

# Marthall Tree Products

T 01565 650526 sales@marthall.net www.marthall.net F 01565 650543

Chelford Road Ollerton Knutsford Cheshire WA16 8SZ

## Marthall News 2012

### General

Firstly, could I thank all of you for your business and support throughout the last year. Despite all the gloom and doom we keep being told about we managed to increase our sales by over 10% on the previous year. Increased costs, notably on fuel, yard disruption and tighter margins, more about this later, lead to reduced profits, but in the current media created climate, we were delighted with the outcome and progress made.

Our new yard is now finished complete with extended shop and new display area with various pergolas, pagodas and furniture on show for the first time, we hope that we can all enjoy the benefits of the new setup. Pictures are also available on the website as well.

Returning from the Christmas break I was particularly touched by customers, who despite having many other options available, and having found we were closed on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January, returned to collect from ourselves on the Thursday rather than purchase elsewhere. We hope we can continue to reward your loyalty.

### Cherry Peachey

Those of you with good memories will recall our 'launch' of Cherry Peachey nearly 8 years ago.... 'no not a new soft drink from Marthall'.....

In the last 18 months Cherry has suffered more than her fair share of health issues. Her strong character has seen her overcome a stroke and cancer. In summer she was told that she needed a hip replacement and decided to retire from Marthall the day before her operation on the 6<sup>th</sup> September. Of course if Cherry had of been a trolleybus we could have simply re-bodied her for a further 15 years' service!

They always say that 1 person does make a team but I can't stress enough the important role Cherry played when joining Marthall. If you put into context the 7 years Cherry was with us was one third of the company's history to date, plus, and possibly more difficult from her prospective, was that she was the first office based person to have to put up with me!! Cherry had a very successful system at Eynsham Park sawmill, but no matter how experienced, it is difficult to enter the world of somebody else who has worked alone for 14 years.

We wish Cherry every enjoyment in her retirement and fans of Cherry need not despair. We understand that she will return to her role at Dunham House on Saturdays from Next spring. So why not go along and see her and enjoy a great day out at this National trust property, one of many in our area, at the same time.

Warning! Don't make the joke of asking her if she is one of the original ladies from the house as she has a mean left hook.

### New Price lists

After much work we have produced 2 new price lists replacing the 3 previous ones. A summary of the changes are on a separate sheet to read in conjunction with the lists. Our website [www.marthall.net](http://www.marthall.net) has also been completely revamped so please take a look.

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## Concrete posts

After much deliberation we have decided to increase our range stocked and now intend to hold stocks of all the slotted posts, including ends, corners, 3 ways plus the 100 x 100 multi holed posts. These now appear on our price lists.

## Aggregate sales

Our aggregate sales division, under the guidance of Alan Goodwin, has continued to enjoy growth at a faster rate than other parts of the business, as more and more people realise the value of the 'honest' service that Alan can offer and the sheer wealth of his knowledge and experience. As one customer commented 'you may be able to buy 10p a tonne cheaper elsewhere but what cost is involved to have men stood about because the wagon or order or both have disappeared off the computer of the supplier'.

**Alan's direct line is 01565 621532.**

## Timber treatment

Sadly, this is going to be an annual topic of conversation, as I continue to despair at an industry, which instead of working together to promote timber fencing, slate each other in a war of words.

4 articles I have seen this year have caught my eye.

Firstly one company who produce a booklet use the headline 'per metre prices' to not only give a sometimes false low looking price, and then offer HC4 treatment, the only correct treatment for ground contact as an extra!! Anybody either unaware or not asking the correct questions will end up with a fence with a much reduced life expectancy.

Second up was another company offering a 15 year guarantee with an \*..... This lead you to the small print, unreadable on my computer screen as it happened..... Which says that this was an indication of the service life? A quote in the article talks about 'a whole life value experience'.... whatever that meant.

Looking up this word the definition of which is 'a promise or assurance', so is it reasonable to promise something will survive 15years and then attach conditions?? Of course the important thing is to remember that from the moment the post is put into the ground it is under constant attack. We are dealing with a natural product.

I would also stress that these companies are well respected in the industry, both have supplied us in the past and one has also been a customer as well.

Thirdly, what happens if you buy a stamped post, possibly costing a little extra, in order to get a guarantee, and then that company goes out of business? Is the guarantee likely to underwritten anywhere??

Lastly, a recent article which made me smile and pause for thought, stated that one will buy a £30,000 car which will come with a 5, possibly 7 year limited warranty, similarly a £1000 television set will be 1, 2 or max. 3 years BUT we expect a £1.79 stake to last 15 years!!!

So, what have we done this year to try to reassure our customers?

Firstly we have held onto our 2003/4 records which would normally now be out on the fire. This means we have 9years traceability.

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All our sawn timbers, except obvious vertical pales, are HC4. 99.5% of which comes from one sawmill ensuring excellent traceability.

We insist that all our round timbers are HC4, removing any supplier who sounds doubtful, unsure or who offers that he will say they are whatever we want to say they are (!) from our list of suppliers.

We won't state something just to ensure a sale. But we will do our very best to purchase materials from sources that are following the correct treatment. We will also check that if these procedures change that our suppliers do also.

## Missing pen

Our counter had an alarming record for losing pens. Having mentioned this at home my son Tom produced a 3' pen he had been given and suggested we should use it. Nobody would possibly want to take it, especially as it was a horrible writer. It was bright white and yellow so couldn't be missed... or so we thought.

It survived 3 days.... Police roadblocks were instantly set up but to no avail. So if you are feeling guilty about having taken this pen it can be returned to our post box, in the deliveries entrance anonymously anytime. In the meantime the police search goes on. Have you seen our pen?

## 2012

If Nicolas Sarkozy or Angela Merkel are to be believed 2012 will be tougher than 2011.

Yes many have lost jobs across the spectrum of trades and industry. But how many larger organisations have simply used the current climate to 'offload' some staff and reduce costs?

I confess I am no economist but throughout the second half of last year I could not understand why the Pound had not risen against the Euro, especially in view of the situations in Greece, Italy, Spain and Ireland.

Listening to radio4 one evening on a 'no news' day they responded to a letter from a listener as to why the Euro was always worth 87p?

They took the previous 3 months values and the MEAN and the MODE were, indeed 87p. A listener, who worked in the city, was on the line to advise that the 2 currencies are level because it was PERCEIVED that BOTH the UK and Europe were in an equal mess. So once again, as with investing in shares, our whole lives are dictated to by a perception, not fact. He even indicated, much to my disbelief, that the Euro would go up and not the pound. Since the reverse is currently happening I don't think I will let him invest for me.

Unfortunately, our media try to paint a negative picture of any positive that happens.... Sales up at Sainsbury's.... well no because if you take VAT adjustment and inflation into account their growth was actually a minus!! Does it really matter? A growth is a growth by any means.

An article regarding Travis Perkins stated that they had seen a growth of something like 6% in the previous period, but due to the period before that having seen a larger growth the headline said 'Sales slump for TP' or 'sales slow', but 6% would make many of you delighted I dare say... so why the negativity? Is it to bring down individuals or Governments or the whole nation? I am expecting headlines of doom in the summer after our Olympic efforts, on and off the track.

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Our strategy for 2012 is very much as it was for 2011. We will endeavour to hold good stocks, so that if you need to start a job instantly we will be able to supply. Our sawn prices have, once again, remained, unchanged, so at our 2010 levels.

Furthermore, our pre winter discussion with Diamonds, our main mill, resulted in a 'second' look at decent size enquiries for our regular loyal customers. Very much a 'can we help you to win the job for us' mentality. We always try to be as competitive as possible but will discuss with the mill if any way can be found to save that odd few percent that could make all the difference to winning a job.

## Rock salt

Whilst we haven't had the coldest of winters yet and as there still is time to have some snow a timely update on our rock salt situation.

We bought in a limited amount this year, available at £3.00 per bag. When this has gone, we have off site, in an emergency some reserves but this will be at a higher price.

Alan, can, of course, still offer direct delivered bulk bags/loose material if required.

Winter isn't over yet!

## What is 0.2%?

It will probably come as no surprise to learn that this newsletter is written over a short period and not in one session. I say this because the media have, once again, managed to prove an earlier point.

At some point during 2011, I think it was, we had a quarter whereby the economy grew by 0.2% or something very similar. The media wrote this increase off as being negligible and said it proved things were not working out. But of course a 0.2% reduction receives major headlines, suggestions of a double dip, a return to the dark ages, and the end of the world as we know it. So if this 0.2% reduction is so important then the similar growth we had last year in a quarter was mis-reported.

So who is to blame, well the answer to this question is Robert Peston, a man described as the BBC's business or political reporter, never heard of him, well just put Radio 4 on of a morning. Robert may possibly be a brilliantly intelligent man, but talks in strange tones and.....  
.....for reasons only known to him suddenly.....pauses mid-sentence. Certainly he would be no good reading the football classified results on a Saturday where tone of voice says it all. Get rid of Robert and the recession will be over. It will also stop me saying 'oh no' every time I hear they are going over to him for a report.

As we started our 22<sup>nd</sup> year I, taking everything into account, was looking to consolidate on last year's growth. So when our first month of the year finished 0.3% down what was our thinking? To be honest we were delighted because we also had the knowledge that a full load had actually been delivered in October, but by prior agreement was invoiced as November, so we had actually had a growth.

So what does 0.2% mean to you??

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Also this week there have been major headlines about 45,000 job losses in the construction industry. The word you were likely to miss was 'may' or 'could'. What has happened to today's media? Bring back Kenneth Kendall and Robert Dougall I say and 30 minutes of what had actually happened. 24 hour news channels are great, you can watch news any of time of the day, but it is now an attention seeking competitive market.....phone tapping, stories not being verified and lots of speculation. So should it be Sky Speculation, instead of News, or BBC Speculation 24, or what about CSN or would they start selling Sofas perhaps. In fact, as much as I disagree with them being allowed to pollute our airwaves, Al Jazeera seem the best set, showing videos of individuals that are actually alive despite the Americans and allies having thought they had killed them! Proof is shown by said 'baddy' holding up a copy of a very recent newspaper featuring that most newsworthy of articles about a 28 year old Yorkshire mum of 4 whom, wearing a black mini dress and black knee length boots is too inappropriately dressed to be allowed access to the clubs of her particular city. This was so newsworthy it went on for 3 days (so far!).

What our 'baddy' makes of it all is anyone's guess. But the news is factual.

## **And finally.**

I know I should get out more but one of my highlights of the year is the double issue Christmas radio times. Am I just getting old or is Christmas television just getting worse. I found very little of appeal and even her majesty was a let-down. I can still recall visiting my grandparents in a tower block in Halewood and watching TV while all the adults were in the pub. You could time, almost to the second, when they would return, just in time to listen to the Queen, and I mean listen and take in what she was saying, before sitting down to our Christmas meal. This year a change of plan saw the family at my parents having the traditional meal and watching the Queen, but blink and you missed it.

So what has Britain got to offer?

Our utilities companies are largely French, Airports Spanish, Some train operators and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest bus group German and now Metro link is operated by RATP, the Paris transport operator. Throw in Keolis, Veola, Transdev and Connex (all French) and we haven't got much left. So if our saviour is to offer The City as a world financial centre we will need to have a Swiss approach to life. Don't pick fights with people, look after our own country exclusively and, when it comes to financial dealings operate in complete confidence with whoever wants to do business, even if this means Iran, North Korea and Zimbabwe.

As we seem to find this easy to do this with people then why not in financial dealings with other countries. As long as Britain prospers who needs to know? Would we really care if they knew anyway?