The Wood Store

Reported By: Grade 7A

The beginning

During the winter of 2005-2006 a storm passed through Nottinghamshire. Many trees were blown over by the gale force winds that accompanied the drenching rain.

Meanwhile, a friendship was developing between the owners of a woodland in Sherwood Forest and a Cabinet Maker living nearby. The woodland owner had surveyed his wood after the storm and found two dozen or so trees on the ground. A conversation one evening round the dinner table led to the forming of an idea for a business cooperation that would result in the trees being turned into furniture and other beautiful objects instead of being chopped up for firewood.

Sustainability & Environmental Impact

One thing that was important for everyone involved was that the woodland environment should not be compromised by the use of heavy machinery to get the fallen trees out. After all, it is an ancient woodland, dating back almost 1000 years and although the trees themselves are not that old, the potential for archaeology below the ground has yet to be fully explored. The owner did not want to risk disturbing or compacting the ground underfoot.

A solution was found

Equipment exists that allows trees to be cut into planks in situ using just a chainsaw mounted on a jig. The beauty of this system is that every part of the equipment is portable, so it can be carried to the most inaccessible parts of the woodland without disturbing or destroying the surrounding flora or fauna.

The first tree

So it was that in May 2006 the first tree – an Oak, some 150 years old, was milled and the process began. Continuing with the ‘low environmental impact’ theme, all the timber from this and other trees was to be air-dried (as opposed to being commercially Kiln dried which is a much faster process, but one which requires considerable power consumption).

To air dry Oak requires 1 year for every 25mm plus a year; so a 50mm board will take 3 years to dry out to the point where it can be placed into a kiln for the final drying process. By the time the first Oak boards were ready to go into a kiln, the Cabinet Maker had built a Solar Kiln to take them, thus extending the ‘sustainability’ theme a step further. Furniture made from this tree was exhibited in the company’s first exhibition in 2010.

Expansion – a chance encounter

The business stayed quite local for a number of years until the Cabinet Maker, now also making a name for Tree Milling Services, was contacted by the Nuns of Notting Hill in 2012. A Copper Beech tree had blown over in their garden, blocking a path. Searching the internet for a solution that would not simply result in a pile of firewood from this much-loved tree, the Bursar contacted the Cabinet Maker to ask if he would mill it. They couldn’t afford to pay for the service, but would he take the timber as payment.

This caused the Cabinet Maker some considerable dilemma; Notting Hill is about 200km from Nottingham. It was going to cost him £400-£500 in fuel and other costs, not to mention 2-3 days’ unpaid time. That is a big investment for a small business, and a huge leap of faith! To date, most of that money is still tied up in the Copper Beech, but the timber has been relocated to the Cabinet Maker’s wood store and is, finally, beginning to pay for itself.

Patience rewarded

In the meantime, four London Plane trees, planted in the 1850s when the Carmelite Monastery was built, were going to have to be taken down. Their roots were affecting the foundations of the buildings. Again, the trees were offered to the Cabinet Maker, and again he had to consider the short-term investment against the long-term profit. This is an on-going project as the biggest section – some 1250mm diameter and 2400mm long – is still waiting to be milled. The good news is that a considerable amount of the London Plane that’s already milled and been air drying for a couple of years has been sold and will soon be used in the restoration of a Georgian farm house in Lincolnshire. The investment is starting to pay dividends.

Completing the process

Timber from other trees is also ready to be converted; some of the Yew, for example the Atlas Blue, as well as some of the Oak. These are trees that the client has paid to have milled with a view to having one or more pieces of furniture made from ‘their’ tree. But before that can happen, the Cabinet Maker will need to sit down with the clients to discuss and agree the designs.

It is always challenging for the Cabinet Maker when a client thinks they know best and insists on a design that either does not maximise the artistic potential of the wood or indeed of the Cabinet Maker’s artistic capability. He much prefers to make to his own designs. This gives him the freedom to choose the best way to show off the grain or any unusual characteristics of the wood that result in a unique piece of functional art. Only in this way can the sum of all his knowledge and skills be brought together with his passion for his art.

The Wood Store Products

Although we recognise that people prefer to see the furniture for themselves, it is possible to buy from the website. Shipping can be arranged. Please use the enquiry form on the website if you would like to purchase a piece, stating destination, to enable us to provide a delivered price. Below is a catalogue of available pieces:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The Wood Store Catalogue** | | |
| Description | Wood | Price |
| Box Settle | Oak | £3588.00 |
| Upholstered Settle | Sweet Chestnut | £2956.00 |
| Child’s Settle | Yew | £585.00 |
| Pedestal Table | Yew | £1053.00 |
| Coffee Table | Oak | £2956.00 |
| Octagonal Coffee Table | Oak | £2964.00 |
| Book Case | Sweet Chestnut | £1068.00 |
| Coffer | Sweet Chestnut | £2800.00 |

Where to see made items

Pieces from the Cabinet Maker’s collection can be seen at exhibitions. Here is a list of some currently planned exhibitions:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Exhibitions** | | | |
| Location | Year | Start date | End date |
| Southwell Minster | 2017 | 3rd July | 29th July |
| Rufford Gallery | 2017 | 29th March | 8th May |
| Canons Ashby House | 2017 | 23rd July | 31st August |
| Rufford Gallery | 2018 | 3rd April | 7th May |
| Hardwick Park Centre | 2017 | 4th April | 13th April |
| Floralands | 2017 | 14th November | 24th December |
| Southwell Minster | 2017 | 5th April | 30th April |
| Patchings Art Festival | 2017 | 6th June | 9th June |
| Whisby Natural World Centre | 2017 | 6th June | 13th July |