

TALKING TIMBER



CELEBRATIONS AND A CHRISTMAS WISH

Andrew True celebrates some Wood Technology Group milestones



Christmas is a time for celebration, and for the Wood Technology Group of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (WTG/IOM3) there is much to celebrate as 2024 draws to a close.

The 75th Talking Timber was published in the July/August edition of *TTJ* and we are extremely pleased to partner *TTJ* in this regular column. Articles are varied in content, thought provoking and educational,

looking at timber from many different perspectives across the full spectrum of interests.

2024 represents the 15th anniversary of the Institute of Wood Science (IWSc) amalgamating with IOM3. During the early 2000s the IWSc faced a series of issues – declining membership, the increasing costs of maintaining the provision of timber education, and attracting high quality papers for publication in the *Journal of the Institute of Wood Science (JIWSc)*. In 2009, to protect and progress its original objectives the IWSc merged with IOM3, forming the Wood Technology Society (WTS) – now the Wood Technology Group.

Continuing a fundamental role of the IWSc, the IOM3 Training Academy has provided on-line education and training for the timber trade, running two courses – PIABC Level 2 Award in Timber and Panel Products and their Uses, and PIABC Level 3 Certificate in Wood Technology and Application. Since 2013 around 300 students have registered for the courses. (PIABC is the accredited awarding body for IOM3, and also offers wood and furniture qualifications, run by centres other than IOM3.)

In 2010 the *JIWSc* was rebranded as the *International Wood Products Journal (IWPJ)*, with Gervais Sawyer appointed as editor. Under his guidance the *Journal* is now quarterly, on-line and hard copy. Much credit goes to Gervais, who retires this year after 15 years as editor. His successor is Dennis Jones, well known for his contributions to wood science.

2025 is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the IWSc, and a paper has been published in the *IWPJ* which summarises the background to the IWSc, and profiles the 27 presidents, who were drawn from the timber trade and wood science communities.

The first president was E Bryan Latham CBE (1955–1958), who oversaw the pioneering issue of the *JIWSc*. Passionate about timber, he was a regular contributor to *TTJ*, wrote books on timber, and was also a president of the Timber Trade Federation.

Eminent wood scientist at Imperial College, John Levy (1971–1973) was a rowing enthusiast and helped create the monocoque principle, paving the way for today's carbon fibre competition rowing boats. These are just two examples of high-profile

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presidents. Visit <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/20426445241246844> for the complete paper.

To complement the presidents' paper, profiles of "Others" important in the development of the IWSc, and profiles of the subsequent six chairs of the WTS/WTG have been prepared for the in-house WTG newsletters. The current chair, Dr Morwenna Spear, a leading wood scientist, heads a young and refreshed WTG leadership team into the next 15 years.

On a note of remembrance, Brian Norris FIMMM (*pictured below*) passed away earlier this year. He had, with 66 years continuous membership, the distinction of being the longest serving member of the IWSc and subsequently IOM3.

Timber education is of utmost importance, so my "Christmas wish" is to establish a UK university undergraduate course for wood science and technology and marketing, enabling the timber trade to secure its future in an ever-changing environment and marketplace.

This is my 15th and final Talking Timber as I plan to step down next year from the WTG leadership team, so on that note I wish you all a very happy festive season and a prosperous and positive new year. ■

Below:

Brian Norris was the longest serving member of the IWSc and subsequently IOM3



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