

Bug's Life in the Bark

What did Peter Sefton do when he found unwelcome visitors in his wood store?

I always feel excited when embarking on the first stage of a furnituremaking project, especially when converting waney-edged boards you have selected from a timberyard, to reveal the beautiful grain and texture when you first start working it. Using waney-edged timber always throws up different challenges for a woodworker; the techniques involved in removing the bark and sap to try to get to the heartwood, and getting a straight edge to work from without wasting too much of your timber, can be daunting.



Beasty The insect under the bark of Peter Sefton's English sweet chestnut was a harmless forest longhorn beetle, but they gave him a fright when he found them in his woodstore

one warm June day, I was horrified to be greeted by flying beetles! I immediately investigated my waney-edged timber stock, as larvae and beetles generally love soft sap and bark as it's easy to chew.

So I quickly captured one of the culprits (and swatted many!) and removed the waney-edged timber from the wood store. I also left the store in darkness, but left the outside door open in the hope that they would see the light and fly towards it. This



Learning about wood

But I like the students at my school to gain experience of working with the natural defects in timber and practise conversion techniques on waney edges. However my latest batch of waney-edged English sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) was to present a problem I have not encountered for a long time.

On entering my wood store

is my own idea and not based on any scientific fact!

Once I could see the insect more closely, I got my timber reference books out and looked up beetles, to see if I could identify it. I was relieved to find that it was only a forest longhorn beetle (from the family *Cerambycidae*) and posed no threat to the rest of the timber in the wood store. It cannot re-infest dry timber without bark and only attacks standing or felled trees and partly dried timber where bark is attached. No remedial treatment was necessary apart from removal of the bark.

Don't let this put you off buying waney edged timber, be aware of woodworm and

perhaps remove the sap and bark at the earliest opportunity to avoid potential infestation. I choose to keep it as a learning experience for my students, so have to be extra vigilant in the wood store. Do remember, there is nothing more rewarding than taking a knotty, sappy, split piece of waney-edged timber and transforming it into a beautiful piece of fine furniture.

The Peter Sefton Furniture School runs short and long courses near Upton-upon-Severn in Worcestershire. The nine-month professional course starts in the autumn, while shorter courses are run over five, three or two days. Find out more at petersefton.com

