

# The Daily Telegraph

## Solid virtue of homegrown wood

Elizabeth Williamson  
on the return of  
craftsmanship in  
furniture-making

**T**HE SOLID WOOD furniture revival is gathering speed. Furniture buyers, in retreat from the wall-to-wall veneering of the average modern furniture department, are turning to solid wood for its beauty and durability. The prices are often less than they expect.

But in today's climate of ecological awareness, the craftsmen are careful about which wood they use. Conscious of the threat to rain forests, they refuse to use tropical hardwoods and turn instead to indigenous timber grown in parkland and hedgerows. The result is some of the most satisfying furniture produced in Britain today.

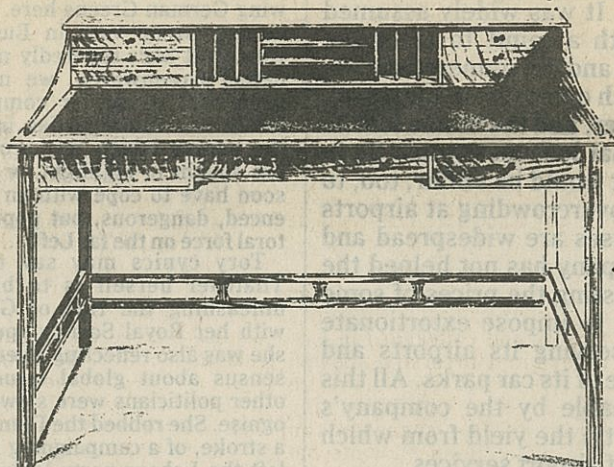
Often made by the man who designed it or by a workshop team, the chairs and tables, desks and dressers in solid wood are pieces of contemporary art that some say rival the craftsmanship of the great days of British cabinet design.

In Glasgow, the dramatic designs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) are once again being made by Joseph Mulholland.

Mulholland reproduces about a dozen original designs, including the famous tall-back chairs, under the Mackintosh and Company label. His factory in Mackintosh's native Glasgow employs the craftsmen who once worked on the panelled interiors of oceangoing liners in John Brown's shipyard. Fine workmanship and the timeless quality of the designs is the reason for the furniture's success. Two Glasgow shops, McDonald in Cathedral Street and Martin & Frost in Jamaica Street, already stock it; Conran is interested and Harrods will display it in its windows in London this autumn.

Robert Williams of Pearl Dot furniture is another enthusiast of British oak, ash and sycamore. "I try to be a Green," he says. "I also use American ash and maple that are grown and replanted.

Drawing: PAUL KERN



*Elegant: oak writing desk by Luke Hughes, price £1,500*

"The grain of tropical hardwoods is not that interesting because the trees grow quickly. English timber tends to come from parkland or hedgerows, where it grows slowly, giving it a better grain."

Another craftsman, Luke Hughes, works with Mark

Adams and Christian Jebbin in a combined workshop/shop in Covent Garden, London. Their furniture, spare, elegant and subtly proportioned, is made of traditional woods such as oak, ash and walnut, with rich touches of American cherry.

Appalled by the devastation

in Brazil, Hughes states: "I use English hardwoods with a lot of wormfree oak or Lebanon cedar — the trees that Capability Brown liked in his landscapes. The wood is good for linen chests or panelling."

Craftsmen like Hughes and Robert Williams build up a repertoire of designs evolved from commissioned work to put into batch production, which brings down their prices.

□ For information, contact: Alan Tilbury Associates, Old Farm House, West Farm, Preston, Chippenham, Wiltshire (0249 890 870); Mackintosh And Company Ltd, 487 Great Western Road, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow G12 8HL (041-357 3601); Pearl Dot Ltd, 2 Roman Way, Islington, London N7 BXG (01-609 3169); Luke Hughes & Co Ltd, 1 Stukeley Street, London WC2B 5LQ (01-405 5995). The Good Wood Guide, to be published in August, will be available from bookshops and Friends of the Earth (UK) Ltd, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 (01-490 1555).