

Londoner 71

Chapter 71. Unseasoned Logs

Taniok gave a thoughtful nod. "I realize that, milord. Ideally, we should have left the logs to season them for at least a year, so that they would dry properly and thus they'd last much longer. But we don't have that kind of time right now, so we'll just have to use the unseasoned logs themselves for the construction of longhouses. Of course, everything will still be done after debarking the logs, which prevents insects and bugs hiding under the bark, along with preventing moisture under the bark which could cause mold."

"But how long will these buildings last?" Gorsazo asked with concern. "Is it even safe to use them for construction like this?"

"No, no, there's no need to worry," Taniok reassured them. "What I mean is that, if we had made the longhouses from well-seasoned logs, then the buildings would have easily lasted for decades. But even when made with freshly cut green wood, the buildings will be just as safe for a few years at least. However, they likely wouldn't last much longer than that, and we would need to rebuild the longhouses after that." He continued, "But until then, the buildings should be just fine, since the majority of shrinkage in a green log happens across the width of a log, instead of along its length. That's why I will not stack up the logs horizontally above each other - which could cause the walls to become warped and tilted, depending on where each log shrinks the most."

He added, "So I'm planning to put the logs as vertical posts next to each other - just like in a palisade wall, and since there isn't much shrinkage in them vertically, so the building stability wouldn't be put at risk this way. However, in the coming months, as the width of the log posts would decrease because of shrinkage, small gaps might emerge between the posts. To counter that, I'll stagger the logs a little when making the walls - instead of putting them in a completely straight line, so that even after they shrink, there wouldn't be too much of a gap. And if needed, we can just seal the gaps with mud to protect the residents from wind."

Kivamus was surprised to hear that the carpenter knew that much about it. He hadn't expected that Taniok would even take the shrinkage of logs into account. "How do you know that much about it? You certainly haven't constructed any buildings directly from logs in this village."

Taniok gave a satisfied smile. "My master was one of the best carpenters I'd known, so he taught me about a lot of things. I still remember most of that, even if I couldn't use that knowledge here in Tiranat."

Kivamus nodded appreciatively. "I'm glad to hear that you already know about making buildings with logs. You seem to have thought of all the expected problems in constructing the longhouses from unseasoned timber as well. It's always a good thing to anticipate any future problems in advance and to plan accordingly."

Taniok, who seemed to have overcome his earlier bout of nervousness, smiled happily at the praise.

Kivamus looked at everyone sitting there. "Okay then. We will use the green logs directly for construction. Although it's not like we even have a choice at this point," he snorted. "We can reconsider what to do with the longhouses after a few years. We have some time until then."

"As you say, milord." Taniok added after a moment, "If I may suggest another thing?" Seeing Kivamus give a nod, he continued, "Since we are clearing a huge area of the forests, we will get a lot more logs than we need, even after we finish building the new village wall. So, once we are done with the construction, we can stock up the remaining logs in loose piles after debarking them, so that the air will dry the logs in a year or so. That way, we will have a good supply of well-seasoned timber in the coming years for any construction we might start in the future."

"That's a good idea, and we'll do that," Kivamus agreed. "But we still have a lot of construction which we need to complete before we start to worry about it. After the first longhouse block is completed to relocate the homeless villagers, we will make a second block to house those villagers whose homes are still standing but are not good enough to insulate them properly in the winter." He added, "That will give us enough living space to house around two hundred and fifty people. That is still not enough for everyone in the village, so after we have completed the other higher priority projects, we can make a third block to house them as well."

He continued, "Apart from the longhouses and the new village wall, we also need to make new barns in the south to keep all the grain which we will harvest next year. It would be a big amount - six hundred and sixty sacks, so we will need more than one barn for that. Once that is done, we can start to tear down the damaged houses - maybe even most of the houses of the villagers, since none of them seem to be in particularly good condition, and then we can make new housing in that place."

"That would certainly be helpful, my Lord," Duvas said. "I don't want to see any villagers freeze to death in the future." He said with a grimace, "It's... not a pretty sight..."

"Don't worry about it," Kivamus reassured him, "we will make sure that it doesn't happen ever again."

Gorsazo observed, "By making the longhouses with logs, we'll also get another benefit. Even without a double layer of planks in the walls, the longhouses will still be insulated well enough with the logs. Of course, we will also be saving a lot of time which would have been spent in cutting the logs into planks." He scratched his beard. "Although, we will still need a small number of planks for the bunk beds inside, and for the partitions between them, like Hudan said, which will need time to finish. Apart from that, more planks will be needed to make a wooden floor instead of just using dirt."

"The planks that have already been cut will be useful there," Duvas said, "but we will still need more of them. Will you be able to do it in time, Taniok?"

The carpenter gave a nod. "Just by making the walls from logs, the requirement of planks will already be much lower than what it would have been otherwise. I should be able to cut the remaining planks easily enough with the help of the new saws we are getting now."

"That's good to hear," Kivamus said. "Although we still might not be able to finish even a single longhouse before the snow falls, we have already managed to arrange temporary housing for the villagers, so a small delay shouldn't be a big problem. So Taniok, you just focus on constructing a full longhouse block, since we need the kitchen and storage there before we ask people to move into them."

He continued, "Make sure that the longhouses themselves are built on a raised mud embankment - maybe a foot high, so that there is no water logging during heavy rains. That will also allow the excess water to easily flow into the drains surrounding the houses. And wherever needed, you can use the stone rubble from the coal mines in the foundations, which will also help in the drainage of water into the surrounding soil."

"I'll keep it in mind, milord," Taniok said with a nod. "We will have to wait for the wagons to become free until we can transport any stone rubble from the coal mines to the construction sites, although I will use a few small carts until then." He added, "That reminds me, it's a really good thing that we don't have to transport the logs too far, since we are making the longhouses right where the forest is being cleared in the north. Although the new log-movers would have made it easier, it would still have been difficult and time-consuming to transport that many logs too far."

"That is true enough," Duvas said.

Kivamus remembered something else and said, "I have noticed that while we have outhouses inside the manor, most of the people living in the village go to the forests to relieve themselves. But that is neither hygienic nor safe - with wild beasts prowling in the forest. So, tell Yeden to make narrow ditches which we will cover using planks with holes in them - to use as communal toilets for the villagers. They should be located a good distance away from where people live, so let's say... next to the village wall in the south-east. We will also make walls for the toilets using planks or even logs to provide some privacy, after we have completed the first longhouse block."

He was already worried about sanitation in the village in their current situation, but until he could devise a better solution, this primitive solution would have to do. Although... he realized that there were some simple ideas he could implement there to improve the hygiene. But it would still have to wait until after the more important buildings had been completed.

"I'll let Yeden know," Taniok said with a nod, and stood up from his chair. "I should return now, milord. I have to tell the workers to start debarking the logs now, so that I can start the construction soon. Since even untrained workers can do that, I will use this time to cut a few more planks to use later."

"Alright then, you can leave now," Kivamus said.

~ Tesyb ~

~ Servant's Hall ~

"Ah... That was some tasty food..." Yufim said as he slowly lay down on a straw mattress, while rubbing his stomach.

Tesyb looked at the archer with raised eyebrows as he sat at another straw mattress nearby. "You ate too much again, didn't you?"

"Shut up!" Yufim retorted. "I was hungry!"

Tesyb snorted. "How is a lazy-ass like you hungry all the time anyway?"

"How would I know?" Yufim retorted. "And stop calling me a lazy-ass! I will let you know that I am a very active person!"

Tesyb gave a big laugh. "If you are an active person, then I am an adzee!!" Hearing that, other new guards who were sitting near them started to laugh at the archer as well, who just sulked in response.

Once he managed to stop laughing, Tesyb shook his head to clear his mind. It was just so amusing to make fun of the archer though.

It was late evening now, and they had finished their meal of warm porridge recently. Today, it had a few vegetables mixed in as well, which Madam Nerida had harvested from the vegetable patches in the manor. Usually those vegetables were reserved for those living in the manor house, but once in a while they got to taste it as well. And now they were resting inside the servants hall.

Yesterday, he had been quite surprised to be addressed directly by the baron. For a moment, he was really nervous based on the stories of the previous baron, who treated commoners like they were shit stuck on his boots. On his various trips to the manor to deliver coal in the past, Tesyb had often seen the previous baron have someone flogged if he thought that the person had disrespected him. But thankfully, Lord Kivamus wasn't like that at all. The new baron even spent a moment to ask his name, even though he was just a common guard! He was really glad that Lord Kivamus was the new baron of the village. After all, he was even sending them to Cinran to buy grain for the villagers from his own coffers!

Tesyb smiled as he thought of meeting Isuha in the town. He didn't know whether he would be selected for escorting the caravan tomorrow, but he was still glad that he managed to meet her once before the winter set in. Earlier in the day, when he had gone to meet his parents to tell them about his journey to Cinran, they had been overjoyed to hear that Isuha was doing okay in the town. Although his parents knew about the rising grain prices in Cinran, he hadn't told them too much about that, otherwise they would just get worried about Isuha.

He had also found out earlier from others that his father had been advising the baron about farming these days, but that was just some unpaid work, even though he was glad that his father would get to use his farming skills which should bring back a spark of life in his eyes. However, his father had told him that he had also been hired as the foreman for the new farming area in the south, so he would be paid as well! That news had certainly made him overjoyed. Any extra source of income was always welcome

for his family, even if it was in the form of grain and coal for now. And now he really wanted to be selected to go to Cinran again, so he could give this good news to his sister there.

The outer door of the servants hall opened, and Hudan walked inside. He looked at everyone inside the hall for a moment, then walked towards the resting guards.