

Ted's News

July 2020

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Did you know that Wilson Timbers/Outdoor Structures will have me come to your office and deliver one or two of my CPD sessions for free? These are serious training times with real learning outcomes. The only condition is that, with travel, we can do it in a day from Gatton in Queensland. Here are the nine courses available:

Topic 1: Timber Preservation

Topic 2: Hardwood Grading

Topic 3: Timber Decks - Designing for Durability

Topic 4: Utilising Small Diameter Hardwood

Topic 5: The Seven Deadly Sins of Timber Design

Topic 6: Timber Joints

Topic 7: Architectural Timber Battens

Topic 8: Timber 101 (Optimally Topics 8 & 9 to be presented together)

Topic 9: Boardwalk Design (Optimally Topics 8 & 9 to be presented together)

[To learn more about these courses visit my website.](#) [Contact Stuart Madill by email to arrange a time](#) or call his mobile 0403 385 707.

[The Most Skilled Spotted Gum Project I Have Ever Seen](#)



I saw my first Arab dhow in Dar-es-Salaam harbour in Tanzania back in 1970 and was amazed at how such small timber trading vessels could travel such large distances. It brought to mind images of Sinbad and his sailors. Later again I saw them up close at a boatyard in Jeddah in the early 80's so you could imagine my complete surprise when I was contacted by [Adam Meisenhelter, a Project Manager with](#) UAP, who were building a dhow in Brisbane. This one was never going to float though, as it was to be installed in the playground at the National Museum of Qatar.

My help was sought because teak, a traditional timber for this application was not available in the

sizes required so an Australian substitute was needed. I advised the use of spotted gum, a local boat building timber. Unfortunately, only structural timber, not appearance grade was available, and this playground needed the very best quality. I have been talking for years about the difference between the two applications and UAP grasped it immediately, but it meant that they had to overorder by 30 percent to get what they needed. A lower moisture content was required than what was stated in the upper range of the millers' specification. The mill was able to accommodate this. The spotted gum was supplied by Parkside.

I am not using hyperbole when I say that this is the most outstanding use of spotted gum I have ever seen. [Click here for a video that will leave you in no doubt also](#). Remember, this was made in Brisbane!

[Here is a table comparing spotted gum to teak that I prepared when I was sending timber to Japan.](#)

For my architect and landscape architects readers especially, [here is a link to an account that has more images and gives the design intent of the dhow](#).



Prefabrication at UAP in Brisbane

I am used to dealing with deck and house builders where the most sophisticated equipment being used is a power saw and drill and, God forbid, a nail gun. When I did my homework on UAP it blew my mind. I saw that they worked with artists across all parts of the creative process: from commissioning and curatorial services, concept generation and design development, right through to engineering, fabrication, and installation. Their public art is produced using the latest innovative processes.

To learn more about the project direct from UAP, the contact details are Phone: 07 3630 6300,
Email: brisbane@uapcompany.com

This is why you do things correctly



I can't show you the offending structure but here is one that is in great shape after 20 years despite being up against the soil.

Almost 20 years ago I was given the plans to quote for a boardwalk in a very high-profile park. I looked at the drawings and realised it wasn't going to work as it had all the usual problems; narrow joists that would split from the fasteners, low quality, non-durable timber etc. So I wrote to the government body organising this, sending my design guides and offering to help make it a success. It was rebuffed with the explanation that it has a 25 year performance guarantee from the engineers. Well, after 25 years you should be thinking about replacing the decking, but only the decking, but now the whole structure is coming down and being replaced by one, at least on paper, that does not appear to be much better. Of course, everyone has forgotten that there was a performance guarantee and the builder closed years ago. How much better it is to do it correctly in the first place.

A short life should not be expected or accepted. The information is out there to enable professionals to design well, the help is out there too. My [Deck and Boardwalk Design Essentials](#) even has a checklist so you can't go wrong! And even my full day course on deck design is very "cheap bickies" in comparison to having replace a complete structure. And I am sorry, but a simple F14 hardwood specification means absolutely nothing when we are talking about weather exposed timber. [Read my guide Grading Hardwood, Understanding AS2082 where it is all explained.](#) Before you commit to spending many thousands of dollars, talk to me.

[Why I Disapprove of Using Oregon Pine Externally](#)



Decaying Oregon verandah roof beam on the Gold Coast

A long time ago, in the early 80's a builder from Melbourne came to my mill and ordered timber for a house he was building in the Lockyer Valley here in sunny Queensland. He wanted Oregon pine for the exposed rafters that extended in one piece over the verandah. I told him that, locally, we would use hardwood for this. I was put in my place when he told me that he had been a builder for 25 years and knew what he was doing and if I didn't want to supply it he would go elsewhere. So, against my better judgment I supplied it. A year later I was hit with a solicitor's letter of demand for \$50,000 to remove his roof, and replace the Oregon. A nasty legal battle ensued and I was introduced to the realities of timber durability. The Judge threw out our defence of supplying timber specified, requested and supplied against an Australian Standards as they did not have the force of law then. Three barristers were arguing over case law relating to bicycle bells supplied in the 1800's. The builder received less than \$100 damages and somehow I, not the Oregon supplier, ended up paying his legal aid expenses as well. The episode was so stressful that I basically put the standards I had been relying on in the round filing cabinet and resolved to only supply timber that was, in my opinion, fit for service. [Here is a link to information that was originally available by at least 1991 basically saying it is unwise to use Oregon in Queensland for structural items in the weather.](#) Incised and then treated would be different but that material is not available in this market. Compare the checked joint in the image to the reference to checked joints in the guidelines.

Since then, a number of Australian Standards have been incorporated into the BCA and now the NCC so they become a defence but I don't know how reliable it would be. Doubtful I would have thought, as Australian consumer law requires any product to be fit for purpose. If somebody asks for third class timber e.g. F14 grey ironbark, am I still obligated to supply timber fit for purpose if I know it is for say a verandah post where, with that species, they are expecting the look of F27? I know I am, and this is a major difficulty as you cannot produce material fit for purpose at third class price. Why do I say that such a product is third class? Because I can supply F14 Grey ironbark with defects so large that about 60% of its strength is missing for a start. It is an ugly piece of timber.

[Japanese Tea Garden Deck](#)



In the [May newsletter I featured decks built in Japan from spotted gum](#). With the threat of COVID-19 in the cities, the tourist operators are promoting trips to the countryside such as the tea plantations in Shizuoka, where some of the Australian hardwood viewing platforms have been installed. [Here is a tourist promotional video](#).

[Earn CPD Points through eClassroom](#)

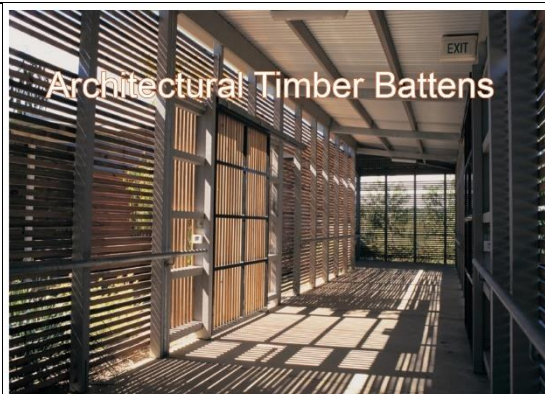


[New Course - the Seven Deadly Sins of External Timber design](#)



**Outdoor Timber:
Design & Specification**

[Outdoor Timber Design](#)



Architectural Timber Battens

[Architectural Timber Battens](#)

The Seven Deadly Sins of External Timber Design, which explains how to avoid many of the common problems that beset timber design, has recently gone up on the eClassroom website. You will be surprised how easy it is to design timber structures and landscaping that ages gracefully. It is time to start earning CPD for the next year points with what is proving very popular course. Face to face training is going to be difficult for a while yet but the three courses now on [eClassroom](#) which include [Outdoor Timber: Design and Specification](#), and [Architectural Timber Batten](#) can be undertake in the safety of your home. Coming soon to eClassroom will be two additional new courses - *Timber Joints* and *Designing for Durability*.

Need a Timber Consultant or Expert Witness?

I have over 40 years' experience in the industry and can assist you with many of your timber needs.

Inspection – I can assess timber products on their performance, fitness for purpose or cause of failure. I also examine whether best practice was used in design and construction. I have recently completed inspections on boardwalks, bollards, support beams and external timber furniture.

Grading - Quite literally, I have written the book on the subject. Recent experience has shown that up to 30% of timber supplied may not be to grade.

Design - I can provide detailed technical drawings and advice. I can also review already prepared drawings.

Reports - I have authored many books on timber and can prepare a report providing recommendations and practical instructions on to how to rectify issues.

Please note as I am now employed a Senior Timber Consultant with the firm BCRC all large and complex consultancies and requirements for an expert witness will be handled in conjunction with them. Existing consulting arrangements remain unchanged and I am also available to assist on small projects. For more information see www.bcrc.com.au



Edgar Stubbersfield

Mail: edgarstubbersfield@gmail.com

Web: www.deckwood.com.au

Phone: 0414770261