

December 2016

WILDWOODS

Following on from my last email I now want to discuss an alternative theory about how Wildwoods came about. This is a rather more complex theory than the earlier one and suggests that as pioneer trees spread by wind-blown seed they were in competition with the grazing species that survived on the tundra. These animals maintained open permafrost vegetation within which individual trees might be able to find adequate cover to become established and produce suckers and seeds. These pioneers would slowly form thickets which would be sufficiently dense to exclude or discourage the large grazing mammals such as reindeer or mammoth. The thickets slowly spread outwards and the oldest trees in the centre would progressively die, leaving a hollow centre - like a doughnut. The empty centre would be available for the same, or other species, to colonise.

As the climate warmed more tree species arrived that no longer relied on tiny wind-blown seed to spread. These new species had seed that ripened in a fruit that was eaten and the seed then carried by birds and small mammals, and deposited on the ground as dung. These small animals were woodland species that migrated from thicket to thicket carrying and depositing new species which could grow if they fell where there was sufficient light and root space. These included species such as rowan, hazel, holly, hawthorn, cherry, yew and apple. The new species of trees filled the centre of the doughnut and in turn spread outwards. These early species were pioneers and dense thicket-forming species that tend not to grow too large, but form a sufficiently dense canopy to exclude their own kind until death opens up the canopy. Slowly the expanding doughnuts of each species intermingled or broke up and a complex distribution developed that is neither homogenous nor monocultural.

The next stage sees the arrival of a wave of dedicated woodland tree species. These are real giants, and long lived, that arrive slowly and drop their heavy seed to grow in the shade of the dense woodland. Some species, like oak stay small until the canopy opens up. Others, like ash, have a limited number of years in which to germinate and grow tall in the heavy shade and so break through the canopy. If they don't succeed after as few as seven growing seasons they lose the ability to survive in deep shade and so die. The picture becomes ever more complex and fractal, with numerous external factors coming into play such as disease, floods, soil quality and depth, wind throw, grazing pressure and slope aspect. The result is that the gradually evolving fractal pattern is twisted and interwoven.

Finally, along comes human kind to cut down the woods or burn them to create open land.

Stage 1: A first tree grows from wind-blown seed and survives grazing



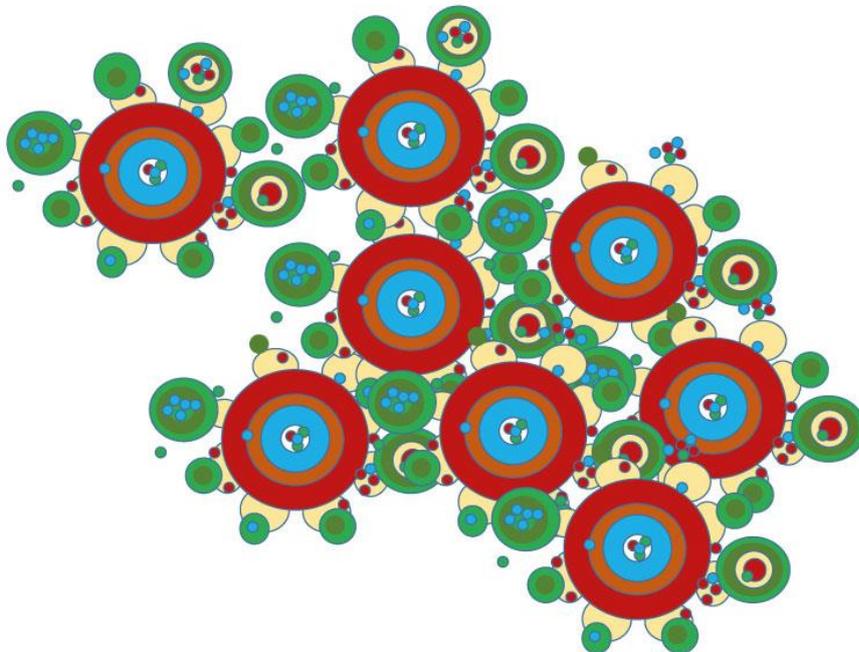
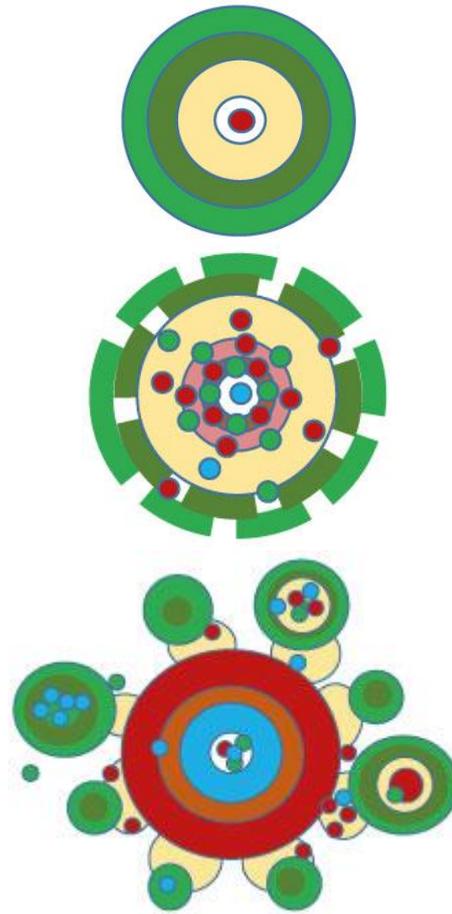
Stage 2: the spreading thicket with outer saplings, an inner ring of mature trees and a centre of over-mature and dying trees (yellow).



Stage 3: the actively spreading outer edge of the pioneer tree species continue to expand and the inner ring of dying trees follows (yellow). In the empty centre a new species arrives, possibly seed brought by bird.

Stage 4: the outer rings of pioneer trees break up into separate stands, the berry-bearing trees spread and the centre dies. Trees of both kinds spread by seed into the dying zone (yellow). A third species finds space in both dying zone and the empty centre.

Stage 5: the first ring of pioneers breaks up to form separate doughnuts within which the process of succession continues. Eventually the expansion brings different doughnuts into conflict and the pattern becomes ever more complex.



I told you it was complicated.

Kind regards

Andrew

Principal Landscape Architect
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Steve Jobs' advice is that after 10 minutes you have lost your audience.

At our livery company lunches and dinners the time limit for the Master's response to the addresses provided by our principal guests is a maximum of 8 minutes. The limit is adhered to quite strictly, especially at lunches, since time is of the essence in the City. Eight minutes is quite a long time and to my mind the rule for being successful and making an impact is that you prepare every word and do not waver from your text. Reading out a speech can be death if it is just read, but practising a great many times over to get the words and timing right and for it to be delivered with the right amount of emotion is the way to avoid this pitfall. I think that emotion is a most important element if the presentation is to be a success and if you are to make some impact. Words and phrases must be chosen and delivered with care. Colour is a vital element. Words can create interestingly vivid pictures.

As Master, once my principal guest was on his or her feet there was nothing I could do to control how long they spoke for. With some, the humour carried them through. At some events we were not so lucky even if the speaker's topic was an interesting one. Politicians were the most likely to overrun of course and the Water Conservators had a few bad experiences with them. Not only did the politicians over run but what they were saying was usually very forgettable. At least one, a former minister, delivered a speech that one of my Conservator colleagues had written for him years before.



It is strange therefore that at technical conferences speakers are allowed perhaps 30 minutes or more but not so strange that so many contributions are found to be unremarkable or even disappointing. According to Steve Jobs 30 minutes is much too long. Perhaps another way of looking at things is that if one cannot say what is important in 10 minutes then it is not worth saying. Condensation is the name of the game then.

In much the same way I am a great believer in trying to keep any written item to one side of an A4 sheet. I fail on this score with many of my newsletters. I do like to include an image and this usually pushes the text onto a second page. In our early days at RML I wrote several pieces on engineering topics like drainage or earthworks that occupied less than an A4. You should try it in respect of some of your areas of work.

Kind regards

Ivor

Managing Director

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LOOKING AHEAD.

Tomorrow is the shortest day and Ivor has allowed me the pleasure of addressing you about this special day when the sun finally stops getting lower and lower in the sky.

I have told you about the huge edifice that has been constructed under my direction at the world's navel to mark important events. Life is all about making a mark, doing something that might last a bit longer than the normal. Around here each generation has so far made little impact, only creating patterns that I consider will not last long because some other crowd could come along and change everything.

In erecting our circle we have had our ups and downs, more ups than downs I suppose since what has fallen down has had to be put back up again. Indeed there have been quite a few setbacks if you just think about what we are trying to build with our bare hands and a few reindeer horns. I lie awake at night, especially when the mammoths keep snoring, and think that one day digging huge holes and lifting heavy lumps of rock will get easier. Just imagine being able to move things about easily and a kind of nationwide system with everyone working together and things arriving on time. No more messing about with delays and things getting lost along the way.

Things can only get better.

Getting the right kind of stones has been a bit of a problem too, dealing with people that far away is never easy. There must be a better way of communicating with people, professional runners cannot be relied upon to provide a first class service, and neither is shouting at people any good, even around here. Fred is never about these days, remember Fred? I really must find him. I miss having him about the place and someone to shout at.

Getting the right shape on the ground was a problem to start with but I solved that by tethering one of the goats to a stake with a long length of rope and letting him wander about, he soon cleared the kind of shape that we were looking for. I must try and keep this method to myself, it might come in handy when we tackle phase 2. Piles of dung were used to mark where the stones were to go but the children kept kicking them around so I got the youngsters put small stakes in the ground instead, another good idea as long as the goats leave them alone, the stakes that is. This on the job experience will pay dividends in years to come.

I must try to record what is going on, but most days I am too busy to put anything down on my stone tablets. I don't agree with sexism in the workplace but I really should have someone to do this note-taking for me but she spends all of her time feeding the goats and doing things around the hut.

Oh well, roll on the equinox and some sunnier days.

Kind regards

Idris

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