

Hidden Heritage Project Tree Stump Survey

Katherine Price and Pete Whyatt

Introduction:

As part of the Hidden Heritage project, dendrochronology fieldwork was carried out by Dr Coralie Mills (2013). As part of her contribution, a public workshop was held. As a result of Dr Mills' analysis, following the workshop it was suggested further work be undertaken. The aim was to date some of the tree stumps that line Church Road, as documentary evidence suggested a beech avenue was planted by Walter McFarlane in the 18th Century (Hidden Heritage 2013).

Church Road



Figure 1 Church Road looking west

There are old boundary banks clearly visible on North and South aspects along the length of Church Road. We carried out a survey looking for tree stumps that were suitable for estimating the age at which the tree was felled. We identified one large Oak stump on the North side of the road (*figure 2*). This stump we cleaned up and counted the rings, which gave an estimated age of 155 years. There were a number of other tree stumps along the banks, predominantly on the South side. However these were all well-rotted and were thought to be mainly conifers due to large growth ring sizes. The stumps were generally fairly small, and although we have learnt estimates from girth are very inaccurate, there were none which appeared to be of particularly great age - certainly none to compare to the recorded stump.



Figure 2: Cleaning Oak Stump for Tree Ring Counting

Plantation

This is the embanked area referred to in Dr Mills' report as highly likely to be the plantation shown on Roy's map – grid reference at Southern edge NN297039. A survey was carried out throughout the area. A number of tree stumps were identified, but the amount of decay rendered counting rings virtually impossible. Many we thought were probably conifers. There was one oak stump which we thought we might have a reasonable chance of recording (*figure 3*). In order to get to countable wood we had to use a saw to take a small wedge sample. This gave an estimated age of 118 years. Although larger stumps were visible, these were in worse condition so no others were sampled (*figure 4*). It was also noted that there was considerable variation in size of stumps; there was no evidence to suggest a significant number of trees had been felled at any one time.



Figure 3: Plantation stump with wedge sample removed (arrow)



Figure 4: Large stump in plantation area unsuitable for ring counting

Northern extent of Plantation

Our final exploration involved the North side of the A83. We wished to investigate whether there was any evidence for an extended plantation, corresponding to Roy's map. There was a boundary roughly in line with the presumed western plantation edge; however this was more like a dyke - there was not the platform feel as on the South of the main road. It was extremely overgrown and difficult to access. We also walked up the hill to the East of the wooded area to see if there was any access into

to the plantation area via the old military road. Again, this was too overgrown with Rhododendrons.

Conclusion:

The oak tree on Church Road dates back at least to the mid-19th Century. Unfortunately we did not find any evidence for the Beech Avenue referred to in Walter MacFarlane's letter of 1735.

Although we were unable to date any of the tree stumps within the Plantation area to the early 18th century, stumps from this time may exist but are now too decayed for analysis. The plantation area to the North of the A83 and the Old Military Road would be interesting sites for further tree analysis if clearance work was ever undertaken.

References:

Mills, Coralie 2013. *Hidden Heritage of a Landscape: Woodland Heritage & Dendrochronology at Arrochar* [pdf] Available at : http://hiddenheritage.org.uk/docs/060_308_woodlandheritagedendroreportcmillsv2_1381137001.pdf [Accessed 18th January 2014]

Hidden Heritage 2013. *Landscape Interpretation*. [online] Available at: <http://hiddenheritage.org.uk/project/landscape-interpretation/> [Accessed 18th January 2014]

Appendix

Tree Stump Recording Sheet

Surveyors: Katherine Price and Pete Whyatt

Date: 20/11/13

Tree Number	Site	Grid Reference	Species	Girth (cm)	Height above ground (cm)	Is the centre intact?	Is the Bark intact?	Ring Count
1	Avenue	NN 29996 03939	Oak	175	64	No	Yes	118
2	Plantation	NN 29810 03951	Oak	313	78	No	Yes	155

Tree Stump 1 Pictures



Tree Stump 2 Pictures

