

Story of OneOak comes to life at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

The creative results of an innovative project following the full life story of a single oak tree is set to inspire visitors to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), from October 12 to December 2. Created by the Sylva Foundation, in partnership with artists and craftsmen from throughout Britain, the OneOak exhibition features some 50 items, ranging from a throne chair to tables, benches and wood block prints. All have been created with timbers from a 222-year-old oak tree felled on Blenheim Estate, near Oxford.

From the outset, the incentive of the Sylva Foundation has been to bring people closer to the importance of woodlands and of wood in modern society. With this in mind, the felling, in January 2010, was witnessed by 250 school children and 200 other guests. A year later they were invited back to each plant a young oak, so fulfilling a cycle of sustainable forest management.

The tree was grown initially for its timber, being planted in 1788; the year *The Times* was first published, when Mozart was working on his last symphony and when the French Revolution was just beginning to stir. It became the most studied oak tree in Britain: it has been weighed, measured with lasers to create a 3D model, studied by a dendrochronologist, and had its carbon content estimated. It has also been featured by dozens of artists, sculptors and photographers. Now, it is being brought to Edinburgh thanks to funding from the Scottish Forestry Trust.

Chief Executive of the Sylva Foundation and project co-ordinator Dr Gabriel Hemery said: "This has been an amazing project that has inspired both the public and those who make a living working with wood and caring for our woodlands. Everyone has given their time to the project in so many different ways because they have been inspired by the concept: the realisation that trees and wood are still vital to life even in modern society."

Dr Hemery continued: "After three years of hard work it has been immensely exciting to be able to bring together all the various elements of the OneOak project. We are able to show the public the stunning artwork, spell-binding films, earth-shattering science and a myriad of truly amazing wood-based products. The only products that we haven't been able include in real life in the exhibition at RBGE will be a house and a boat!"

Reflecting on the harmony between the origins of OneOak project and the work of RBGE, Exhibitions Officer Elinor Gallant, commented: "This is quite a remarkable exhibition detailing the lifecycle of an iconic tree. It is a story which links well with our experiences as a botanic

garden and with our policy of communicating about the environment at every level. Having hosted two particularly well received drop-in sessions bringing insight to the project, back in January 2011, it makes absolute sense for RBGE to present the full exhibition. I am certain visitors of all ages will be delighted by both the beauty of the wood and the story behind why and how these remarkable pieces have come to be on display.”

ENDS

EDITOR'S NOTES

For more information, interviews and images contact Shauna Hay on 0131 248 2900 or Sandra Donnelly on 0131 248 1037 or

Gabriel Hemery, Chief Executive, Sylva, on 07759 141438, email gabriel@sylva.org.uk

OneOak items created for the project include: firewood, woodchip (to heat a house for 6 weeks), sawdust for smoking food by Raymond Blanc, charcoal, bracing beams for a house, transom beam in a boat rowed in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Flotilla, door and frame, chest, pedestal table, coffee table, throne chair, clock cabinet, lantern, moebius sculpture, jewellery, wooden clock, acorn oakbot sculpture from waste slabwood, memorial sculpture, carved bowls, carved spoons, turned bowls, sawdust for ceramics glazing, carvings, automata, commemorative garden bench by disabled workers, five benches for primary schools including the spiderbench, contemplation bench, MakeIT! bench national school design competition, nesting tables, fine furniture competition winner's pieces, small craft items, deer, viola chin rest, printing blocks, relief carving, sounding bowl, wood ash and smoke-glazed ceramics, and a wooden clock.

Details of the OneOak products along with the stories of their making can be found at: www.oneoak.info/wood_products.php. The project website is www.OneOak.info

The **Sylva Foundation** is a tree and forestry charity, working to revive Britain's wood culture (www.Sylva.org.uk). It works in three main areas, covering science, education and forestry. It runs an independent think-tank **Forestry Horizons** (www.ForestryHorizons.eu). Its education initiatives include the **OneOak** project and **TreeWatch**, a citizen science initiative exploring tree health (www.TreeWatch.com). Sylva's **myForest service** (www.myForest.org.uk) supports over 650 woodland owners across Britain in managing over 14,500 hectares of woodland, and encourages the use of home-grown wood.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is a leading international research organisation delivering knowledge, education and plant conservation action in more than 80

countries around the world. In Scotland its four Gardens at Edinburgh, Benmore, Dawyck and Logan attract nearly a million visitors each year. It operates as a Non Departmental Public Body established under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, principally funded by the Scottish Government. It is also a registered charity, managed by a Board of Trustees appointed by Ministers. Its mission is “exploring and explaining the world of plants for a better future.” Learn more: www.rbge.org.uk