Scotland’s Winter Seminar and AGM

Nick Porter, Scotland Editor

Scotland’s Winter Seminar and 2022 Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place at Chatelherault Country Park in South Lanarkshire on 28th January.

Scottish Branch Chair Chris Simpson welcomed the attendees to the first in-person AGM since before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As is tradition, the morning session began with presentations from two guest speakers. The Curator of Living Collections at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) David Knott gave a fascinating talk. He detailed some of the challenges of managing a diverse tree collection in Scotland as the climate changes due to human activity and new pests and diseases take hold. He gave the sad example of an impressive Juniperus rigida in the rock garden at the Edinburgh site that needed to be removed due to infection by Phytophthora austrocedri. David finished his talk by giving examples of some of the trees that could grow well in Scotland if the climate continues to change, including Corylus jacquemontii, Metasequoia glyptostroboids and Ginkgo biloba.

Landscape historian Christopher Dingwall gave an informative presentation on the history of Chatelherault and the Hamilton High Parks. He described how during the 1700s exotic trees from across the world were planted at Chatelherault, including cypress, common spruce and New England pine. He also explained that Hamilton Palace, which once stood in Chatelherault County Park, had to be demolished in the 1820s due to its being structurally compromised by mining in the local area.

Prizes presented

After the speakers, this year’s awards and prizes were presented. The Tom Hall Memorial Literary Prize is awarded in recognition of writing that contributes to our understanding of arboriculture in Scotland. Curator of Dundee University Botanic Garden Kevin Frediani received the 2022 award for his excellent series of articles titled ‘Towards an anthropology of plant names’. Kevin’s articles look in depth into the history and processes involved in the naming of plants, unpicking the intricacies of this complex subject and making it more accessible to the reader in the process. (The latest in the series appears on pages 88–92.)

The Ken Martin Award is presented to those that have made an outstanding contribution to the arboricultural industry in Scotland. Christopher Dingwall, who had talked earlier that morning, was presented with the 2022 award. Christopher has contributed in a variety of important ways to arboriculture in Scotland. In 2006 he was commissioned by the Forestry Commission to prepare a report which led to the creation of the National Tree Collections in Scotland. He co-authored the 2011 Forestry Commission Practice Guide on Conserving and Managing Trees and Woodlands in Scotland’s Designed Landscapes and he is a voluntary tree warden in Perth & Kinross. The Scottish branch would like to thank this year’s winners and congratulate them.

AGM

Chris Simpson then went on to give the officers’ report which included a summary of the branch events that took place in 2022, among them a Stationary Rope Technique (SRT) Workshop in Blair Drummond Safari Park in February and a Bats and Trees Habitat Workshop at Chatelherault Country Park in November (see page 93). Branch secretary Struan Dalgleish reported that Association membership in Scotland stood at 132 individual members, 7 Corporate Members and 7 Approved Contractors.

It was then on to appointing the Scottish committee members and officers for 2023. Chris Simpson stays on as Chair with Struan Dalgleish as Secretary and Nick Porter as Scotland Editor. Simone Stuart was appointed Vice Chair, taking over from Alan McDowell who stays on the committee. Existing Committee members Mark Foster, Matthew Cooper, Chris Knapman, Callum Braithwaite and Mike Charkow all stay on. Two new members, Ruthe Davis and Ronnie Barker, were nominated to join the committee. After two years Andy Walley stands down. The branch thanks Andy for his hard work and valuable contributions during his time on the committee.

The day concluded with a guided tour of Chatelherault Country Park led by South Lanarkshire Countryside Ranger Mike Brady. The group enjoyed spending some time inspecting the veteran Cadzow Oaks which are thought to have been planted in the mid-12th century.

Thanks go to everyone that attended this year’s seminar and 2022 AGM. Keep an eye on the e-Blast emails and the Association’s website for more events taking place in Scotland in 2023.