



The Illawarra Festival of Wood

Something very special happened just South of Sydney during the last week of the New South Wales school holidays. The inaugural Illawarra Festival of Wood opened on Friday the 6th of October and proved to be an instant success. Friday saw the car park fill by 11am. Kids under 18 got in free so there were a lot of families turning up for the event. The workshops on offer quickly booked out but that didn't seem to unsettle the creative buzz hovering over the event.

EVERY TREE HAS A STORY

This fabulous festival was the brainchild of Stuart & Suzanne Montague from the Illawarra Woodwork School and Christian & Tomiko Timbs from Japanese Tools Australia.

Stuart, Christian and Tomiko are all graduates of the University of Tasmania's excellent Fine Arts course. They have naturally found soul mates in the world of woodwork in the Illawarra and had become aware of a groundswell of interest in a festival dedicated more to

crafting in wood rather than selling machines that do it for you.

I spoke to Christian on the Friday and congratulated him on the combination of fine food, great entertainment, fabulous workshops and crafty stalls on display. We both agreed that it had a "Maleny Wood Expo" feel to it; more of a county show atmosphere rather than a trade fair.

Christian was quick to acknowledge Suzanne Montague as the organising genius behind the scenes. A lot of planets had to align in order for the festival to get off the ground. Suzanne charmed 42 different makers and retailers to sign up for the inaugural festival. To feed the crowds Suzanne then won the confidence of eight catering companies who prepared food before the festival.

FAMILY FUN

Making the event free for kids under 18 attracted a lot of people who may not have visited a wood show. Not only did kids get in free, they also got to par-

Every tree has a story

Friday 6th & Saturday 7th
October 2017

10am - 5pm Bulli Showgrounds

Reconnect, Learn & Discover

- #Spoon carving
- #Traditional tool makers
- #Jewellery
- #Timber milling
- #Knife makers
- #Floristry
- #Chainsaw Sculpture
- #Timber surfboard maker

Workshops available for adults & children
Book online
www.illawarrafestivalofwood.com

WOLLONGONG

- ▲ The beginning of something quite special. The guys behind the festival have now signed a lease for five more years of fun.

ticipate in workshops at a reduced rate. Christian generously supplied chopstick stock along with 18 workstations in front of his Japanese Tools stall. It was amazing to watch young and old alike take on the challenge of planing chopsticks and then walking away with a completed project.

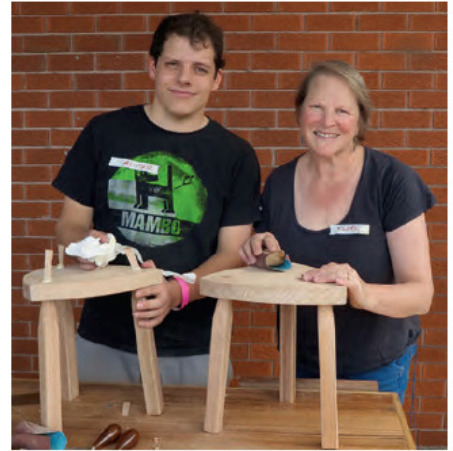
Scott Pilkington drove all the way from Noosa (where he teaches at the Pengari Steiner School) to run his stool making workshops. As you can see in



▲ Face painting, a range fabulous food stalls and excellent coffee made the festival a great day out for the whole family.



▲ All 18 chopstick-making stations were kept busy with excited kids (and some adults) making their first wooden project.



▲ Mother and Son. Alistair and Clair spent a morning crafting stools with Scott Pilkington.

the photo above right Clair and Alistair had a productive morning shaving three tapered legs with draw knives and spokeshaves in order to fit them into their milking stools. Besides face painting and good food, kids were also entertained with free Parkour gymnastics games. All these activities took place to the tune of live music (and the occasional chainsaw chorus from SawPit Gully Chainsaw Carving).

THE MAKERS

Hape Kiddle generously ran spontaneous workshops on how to hone gouges and carve timber. (I was appalled to see Hape ebonise Huon pine with a blowtorch but was pleasantly surprised to see the outcome.) Leon Sadubin added his gentle wisdom to the day, encouraging fellow makers to keep at it (while protecting their crafty secrets!)

It was great to see so many female makers at the venue. Melisa Allen and Sarah Bourke filled their order books

with clever jewellery (bought by fellow woodies for their wives and girlfriends). I was so impressed with the creative team of Melissa Allen and Mark Boxall (Meraki Makers) that I have decided to feature them both in future articles.

The IFW dedicated space to SALT (Supporting And Linking Tradeswomen) so that aspiring women could network in a hands-on environment to see if they were interested in a career as a "tradie".

Space precludes me from detailing each of the stalls at the festival. The Illawarra Festival of Wood website (illawarrafestivalofwood.com) will give you more information on the makers who made the festival such a success.

It was an incredible weekend, so successful, in fact, that they could have sold tickets to workshops five times over! The venue has been booked for the next five years. The Illawarra Festival of Wood is a winner! Book now for next year! **W**



▲ The components for the stool workshop were prepared by Scott before the festival. Next year he will prepare five times more kits!



▲ Hape Kiddle is a master carver with a growing reputation. He was happy to share the honing secrets he uses to keep his edges keen.

Timber Bargains

Tasmanian Native Timbers had a stall at the festival showcasing several of the timbers they can supply to craftsmen across Australia. I was taken aback by the prices on the slabs of Huon pine (just \$320.00 for a 2600 x 300 x 75mm glorious slab just waiting to be transformed into something beautiful).

I spoke to Rob Bird (manager of the family run business) and asked him why his timber was so well priced. He pointed out that there was no middleman in the equation and that he was selling his stock wholesale direct to the public. Bob had Black-heart sassafras, King Billy pine, Tasmanian Myrtle and Celery Top Pine all at exceptionally keen prices (visit www.tasmaniannativetimbers.com.au for more info).

