

## Highly Commended



The elm used by Dylan Pym exemplifies the purpose of our Best Use of British Timber award, being sourced from Hackney in London. "In 2005 one of our Huntingdon elms (*Ulmus x hollandica 'vegetata'*), succumbed to Dutch elm disease," writes Rupert Bentley Wallis, Arboreal Officer for the borough. "Dylan came down to see the tree, and it was agreed that rather than a monetary donation which had no real meaning to the borough or its community, that Dylan would produce an item of his work (a wonderful bench), in return for the trunk, and also pass on some of his skills and expertise back to Hackney. The borough still has one of the best collections of elms in London, planted when the Lammas Lands came into public ownership in the 1880s-90s. The hybrids of wych elm and smooth-leaved elm are less susceptible to Dutch elm disease than English elm, but some die and have to be cut down."

*Details* Dylan Pym is based in Polstead, Suffolk ([dylanpym.co.uk](http://dylanpym.co.uk)).



*Elm* Inspecting the elm butt during milling

## Erich Fichtner

Congratulating the winner of our inaugural award

It is perhaps ironic that our inaugural Best Use of British Timber Award has been won by an American living in Ireland, which we considered to have been eligible as part of the British Isles.

We loved Erich's 'rippled' boxes last year at CCD in Cheltenham, and this time he went further in making a Fluted Blanket Chest from lacewood (London plane, *Platanus acerifolia*) with walnut strapping. It's a simple piece, but joining the long mitres at the corners tightly, and routing the scallops without serious chipping is a triumph. "It is a further exploration of the intricate and sometimes surprising patterns revealed through carving quartersawn London plane," Erich explains.

The craftsmanship and design are both good, and the choice of lacewood is ideal because the speckled effect of the medullary rays adds to the textural nature of the surface, while the gradual changes across the board are only noticeable when you stand back. The contrast between walnut and London plane is more subtle than the sycamore/walnut combination that is relatively common.

Provenance is critical, and Erich provided a dossier of evidence from the Irish Forestry Board (Coillte Teoranta) that the London plane is from Lismore Castle, while the walnut was extracted from a garden in County Meath. It had fallen into a lake and had to be skidded on plywood to the owner's lawn for sawing on a mobile mill for the Lisnavagh Timber Project. The documentation refers to the



walnut as being black (*Juglans nigra*), which is unusual outside America. It looks more like *Juglans regia*, best known as English or European walnut.

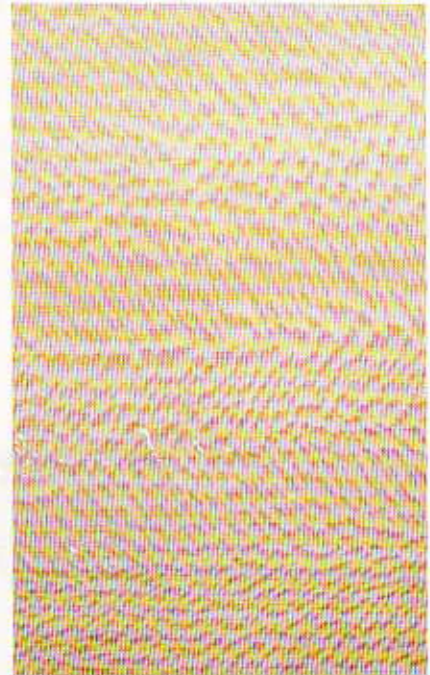
*Details* Visit [erichfichtner.com](http://erichfichtner.com) to view more of Erich's work.







## Medullary rays



The lacewood figure revealed in Erich Fichtner's Fluted Blanket Chest is the result of cutting through the medullary rays that run radially from the heart of a tree, at right angles to the cells. The rays transport waste products from the cambium under the bark towards the centre of the stem to protect the heartwood from decay.



Plane lacewood comes from London plane trees (*Platanus acerfolia*), which are common lining the streets of towns and cities. Urban trees are vital for providing shade as temperatures rise, while also combatting pollution  
 Photo courtesy of FC Photo Library

Plane lacewood is a superb choice of timber for this routed blanket chest because the figure is textural, and homogenous, and is interesting both close up and from afar. When you cut through quartersawn London plane you reveal the medullary rays in a speckled pattern, as is also found in elm, and to a lesser extent in sycamore, maple and beech

