

THE ANATOMY OF WOOD:  
ITS DIVERSITY AND VARIABILITY

K. Wilson and D. J. B. White. Stobart and Son Ltd., London.  
1987. Price £20. ISBN 08544 0339.

Appraisal of this book must be made against the authors' stated intention to write a work similar in its content and purpose to "The Structure of Wood" by the late F. W. Jane. This latter book is now out of print but it had become outdated in its treatment of many aspects of wood structure (spiral grain, juvenile wood, pit aspiration) which have assumed much greater significance with the development of plantation forestry.

This new book which is intended primarily for student of timber technology rests widely on Jane's work, but draws much of its new material from the relevant literature of the subject as the list of references indicates. An outline of the chemical and physical structure of wood furnishes a background of understanding of some of the physical properties of timber generally. The diversity of wood anatomy is described and illustrated. The variability of wood within and between trees and its bearing on timber utilisation is also described. The approach to wood identification focuses attention more on these anatomical features which have been found useful in distinguishing one wood from another, rather than on the whole structure.

However, the treatment of wood anatomy is spread over several chapters and it is sometimes difficult, without resorting to the index, to know where to look for any particular feature. One also wonders about the extent (33 pages) of the chapter on the "Ultrastructure of Wood", particularly in view of the limited nature of the keys for identification of timbers. Figure in wood is always an attractive subject and while this is adequately dealt with in the book, the chapter title is, "Wood Surfaces and Their Underlying Structure". This appears to be change for the sake of change.

It would be easy to carp over these and other points in this excellent textbook, but too much emphasis on small points would denigrate this book too much. The authors have made a valiant effort to produce a balanced and up-to-date book on wood technology, for which there was a need. They have succeeded in producing a book which will be widely used by all wood technologists who seek to understand the relationships between wood structure, wood properties and wood use characteristics. The book is well illustrated with a combination of photographs and line drawings.

Jack Gardiner