

## WORKING WOODS SCOTLAND 2022

In September this year ASHS had its second ever run of the Working Woods Scotland course. The first run (October 2021) was a great success with attendees, trainers, and (most importantly perhaps) funders! A second course was clearly very much on the cards. Applications started coming in before the dust had even settled on the first course.

Furthermore, off the back of the success of the first course, we are now in the process of creating an alternative 2-day version of the course, in collaboration with ICF, that is specifically designed for foresters.

*Here is a review of this year's course, from one of our participants.*

### *Working Woods Scotland: it's THE place to go*

If you are interested in learning more about the management of broadleaves for hardwood production, the processing of timber, or if you are looking into setting up your own sawmill - or just want to improve your current set up - the Working Woods course is THE place to go. With a melting pot of professionals and like-minded enthusiastic people, you learn so much, and come out on the other side, not only with a greater understanding of the industry, but also the confidence required to take yourself in whatever direction you want to go within the Scottish hardwood sector.

Having talked to previous attendees I was excited to start the course (at last!) on the Tuesday morning - although I must admit I was slightly fearful of the infamous hoppus foot! After our initial meet and greet in one of the lean-tos at the Scottish Wood yard - where we were supplied with bountiful cups of tea and biscuits - we sat down and got straight to business.

Of course, the first subject we covered had to be the Hoppus Foot!

Out came Gavin Munro's quarter girth tape, as he started telling us all about how to measure the volume of a log. To my great relief, it actually seemed quite simple; perhaps my leg was being pulled; or perhaps it was just Gavin's excellent tutelage!

With a lifetime of experience under his belt, there was no question that Gavin couldn't answer. I'm sure he, his dry sense of humour, and his loathing of softwood (or weeds as he prefers to call them) will be greatly missed in all future courses, as this one was his last. Having said that, his successor Kate Tuer was equally knowledgeable despite being almost 50 years his junior!

On the second day we were lucky enough to go to Dalmeny Estate and learn about silviculture with Andy MacQueen, Rick Worrell, and Kate. This is a subject which I personally knew very little about, and therefore learned an awful lot! Moving between stands of trees of different ages enabled me to visualise the whole process, and the amount of attention and effort required to take a plantation from seed to final crop.

It's a lot to process, especially for a newcomer to the topic, but Rick, Andy, and Kate's enthusiastic and hands on approach really helped the information sink in.

The last day saw a return to Scottish Wood where the logs that we had measured and priced up on the Tuesday had been milled; some 'through and through' and some into beams. We then went over each board and beam noting their flaws and pricing them accordingly, with the help and expertise of Jim Birley, the founder of Scottish Wood. This exercise really highlighted how much value can be added to a log through the milling and drying process.





However, in my opinion, the most valuable thing from the course is not necessarily all the new information you learn, but the people you meet. It was great meeting so many like-minded people and everyone is willing to help you, no matter what; everyone wants each other to succeed, and competition is encouraged rather than stamped out (something rarely seen in other industries).

*This is where ASHS and its members must be applauded. The way it supports small businesses to grow is exemplary, and both ASHS and the WWS course are a credit to the industry.*



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