Machinery options for small scale woodland management

This information is based on observations of machinery on display at the Association of Professional Foresters (APF) show held on Rageley estate in 2012. There is no endorsement of any of the machinery shown or described. There are general comments made about the machinery based on knowledge of their use and what could be seen.

All prices quoted are excluding VAT, delivery and any extras and should be considered as a guide only.

**Under £10,000**

Within this category, there are not many options for buying a complete unit, but there are accessories that can be bought for use with existing machinery.

Self loading trailers carrying about 3 tonne of wood can be attached to existing farm machinery and cost from about £6000 depending on build quality, crane size etc. Might be a need to ensure adequate flow rate of hydraulic oil through the tractor and to also consider under engine protection for the tractor if it is going into woodlands.
Self loading trailers can be attached to many different units and can be used on ATV's. Note however the need to add an additional power source to drive the hydraulics. Although ATV's are very robust machines, asking them to tow 3 tonne of wood etc can quickly cause problems. Also ATV's do not generally have any falling or rolling over protection for the driver.
There are many 3 point linkage mounted winches available. The one shown is capable of a 5.5 tonne pull but to achieve this, the tractor must be capable of physically moving that. The winch plate acts as an anchor in the ground. This one costs approx £4200.
Hydratongs have been around for sometime and require the base machine to reverse to the log, grab it and then lift it using the 3 point linkage. Some of the more expensive Hydratongs have extendable arms that give greater flexibility and also allow the operator more space when trying to get near to the timber. These start at about £1200
For just over £12,000, the Scottrac OX14 provides a fairly simple low ground pressure option for small sizes of timber. It is a pedestrian controlled vehicle using an electric wire rope crane to lift timber onto the trailer. It appeared to be fairly easy to operate and might have potential for communities where something simple and robust might be appropriate. There is also the option of adding different bodies to it, such as a tipping body which would allow it to be used for path making etc.

The overall width is just less than 4’ so it is capable of being manoeuvred into very tight places.
Vineyard or Alpine tractors have been around for a long time and over 30 years ago the Holder was adapted for forestry use and proved to be a very robust piece of equipment. The cost of a basic tractor with 25HP engine is approx £12500 with a 70HP model coming in at just under £30,000. They are very versatile, and can be supplied with either front wheel steering or an articulated body. Some models have reversible driving controls. Fitted with 3 point linkage and PTO, not only can they be fitted with a self loading trailer or winch, but they can also be used for running firewood processors, cutting grass or doing general estate/farm work. The models looked at were not fitted with sump guards and this should be a standard feature on these machines for Forest Use. It was not clear if the tractors also came with a full roll cage and protection from falling objects, although the RIKO catalogue does suggest a more Forestry specification and guarded tractor.
The Oxtrac is a Canadian designed and built tracked skidder. It has very low ground pressure and is used primarily for pulling timber out of woods. It is of a very strong construction and has been described as a bath with an engine and tracks. It can tow a self loading trailer and or other implements.
The Alstor is a purpose built forwarder that can carry about 3 tonne of wood on the trailer. It has very good terrain capabilities, but does not have a full safety cab which might restrict where it can be used depending on the site owners health and safety policies. Cost of the unit is approx £50,000.
For about £75,000 it is possible to buy a new Valtra tractor with timber trailer. The Valtra is a very strong Scandinavian tractor with reversible driver seat that helps significantly with operator comfort. Implements can be attached at the front and rear, it comes with full cab protection for the driver and can be put to all the uses on a property that you would expect of a tractor. The majority of these units work with a 10 tonne capacity trailer. The tractors come ready for Forest use and there is a good second hand market for older machines.
Vimek 606 3.5 tonne capacity purpose built forwarder costing from about £65,000. Comes with full driver protection and is of a very robust construction. It can be moved from site to site by 4WD with a 3 tonne minimum towing capacity. The next model up is the 608 that can carry about 4.5 tonnes, costs just under £90,000 but is just over the legal limit for towing by 4WD in the UK.
County tractor. Everybody used to have them as they were a versatile piece of equipment. It is still possible to purchase refurbished tractors (as shown), and costs probably from about £25,000.

For a list of machine suppliers, make contact with CONFOR, Forestry Journal, RSFS Journals etc for the advertisers lists.

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