

Report from the Chairman

Colin Hall

HRH The Prince of Wales is our new patron!

We were delighted to announce earlier this year that HRH The Prince of Wales, with his close personal interest in trees and the natural environment, has agreed to become our patron. This is a great honour for us and an endorsement of the value of the work of The Tree Register.

The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire has, as our first patron, championed the cause of The Tree Register since its inception and we are extremely indebted to her for all her support.

We are also pleased to welcome as trustees Tony Kirkham and Rupert Eley, whose tree knowledge and experience will be a great asset to the continuing growth and development of The Tree Register. Tony Kirkham is head of the Arboretum at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Rupert Eley manages his own arboretum at East Bergholt Place in Suffolk.

It is with great sadness that we reported the death of Scottish tree hunter Jim Paterson earlier this year. Jim's knowledge and love for the trees and history of Scotland was unparalleled and his contribution to The Tree Register, as our senior Scottish registrar, will be really missed. See below about the appeal we have launched and a tribute on page 4.

The Alan Mitchell 2007 Lecture, a joint project with Irish Tree Society and given by Thomas Pakenham at Birr Castle was

a great success. It was good to see many of you there and to meet fellow tree enthusiasts from Ireland. Once again, the Silent tree auction attracted much interest and raised over £1100 for The Tree Register. We are very grateful to the Earl and Countess of Rosse for hosting the event so stylishly, to Thomas for a fascinating lecture on the work of Augustine Henry and to Chris Carnaghan for his help with the auction.

Thank you all for your continued support whether as a recorder or with your subscriptions or in any of the other ways you help us.

Champion trees receive official blue label



Sir David Davies (right) and John Anderson show off the new blue Champion Tree botanic labels against Sir Davids' champion *Rhus verniciflua* at Abbeyleix in Ireland. The new labels were officially launched at Birr Castle and owners are being encouraged to display them throughout Britain and Ireland.

Champion Trees of Scotland Jim Paterson MBE Memorial Fund

The Tree Register is raising funds towards a new project in memory of Jim Paterson who recorded more notable trees in Scotland than any other person. It was Jim who guided Alan Mitchell in the 1980's to record so many now well documented big trees, but at the time was given no credit for his exceptional local knowledge and expertise.

The publication Champion trees of Britain and Ireland records many remarkable Scottish trees but many other tree species are growing in Scotland at a higher latitude than anywhere else in the world! This project will address this and promote all tree species growing throughout Scotland. It will also highlight those tender tree species, normally associated with western gardens, now being found in Scotland further north and east than once believed possible. Perhaps an indicator of global warming, such information is now much sought after. We also wish to support research providing evidence that the oldest trees in Britain are to be found in upland areas of Scotland.

We will achieve this by creating a new Scottish section to our recently updated web site www.tree-register.org with an interactive database search specifically for champion trees of Scotland. We will help fund expenses of volunteer recorders to update records and provide the opportunity for further surveying throughout Scotland. And also, to provide grants for dendrochronology research into ageing of upland trees.

We are seeking by personal donations a figure of £3000 which the Tree Register will match fund. I do hope that you will feel enthused to help us in this exciting project and keep the name of Jim Paterson at the forefront of Scottish tree history.

Donations can be made by cheque made payable to The Tree Register, posted to the Secretary at our address shown on the back page, or via our web site where we have a donations section in our secure shop.



First new champion for 2007 - *Arbutus menziesii*, Fife, Scotland

Registrars Report

David Alderman

Tree Register gains European appeal

Interest in heritage trees and particularly county champion trees, has certainly increased over the past year, with many enquiries being handled by Pamela our stalwart secretary. This is a good opportunity to clarify to new and old members that, unlike most other national charitable tree organisations the Tree Register is run solely by volunteers. Inevitably, personal and family life occasionally has to take preference over what is a labour of love and I therefore apologise to anyone who perhaps hasn't received information as quickly as they would have liked. It is always difficult responding to the immediate requests of the press who always work to tight dead lines, but we have managed to get the Tree Register mentioned in various articles and have been approached several times by television companies. The Woodland Trust have always promoted our partnership in the Ancient Tree Hunt and many more people have become aware of us through this project.

Pan-European Tree Register

In Europe we are not alone in our enthusiasm and quest for champion trees and it is not unusual for Pamela to be in a challenging conversation with people from other countries. Many likeminded individuals have been collating records for their own country or region and our new European Representative, Chris Carnaghan – based partly in France, will be contacting these in an attempt to bring together our datasets to compare records. An idea of Thomas Pakenham's back in 1996 of a Pan-European Tree Register may yet become a reality. How many of our biggest trees are the biggest in Europe or even the world? Such status for a tree can only help provide more incentives to promote the importance and preservation of trees in our custodianship. Elm expert Peter Bourne has, following research in the USA, now confirmed that the two English Elm known as the Preston Twins in Preston Park, Brighton are the biggest in girth anywhere in the world! We were pleased to see Hendrik Relve, the Estonian national recorder of big trees, attend the Alan Mitchell Lecture at Birr Castle. Following a tour of Britain and Ireland, Polish recorder Krystov Brokowski has provided us with a number of tree photos now showing on our new web site members photo gallery.



Irish recorder Aubrey Fennel re-measures the Great oak at Abbeyleix (Tree Register)



Jeroen Pater (left) and Krzysztof Borkowski at Much Marcle during their tree tour (K. Borkowski)

New web site

Our web site www.treeregister.org (no hyphen now!) was updated in June 2007, so if you haven't had a look for a while please do so! Apart from looking better the site is now fully compliant under the Disability Discrimination Act and provides us with a web site we can update more easily ourselves – when we get the time! The champion tree database in the members area has already had more than 250 new or updated entries in 2007. Our support for the Ancient Yew Group continues and Tim Hills must be congratulated for all the hard work he has done in making our other web site www.ancient-yew.org such a success. The German group Friends of the Yew, Eibenfreund, are helping create a European section of the web site which should see exciting developments in 2007-08.



Judge Wyndham's Oak, Silton, Dorset. One of many photos that can now be viewed on our web site (K. Borkowski)

Jim Paterson MBE

Donald Wilson

Tribute to a great Scottish tree hunter

Jim Paterson's work with the Tree Register of the British Isles was recognised by the Queen when he was made an MBE in 2005 for his services to Scottish dendrology.

Mr Paterson was described by Registrar of the Tree Register of the British Isles David Alderman as one of the country's greatest tree hunters who had an unparalleled knowledge and love for the trees and history of Scotland. "It was Jim who inspired and lead the hunt for Britain's tallest tree. The tree he first identified as the potential champion in 1993 (Dughall Mor, a Douglas Fir at Reelig Glen near Beaulieu) was finally confirmed and televised in 2006 for the BBC production Trees that Made Britain in which Jim made a cameo appearance."



Happy days... tree hunting in the rain...receiving the MBE

Mr Paterson, who was 74, was responsible for cataloguing and measuring many of Scotland's rarest and tallest trees. His other passion was local history and he was in great demand as a speaker at local field clubs, literary and historical societies.

He was one of a group of members of Cawdor Heritage Group who discovered the grave of Niel (not Neil) Smith, a young surgeon who tended to Lord Nelson's wounds on board HMS Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. The group were carrying out a survey of the churchyard when they discovered Smith's grave and the whole story unfolded. The grave was suitably restored and railings put in place with a commemorative plaque to mark the Cawdor link with the famous battle.

Mr Paterson began his career in the Royal Navy in 1949. He rose to the rank of Chief Petty Officer with the service then worked in the oil industry from 1973 at the McDermotts yard at Ardersier for many years before his retirement.

His passion for local history was put to good use when he was employed as a guide at Cawdor Castle. He delighted in passing on his in depth knowledge of the castle's history and the Big Wood at Cawdor, established by the Cawdor family, to thousands of visitors every tourist season.

For nearly forty years he immersed himself in the study of trees of Scotland and carried out regular measurements of such famous specimens as the Fortingale Yew and of course Dughall Mor (Gaelic for big dark stranger). A proud Scot, Jim was delighted when their measurements showed the Inverness-shire specimen, retained the distinction of being the tallest specimen on the British Isles.

The gauntlet had been thrown down by tree lovers from Wales who believed they had found the tallest tree in Britain, a Douglas Fir in a Powys RSPB nature reserve. In 2005 it towered over Lake Vyrnwy at 62.5m. But Dughall Mor was measured by Mr Paterson and a team of experts which showed it remained the tallest tree in Great Britain scaling 64 metres.

"It was all done above board using laser technology. But I admit I would have been hurt if it had been usurped by its Welsh challenger" admitted Jim at the time!

Mr Alderman added: "There were very few remarkable trees he didn't have a reference for, but it was his knowledge and love for the trees and history of Scotland that was unparalleled. He had a great affinity with many landowners who gave him permission to seek out trees on their land and to whom he was always most respectful. In return it provided the Tree Register unrivalled privileged access to many private estates."



Jim measuring a Cedar with friend and tree companion John Miller from the Highlands (Tree Register)

The above obituary appeared in part or full in the Daily Mail, Glasgow Herald and local Inverness newspapers

Volunteer Verifiers for The Ancient Tree Hunt

Katherine Owen – Senior Verifier for the Woodland Trust

“A network of valuable volunteers is helping to build a living map of verified Ancient Tree’s throughout the UK “

The Ancient Tree Hunt (ATH) is a partnership project with the Woodland Trust, Ancient Tree Forum and the Tree Register and is gathering momentum following the launch of the project at the end of June. Everyone can now get involved in the hunt for our hidden treasures in the landscape, uncovering them in order to allow them to have the recognition which they truly deserve. Trees can be plotted directly onto the web site map adding details, and photographs. Each tree has its own web site page and anyone with access to the internet can add more photos and comments to their favourite trees building a social history.

Training

Since the beginning of January volunteer Verifier Training has been carried out throughout the UK, to ensure the ATH has a network of verifiers in place to ensure we have a robust dataset. Recently we have also gained three new volunteers to train in the Channel Islands which will take the numbers to 99 throughout the UK, which is a fantastic support network for the ATH.



Verifiers training day (Ancient Tree Hunt)

Exciting role

The verifier’s role involves checking tree records, approving images and comments and answering queries sent through from recorders. Verifying a tree record could involve visiting the tree or verifying by checking the details against photographs added to the website and by using the map. They have a very exciting role allowing them to see the amazing trees out there which have been hidden away and then having the opportunity to go and see them in the bark.....

New champion tree

The verifiers have been assisting also with checking Tree Register records and plotting them on the map. The role of the verifier has also enabled the verifiers to discover new trees on their

travels throughout the UK. The most exciting find so far has been made by Scottish Verifier Keith Burgoyne, who came across a White Poplar in the West Lothian area whilst out verifying. With a girth of 4.20m this is the first new “champion” tree recorded thanks to the ATH. David Alderman of the Tree Register who assists the project has a target for the ATH of finding 10 new champions and 100 new county champions within the 5 year project.

Ancient treasures

The network of verifiers throughout the country has proved already to be a valuable part of this great project with over 2,700 records verified to date. Each contribution by the verifiers is a step closer to gaining further recognition for our ancient treasures. The verifiers have many opportunities to get

involved with other related activities. Many assisted with media interviews for the launch, and have attended events to guide walks. They also have the opportunity to attend conferences and gain further knowledge in a subject area (e.g. Tree Identification) about which everyone involved in the project is very passionate.

Regular communication

The volunteer verifiers throughout the country are proving to be real team workers and we communicate through a conference call facility in small groups on a monthly basis, to catch up with each other and solve any problems, and chat about ancient trees. This is an excellent opportunity for people with an interest in ancient trees to work with like minded people. I feel lucky to be working with such great people throughout the country, and will look forward to the further developments with the project.

For further information on recording Ancient Trees, go to the Ancient Tree Hunt website www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk



Scottish verifier Keith Burgoyne and the champion White Poplar he discovered. (Ancient Tree Hunt)

Later in the year we will be looking for more verifiers throughout the UK, if you are interested in becoming a verifier, please look out for the advert on the website or subscribe to the Ancient Tree Hunt Newsletter.

The Kynaston Yew

Extract from www.ancient-yew.org by Tim Hills - compiled from accounts collected by Allen Meredith

The history of a Yew brought up to date

Originally a churchyard yew, its status was to be dramatically altered by the events of 1575:

".....on the 17th of February, at six o'clock in the Evening, the Earth began to open, and a Hill with a Rock under it . . . lifted itself up a great height, and began to travel, bearing along with it the Trees that grew upon it, the Sheep folds and Flocks of Sheep abiding there at the same time. In the place from where it was first mov'd it left a gaping distance forty foot broad, and fourscore ells long; the whole Field was about 20 acres. Passing along, it overthrew a Chapel standing in the way . . ." (1674)¹

The first account to specifically mention the Yew is found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1793:

"..... it has left immense chasms of earth and moved stones thence at the magnitude of five or six tons; a number of trees thrown down, some moved standing and now remain so; a large old yew tree was moved nearly sixty feet, and is now standing fine and uninjured."

Dr Fuller's account in 1815 ² added that the "aged yew-tree, growing in the chapel yard" was removed "from the west to the east".



(Tim Hills 2007)

The Woolhope Club account of 1899 is more cautious about the yew's origins, but provides a clear description of its location:

"The church or chapel at Kynaston was involved in the landslip, and it is believed that the Yew tree, the roots of which are still visible in the hollow beneath the deep cutting in the Upper Ludlow rocks at the crossroads half way up the hill leading to the Cockshoot, originally stood in, or close to, Kynaston churchyard."



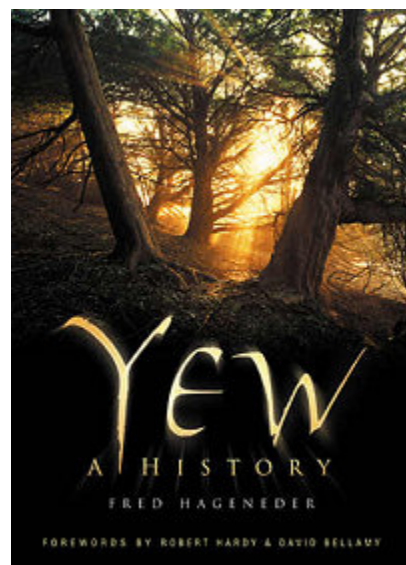
(Tim Hills 2007)

A site visit in July 2007 confirmed that the yew, first noted in the account of 1793, lives on. The exposed roots find their way into the ground many metres away from its leaning trunk, which supports a small but flourishing crown. It would seem very likely that this is a well developed fragment of the original churchyard yew that moved with the land in 1575.

¹ Sir Richard Baker: *A Chronicle of the Kings of England etc.*, 6th impression. London, Ludgate-hill: George Sawbridge, Hosier Lane - found in *A Brief Time of History* by David L.Higgitt

² *The Excursion down the Wye, from Ross to Monmouth: Including memoirs and anecdotes of the* by Charles Heath and John Kyrle

Yew: A History
by Fred Hageneder



The first book to cover all aspects of botany as well as the cultural history and mythology of the Yew. This is the remarkable story of the oldest living things in Europe and their endangered future.