



# Marthall NEWS

From Marthall Tree Products Ltd

## YEAR 16

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You may recall that having enjoyed two years of good sales growth and having realised we probably would see this reduce, I had set my sights on a 10% growth for this year, based on our then current team of nine. Things started well with October being up 14% on the previous October, but the advantage was all but wiped out in November and December, but still Christmas was upon us and no need for any alarm bells.

The new year brought sales increases in January, February and March, March seeing us break the magical £250,000 sales in a single month. However the brakes seemed to be applied and April was down 19%. April saw our first departure in staffing terms when our third driver, Steve, left. We decided not to replace him, but to use the two drivers on three vehicles. May was also down and with the World Cup fever about to be upon us, things were looking poor.

A sad departure at this time was John Coghlan. Many of you will remember John who was a nice man and able to perform in any role you set him – delivery driver, yard man, repairs and maintenance or in the office where he had often covered for me during my holidays and had recently taken over from Cherry on Fridays. John had the opportunity of a partnership with a neighbour who had bought a mill in Macclesfield and as John said "At my time of life, I'm not going to get the opportunity again!" We wish him well.

So Wayne Rooney didn't win us the World Cup, but every time England played, we had two days of virtually no activity. June was set to be down also. The way the press went on about Rooney, it was as if no other player existed. I'd even suggested that he should do the Trooping of the Colour and the Christmas day Queen's Speech.

At this time we saw the departure of part-time yard person Derek who left for personal reasons and very sadly our first time genuine casualty of the downturn when Jimmy was made redundant. July was a brighter month with August slightly down and September 21% down.

So overall it was a roller coaster year with the end result being a half percent reduction in sales, but with a more realistic level of staff. So maybe a score draw.

## SO WHY?

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Why have we seen this slowdown? AGAIN it's only my opinion, but to my mind the whole financial aspect of the country runs on confidence or lack of it, not so much on reality. For example some senior Arab oil person is involved in a completely innocent, non-terrorist related accident resulting in his inability to work, the F.T.S.E. panics about the 'possible' impact and drops 50 points. The next news breaks, he's not as bad as first thought and the F.T.S.E. goes back up 50.

The current political situation makes local authorities uneasy. Okay, so Blair is going, but when? Will it be Brown or not? How will things change if it is? Interest rates, with a couple of rate rises already and possibly a third at the time of writing are seeing some businesses and people with high mortgages (and most are with current house prices) now starting to hurt. The worst thing the Bank of England can say is "No interest rate rises this month, but don't rule it out for next month." So, what happens? People wait and see.

Plus there is the bad feel factor. We are losing in Iraq, probably also in Afghanistan and will we get sucked into the Lebanon? I fail to understand why we have troops in far flung places as this when news reports suggest that these troops should be in High Wycombe or Bradford where apparently the terrorists in our own beds are actually living.

But, this throws up another phenomenon in our lives today, twenty-four hour news channels, good thing or bad thing? Competing news channels are actually attempting to create news and the instant something happens, they roll out these 'experts' to 'suggest' what has happened. In the B.B.C.'s case, usually Frank Muir and a former 'Goodie' and in Sky's case a former football manager. None of this is ever good uplifting news.

Having said all this, I believe people are still much better off and across the board are being 'cautious'. Even the very poor can seem to afford that one real necessity, "Sky World".

## DELIVERING TO SITE \_\_\_\_\_

We are still having problems delivering to sites. Despite telephoning and advising times, we find nobody willing to help unload. Whilst this is no problem for the crane vehicle, our 7.5T driver has just had a week's sick due to a bad back. We are currently looking to replace our 7.5T with another crane vehicle of approx 13T to address this problem but, in the meantime, assistance would be appreciated. I've instructed the driver not to keep bending his back by unloading neatly, but to find the quickest way to unload. So when your subbies arrive to a pile of timber in a heap, don't blame us.

## METAL GATES \_\_\_\_\_

We have increased our range of galvanise field gates held in stock. As well as 10' 0" and 12' 0" we now aim to keep one or two of all sizes 3' 0" up to 16' 0".

## COMPETITION TIME \_\_\_\_\_

As Christmas approaches and Holiday 07 is now being screened, commercial forces mean it is now time to think about Easter.

Our competition is a 5% reduction of any order from stock for the first customer to e-mail a picture of Easter eggs on sale. E-mail to: davidgodsmark@btconnect.com. The same e-mail can be used for orders and enquiries.

## THE FUTURE \_\_\_\_\_

Depending on who you believe, there could be a lot of shortages on timber fencing next year with Zimbabwean style price rises. As we do every year, we sent out enquiries for 130,000 stakes and most suppliers were unable to quote prices beyond 31st December, saying that shortages were definitely going to happen and relationships would be very important. Sales wise we are busy ex yard and on deliveries, but we are missing the big urban regeneration schemes which seem to be greatly reduced.

So I see things falling one of two ways. The shortage will happen and prices will rise, or sales will remain flattish and stocks will be readily available. Which way it will go, I

couldn't say and you have to bear in mind this is the person who, two years ago, said we would have £1 a litre by Christmas '04, so I don't always call it correctly.

## CHRISTMAS

This year we will close at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 21st December (subject to demand) and reopen on Thursday, 4th January, 2007 at 8.00 a.m.

## WHAT'S NEW? \_\_\_\_\_

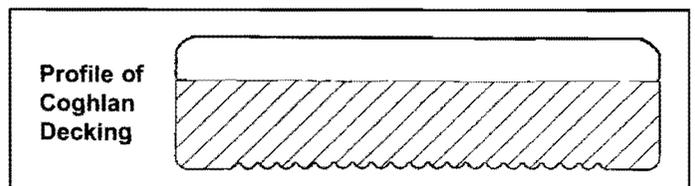
We have continued to expand our tools range, which has proved popular, with a variety of types of spades. Very popular are our Fencer's Grafts at £27.50, many people liking the strong weld on them.

We now have an extensive range of screws at excellent prices and before anybody says we can't beat Screwfix, we **ARE** selling at their previous year's prices.

This year saw the arrival of our heavy PVC Weldmesh 3.50/3.00 green PVC 1.22 and 1.83 metres high.

Our galvanised mild steel barbed wire price has increased to £19.00 per 200 metre reel. We will reprint this particular list at a later date.

We have brought in a new style of decking, our 'Coghlan Decking'. It's smooth on one side as shown below.



We used to have customers who liked to turn our original decking over to get a smooth face, so now they can again. Price wise, this decking is more expensive, but for now we are offering both types at the same price.

Also in stock are joist hangers, Mini and Jiffy.

