



A storm of saws

Bad weather only heightened the drama last month as contenders met for the Newton Rigg Logging Competition. Susan Burke was present to report on the action.

STORMS were forecast for Cumbria on Saturday 27 April. But it takes more than a few thunderclaps and occasional hail showers to dampen the enthusiasm of those professional motor-manual operatives and college students who put their skills to the test at the Newton Rigg Logging Competition.

There were 19 contenders who took part in the much-anticipated event, some of whom had travelled to the Penrith-based rural skills college from as far afield as Wales and Scotland.

As usual, Husqvarna sponsored the event and the Swedish-made saws were much in evidence. Even so, when it comes to the cut and thrust of serious competition, top performers have their tried-and-trusted favourites and Stihl has a loyal following. Gethin Hughes explained that although he uses both Husqvarna and Stihl chainsaws for day-in day-out work in the wood, when it comes to tackling competition disciplines, he brings out his perfectly maintained and dependable Dolmar.

Pete Bowsher is a Tilhill harvesting manager based at Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway. He explained that the company had donated prizes in the form of cash-filled envelopes for the newcomers. Tilhill also supplied the Newton Rigg event with timber for the limbing poles. The logs were hauled to the Hunter Wilson timberyard at Gretna on the Scottish border, where they were rounded. Robin Hood Sawmill, Bassenthwaite, Keswick, produced the pegs.

Pete Bowsher, who hails from Canada, is recognised as one of the UK's most talented and sought-after chainsaw carvers. Precision being his strong point, it was no surprise that he was willing to don his judge's hat and attend the Newton Rigg Logging Competition. Dan Barry, Tilhill's harvesting contracts manager, was also present,

but as a competitor.

Euroforest, South Lanarkshire, is also sponsoring logging competitions and donating prizes for student entrants this year. Simon Wallis is the company's compliance manager. A former training manager with the Forestry Commission and director of the Symington-based company Forestry Training and Consultancy Services, he too was well qualified to take on the role of judge.

Sam Moore is also employed by Euroforest. Unfazed by his first attempt at competitive logging, the Scotsman commented: "It's great. I'm enjoying it. I like seeing the different ways folk approach the job. It's nothing like when you're actually working. I'll probably give it another go, as it's sort of addictive. The camaraderie is good too. People are prepared to give you advice. Competing is a bit nerve-

"And they're off!" Matt George (foreground) and George Milne race along at the second attempt. While still under starter's orders, George had set away prematurely and cleared half of the pegs from his pole before he could be brought up. Rumour has it that he was docked only 20 penalty points for the transgression.

Einzelklassement / Individual Class											
Rank No.	Start No.	Name Vorname surname first name	Land Country	Kategorie Category	Punkte / Strafpunkte Points scored and penalty points						
					Tree felling	Limbing	Fitting another Chain	Combined Cuts	Precision Cuts	Total Points	Total Penalty Points
1	1	Peter Fox	England	Prof	658	412	120	179	224	1593	-20
2	4	Gethin Hughes	Wales	Prof	613	380	108	177	236	1514	-40
3	14	Mark Edwards	England	Prof	607	390	91	134	245	1467	-60
4	17	Andrew Townsend	England	Prof	613	322	118	179	230	1462	-100
5	15	Alun Jones	Wales	Prof	592	344	95	187	230	1448	-100
6	19	Dewi Williams	England	Prof	627	244	87	174	222	1354	-180
7	6	Simon Tranter	England	Prof	603	360	112	11	230	1316	-110
8	2	Darren Brookbanks	England	Prof	573	340	93	133	164	1303	-60
9	13	Dan Barry	England	Prof	647	338	12	108	197	1302	-60
10	5	George Milne	England	Prof	619	290	93	116	142	1260	-170
11	20	Matt George	England	Prof	561	250	84	142	205	1242	-160
12	12	Adriah Cole	England	College	599	96	0	92	195	982	-280
13	10	Haynes Tommy	England	ewcom	567	66	34	85	104	856	-240
14	9	James Taylor	England	College	548	60	0	0	124	732	-290
15	8	John Stevenson	England	ewcom	450	98	17	7	154	726	-340
16	18	Richard Hunter	England	ewcom	469	0	10	108	119	706	-440
17	16	Sam Moore	Scotland	ewcom	469	0	0	53	158	680	-50
18	3	Maddy Parkin	England	Prof	350	156	0	0	158	664	-380
19	11	Oliver Newhouse	England	College	520	0	0	0	100	620	-430



wracking but that's what makes you want to improve.” Richard Siddons, Head of Strategic Projects, Natural Resources Wales, revealed that he has been carrying out the exacting task of sitting in a quiet, sheltered place keeping tally of the scores at logging competitions for quite some time.

“My interest in logging competitions started 30 years ago with the Royal Welsh Show version,” he said. “I would like to say that it's the wine, women and song that keeps me going, but really it's the people associated with the sport that I enjoy. Despite being competitors, they support one another and create a convivial atmosphere. Competitions such as that held at Newton Rigg are important because we want to encourage as many young people as possible to join in the time-honoured sport and keep it going. Our efforts are attracting interest, so I expect to be around for some years yet. My sense of power is endless!”

Maddy Parkin was the event's only female competitor,



Richard Hunter is the lecturer at Newton Rigg College who arranged for the venue to be available to the UK Loggers. Willing to put his own chainsaw skills to the test, Richard also aims to encourage his students to improve their competence by competing with experienced and welcoming professionals. A laser beam inserted into the completed felling cuts estimates the accuracy of the simulated tree fall.

and a pretty determined one at that. Currently employed as a Forestry England craftsperson at Kielder, Northumberland, it came as no surprise to learn that she has ambitions aimed at extending her forestry experience. Persistence has paid off for Maddy. After competing at Newton Rigg previously, in 2018 she secured a place in the UK Loggers team and was able to compete in the World Logging Championship at Lillehammer, Norway.

Reporting that the experience had been amazing, Maddy said: “The very high competition standards I encountered there are definitely something to live up to, but I hope to get there within a few years. Winning silver in the relay was not only a welcome surprise but also a real confidence boost that left me feeling very much encouraged. The next World Logging Championship will take place in Serbia in 2020 and I very much hope to be there.”

As luck would have it, wet conditions didn't become a serious issue at Newton Rigg until the logging competition was in its final and (for the spectators at least) most exciting stage. Perhaps it was the peals of thunder rumbling ominously overhead that caused George Milne the embarrassment of pre-empting the starter's signal in the limbing competition. After some consultation on the correct punishment, the official rule book was consulted and George penalised by the loss of points. Unfortunately, the time delay meant the storm broke just as the last pair of competitors scheduled to complete the discipline prepared to enter the arena.

The situation did, nevertheless, demonstrate that would-be UK Loggers need to adopt professional practices and be prepared for all contingencies. Ace UK logger Peter Fox exemplified this when he hastily zipped on a transparent plastic waterproof before he and Andrew Townsend stepped into the slanting rain and took their turn at limbing. Peter didn't only stay dry on the day, he no doubt also experienced a high when he won the Newton Rigg logging competition with an outstanding score of 1,593 points.

Speaking in his role as event organiser, Peter Fox drew the Newton Rigg Logging Competition to a close by extending his thanks to all who had been involved in its realisation. He also said the next logging competition will probably take place in East Anglia at the end of August.

Above left: Dan Barry with his Husqvarna 372 (far side) and Darren Brookbanks with the newer equivalent Husqvarna 572 were well matched. In the limbing discipline, Darren scored 340 points with Dan only two points in arrears, notching up 338. Overall in the competition, both limited their penalty point deductions to 60 points; a highly commendable achievement.

Above right: Newcomer John Stephenson (left), student Oliver Newhouse (centre) and professional Maddy Parkin (right) complete the limbing discipline. A mix of experience not only heightens the competitive element, it encourages the discussion and critical observation vital to not only improving chainsaw technique but also team building.

Above centre: Matt George completes the first of his two combination cuts. As he completed his second, he was to lose his chain and the rulebook was consulted to ascertain whether his attempt was valid. Alun Jones of Wales was top scorer in this discipline.