

From the Chair of Trustees

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From the Chair of Trustees

James Walmsley



I confess I've not found it easy to find the words for this article; reflecting perhaps the very highest regard that I hold for previous Chairs of Woodland Heritage. Their life and career achievements are simply remarkable. So it goes without saying what an honour it is to take on the role of Chair of Woodland Heritage for a year. Since joining the charity in 2010 and then becoming a trustee in 2012, I find it hard to believe just how much it has changed. Looking back now, I have a greater appreciation of what our late co-founders, Peter Goodwin and Lewis Scott, achieved. They laid the ground for many of the

successes we see today: the thriving sawmill at Whitney, the exciting James Wood project, the ongoing support of our patron, a decade long research partnership with Forest Research focused on Acute Oak Decline, the greatly respected Woodland to Workshop course, and much more. Most importantly, they inspired so many people who are at the heart of our efforts to create a different future for our woodlands and the sustainable, creative and rewarding businesses they support.

I also want to express my sincerest gratitude to Simon Burvill, our outgoing Chair, who dedicated

two years of his life to the Charity, bringing stability and positivity during an incredibly challenging period when we lost Lewis Scott, endured the global pandemic and had to overcome significant internal changes.

It's also an absolute privilege to be able to work with our very talented Chief Executive, John Orchard, who, alongside Annabel Stones, our Membership and Charity Officer, are the beating heart of our charity. Their positive, transparent and productive work ethic is infectious and gives me and the other trustees every confidence that the future for Woodland Heritage is very bright. Yet the future of Woodland Heritage is intricately linked with the need for the (re-)creation of a wood culture, something that arguably vanished from these shores many decades ago.

As a lecturer in forestry at Bangor University, I frequently encounter students and others who are curious about why the UK's forest resource is as it is – and are often critical of it. They bemoan the very high reliance on one species (Sitka spruce, which comprises around 25% of our woodlands), perceive that silvicultural methods are too intense and damaging, and recognise the tragedy that is our neglected, unmanaged, dark,

unproductive and impoverished broadleaf woodlands. To which I respond (if I have the chance): what can you do to make the future different to the present? How can your decisions and behaviours, your choices as an individual, and your powers of persuasion create a different future for our woodlands?

If those of us involved with Woodland Heritage sought every opportunity we could to purchase timber grown in local woodlands,

processed by local sawmills and products crafted by local craftspeople (and encouraged all our friends and contacts to do the same), we would send a very strong signal to woodland owners and managers. A signal that it really does matter which species are planted. A signal that high-quality silviculture is a valuable endeavour. A signal that it really does pay to train the foresters of the future. A signal that society recognises and values our woodlands not only

as habitat and for recreation, as beautiful landscapes, as carbon stores and water purifiers, but also for their ability to supply us with renewable materials that can enhance virtually every aspect of our lives – as the pages inside this journal will show you. I trust you will enjoy every page and recognise that a thriving wood culture is a possibility, not just a dream.

Woodland heritage?

An update from John Orchard, Chief Executive



Thank you for your support throughout 2023/24 and I hope you enjoy reading *Wood Culture: The Journal of Woodland Heritage*!

Heritage comes from c.1200 Old French and means ‘that which may be inherited’. Old French was spoken hundreds of years ago, largely in northern France, and was a mesh of Romance dialects including Italic and Celtic.

So, ‘that which may be inherited’.

I feel the key word is ‘may’. The future is unknown; far from certain.

I’ve learned so much in the last year. A recurring theme is that woodlands often change slowly, and as a

result, the decisions we make today directly affect the knowledge, skills, woodlands and timber we pass on to future generations.

This in turn affects whether our children and grandchildren can create a thriving wood culture that benefits their environment, all people and their economy. This means woodland heritage is not the passive act of preserving the past.

It is the active process of deciding what world our children and grandchildren will inherit. It requires action.

Please join us in taking action, and support the appeal on page 6.

Thank you.