

Managing Woodlands for Added Value

This one day event on Friday 18th July 2014 was attended by Gary Cowell and Angie Zelter for KTAT and written up by Angie. We think it is always a good idea to write up our courses and events so that the knowledge and contacts can be shared.

The event showed how the conversion of timber into marketable products can add value to the raw material. Ranging from firewood to fencing and milled timber and woven panels to chairs and signs. It was hosted by Toby and Aly at 'Say it With Wood' at Leighton Court, Much Cowarne, Herefordshire, HR8 2UN, 07811 852704 and 07800 578308 toby@sayitwithwood.co.uk <http://www.sayitwithwood.co.uk/> The day was organised by Harriet Wood from Heartwoods 01952-435860 harrietwood@smallwoods.org.uk

First of all we visited their processing, storage and selling yard and stores. Aly talked it through with us.

They work almost exclusively in chestnut and at first took their equipment into the woods where they were felling, cleared a flat area and did much of their cutting to size and processing on the spot as this was more cost effective as it

used less fuel and there was less handling of the timber. However, they are now mostly processing in this yard as they have bought larger and better machinery for processing and can process more efficiently here.



They fell around 6 to 7 hectares per year within a 14 miles radius of their yard and know all of the chestnut stands in their area now. They mostly fell 20 to 30 year old chestnut as chestnut starts to spiral and get shakes at around 60 years and is not so good for making into stakes and other straight products.

They buy standing timber – at an average of around £12 per square metre although it depends on the quality of the trees and access (which can be a massive problem) – range in price can be from £0 to £25 per square metre.

They reckon that soft-wood for fencing, poles, stakes and strainers sometimes only lasts 3 or 4 years before rotting whereas even in boggy land chestnut lasts 15 years and more - usually up to 30 plus years. Having the bark on or off makes little difference except to appearance.

Any wood that cannot be made into a product that they can sell for added value is chopped for firewood and stacked for 2 years before being sold or sold immediately as 8' cordwood. However, as fire-wood prices are very high at the moment, if they need to help their cash flow they might sell a large quantity for firewood. They reckon on selling their firewood at £45 cubic metre. Whereas with a little processing, say to fence posts of 6' lengths, just pointed, they can sell at £132 cubic metre.

They use a range of high and low tech procedures for processing their wood and have 5 or 6 workers in their yard some only working a couple of days a week and learning on the job.

Splitting – the greener the wood is the better for this (and for cleaving).



As it is split along the grain it is much stronger than if just sawn. The split tends to go towards the smaller side so flip the wood so that the heavier side is on the bottom



Firewood – they bought their machinery second-hand, it runs off the tractor engine. It is a Japa and the feed is very safe. They chop into 8 to 10” lengths after sawing into manageable lengths to feed in the machine.



Cleaving – is done from the butt end. And the log is balanced on two logs with one behind to stop it moving.





Tools being used – splitting maul, axe head, 4 or 5 wedges.



Pointing – they had a peeler and a pointer machine but it can be done by hand. Longer points, like these illustrated, are better for ease of use

Sawing into lengths – a chainsaw was attached to a structure to enable safe sawing. Wooden rollers were attached to a structure to enable a log to be examined and then rolled to be cut.



Trestles of different heights and lengths make a real difference to comfort and speed. And were used all around the yard for different purposes.



Products and Selling prices – some prices are below but for more detail see their website at <http://www.sayitwithwood.co.uk/index.php/fencing/fencing-and-prices/stakes-and-stock-fencing>

Strainers 7' by 5-6" diam = £6.30 each

Stakes 6' by 4" diam = £2.20 each

Laths = £3.50 per square foot

Log rolls = £10

Bird boxes = £10 each

Bench = £90 each



In the afternoon Toby showed us a wood where they were extracting wood by horses. Crunchy usually charges £120 per day as his rate plus petrol costs to get the horses to the site. The slope was less than that at Llangunllo and was probably the limit of slope that horses can manage. It is best to use horses where the value is high and the diameter small. Reckons he can move 10 - 12 cubic metres per day.



He also showed us that the natural regeneration of the chestnut was good on the areas he had logged previously and he reckons that in 20 years time he can coppice it again.