

Mike Gardner Bsc Ecological Sciences (Forestry Hons)

Gardner Woodland Consultancy Ltd

[woodmanship.co.uk](http://woodmanship.co.uk)

Windy Cross Stables  
Dunsford  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX67BW  
07767 226887

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### **Brief Personal Career History**

**1986 to 1990** Edinburgh University Honours degree in Ecological Sciences and Forestry.  
Engaged in community and commercial Tree Planting projects in Scotland.

#### **1990 to 1994**

Having learnt a predominantly exotic conifer monoculture based upland Scottish forestry system at University I was keen to learn more about the variety of potential forest products which I believed there was good potential demand for but which the consumer had difficulty accessing.

I therefore spent four years in Cumbria based in The Lake District National Park where the Park Authority were very aware of the ecological, landscape and amenity value of their woodlands both broad-leaved and conifer. The Lake District National Park Authority were very proactive at this time in trying to bring the woodlands within the National Park back into management. This included the setting up of Cumbria Broadleaves in partnership with the Forestry Commission to proactively bring more broadleaved woodlands within Cumbria back into management.

I managed various woodlands within the National Park for charcoal production, firewood, oak tan bark, many different coppice products, wattle hurdles, and sawlogs learning off a well established coppicer Bill Hogarth MBE and vocal charcoal maker Walter Lloyd amongst others.

The Lake District National Park were very keen to bring their neglected woodlands back into sustainable management and grant aided with others. The New Woodmanship Trust and Walter Lloyd to set up a small charcoal production company called Lakeland Charcoal producing charcoal in the woods. The firewood market at roadside was very low at that time and charcoal was seen as a good way to add value to small diameter hardwood timber to cover the cost of its harvesting.

This charcoal business model of making the charcoal in the woods close to stump has been carried out for hundreds of years and selling the charcoal locally from garages worked well. I ran the Lakeland Charcoal business for two years before it was sold as a profitable going concern.

I became a Director of The New Woodmanship Trust and learnt small scale woodland management to produce a large array of high added value forest products. The New Woodmanship Trust, with support from The Lake District National Park and funding from the then Countryside Commission, was commissioned to research and write "The Microeconomics of Coppice Management" which I researched and wrote.

I worked alongside various archeologists at different times including helping to build a crannog at Loch Tay for the Scottish Trust for Underwater Archaeology ([crannog.co.uk](http://crannog.co.uk)) teaching them hazel

coppicing and wattle hurdle making. Archaeologists were very interested in woodlands in the Lake District National Park due to the large amount of interesting archaeology surviving in the woods from the various industries that had worked in the woods. This included mining works, quarrying, limestone burning, bark peelers huts and charcoal makers huts, charcoal pitsteads, gunpowder works and more. Outside the woods there were also lots of other interesting buildings such as bobbin mills. Charcoal pitsteads can still also be seen in Dartmoor National Park in the coppice oak woods up the Dart showing our rich cultural woodland heritage.

**1995 to 1997** working in various places in Scotland in the borders and highlands managing various woodlands and setting up a company called Treewrights producing carpentry and joinery products from native woodlands predominantly oak products. Learning more predominantly carpentry skills in creating further added value for local woodland products and the properties of the timbers required and buying trees and processing them in the woodlands using mobile sawmills.

**1997 to 1999** Training courses teaching Woodland Skills throughout Southern England and the second year in Devon on the Perridge and Idestone estates on the edge of the Teign Valley.

**1999 to 2000** Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship to the west coast of the USA and Mexico. Titled “Sustainable Forest Products from Isolated Rural Communities” in the category “Projects related to the countryside and the future of rural communities” working from the premise that local communities can survive and flourish if they can make a living from their neighbouring woodlands by adding value in the woodland or very close by with relatively low capital investment. This type of woodland management enables the important wooded features of the landscape to be managed and evolve and be retained protecting and enhancing the local wildlife and ecology associated with them. I travelled widely in the Pacific Northwest and California and Mexico studying how people made a living from their local woodlands with relatively small scale infrastructure and low capital investment by adding higher value within or close to the woodland.

**1999 to 2002** Established a small mobile saw milling business milling timbers in the woods where they were felled adding value in the woodlands. Developed my carpentry and timber framing and milling skills and developed the business working out of local woodlands and on the Perridge and Idestone Estates with encouragement and help from various Woodland owners and foresters who I bought timber from and were very keen to encourage developing woodland enterprises.

**2002 to present.** In 2002 I was eventually able to buy some land suitable for establishing a small scale timber harvesting and processing business where I was able to establish a small but decent woodyard from which I could develop the business. Running a sawmilling business and building timber frame buildings and other carpentry projects. Managing various Woodlands including Idestone Woodlands and The Dartington Hall Woodlands where I was taken on due to my knowledge of local markets resourcefulness and ability to market timber from their interesting and diverse woodlands. Running a small forestry harvesting team. Selling a very wide array of products with varying degrees of added value from pea sticks bean poles and firewood at one extreme to green oak timber frame buildings at the other.

**In 2014** invested in a new larger sawmill and expanded the existing saw milling business selling predominantly sawn timber and reducing the timber framing and carpentry side of the business. Concentrating on forestry and woodland management marketing forest products and sawn timber and passing on most large scale carpentry jobs to my timber buying carpentry company clients,

Managing the above Woodlands and others.

#### My Knowledge of the Hillyfield and my reasons for support.

Doug King-Smith approached me for advice soon after he first bought the woodlands. At first I was slightly reluctant to waste my time giving out free advice to someone who would just be setting up in competition against me for various products. I then remembered all the assistance and advice I had been given in my forestry career by those hoping to advance the industry and see it thrive in generally adverse conditions.

We only produce approximately 35% of our wood based products in this country and the rest is imported. Also a vast amount of other potential wood products are displaced by other materials such as plastic. So there is plenty of room for competition and the Hillyfield's output would be unlikely to have a too detrimental effect on my business.

### **My View of The Hillyfield.**

**Access Limitations.** My immediate concerns with the woodlands were the lack of access for any vehicle beyond a 4x4 car to extract produce from the woodlands. This meant that it would be impossible to manage the woodlands using large conventional harvesting equipment which harvest the timber and extract to roadside where it is stacked to await timber lorry transport to sawmills and fencing manufacturers predominantly outside the region. There was nowhere to stack timber for a lorry to access and there was no access large enough to allow access for forestry machinery especially large forwarders. The small transport infrastructure of the Dartmoor lanes leading to the A38 would favour small vehicles and not cause problems that larger timber lorries in the lanes could. Selling the produce as a raw material without further processing and on site added value would be a greatly loss making enterprise due to the costs of moving small volumes of a maximum of 3 m<sup>3</sup> off site by 4x4 to some other lorry loading site and the amount of loading machines required at each end.

The only option available for the cost effective harvesting of the timber was to add value in the woodlands and then transport a finished product off site to the consumer by 4x4 and trailer or similar.

Since then after much local politics, long and costly planning processes and cost in buying land the Hillyfiled has been able to buy some land and put in some new access in the north east corner of the woodland. This was the only option available. Unfortunately this was not the best option as access through the woods to the new road access is still steep.

The new access does not however make the harvesting of the larch softwood with large scale commercial equipment viable. This is because of the costs of moving the harvesting machinery to and from site and the costs associated with running these machines. Only small parts of the site are drivable with machines so the site still needs hand felling and winching to where the harvesting machine can grab it. This means that harvesting costs would still be greatly more than the £23 per m<sup>3</sup> that the larch is worth as chip stacked at roadside.

### **On site processing for higher added value products.**

Therefore to make the operations cost effective all the produce harvested needs to be processed on site and value added on site. Finished products can then be transported to the local customer by 4x4 car and trailer or similar. This would also make the whole enterprise potentially economical. This requires infrastructure on site to process the material and get it in a fit state to be marketable. Roofed sheds to season firewood and air dry sawn timber as well as sheds for storage of machines and keep machines and operators out of the weather. I thought he was lucky to have an old quarry area with hardstanding to use.

**Firewood.** Very few potential customers have the space or time to season their own firewood and want to buy it dry. Especially those living in small accommodation in and around Totnes and South Brent which are the Hillyfields marketing area. Firewood has to be sold seasoned as any firewood consumer or chimney sweep will tell you. Hence the EU and British Government have

been setting up and investing heavily in the Renewable Heat Incentive paying businesses to season firewood. Time and air movement in a covered area seasons firewood very effectively and has been how firewood has been seasoned for millenia before the advent of costly fast carbon consuming and electricity consuming kiln drying in the last decade only. People have and continue to season wood in woodlands under cover for firewood through out Europe and the rest of the world. Wood is also heavier and more costly to transport when green and full of water. Green larch is at present fetching £23 per m<sup>3</sup> for chip wood . Seasoned larch firewood delivered in is fetching approximately £100 per m<sup>3</sup> delivered in. By having to extract the larch a smaller distance and then logging it up and storing it under cover for a year and then delivering it locally the Hillyfield can turn £23 into £100.

### **Sawn Timber products**

The above is true with sawn timber products sawn in the woodland on a mobile sawmill. The green freshly sawn products need a flat dry place to be seasoned for one or more summers (depending on their thickness) before they can be processed further (eg planed, sanded, jointed etc) and then eventually sold. Traditionally this was always done locally close to the woodlands and the local market and this approach still works. Due to various socioeconomic reasons, cost and access to land, housing costs, lack of rural investment and economies of scale the amount of sawmills doing this is reducing all the time. Hence local customers have less options to buy their wood products from local woodlands. Hence the main local suppliers Devon Hardwoods does not sell any hardwoods grown in Devon and New World Timbers sell timber from the new World and not England. So there is a market for sawn local wood products. But these can not be sold green as they will shrink and buckle and move if installed green into a heated house.

### **Dartmoor National Park Visit to Hillyfield.**

In 2012 Mr King-Smith then approached me again to advise him during his visit from The Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) and I was willing to attend. It seemed so obvious to me that what he was proposing was within permitted development and blatantly obviously needed for the sensible management of the woodlands.

I thought I could help him by explaining this obvious need to the DNPA. My experience managing woodlands in Cumbria with the Lake District National Park was of their enthusiasm to encourage the sustainable management of their woodland resource and their understanding of its importance to the National park, its landscape, its ecology, its inhabitants and its visitors and all it stood for. The Lake District National Park supported small local woodland enterprises and large ones with encouragement, promotion and financial aid for woodland based enterprises including being instrumental in the setting up of Cumbria Broadleaves to further these aims and financially aiding Conferences by The Coppice Association North West amongst other projects.

Unfortunately on that initial visit by DNPA to The Hillyfield attended by myself and Doug King-Smith the DNPA were not interested in anything I was trying to say and were just fixated on the fear of incremental development if any buildings of any sort were put up. They ignored all the points I was trying to put over and had no interest in the management of the woodland in a small scale way or any other way. They ignored the problems of access as I tried to raise them and showed no interest in the management of the woodlands. Their view was solely that permitted development for simple drying sheds and storage sheds would then be used for change of use further down the line leading to residential development. They would therefore not allow any permitted development and were not interested in the woodlands or their need for management.

I left that meeting shocked and bewildered by the intransigence of the DNPA representatives and their total unwillingness to listen to the needs of the woodland management at the Hillyfield.

Woodlands in Britain and especially in South Devon are the last reserves of the majority of our native flora and fauna, existing as small islands of biodiversity surrounded by monoculture farm

grassland or arable land or severely overgrazed near monoculture Dartmoor sheep cattle and pony grazing (with the occasional species of rare bird).

To manage the woodlands at Hillyfield, to preserve the existing ecology of the site and to improve the biodiversity of the site in a cost effective manner requires the production of various sustainable timber and woodland products from the trees growing on the site. These operations need to be cost effective and not be a cost to the owner who does not have limitless resources to pour into the project.

To be cost effective the products from the woodland need to be fit for purpose and of sufficient quality that the customer is happy to pay for them and hopefully recommend the products to others but certainly not complain they are not fit for purpose.

For firewood to be fit for purpose it has to be dry and hence it needs covered sheds to be stored in and not continually rained upon or covered in cos of wet snow. There need to be sufficient sheds so that the firewood can season over the summer and stay dry in the cold wet winter. More higher valued sawn planks need to be seasoned correctly undercover on flat ground to be a viable product.

Machinery needs to be stored undercover and in a secure manner so they are adequately maintained and not stolen.

To ensure further environmental benefits from the management of the woodlands and to produce a variety of products The Hillyfield's approach is to share volunteer opportunities for people to be actively involved in delivering the ongoing management of the woodlands. This provides less expensive labour than using commercial contractors all the time as well as affording training and experience to volunteers. (The timber industry has an average age of contractors being over 50 years old and is desperate for new younger entrants.)

These volunteers and trainees (as well as seasonal workers) obviously need suitable infrastructure in terms of warm and dry welfare space and a covered works area to make products out of the weather.

Due to the lack of affordable housing and lack of temporary affordable accommodation in the area there is also a need for simple accommodation for volunteers and temporary and seasonal workers. This needs to be on site to be time and cost efficient and to reduce road transport locally.

Michael N Gardner