



## A day in the life of a Devon horse logger

HORSE loggers are considered keepers of the art of low impact extraction systems. Useful for removing fallen trees and providing horse powered woodland management. Reconnect joined John and Clare Williamson to experience a day in the life of a Devon horse logger...

**O**UR day starts early with campfire tea. At dawn, Burniscombe is often shrouded in mist. The horses, Jens and Louie, are waiting patiently for our arrival. Last week we were working on an archeological site in Fingle Woods for the Woodland Trust and National Trust but today we are back on home turf. The horses know the ropes here and need little persuasion to follow us into the barn for their first of several feeds. Breakfast is the most important meal, especially for a one ton Belgian draft horse who needs slow release energy.

The horse's harness, specially made in Sweden, needs checking over. This gives us a moment to plan our days work and to make sure the kettle has boiled.

Today we are working a birch stand destined for the charcoal kiln in our own wood. Charcoal is an ancient crop and a carbon neutral fuel that helps restore the woodland by managing neglected coppice. Any



Making charcoal at Burniscombe Wood

winter weather soon gets forgotten as we work up a sweat. We have a wide range of equipment but today we are using the basic whipple tree to skid our timber. The tack jangles and the heavy tread sounds along the woodland rides until we reach the glade where the kiln waits.

We have trained our horses to listen out for our commands, so they move the timber precisely. The horses' quiet yet powerful presence is part of the joy of working under the canopy.

After a few rounds of work and rest and food we unharness the horses and take stock. After a good day's work the horses like nothing more than a good roll in the field, which we never tire of witnessing.

● Join John and Clare Williamson around the campfire to learn an ancient craft - from horse logging tuition and charcoal making to spoon carving and woodland yoga. Check out their website for details [www.burniscombewood.co.uk](http://www.burniscombewood.co.uk)

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