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www.aaschool.ac.uk/hooke
Hooke Park is the AA’s woodland site in Dorset, southwest England. The 150-hectare working forest is owned and operated by the AA and contains a growing educational facility for design, workshop, construction and landscape-focused activities. Underlying these activities is the ethic of self-sufficiency and the opportunity to develop new rural architectures.

Today the campus presents a 30-year history of experimental timber construction and rural architecture. Under the previous ownership of the Parnham Trust’s School for Woodland Industries, three remarkable demonstrations of round-wood construction were built: the refectory (1987), workshop (1989) and dormitory (1996), which offer a valuable legacy and point of reference for today’s students. Following the transition of ownership to the AA in 2002, the masterplan for campus development was redrawn and continues, with new workshop and accommodation facilities – the Caretaker’s House (2012) and the Timber Seasoning shelter (2014) among them – designed and built by students of the AA’s Design & Make programme.
Students of MArch Design & Make use the realisation of buildings as a vehicle for design research, developing modes of architectural design that integrate full-scale making. Based at Hooke Park, the AA’s woodland campus in Dorset, they inhabit an environment that combines studio, workshop, building site and forest, as part of a wider rural community of rich craft tradition. Working within a masterplan for the extension of the campus, student teams design and construct experimental buildings at Hooke Park. With access to the woodland as a source of building material and to Hooke Park’s wood-working facilities, timber-building technologies underlie the programme’s agendas.

The 16-month full-time post-professional design programme starts with an Induction Studio through which key design and digital fabrication techniques are taught. This is followed by the Core Studio wherein a temporary full-scale piece of inhabitable landscape infrastructure is built in the Hooke Park woodland. In parallel, seminar courses cover agendas of ruralism and the cultural theories of making as design. These taught components are then applied in the design and construction of the Hooke Park Project, which follows the brief for a new building for the Hooke Park campus.

Designs for the built project are developed through prototyping, mock ups and physical testing, working with engineering consultants and specialist builders. Construction is completed in the autumn, and this is followed by the individual production of a thesis, which draws on the constructed project as evidence towards a propositional argument concerning the practice and realisation of architecture.

From 2015 a 12-month MSc Design & Make programme will also be offered, subject to approval by the MSc award and validation of the MSc programmes by the Open University. The MSc will share the taught components of the MArch programme and will focus explicitly on design prototyping in timber, using new fabrication facilities at Hooke Park including the robotic fabrication cell being installed in Autumn 2014.

Programme Director
Martin Self

Studio Master
Kate Darby

Construction Tutor
Charley Brentnall

Thesis Tutor
Mark Campbell

Martin Self is an engineer and designer who has taught design and theory at the AA since 2004. He worked at Ove Arup & Partners where he was a founding member of the Advanced Geometry Group, studied architectural theory at the AA and has consulted with such practices as Zaha Hadid Architects and Antony Gormley Studio.

With Charles Walker, he led the design and production of the four AA Summer Pavilions (2006–09) through tutorship of AA Intermediate Unit 2.

Kate Darby is an architect and has taught at Bath University, the Bartlett, Cardiff, Cambridge, Westminster and London Metropolitan Universities, Oxford Brookes and the AA. In 2008 she founded KDA, a rural practice that is concerned with meaning and physicality of architecture.

Charley Brentnall is a timber-framing contractor who has played a pivotal role in the renaissance of timber framing in the UK. He founded Carpenter Oak & Woodland in 1988, is a visiting lecturer at the Universities of Bath and York and a member of the Timber Framers Guild, Carpenters Fellowship, Icomos and SPAB.

Mark Campbell has taught history and design at the AA since 2004. He is the founding director of Unreal Estates and has worked in practice in Auckland, New York and London. He is the director of the Paradise Lost AA Research Cluster.

(Previous Spread)
View of Hooke Park from the neighbouring Mapperton Estate; the Hooke Park Timber Seasoning Shelter designed and built by four students of the 2012–13 Design & Make cohort and fabricated from steam-bent beech components. Recent Student Lodge projects can be seen in the background.
Hooke Park’s timber provides material for construction projects. Here tradition timber-framing techniques are applied.

Working in a clearing on the 350-acre estate’s woodland landscape; a beech tree is felled adjacent to the Fractal Pavilion (opposite)
Life in West Dorset

Hooke Park is used by the AA throughout the year for activities in three categories: visits by London-based units, the Hooke Park-based Design & Make graduate school programme and for AA Visiting School short courses. As an integral part of the AA, Hooke Park also makes up a larger community of culture and making in West Dorset through a public programme of evening lectures, symposia, concerts and open days.

Historically a deer-hunting enclosure, the forest is now designated as Ancient Woodland and forms part of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is sited within an active farming community close to the market towns of Beaminster and Bridport and a few miles inland from the Jurassic Coast – a UNESCO world heritage site. This historic rural landscape context provides a unique alternative to the conventional urban focus of city-based architecture schools.

Consisting mainly of spruce and beech trees planted in the 1950s, the Hooke Park Estate is also home to western red cedar, Douglas fir, Corsican pine and of combined oak and spruce. In addition to the densely planted forest is a rich variety of woodland landscape, including recently felled clearings, hidden river valleys, an ancient willow coppice and a broadleaf grove of ash, hazel, alder and poplar.

On-site lodging is provided for students and guests working at Hooke Park. Westminster Lodge dormitory accommodates 16 people in eight rooms each with two single beds, a toilet, shower and wash basin. A further eight foldout camp beds are available for short visits. There is a large communal room with a wood-burning stove. For longer-term use, an additional pair of two-bedroom student lodges were completed by the Design & Make programme in 2013–14, allowing students to test various design and making strategies – including maximising the use of recycled and reclaimed materials. They were constructed using Hooke Park timber for their structure, flooring and cladding.

Food at Hooke Park is provided in the refectory and cooked in the kitchen managed by Georgie Corry Wright. Most ingredients come from the kitchen garden or farmers in the local area, and the food is generally vegetarian to include a broad range of diets. Historic village pubs are nearby, and on some evenings a barbecue and pizza oven is available for groups to use.
Charlie and Georgie Corry Wright, the Hooke Park Caretakers, live on-site in a student-designed house. Hooke Park is a few miles from the Dorset coast, where students take a break from the workshops to go for a swim.
The Hooke Park staff team, from left to right: Chris, Jez, Bruce, Martin, Merry, Georgie, Charlie and Edward

Workshop supervisor Charlie Corry Wright advises on window frame joinery
Participants of the SummerBuild programme consider techniques for fabricating trusses for the Big Shed project.

The refectory is used for a variety of functions, including an Open Talk, given by Charley Brentnall.
Design & Make students assemble components for the Timber Seasoning Shelter (previous page); the Big Shed Assembly Workshop under construction and completed (this spread), which provides a large accessible space for full-scale prototyping and pre-assembly work.
Hooke Park’s most recent completed project, the Timber Seasoning Shelter (2014), is a canopy for the stacked drying of Hooke Park sourced timber for future construction projects. Built from Hooke Park’s beech trees, the project was used by Design & Make students as a vehicle to test the innovative use of steam-bent timber elements in a reciprocal grid structure.

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The Caretaker’s House (2012) is based on a schematic design by students of AA’s Intermediate Unit 2 in 2009–10, which was developed for construction by architects Invisible Studio. It is a prototypical low-cost timber exemplar building constructed from timber grown and felled on site, used in its green state and achieving passivehaus standards for insulation and airtightness.

The Assembly Workshop, also built in 2012, was designed by students of Design & Make and Diploma Unit 19, with support from engineers Atelier One and architects Mitchell Taylor Workshop. It provides a large enclosed workspace for fabrication, assembly and prototyping activities at Hooke Park. The building is constructed from larch sourced from Hooke Park and local woodlands, and uses innovative screw connections to form the roundwood trusses.

Additionally, the wider Hooke Park woodland is home to a number of temporary projects, in the form of experimental pods, towers, bridges and other structures the product of short workshops and visiting school courses.
The ‘Big Shed’ Assembly Workshop is clad with western red cedar felled and sawn at Hooke Park. At the Hooke Park sawmill, Chris Sadd (centre left) manages the forestry activities.
Hooke Park provides a backdrop for numerous experimental structures (opposite and this page, below), including a sonic instrument by the SummerMake Visiting School and temporary project by Design & Make students.
The Big Shed hosts the Sonic Coast concert, organised by a local arts organisation.

The student–designed Caretaker’s House features a Douglas fir structural frame and is clad with western red cedar.
A Separate Place - a project conceived by Jesse Randzio and realised by students funded by the Custerson Award

A Student Lodge project, designed and built by a team of five Design & Make students, incorporates randomly sized panes of reclaimed glass
Hooke Park’s facilities are available to all students at the AA for visits by their units, programmes or complementary studies groups. Bookings of up to one week in length can be made by tutors for groups of students wishing to use the workshop facilities or have access the woodland estate and wider surrounding landscape.
The Driftwood Pavilion, fabricated at Hooke Park, on its opening day in Bedford Square.

The Hooke Park workshop is equipped with woodworking machinery, a CNC machine and hand and power tools.
Students gather in the communal space of the Westminster Lodge dormitory building and at work in the Hooke Park studio.
Hooke Park maintains a presence at the AA in London: students resolve a pavilion structure before its fabrication at Hooke Park (above), while Hooke Park projects are exhibited at the end-of-year Projects Review (below).
Architects Richard Burton and Edward Cullinan discuss project proposals with students

Design & Make students give their final MArch presentations in London
Hooke Park provides the backdrop for six of the AA’s Visiting Schools. Accommodation is provided in Westminster Lodge and delicious meals are served daily in the Frei Otto-designed refectory. BBQs are arranged on occasions using locally sourced food, and visits to local scenic spots and public houses are organised as part of the course.

**MakeLab** is a six-day programme held in the spring that explores new modes of design conception based on environmental and social performance data. Using Hooke Park’s forestry and workshop resources, the workshop offers the unique opportunity to explore, test and evaluate experimental structures and methodologies at 1:1 scale.

At the **Maeda Workshop**, held every summer for two weeks, students design and construct site-specific furniture by taking sectional measurements directly from the landscape.

**AA SummerMAKE 2014** is a two-week, live architecture project at Hooke Park. This hands-on programme provides workshop-driven classes in design and production methods.

**Locimore** is a five-day opportunity to engage in a live architecture project at Hooke Park using innovative woodworking techniques developed by regional master craftsmen living and working in Dorset. Participants experience the complete cycle of timber construction, from felling a tree to enjoying the finished architecture sited in the Hooke Park Forest.

**Summer DLAB** experiments with the integration of algorithmic and generative design methodologies and large-scale digital fabrication tools. The three-week programme is formulated as a two-phase process. During the two-week initial phase, participants benefit from the unique atmosphere and facilities of AA’s London home. The second phase, lasting a week, shifts to AA Hooke Park and revolves around the fabrication and assembly of a full-scale architectural intervention, which unifies the design goals of Summer DLAB.

At **Summerbuild**, participants spend the summer working alongside Design & Make MArch students and professional builders to help construct projects at Hooke Park.
The Hooke Park Visiting School programmes give hands-on experience at a full range of scales – from fabrication in the workshop to completed projects including the Dangerous Dwelling treehouse constructed by the 2014 SummerMake Visiting School (above)
An experimental gridshell derived from straight geodesic strips, by the 2011 Makelab Visiting School
Students of the 2014 Summer DLab build a branching fibre-reinforced structure on a temporary earth formwork.

2012 SummerMake students use the Big Shed for an impromptu noise concert.
Charlie Corry Wright manages the Hooke Park workshops. He has worked in forestry, furniture making and traditional timber framing. He studied forest manufacturing at Hooke Park in 1990 and has lived in the forest with his family since 1994. Since 2002 he has overseen all of the AA’s workshop activity at Hooke Park.

Christopher Sadd has been involved in the forestry of Hooke Park since 1985 and became head forester in the 1990s. He manages both the day-to-day forestry activities and the long-term forestry planning.

Edward Coe supports Charlie in the workshop, and also leads technical input across Hooke’s activities, including the running of the sawmill, which produces most of the timber used in construction projects.

Georgie Corry Wright and her daughter, Tia, are the Hooke Park cooks; they provide delicious meals for us all.

Jez Ralph is Hooke Park’s estate and development manager. With a background in forestry and funding, he manages the estate-wide works, including the new biomass district heating system, as well as Hooke Park’s development and community related activities.

Jack Hawker and James Stubbs manage and supervise Hooke Park’s construction projects. Jack is a graduate timber engineer and carpenter, and James is an experienced timber framer and grader.

Merry Hinsley is the administrator at Hooke Park. She provides pastoral guidance to students and coordinates Hooke Park’s bookings, library and events.

Martin Self is director of Hooke Park and Design & Make. He is an engineer and designer who has taught design and theory at the AA since 2004, and has provided structural engineering and form-finding consultancy within practices including Arup, Zaha Hadid Architects and Antony Gormley Studio.