by future generations.***



*Esmond Harris (centre) discusses his stand of *Nothofagus procera (nervosa)**

# The Irish Hurley stick market

## *An early cash return?*

**F**ew people realise that most of the ash used in the manufacture of Hurleys is imported into Ireland. We simply do not have enough native ash of the right age and size to suit this market, so Coillte import ash in order to keep our local manufacturers supplied.

Without this service, many of our local traditional Hurley manufacturers would be unable to source enough material to keep their workshops going and we would then be reliant on imported, finished Hurleys. If this were to happen we would have lost yet another valuable traditional craft and a further vital source of employment and income in rural Ireland.

Soon however, we will be self sufficient in ash as thousands of acres have been planted under the current afforestation scheme. Many of these plantations are approaching the stage when suitable butts can be harvested and certainly within 10 years this market should be fully supplied with home grown timber.

***The man in charge of ensuring that there is a continuous supply of Hurley butts available is Mick Power of Coillte and I met him recently in Kilkenny where he answered all those questions that everyone with young ash is asking.***

Mick said that the first query he normally gets is “How much is a Hurley butt worth?” You cannot really give a simple answer to this as it is a bit like asking how much is a bullock worth. It all depends on size, quality and finish. Hurley butts are very much the same. They come in many shapes and sizes. In some cases it might only be possible to use



*Mick O'Brien, RDS farm forestry judge on left with Mick Power, Coillte, holding an ash butt ready for hurley manufacture.*



*Top of an ash butt showing how it is sawn to make full use of the timber.*

half the butt. The optimum size would be 28 cm DBH or diameter at breast height. Breast height is taken to be 1.3m from ground level so it is easy to check the suitability of standing trees. The butt that Mick showed me was 19cm DBH and when sawn contained enough planks for six top quality Hurley's and a further three suitable for juvenile grade.

***When pressed to put a value on an average Hurley butt, Mick suggested that the one we were looking at would probably be a reasonable example of an average butt and sawn was worth app €42. Taking away the expenses of harvesting, transport and sawing would leave a price to the grower of app €20. This may not seem like much and I have heard higher figures quoted, but if you***

***have a well grown ash plantation, somewhere between year 15 and year 20 you will have a harvest of perhaps 500 butts per hectare as part of the thinnings. This is equal to €10,000 and is tax free with the final crop still standing!***

Any ash tree with a straight stem of 1.3m will be suitable for use in Hurley manufacture so most ash has the potential to make it for this market. Many plantations have fast growing trees that have forked low down and these would make perfect Hurley butts. It is advisable when carrying out first thinning to remember that a fast growing tree with abundant top branches that is forked at perhaps 2m is probably the one that will reach the Hurley market first. This tree should be marked for retention as a Hurley butt and can be harvested during the second or third thinning.

***Mick said that the market for Hurley butts has grown by 30% in recent years and is continuing to expand. There have been fears expressed that the market would be flooded once the current crop of ash reached the required size. Mick feels however that while the price may well drop somewhat it will still give a good return for quality material. The game of Hurley is increasing in popularity and happily, our sportsmen continue to break sticks enthusiastically.***

Other materials have been tried but none have the resilience of ash or the flexibility to absorb the shocks received during a game. It is nice to know that here is a broadleaved crop that can produce some cash early in its life and like everything else we grow, the well managed crop will produce the best and earliest returns.

But watch out for thieves. There are organised gangs of thieves operating around Ireland and they



*Mick Power with the ash butt spread out, following sawing.*



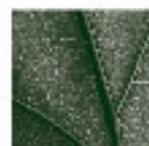
*The finished article. Note the sweep of the grain in the blank, which is essential for the strength and flexibility of the stick.*

can move in and take large quantities of valuable butts in one night.

This is a serious problem and like the theft of Christmas trees, vigilance is the only answer with frequent visits to the woods and proper locks and chains kept on gates.

I know I will be keeping a close eye on my own ash from now on. Even €5000 per hectare would be something to look forward to and indeed, I would be happy with half that.

**Joe Barry, "Crann"**



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# HULLS MILL FARM WOODLANDS

*Near Halstead, Essex*

**P**eter and Laurence Gagen, the owners, have just begun their first thinnings 11 years after they began afforesting their grazing land.

*This involves the removal of about 80% of the Red Alder which had been introduced at the suggestion of WH Trustee Steele Haughton. This species, together with further Oak and Ash, were planted to thicken up the plantation and help draw the young saplings towards the light. HERE IS THEIR REPORT :*

The Red Alders have now finished doing their useful job because they are now “smothering – not mothering” the adjacent Oak and Ash with their fast growth rate. Fortunately, the Alder logs are making firewood (after seasoning) and we have sold some of this in log nets at the farm gate during our Christmas tree sales. The Red Alder is not native to this area and we have noted – with some relief – that there is very little, if any, regrowth from the stumps, unlike our Grey Alder. This may also account for the fact that most of the 7-8 year old Red Alders have been dying off during the past couple of years.



*Chris Gagen (left) and Laurence mark the stumps where the red alders were felled.*

## Provenance

Whilst walking through our young wood it becomes ever more apparent that the provenance of the plants – the *Quercus Robur*, or Common Oak, in particular – is very important. In our original planting of 1993, a number of the Oaks have such poor apical dominance that they are nothing better than Gooseberry bushes! Perfect for pheasants to sit under and for pigeons to nest in...

Nearly all the Oaks used for beating up (some of which were supplied by Woodland Heritage from carefully sourced East Anglian parents) are of good form and have positive leaders. Lesson learned –



*Laurence prunes a Woodland Heritage oak alongside two poor specimens.*

check the quality of the plants you are buying. Bad youngsters will never make good trees in maturity.

## Pruning

Our pruning goes on as before, with the end in sight for the first formative trimming. Our preferred method is to select the apically dominant leader, then “tip” prune most of the other branches by between a quarter and a third, about 40% of the way down the trunk – then leaving a clean butt length to the ground. In this way, all the growing energy will be focussed on sending the lead shoot upwards and encouraging straightness in the trunk.

## Hornets

Whilst pruning our Ash in late September, we noticed that the upper parts of the trees – from 5 feet upwards – had been debarked, in some cases, quite severely. Then we noticed Hornets chewing the tender young bark – presumably for use in their



*Vertical lines of hornet damage.*

nest-building. Peter Goodwin told us that his friend, Bill Durlacher, had experienced the same problem on his similarly-aged Ash only 20 miles away on the edge of the Stour valley!

Bill reports: "The damage was first observed on 12 year old ash trees when pruning in the winter of 2001/02. The ash trees are planted throughout the wood, but damage was seen only at one end, adjacent to a small copse. On showing a damaged leader to a gamekeeper friend, without hesitation he suggested the cause was hornet damage, having observed such damage being done by hornets to a willow tree. In the summer of 2002 hornets were seen gnawing on the ash trees and then flying off in the direction of the old copse there, to presumably, extend their nest.

Damage was particularly bad in the summer of 2003, but very much less noticeable in 2004.



*Girdling by hornets.*



*The astonishing growth of hybrid walnuts.*

## Walnuts

The growth rates of Woodland Heritage's trial plot of Black Walnuts, planted by Gabriel Hemery in February 2000, are nothing short of astonishing! Being a south-east facing plot, sheltered on the northern and western sides by hawthorn hedging, the plot is quite a suntrap. Four different types of Walnut, with five nurse tree and shrub species, were planted. The growth of the ***Nigra x Regia NG23*** hybrid has been exceptional in only five years.



# Better Trees, Better Profits

*Jo Clark and Gabriel Hemery present the highlights of a field day held at the Northmoor Trust's Forestry Research Centre.*

In March 2004, The Royal Forestry Society hosted a Conference *Better Trees, Better Profits*, to promote genetic and silvicultural aspects of growing quality hardwoods, held at RASE Stoneleigh (Hemery and Savill, 2004). ***This highly successful Conference was followed up by a field visit in June to the Northmoor Trust's Forestry Research Centre, where many of the points discussed could be viewed in practice in the numerous field trials.***

The Northmoor Trust (NMT) hosts one of the largest collections of forestry trials in the UK, promoting the principles of sustainable forestry through applied research and demonstration. The key objective of the Centre is to promote the role of the forestry industry within a sustainable countryside by developing genetically improved planting stock through selection and breeding, demonstrating the multiple benefits from managing woodlands in a sustainable fashion, and developing and promoting viable solutions for forestry and woodland in the face of environmental change. These were continual themes throughout the field day.

***The Northmoor Trust has received significant support for many of its trials from Woodland Heritage since the inception of its Forestry Research Centre (FRC) in 1992.*** The Northmoor Trust works with many partner organisations in the establishment of trials, most notably, Forest Research (FR) and East Malling Research (EMR), in conjunction with the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme (BIHIP). During the field day, many of the researchers from these organisations presented their work, and lively discussion followed.

## Silviculture and genetics

The tour started with a look at some mixed species



*Gabriel Hemery (NMT) presents a Woodland Heritage funded experiment, testing nitrogen application rates on walnut growth.*

planting. One mixture including **Wild Cherry**, *Prunus avium*, led to a lively debate about the species. It was explained that wild cherry exists in two forms, true wild cherry suitable for timber production and sweet cherry that has been bred for its low, heavy branching pattern, suitable for fruit production for jam. Until recently, much of our planting stock came from Europe with no assurance of quality and suitability for timber production in the UK. The main points raised here were that, at present, there is no assurance of the genetic quality of much of our planting stock, and that good silvicultural practice is always necessary to produce a valuable timber crop.

***Karen Russell presented the work of EMR in providing the industry with genuine wild cherry that is of good growth and habit, and possesses some resistance to bacterial canker. She explained that ten clones were released in 2000 under the trade name Wildstar™.***

Tree breeding is a key component of improving the quality of our hardwood resource. The ash breeding seedling orchard (BSO) was the first trial established at the FRC in 1993, in partnership with BIHIP. Based on 36 families selected across the UK and replicated at four sites, this trial is almost reaching its conclusion. A BSO combines the testing phase (the progeny trial) with the production stage (the seed orchard) to reduce the time needed to release tested, improved seed to the market.

Provenance trials are a useful tool used to identify the best seed sources for production in the UK. The NMT hosts an ash and a beech provenance trial for FR. In this ash trial, European provenances showed greatest vigour, but British provenances showed better form.

***Ash from Yorkshire had better than average vigour, reasonable form and is already producing seed, whilst trees from Romania, although exhibiting greater vigour were of poor form.***

Much of our planting stock today comes from eastern Europe and is poorly adapted to growth in the UK, being frost sensitive and thus prone to forking.

## Climate change and sustainability

The international beech provenance trial, established in 1999, comprises 23 provenances from across the range of beech, and is replicated at many sites across Europe. There is increasing interest in beech in the light of climate change. Climate change models described by Mark Broadmeadow from FR predict a 3-5°C increase in summer temperatures, a decrease in summer rainfall and a 30% increase in winter rainfall

in the south east by the end of this century, making flooding a serious possibility across Britain. Under these environmental conditions, it is likely that beech will become increasingly difficult to grow on a productive scale and new provenances need to be introduced to ensure the continuation of this species in to the next century. Work is being conducted to identify those provenances that will perform well in the British climate today and for the future.

### Walnut – for the future?

In view of climate change, it is becoming increasingly evident that, as foresters, we need to consider not only alternative provenances for our native species, but also productive non-native species. An obvious choice is walnut, both common (*Juglans regia*) and black (*J. nigra*). Much work has been carried out by the NMT, investigating establishment techniques for walnut and on provenance selection.

**Walnut has traditionally been viewed as somewhat difficult to establish. Gabriel Hemery presented another of the Woodland Heritage funded trials, testing a novel way of growing walnut.** This utilises a series of nitrogen-fixing trees and shrubs as nurse species to provide an ideal environment to promote walnut establishment. Early results show increased growth of walnut with excellent form.

In conclusion, the day was a great success with over 70 delegates attending and contributing to the discussion. The Northmoor Trust are indebted to



*The novel Silvo-poultry experiment at the Northmoor Trust visited by delegates. These birds are free to roam in new farm woodland. The birds are housed in mobile "Arks" (visible above) powered by solar and wind energy.*

Woodland Heritage for their continued support, both for various experiments now established at the FRC and for promoting our common goal of a sustainable forestry industry for tomorrow.

### References

Hemery, G.E. and Savill, P.S., 2004. Better Trees, Better Profits. RFS Conference Report. *Quarterly Journal of Forestry* **98** No. 3. ■



**Ireland was once almost entirely covered with woodland. It is now the least wooded country in Europe.**

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# Are you disinfecting your pruning saws?

**I**t has only just occurred to me that enthusiastic high pruning of my 100 year old oaks may be spreading disease. I am certainly no scientist, but one or two recent events have made me stop and question my methods. Let me set the scene for you:

My Suffolk woodland is about 8 acres and boasts a marvellous stand of Pedunculate Oak – in fact more than 90% of the mature trees are this species. This sheer imbalance has always worried me and I am desperately trying to convert the woodland into one of mixed species and younger age groups. But having experienced virtual warfare 7 years ago – when I was granted a Felling Licence to thin out 140 poor oaks in order to improve the whole crop – when a few local villagers unwisely decided to call the Police, English Nature, Suffolk Wildlife Trust etc. I must patiently persuade and educate these “stakeholders” all over again.

***They are suspicious of the red tapes which I have used to identify trees which are showing signs of Oak Dieback.*** This unsightly disease, as readers probably know, is readily identified by horrid bleeding cankers running down the bark and serious defoliation of the crown. These oaks look really sickly. After David Rose of Forest Research had kindly inspected the oaks in 2000 and confirmed my worst fears, I immediately marked all the “victims” and began keeping regular photographic records.

But because I am one of those sad foresters who like tidy woods, I put in for a Felling Licence for a sanitation felling of the 15 affected trees in the summer of 2001. (I was determined not to have a repeat of Dutch Elm Disease proportions.) The villagers actually approved of my plans because they had come to admire and walk the wood in large numbers (“Walkers Welcome” signs did the trick!).

When it came to mid-summer, I began to prepare for the selection felling by marking out precisely where I did NOT want the trees to drop. To my huge relief, the infected trees were definitely recovering, the cankers were drying up and the foliage was much greener and more vigorous (albeit in the form of epicormic shoots from top to bottom), but there were clear signs of life – not death. So I withdrew the Felling Application immediately and wrote to the Parish council, telling them the good news. I was now ‘The Local Hero’.

In 2002 I was confident that most of the 15 oaks were strong enough to have some pruning of these epicormic shoots, so I tackled the job at the usual time for such operations:

***1st intervention at end of June; 2nd intervention in August before lignification.***

The oaks looked so much better with their new haircuts! On the way out of the wood, I also pruned a big oak which I must have somehow missed years ago. That was given ‘The Treatment’ too.

In 2003 that last oak looked a bit forlorn, but I put it down to a variety of innocent reasons and proceeded to keep it free of epicormics anyway. I also high pruned another oak which stood close to it – and a few more in the vicinity because when you are a “tidy” forester, you just can’t stop making the place even tidier! That was my downfall.

***You’ve guessed it. Yes, all those recent high prunings have spread Oak Dieback to precisely those trees. It is a tragic sight.***

My theory is that I have spread the disease on the blades of my high pruning saws. Should they have been dipped in disinfectant after each tree had been worked on? ■

***Peter Goodwin***

Editor: Readers’ views would be welcomed.



◀ *Hyauchi 4200 high pruning saw from Silky Fox Saws.*

# Red Lodge Wood

## A Retirement Refuge

*Should you be blessed with good health, then life is your oyster, and even better if you should be able to retire from work at the same time. So it was in 1987 that I started to concentrate the mind on the next stage of my life.*

I have always loved the countryside, so why not try and improve it by putting something back? Perhaps I could, at the same time, make an investment for future generations of my family. So, as the enthusiasm grew, I started looking for a field or two, which would be suited to growing trees. Much to my surprise – and good fortune – a farm in the East Midlands, not far from my home, came on the open market.

The meadowland was divided into small parcels and put out to tender. I was fortunate enough to buy about 40 acres which included 10 acres of disused railway land (part cutting and part steep embankment) which has proved to be most suitable for wildlife. It is now my conservation area.

It was at this time that the Forestry Commission at Corby came to my rescue with information booklets and a site visit which enabled me to draw up a development plan. Tree selection was determined by the length of time the various species would take to mature. I would plant at 3m x 3m spacings, using 750mm tubes. So I reckoned that the Hornbeam would mature first at 50 years, followed by the Ash (which was to act as the nurse crop), at 80 years – to leave a pure Oak woodland. It was not considered necessary to plan for a thinning programme with the trees at 3 metre spacings. As far as I was concerned, that was all the hard work done and I would sit back and admire my trees progress...

***That notion was soon dispelled when I was introduced to Peter Goodwin of Woodland Heritage! He came to inspect the plantations when they were 5 years old. His first question was "Why haven't you started***



*My Silky high pruning saw in operation.*

***formative pruning?" I explained that with my policy, pruning would not be necessary as trees naturally fill in the gaps within the rows and the nurse trees would encourage them to grow straight and true. "This is not reality" said Peter. "If you want to grow quality timber, then you must prune regularly – at least every 3-4 years. Because you have no hope of catching up with this work yourself, I will arrange for Woodland Heritage to have the work carried out professionally on the first two plantations, at no expense to yourself."***

I am greatly indebted to this gesture and am certain that my trees have greatly improved by this action – furthermore, all the trees are now monitored on a regular basis to ensure that I am not falling behind on these instructions.

Next winter will see the start of the final pruning – at up to 6 metres high – and I am beginning to select certain trees for their first thinning.



*High pruning January 2005.*

***Two years ago the grey squirrels moved in and began to bark-strip the Hornbeam (most which are now dying). The Forestry Commission have proved most helpful in fighting this problem through their Woodland Grant Scheme. Although the battle is far from won, at least the damage has been reduced for the time being.***

In conclusion, my trees are now progressing very satisfactorily, largely thanks to the help from so many knowledgeable people – and a more recognised retirement may be possible when the final pruning has been done!

**David Duxbury**

## Greek hardwood timber project

by Charlotte Dawson, MICFor, Economics Projects Manager, The Silvanus Trust

The first thing I have learned is that Greek forestry workers have certain key characteristics in common with their English counterparts – they are all a thoroughly miserable lot! (I have also learned that there isn't a word in Greek for "depression" – this does not stop them suffering from it!). Many problems here are familiar to us in the UK:

- An ageing workforce, with forestry attracting few young people, it being considered hard work and poorly paid.
- Problems of terrain that make motor manual work in Cornwall look like a kiddies' picnic. Last week, I was looking at a beech thinning site in the mountains that was so steep, I resorted to going down it backwards!
- Seasonal issues – winter weather being more extreme than the UK; (you really can't work in a Greek downpour) and summer being punishingly hot.

In these circumstances finding out what the Greeks are doing right is a bit like drawing teeth – they much prefer to have a good moan!

**Main points of interest** so far gleaned are however:

1. **The firewood market** is exceptionally buoyant. Very high volume firewood sales, estimated at 1500% higher than in the UK – i.e. over 50 times more per capita, as Greece has a population of approx. ten million – at very variable prices ranging to €30-€100/m<sup>3</sup> delivered in (raw vol. measurement). (The cost of living/wages in Greece is lower than the UK, but if you reckon on €1 being equivalent to £1, it gives a fair comparison).



Firewood is sold green, thus reducing pressure on storage and avoids tying up capital. (I don't suggest we try this in the UK). The income support from firewood sales is vital for other forest products.

2. **Other small diameter products**, (e.g. bean poles, round wood for fencing, rustic buildings etc.), are gleaned from thinning work. Far more timber generally is extracted than from a UK thinning operation. (Fire hazard from brush is an environmental incentive to do this).

*I find these 2 points interesting because:*

**Conventional wisdom in forestry has always been that small diameter products are uneconomic. It seems to me that the Greeks, by getting maximum value out of a thinning operation, may have found a valuable approach. Many costs of harvesting are fixed – e.g. transport of forwarder etc. to site. Further, it probably does not take significantly more time to brush a branch to make a bean pole/rustic pole, than to cross cut it to waste.**

The forest floor after thinning operations is cleaner and the forest more quickly accessible for recreation, (and other non-timber uses).

3. **Co-operative working.**

Workers are organised within teams within a fairly small geographical area. These teams work on a co-operative basis, with cutters either being multi-skilled and working the timber themselves in unfavourable weather, or cutting specifically for another member of the co-operative. Foresters I have talked to have been shocked that we do not have such a system in the UK, and have asked me how the cutters produce the correct spec. for the end use. (The answer is, of course, that we waste a huge amount of valuable but non standard timber).

For example, *pinus halepensis* has a habit of losing the leading shoot; (yes, I know this is a softwood example, but bear with me). When a side shoot takes over as the leader, this produces a curved stem. These curved timbers are especially value for boat building and are sorted out by the cutters.

*This point is interesting because:*

**The same skills could be applied to hardwood timbers, especially oak, where curved pieces are valuable for use in greenwood buildings.** I know few cutters, (and indeed foresters, who would

be doing the marking), in England, with sufficient knowledge of the potential end uses, to be able to select out such stems, which would normally be dismissed as useless rubbish and chucked on the firewood heap.

Short length timber – cutters also select out short saw logs. Customers often do not need 2m sawn lengths. Local small scale processing enables recovery of good quality smaller lengths outside the standard sizes prescribed by the mills.

*This is also a training issue.*

## Marketing:

The Greeks don't understand marketing in the same way as the English, but they have VERY strong sense of region:

They wish to buy local products wherever possible; (our landlord told us off for not buying the local brand of milk). This applies equally to timber – your carpenter can tell you where his piece of chestnut has come from and it is an issue of regional pride – this is something we need to build on far harder in the UK – not is it certified from Scandinavia (or even Indonesia) but is it from Cornwall?!

***Making things easy for the customer:***

***The fireplace shop is next door to a firewood merchant – not difficult, but we don't do it in the UK.***

The “koinotita” – this is the most wonderful institution. Basically a local council, it knows everyone and makes it its business to oil the wheels of the supply chain. Thus, if you want a wood product you can go to the koinotita and they will

put you in touch with someone (or in the case of firewood, arrange delivery for you). This is an Agenda 21 issue and is something that could be taken up by local councils in the UK. It's all very well district councils having a local purchasing policy, but they could have double the impact if they acted as an information hub for local products as well.

If Local Authorities are for some legal reason unable to perform this role, Enterprise Agencies would be well placed to step in. Most EAs are partly funded by the relevant Local Authority for business promotion work.

There is a general understanding that wood is good – this is something that has been forgotten in the UK and we need to work on.

Finally, I'm afraid, a dig at the forestry industry – use of sawn hardwood in construction is huge here. This ranges from rough wood – used as supplementary scaffolding, shuttering etc. – to medium quality hardwood (mainly chestnut, but also oak) for beams (where stress grading isn't an issue – e.g. in sheds, conservatories etc.), door frames, doors etc. In the UK, most of this would be imported pressure-treated softwood. The insistence of the forestry and construction industries that hardwood is a quality product (when often it is not) has priced us out of the market. ***We do not seem to have the concept of an interim value product; (hardwood is used either for firewood, or for high quality joinery, but little in between). We look to add a lot of value, not some value – but low quality sawn timber is more valuable than firewood, if less valuable than high quality. This is something we need to look at.***



# Profile of a Modern Day Windsor Chair Maker

**The 2004 winner of the Woodland Heritage trophy for Best in Show at the Association of Pole Lathe Turners (APT) annual show was Warwickshire chair maker Jim Steele with his stunning Yew wood rocker. Wade Muggleton went along to meet him and find out what life is like as a modern day Windsor chair maker.**

Jim has been turning out Windsor chairs in the small Warwickshire town of Southam for the past 13 years. Following a career in the carpet trade, Jim was able to turn his passion for Windsor chairs into a business. He currently makes up to 35 chairs a year and has a 15 month waiting list.

Jim is purely a Windsor chair maker, so what is it about this one particular style that so fascinates him? "For me it is the ultimate chair as far as the human frame goes. It is ergonomically perfectly suited in terms of comfort and sitting position," says Jim. "A good Windsor must invite you to sit in it, from across the room it must say 'come and sit in me'."

The chair making year is a carefully planned operation for Jim. In the winter months he harvests his timber for the year ahead and assembles the orders, whilst in the summer he is out and about at shows demonstrating the pole lathe, chair making and marketing his chairs to potential customers.

But far from just whittling away to amuse the audience, such is his planning, that while demonstrating, he is turning out legs, rails and sticks for the orders he has to make. The turned items are then bundled together and labelled as to which chair they will become. They are then hung in the rafters of his workshop in hessian sacks where they dry over the summer months.

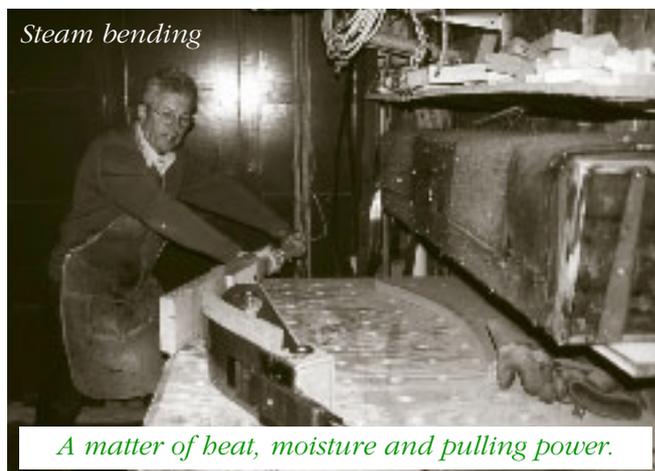
**Jim and his mate Jeff harvest all their own ash from a wood 4 miles down the road where they have a free reign from the landowner to select individual trees. So in early winter they spend a few days felling and extracting suitable ash trees for the orders for the year ahead. This ethos of using material that is as locally sourced as possible is something that underpins Jim's work.**

For each chair, when complete, comes with a booklet of provenance that includes a few photos of how the chair was made and a map and grid reference of where the tree grew from which it was

made. The concept of this story behind the chair is something Jim passionately believes in. At all stages customers are encouraged to visit the workshop to see their chair being made and when complete he makes a point, wherever possible, of delivering the finished chair. "I like to see where it is going to live and the faces of the people who are going to own it." After all they are not just purchasing a chair, it's a Jim Steele Chair; an individual hand made item, an 'Heirloom of Tomorrow', as Jim has written on the side of his van.

Jim's approach to marketing is an interesting one "I have never sold anything in my life." He claims, "All I do is give people information on how they might spend their money, the chairs actually sell themselves". As far as a customer profile goes, he reckons it is impossible to say. Jim's chairs have gone to America, Japan and to famous figures, but also to council flats and suburban semi's; all equally important according to Jim, who thinks the target market ought to be between 30 and 45 year olds, as younger people have neither the money, or interest, whilst the older generations tend to have a house full of furniture (chairs) already.

**True to the traditions, all Jim's turning is done on the pole lathe, there is no electric lathe lurking in the corner of his workshop. He has no preferred aspect of chair making and claims it is the whole process that is the thrill of the challenge, "Making Windsor chairs is extremely demanding, you have got to keep thinking all the time, it constantly keeps you on your toes" he says.**



*A matter of heat, moisture and pulling power.*



*Drilling the holes in the elm seat.*

Jim reckons that including the time taken to fell the trees, extract the timber, haul it back to the workshop, make all the components, assemble, oil, wax and deliver the chair it takes on average about 12 days each. When looked at like this, a six, or seven hundred pound price tag seems reasonable in the extreme.

### Steam Bending

If one thing sums up Windsor chair making in terms of technique it is steam bending, something Jim has a boundless enthusiasm for. His bending operation is the result of countless experiments, modifications and time spent making jigs and formas. It remains something of a black art. On some occasions we get virtually all the bends to work, on other occasions up to 50% are useless when either the grain, or structural tensions in the timber just won't play the game. This is something that has to be lived with, for as Jim says what makes Windsors so appealing is "The character of the timber, for that is what makes them all different."

Jim cites Bernard Cotton's book **'The English Regional Chair'** as the gospel for his inspiration, with an array of historic examples it is a wealth of ideas and subtle design differences that can be

copied, or re-adapted to suit Jim's own style of Windsor.

For several years Jim has been heavily involved in the APT (The Association of Pole Lathe Turners), serving as a committee member and in 2004 as Chairman. He firmly believes that for these skills to be carried on it is essential that knowledge and skills are shared, passed on and although he relies upon making and selling Windsors for a living, he would love more people to do likewise.

*When pushed to define why he is so passionate about the subject he says "What I like about Windsor Chairs is that they are all so different, no one makes the same chair, each maker takes the principle design and makes it their own". Something Jim is adamant he will be doing for years to come. "I will fall off the end of the lathe one day," he says. "There is no way I am giving up, I'll keep on making Windsors to the end."*

*Adapted from an Article originally published in Traditional Woodworking magazine.*

**Wade Muggleton**



*Final waxing of a child's chair.*

# CHAIRS 2004

## A unique exhibition at Westonbirt

Of all furniture, chairs are perhaps the most varied, personal and taken for granted items. They have crept into our lives, our language and culture in a way that perhaps no other single item of furniture has.

We all use a range of them on a daily basis, every home has several, from palatial thrones to the humble stool, from the Windsor to Chippendale and Hepplewhite, they have a deep cultural significance, as well as fulfilling the basic function of providing something to sit on.

We have the 'Chairman' of a board, people 'chair' meetings, Kings and Queens have 'thrones' – the highest form of 'chair'. Chairs have a deep ceremonial, as well as functional significance.

*So when Chloe Darling brought together 170 chair makers and designers to Westonbirt Arboretum over the May Bank Holiday weekend for Chairs 2004, it was to celebrate and share the cultural and physical diversity of chairs and seating.*

The event was attended by makers from 11 different countries, as well as the length and breadth of the British Isles and with so many diverse backgrounds and interests, the exhibition of chairs

was perhaps unique. 120 chairs were displayed simply in the order that their makers had booked in. No attempt was made to classify, or group them, resulting in a true display of the sheer diversity of the approach to seating. As makers and designers we have interpreted the need to sit down in hundreds of forms, from the simple to the outrageously ornate, from the hand crafted to the mass produced.

There were a series of lectures from a prestigious line up of speakers covering three subject areas, Provenance, Design and Inspirations.

**Dr Bill Cotton**, author of 'The English Regional Chair', gave the opening lecture on Provenance of Country chairs, a field, which until 30 or so years was largely overlooked and little studied. Yet in many ways the lives and stories of those who made this simple furniture for ordinary people are every bit as fascinating as the well-recorded history of the classical schools of furniture design. Bill Cotton has studied this field in great detail. He has a fantastic ability to give us an insight into the lives and daily goings on of the mostly rural men and women who made the vast range of regional chairs with which we are all familiar. 'The English Regional Chair' is perhaps the most in depth work on the subject

**Philip Koomen**, designer of the much publicised pond life benches, delivered a rather different interpretation of the subject by suggesting that the provenance of the present and future should be of an environmental and social nature. Philip felt that we should judge a piece of furniture by the impact it is making and use it has on the environment. We should also strive, as makers, to use local timber from sustainably managed forests (echoing the Woodland Heritage ethos); use eco friendly and low energy methods and that these facts should be the story, or provenance of a piece.

**Scott Swank**, Director of the Shaker community



*The Cotswold Antique Dealers Association put on a display of historic chairs.*

of New Hampshire gave a fascinating talk on the Shaker design, its simplicity and enduring appeal, and how his studies have identified unique and subtle differences, which were the signatures of the different Shaker communities in 17th century America. A combination of a strict religious doctrine and a sense of minimalism along with that of functionality gave birth to what has become an iconic design. Shaker 'style' furniture is still immensely popular today and sells across the world.

**Anthony Buxton** (historian and lecturer) provided an insight into chair design from William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement up to the present day. Particularly looking at how fashion and world events drove the design process through a series of reactionary and influential periods.

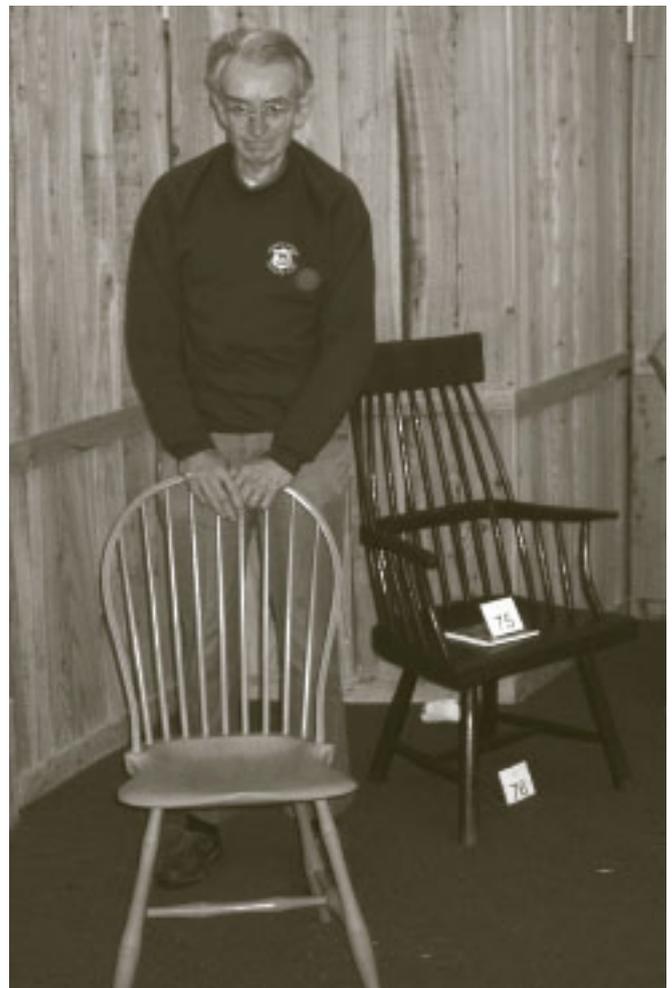
Whilst we makers were sat intently listening to the speakers and discussing the matters at hand, the public poured in to look at the exhibition of chairs large and small, modern and traditional, from the high conventional to the weird and wacky.

When it came to the subject of inspiration the speakers were again highly varied in their work and outlook on life. **Mike Dunbar** from Hampton, New Hampshire, author and maker of 'American Windsor Chairs', now runs the Windsor Institute, a school of Windsor chair making which has several hundred students going through its classes every year. Mike spoke on the subject of success and told his own story of how he fell in love with an old Windsor chair he bought in a yard sale in 1971 and how this inspired him to go onto make professionally for 10 years before giving up to write and teach others. His message was full of American self-belief and being driven by a desire to succeed.

**Woodland Heritage member, Gudrun Leitz who now lives in Herefordshire, teaches green wood and makes very organic pieces of furniture inspired by nature and the wood which she owns and from which she harvests most of her timber. For Gudrun, inspiration is about that link to the natural world, about making pieces that reflect the beauty and diversity of trees and the woodland environment.**

Antique chairs were well represented by a fine display from **The Cotswold Art & Antique Dealers Association** with a collection of chairs through the ages and it was interesting to see the way that these traditional designs had influenced some of the makers. Whilst many of us were drawing from the past and time-tested and much-loved styles, others broke with convention to explore modernism in design.

There were some lovely examples of traditional designs based on antique originals, proving the enduring appeal of many traditional designs.



*American Windsor maker Dave Sawyer with his delicate bow back side chair in a blue milk paint finish.*

**American Windsor maker Dave Sawyer** came over for the event and exhibited one of his fine American Windsors, proving the interesting divergence in style that developed in the US Windsor, as opposed to its traditional English cousin.

On the afternoon of the Bank Holiday Monday, 43 of the exhibition chairs, including all those by the overseas makers, were auctioned off with prices ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand pounds, proving that not only do styles and tastes vary, but so do prices. When it comes to chairs there really is something for all tastes, price ranges and practical uses.

Whilst this was a one-off event it seemed so be highly successful and greatly enjoyed by those that attended. If it is possible, it may be repeated at some point in the future to celebrate all things – chairs, timber and woodworking.

**Wade Muggleton**

*(adapted from a piece that first appeared in Antiques Diary magazine)*

# OUR FIELD WEEKEND

*“He marched them up to the top of the hill and he marched them down again”*

***This sums up our weekend in Gloucestershire! A high level of fitness and endurance was needed as our members were put through their paces by Major Tom Wills on Saturday – then John Workman on Sunday, with a “grand finale” at The Westonbirt Arboretum (which contained no hills, thank goodness).***

55 members from as far afield as Scotland, Isle of Wight, East Anglia and Kent gathered together on a beautiful sunny day in the delightful village of Miserden with its limestone houses set around the main house where the Estate plays an integral part.



Major Wills the owner, gave us a brief history of the estate which is situated 750 feet above sea level on the west side of the Roman road. It comprises 3,000 acres in all, of which 630 acres is woodland on steep ground. The woodlands were clear-felled for the war effort – the timber being used in the production of Mosquito aircraft. As a result all the woodlands are post 1945.

The woodlands are managed by two foresters – Roly Holtham (the resident) and Geoff Huggett (the consultant). Roly has just completed 46 years in forestry – having first come to the estate as a 15 year old.

We were then taken – at breakneck pace – into the beautiful River Frome valley, close to which were some outstanding mature conifers. A group of Silver Firs (one of which hosted a lofty Buzzard’s nest) were much admired and their naturally regenerated “children” gave us hope for the future.

Close by were some magnificent Douglas Firs planted about 1875, with one “monster” of 412 cubic feet, reaching up to the sky with its healthy leader signalling in triumph. The underground springs and

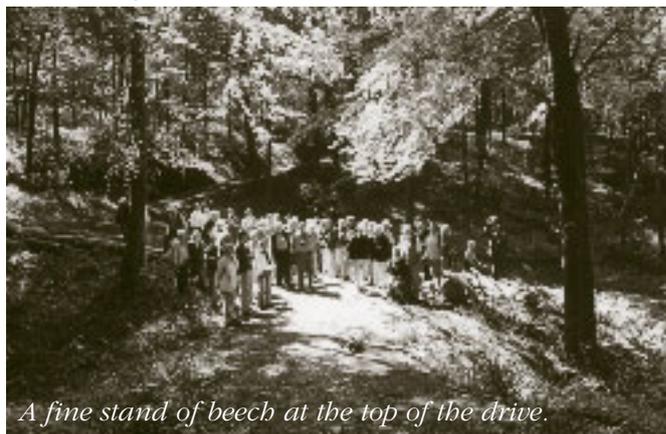
micro-climate here produce superb Norway Spruce, Coast Redwoods and Wellingtonia (more 185 feet monsters) which had somehow survived the Ministry Inspectors for the War Effort.

Peter Goodwin introduced Arwyn Morgan from South Wales who is studying Redwood Groves in Britain (*see W.H. Journal No.8*) and a lively discussion on micro-climate followed. ***Trustee, David Rice, spotted plenty of natural regeneration of mixed ages and with the potential for true Continuous Cover Forestry in this area.***

Then we set off up the hill, along the main drive, to see the progress of thinning the beech woodlands in order to produce final crop trees. Recent work was very professional with minimal damage and neat piles of timber awaiting the timber trucks. David Taylor commented: “I had my office in Miserden for many years and always walked home through this spot, so I have watched it develop from being a pretty nondescript plantation which has benefited from many judicious thinnings. Now it begins to look rather nice doesn’t it? The quality is here and there is going to be a nice crop of Beech – which you wouldn’t have reckoned on 10-15 years ago”.

Asked by Trustee Roger Venables about the long term future of the wood, Major Wills put it like this “Because it’s on the drive, it’s probably looked after rather better than some of the plantations that are further on and I think it will hopefully be kept under continuous cover”.

He added: “I think as a private woodland owner one just has to be the eternal optimist, sticking to management that one knows is right – and hope that one is going to get a reasonably good return on the rotation at the end of the day that will encourage natural regeneration to come on, whatever it is. But I



*A fine stand of beech at the top of the drive.*

# - GLOUCESTERSHIRE

would hope by enriching with planting where trees are required, by filling in gaps, we would keep it under continuous cover.”

Onwards and upwards we went, to see Ash, Sycamore and Beech growing high on a hillside upon a rich seam of Fuller’s Earth, producing better growth rates than in other places on the Estate. **Major Wills was proud of his seed source which had produced consistently high grade Sycamore and Beech for the veneer trade over the years.**

At the top of the hill we were allowed to get our breath (believe it or not) under a 630 year old Oak. This stood on the edge of a field which played host to Bee and Butterfly Orchids – only allowed to be grazed by sheep at the end of the summer.

At the promise of “it’s downhill from here” we found new vigour and arrived back at the lakeside where the Ram Pump was shown to us – an 18th century piece of engineering which was used to pump lake water up to the house and garden.



*David Taylor (left) and Trustee David Rice (centre) at Fuller’s Earth.*

“This American invasive alien mammal”. Bede reassured us that the work of ESI was focusing on GS elimination by immuno-contraception. He warned us that European forests were under threat from GS colonies which were already at the foothills of the Italian Alps.

If this bad news did not dampen spirits, then the realisation that our picnic lunches were now some 500 ft above us in the village, was another challenge to be faced in the hot weather ... Most of us made it in the end, although there were some dark mutterings about the “downhill from here” quote.

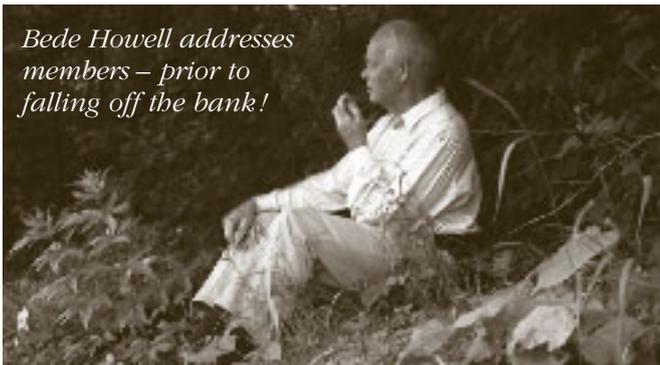
**At the conclusion of the morning session Lewis Scott warmly thanked Major Wills and his staff for giving us**

**such a wonderful tour. Miserden Estate must surely be one of the most beautiful places in the county of Gloucestershire and it had left us all with the deep impression that it was in the most capable and caring hands.**

After a picnic lunch we held our Annual General Meeting, followed by a demonstration of mobile log sawing by the Dean Oak Cooperative – using the portable Trekkasaw which Woodland Heritage had provided a few months earlier.

We were then free to walk back (downhill) into the village to see the small workshop of Mark Mitchell who uses timber from the estate for much of his commissions. Finally, we were kindly allowed to tour the magnificent gardens of Miserden House which really set the seal on a memorable day.

*Bede Howell addresses members – prior to falling off the bank!*



We then examined a 15 year old Beech which had been severely attacked by grey squirrels and which had no future at all. **The question of whether controlling grey squirrels was effective or not, was dealt with most convincingly by Bede Howell (past President of the R.F.S. and committee member of the recently formed European Grey Squirrel Initiative).** He talked us through the problems of GS damage and led us to the inevitable conclusion that the beautiful Miserden Estate woodlands were at dire risk of destruction by



*Lewis presents Major Tom Wills with his Yew Bowl.*

# Day 2 – Workmans

*John Workman O.B.E. has spent a lifetime managing the woods and has lived on the edge of them since 1949. He has worked for the National Trust as Forestry Advisor for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. He is a past President of The Royal Forestry Society.*

*Woodland Heritage members were privileged to have been invited to meet John in his wood.*

Woods have graced the Sheepscombe Valley for centuries and were part of the Ebworth Estate bought in 1901 by John Workman's grandfather. In 1976 the wood was recognised as a National Nature Reserve and named "Workman's Wood" in honour of the family. It comprises 120 hectares of steep sided valleys with slopes of varying gradient and aspect, ranging in altitude from 150 to 250 metres above sea level.

John told us that in 1989 the 400 acres of beech woodland and 600 acres of agricultural land was given to the National Trust. The old Ebworth Centre adjoins the woodlands and was established as a centre for woodland study, management and practical work. English Nature and the Forestry Department of the Royal Agricultural College are involved with the venture.

*John warned us that he had prepared a tight schedule which necessitated keeping up with him at all times - and promptly roared off downhill in his electric buggy ...*

Fortunately, the forestry roads were in superb condition so our party of 70 were determined not to miss anything. Above and below us stood hundreds upon hundreds of superb Beech trees – of excellent form and vigour. The bigger trees averaged 200 years – and some were still looking healthy when nearly 300 years old.

## Provenance

We paused to discuss the provenance of these trees – and to catch our breath. John said: "This area I planted in 1956 when the rabbits had all gone. There were 3 rows of beech, 5 feet apart. The plants came from Kingscote, my father's other estate where there are many marvellous Beech – and these were dug up from the regeneration and planted here. I suspect that the original trees came from the famous Forêt de Soigne on the outskirts of Brussels, so we might go back and get some more from that source." John

asked us to note that there had been no high pruning because the shaded environment and close spacing will do the job naturally.

## Grey Squirrels

When asked about potential damage by Grey Squirrels, John told us: "I have a fairly firm conviction that if trees are growing slowly, the squirrels will find them less attractive. Now it's a fact that however close the trees are, the height growth is not affected – so by having them close you still get the height position. Obviously, I must now open them up to allow the crowns to expand and hope that they will then be beyond serious squirrel wreckage."

## The Past Resource

Trustee, Roger Venables recalled coming to these woods in his twenties as a young timber buyer. "I came with my uncle and 'his' father to learn how to negotiate the annual log prices. My uncle had just bought a new Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire and it was snowing heavily at the time. The roads were steep and treacherous and we finally arrived at Mr. Workman's house and began the negotiations. The

*I am trying to pretend that this is a National Nature Reserve, not a production forest. It is a compromise. I don't want it to be a well-spaced boring plantation and if and when I ever write my life story, the title will be CONTROLLED NEGLECT.*



*John addresses our members with the electric buggy at the ready.*

# Wood, Ebworth



*A typical stem of a 200-year-old beech.*

more it snowed, the more Mr. Workman Senior thought that Sidney Venables is bound to give in on the price and want to head home! But Sidney, being the sort of man he was, thought I'll stay here all day to get this price lower if I can! And so we sat there



humming and ha-ing – drinking endless cups of coffee (and other things) for about three hours before we left!"

***Roger went on: "The quality of Beech which we drew out of these woods, which we sold to the furniture trade at that time, could match anything and be far superior to a lot which was coming in from the continent. The thing that finished us was that we couldn't get enough volume to sustain the market that we had found and so we were forced to import a lot from Europe where there was continuity."***

John raced ahead again, leaving some of us in need of oxygen, only to brake suddenly. "Here you will see a fallen Beech and an Oak. One of the things that irritate me about naturalists is that they insist that I leave them there for the sake of the insects. Well, okay, they are welcome to that, but I would much rather remove the valuable part to make decent furniture."

## Fuelwood

He accelerated away again and finally stopped to point out a flat standing where there once had been a charcoal hearth. "This simply indicates that for hundreds of years these woods were used for producing Beech charcoal. Everyone thinks that was only for smelting, it wasn't, it was mostly for household cooking and heating. People say that the Beech woods around High Wycombe developed because of the furniture industry – but it was the other way round – the furniture industry developed around High Wycombe because the market for charcoal for London had collapsed."

## Deer

We gathered ourselves again and followed our relentless Leader to his next stop. "Why I am stopping here is that you will see a lot of tiny little Beech – we shall call them Bonsai trees – twenty years ago the Fallow deer arrived and since then they have simply destroyed everything. All I see is a browsing line. You don't see any young trees at all, whereas 30 years ago the wood was choked with young trees. The Fallow come back each year to feed and they don't kill the young Beech, they just leave enough so that there will be enough for them the next year. Look, there is one that they missed and it got away alright. I could put guards around one or two young trees, but it is a hopeless task – heartbreaking, because a system which has been running for 50 years is now doomed – unless, of course, you get rid of the deer."

## Ash

High above us on a steep slope was a parcel of recently felled Ash, destined for the Irish hurley stick market. We noted that the Irish cutters favoured those stems which had the widest buttresses – in order to produce the special sweep of the traditional stick. It was sad to see that only about 5 feet of each tree had been taken, leaving the rest of the butts and 2nd lengths to find a market which, in these difficult days, is only likely to be firewood. The moral being **GET A HIGH PRICE FOR THE HURLEY STICK PART!**

*\* Editors note : see page 18 for more on the Irish sports market \**

Now admitting that we were on the return leg, our Motorised Leader urged us to keep to his schedule – not easy for those from flat East Anglia who were now experiencing Second Day Mountaineering Pains – but we pressed “onwards and upwards” where John thankfully stopped.

## Natural Regeneration

“Here on the left is all natural regeneration. The wood blew down in 1976, but fortunately the regen was just established and was as good as you could wish for. Below the track we have planted three row strips of Beech and Larch. The Larch have virtually



*John stands beside his sculpture “The Spirit of the Woods”. (Phil Hinton)*



*Trustee Roger Venables presents John Workman with his Burr Yew Bowl.*

all gone, but I have kept the strips to encourage anything that wanted to come – like Ash or Sycamore. Pure Beech is very destructive, nothing grows underneath it except the occasional orchid. Sycamore seeds about very freely and produces very big valuable white timber which is sadly very attractive to grey squirrels. If you leave Sycamore too long it suppresses the Beech, but by leaving it, the squirrels then attack it and leave the Beech! But on the whole I do think that we have controlled the grey squirrels pretty well.”

Closer to Base Camp now, we rested to admire a stand of magnificent Ash on the lower slope. Just around the corner the writer was permitted ‘time off’ to admire (and girth) a fine Oak in an area where the soils gave it best advantage. We saw huge Poplars, then more beautiful Beech before hauling our tortured bodies up the final track – where our Leader calmly waited for us and announced that we were precisely on time!

***It was here at the top of the bill, overlooking the wood, that John had erected an impressive wooden sculpture called “The Spirit Of The Woods” – precisely the words used by Laurie Lee to describe John Workman's influence on the wooded landscape for which he had contributed so much. It had been a memorable tour, conducted by an enthusiastic and highly skilled forester who clearly loved to pass on his knowledge.***

Roger Venables then stepped up to present John with a Burr Yew bowl which had been crafted by our (now famous) member, Richard Chapman. Roger thanked our host for giving us a wonderful morning and went on to say: ***“It has been a tremendous memory for me to come back into your woods after such a long time. The respect we have as a family for the Workman family goes back a very, very long time – and will be echoed by everyone here today.”***

■  
***“Treebugga”***

# *The Finale – Westonbirt*

## The National Arboretum

**W**estonbirt Arboretum is a wonderful world of trees. There are 18,000 of them from all over the world, planted from 1829 to the present day and set within 600 acres of beautifully landscaped Cotswold countryside.

Woodland Heritage members were privileged to be given a guided tour by none other than the Head of Collections, Hugh Angus (right).

Here are some photographs which we hope will illustrate some of the fascinating trees which we discussed with Hugh. He was a Mine of Information, and it was therefore pleasing to present him with a special yew bowl as a token of our thanks.



*The grove of Redwoods.*



*A massive Westonbirt oak.*

# The Dean Oak Co-operative

## use their logsaw to good effect

by Tim Orson

**W**oodland Heritage very generously sponsored The Dean Oak Cooperative in The Forest of Dean to purchase a

**Trekka saw mill.** Having taken delivery of the saw we were immediately aware that we had a lot of work to do setting it up. We were aiming to start milling timber to supply the local market so we needed to prepare the ground ready for the delivery of our first logs. We paid for some ground to be levelled and laid with compacted loose stone which came from a quarry two miles away, so we are adhering to our sustainable principles.

We set the saw up making sure everything was level and secure, and then encountered our first problem. We had taken delivery of 180 oak logs that were due to go for pulping as we thought we could put them to better use. They were only 1800 mm long and averaged 350 mm mid diameter, but even these small logs are very, very heavy. It seems bizarre to think now that we didn't consider how we were going to move the timber that we proposed cutting. Though we are all woodworkers of various persuasions, none of us had any experience of moving anything but planks!

After struggling for a few weeks moving timber by hand, we realised that we would need some mechanical help if we were going to make progress.

**We were already selling all that was cut and more orders were coming in.** Our bank balance was growing steadily, so we started researching

machinery used for moving timber. We were immediately horrified at the cost of even the most beaten up old machines, so we ended up hiring a very old Volvo BM which has been Christened 'Frank the Forks'. We aim to acquire our own machine in time, but that is another story.

We are now able to move logs up to two tons in weight and can move large stacks of timber with ease. **We've been following Peter Goodwin's advice when creating our stacks, ensuring bases are level and sticking is evenly spaced.** We have such steady orders coming in, that we had to start thinking about our future stock. We were being offered trees by people who had heard about the Cooperative.

After a bit of research, we established that our minimum sustainable load is around 25 tonnes, but even this is considered to be not worth bothering with by most timber haulers. We finally made contact with the very helpful Dave Parker. He is the only local contractor we have found who is prepared to visit up to six different locations in order to make up a full 25 tonne lorry load. This included picking up a single cherry tree and root ball that was offered by a local man who had read about the Cooperative in the local paper. This lovely tree was being felled because it had grown too large for its setting and was damaging the neighbour's boundary. It would have ended up as firewood if we had not been able to take it for a better use.

**The Woodland Heritage field day at Miserden was very enjoyable, if a little stressful. We really enjoyed meeting and chatting with members. Everyone was very interested and supportive of what we are trying to achieve.**

We liked demonstrating the saw, but felt that we weren't getting the best out of it. We had only three full days running the Trekka saw prior to taking it out for the demonstration. When we got the saw back to base we discovered that the blade was over tensioned and wasn't running true, also that each blade is slightly different in length and sits in a different position on the drive wheels.



We now tension and align each change of blade with much more care.

***The ash that was cut at Miserden is drying nicely and will be used for a project next year.***

We had decided that another ash butt was far too wet to be milled, so put it aside for cutting later. Just as we had piled the log, up walks Tim Oakes, local coracle maker, musician and story teller. "Have you got any ash" says Tim, "It needs to be very green, in fact the wetter the better". We were about to learn yet another lesson! **Tim Oakes takes up the story:**

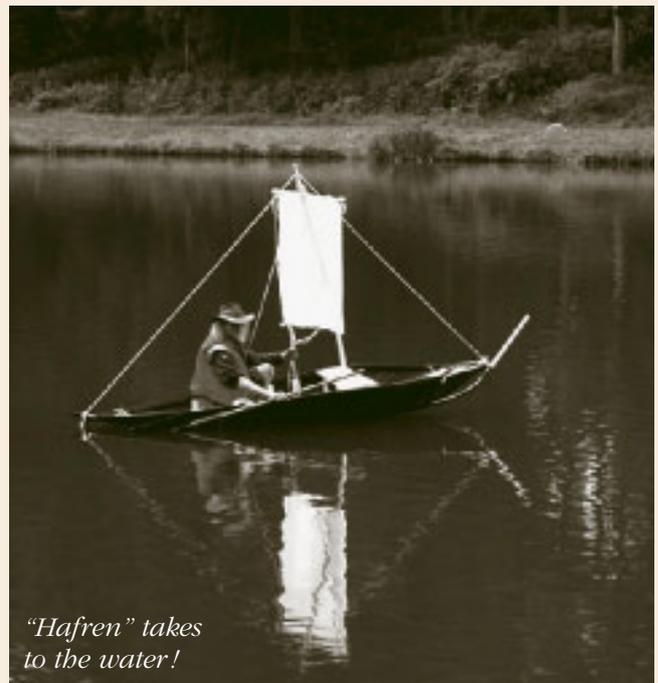
*"Coracles are tiny boats constructed from a basket-like framework, covered in a waterproof skin and are now confined to a few of their traditional rivers in west Wales and on the upper Severn. Coracle history actually goes back into deepest antiquity and there have been claims that they were the real forerunners of planked boats and ships. Rock carvings of long, skin-covered ships are to be found throughout Scandinavia and across the Baltic states. These intriguing carvings clearly show the ships' 'ribs' through the skin covering. Having built numerous coracles of various shapes and sizes over the years, I was very keen for some years to have a go at recreating the boats that were 'set in stone' some 3,000 years ago.*

*Coracle building is a strange art, which starts with the freshly cut 'green' trunk of an ash tree. This has to be split, or sawn down into long, thin laths, which are surprisingly larger than the craft they will eventually make.*

***I paid a visit to The Dean Oak Cooperatives' mill, where the new saw was buzzing away. Over the racket the guys pointed at a great grey shape beside the woodpile. It was a truly massive ash tree-trunk, and seemed to have almost no side branches, or shoots, which cause knots in the timber – knots that are fatal to all watercraft and especially fragile coracles.***

*The log was sawn through into 1 1/2" thick planks, which were then clamped together on edge and put back onto the saw to be cut into 5/8" strips. As they slaved away on midsummer's day, I watched the laths emerging, clear creamy-white with a very soft grain. In other words, just about perfect for some (very) green wood work.*

*First job on getting the laths home, (jokingly referred to as 'wet' by the sawyers) was to give them an overnight soak in the stream at the bottom of my garden. The laths are then laid out on the ground in an interlocked pattern, the proportions of which have to be very accurate, before the protruding ends of the laths are bent upwards to form the bow, stern and sides of the boat. Then a gunwale is fitted. Upsizing the basic coracle building process was not straightforward, and led to some frustrating days. But I stuck to the principles of those prehistoric craft*



*"Hafren" takes to the water!*

*outlined in the rock carvings, while assessing the practical arrangements for my boat along the lines of the Curraghs, still used around the Aran islands off western Ireland. 'Hafren' (the pre-roman name for the River Severn) proved to be a very difficult boat to complete, since the forces involved are far stronger than usual. Eventually the shape began to emerge – and what a shape! Sleek, streamlined and twin-ended, Hafren looked rather like a strange cousin of a modern open Canadian canoe. That is, until her tiny mast and sail was fitted... then she looked like nothing else but a tiny little Viking ship. The design for the rigging came from standard rigs used on all square-sailed ships from prehistoric days up to the end of the sail era with the great tea clippers. The idea was that the forward thwart would take the mast, while I would sit on the rear seat and control both the rigging and the long steering oar. Fitting the external 'strake' was the last task, adding the vital extra 'bowsprit' to her profile. Hafren was complete."*

**Back at the sawmill** – we still have regular orders coming in for timber and are generating enough income to allow us to pay the bills and purchase more logs. As well as supplying timber to customers, we are setting aside planks to dry from each log we cut, so that we accumulate stock. Hopefully this will enable us to increase our income to a point where we will be able to employ someone to operate the mill. The mill is currently operated on a voluntary basis, one day a week on Tuesdays.

***The Dean Oak Cooperative is very grateful for the supply of timber from Miserden and the ongoing enthusiasm and support from Woodland Heritage and its members.*** ■

**Tim Orson**

# Coupe de Grâce

*Fulfilment of the 6th Earl of Bradford's great vision – the Bradford Hutt Forestry Plan – 'to create a mixed species, uneven-aged selection forestry system based on a geometric pattern' was celebrated in June. **David Taylor** joined guests to witness the felling and replanting of the final coupe at Tavistock Woodlands Estate.*

**A** combination of copper and arsenic sounds a lethal botanical cocktail.

However, an area near Tavistock on the borders of Devon and Cornwall, extensively mined for copper – the Victorian mines of Devon Great Consols were, in the 1860s, the world's largest – and then arsenic, is the unlikely setting for a silvicultural experiment which, over the past four decades, has established itself as an exemplar of continuous cover, irregular-managed forest.

The original concept arose from the 6th Earl of Bradford, an enthusiastic forester, who realised the importance of soil protection; indeed he was Chairman of the Soil Association. Armed with a good deal of practical experience with mixed crops and nurse species from Weston Park, his Shropshire Estate, he bought the 140 hectare woodland in 1959, with its mineshafts and its sawmill, to add to his



*Former head forester Phil Hutt.*

active forestry interests.

His objective was to develop a commercial forest which protected the sometimes very steep Devon valleys from erosion by avoiding clearfelling, had an attractive and diverse appearance, and yet was able to take advantage of the potentially very high growth rates achievable by exotic conifers in the warm South West of England.

These favourable growing conditions and an active imagination were not the Earl's only advantages. He needed to turn his concept into a workable

system, and here he looked to the remarkable Phillip Hutt, his head forester. Together they evolved the formalised selection forest which has become known as the Bradford Hutt Plan.

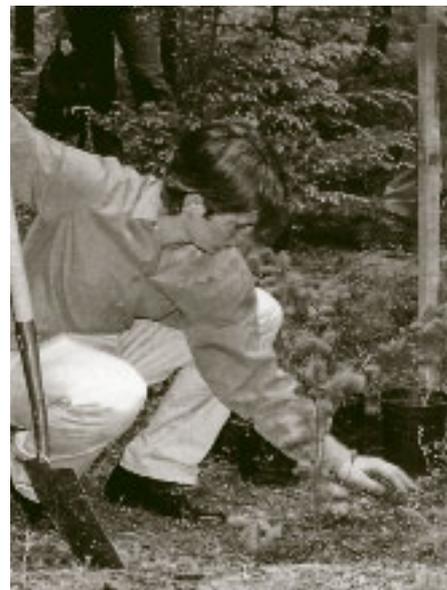
This set out to treat uniform plantations of even-aged larch and pine to irregular stands over a period of some 50 years, the time required to produce



*Viscount Newport, Lord Bradford, forestry manager Mark Snellgrove and retired head forester Phil Hutt with the last tree to be felled under the Bradford Hutt plan are pictured with other guests including WH Trustee Steele Houghton and Esmond Harris (extreme left) who gathered to join in the celebration.*



*The final tree, having been felled, is removed.*



*Viscount Newport, Lord Bradford's son, plants a Douglas Fir*

sawlogs of a size and quality best fitted to local milling capacity.

The forest was divided up into 18m square units (each comprising nine plots and each divided from its neighbour by a timber extraction rack leading to a forest road) around which felling of the existing crop, re-planting, thinning and ultimate final felling progressed in a logical sequence.

Once established, every six years, one 54-year-old tree is harvested from a unit and the other plots thinned as necessary. The bare plot created by felling is then replanted.

***The result is a forest which looks initially pretty random. After a while, the geometry of the plots begins to reveal itself. The overall effect is an open canopy, with a good deal of light falling to the forest floor. This produces a pleasing, diverse, uneven-aged appearance.***

***That such an apparently complex system can have survived and prospered, initially in the face of considerable opposition from the forestry establishment, says a lot for the original concept, and for the skill and persistence of the woodland staff.***

One of the principal ingredients has been the continuity of enthusiasm within the Bradford family. When the 6th Earl died in 1981, the present Lord Bradford carried the scheme forward. This had several unforeseen difficulties, not least was its unsuitability for the favourable Schedule D/Schedule B tax regime that sustained the private sector in the eighties.

Years of wrangling with the Inland Revenue finally produced a workable compromise, just in time for the 1988 Budget abolishing Schedule D!

A second problem was the shade-bearing conifers around which the system was based. Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and the Western Red

Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) were very much the flavour of the times in the fifties and sixties, but by the nineties both had fallen from favour, for poor timber quality, and for their unfortunate habit of regenerating far too freely.

The heavy crowns of the Hemlock also tended to take up too much room in the plots, and Douglas fir is now steadily replacing both in current new plantings.

Lord Bradford, speaking in early June at an informal celebration of the felling and replanting of the last plot, Coupe 9 of the original Bradford Hutt plan, paid tribute to the imagination of the plan's progenitors. His audience included the staff and Trustees of the Tavistock Woodlands Estate, their contractors, and friends, of course including the long retired Phillip Hutt, who took advantage of a warm morning to arrive at the age of 90, on a smart BMW motorcycle.

To commemorate the event, Mark Snellgrove, woodland manager of the Tavistock Woodland Estate, presented Lord Bradford with a beautifully turned bowl made from Nothofagus timber, an apt choice as the UK's national collection of Nothofagus, some 30-plus species, forms part of the Tavistock Woodlands.

Can the Bradford Hutt plan survive in an age of low returns and the ascendancy of public benefit as a management priority? It would be sad if such a large-scale and long term system were to be prejudiced by continuing marketing problems, but there is comfort in the happy appearance of the woods and the determination of the owners, their advisors and staff to see that it continues.

*We are indebted to Forestry and British Timber Magazine for permission to reproduce this article.*

# B<sup>BRITISH &</sup> I<sup>RISH</sup> H<sup>ARDWOODS</sup> I<sup>MPROVEMENT</sup> P<sup>ROGRAMME</sup>

## Developments in BIHIP during 2004

The important developments in BIHIP during 2004 have been:

- The conference on 4th March, and associated field day in June on "Better Trees, Better Profits". This is reported upon elsewhere in the Journal by Jo Clark (see pages 22/23).
- **The Sycamore Group**, under the Chairmanship of Michael Carey, has been reasonably successful in raising funds for its work from COFORD, The Forestry Commission and **Woodland Heritage**.
- Support for the work of other BIHIP groups has continued from the four main sponsors of recent years, the Forestry Commission, DEFRA, **Woodland Heritage** and the Royal Forestry Society. Support has also been obtained from Tetrapak and the Scottish Forestry Trust.
- BIHIP now has a formal charitable arm, **the British and Irish Hardwoods Trust**, which is a recognised charity in the UK, and is going through the procedures to become recognised in the Republic of Ireland. The advantages of this

charitable status are that many potential funders were previously unable to give money to BIHIP because they could only give to charities. This hurdle has now been overcome.

- Peter Savill and Jason Hubert will take over from Jeff Burley and Gabriel Hemery as Chairman and Secretary of BIHIP. John Davis remains Treasurer.

## BIHIP species groups

BIHIP has seven species groups, dealing with the genetic improvement, by selection and breeding, of ash, birch, cherry, oak, sycamore, sweet chestnut and walnut. A proposal to establish an eighth group, dealing with "Minor Species" will be pursued. It will deal with potentially valuable species like the wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*) and other Sorbus species.

## BIHIP Meeting and Field day

In 2004, the Birch Group was able to demonstrate its work during the annual meeting and field day (21-22 October) based at Pitlochry, Perthshire. This was the first time a meeting had been held in



*Discussion in the 9-year-old improved birch stand at Bolfracks*



*L. to R. Peter Savill, Jason Hubert, (new Chairman and Secretary of BIHIP), Norman Weiss (Chairman of Cherry Group), Jeff Burley and Gabriel Hemery (retiring Chairman and Secretary of BIHIP)*

Scotland. The day was organised by Drs Barbour (Chairman of the Birch Group), Hubert Malcolm (Secretary), Samuel and Worrell. There were about 40 participants who came from Great Britain and Ireland.

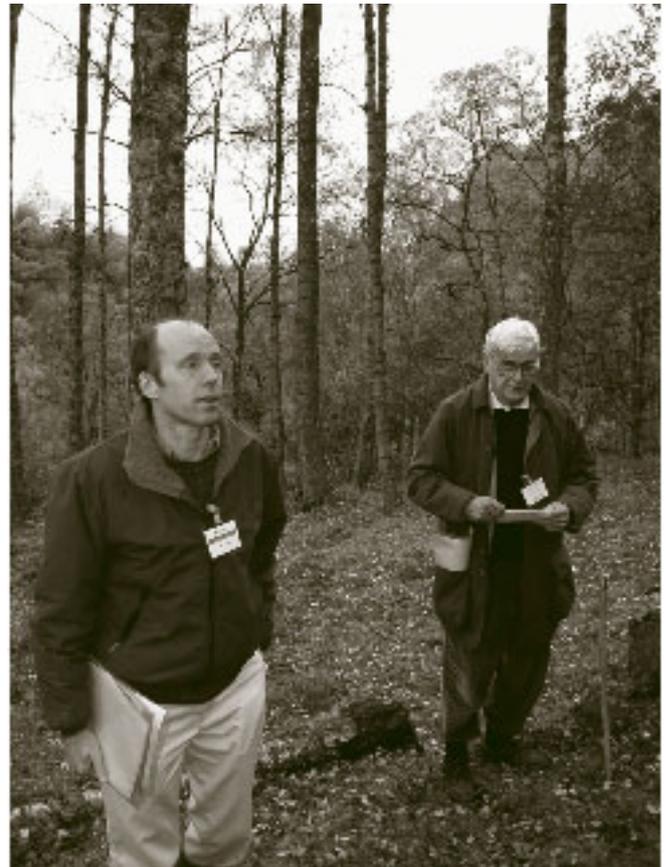
### Encouragement for Broadleaves in Scotland

Dr Bob McIntosh, Director, Forestry Commission Scotland, was the guest speaker at the evening meal and also spent the field day with the group. In his speech he gave some very positive and encouraging remarks about where he saw the position of broadleaves in Scotland and announced that a working group would soon be set up to develop recommendations for increased broadleaved planting. He recognised their values to the environment, and said that planned measures should encourage significantly increased planting in the near future. He repeatedly emphasised the importance of growing the trees economically if they are to be produced in a sustainable manner, and not rely on the state for funding.

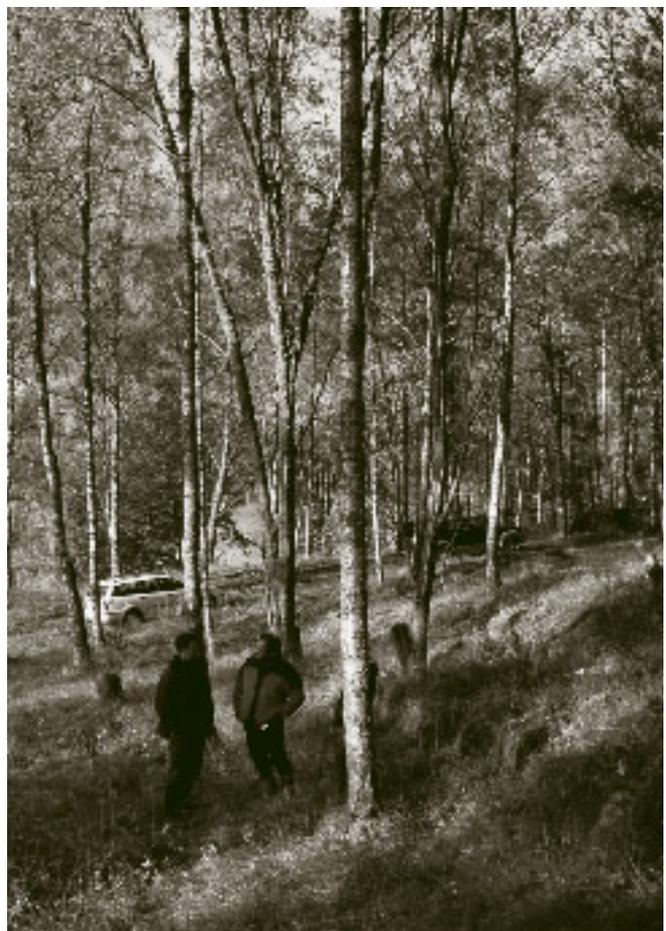
Bob McIntosh's views are in marked contrast to those of the English Forestry Commission's hierarchy. They consign broadleaves to fulfilling amenity and biodiversity roles only, which many believe may not be sustainable when government support policies change. England has by far the biggest area of broadleaves – significantly more than in Ireland, Scotland and Wales combined – with two thirds of its forest area being broadleaved. It also has much better soils and climatic conditions for growing them.

### The Field Day

Birch improvement, as opposed to provenance studies, started early in 2003 with the selection of



*Drs Rick Worrell and Douglas Malcolm demonstrating plus trees at Killiekrankie*



*A birch seed stand on Bonskeid Estate*



Andrew Barbour, Chairman of the Birch Group

superior (plus) trees on a regional basis, mainly in the Tay and Tummel valleys. They originate from 50–230 m above sea level. The first stop was to see an excellent example in a wood at Killiekrankie. Most of the selected trees had smooth bark, which is correlated with straight grain and strength. ***The extent to which such smooth-barked trees should be selected, as opposed to those with rougher bark which tend to have more attractive, patterned, wood grain, but less strength and straightness, is still unresolved.***

Seven to ten cuttings from each plus tree have been grafted onto rootstocks and will be grown on in a polytunnel breeding orchard next year. The all-inclusive costs, from plus tree selection to seed production, are estimated to be of the order of £15,000. Such an orchard should be in full seed production five years after establishment, and give significant genetic improvement. Seed from it would be classified as a “qualified” (i.e. selected). Ideally progeny trials would also be carried out, but no plans exist for these at present. 30–40 year rotations are anticipated to provide timber for furniture and flooring. This approach, possible with birch, will allow improved seed to be produced in great quantities and marketed very quickly, unlike most of the other BIHIP species.

However, the most immediate (i.e. within one year) way of improving genetic quality by about 5%, for *any* species, is to collect seed from registered

seed stands, and this was the topic for discussion at the second stop, at Bonskeid Estate (owner Andrew Barbour – Chairman of the Birch Group). Seed stands contain trees that are superior to those in other stands in the same ecological zone. They have to consist of *at least* 200 trees. At Bolfracks, the group saw an impressive, as yet unthinned, stand of nine-year-old birch planted from selected seed, and also one of the selected ash trees, used by the Ash Group. Joanna Clark described this programme briefly.

The final stop, at Craigvinean was to see a birch provenance experiment, planted in 1997. This contained provenances from Yorkshire up to north Scotland and from a range of altitudes. ***The more southerly provenances were growing more vigorously than the local material and in some cases the differences were of the order of 80% greater height growth by year 6. This was possibly due to the longer period that the southern provenances grew each year, highlighted by the contrasting leaf fall and coloration visible in the trial.*** Of the local provenances, the lower elevation ones were outperforming the higher elevation examples. A note of caution was advised since the trial is still young and some extreme weather could alter the results in the long term. ■



THE BRITISH HARDWOODS used by Treske for special commissions in churches, libraries, schools and boardrooms, and for their craftsman-made bespoke solid hardwood furniture and kitchens, all come from sustainable forests.

Treske has over thirty years' experience of working with architects and designing in-house for a wide range of discerning clients.

The restoration of St Martin's Church, Castleton, Rochdale, (pictured) for which Treske made sanctuary furniture in oak, was listed in the RIBA Conservation Specialist Sector Review.

Treske, The Old Maltings, Station Works, Thirsk,  
North Yorkshire YO7 4NY

Tel: 01845 522770 Fax: 01845 522692 [www.treske.co.uk](http://www.treske.co.uk)

# Pro Silva and Nat-Man Conference

## August 4th- 8th 2004 in Denmark

**P**ro Silva is a European federation of foresters who advocate forest management based on natural processes. The Continuous Cover Forestry Group is affiliated to Pro Silva and usually our Chairman or other representatives of the group attend these conferences.

*Our thanks to Woodland Heritage for giving financial help for the three authors to attend this conference.*

Nat-Man is a four year research programme looking at Nature-based Management of Beech in Europe with Denmark, Britain, Hungary, Slovenia, Netherlands and Germany as the main partners, plus links and contributions from other countries in Europe.

Fourteen work packages were researched with the aims to deliver policy recommendations and management guidelines based on the scientific axiom that nature based management is a powerful tool in achieving sustainable forest management.

This was therefore a joint conference where the first day and a half were occupied with the final reporting of the Nat-Man results, plus workshops to help develop the management guidelines. Two and a half days were then spent out in various forests.

Approximately 80 people attended from 14 different countries split equally between research and practice. This proved a good mix, bringing researchers and foresters together from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

### Close to Nature forestry

On the whole Denmark is an undulating country with the highest point being 173 metres above sea level. This 'high spot' has now been topped by a suspension bridge! With one exception the country is a collection of islands, and the close proximity to the sea has a great impact on the woodlands.

**Wind-throw occurs frequently, but the number of frost-free days is high.** For most of the broadleaved species found there, Denmark is their northern boundary.

Managed forestry goes back very many years, with regulations for state and private forests dating from about 1670. Although initially greatly influenced by German foresters, forestry in Denmark became very forward-looking in the 20th century, particularly so in the use of crown thinning.

For very many years Beech has been the dominant species, and is now regarded as the 'national tree'. There is a wide range of native broadleaves including, Oak, Ash, Sycamore, Common Alder, Birch



*The authors: John Everard, Andy Poore (still waiting for his luggage to arrive), and Rik Pakenham.*

and Hornbeam. In contrast only Juniper is considered to be the only truly native conifer, with Scots Pine having been reintroduced in about 1800. Both Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce, introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century, grow very well on the right sites, as does Larch.

**The woodlands seen in Denmark have been well managed for many years, with both Oak and Beech producing very high quality timber.** At the same time, the woods are well used for public recreation, and today there is a high regard for nature conservation. However, as is the case in many parts of Western Europe, the present very difficult financial situation in the home-grown timber industry is beginning to bite. Considerable changes are being made, with sustainability taking the place of financial returns as the main objective. **In the state forests, 22% of all woodlands, it has been decided that 'close to nature' forestry will become the basis of management and that private woodland owners will be encouraged to do likewise.**

Timber production is still an objective but over the long term native broadleaves, in particular Beech, will replace conifers. This development is partly based on the view that climatic conditions for Norway spruce, the dominant exotic species of the last 100 years, are becoming too warm.

Traditionally forest management in Denmark has been even-aged, with plantation management dominating coniferous stands and shelterwood systems with a short regeneration period or plantation being used in Beech dominated stands. **The political decision to move towards Continuous Cover Forestry in the State sector therefore represents a major challenge in changing attitudes and working practice within an organisation where foresters are thin on the ground.**



*Transformation of spruce and silver fir, now aged 130 years, started in 1993. Beech groups were planted within a deer fence, and the naturally regenerated conifers are accepted as part of the new stand.*

A programme designed to address this has been established by the Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape & Planning. A particularly interesting aspect of this approach is the use of the concept of 'Forest Development Types'. These are a set of stand structures which might develop on different site types with different sets of species given the application of 'Close to Nature' management principles. They are represented as a series of drawings of stands moving from even-aged to an irregular structure in order to be able to convey a visual impression of the transformation process. This was one of the key outputs from the Nat-Man project. A further significant aspect of this approach was the way in which foresters and technicians were involved in the development of these images rather than the simple 'imposition' of ideas derived from academic forest research.

## Suserup Forest

Suserup is a semi natural, mixed deciduous forest at the northern side of Lake Tystrup, central Zealand, Denmark. Annual mean temperature is 8°C and an annual mean precipitation is 635 mm with maximum in July to December. The physiographic setting of Suserup is an undulating elevated plateau to the North and some 10-15% downward slopes toward a lower terrace along the lakeside. The low terrace consists of lacustrine soils, developed through a slow land reclamation process along the lakeside, which is caused by accumulation of organic material, intermingled with pockets of sediments rich in clay. The elevated parts are mainly developed from glacial calcareous till.

The forest comprises 19.2 ha, and consists of three parts (A, B and C) with different management history. **Part A (10.7ha)** is dominated by Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), but Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) are also important species. A model for the dynamics occurring in this part of the forest is described below. **Part B (4.9 ha)** has a history of grazing and the created open conditions resulted in an Oak-dominated (*Quercus robur*) canopy layer. Sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is most abundant in this part of the forest. **Part C (3.7 ha)** is situated along the lakeside, and is dominated by Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) on the wettest conditions and beech on the more elevated sites.

***Suserup is probably the most researched forest in Denmark, with many years of scientific work recording and monitoring taking place including several of the work packages for the Nat-Man project.***

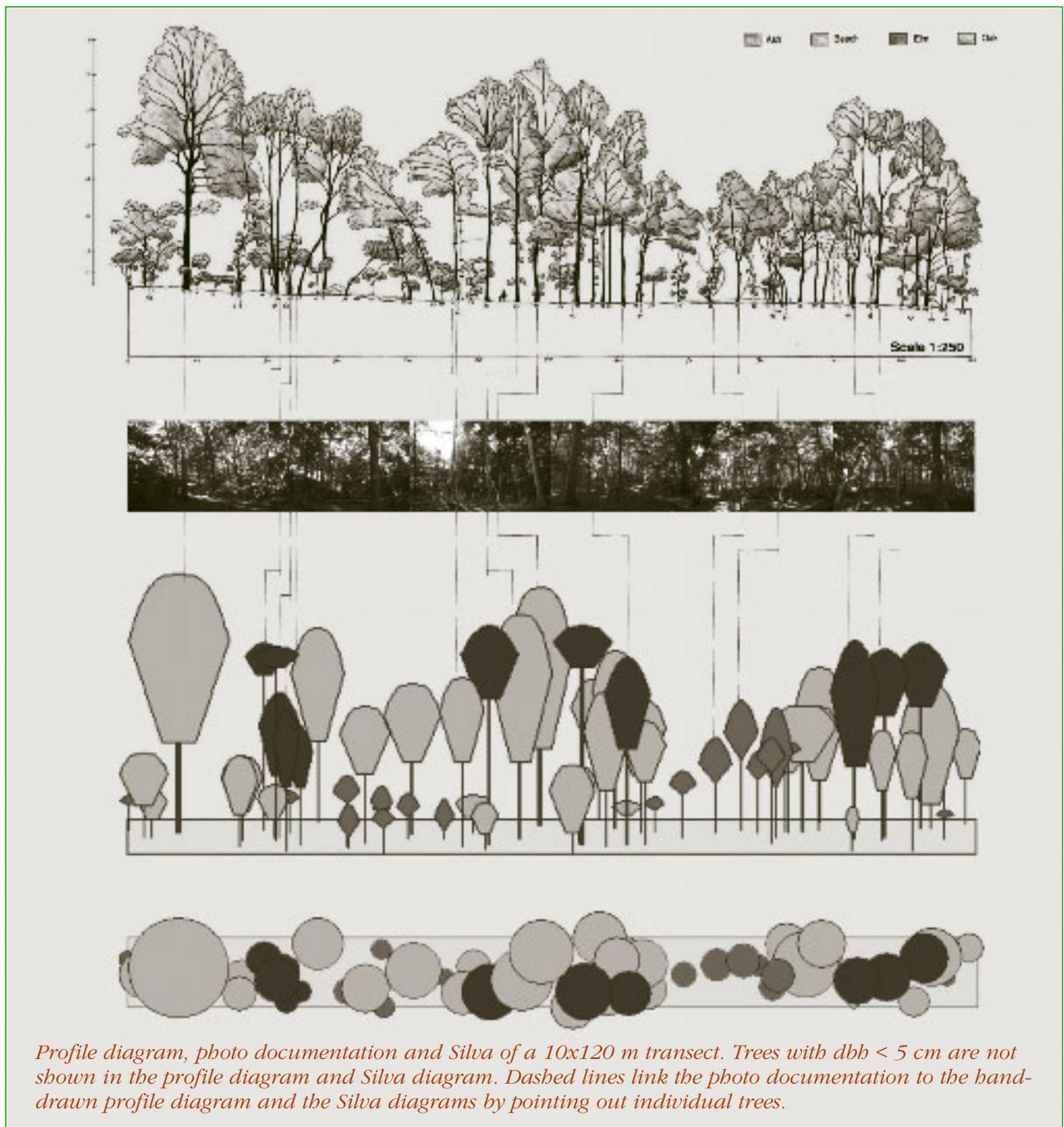
During our visit we looked at three specific areas of research: Deadwood resource, gap phased dynamics and visual interpretation of the research data.

Because natural processes have been allowed to develop without human interference, a fair volume of both aerial and ground deadwood had accumulated, but how much, what sort and how was it functioning within the forest cycle? These were some of the questions being researched.

Dead wood is one of the most important habitats for biodiversity. Its functions are water retention which contributes to the microclimate of the forest, nutrient storage, erosion control, habitats for birds, mammals, fungi, insects, bryophytes and plants – all part of the forest's natural cycle. It is also an important indicator for sustainability.

**Table: Basic figures on volumes in Suserup**

Suserup	Living volume	Beech	Oak	Ash	Other	Dead wood Vol
Part A	674 m <sup>3</sup> /ha	63%	17%	14%	6%	169 m <sup>3</sup> /ha
Part B	874m <sup>3</sup> /ha	31%	42%	22%	6%	
Part C	771 m <sup>3</sup> /ha	39%	4%	20%	37%	



*Profile diagram, photo documentation and Silva of a 10x120 m transect. Trees with dbh < 5 cm are not shown in the profile diagram and Silva diagram. Dashed lines link the photo documentation to the hand-drawn profile diagram and the Silva diagrams by pointing out individual trees.*

In a natural forest all types and ages of the deadwood cycle are present, and the volume is generally one third of the living volume.

In the 1920s A. S. Watt developed a conceptual model of 'the forest cycle' based on his work in British Beechwoods. This describes the phases within the forest cycle and has been renamed for the Suserup model shown here with the average duration of each phase. Gap, Regeneration (Innovation 14 yrs), Building (Aggradation 56 yrs), Mature (Early Biostatic 96 yrs), Ageing (Late Biostatic 108 yrs), Degenerating (Degradation 10 yrs). **Therefore the whole cycle takes 284 years.** These long-term dynamics prompted by natural disturbances were well

illustrated at Suserup showing that a forest, although well rooted, is a kinetic structure, creating an ever evolving mosaic of the various phases of the cycle.

***One of the plots interestingly had all the research detritus waiting to be cleared up of wires, pipes, pegs, lines, markers etc. used to monitor light, soil, water, nutrients, canopy features, ground vegetation, tree regeneration and gap closure at canopy level for WP3. The research most importantly extended beyond the gap into the closed canopy surrounding it.***

Once monitoring of stand structure is completed, whether it be research or forest management, how does one illustrate the results and share the

knowledge with others in an easily understood, visual format? Computers can do the analysis and produce a visualised image. Photographs can be linked to the numbers, but a third way is for an artist to illustrate the structure. All three methods were shown to many practising foresters in Denmark, **and they unanimously chose the artist's illustrations as the best and easiest way to understand and disseminate the information.** This would be even more relevant when teaching to students or developing demonstration forests.

### Klosterheden Forest District

Trials of converting conifers to broadleaves have been running for some years in the Klosterheden District, in the most westerly part of Jutland, north-west Denmark. Of the total area of 20,000 hectares, 12,000 is forest, with the first purchase, of the poor heathland, being in 1880. The earliest plantings were of pioneer species, in particular Mountain Pine. Later, other species, in particular European Larch and Scots Pine were planted in the shelter of the Mountain Pine, so that by 1924 some 7000 hectares had been planted. Later still, more species, including Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce, Silver Fir, were tried. Broadleaves were considered unsuitable, other than Oak on the better soils. Today, conifers total 78% of the woodland, but this is gradually changing in favour of broadleaves, in particular, Beech.

Roe and red deer are commonplace. Shooting is an important source of income, and visitors to the forest are very pleased to see the deer. It is therefore necessary to fence all areas being regenerated. There was considerable support from the public when it was proposed to re-introduce beavers, and 34 young have been born over the past four years.

**The two main silvicultural systems tried over the last fifteen years are Group Shelterwood and Target Diameter Fellings, both of which have been successful. Of the two, Target Diameter Felling seemed to be favoured by the majority of the visiting Pro Silva foresters. A target diameter of about 60cm diameter at breast height (dbh) was generally preferred, but the problems are arising where sawmills restrict their demands to small diameter logs. Conversion should start at a relatively early age if a good range of size and age classes is to be obtained.**

Where opening the stand groups are preferred, 50m by 25m or thereabouts seemed to be preferred coup size, with the narrow face pointing towards the prevailing wind. It was suggested that rather than extending such groups, it is preferable to start new ones. There seemed to be general agreement that in future the silvicultural system should be simple, as the trees to be cut

would be selected by the harvester operator.

Where conifers were going to be converted to broadleaves, **trials of sowing Beech seed within the stand have, after three years, been successful.** The following points were made.

1. The stand should not be opened too much before sowing, otherwise grass will come in strongly.
2. Sow dry pre-treated seed in late April to early May.
3. The system has been used successfully with Oak, Beech and Douglas Fir.

It was interesting to learn that the Jay is a protected bird in Denmark, and as a result Oak seedlings occur scattered throughout the woods

### Grydebjerg Forest

Grydebjerg Forest is part of the estate owned by the Sorø Academy Trust situated in central Zealand on the western side of the town of Sorø.

The Trust is a private commercial trust, whose main objective is to run the Sorø Academy's School as well as to fulfill its obligations as owner of Sorø Monastery. It is managed by a board of Directors consisting of five persons; their areas of expertise are agriculture, general commerce and the law.

**The stands were in the highest Danish beech quality classes despite relatively low rainfall of 600 mm per year and had produced high quality beech for specialised markets, including Japan. Under these market conditions top quality timber commanded almost 5 times the value of the 3rd class and attained these prices at relatively small diameters of 45 cm plus. Currently low prices have led to a reduction in harvesting. Concerns were expressed by the managers that 'close to nature' forestry would lead to larger dimensions being grown which were seen to economically less advantageous and with a greater potential for red-heart, the severe discolouration which affects beech in Europe.**

### Indexed Danish price relations

	A-quality	B-quality	C-quality
>50cm	100	62	24
40-49 cm	91	50	23
35-39 cm	56	43	23
30-34 cm	48	39	23

### European Squirrel Initiative

**During the conference Roger Cook raised considerable interest in the problem of grey squirrels in the UK, also Ireland, Italy and probably soon Switzerland. His literature was quickly taken up, and many more foresters throughout Europe are now aware of the possible damage they too might face.**

# Continuous Cover Forest Management in the Lowlands

*A joint research project being conducted by SelectFor Ltd and Forest Research – funded by Woodland Heritage.*

The silviculture of mixed coniferous continuous cover stands in the Lowlands is now developing with the assistance of the large volume of experience and data available from central Europe and the increasing direct experience which is being gained in the UK. Data on stand structure and increment is beginning to be collected, at Stourhead (Western) Estate, for example.

The situation with stands dominated by pedunculate oak and/or ash is very different. These stands, often on heavy clay soils or soils over chalk, are common in southern England and north-east France but are virtually absent from the areas of central Europe where CCF has been developed. The classic oak forests of north central France are very different: sessile oak stands growing on sandy sites regenerated naturally but essentially even-aged in structure.

There is, therefore, little long term European experience and recent management of these stands in the UK consists of neglect or the haphazard application of a small-scale clear-fell and re-plant approach. ***The theoretical basis for management of these stands exists, however, and at Melbury and Rushmore Estates Andy Poore (SelectFor) has been undertaking transformations of oak and ash dominated stands to CCF on a range of soil types over the last 10 years.***

The impetus behind the application of Continuous Cover principles to these stands are many:

- The need to achieve cost-effective regeneration – current small scale plantation techniques are very expensive.
- A desire to improve stand performance – closed mature oak and ash stands often have very low timber increment.
- The need to create more structurally diverse stands for biodiversity objectives incorporating the use of natural regeneration and low to moderate degrees of change.
- The necessity of regenerating these stands without major disruption to the landscape or to the sporting value of the woods. This is a particular challenge with small stands which make up the majority of the resource.

The major question which this project aims to address is whether permanently irregular structures can be created with these species and what such structures might look like. (The alternative would be some form of irregular shelterwood but on rich

lowland sites the difficulty of such an approach should not be underestimated).

The aim of the first part of the project, which was completed in spring 2004, was to put in place a series of research areas which will produce information on stand structure and stand performance in terms of timber increment. There are few examples of systematically managed, irregular stands of these species in the UK, but a range of stands on the Melbury Estate in north-west Dorset have been subject to interventions over the last 10 years designed to move the structure towards a structure likely to achieve permanent irregularity.

**Part 2 of the project** will consider the silviculture of Continuous Cover oak/ash stands in detail in the light of recent experience and research in north-eastern France. Recently a major project into the silviculture of irregular oak stands has been established in the Franche-Compte Region by ENGREF, the leading forest research institute in Nancy, PRO SILVA France and the AFI (the 'Association of Irregular High Forest'). A visit is being arranged next spring with the major participants in this project and we will be able to match the site types with those we are looking at in Southern England. ■



## Letters to the Editor ... *Field Day*



Dumfries, Scotland

Dear Lewis and Peter,

Thank you for all the work you have done to make our Annual Field Week-End such a wonderful experience. It was most enjoyable and full of new knowledge and inspiration from the word Go. I would also like to thank Mrs. Goodwin for her part in the proceedings.

Alan and I had a wonderful time, and although we have had to stagger through to-day to get over our weariness, it was the best weekend we have had since we napped off with our lady loves for the first time during our youth!

I very much appreciate all the work you and the other Trustees are doing and hope you can obtain and sustain the enthusiasm to continue the good work. Thank you again for your self-sacrifice.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Sydney A Draper

*Lewis replied...*

*Dear Sydney*

*Thank you for your letter. I thought that the attached photo of you epitomised the spirit of a Woodland Heritage Field Day.*

*I am glad you arrived home safely. I must admit to being rather weary too after our busy weekend and Belinda has threatened to "knobble" the turbo-charged "Workman Buggy" if we ever have the good fortune to visit his wonderful woodlands again!*

*It is no self-sacrifice on our part; we wholeheartedly enjoy what we do! If we can make a difference, then it is all the more rewarding.*

*Sydney and Alan, we thank you and of course, if we make it North of the Border in 2005 for our Field Day I do hope that you realise that I might just be the one to claim the bottle of Moët this time!*

*Yours sincerely,*  
Lewis

*The Spirit of our Field Day!*



Monmouth

Dear Sirs,

Two great days. I hadn't realised that so many would come as couples. Perhaps I will bring Allison next time. Thank you for all the hard work that will have gone into arranging it. I think it was Peter who said you would like e-mail addresses so here is mine.

John Edwards

Gloucestershire

Dear Lewis,

I enjoyed immensely Sunday morning. I couldn't make Saturday as I have a stall at Stroud Farmers Market selling my products and I didn't go to Westonbirt as that's where I do my coppicing!

I work in the Stroud area as a woodland manager (MSc Forestry Aberdeen), coppice worker, furniture maker and wood turner. Several strings to my bow and feels like a juggling act at times.

I thought this picture may be useful of John Workman and Spirit of the Woods.

*Thanks very much. Best wishes.*  
Phil Hinton

Kent

Dear Lewis

We both thoroughly enjoyed the weekend in Gloucestershire and would like to thank you for all the work involved organising the events.

*Best Wishes*

Bill & Daphne Chandler

*Editor's note: We have been pleased to welcome the Chandlers to every one of our Field Days since the first one in Norfolk in 1997.*

Lincs.

Dear Belinda

Patricia and I thought we must write to thank you all for making us as newcomers so welcome on Saturday.

What a splendid venue for a walk and meeting. A most informative day.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Alan & Patricia Johnson

## Letters to the Editor...

Norfolk

Dear Peter and Fellow Committee members,

A belated thank you for organising a great weekend in Gloucestershire, very well organised, very interesting, we learned a lot. A subject I know very little about...trees and woods!! I've an idea about the wood that comes from trees, but they are two very different skills.

Please let us know when you have firmed up the trip next year. We would like to put that in our diary before anything comes along.

*Thanks again,*

Simon and Aase Simpson

Carmarthenshire

Dear Lewis,

I have not read all the Journal yet, but it appears to be well up to the high standard you have set.

### **Walter Start and Oak**

I hope that in the future there will be an explanation of the silvicultural system that produces 3.4m veneer butts at 70-75 years. My recollection is that a 'free growth' system is used. Can Walter be persuaded to elucidate, sooner than later as at 79 years old he won't be with us for ever. The FC have a small series of 'free growth' plots that were monitored by FC Research, perhaps Gary Kerr could add up to date information. The plot I know is at Crumbland, near Tintern on the west side of the Wye Valley. I took John McHardy there many years ago and it inspired him to practice the system at Longleat; he might contribute too.

Pleased to see so much about the grey squirrel. I note that Francis Fulford gives a plug for ESI and the Review in Forestry and Timber News.

*Very best regards to all.*

David Rice

Surrey

Dear Lewis,

I spent this morning working as a volunteer for the Haslemere Conservation Group with The Woodland Trust who own quite a lot of wooded estates around the country and particularly in this area.

This particular one was in Brook, just beyond and opposite the Dog and Pheasant pub. Their estate manager very much shared the views expressed in your Journal regarding the **serious grey squirrel problem!**

*Regards*

Christopher Ashton-Jones

Worcs.

Dear Woodland Heritage

Having a great time in these beautiful surroundings. Timber galore, Hoopa, Oregon is 23 sq miles of woodland, mountains and rivers. One guy on the course is in his 80s and has worked in the woods all his life.

We had two very dedicated women this time, Debbie and Megane and I think they helped to get the Boys working because they didn't want to be outdone.

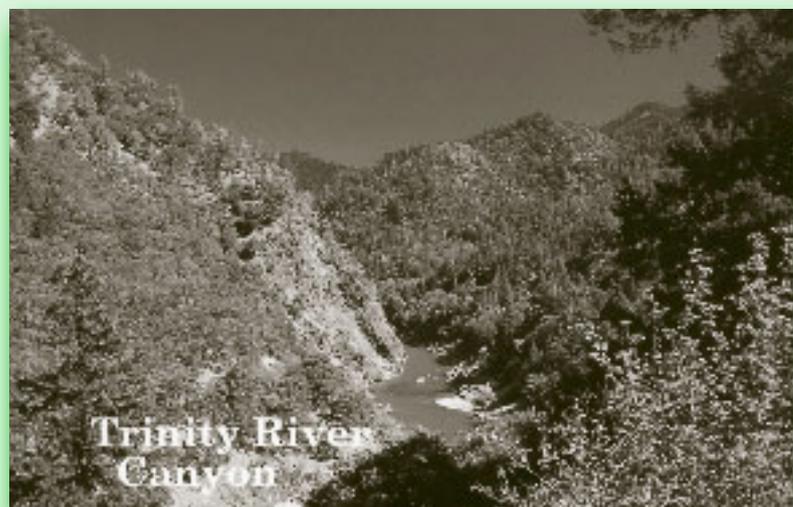
The month went far too quick again, though there is talk of lengthening my time out there if I can go again. I just wish my time at school had gone so fast!

**Once again, thanks for all your help and support, not only for my trip to Hoopa, but through all my Greenwood Training.**

Hope to meet up with you all at one of the Wood Shows this summer season. Many thanks

Ben Orford

Green Woodworker, Toolmaker, Coppice Crafts and Woodland Management



## Letters to the Editor ...



Beccles, Suffolk

Dear Lewis

The Woodland Heritage Journal just keeps on getting better and better!

Congratulations to you all – and thank you for the really impressive letters about the grey squirrel problem. Much good will come of that, I know.

*Best wishes*

Miles Barne

Chairman – ESI

Tonbridge, Kent

Dear Mr. Scott,

Thanks for the latest Journal and Membership List, both of them terrific.

I have been in touch with Peter a good deal, but am now delighted to see your face on page 3. I hope you are pleased with the great success you have both achieved with Woodland Heritage. The Membership List is immensely impressive – a great deal of hard work.

Peter knows he is greatly welcome here at any time and the same goes for you. I can show you forestry – how not to do it!

*Yours sincerely,*

Patrick Hills

*Lewis replied...*

*Dear Patrick,*

*I must admit that our Journal does take a lot of hard work to put together; but it always seems to be well received – so the effort is worthwhile.*

*It goes without saying, that without Peter's unrelenting enthusiasm and the stalwart support of our Trustees and Members, such as you, all this would not be possible.*

*I do hope that we might be able to take up your offer and see "...how not to do it!" though I am reliably assured that this is not the case!*

*Thank you very much for your continued support*  
Lewis

Ipswich, Suffolk

Dear Peter,

Many thanks for the latest issue of the Woodland Heritage Journal, I particularly liked your tribute to Tom Bush, and I am looking forward to reading the rest of the issue this evening.

I also liked the traditional English oak notice boards made by Harry Stebbing, this is something I will be promoting to Parish Councils etc. throughout the Eastern Region.

I was recently appalled to see the whole back page of the East Anglian Daily Times covered with adverts for Tropical Hardwood furniture, so I sent them a letter which they published. Since then I have not seen a repeat of the adverts.

Garry Battell – Woodland Adviser  
Suffolk County Council

Otley, Yorkshire

Dear Lewis

The Journal reads very well! All who came on the "Yorwoods" Course found it very interesting and instructive.

Here at Farnley there is a stand of Sycamore, which I am sure BIHIP will be interested in. It would be good to see you at the Yorkshire Show this July.

Keith Rawling

Oxford

Dear Mr. Scott,

**Re: BIHIP Birch, Oak and Walnut Groups.**

Please excuse my delay in writing to acknowledge the generous grant from Woodland Heritage to the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme. My tardiness does not reflect my lack of gratitude but prolonged absences overseas. As Chairman of BIHIP I recognise the absolute necessity for grants such as yours to maintain the excellence and effectiveness of the research and development work of the Programme. However, as a Trustee and fund-raiser myself for various other organisations, I am equally aware of the great pressures that are placed on donor agencies and trusts. We are extremely grateful for the support that you offer us and I know that all our Species Groups and their individual members are keen to ensure that the funds are used for the greatest benefit.

*Yours sincerely,*

Professor Jeff Burley  
Chairman BIHIP

Lincs.

Dear Lewis

My annual subscription is enclosed. I very much enjoyed the latest Journal.

Thank goodness Woodland Heritage is addressing the wood users' end of the supply chain.

Mark Hudson NDF MICFor  
Independent adviser on trees, woodland and products

## Letters to the Editor ...

Bristol

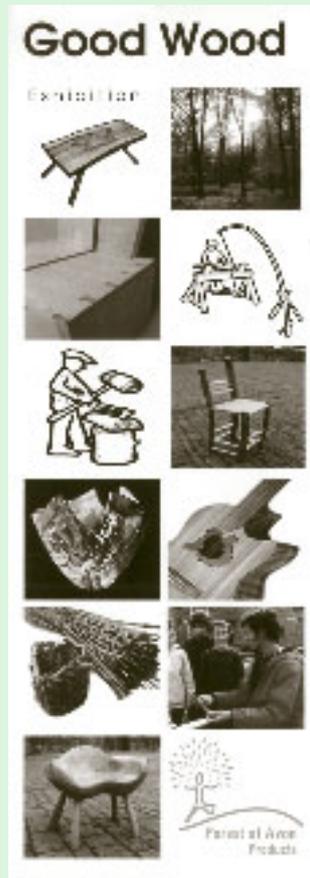
Dear Peter

A quick note to keep you up to date. The planer/thicknesser machine is now in pride of place at our Chelvey workshops and had helped with many projects, thank you again.

I have enclosed some fliers for our Good Wood Exhibitions. This will be a celebration of the work achieved by some of our members. It is however, important for me to recognise that Woodland Heritage's support at the right time has made an important contribution to our success.

Best Wishes

Nigel Howe  
Forest of Avon Products



Oxfordshire Woodlands Project

Dear Sirs,

As usual the Journal is very good, I particularly support those with misgivings about the Grey Squirrel control strategy and the dreadful impact high densities have on our woodland.

David Rees

Carmarthenshire

Dear Lewis,

For the past 10 years I've run a Trekkasaw, and it was plain to see that with the best will in the world Dean Oak Co-operative will not get any production out of the saw until they are given a few guidelines to make things easier for them.

Currently our Trekka is not being used as we installed a new mill late last year. Probably in a few weeks time I will need to use it for a particular timber framed building which we are about to start on. Therefore I will get in touch with Dean Oak to see if they want to come down to the yard and be with me for a few hours while sawing etc. with Trekka – and then go through any problems they might have.

Regards

Arwyn Morgan

*Editor's Note: This typifies the spirit of co-operation amongst our members where knowledge and experience shared is to everyone's benefit.*

## A soaking at the Royal Norfolk Showground !

**E**ric Rogers and Ron Hoblyn, retired Forestry Commission foresters and Woodland Heritage members (right), braved one of the coldest and wettest spring days this year to bring the forestry message to 3,600 school children and their minders at the "Spring Fling" at the Royal Norfolk Showground on 6th April 2004. Many other countryside organisations took part.

The children enjoyed themselves filling in a Woodland Heritage questionnaire which entitled them to an Easter egg and hopefully some seeds were sown in their minds which will germinate later. **The minders, teachers, parents and grandparents in the main, took an intelligent interest in the message which Woodland Heritage were imparting.**

It was a pity that the weather forced an early closure.



## 5th International Walnut Conference Sant'Agnello di Sorrento, Naples, Italy

by Jon McCosh<sup>1</sup> and Gabriel Hemery<sup>2</sup>

The generosity of Woodland Heritage, in providing two Garthwaite Bursaries, allowed the authors to travel to Italy to attend the 5th International Walnut Conference. Dr. Hemery presented a paper entitled "Advances in Walnut Breeding and Culture in the United Kingdom", whilst Jon McCosh attended to learn more about the growth and production of walnut timber.

The majority of the commercial production of walnut, both for veneer timber and nut processing, comes from three main species and their hybrids:

**The 'English' Walnut** *Juglans regia* is native to the Middle East, with a natural range from Bhutan in the East to Turkey in the West, and from India in the South to Kyrgyzstan in the North;

**The 'Black' Walnut** *Juglans nigra* is native to North America, with a natural range encompassing the majority of the eastern United States;

**The 'Arizona' Walnut** *Juglans major* is native to North America, with a natural range from west Texas, to central Arizona, to northern Mexico.

These species have been collected and cultivated for hundreds of years, this has led to a profusion of cultivars, each with its own particular qualities. Walnut is now grown worldwide, from Chile and Argentina in South America to the north of the United States, in Australia, China, the Middle East and the majority of temperate and Mediterranean Europe.

Delegates from 18 countries converged on Sant'Agnello di Sorrento for the Conference which took place from 9th to 13th of November 2004. Over the four days of the conference, a total of 161 papers and 99 posters were presented to the delegates, these encompassed: Economical Aspects of Walnut Production; Genetics and Breeding; Biotechnology; Biology and Physiology; Propagation and Rootstocks; Walnut Cultivation in China; Pests, Diseases and Plant Protection; Orchard and Forestry Management; Nut and Wood Processing; and a Technical Tour of a Veneer Mill, and a Nut Processor.

Talks of particular interest were given by a number of delegates, they included:

**H. Schepers (Netherlands)**, who has made promising trials of Walnut cultivars in an

agroforestry project, this will be an interesting area of ongoing research;

**E. Voulgardis (Greece)**, who noted that currently the greatest demand for Walnut veneer is in Italy, and that the demand was for lighter coloured timber;

**T. Ameglio (France)**, who showed why walnut is frost tolerant under many conditions;

**D. Jacobs (USA)**, who demonstrated that the genetic quality of the tree is more important than the sowing density in tree nurseries;

**The Chinese Group**, who spoke eloquently about Walnut cultivation in China, and their hopes for the future;

**B. Mariotti (Italy)**, who talked about the development and architectural traits of walnut, grown for timber, in pure and mixed species plantations; and lastly;

**S. Dernini (Italy)**, who highlighted the nutritional qualities of the walnut, especially the fact that walnuts are a 'vegan edible' provider of essential oils and amino acids.

Most the presentations will be made available in a special issue of *Acta Horticulturae*, later in 2005. This will be available from the International Society for Horticultural Science's dedicated website for the journal: <http://www.actahort.org/>. Gabriel Hemery's paper, written jointly with Karen Russell from East Malling Research, provided an overview of all walnut work in the UK. The abstract is reproduced below:

*Walnut (Juglans spp.) has not been widely cultivated for timber or fruit production in the United Kingdom (UK). Recent research activities in the UK have stimulated renewed interest in common walnut (J. regia), black walnut (J. nigra) and hybrids as providers of valuable timber on relatively short rotations, and in the case of J. regia, as a highly marketable fruit crop. In addition, these walnut species are also likely to be more suitable than many native tree species to the climatic conditions predicted for the UK within a single generation. A substantial collection of walnut germplasm has been established through complimentary research programmes at the Northmoor Trust (NMT) and East Malling Research (EMR). The NMT programme has concentrated on J.*

<sup>1</sup> Culter Craigs, Coulter, Biggar, Lanarkshire. ML12 6PZ

<sup>2</sup> Director of Land Operations, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon OX14 4QS.



## *The gathering of “Nutters”*

*regia* for timber production. Genotypes were collected across 11 countries from both the introduced and natural ranges of the species, amassing a total of 371 half-sib progeny, primarily from the walnut-fruit forests of Kyrgyzstan. Five-year results for survival, growth and phenology from the trials are presented, indicating significant variability for growth and phenology. A series of silvicultural trials have been established aimed at improving establishment and early growth of walnut species in the UK. The programme at EMR has focussed on establishing a clonal collection of 78 timber selections (*J. regia*, *J. nigra*, *J. major*, and their hybrids) and 66 *J. regia* fruit varieties from breeding programmes across Europe and the United States of America (US). Jointly, NMT and EMR have initiated a black walnut timber improvement programme, comprising seedling progeny from 7 European countries and 13 States in the US. The genetic resource within these combined programmes provides an unrivalled resource for breeding and genetic improvement both for timber and fruit production, and for genetic diversity and adaptive trait studies.

At the end of the conference there was a technical tour to a veneer mill. This was a most instructive and well presented visit. The veneer mill used old but effective machinery, employing 16 workers, and was obviously very well run. The manager of the mill made some interesting observations: firstly, that the European market required both light and dark timber in its walnut veneer; and secondly, that dark veneer was not in great demand for the Italian furniture industry.

The conference raised several issues of particular relevance to Britain. Global warming will have a very

important part to play in the future of our forestry industry. Walnut is already well adapted to severe cold, but requires hardiness to late spring frosts to be truly successful in the UK environment. The development of late flushing cultivars and hybrids with good vigour will help in this process. Walnut does not often produce a straight tree without pruning. Thus, time and effort must be expended to ensure that the tree grows with the correct form for timber production (extra costs for the timber grower). This is where the Northmoor Trust is aiming to make a difference through the genetic improvement of the species. The research programme aims to improve walnut and will eventually result in late flushing, high vigour, straight growing walnut trees ideal for the British market. In 2003, the rewards for producing a first class veneer log were £600 per cubic metre. High quality walnut for gun stocks and furniture making are also very profitable.

***The conference highlighted the significant progress we have recently made in promoting walnut in Britain often, it must be said, with the support of Woodland Heritage.*** However, our breeding programme is a generation behind those in France and elsewhere. The lack of vision from policy makers in Britain prevents further interest in the species from the forestry industry, whilst funding for broadleaved research remains minuscule. Without the support of Woodland Heritage and the other main partners in the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme, there would be no such work at all. International conferences such as this provide a real insight and sense of perspective, which is crucial if we wish to realise Britain's forest potential. ■



Book Review by Joe Barry

# THE RED SQUIRREL

## *Redressing The Wrong*

*By Charles Dutton MICFor*

**T**he red squirrel was once common in all wooded areas of Britain and Ireland. I can recall a time when seeing them scurrying among the trees on my farm in Co Meath was an almost everyday occurrence. It is now however fifteen years since I last sighted one.

***In an astonishingly short space of time the red has become an endangered species while the North American import, the bigger and stronger grey, has taken over more and more of the red's natural habitat.***

When the grey first became a common sight, people were fascinated by its boldness, agility and adaptability and whole TV wildlife programmes were devoted to admiring the ability of this pest to raid bird feeders and avail of unusual feeding opportunities.

Sadly, the public were, and to a large extent still are, unaware of the steady disappearance of our native red squirrel as the grey pushes it further and further towards extinction.

***The European Squirrel Initiative or ESI have already produced two excellent publications highlighting the dramatic spread of the alien grey throughout Britain and Ireland and the threat this pest poses to our woodland resource.***

With this new publication "*The Red Squirrel, Redressing The Wrong*", they demonstrate effectively just how serious the situation is and what must be done to protect our remaining pockets of woodland where the red still survives.

Research has shown that if the current situation continues the red squirrel will be extinct in Britain and Ireland within 20 years. This is a major conservation issue and Charles Dutton has done an excellent job in presenting the facts clearly and comprehensively with attractive pictures, illustrations and charts allowing for easy assimilation of the information.

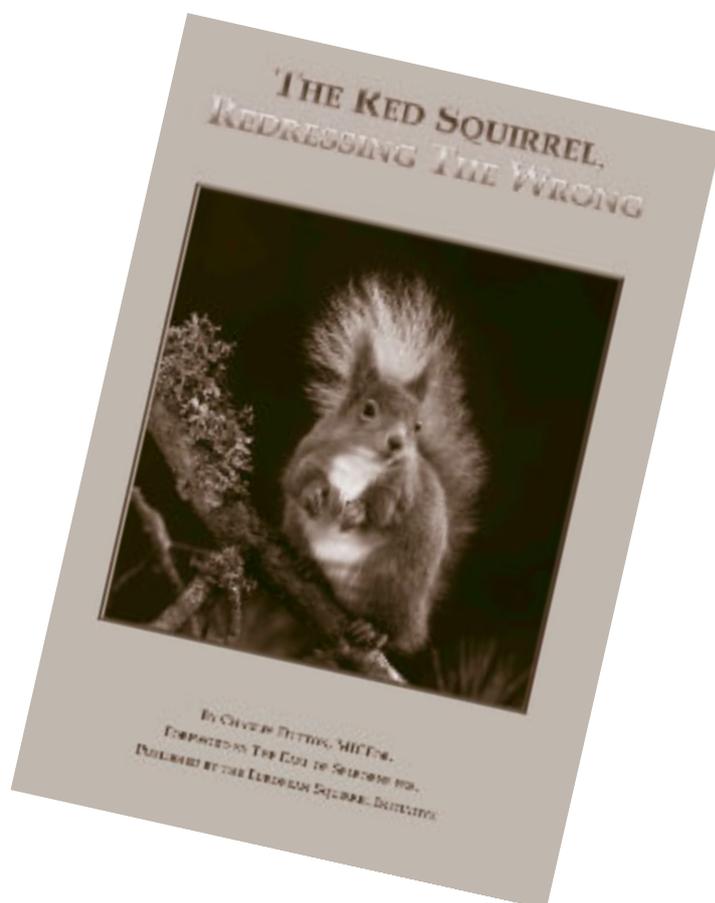
***In the introduction the reader is asked the question "What do you feel when you see a red squirrel running about in the tree canopy? Perhaps a sense that one's daily life has been***

***enriched and that the forest is in balance and in good heart."***

Keeping our forests in balance and rich in biodiversity is perhaps what concerns us most and this book illustrates, in well researched detail, the rather stark choices facing us. If we do not act quickly, then our native red squirrel will soon be a memory relived only through the pages of Beatrix Potter's "*Tales of Squirrel Nutkin*".

The book begins with details of the red squirrel's distribution throughout Europe. Maps illustrating the distribution of the red in both 1940 and 2002 show an alarming loss of territory with the 2002 map demonstrating how the grey squirrel has overrun most of England and Wales in the intervening period.

The advance of the grey has not just affected red squirrel populations; since Cecil Rhodes introduced



the grey to South Africa, it has been responsible for environmental disruption and the University of Natal has recorded songbird losses of up to 40%.

Current conservation projects throughout Britain are detailed including data from the Isle of Wight, which is the only large area in England totally protected from natural invasion by grey squirrels. Clocaenog forest is a large Sitka spruce forest and probably contains the largest remaining population of red squirrels in Wales, however these are now stated to be at risk as greys have entered the forest. Road edges had been planted with beech for landscape and amenity purposes but were then removed as they were providing access corridors for the greys. Based on this kind of experience, recommendations are made for woodland management and planting to further assist the survival of our remaining reds.

The final chapters then deal with means of assisting re-colonisation and the creation of red squirrel reserves. These also contain essential information on means of reintroducing the red and its further management and aftercare.

Once the red has been driven out of an area of woodland, the costs of reintroduction are high and it is suggested that great savings could be made if

local conservation groups could be used to help or even run sites.

*“The Red Squirrel, Redressing The Wrong”* is essential reading for anyone who cares about the future of this attractive and endearing native mammal. ***We need to create far greater public awareness if we are to seriously address the problem and this can only be achieved by first bringing the plight of the red to the public's attention.***

This book does just that. Hopefully our decision makers in government throughout Europe will take note and act before it is too late.

*Published by  
the European Squirrel Initiative.  
ISBN No. 0-9547576-0-3.*

**Joe Barry farms in Co Meath, Ireland.  
He also writes for a number of  
publications on forestry and  
environmental issues.**

## ORDER FORM

# THE RED SQUIRREL, REDRESSING THE WRONG

*- by Charles Dutton*

Price £20 each + £2 postage

Please send me ..... copies of Charles Dutton's book

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# Out of the Woods



## Philip Koomen: a sustainable approach to furniture design

Oxfordshire's woodlands are in a state of ecological and economic crisis. Almost two thirds of UK woodlands are privately owned and most timber resources are poorly used. Oxfordshire's small woodlands have the capacity to produce timber worth up to £1 million each year, but current production is almost negligible.

Are there any solutions? In an effort to find alternative and sustainable ways of sourcing, processing and utilising wood, the Philip Koomen workshop makes creative use of local timber resources that are not usually considered commercially viable in the timber trade. Koomen has developed a 'local cycle' which promotes greater collaboration and support among woodland owners and local forestry-related businesses. The timber is sourced from estates and woodlands within thirty miles of the workshop in South Oxfordshire. Local sawmills convert the timber into pieces, which are dried on site at the workshop ready for use. By reducing the number of stages in the supply chain, woodland owners are able to negotiate a better price for their timber.

**Locally grown trees, which have not been grown specifically for timber production, come in a huge variety of shapes and species. These**

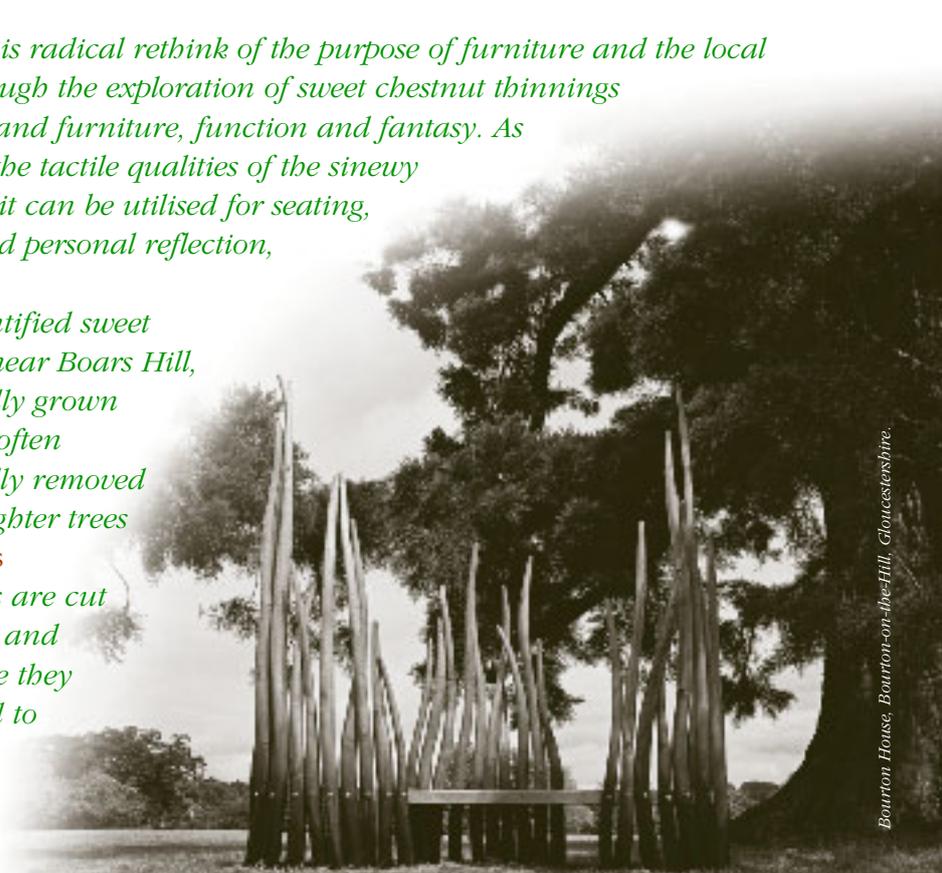
**timbers have many unique characteristics, including knots, cracks, unusual grain patterns, or uneven colouring caused by fungi or age. Because conventional manufacturers need wood that has consistent qualities to maximise efficiency, the variety found in local timber complicates production. For this reason, local timbers are typically used for firewood and low value products.**

**Yet, unusually shaped trees and planks can inspire unique design forms. The varied characteristics of locally grown timber can be used to create furniture with a distinctive regional identity.**

The creation of an infrastructure to facilitate the sourcing, conversion, drying and selection of locally grown hardwoods has fundamentally altered the working practices of the Philip Koomen workshop. The project has increased our understanding of the difficulties and challenges that forestry professionals and the timber trade are faced with, and has created a growing network of collaborators among professionals who derive their livelihoods from local woodlands and the world's forests. ■

*The Pondlife bench is one example of this radical rethink of the purpose of furniture and the local cycle. Its unusual form has evolved through the exploration of sweet chestnut thinnings and the relationship between sculpture and furniture, function and fantasy. As sculpture, Pondlife invites one to enjoy the tactile qualities of the sinewy reeds. However, unlike most sculptures, it can be utilised for seating, as a space for respite, contemplation and personal reflection, either in the garden or the home.*

*The Oxfordshire Woodland Project identified sweet chestnut thinnings from Bagley Wood near Boars Hill, as an under-utilised, durable and locally grown hardwood. The misshapen thinnings – often regarded as a waste product and usually removed to promote the growth of stronger, straighter trees – are particularly suitable for Pondlife's curvaceous carved reeds. The thinnings are cut into halves at the Bagley Wood sawmill and delivered directly to the workshop where they are stored until band sawn and shaped to create the finished Pondlife reeds.*





# BRITISH & IRISH HARDWOODS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

## WIN £250 – HELP FIND THE BEST BRITISH AND IRISH NATIVE TIMBER TREES

Woodland Heritage in conjunction with the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme (BIHIP) are offering at least seven and possibly nine Sir Eric Weiss prizes of £250 each to landowners, local authorities, the Forestry Commission and the public who can locate the best mature examples ('plus' trees) of oak (*Quercus robur* or *Q. petraea*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), common walnut (*Juglans regia*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*). If no overall prize-winning tree of any of the species is found in Scotland or Ireland, there will be an additional prize of £250 for the best tree (of any of the species) in the country concerned.

Such 'plus' trees will form the parent material in a programme for improvement of broadleaved trees for woodlands. The best of them will be used to create seed orchards, to provide British and Irish seed from good quality parents of known origin, to the nursery industry. This approach has been successfully applied by East Malling Research to wild cherry, resulting in the establishment of regional seed orchards and the release of the Wildstar™ collection. It is clear that trees of the highest quality are essential.

Ideally trees should be 50 years or more but outstandingly good younger trees may also be considered. They should be growing in woods, parkland and public gardens in Great Britain or Ireland and should have excellent timber characteristics – clean, straight cylindrical stems, vigorous growth, a flat branching angle, light branching and freedom from pests and diseases.

If you feel you have very high quality examples of any of these species, then please complete the form available on <http://www.bihip.com/>, <http://www.woodlandheritage.org.uk/> or [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk) and send it, together with a photograph of the tree (including some idea of scale), to Dr Jason Hubert at the address below. Entries will close at the end of December 2005. Winners will be announced on these websites, probably in February 2006.

*Please send completed entries either by post to:* Dr Jason Hubert, Forest Research, Northern Research Station, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9SY, or [jason.hubert@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jason.hubert@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

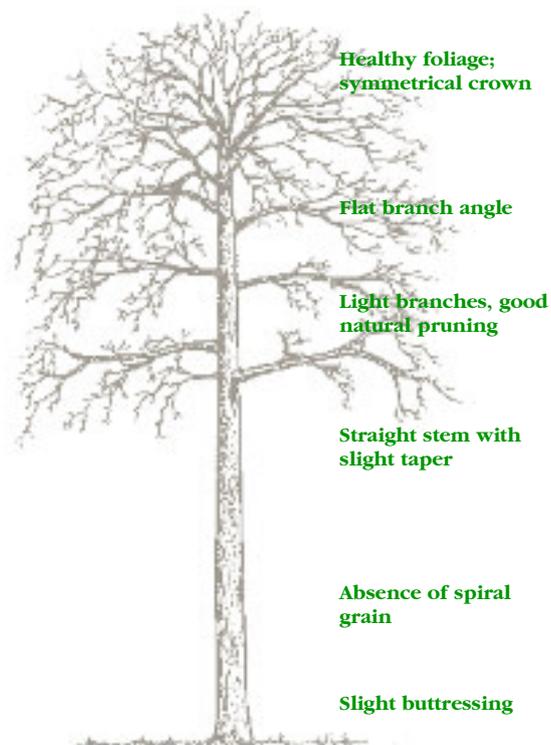
### Conditions of entry

1. Only the owners of the trees entered, or their agents may formally enter the competition. Their permission must be sought if others enter trees.
2. Members of BIHIP and East Malling Research (EMR), or their families are not eligible.
3. Each entry must be accompanied by a completed tree description form and a photograph of the tree.
4. Trees that have already been selected by BIHIP or EMR are not eligible to be considered.
5. The competition will be judged early in 2006. The decisions of the judges will be final.

### Note:

1. Trees will be judged mainly from the photos submitted.
2. Only the best 3-4 of each species will actually be visited.

### An ideal tree has:



*Figure 1. Attributes of an ideal tree. In addition to the points illustrated, excellent trees have persistent, vertically-growing leading shoots for most of their lives, and do not fork.*

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Continuous Cover Silviculture Practical Workshops 2005

2.5 days Practical Workshops in 2005 are available on request for those requiring an introduction to, and an up-date on *"Transforming even-aged plantations into diverse and uneven-aged forests and woods. An alternative to clear felling"*.

The Workshop programme includes inputs from a range of practitioners, researchers, individuals with British and Continental experience of management of continuous cover woodland and other 'specialists' engaged in relevant topics, such as natural regeneration, a consultant's view, policy matters, conservation and biodiversity.

Once again led by Mark Yorke F.I.C.For., who has organised annual programmes throughout the UK and Ireland since 1994 with over 40 events held to date. Outline details include:

#### Day 1

The morning is spent inside:

- i) What is continuous cover and where is it practical and relevant?
- ii) An outline description of the alternative silvicultural systems that deliver continuous cover – shelterwood (uniform, irregular, strip/group) group fell, group/single tree selection.
- iii) Factors influencing the establishment of natural regeneration.

The afternoon is spent in the forest:

- i) Practical exercises in the transformation of the even-aged stand and its subsequent management with continuous cover. Identifying opportunities and constraints.

#### Day 2

In the forest as for p.m. of Day 1.

#### Day 3

The morning is spent inside:

- i) Discussion and visiting speakers on relevant topics that may include: Economic aspects, effective deer control, biodiversity and environmental aspects, yield control and forecasting, policy matters, crop stability etc.  
(Note: Not all of these topics are included in one workshop).

Disperse 12.30pm

*Woodland Heritage invite applications from 'young' foresters, managers and students who wish to attend these workshops and are in need of financial assistance.*

## STOP PRESS

The CCF visit to Switzerland will take place on 13, 14 and 15 September at Le Chaux-de-Sondes near Geneva.

One day will be spent in a broadleaf forest and two days in predominantly coniferous forests.

Woodland Heritage welcome applications for sponsorship from advanced forestry students or practitioners to join this small party.

## CONTINUOUS COVER SILVICULTURE

*For practical, experienced and cost-effective advice, contact:*

**MARK YORKE F.I.C.For.,  
Tyddyn-Bach,  
Llanegryn, Tywyn,  
Gwynedd LL36 9UF**

**Tel/Fax: 01654-712075**

**Email: mark.yorke@amserve.com**

*Transform your even-aged plantations  
into diverse and uneven-aged productive woodland.*

*Avoid clear felling with subsequent high costs of re-establishment.*

# BRECHFA FOREST PLOTS

## CARMARTHENSHIRE

This interesting collection of coniferous and broadleaved trees is situated about 2.5km from the nearest public road; a distinct disincentive to visit!

There are nearly ninety plots, mostly planted between 1955 and 1960, of which two thirds are conifers and one third broadleaves. A few plots failed and last year wild cherry *Prunus avium* 'Wildstar', aspen *Populus tremula* and walnut *Juglans regia* 'Lazarone' were planted in these, the balance to be planted with rauli *Nothofagus nervosa* and white ash *Fraxinus americana*. Of particular note is the redwood *Sequoia sempervirens* (mentioned in WH Journal No 9) and the Macedonian white pine *Pinus peuce* growing extremely well for a pine in a high rainfall area. The redwood are majestic, over 30m tall and the pine more than 20m tall.

**Woodland Heritage has contributed to the cost of uneconomic thinning of some of the**

**plots, new planting, improving pedestrian access, new plot labels and an interpretation board.**

A visit is really worthwhile and could well be combined with visits to the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the restored garden at Aberglasney and the veteran tree collection at Dynefwr Park; all in the Towy Valley.

To make the collection more readily available members may drive to the site, by prior arrangement.

*The procedure is to contact the Forestry Commission, Llanfair Road, Llandovery, Carmar, SA20 0AL, Tel 01550 720394, Fax 01550 721013. Contact should be well in advance in order to make sure that the desired date of access does not conflict with other uses such as car rally practice or timber extraction. A map and gate key will be available for collection from the F C Office in Llandovery, about 22km to the east of the collection.* ■



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# Woodland Heritage

## Garthwaite Travel Bursaries



**The Trustees of Woodland Heritage invite applications for travel bursaries to study an aspect of forestry or wood processing outside the UK.**

### Eligibility

Applicants must either be forestry practitioners in the UK, or intending to become so after completing a forestry education. Preference will be given to those whose interests are in the production of high quality timber. Applications for support on compulsory tours (e.g. as part of a University group) will not be considered, nor will retrospective applications.

### Applications

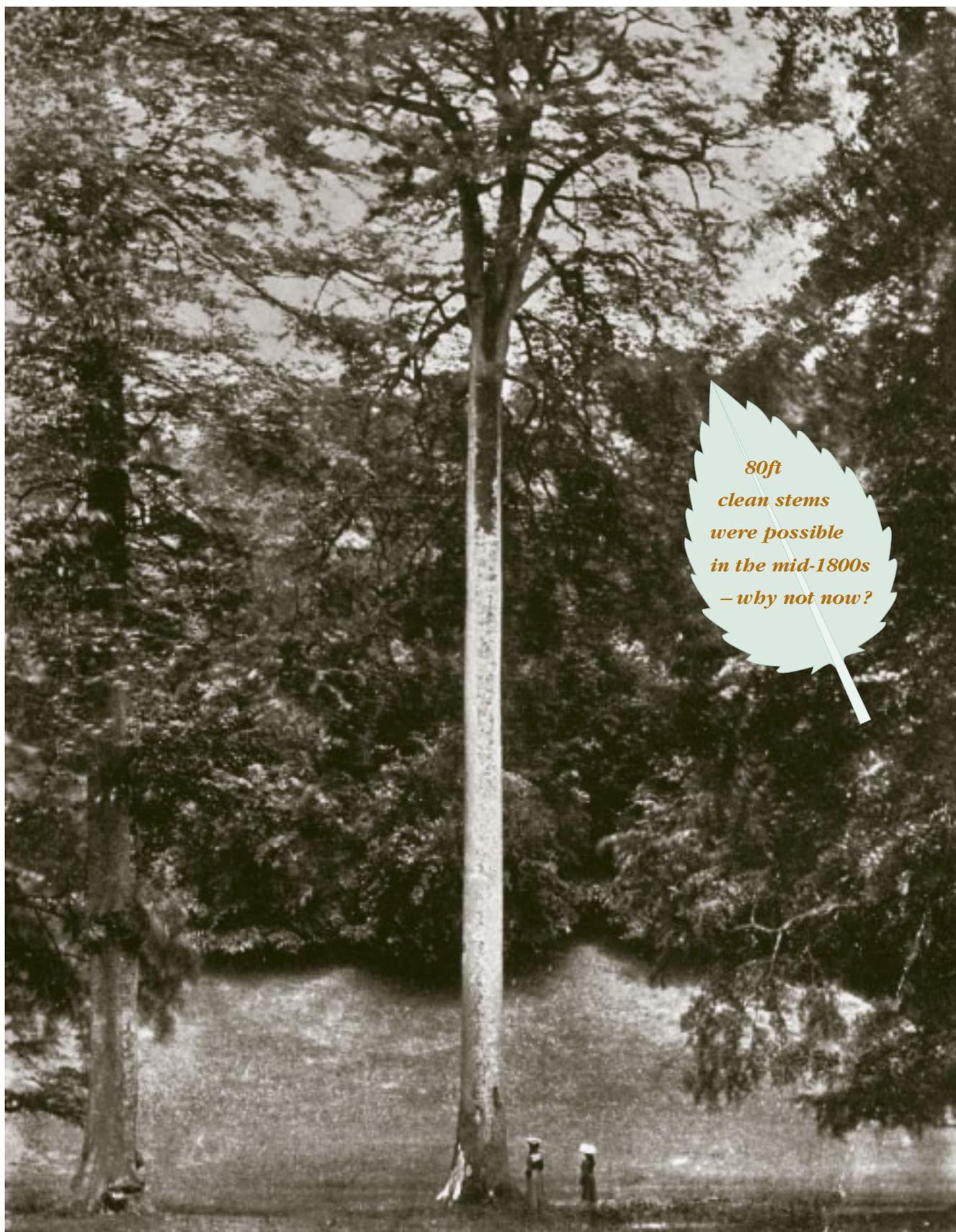
Should be sent to Lewis Scott and should contain details of the proposed travel including costs and a brief (1 page maximum) CV. Applicants should also ask one independent referee to write separately and in confidence to Lewis Scott in support of their application.

Successful applicants will be expected to produce a short article/report with photographs on their travel for publication in the Woodland Heritage Journal.

*Catch up on back issues of Woodland Heritage Journal*



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