



TALKING TIMBER

THE IWSC IS DEAD ... LONG LIVE THE WTS!

Industry still bemoans a lack of timber expertise but the WTS is working to change that. John Park reports



**John Park –
WTS chairman
and manager of
Canada Wood**

In this year of notable anniversaries: 10 years ago this December at the London Softwood Club Christmas lunch I asked for the microphone to announce the impending demise of the Institute of Wood Science (IWSc), a somewhat poignant and particularly ironic development given that at the same time the use of wood was undergoing something of a renaissance. It was quite the perfect example of going down like a lead balloon!

The following June the IWSc affiliated with the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) becoming The Wood Technology Society (WTS). But, my word, look at wood now with even talk of an 80-storey wood structure in the City of London!

And then we read these words: "At TRADA we're seeing signs that timber retailers are starting to worry about the consequence of having far too few people in their business that know about wood," – Rupert Scott, TRADA's membership manager. (TTJ May 2018).

And: "The timber industry needs a constant flow of graduates in disciplines such as wood science, product design engineering, process engineering, mechanical and materials engineering as well as business, IT and logistical-focused subjects to support the digitalisation and 'serviceification' of manufacturing and construction" – Iain McIlwee, British Woodworking Federation chief executive CTI Winter 2017-18 Newsletter.

Also: "Incidentally, I met a customer today in Northern Ireland, who unprompted commented on a lack of younger people with any timber knowledge entering the trade," – Andrew True, WTS immediate past chairman.

And: "On the subject of education, I saw a very interesting presentation by Horizon (the guys putting the new nuclear power station on Anglesey) and their 60-year plan, which started with investing in education in the area of STEM activities in primary and secondary schools on the island. They see this as the first steps to having a local educated work force to work at the power plant. This is a 60-year plan...from the inception through the running and to the decommissioning of the plant and the education that is needed from primary through to university. What plan has the timber trade/industry got?" – Graham Ormondroyd, WTS chairman elect.

This truism from me: The elevation of both the status of wood within the materials sector and the stature of wood industry professionals to the level enjoyed by all other materials sectors and professions is long overdue.

But when it comes to the status of wood is it perhaps a case of

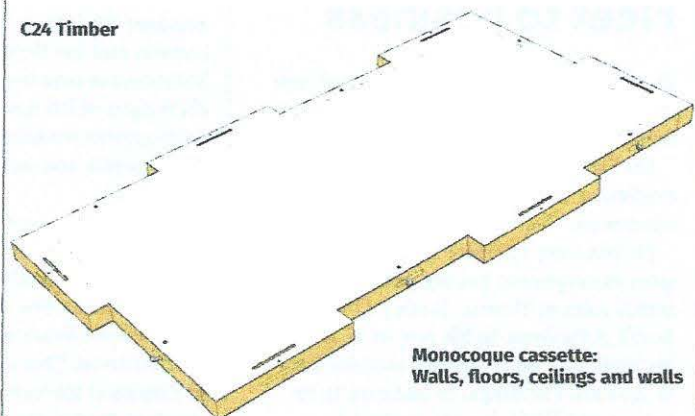
familiarity breeds contempt? It's only wood! Wood, with which, some 1.6 million years ago with the discovery of the controlled use of fire, began a close association which was to have a fundamental effect on the evolution of Homo sapiens; with which countless companies for untold centuries have developed businesses and continue to profit; which has undergone a constant decline in use beginning long before the start of the Industrial Revolution but which is now, initially initiated by its environmental credentials, seen as a highly competent structural material. This has not happened in the absence of wood science!

Profiting from developments in wood science and technology was at the heart of the WTS's recent Timber 2018 Conference, held at the London HQ of the IOM3, with the future growth of wood utilisation very much in mind (see pp37-39). And with the future very much in mind the IOM3 Schools Affiliate Scheme is "connecting teachers (not to mention those they are teaching) to materials, minerals and mining". On its homepage you will find 'Wonderful Wood' headlined.

Seems like the start of a plan for the future to me! ■

Below: The recent WTS conference Timber 2018 included several presentations on the use of structural timber
PHOTO: BUILDECO

C24 Timber



**Monocoque cassette:
Walls, floors, ceilings and walls**

The Wood Technology Society

A Division of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining