

# Sustainable Furniture Collection

Bill Amberg Studio has partnered with the pioneering rewilding project at Knepp Estate to create a furniture collection for its new café and farm shop. This collaboration demonstrates creative reuse of natural materials from ash cleared due to ash dieback to leather from free-roaming cattle. It a great case study in circular design and ethical sourcing.



Bill Amberg Studio has collaborated with the Knepp Estate, renowned for its rewilding project, to design and manufacture a sustainable furniture collection for its new café and farm shop at Swallows Farm.

The Studio has designed a range of furniture using materials entirely sourced from the estate including leather ethically sourced from the longhorn cattle free-roaming the rewilding project. The leather is tanned in the UK for the collection and the wood is ash from ash dieback clearance. The collection was officially launched at Bill Amberg Studio during London Design Festival.

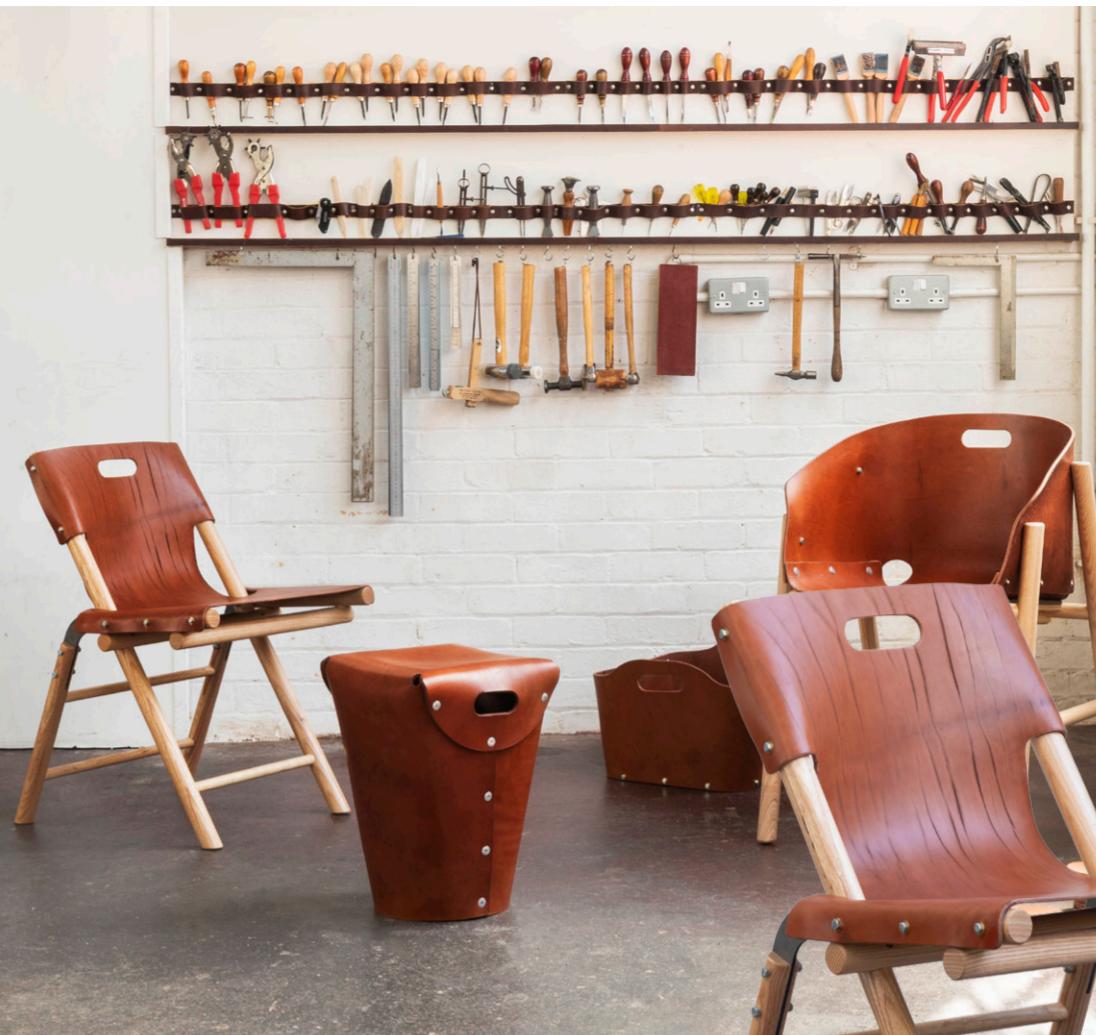
## Knepp Estate

Knepp is a 3,500-acre estate in West Sussex which, since 2001, has been devoted to a pioneering rewilding project as beautifully characterised in the book 'Wilding' by co-owner Isabella Tree. The driving principle of the project is to establish a functioning ecosystem where nature is given as much freedom as possible. Formerly intensively farmed land, Knepp has undergone a radical transformation, abandoning conventional agriculture in favour of letting natural processes shape the landscape.

This hands-off approach has led to extraordinary results, with rare species like turtle doves, nightingales and purple emperor butterflies returning in increasing numbers. Knepp is now internationally recognised as a model for conservation innovation and nature restoration.

## Bill Amberg Studios

In keeping with the sustainable ethos of the estate, the studio has sourced natural materials on site for the collection, keeping waste and energy use to a minimum. The studio received the animal skins from Knepp in 2021 and tanned them in two small tanneries in the UK - one specialising in shoe sole leather for the cattle hides, and another specialising in small skin tanning for the deer hides. The character of shoe sole leather is unusual in



its firmness, rigidity and durability. While experimenting with shoe sole leather as a furniture material, the team realised its structural qualities. This informed the design of the furniture. Leather in this form is rigid and more like moulded plywood than softer leather, perfect for creating a traditional slung seat.

## Material-Led Furniture Design

This led to the development of the Knepp Chair, the Rivet Stool (formed as a cylinder), and the Knepp Tub Chair with a curved back. The collection also includes log baskets and coasters for the café, making use of every possible part of the material.

Inspired by the medieval nature of the barn which houses the café, the collection includes a 3-legged trestle table. This is a simple design by a timber frame building specialist on Knepp Estate. Simply jointed and pegged, in ash wood, with a plain planked tabletop, these flexible tables are used in the café and for events around the estate. The tables come with rectangular or circular tops.

## Fixtures and Fittings

In keeping with the character of the café, all the fixings of the furniture are simple coach bolts and rivets, with brass washers to prevent staining. The cattle and deer hides are tanned using tree bark, and the surface finish is a simple wax. This allows a natural patination of the hides through use, and as the leather relaxes it will shape to form over time.

*"We have been investigating the use of leather structurally for some time, and this collection of furniture maximises the material's use and pushes the boundaries of what is possible with leather. Each piece allows the natural beauty of the materials to shine and represents unparalleled credentials of sustainability, quality, design and craftsmanship."*

*We are delighted to be collaborating with Knepp, whose impressive re-wilding project puts nature first and focuses on the importance of natural habitats and the materials found within."*

- Bill Amberg

*"It was important that the circular economy model was continued in the design of the café and the team at Bill Amberg Studio has understood our ethos and designed a beautiful collection which represents us and our respect for Knepp's inhabitants."*

- Ned Burrell, part of the Knepp Estate family and head chef of Knepp's new café

## In the Classroom

With a focus on circular economy, minimal waste, and user-centred design, it's an example for students learning about responsible product development, material properties and selection, and the intersection between traditional techniques merged with modern design thinking. It offers a fantastic case study into working with and understand client requirements. Bill Amberg Studio deeply understood the values and context of the Knepp Estate from its rewilding ethos and natural material availability which led the design.

## The Leathersellers

The Leathersellers' Foundation supports education, charities, and the leather industry across the UK. Their funding helps schools enhance practical learning, making them a valuable partner for D&T teachers, particularly in projects involving sustainable materials. Find out more via the link on the right to explore grant opportunities and open access programmes.



Bill Amberg Studios  
Explore their website.  
[billamberg.com](http://billamberg.com)



Knepp Estate  
Rewilding project.  
[knepp.co.uk](http://knepp.co.uk)



Sustainability Report  
[tinyurl.com/2nunyenc](http://tinyurl.com/2nunyenc)



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