



# TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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## SEMINAR

### THE CARSE OF GOWRIE ORCHARDS: SURVEY, RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

TUESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2007 (9.15 AM - 6.00 PM)

#### NOTES FROM PRESENTATIONS

##### *Presentation 1 - Syd House, Forestry Commission Scotland (Seminar Chair)*

Syd welcomed delegates to the morning's seminar and gave an overview of the day ahead -

- To understand the condition of the remaining orchards on The Carse
- To discuss the work that needs to be done to safeguard and enhance them.

The orchards in the Carse have existed for a long time. First and foremost there is an important historical landscape element to them. This generation can safeguard this for future generations. The consensus is to concentrate on the rationale for protecting and restoring remnant Carse orchards with a broad approach.

##### *Presentation 2 - Dr. Crispin Hayes, CW Hayes Associates Eco-Consultancy*

Crispin presented the results of his survey work and outlined the importance of the Carse orchards. The survey is an historical snapshot. The resulting habitat is unusual. Veteran trees are very important. There are 50 sites left in disrepair.

- The medieval monastic culture brought pomology to this area of Scotland. A Fruit Tax break was given by the Pope - land was drained. The orchards were at their most productive during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Many of the historic orchards no longer exist. In some cases there is just one old pear or apple tree left. 28 orchards have been verified as no longer existing.
- Gourdie Hill orchards were the largest in the Carse (Grange). Patrick Mathews was a pioneer in breeding different varieties: 35 acres of new varieties - 10,000 trees. In the 1860s his sons went to New Zealand and began the orchard industry; these are the imports now seen in shops. Crispin located the old remnants of the original orchards.

- Pitfour - in the 1920s this orchard was booming, but by the 1960s no young trees were left. The orchard had totally declined by 1968. Smaller orchards remain at field scale, although not necessarily commercial.
- The Retreat, Carse Grange - part of the original orchards: the remains are well looked after.
- Field-scale orchards at Muirhouses and Megginch.

Nine "gems" still remain in the Carse. There are five of historical value, but all have diminished. These could be returned to orchard status.

Orchard loss is due to:

- Agricultural pressure since World War Two
- Benign neglect and old age (process of attrition and wind blow)
- Housing pressure - a growing threat

Government policy incentives are hopefully changing. In the meantime, however, no presumption has been taken in Planning to prevent orchard loss. The orchards are a major part of our cultural heritage; they have intrinsic value - hopefully awareness is being raised through organisations working together. There is a proposal for Heritage Orchards so that there is better focussing of attention, awareness-raising, and help with funding.

Indicators for Biodiversity include:

- presence of veteran trees
- the different conditions of trees
- likely niches habitats (especially important for invertebrates, birds and bats)
- vegetation on orchard floor (especially species-rich grassland)
- Management of orchard floor

Main points:

- Awareness raising
- Planning = value
- Engagement - establish a Carse Orchards organisation to foster ideas
- Establish a nursery with heritage varieties; survey existing varieties, research economic opportunities
- There is a need to constantly review, manage and consider best practice
- Neglect, in many ways, can mean more biodiversity value (increased invertebrate and lichen populations) - these need to be monitored and understood
- Fruit Days, Blossom Days, tourism potential in the Carse - all to be explored, many to be taken forward by the local community itself
- Scotland has a great fruit heritage - Newburgh, on the south side of the River Tay, is a prime example with over 1,000 mature fruit trees and a thriving and proactive Orchard Group

### *Question & Answers - Dr. Crispin Hayes*

It was noted that there are other orchard areas around Scotland, such as those in the Clyde Valley. (Fiona Fisher) noted other examples of orchard surveys such as in the Clyde and Newburgh.

(John Hancox) noted the successful Children's Orchard which is located in the middle of the city centre of Glasgow. It attracts children to the Clyde Valley. Orchard-sourced varieties. Networking is very important.

(John Butterworth) noted the technical aspect to restoration and enhancement of existing orchards.

(Crispin Hayes) pointed out that there is a link with the commercial market for fruits locally grown, especially Farmers Markets, Box Schemes, etc.

(Rose Clarkson) Clyde Valley - a survey was carried out 5 years ago: 70 orchards cover 9 miles in length. Motives for conservation are very important. Farmers are busy with their own problems. An example - incomers adopted an orchard as part of their land - it is requiring a lot of input to safeguard it. We need new opportunities to help promote orchards and this awareness of opportunities can help the future of local fruit.

(Crispin Hayes) Orchards can involve so many different aspects. There are some pioneers to show this. Cheap labour for soft fruit has been very successful in Tayside.

(Catherine Herdman) Megginch Orchards - the fruit was sold to Dundee stores, but EU regulations made things extremely difficult. Local people still use Megginch produce. Farmers Markets are great but are very labour intensive - although financially viable.

(IW) asked about Cider makers. Crispin confirmed that whilst undertaking survey no-one really mentioned cider-making. It was pointed out that there used to be a small-scale cider-maker in Stanley, Perthshire. (MYoung) said there was little reference to cider - small private, non commercial. There has been reference to Perry-making and pears though.

(George Humphry) SCRI - said that there is a more recent collection at the Scottish Crop Research Institute (Invergowrie) planted in 1981 which could be added to the survey findings.

(A Thomson) Community Woodland Association - there is so much potential for community orchards. The orchards that are in best condition are under ownership - this is key. There is potential to retrieve ownership - and help them continue.

(Mr Rettie) There is an orchard on The Carse waiting for a planning application. Could a TPO help? Crispin said that Tree Preservation Orders are not really a useful way to preserve trees - they tend to get ignored by developers any way. What is needed is a fairer process of engagement and awareness. Brownfields, for example, are ideal for building - save the orchards. Communities need to come together and do something - there are ways to fund nowadays. We need to highlight the value of the orchards to owners who look after their own plots.

(Ken Cox) Glendoick. Mentioned ill-conceived legislation - for example a 'fun day' at a local school was organised with children picking their own fruit and learning. The idea was they could eat the fruit they picked for a snack, but at the end of the day the teachers wouldn't allow this. Is this a misinterpretation of the law? What message does this send? SH agreed and said this myth needs to be dispelled.

(Flatfield delegate) It has become a minefield of paper work and bureaucracy. TPOs do not work - we need engagement.

(John Hancox) Concentrate on the value system. There must be a way, an alternative look at the value and potential benefits to be gained. There is educational / cultural and heritage and social benefits which all in turn add value. The Children's Orchard has been popular with Glasgow schools in many ways. We need to charge on regardless. Let's get community engagement.

(Bill Wilson) suggested the importance of securing sources of varieties. CH agreed - some varieties are available, but only commercially, rarely locally. Work does need to be done on varieties. This would be a local responsibility.

(Willie Duncan & Crispin Hayes) - it would be silly to compete with big supermarkets. Heritage varieties should come from heritage orchards. This should be a niche market - organic heritage. Most orchards in the Carse are organic. Can there be Organic Status held to them? The market is out there.

*Before introducing David Imray, Syd House gave Phil Elliot's apologies for not being at the seminar. Phil had been involved in a car accident the day before and was in hospital undergoing an operation. All seminar delegates gave their best wishes to Phil for his speedy recovery. Syd confirmed that Phil's presentation would be added to the website in due course.*

### ***Presentation 3 - David Imray, Scottish Government***

David gave a briefing on Scottish Rural Development Plan 2007-2013:

- a one-stop shop (includes non-agricultural)
- Regional Priorities - there was an opportunity to get the Carse of Gowrie orchards onto this
- Applications for funding can be made direct to any one of SGRIP, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish National Heritage

Outline on procedure of application for a grant:

- There will be no deadlines for submissions for grants (3 assessment rounds for judging applications per year)
- A 'Statement of Intent' will be required prior to submitting a full application
- Case Officer support throughout the whole process

The system will be more flexible - orchards may well attract support under a number of measures available under the plan.

The whole process will be driven to achieve appropriate 'Outcomes'. Appropriate 'outcomes' for remnant orchards could be:

- to safeguard and enhance the biodiversity of the landscape
- promote business viability (historical landscape features / add value to produce / diversify rural businesses)
- Investment into restructuring of grant schemes

The following measures/actions might attract support under the new incentives regime to help manage and restore remnant orchards provided the applicant meets the necessary requirements:

- measures for safeguarding and enhancing the historic landscape
- training
- co-operation with other orchard owners
- process and marketing support
- support for non-productive investment (such as for fences)
- woodland creation
- support for development of micro-enterprises (keeping people in rural communities)
- restoring walls and dykes - enhance and maintain
- grazing in ancient woodland pasture

Timetable: The SRDP and allied funding support still awaits EC approval which is unlikely prior to the end of 2007. It is intended to launch the scheme as soon as this approval is received so early 2008 is the likely timing. Applications may be made thereafter though it is unlikely any applications will be approved before summer 2008.

### *Questions & Answers - David Imray*

(Rose Clarkson) Clyde Valley - said that any applicant now requires land to have received IACS registration. (DI) in reply acknowledged this -and added that rural businesses were also eligible for support on some measures. The business just needs to register. (SH) said it is recommended to get the land registered if one is an orchard owner. (Trefor Woodfor). What is needed to register non-agricultural land? Is there a minimum size? Noted it is 0.3Ha for agricultural land.

The SGPID office in Broxden allows register for mapping.

(Christine Hall) SAC - Proposed Regional Project Assessment Committees (this Committee will decide on - any numbers yet? (SH) outlined the background to this in general terms. The means by which RPAC's will operate and the opportunity for engagement by wider stakeholders will be publicised shortly.

(A Thomson) - Community Woodlands Association. Agrees there is good advice on the website. IACS is very user-unfriendly. Broxden office is very helpful if you make time to go in person.

### *Presentation 4 - Ron Gillies, Cairn o'Mhor Winery*

Ron has been making wine for the past 25 years. He uses grape yeast; apples need more work, including a special press. A niche market is essential - there are 66 micro-breweries in the UK. All have done well. He is making something different. The Carse of Gowrie is great and has much potential. Apple / pear wine - there would be enough fruit on the Carse, if the orchards were looked after. No new trees would have to be planted.

Ron has won 'Great Taste Awards' for his Strawberry and Elderberry wines. There is a lot of potential in what is growing in the Carse already but there is a lot of marketing involved. Cairn o'Mhor participates in around

250 events a year, mainly at Farmers' Markets. Networking IS key, plus initial hard work until you get established.

One of Cairn o'Mhor specialities is Elderberry wine which can't be bought commercially. There is a lot of wild elderberry around - mainly ornamental variegated varieties. RG has taken cuttings of his favourites and planted them on 2 acres of land - there are 13 or 14 varieties and 99% of these cuttings have been successful. Fifteen years ago his main success was the elderberry. The end of the wine season currently finishes with elderberry.

RG's efforts were recorded, last October, on "The Woman Who Ate Scotland" TV series based around the Edinburgh Farmers' Market. He invented a mixed Rowan, Hawthorn, Elder and Rosehip wine - very successful. Unusual wines have great potential and a big market. He has 300 outlets throughout Scotland, England and Germany. He supplies ASDA and Historic Scotland. He is still a low key modest enterprise.

Over the years there has been great change: the angle of the market, countries, varieties and colours. Strawberries have great potential - fruit wine does not have to be grapes.

The commercial aspect is a bit by-the-way. There is potential for the tourism industry. People see the Carse of Gowrie becoming less rural. It is important to look after the Carse and its character. RG noted the slashing of hedges, cutting of grass road verges - tidiness is not the answer and is not pretty. The Council, Government, everybody has a part to play; communities need to shout louder. Human neglect is good in some cases - let wildflowers grow - it helps the pollinating bees. Over-cutting hedges means no birds as none of the hedge fruit is kept back for them.

#### *Questions & Answers - Ron Gillies*

Where do you get your recipes? RG - I've been flexible and experimented. Over the years I have been able to tweak recipes to suit.

(Christine Hall) Is it financially viable for you to buy fruit from farmers? (RG) -In some cases. (Christine Hall) agreed with RG's point on the issue of verge and hedge cutting problem.

#### *Presentation 5 - Kay Lamb, Cittaslow Project (Perth & Kinross Council)*

2005 was the year Perth became branded as a Food Town. "Ludlow" is a Slow Food Town. Perth is the first Slow Food Town in Scotland.

"Ark of Taste" / "Presidia" - established to help preserve lost heritage brands / rediscovers catalogues and flavours.

Orchard-related produce: perry - a product that was widely popular then became largely lost - the project is helping to bring it back. Jersey Blackbutter - spices, liquorice.

California - used to have thousands of orchards - but no longer - we could exchange knowledge and work together - "Terra Moda"?

#### *Questions & Answers - Kay Lamb*

(?) Does Cittaslow get consulted to help respond to planning applications? (KL) No - but councils and environmental departments are involved with the process indirectly.

(?) I am a member of the Slow Food Project in Perth - I just want to say that they do have great evening meetings. However I think that there is a problem with the word Cittaslow - "Citta" suggests "city" but the movement is not only concerned with cities - suggesting a more local / Scottish name.



## SEMINAR PANEL - QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

(TW) Wanted to raise the problem of relating local small-scale activities to large-scale legislation. A friend took over a raspberry farm to make "Framboise". Unfortunately legislation is not so easy for this. Another neighbour pressed a lot of fruit but ended up giving most of it away. It is difficult to become commercial at such a small-scale.

(RG) Nothing is impossible. Environmental Health and Customs issues are easy enough to accommodate, even when starting out small-scale.

(SH) There is not an easy answer. One needs to tackle each issue as it arises to get through the bureaucracy - we need to share the knowledge and expertise in this. Some people are closer to government than others - pro-monopoly. When there is a fixed cost small companies suffer more. There should be thresholds. Successful help can come through organisations such as the Small Business Gateway who work with local people to get them through this maze. PKCT / Big Tree Scotland / Scottish Enterprise are all excellent in giving information and helping talk about bureaucracy.

(CH) There is an advantage in having an organisation made up of a group of people which represents on behalf of other orchard owners.

(Elaine Whiteley) She wanted to plant an orchard but it was not financially viable (due to other issues such as fencing etc) - she met a wall of bureaucracy. The costs of setting up were proportionally greater if you want to promote diversity and establish new orchards. (DI) Yes - the whole agricultural system is changing. The new Rural Development Plan is going to help - it will move in the right direction.

(RG) One would need a farm number in order to get a grant. (SH) Economies of scale - get together with others of a similar mind and position.

(Estelle Ward) wanted to move something forward - thinks there is little future for local people. There is land near her - if funding is given to an owner for grazing, the local people have no say. It would be different if funding was given and the whole community was able to use this. She thinks the land is just waiting for planning permission. Will this Initiative give protection? (DI) There is no reason why the land won't be used for grazing. We can't force owners.

(SH) We shouldn't put all our eggs in the public funds basket. Urge individual entrepreneurship.

(J Hancox) There are other sources of funding available. We have set up the Children's Orchard and got help from the Big Lottery Fund and Volunteers (and banks and offices). It is worth exploring other avenues - shout about environmental and health benefits. Entrepreneurship is very important.

(CH) Land use funding is never going to be significant. For non-profit organisations there are lots of opportunities for community groups to get £5,000 available for surveys etc. - this would at least get the ball rolling.

(Liz Houghton) There was a relict orchard near her. Unfortunately there was a serious problem with orchard use and grazing. There are very strict health regulations, having to be careful about contamination. In the past however this combination was okay. (DI) what if the orchard was managed better? (LH) No - this would make it more susceptible to dangerous viruses.

(SH) This is a valid point to follow up. (WD) Could the fallen apples be useful? (RG) If you were there in time every day to pick them up. (WD) You have to be quick as the natural yeast moves in as soon as they hit the ground. (RG) You can kill off the natural yeast, but for the likes of grape wine, few yeasts work away. Different fruit requires different processes. You do need a sterile environment. Fallen apples are also good for juicing depending on the variety (not for making wine however).

(P Hancox) How do we preserve orchards? Surveys must be good for this. What about protecting local heritage varieties? Should old and existing varieties be retained and new ones developed?

(CH) All varieties are important. We do have a foundation set up now from surveys taken - the next step is to analyse the data with orchard owners - we need to take a pragmatic approach while considering heritage varieties but also modern varieties.

(Patricia Cox) She used to have a 17 acre orchard. The company Bulmers took the windfall, any variety. (RG) The company Taycider had potential - they used everything. Annual pressing of apples is very economic - and they freeze well. (Polly Murray) She intends to expand her own apple orchard. (?) We need a pragmatic variety mix - it should include southern varieties as well as strong resistant varieties.

## The Way Forward

(SH) There seems to be three underlying themes:

- to now hold one day workshops on the care and maintenance of the surviving orchard remnants
- provision of information on production and care of trees in general
- where do we go from here?

(SH) Rounded up the Questions and Answers session:

- How do we value these priceless areas?
- This is a priority for historic landscape protection
- Communities can help
- There is a serious threat of development
- The idea of securing sites, rejuvenating orchards - but we need to secure existing trees as anchors of our heritage first.

(RG) Yes - when it comes to old orchards - these are special and can become restricted - as sites of special interest, monuments of the past.

(Catherine Lloyd) The National Orchard Forum is a very useful organisation. Delegates asked to complete the feedback forms as they will help plan the way forward. We want to set up a Carse of Gowrie Orchard Forum but don't want to step on toes. Other successful organisations are made up of lots of different strands brought together. We need all the input possible. Green Tourism? Community Orchards - buy/give/lend. School orchards - there is small funding available. Over 40 people could not attend today's seminar; 85 people are here. That's a lot of interest in one small orchard area!

(SH) Essential now to review the day's proceedings, everyone's feedback and plan ahead - we need to tap into all this interest and everyone's contributions. We will be discussing ideas and moving to set up a small Steering Group or Forum to encompass the wider body of interest.

He expressed thanks to the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership for organising the seminar, all the speakers for their contributions, and the funders which made it possible to offer a free event today. He pointed out the collection of Scottish heritage varieties of pears and apples on display in the room and reminded everyone to look at the display of British small-scale orchard projects the Partnership had prepared. Importantly - 'thank you' to everybody who attended.

The afternoon would be spent with a special site visit to Megginch Castle Orchard where delegates would be split into two groups. Mrs Catherine Herdman would give a tour of the gardens, and John Butterworth would tour one of the best orchards in the Carse to discuss the potential for restoration, and practical management. Ron Gillies of Cairn O'Mhor was then looking forward to showing delegates around the winery and Elderberry plantation.

### USEFUL WEBSITES

Forestry Commission Scotland	<a href="http://www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland">www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland</a>
Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust	<a href="http://www.pkct.org">www.pkct.org</a>
C W Hayes Associates	<a href="http://www.crispinwhayes.com">www.crispinwhayes.com</a>
Scottish Government (Rural Grants)	<a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/rural">www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/rural</a>
Cairn O'Mhor Winery	<a href="http://www.cairnomohr.co.uk">www.cairnomohr.co.uk</a>
Peelwalls Cider	<a href="http://www.edenbrands.co.uk/">www.edenbrands.co.uk/</a>
Cittaslow Perth	<a href="http://www.pkc.gov.uk/Promoting+Perth+and+Kinross/Cittaslow/">www.pkc.gov.uk/Promoting+Perth+and+Kinross/Cittaslow/</a>
National Orchard Forum	<a href="http://www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk/">www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk/</a>
Central Core Orchard Network	<a href="http://www.centralcoreorchardnetwork.co.uk">www.centralcoreorchardnetwork.co.uk</a>