



DON'T KEEP IT TO YOURSELF!

*The wonders of trees and timber should be promoted to all ages, says **John Park***



At our recent Wood Technology Society (WTS) board meeting our longest-serving, past president of IWS, died-in-the-wood timber trader, board member, from the era when studying for the AIWSc qualification was available at a multitude of centres around the country and moustaches were particularly fashionable but whose name eludes me for the moment (Keith Purcell, actually) made the observation that if the *TTJ* got beyond the MD's desk it

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was not before the job adverts were ripped out – there's another topic for 'Talking Timber' if ever there was one!

'Talking Timber', four years old next month, is an agenda item at every board meeting, primarily for me to give an update on progress and making requests of fellow board members for contributions. It was my question, "Who reads these; it's not something that we are ever likely to know?", at that recent meeting which elicited the above response. But, with a circulation of several thousand and potential readership of many more, above comment notwithstanding, it must be more than just a few.

What we write might not be of interest to everyone but one of our initial intentions, to delve into the fascinating field of wood science and associated technology, has oft been side-tracked, as indeed it has been here, by current events or something that I've read, seen or heard which is, intentionally or unintentionally, not favourable towards wood. Now, those should interest everyone, because it's your business being besmirched!

But I'm going to turn that around as what I've heard in this instance is just the opposite. And if you have children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews of a certain age there is much that has been written about in 'Talking Timber' that you should be bringing to their attention and to that of their schools. (Check out the IOM3 Schools Affiliate Scheme).

We are blessed with the planet's foremost natural wonder material; with the current interest in tree planting, the timber trade should be capitalising on that with vigour, which is precisely what our foremost WTS stalwart, Gervais Sawyer, did with his family and friends recently at the Brighton Science Fair with a novel display stand to promote the wonders of wood to primary school children and their parents.

The theme was 'More Trees Please'. Visitors were given clipboards with activity sheets to complete. They examined a large shopping trolley full of products derived from trees, the aim being to find the product that was not from wood. 'How old was my Christmas tree?' Count the rings. Then count the rings on a larger slice of tree and put a flag on your birthday ring.

Another task was to look at the local trees and identify

them from the leaves (a bit more difficult in February!). Then came some lab work; a look at wood under the microscope; feel the weight of a small piece of wood and try to pick up a 25-litre drum of water – because the tree needed all that to make that piece of wood. A very popular activity was blowing soap bubbles through a piece of (red) oak. Finally, search the big glass tank exhibiting the forest floor to examine everything living and rotting. Gervais reports that nearly 500 children experienced More Trees Please, with much laughter and fun. A sure sign that they learned something.

Gervais's alter ego 'The Saw Doctor' was playing on a large TV and the children were most impressed to be seeing him in the flesh. A day full of enjoyment, but with the serious objective of informing about the importance of trees and wood, in our ever-fragile environment. The WTS website is full of even more fascinating stuff and, with thanks to *TTJ*, 'Talking Timber' articles from April 2016. Don't keep it to yourself! ■

Below: Two of Gervais Sawyer's 'team' (centre) at the Brighton Science Fair



The Wood Technology Society

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