

# Woodland products blooming

BY CAROLINE COOK

IT was while Dan Watson was studying landscape architecture that he became interested in traditional woodland skills.

As part of his course at Leeds Metropolitan University, lectures touched on conservation management and woodland skills, and Dan, now 26, decided to pursue the subjects further.

Now, with the help of the Prince's Youth Business Trust Dan, who lives in Meanwood, Leeds, has turned his skills into a thriving business.

With a workshop in Thornor, and two rented woodland areas near the village and at Sherburn in Elmet, Dan practices the ancient craft of coppicing, before turning the materials into fencing products and other specialist garden items.

"Most of the things I make are garden-related products and I get the materials to make them by doing what is known as coppicing," said Dan, who met Prince Charles during a recent exhibition of his work in London.

"Coppicing is a form of wood management by

which you cut a tree down and from the stump you get several new shoots regrowing, providing a renewable crop of hardwood.

"You cut the area and about seven or eight years later you go back in there and cut the new crop. It is superb for flora and fauna. It kick-starts the wood by letting light into the woodland floor," he said.

## Loan

With the help of a Prince's Youth loan, and grant, Dan Watson Woodland Products was set up in October last year.

Most of his customers are individuals, looking for products slightly different from the more mass-produced items from garden centres.

Some of Dan's most popular products are hurdles, or woven fencing, but he also makes archways, rustic furniture and produces barbecue charcoal.

"Every piece of timber that I cut I use. And since October I have managed to meet all my targets and am also enjoying it, which is one of the most important things for me," he said.



BRUCE ROLLINSON

● WOODLAND EXPERT: Dan Watson at work in Saw Wood near Thornor



● FLASHBACK: Dan Watson meets Prince Charles at an exhibition of his work. It was a Prince's Youth Business Trust loan which got him started



DAN WATSON