

# OneOak exhibition, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

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## *Final report for the Scottish Forestry Trust*

The OneOak exhibition, co-ordinated by the Sylva Foundation, was hosted by Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) for a period of six weeks between October 12<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Funding was provided by the Scottish Forestry Trust to support the creation of the exhibition, its transport to the venue, and its curation.

## **The OneOak exhibition**

The exhibition comprised educational materials (2D information panels) and interpretation of exhibits, plus music and film. 3D materials included a number of articles of fine furniture, craft items, sculpture, toys, household items on display. The exhibition filled completely the large exhibition space immediately adjacent to the main entrance to the John Hope Gateway (West Gate).



Further images: <http://www.sylva.org.uk/blog/oneoak-exhibition-at-royal-botanic-garden-edinburgh>

## **Private View**

A private view was held on the evening of 11th October. Some 450 people were invited. Numbers attending were disappointingly low (25). The most likely cause was the weather which was very inclement. The event was opened by the Regius Keeper Dr Stephen Blackmore, followed by a short presentation by Gabriel Hemery and curator Jane King. The support of SFT was acknowledged.

## **Media and social interest**

A press release was prepared jointly by Sylva and RBGE and circulated by RBGE by their Media Officer.

Separately, Sylva authored two articles for the forestry press: one for The Chartered Forester, and a smaller piece in Forestry & Timber News. The SFT was credited in both articles. Copies of the articles are appended.

Sylva's active website for the OneOak project, and associated social media, made the most of the exhibition. The homepage at [www.OneOak.info](http://www.OneOak.info) includes an interactive 360° degree panorama of the exhibition.

During the six weeks, October to December 2012, we received unprecedented interest through our websites and social media. The **OneOak website attracted 9,249 unique visits**, and **Sylva's main website an additional 12,573** (total 21,822). The project's Facebook and Twitter accounts attracted good numbers of 'likes' and followers.

## Visitor attendance

Two members of staff from Sylva and the curator spent three days interacting with visitors following its opening. Comments were extremely positive, both relating to the overall presentation of the exhibition, and its content and story.

RBGE provided visitor numbers for the entire run of the exhibition, these were: **49,608 visitors**. These do not denote actual visitors to the exhibition but given its placement immediately adjacent to the entrance, a high proportion of these visitors were exposed to it.



The exhibition was highlighted specifically in a report by *Visit Scotland* that awarded RBGE with their highest standard as a visitor attraction of **5 stars**, and they were impressed by the quality of the OneOak exhibition and found it 'fascinating and worth visiting in itself'.

## Feedback from RBGE

Ian Edwards, Head of Exhibitions at RBGE, commented that the exhibition was a "triumph".

Elinor Gallant, Exhibitions Officer at RBGE said: "The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is delighted to be the final host venue for OneOak. The story of OneOak links well with our experiences as a botanic garden and with our policy of communicating about the environment at every level. Having hosted two particularly well received drop-in sessions bringing insight to the project, back in January 2011, it made absolute sense for us to present the full exhibition, and what a finale it is. In its first 11 days the exhibition has not only proved very popular with our visitors, of all ages, but has also provoked passionately positive feedback from our staff."





## OneOak Sales

The OneOak exhibition was not designed primarily as a selling event but rather an educational activity. Nonetheless a number of the larger items on display were sold on behalf of makers, and a reasonable quantity of prints and smaller wooden items sold. This was very welcome given the very considerable investment made by Sylva to the project over the last three years.

## Legacy

The Sylva Foundation's next major educational initiative is a celebration of John Evelyn's *Sylva* of 1664. The Sylva Foundation has supported the writing and illustration of **The New Sylva**, to be published by Bloomsbury in 2014, to celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the original work. Sylva is also planning exhibitions to accompany the book's publication, consisting of a proportion of the 200 new drawings made for the new book, together with some information panels communicating the importance of forests and of forest management to a general public audience. As a direct result of the success of the OneOak exhibition at RBGE, the Head of Exhibitions at RBGE has not only invited Sylva to launch *The New Sylva* exhibitions at RBGE, but is also co-ordinating on Sylva's behalf a series national touring exhibitions. Starting at RBGE in April 2014, the exhibitions will move on to Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Westonbirt Arboretum, and National Botanic Garden at Glasnevin (Ireland). Through these exhibitions we hope to reach a very wide audience and be able to communicate effectively about sustainable forest management in the 21st Century.

The educational work undertaken in the OneOak project has also been instrumental in the development of a new programme of work starting in 2013 being funded by B&Q. The concept of engaging the public in positive stories about sustainable forest management has been included in the B&Q project, which is supported by their Corporate Social Responsibility team. It is hoped that some 'mini one tree' projects will be undertaken in this work.

The OneOak finale exhibition at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has been significant at a number of levels. It has assisted very significantly in the delivery of Sylva's core educational objectives in bringing people closer to sustainable forest management and in using wood. It has created a lasting legacy in feeding directly in the development of two new major projects. The funding provided by the Scottish Forestry Trust and their support for the exhibition was fundamental to its success.

Dr Gabriel Hemery  
Chief Executive, Sylva Foundation  
7th February 2013