



## Timber Talks

regular news from  
WLW & PRO

Issue 195

January/February 2011

**Hardwoods • Machining • Worktops • Cladding • Decking • Gates • Fencing  
and so much more.....**

### Green Supplies — Good Carbon Footprint

How about this for Green Credentials.

We recently bought a quantity of Scots pine logs that were milled on our local estate. From our yard, as the crow flies, that is approx 5 miles away. This is on an area of FSC accredited land.

The timber was brought in to be part kiln dried. These boards are for an external application

as polo pitch boards surrounding the polo pitch to prevent the polo balls leaving the ground.

The volume of timber brought in was 22.50m<sup>3</sup>

The timber was then machined - planed all round, and the ends tongue and grooved. Holes were then drilled to take securing pins. It was then delivered to the local Polo Club. From extracting the timber and mill-

ing it, part kiln drying it, to machining and delivering the boards, the timber never left a geographical square 5 x 5 miles in area!!! The local estate using its own timber and local people to crop, and us using local people to mill and manufacture all so local!

It would be nice to gain more work such as this and keep work in this local area.

#### Offer

**Scottish Elm  
Through & Through**

**27mm - £1135.00m<sup>3</sup>  
(waiting kilning)**

**54mm - £1220.00m<sup>3</sup>  
65mm - £2015.00m<sup>3</sup>  
80mm - £2230.00m<sup>3</sup>  
Some kiln dried some  
air drying  
All + VAT**

### A Mother of all Boules



The tape ran out at 5m !! ringed

Taking all of our existing team into account, our timber knowledge extends well over 400 years and we still get surprises.

A chance comment at a French sawmill led us to a huge 2" (60mm) thick Euro Oak Boule that the company had kept Air Drying for some time. It measured 8.1m long and pushing towards 1m in diameter. We suspect that it was there be-

cause it was so big that they weren't sure what to do with it! The grade is first quality and the timber is beautiful.

Over the last 10 to 15 years the average diameter of Oak logs in Europe has gradually reduced. Because it has been over a number of years it has not been noticed.

This Boule reminds us of the "good old days" and the importance of our work in checking that forests are well managed.

If you have a job for this Boule we would welcome you to have a look at it (as long as we have some notice!).

European Oak is still the most popular hardwood species we sell and is used in construction,

joinery, flooring and kitchens. It's durability and looks are unmatched by any other timber. We can supply it sawn in large beams, in Boules (waney edged boards with bark on the edges of the planks) or square edged timber. Oak from the same Boule will provide the greatest consistency of colour and grain. We mainly stock first quality in thicknesses from 18mm up to 100mm and also have some Character grades available.



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**Our updated website was launched just before Christmas, lots more information and pictures of our products. Have a look, link below.**

## Timber Talks



### Offer

English Ash  
Through & Through

Big and wide—kiln dried

54mm - £745.00m<sup>3</sup> +vat

## The Return of the GRIBBLE, fact not fiction!!

If you were asked what a “Gribble” is, what would you say? People have come up with all sorts of replies. From paint effects to an intestine disorder; to a skin irritation; to a mispronounced geriatric spittle.

However, all of these guesses are incorrect. It is a small marine bug which exists in millions, eating away at timbers situated in marine environments.

They are so efficient they chomp through Ekki and Greenheart, both very dense timbers, with great vigour, as we would a chocolate bar.

Currently with sea temperatures rising they are spreading around the coast and harbours of the UK. They are

also thriving due to the reduction in pollution around our coasts.

Gribbles have some fifty plus species. Their Latin name is Limnoriidae or Limnoria. They can, in the right conditions, between high and low water marks, eat through 65mm of Greenheart in 7/10 years! Softwood in 2/5 years! They are only approx 4/5mm long but live in colonies. However, a ‘Super Gribble Species’ has been found in the Shoreham harbour basin possibly due to the higher than average water temperature from the power station outlet. These are thought to be up to 8/9mm and are eating the lock gates and piles at an increasing rate.

Many hardwood and softwood species have been tested by placing measured samples into a tank, and over a given time period a pellet count (of faecal material) on the timber sample were counted, and ranked in low to high numbers of pellets, according to the macerations of the Gribble.

This is having quite an impact on our off shore defence systems. A handful of us Gribble watchers are paying particular note to the results that are being obtained.

On a positive note, there are current studies being undertaken by York and Portsmouth Universities to establish if the Gribble can be farmed to produce Ethanol for fuel, a positive part of the cycle.

## Westernbirt Hardwood Timber Auction



We again attended the annual hardwood auction at Westernbirt in November last year, the bulk of the lots were from the Forestry Commission.

Having looked at the lots available, 50 in all, we could only find one lot that was worth measuring. Located in the Forest of Dean, we spent a long day viewing the lots that we had selected (4 or 5), and measured just the one. Even that lot did not contain very much first quality Oak, but with ideas of where we could use the lower quality timber in the parcel, we went to auction.

Having set our bid limit, we missed the lot by a few hun-

dred pounds. Why not bid on you may ask? Well you have to stop some where and know your limits.

What is sadder, is that there is so little first quality timber available in the UK. Much of what was auctioned was beam quality, and probably an even greater quantity went for fuel wood, a growing market in the UK.

But what to the future? With the government cuts, it is almost inevitable that the Forestry Commission will be forced to sell part of their estate. Good thing or bad thing? Well if it is bought by people who are forestry minded then perhaps it is positive. But most people who

invest want a return in a relatively short time. That rules out hardwoods !!!

We feel that whatever happens with the Forestry Commission and our national forests, a more commercial view has to be taken on the hardwoods that grow there.

It seems that the government has, at least in the past, paid too much attention to promoting the forests as a leisure resource and not paid enough interest to our national hardwoods. It is clear that the UK has not given our industry as much assistance as other European countries have. Thus there are only 6 or 7 large hardwood sawmills left!!

**Don't forget, WESTS WOODSHOW 2011 will be here again on Friday 6 & Saturday 7 May. Do you do something interesting with wood? Call Jo or Sonia in our shop and they will chat to you about being part of the 2011 event.**

## Spring is approaching

What a winter! I don't think any of us could have envisaged such a harsh and early winter. Especially a repeat from late 2009 and early

2010. In the South of England we certainly have not seen conditions quite as bad for a few decades.

But good news is on the way, at the beginning of the second full week in January

when we went home, there was a distinctly lighter sky, the days are definitely becoming longer.

Very soon we will all be getting into our gardens and sorting out the weeds.

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But there will be more substantial jobs as well. The winter will have taken its toll on your fences and gates as well.

Did you know that we can supply, and supply and fit most fences and gates?

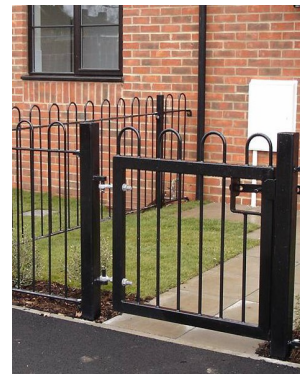
Our dedicated fencing divi-

sion is based in Farnham and run by two family members — Martin West and Chris West.

Our portfolio is wide ranging from traditional timber fences, both Oak and Softwood fences and gates, through to metal security and sports ground fencing.

We make all of our own hardwood gates at our site in Selham. From standard field and hunting gates to bespoke entrance gates.

Give the team a call with your enquiry and have a look on our website for additional information.



## Working in Partnership

After much hard work, last year we secured a 5 year contract with Brighton & Hove Council. We are now well into the working relationship with them.

The autumn and winter months have involved sheep proof fencing, much of it on the South Downs. This can be cleft rail with stock netting or just netting on chestnut stakes.

The South Downs are a popular walking area, and some of our maintenance work involves the hunting gates that appear on the footpaths. We ensure that they are installed to be 'self closing', unfortunately not all walkers understand the Country Code to close gates after them!

We are delighted that the council has been using Oak

and Chestnut in the fencing and gates.

Back to a traditional species of timber.

Variety is the spice of life, so they say, and our work with the authority is definitely varied, from chain link around allotments to parkland with knee rail fencing, bollards or dragons teeth.



Brighton & Hove City Council



## A peep in the past

In the early nineteen thirties a steam engine was installed in the yard at Midhurst to become the powerhouse which would run the newly built sawmills.

This replaced the old sawing method of pit sawing, which originally would have been carried out in the woods where the timber was felled and then latterly in the permanent yard at Midhurst. The yard at Midhurst was in the grounds of the railway goods yard and close to the means of transport for the Company's sawn products. The better efficiency of this occurred in the middle nineteen twenties when motor transport replaced horse drawn transport and the round logs could be loaded and transported by road.

Pit sawing consisted of a pit some eight feet deep and four feet wide and of varying lengths but generally such that it suited the length of the logs being sawn. Two cross beams would span across the pit supporting the round log and a saw with a handle at

each end would be used by two sawyers. The sawyer in the pit would be the powerhouse and his job was to pull the saw through the timber making the cut. He would invariably be continually covered in sawdust and he was known as "the under dog". The other sawyer would stand on top of the log and his job was to guide the saw so that it made a straight cut and then to raise the saw ready for the next cut, he was known as "the top dog". The better job was of course the top dog and it is interesting to note how these terms are still used today. It would take around a week to saw a log of 3/4" Oak or Elm planks 7 feet long for "coffin" boards or about four boards per day. Compare that with the sawing of a similar log today in a modern mill which would take about 10 or 15 minutes.

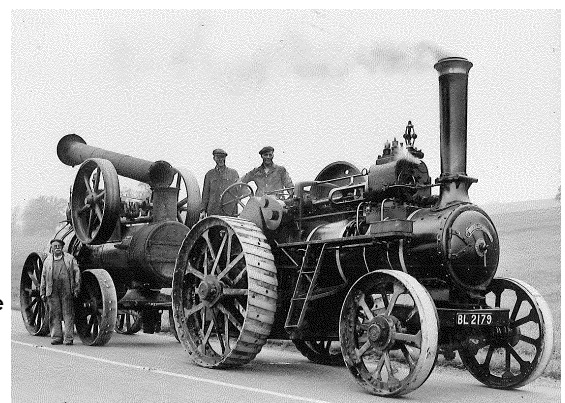
It is hardly surprising that the partners wanted to ease the pain of pit sawing and increase production mechanically, and this was achieved

by the installation of a static steam engine.

The sawmills consisted of a Guilliet bandsaw, a push bench band re-saw, one circular saw and one or two cross-cut saws, these were connected to the steam engine by means of continuous belts and transfer shafts. The steam engine was fired up daily at about 5 am in order to get up sufficient steam for the sawmills to commence sawing at 7 am.

Eventually the sawmill was converted to electricity in about 1951 and the engine was sold.

The purchaser collected the engine and towed it to Billingshurst using his own mobile traction engine. (see photo)



### Offer

**Cedar of Lebanon Through & Through**

**Well air dried quantities of 0.30m<sup>3</sup>+**

**20mm - £780.00m<sup>3</sup>**

**27mm - £882.50m<sup>3</sup>**

**34mm - £940.00m<sup>3</sup>**

**54mm - £980.00m<sup>3</sup>**  
**All + VAT**

Big enough to cope, small enough to care — a family run business.

W. L. WEST & SONS LTD

**Offer**

**Flooring**

**Solid light character sound Euro Oak flooring 10/12% moisture content. Prices on quantities of 30m<sup>2</sup>+**

**160mm x 19mm - £34.50m<sup>2</sup>  
180mm x 19mm - £36.50m<sup>2</sup>  
200mm x 19mm - £38.50m<sup>2</sup>  
ALL + VAT**



**And finally.....**

It's amazing what you can find in timber. Over the years we have found a variety of items in different species.

Some have grown into the tree and some have been put into cavities in the tree.

Some 40 years ago Peter Alderson, our Round Timber Buyer and Sawmill Manager discovered a musket rifle hidden within a log being cut in the sawmill.

It was in a pretty rough condition and Peter thinks that someone had used a crevice within the tree to hide the rifle. When the owner died the tree would have continued to grow around it, keeping it hidden for over a century.

More recently, we have found barbed wire, shrapnel, old fence and gate fittings the list is endless.

Some items cannot easily be seen, iron or steel in Oak reacts with the Tannic Acid in the timber and causes a blue/black stain, a clear indicator of a foreign body in the timber. We can then use a metal detector to locate the offending item.

On the left you can see the remains of a bullet discovered only after we had machined some flooring!!

But we have also found more unusual items as well. On the right you can see a whole horseshoe. This was found as it is pictured, in a log of Lime. This had been bought in France and had come from some woodland near Reims.

The saw just glanced one edge, the sound attracted our sawyer to the fact that there was something in the timber.

After splitting the log we looked closer at the horseshoe, there is a stain vertically, not easily seen on the picture below, which by counting the rings, it was established that it was put there during the second world war. We surmise that it may have been hammered into a tree for tethering a horse! Artistic licence? Perhaps!



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**W.L. West & Sons Ltd  
Selham  
Petworth  
West Sussex  
GU28 0PJ**

**Phone: 01798 861611  
Fax: 01798 861633  
[sales@wlwest.co.uk](mailto:sales@wlwest.co.uk)  
[www.wlwest.co.uk](http://www.wlwest.co.uk)**

**PRO Fencing  
4 Coxbridge Business Park  
Alton Road  
Farnham  
GU10 5EH**

**Phone: 01252 726391  
Fax: 01252 726392  
[enquiries@profencing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@profencing.co.uk)  
[www.profencing.co.uk](http://www.profencing.co.uk)**