



Timber Talks

*regular news from
WLW & PRO*

Issue 199

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

That was the year that was 2012

Well as this newsletter goes to print we are approaching Christmas. Where, Oh Where did 2012 go?

There are many in the timber trade who would prefer to forget 2012. Trading has been probably as bad as it gets in our industry, we certainly think it has probably been one of the worst trading years.

This year we seem to have lost all seasons!! There seems to be little difference between the four traditional seasons. Monsoon would be a better descrip-



Photo credit to Kennysarmy via Flickr

tion with probably the wettest year on record. In March we had an unusually warm and pleasant period, followed in April by a hosepipe ban - the trigger for rain, rain and more rain. Indeed I don't think there has been a week without rain since. We tend to be used to it as we are located in a flood plain, and the local river floods regularly. But you have to have

sympathy with those many people who have lost their life long belongings.

Could this affect our industry? Well we have certainly noticed differences in some hedgerow plants losing or not producing much if any fruit. So we could well see a different growth pattern this year.

But how could we forget 2012?

One of the major events of the year was the Queens Diamond Jubilee and it certainly gave the UK a warm feeling, but it did seem to affect trading. We were pleased to have a very small timber supply involvement in the building of the *Gloriana* (pictured right), Built by our customer Mark Edwards, it was funded by a group led by Lord Sterling and gifted to the Queen in celebration of her Diamond jubilee.

We hosted one of the world greats - The Olympic Games. Our Olympians won a good amount of medals and did GB proud. We gained a very small amount of business from the event, but we think we also lost business through the event being held. The spread over eight weeks again certainly had an affect on trading. Businesses in

London reported a decline in turnover, when the Olympic committee was projecting a boom time for the leisure industry.

Leading up to the Olympics the Olympic torch

touched every part of the UK and went past the end of our road (at speed as it was between running events).

From an International point of view, we have seen European finance almost hit the self destruct button. We were at an event earlier in the year at the Institute of Directors, and the chief economist for the IoD was projecting Greece withdrawing from the EU by the end of the summer, and may be followed closely by Spain and Italy. That has not materialised, and I think we all are thankful for that. It would inevitably have led to greater uncertainty across Europe.

Let's look forward to our economy improving in 2013.



Gloriana - Gifted to HM The Queen

Photo credit to Darren Clarke via Flickr

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Timber Talks

Weathered Beams



Historically most of the demand for Oak Beams has been for Fresh Sawn timber i.e. Oak cut from fresh logs. Our mill has been cutting Oak Beams for decades and generally they are used for constructional applications

such as barn conversions or gate posts where clean faces of freshly sawn timber are required.

More recently we have seen an increasing demand for air dried Beams. Ones that have been allowed to dry naturally for several years. Over time the weather causes the surfaces of the Beams to fry and dry in the sun, or soak and bloat in the rain. This constant action makes the Beams gradually

dry out but where the surface shrinks faster than its core, checks and splits develop. Some have a more wild grain and knots that give the beam great character, useful in the current trend for use of Oak in buildings.

The idea of using air dried Beams is that the Oak will have completed most of its shrinkage naturally before it is installed and will be more stable.

As we all know timber breathes so after installation some changes will occur during the seasons in the same way that a door or window may stick in winter but become free in summer.

We have stock of over 300 Oak Beams in thicknesses from 50mm to 300mm and lengths from 1.5m up to some

6.0m monsters! In the main they are between 4 and 10 years old and have greyed with age. We can re-saw them to any size required or



check with our French partner for any unusual sizes.

We have the ability to plane beams to order or to cut profiles using specialist equipment.

Call our sales team for your requirements.

OFFER

Cedar of Lebanon

20mm T/T £955.00m³
good lengths and good widths excellent stock

27mm T/T £1005.00m³ + vat as above

54mm square edge
approx 2.10 / 2.20m
good widths kiln dried
£1200.00m³ +vat
rare and very useful

New Faces in Sales

There have been changes afoot. Sally Sparkes has returned to us as external sales for the South East region. Sally left us five years ago for the Greek sun, but is back and covering Kent, East Sussex and some of Surrey. She is contactable on 07436 545517, call her if you would like a visit.

We have expanded into the Oxford/High Wycombe areas, and to cover this area, Emma Walters has joined the team as an external sales person for that area. New to our industry, Emma has a bubbly character and has been putting her heart into learning about our industry.

She has started to visit her clients in the Home Counties area, call her on 07436 806989 for a visit.

Cat Paquette has joined us to be the office backup for Mike Dalman. Cat is also new to our industry but she is making good inroads into the intricacies of timber.

Current markets

The Euro Oak market has been a significant issue during this year. The current economic market has had timber merchants at each others throats ripping the very last penny out of this commodity.

The softwood companies who sell Oak, appear not to care, or worry about replacement stocks. Moreover, they have driven down the price, by offering lower and lower grade mixes.

Once it was quite clear that Oak was sold on a European basis and now due to grade

boundary changes how does the customer compare like for like?

We are now offering the Super Prime Euro Oak for top joinery in Square Edge, Through and Through ex Boules cut and dried by ourselves for the very long and wide stock, stair strings for example.

We now have FAS stock which is to compete with the rest of the market. We have perhaps been too slow to react because of the 50 Shades of Grade that there are in Oak!!

Replacement prices are increasing, Oak is the only imported species in to the UK which has slightly grown compared to all the others which have declined as aggregate demand has fallen away. Imports of sawn timber have fallen by approx 40% in these last 5 years.

It is important that we are clear on what your grade requirements are when quoting, many is the time that we have found after losing a quote that what was eventually accepted was a different grade to that which we had quoted for.

OFFER

Well air dried e Oak beams
Good stocks good range of sizes POA. Re-sawing facilities available
Machining/drilling
Planing
Scroll cutting

So... What has been happening to our Home grown forests?

Confor's recent Conference declared a good opportunity to invest in more woodland. A target set aimed at 15% of UK under forest cover by 2060, an increase of 600,000 hectares. Currently less than 40% of our woodland is harvested, however the need for biomass fuels increases annually. Our current estimated forest cover is 10% - 12%

By having more woodland it's thought that by 2020 this would create 7000 new jobs plus millions of tons of natural carbon reduction. We have to change our view on woodland management, it's not just there for rambling and mountain biking.

'More trees on Farms' was one quote, which is OK but if the trees are not grown in big numbers they only make semi decent timber but ideal for fuel which of course can be rotated on a cropping cycle.

These plans are still on the drawing board, in some people's view too late, France has over 27% of its land given over to forest, with Germany and Italy over 30%.

Re-planting and re-forestation is quite a small investment in comparison to other long term capital projects but it needs to be government led and controlled so that the benefits will be there for future generations, not just the London Investment Lenders with a mentality of smash and grab in 5/10 years.

Defra is due to respond to this recommendation outline by Jan 2013 which in these terms is quick!

The cost to increase our indigenous forest cover will be an estimated £6.50 billion. This, it was suggested would mean a 500% increase in re-planting to be sustained over

50 years.

There is a need for a dual approach to planting. Only 15 -18% of UK timber makes a joinery outcome. But there is a growing requirement for biomass for energy creation. It is argued that we reached the peak of oil production some time ago. However, shale oil has yet to be developed. This renewable resource not only provides a cleaner air filtration system but for every growing 1 ton of timber it locks up approx 1.48 tons of Carbon.

Earlier this year Ash dieback (Chalara fraxinea) was found in our native Ash trees. This species has been a very useful timber to our economy, although less popular in the last few years, as it has 'fallen out of fashion'. This is sad because it is an exceptional timber in both wood bending and shock absorption. It's a great furniture timber but can be



'Kebonised' and treated with other chemicals which makes the timber usable externally.

Ash dieback (Chalara fraxinea) is populated through airborne fungi spores, it is almost impossible to prevent the spread. Only in spring when the trees come into leaf will the real extent of this problem be fully realised. Although first seen in the UK this year, it has been evident in Europe for nearly 20 years. But one has to remember this is commercially less significant

than the fungi affecting the Larch Tree population which has more of a commercial impact to the UK economy. Sawmilling for Larch in this last year has gone from approx 770,000m³ to 925,000m³. Larch has been seen as a premium home grown species but the prices have dropped, with volumes of Larch being stockpiled. Larch has a hugely more value to the market than Ash.

The spring will reveal just how much of the Ash population has suffered, if the trees do not come into leaf in the spring, this will be a sure sign of a greater problem than first thought. However any problems with tree infections are brutal to the landscape and economy. The Elm was a significant legacy of this, it is amazing to think that the fungi carried in the knee caps of the beetles would decimate the countryside.

Greater bio security may be needed when moving plants between countries. This disease was identified as originating from growers in Holland, similarly, so was the Oak Processionary Moth.

It seems that sapling stocks have been moved into our country without great enough control over the plants. Some in the timber and forestry industry feel that there is little that can be done for mature Ash trees that are affected, and that we should be concentrating our efforts on preventing other similar occurrences. Clearly any wind born diseases that come across the English Channel or North Sea are a natural occurrence and therefore difficult to control, but plants being transported by road, rail, air can be controlled and we definitely should pay more attention to this area.



OFFER

Elm Kiln dried Scottish

27mm T/T £975.00m³

54mm T/T £1236.00m³

65mm T/T £1425.00m³

80mm T/T £1766.00m³ Rare and full of tight

Character

Prices all +VAT

OFFER

Sycamore

27mm T/T £1066.00m³

34mm T/T £1130.00m³

41mm T/T £1200.00m³

54mm T/T £1270.00m³

Yew

27mm T/T £1765.75m³

54mm T/T £1950.00m³

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

W. L. WEST & SONS LTD

And finally..... Are we fit?



Well Some of us are!!

Chris West, who works as a surveyor and estimator for our fencing contracting department, PRO Fencing and who is one of Walter Luke's (WLW) great grandsons, ran the Edinburgh Marathon in May this year. He chose this race because it is run on the flat and it is also easier to get one's application accepted. He and his wife have friends who live in Edinburgh, so this gave them the opportunity to have a few days holiday in Scotland. His time was a commendable five hours and nine minutes. He also ran the Survival of the Fittest 11k obstacle course in Cardiff earlier in the year getting a respectable 1:41:57. Chris also plays rugby for Midhurst in the winter and cricket for Midhurst in the summer.

Sammy Pett who is one of our administration team and who is also one of Walter Luke's great granddaughters, this year, on 7th October, completed the Royal Parks Half Marathon in London. She was running in aid of the Eve Ap-

peal, which is a charity that aims to improve the prevention, detection, treatment and care of all five gynaecological cancers; a charity very close to her heart after her Mum lost her Mother to uterine cancer when she was just 20 years old. She completed the race in a respectable 3hrs 9min raising £400 for her charity's. She says that the feeling crossing the finish line was a huge sense of relief and accomplishment. The Royal Parks Half Marathon is a fantastic race to be a part of as the route takes you through beautiful London Parks as well as past iconic attractions, for example The London Eye and Buckingham Palace.

Gerard Magill - our timber buyer chose to cycle from John O'Groats to Lands End in July this year. Our haulier is an avid cyclist and invited Gerard to join a group who took the challenge to cycle the length of the country. Taking 8 days and 960 miles, they cycled an average of 120 miles per day. Gerard says that there were many highs and an

equal amount of lows!! But he did raise £1200 for Multiple Sclerosis Society. The whole group raised more than £8000 - a commendable sum of money.

Many others in our team also play sport on a regular basis. **Seb Linke** who works at PRO Fencing plays rugby with Chris.

Craig Thorpe who looks after our logistics and stock control turns out regularly for Stedham Football Club as a mid-field player. He has been playing for the team for over 5 years, incidently, the West family originates from Stedham with many of the family playing there over the years.

From a more gentle point of view, **Richard Pett** our workshop manager does favour a game of bowls.

So in conclusion - yes at least some of us are!!

OFFER

Caucasian Elm
54mm T/T kiln
dried £700.00m³

English 1st grade CND
Beech kiln dried T/T
41mm T/T £530.00m³

All prices +vat

Go to www.wlwest.co.uk for our normal offers



The mark of responsible forestry



Member of the
Timber Trade Federation



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