



*(Left) Ralph extracting edge trees in traditional fashion. (Right) Andy Lovell picks up one of the last loads of pulp to go to Sudbrook.*

cut with lawn mowers up and down the rows for the first few years until the trees had grown up 'quite big', as he put it.

Once all the converted timber had been forwarded from around the edges, where there was a footpath, a stream and some rather nice barbeque areas, the outside trees could be pulled in and pulled down the centre ride to make the forwarder driver's job easier – always a good idea when he's the boss. All the produce was then forwarded up into the paddock whilst the weather was dry and incredibly the entire 200 tonnes was extracted without resorting to bandtracks or wheel

chains. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the wagons. The crane wagons managed to get in and out without anything more serious than the occasional tug with the County due to their shorter trailers and the ability they have to load the front bay then manoeuvre and load the back of the trailer with the front of the wagon standing on some hard going. The flat wagons with their 44 foot trailers and 28 tonne payloads are a different proposition. The only way to deal with them has been to either wait for dry weather for at least three consecutive days or load them out in the farmyard which has meant handling the tim-

ber twice and spending an hour and a half loading each trailer.

It just goes to show that it pays to look at jobs that don't seem to have much to recommend them as sometimes they can be better in reality than they appear on paper. Just as we were finishing this particular stop gap job the owner came out with these welcome words: "I don't suppose you'd be interest in looking at another wood I need thinning? Its mainly oak and sycamore. It's just about 10 acres and nearly mature."

Just as this job was coming to an end I received the unwelcome news that Sudbrook Mill was clos-

ing down which, though an inconvenience for myself, is a disaster for many in the timber industry in the south of England. St Regis has been an excellent company to deal with for many years and its loss will have repercussions that will reach far and wide. It is proof yet again that we work in an industry that can change from hope to despair in an instant – but fortunately it can change back again just as quickly.

With the loss of Sudbrook as an outlet for poplar, its already marginal value as a timber tree has been dealt a further serious blow.

Unpopular poplar – it is now.

*Simon Bowes*