



NEW CHAIR FOR IOM3 WOOD TECHNOLOGY GROUP

*Dr Morwenna Spear has been appointed as chair of the Wood Technology Group
Andrew True reports*



It is a great pleasure to welcome Dr Morwenna Spear as incoming chair of the Wood Technology Group (WTG) of the Institute of Materials Minerals and Mining (IOM3). She is only the second woman to hold this position in the entire history of the WTG and its predecessors the Wood Technology Society and the Institute of Wood Science (IWSc). In former times Dr Spear's title would have been president!

She, therefore, succeeds

Jean Taylor, who may well have been the first female member of the IWSc and who served as its president from 1986 to 1988. But Ms Taylor's career was much more than that – she was another of the timber trade's “unsung heroes”.

As president, Ms Taylor was sandwiched in between two of the trade's personalities – Terence Mallinson from the timber industry (president 1984-1986), and John Brazier from a research background (president 1988-1990).

Ms Taylor was 15 years old when the second world war broke out, but before it ended she had volunteered to serve in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, working on air-frame maintenance and becoming a skilled fitter.

She later took a zoology degree at Cardiff, and then in 1949 joined the entomology section of the UK Forest Products Research Laboratory (FPRL, later to become PRL, Princes Risborough Laboratory). This was one of the world's foremost timber research bodies. Entomology is the study of insects, and in this context their effect on wood.

She was part of an illustrious post-war intake to FPRL, which included John Brazier and Michael White, both of whom have featured in earlier Talking Timber articles. It was a formidable team which made major contributions to the advancement of wood science, and helped place the timber trade where it is today.

Ms Taylor was particularly concerned with the prevention and control of wood-boring insects, and she was instrumental in the evaluation of insecticides. Accordingly, she developed laboratory testing technology and then used her laboratory research to predict real life performance.

She was very meticulous in experimentation and, combined with practical skills, she played a major role in collaborative programmes within the European Standards Organisation, CEN, and the International Research Group on wood preservation.

After over 20 years at PRL, Ms Taylor accepted a research post at Protim (now Koppers Performance Chemicals), and was later technical director, a post she held until retirement.

Dr Spear is also a leading wood research scientist, currently at the BioComposites Centre, Bangor University. Following studies

Andrew True (FIMMM) is a previous chairman of the Wood Technology Society, and a current board member

in forestry and forest products, she gained a PhD in natural fibre composite materials.

Her research interests include the physical, mechanical, and thermal properties of wood and she has applied a wide range of techniques to understand and develop wood modification technologies. Like Ms Taylor, she also has experience of scaling-up new technologies for industry, and value-adding for timber.

Dr Spear also has a strong interest in the use of timber as a renewable and sustainable resource for construction, considering availability, embodied and sequestered carbon, and the route to net zero.

She works closely with the timber industry, and has conducted market studies on the forest products sector, the use of timber in construction and the bio-based composites sector.

Dr Spear supervises MSc and PhD students in topics relating to timber and bio-based materials. She is involved in the Places of Climate Change research group and Plastics Research Centre Wales within Bangor University.

She has written papers and book chapters on topics including: natural materials, wood-based composites, timber properties and recycling.

Dr Spear applies much of the diverse knowledge she has gained and interacts with industry to consider the timber resource in the UK and its potential in our fight against climate change. ■

*Below left:
Jean Taylor was
IWSc president
from 1986-1988*

*Below right:
Dr Spear is the new
chair of WTG*



**Wood
Technology
Group**
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