

A Working Partnership

Having its own harvesting operation is the key to flexibility for Kingan's sawmill



David Kingan (left) and Peter Atkinson beside some timber destined for the large log line.

The small village of New Abbey, population just over 600, lies about eight miles south of Dumfries, and there's been a sawmill there for 200 years or more. It originally belonged to neighbouring Shambellie Estate, but was bought by the Kingan family, in the person of the great great grandfather of current managing director David Kingan, in 1861. Originally powered by a water wheel, the sawmill still stands on the same site, though this has expanded over the years.

The surrounding area is heavily afforested, and James Kingan & Sons do not have to travel far for

their timber. The sawmill, which is divided into a small log line and a second line that handles large timber, employs 25 people and has an output of around 20,000 cubic metres a year.

The small log line accounts for about 40% of the total output. It processes logs with a maximum diameter of 35cm (the majority being some 14 to 18cm) and up to 3.4 metres in length. They pass through a Stenner twin band slabber, which feeds a twin roller bed resaw. The slabs then go on to a twin edger, and all the material from the roller bed resaw and edger goes to a twin resaw. Finally,

packs of timber may be cross-cut on a Holtec pack cutter.

The produce from the small log line is mainly aimed at pallet production (pallets are manufactured on site) and at fencing. 50% of the throughput is larch – a situation that may continue for the next year or two, but, with the advance of *P. ramorum*, this will almost certainly change.

The big log line makes the sawmill a little bit special, and enables it to supply niche products. Kingans never advertise, although they do have a website. Much of their trade comes through recommendations from other sawmills who cannot supply certain large products.

The line accepts logs up to a metre in diameter, and 9.2 metres in length. First, they pass through a chipper canter – a Stenner bandmill with an LBL chipper head – which removes all unusable material at the outset. The main block goes to a VBV resaw, while boards from the first bandmill are passed

through an Armentia edger. All timber then goes on to a Reinhardt cross-cut.

As well as fencing, output is often used in agricultural buildings, but long lengths open up other markets – bridges and fish farm cages, for example. Kingans don't always know what the end use will be when they receive enquiries. Whilst 70% of their output is sold within a radius of 50 miles, they sometimes supply timber as far away as the south of England.

The timber for the mill is all supplied by Kingan Forestry Ltd. This is a separate company founded in 2003. David Kingan is a director of this as well, alongside Peter Atkinson, who teamed up with Kingans after 18½ years as forest manager with Iggesund Paperboard in Dumfries. Kingans' harvesting operation was being reviewed at the time of Peter Atkinson's move, and he knew the sawmill already, having supplied them with logs.



The twin roller bed resaw in the small log line.



Manual sorting of the finished boards in the small log line.



The Holtec pack cutter in action.



(Above) The log intake and carriage feeding the bandmill and LBL chipper in the large log line. (Below) The outfeed from the bandmill in the large log line.



Bandmill operator Stuart Weymouth at his control console.

Kingan Forestry offers an all-round forestry service aimed at private estates, farms, etc. This includes not just harvesting, but also forest management and consultancy. They aim to be a one-stop shop that will deal with anything to do with forestry.

Kingan Forestry's two harvesting squads produce 55,000 to 60,000 tonnes of timber a year, a third of which goes to the New Abbey mill,

while the rest is sold to all major players and large processors in the industry. Kingan Forestry operates across the south-west of Scotland, and into the Borders. Other activities include drawing up and carrying out felling and restocking plans, and administering all current forestry grant schemes. They have a number of retained clients whose woodlands they manage on a continuing basis.

An advantage of a small consultancy being linked to a sawmill is that it can offer clients a service which ensures all their timber gets used.

Last planting season, Kingan Forestry planted over 250,000 trees. As well as running a squad of planters, they carry out draining, ground preparation and fencing operations.

A recently completed project was the Diamond Jubilee Wood, planted for the Balfour family at Dawyck Estate, near Peebles.

This was part of a scheme conceived by the Woodland Trust, who wanted to create 60 woodlands of 60 acres apiece across the UK, planted with 'native' woodland – oak, ash, birch, rowan, juniper, hawthorn and blackthorn. Planted on an open hillside, the wood was opened in March, and the trees have done well over the wet summer. Funding came through the SRDP.

Whilst he is proud of the Peebles

planting, Peter Atkinson remains concerned at the lack of commercial planting being carried out at present.

The sawmill is very flexible, and can respond quickly to customer requirements, which means the harvesting operation has to change cutting patterns in the forest immediately to suit the product required by the mill. The fact that the two operations work hand in hand gives that flexibility. "A lot of harvesting companies would not be so quick to respond," said David Kingan.

Each of the two harvesting squads have a harvester and a forwarder. Their in-house team operates a John Deere 1270D and a 1210E, whilst independent contractors J&A Finlay have a Doosan with a Keto head and a Rottne forwarder.

The mill takes exclusively softwood, but hardwood is marketed, the poorer quality produce for firewood, whilst the rest goes to the hardwood trade.

The mill always ran its own har-



James Kingan & Sons' 1210E and 1270D.



John Mason loading larch in Glengap.

vesting contractor – so John took over the wagon. Kingans look to him for the majority of their haulage. If any extra is needed, John Miller Transport is the first point of call.

Having seen both sides of the operation, it was clear that the two halves of Kingans dovetail together perfectly.

vesting operation, but having upgraded to purpose-built equipment, they found output was outstripping the requirements of the mill. Modern harvesters and forwarders have to work full time to earn their keep. To retain the mill's self-sufficiency and flexibility, which are key components in its success, some means of marketing the timber that was excess to requirements had to be found. This meant that the partnership with Peter Atkinson, and the setting up of Kingan Forestry, was particularly timely.

Having taken the tour of the sawmill, we headed out to Glengap to see one of the harvesting teams in action.

The Forest Enterprise site consisted of an estimated 2,700 cubic metres of *Phytophthora* infected larch, which had been bought as a lump sum standing sale. The trees averaged almost 1.7 cubic metres apiece. Large logs were destined for the New Abbey sawmill, while 2.5-metre logs were going to BSW at Dalbeattie, and small roundwood was heading off to Jenkinsons in Lockerbie.

The timber was being harvested by Tim Nugent in a John Deere 1270D harvester and George Tennant in a 1210E forwarder. Both have worked for Kingans since they left school.

Also on site at the time was John Mason of JTM Haulage. Based in Gretna, he runs two DAF six-wheelers, one a tag axle, the other a double drive.

A wagon mechanic to trade, John worked for DAF. His brother ran a wagon, but decided on a career change – he became a har-

So, what of the future? The impending disappearance of larch is bound to make a difference, but apart from that, things are expected to continue very much as they are now.

When something is working very nicely, why would you want to change anything?

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