Mobile Sawmilling

Chiltern Woodlands Project

Registered Charity No.1002512

The sawmilling area, a clear level site

Steve operating his Lucas Mill

Cut larch boards

A mobile sawmill can be a very useful tool to add value to a small quantity of timber or to cut timbers for a particular need.

- These mills are best hired in with a skilled operator, perhaps paid on a day rate, or rate per job.

- The Chiltern Woodlands Project organised a visit to see Steve Robert's sawmill in operation.
  See **www.straightfromthewoods.co.uk** for more information and contact details.

- Steve's Lucas mill is able to convert trees of most sizes into planks and beams of any dimension. It is on a light weight frame which can be transported in a trailer behind a Landrover and assembled easily in a wood or garden.

- You are likely to require felling permission from the Forestry Commission unless you are cutting up dead or fallen trees. You need a felling licence to fell trees to sell timber. There are two ways to get this either as a simple felling licence application to fell marked trees, which may take about 2 months to obtain, or as part of a long term management plan (which the FC will probably grant aid under their English Woodland Grant Scheme but this takes longer to arrange). Other consents for felling may also be needed for example from your local council if the trees are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
  See **www.forestry.gov.uk**

- Carefully consider access and stacking areas to keep handling and timber movement to a minimum; this helps ensure the sawmill is as productive as possible

- Why use a mobile sawmill?

  - To add value
  - For a local use / need eg fencing
  - To meet an order eg craft uses
  - To cut timbers to a specific size for a particular purpose eg building timbers
  - To make use of a larger tree than normal
  - To use a smaller parcel of timber than can be sold to the conventional timber market which is likely to need a minimum of 25 tonne lorry loads.

- Remember the offcuts from mobile sawmilling can be used for fuel, along with the branchwood. Sawdust and the bark covered slab wood may also have a use.

- Check for metal in the tree eg old fencing (most mobile sawmillers will use a metal detector to reduce the risk of costly damage to their saw).

- Agree with the sawmiller the dimensions of timber you want cut; give him a written cutting schedule if it is important to cut to specific sizes. Remember that green timber will shrink a bit as it dries.

- There are several different types of mobile sawmill available, make sure you use the right one for your needs. Some can get access into gardens to deal with the odd valuable tree such as walnut, cedar, yew, chestnut, cherry etc

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- It may be possible to sell surplus timber through websites such as MYForest
  See www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/directories.php
  Or Woodlots www.woodnet.org.uk/woodlots/

- See the following publications which can be downloaded from www.chilternsaonb.org

- **On-site sawmilling and timber conversion** (pdf 189Kb)
  An introduction to using a mobile sawmill to process timber, developed by the Chiltern Woodlands Project as part of the TWIG project

- **Air Drying of Timber** (pdf 251Kb)
  An information pack written for the TWIG project

CASE STUDY

Angling Spring Wood at Great Missenden for Chiltern District Council.

There was not enough timber in this area to sell to conventional markets.

1. A small parcel of first thinning larch in a one hectare plantation, about 24 years old, were thinned to leave the broadleaved trees space to develop.

2. The timber was extracted using a horse to a hard standing within the wood.

3. The timber was then converted into fence posts and rails by Steve Roberts.

4. The cut posts and rails were then erected to form a road side fence.

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You can download information sheets from:

www.chilternsaonb.org/about-chilterns/woodlands/
woodlands_project.html

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