

October 2014

## Chainsaw course

*Harry Wakefield, David Crawford, October 2014*

Harry Wakefield of Pryor & Rickett Silviculture and David Crawford of R J Woodland Services are graduates of the National School of Forestry, University of Cumbria. During their BSc in Forest and Forest Management final year, they applied for funding from CONFOR to undertake the CS32 (felling and process trees over 320mm) and CS34 (dealing with individual windblown trees and partially uprooted trees). The NPTC training and assessments were undertaken in Baronscourt Estate, Northern Ireland.



Harry Wakefield (left) and David Crawford (right)

Baronscourt Estate is located in the foothills of the Sperrin Mountains, County Tyrone. The estate occupies approximately 2250ha of land, of which 1,700 ha is woodland. Baronscourt Estate has been in the same family ownership since 1612, with the Duke of Abercorn as the current owner. The Northern Ireland Forest Service currently leases a proportion of the forest area. The land is being returned to the estate when a forest stand has been clear-felled. The dominant species present on the estate is Sitka spruce, with a variety of mixed and monoculture woodlands consisting of:

**Conifers** - Norway spruce, Western hemlock, Douglas fir, European, Hybrid and Japanese larch, Scots, Lodgepole & Monterey pine, Western red cedar, Lawson cypress, Atlas & Deodar cedar, Chilean pine (monkey puzzle) and Giant sequoia.

**Broadleaves** - Common, Red & Turkey oak, Common and Chilean beech, ash, rowan, alder, Silver and Downy birch, willow, poplar, aspen, lime, Spanish and Horse chestnut, Crab apple, sycamore, Norway maple, cherry and whitebeam.

In 2001, Baronscourt Estate made the decision to adopt the silvicultural management system, Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF). This gradual transformation would benefit the woodlands after significant threats were identified. Area restocking had become increasingly expensive and pests and diseases threaten monoculture single age class stands. Reducing the area of monoculture stands for the destructive Sika Deer and to improve the aesthetic value of the woodland compartments were high priority factors in the decision.

The location used to conduct the training and assessment lay in the valley bottom of Baronscourt estate, "Ash Wood Cover". The primary species is Western hemlock and not Ash, as the name would suggest. A large proportion of the species has naturally regenerated from surrounding large dominant Western hemlocks. Sitka spruce, Scots pine, Norway spruce, Downy birch, Oak and Holly contribute to the remaining sub-dominant species in this compartment. The woodland provided an ideal learning environment for felling large trees. Mensuration before the thinning calculated the Western Hemlock at > 40m in height with a girth to complement. The sawlogs were destined for the Balcas saw mill, Enniskillen. Head forester, Jim Simpson assessed and had selected trees within the compartment to be logged in accordance with CCF management. Three factors influenced the decision to thin Ash Wood Cover: to gain maximum value from the timber, reduce the possibility of butt rot in future years and continue with woodland succession by introducing light and encourage regeneration. Natural regeneration is key to the success of Continuous Cover Forestry. Throughout the wood, blankets of Western hemlock saplings were developing under the canopy of these impressive trees.



Roadside sawlog stack from training course

The training for felling windblown and partially uprooted trees was undertaken adjacent to Ash Wood Cover. This stand contained mature Sitka spruce, Western Hemlock and Silver fir. Any forest that has to withstand high gales from the North Atlantic Sea is prone to a small percentage of individual windblow.

Harry and David had a great opportunity to learn how to safely and professionally fell, breakdown and convert large and windblown woodland tree species. Both assessments were passed. The courses have helped improve their practical and theoretical knowledge. The understanding of how to fell a large tree or safely take down a partially uprooted windblown tree has given them the ability to improve their forestry knowledge and empathise with other forest personnel when instructing or undertaking the same job.