

## INTRODUCTION

Mobile sawmills are now widely available in Wales. The type of saw to choose depends on the size of the timber you have. Alternatively many of the smaller sawmills will cut timber on contract if it is delivered to them.

## BEFORE YOU START

- Before you start be sure that you know what timber you are going to need before you fell and cross cut. If you intend to sell some timber find out exactly what your customer wants.
- Be sure that you have the necessary felling licence and tree preservation order consents.
- Be sure that your timber is of the right quality. If you aren't sure seek advice.

## MACHINERY

There is a wide range of machinery available, that which is most suitable will be determined by the size of the timber to be processed and desired end products. For the largest logs, 90cm to 2m diameter, a Lucas Mill is usually most appropriate (see Figure 1). For logs with diameters of 30 – 90 cm a bandmill is suitable (see Figure 2). While for 15-30cm diameter logs a double slabber is appropriate (Figure 3).



Figure 1: Lucas Mill

When you have your licenses and consent, prepare a cutting list for both your own need and those of your customers. Unskilled felling is dangerous and will ruin decent timber. Get someone who knows what he's doing or, better still, get trained to do the job properly yourself. If you intend to offer some of your timber to a merchant, talk to him while the trees are still standing. He will probably want a specialist to fell his timber.

Choose a site as near as possible to the wood. It needs to be dry and level, preferably on hard standing, and large enough to set up the saw and allow room for tractors to turn into and away from it safely.



Figure 2: Bandmill

Trim the timber very carefully. Small slivers of loose wood and little branches are especially dangerous on a bandsaw. Check thoroughly for wire, nails or any crevice that might hold a piece of stone. If you suspect something search for it with an old axe **not a chain saw**. If you can borrow or hire a metal detector, use it.

Bring your timber to the site, keeping it as clean as possible, cross cut **accurately** to length, ends cut **square** and clean. Load it on to bearers so that it can be handled easily and kept clear of grit and gravel which will ruin the saw blade. Clean any

remaining dirt off the timber - strip the bark with a spade if needs be - but do it **before** the saw arrives. Do not waste the sawyer's time cleaning the timber. For you to get value for your money he needs to be sawing continuously. That means keeping fresh timber in front of him and getting sawn timber out of his way. Pallet forks on a front-end loader are very useful for both jobs but you'll need plenty of labour too.



**Figure 3: Double slabber**

Mark the end of each log nearest the sawyer to show him what thickness to cut. If you're not sure discuss it with him first, but remember his time is your money. The better organised you are, the better the service he can give you.

### **Stacking and Drying.**

Whether your timber is destined to be fence posts or furniture, it pays to stack it properly so that it can begin to dry evenly. Do this as the timber comes off the saw. That way you only handle the timber once and you allow the least time for fungi to weaken and discolour it.

- Have plenty of stickers (spacers) available, 10mm or 12mm thick x 20mm wide.
- Check that stickers and bearers are free of dirt, rot, woodworm, nails and creosote as all can affect the value of the timber. It is especially important for stickers to be clean and dry when stacking sycamore which can stain easily.
- We recommend stacks 3 ft wide, with stickers 1ft apart (or less) bearers and straps 2ft apart.
- Pallets (or bearers) should be sitting flat and level
- Boards should be brushed free of sawdust when stacking to encourage even drying and reduce staining and sticker marks.
- Use a layer of stickers between the pallet and the first layer of timber.
- Place end stickers as near as possible to the end of the boards. Protruding ends dry faster and this encourages splitting on the end of the boards.
- The boards in each layer must be consistent in thickness and should be consistent in length wherever possible.
- Take care to keep the stickers vertically in line.
- Stack the grades separately
- Strap the pack **tight**, straps at each end adjacent to stickers, and at 2 ft intervals, adjacent to stickers.
- Stack in a dry but very well ventilated building. An open shed or lean-to is ideal. Leave space between stacks for air to circulate and to allow access.
- Keep out of the sun
- Take pride in a tidy stack, and you are more likely to get a tidy price for it.



**Figure 4: Well stacked timber**

Even if the timber is to be treated it will absorb creosote or pressure treatment better if it is dry. Thoroughly dry timber, often called seasoned timber, is less likely to shrink, warp and crack than freshly sawn timber, but that is no guarantee. If the timber is to be used in-doors in heated surroundings it will need to be kiln dried. Many small businesses own a kiln and offer a drying service, but check how the timber is to be presented before you saw and stack it.

Further information on kiln drying and timber products is available from Coed Cymru [www.coedcymru.org.uk](http://www.coedcymru.org.uk)