

THE LOG LOO

CASE STUDY

BARNLUASGAN COMPOST TOILET, ARGYLL GREEN WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

Introduction

Argyll Green Woodworkers Association (AGWA) was established in 1994 by a group of woody enthusiasts: woodworkers, woodland owners & managers, arborists, craftworkers and architects. Barnluasgan is part of the National Forest Estate, and AGWA has had a lease on the site for several years.



Fig 1. The Barnluasgan compost toilet

Building a compost toilet from round logs fitted well with a number of AGWA's objectives. The Barnluasgan Centre was designed for educational use, and the 'log loo' is a demonstration of the benefits of using local timber and of sustainable practices. However AGWA is also about taking advantage of opportunities: we had some members who were very keen to build a round log building, and we needed a toilet!



Fig 2. Pre-dating the log loo is an adjacent cruck-frame oak shelter for holding workshops

The Building

Description: underbuilding of block, with stone outer face, providing two composting compartments for solids and one for liquids. The overbuild consists of a hand scribed round log building under a turf roof.



Fig 3. Sunart Oakwoods Initiative visitors to Barnluasgan admire the construction

Project management

Steve Hunter, AGWA member & architect, took the lead on designing the overall building, while AGWA member Cormac Seekings led the aesthetic & practical design of the log-shell, and Laird Henderson helped with some of the roof detail and the internal fittings.

This was the first composting loo in Argyll, however the Council were supportive, and Steve Hunter worked closely with officials to secure the planning permission. Project Management was carried out by Steve Hunter, the architect.

Cormac led courses for the log scribing element of the build. We ran two training weeks, which attracted 15 people.



Fig 4. Main door detail

Construction

The understorey, soakaway & plumbing connections were completed by Tim Lister, an external contractor. Cormac Seekings took on the contract to construct the round log structure. This was pre-constructed on a flatter area of ground, and moved to the final location by a Forestry Commission Scotland forwarder. AGWA folk who helped Cormac during this phase included Dino, James, Bob, Ek, Di & Dan, with Dan providing welcome support. The wooden roof was topped with turf by volunteers, and the internals were then fitted out by AGWA members Laird Henderson and John Pollard under a contract.



Fig 5. One of the stone-built, concrete-lined understorey compartments

All the timber was sourced from Argyll. Roundpole Western Red Cedar was bark stripped on site by patients from the Argyll & Bute Psychiatric Hospital. Douglas Fir roof boards & internal partitions were processed by Woodmizer mobile sawmill on site. The Oak flooring was processed by McConnell Wood Products (and donated to the project by Argyll Broadleaves).

What is innovative in a Scottish or woodland context: This is the first modern composting loo in Argyll, possibly Scotland in one of the first handscribed round log buildings in Scotland.

Problems encountered: AGWA did run into some problems over the relationship between volunteer time scales and funders time scales. The innovative nature of the build was partially responsible for these delays.

How these were overcome: Blood, sweat & tears

Any finishing still to do: Weeding the turf roof

Costs: Total cost for material & (paid) labour came to £21,000

Voluntary hours put in to the construction if known: Several hundred.



Fig 6. Indoor detail

Impact in the Community

What does the wider community say about the building: The building has a high “wow” factor, and is generally appreciated.

How is the building being used: The building has had less use than AGWA initially anticipated, however plans are afoot to address this.

What is happening now, are any more buildings being developed: We hope to construct additional innovative timber buildings at the site in the next year or two.

What did the builders get personally from the process: Satisfaction of being involved in a special project. Skills development.

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