

Sustainable Cities Course

June 21-24 2016

Sustainable use of local forest products.

Urban forestry/people and Trees

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Success is often measured by :

- the type of job you have
- the amount of money on your bank account
- ~~the type of vehicle you drive~~
- the size of your house you live in
- the type of clothes you wear
- the type of food you eat

Success in my opinion should be measured on the amount of persons you can manage to impact upon your initial meeting period. Success in my opinion should mean that people and nature can co-exist as one without any party suffering any great loss.

I am Refica Attwood a 28 year old female who doesn't have a traditional 9-5 job. Prior to taking up the logging business full time I was and still am successful waitress, bartender, events coordinator and events manager.

I own RA Events Ltd where events, logging and hiking all fall under one umbrella. These are my 3 favourite activities. Guess what I love what I do!

My family and I which is made up by my dad, my two brothers, my three sisters(occasionally), my two daughters and one outside individual is involved in the section of agricultural service which is called LOGGING.

My father in addition to being a fisherman has been doing this business for over 50 years. Growing up it was something he always did.

The logging business comprises of the cutting of wattle, bamboo, posts and wood for boat repair. We have also been known to cut and prepare wood for the coal kil .

I got up one morning after working 12 hours and realized that should any thing happen to my dad there would no one who could dedicate themselves full time to continue the family business.

So I quit my day job and got on a donkey determined to refresh my mind on the trails and different types of wattle and bushes that just may come in handy to save a life.

Not only am I learning the different types of wattle: guava berry, yellow spittle, Christmas bush, black pepper (red wattle) just to name a few and the candle stick(white wattle). I have gotten reacquainted with different types of fruits that the present generation don't partake of the water lemon and guava berry to be exact.

I am also getting a refresher course on all the trails that surround my village of John Hughes for future use. The plant lessons are taught daily especially if my dad hears me let loose a cough. He makes a mean brew that is kept refrigerated at all times. As we work whether its sunny or raining.

At present we are the only family who does the logging business full time.

Our customers travel from all over the island to purchase the wattle whether it be for fishing or fencing purposes. Some of our customers include Antigua Rainforest Canopy, Big Banana, Jumby Bay Resort, Keyonna Beach, Sugar Ridge, Blue Waters, Coco Bay Resort, various home owners across the island , farmers, the fisheries division and almost all the fishermen in Antigua. The fence on independence drive that surrounds a barber shop, the yard on St. Mary's Street, the fence at Big Banana just a new a popular few. Barbuda has wattle that they some times ship to the mainland if they get an order. In addition to cutting wattle our donkeys are use at various events and functions Christmas at hotels and the Precision Centre exhibit just to name a few.

We are always kept on our toes..... Sometimes we cant cut fast enough.

Like every business we also have a slow period.

We always try to keep on hand 30 bundles of white wattle and 30 bundles of red wattle as even in the slow season as long as the yard has wattle someone is sure to stop and buy.

Lets talk about my cars:

Wildie is the oldest donkey was on retirement until he passed away on Monday June 20 2016. He served the family well and has left big shoes to fill. He has been with the family for over 23 years and was the last remaining donkey from the set that was their when I was just a small girl attending primary school: their names were: Steamer, Jolly, Kicker, Spinach and Spare Wheel.

Names sound strange the donkeys are named as the characteristics they portray. Even old and retired my best car Wildie was still wild up to his last day. Wildie unlike all the other donkeys in his hay day was a tyrant in the bushes never known to hook on any tree. It really amazing to see how the donkey would weave through the bushes and trees in his path as it's a sin to that donkey to off set his load. Imagine if his load was to be offset that Wildie would adjust himself to take the load home because once you load him he will not allow Any one to touch him. You better meet him at the house in Wallings.

The present set of donkeys we now have are :

Flip over..... What a donkey likes to flip over even with a human load. He is also the tallest donkey we have right now.

Small boy: ~~wants to be just like Wildie.. Likes to bite and is the most~~ mischievous of all the donkeys right now. He was the smallest donkey at one point but was sure to be right behind Wildie on the way home.

Big Mouth: if your clothes was made of grass big mouth will eat it off of you. The donkey finds the time to always be eating. He is also one of the donkeys who has a job at most of the gigs that get booked. Trust me he can pose for the camera. That donkey is very photogenic.

Taxx: small and fast seems unassuming until you let him pass you your going to run to catch up. Taxes never sleep even if you ignore them.

Brandy: blame my dad he took my two daughters and niece and told them to name the donkey. It's a female and they told him she looks like a brandy so that's her name.

All the donkeys are trained just load them and they will go home. Car owners have learnt the hard way not to cross their paths. They hold their side better than most drivers.

We cut wattle in the hills surrounding the village the most we will work one area is 6 months then shift. Since were the only family actively cutting some areas haven't been touched in over 10 years. My dad has a cutting pattern that he follows and can tell me when we arrive at an area how much years its been since he has been there. He allows the area to become reforested before he returns.

When he use to drive he would travel to other villages and cut the wattle from there should he have an order for fisherman from that area.

All of use in the family has their special uses when we get into the bushes my sisters will take the time to cut a road from any point in the bushes to load their donkeys.

~~Me I can literally clear a path through any fever grass without killing the grass.~~
A car can literally drive through my road after I've gotten to work. The road I clear stays that way for 2 months before it closes back in.

One of my brothers would go into the bushes and just whistle and cut daily. He tries to cut at least 8 bundles daily before going to work at hotel.

My other brother just keeps us entertained while we work.

Our day usually starts at 5:30 am even when its dark as we have to travel sometimes 30 minutes to 45 minutes to get to the cutting site.

We are usually back home by 9 am 12 pm the latest with 21 bundles if 4 of us work that day.

If it's a team of 2 with 3 donkeys then its 16 bundles of wattle.

If it's a team of 2 with 2 donkeys then its usually 11 bundles 12 depending on the size.

A bundle of wattle is always bought home as loose wattle spread evenly across all the donkeys.

Each day a donkey brings home 5 bundles of wattle 6 the most according to the size and the minimum of 4 also dependent on the size.

My cars are never over worked as I am usually the person to prepare the final touches in order for the load to get home.

I value the work my donkeys do as it would take me days to get 1 bundle home while they bring a load of 5 daily 6 maximum.

Questions