

**The Origin of Old Scots Pine Planted by Gordon Castle Estate**  
*by M T T Phillips*

Some recent research into the history of early planting of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris* L) on the Gordon Castle Estate at Fochabers, Morayshire uncovered a series of documents and maps which strongly suggest that the old trees are derived through seed gathered from the native pinewoods of Glenmore, which at that time were owned by the Duke of Gordon. The Scottish Records Office in Edinburgh hold a letter under Register House Plan 2504 dated 16th Feb 1762 from William Bell, factor to the Gordon Estates, addressed to the Duke of Gordon in which he refers to the planting of 400,000 firs above the village of Fochabers in that year.

**Extracts of a Letter from William Bell,  
Factor to the Duke of Gordon**

*Gordon Castle 16th Feb. 1762*

*My Lord,*

*I have the honour to write to your Grace on the 11th Nov last to which I now refer. I have now sent an abstract of the plan of Glenmore which I hope will amuse your Grace it is without doubt one of the prettiest places in Britain you will see by it which is Peter Grouts tack and also the part possessed by James Stuart the forester and as Peter Grant is to remove at Whitsunday I hope your Grace will send your orders to what I mentioned in my last letter have paid the Spences. Each of them the salaries that their father had agreeable to appease your Graces order and it is necessary that there be a salary to the forester of Glenquiach which nice it befits 6 bolls of meal and about 30 to 40 shillings and I give the two foresters at Glen Avon five bolls of meal each I hope your Grace will take the trouble to let me know how far you approve these salaries and your orders shall be faithfully followed. I have had another meeting with the tenants at Auchendoun and Glenrinnis about their perjurying the right to the forest of Blackwater which I have procured for them the greatest part of this I have passed The others I hare absolutely refused to pass*

*I have caused the planned measure of the parks that is enclosed and planting of the hill of Fochabers on the way to Mulben it contains 203 acres and there are already planted in it this season 400,000 fir plants 11000 birch plants 1500 Alders 300 Elms 200 rowans 200 ash 100 gean 100 white poplar 100 Hollies and 100 willows and I think much above half the ground is planted I hope to have it finished this season and I have turned the road that end to Mulben round the out side of the enclosure which will do much belter than having the road through the plantings and we about drawing out the avenue at the burrows gate to the wood through Clunys field in obedience to my Lady Dutchess orders but we will be at a loss for trees of a proper size to make it up.*

*The Gardener has cut more trees in the garden than what I have reason to think your Grace will approve of and has taken such opportunity to do it when there was nowon to oppose it however I think there is now a stop put to it. I have marked by and caused cut*

*some dead butts one fir tree in the wilderness of his use which will soon be rotten where these feed beside doing hurt to the other trees and bt then will save as much other woods but this will not near save for Mr Alan Durmand use very large and some times extrovagent your Graces hopes*

*I beg to offer my duty to Lord William and compliments to Mr Beneto  
My Lord  
your Graces most Faithful  
humble servant  
William Bell*

Under the same Register House Plan there is a map of Glenmore inscribed Glenmore' and 'Wood', which is referred to as the plan in the above letter. Also of interest, the heading of the plan was addressed to 'His Grace the Duke of Gordon, Chez Monsieur Bellon'.

Further research discovered a map by William Anderson, dated 1764 under Register house Plan 2312, of Fochabers and surrounding areas. The map shows the plantings above Fochabers at the Cullen and Deer Park Woods, all of which are now owned by the Forestry Commission.

It is the Winding Walks area above Christies Nurseries (Peeps Wood) and two old trees in the Deer Park which, as far as it is known, constitute the sole surviving remnants of the 1762 planting, a considerable number of which were blown down in the 1953 gale.

In 1994 ten trees were core sampled giving an actual mean age of 215 years. Trees were sampled at breast height and an allowance of 15 years was added to estimate age at planting. Also some core samples missed the centre of the tree and an additional allowance of 5 years was made to give a final estimated mean tree age of 232 years, very close to the planting year of 1762 mentioned in Bell's letter.

There are a number of references to the early plantings around Fochabers; in particular, a wonderful account of the excursion of the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society to Strathspey Moray and Nairnshire in 1894 (Anon, 1894). Reference has also been made to the planting of Scots pine in the Deer Park and Hampshire Woods in about 1916 with seed from the native pinewoods of Glenmore (R. Allison, pers. comm.). We may therefore assume that it was common practice for the Estate to collect, grow and plant its own pine from Glenmore; and there was certainly a seed extractory and nursery on the Estate at Fochabers in the very early days.

There is also a local belief that when Charles II landed at Garmouth and signed the Solemn League and Covenant on 23rd June 1650 a number of Scots pine were planted to commemorate the event; this area is now known as the Winding Walks. There is no evidence to substantiate this although there are still a number of very old pine trees in the area which have not been dated by core sampling and which could be of this vintage. The research continues.

## Notes of Historical Interest

1. Gordon Castle was also known as Bog of Gight (Gaelic Gaothoch). 'The Windy Place'.
2. The meaning and origin of the name 'Peeps Wood' is uncertain although a reference is given in the 1894 RSAS Journal, where the party on crossing Cullen Wood, view the village of Fochabers 'which betrays its existence as its roofs 'Peep' out of the dense mass of foliage'.
3. There are several references to the old forest of Enzie which it is believed was a natural native forest largely of fir and of considerable extent (Donaldson, n.d.). It was said to be planted by Lord Findlater (Matthews, 1949: MacLean, 1953). The Braes of Enzie lie just north east of Whiteash Hill (Bore Hill) where many old pine stumps were exposed in ploughing by the Forestry Commission in 1961 (R. Allison *pers comm*). The term Enzie or Engie is recorded by Blaeu (1583-96) as Ainie, and by Timothy Pont as Ainze.

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Bob Allison for wonderful historical information;  
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**Styne Wood: Plantations by Gordon Castle Estate**

**Between 1736 and 1829**

***FIR WOOD FOR SALE,  
IN SPEYMOUTH PARISH.***

*To BE SOLD, the FIR WOOD at*

*Stynie, confisting of nearly Three Thousand*

*Full Grown Trees, of excellent quality,*

*between Seventy and Eighty Years old.*

*Offers to be given in to Mr Hoy or Mr*

*Menzies, at **Gordon** Castle, at any time*

*agaift the 1ft of June next, when a Bargain will*

*be concluded.*

As already reported (Phillips, 1996) it is believed that the Stynie Wood at Mosstodloch, east of Fochabers, in Moray, was planted with Scots pine (*Pinus silvestris* L.) by Gordon Castle Estate in 1736. About that time, the Duke of Gordon planted large areas of his land with Scots pine, and records indicate the seed came from local or Speyside native origins (Anon, 1762).

The original Stynie Wood was felled between 1808 and 1811 by Alexander Duncan of Garmouth as recorded in Estate papers which described the fir wood as of excellent quality and between 70 and 80 years old at that time.

Remnants of an old Scots pine wood still survive and are scattered throughout Stynie Wood, mainly around the Forestry Commission office at Balnacoul.

In April 1997 eight of the old trees were core sampled to determine their age, together with a disc from a recently felled tree. Two trees were subject to heart rot and had to be discounted, but the remaining seven trees gave the following ring counts (which include estimates to ground level): 160, 162, 178, 177, 169, 167 and 165 giving a mean of 168 years old. The ring counts show that the present remnants are therefore not survivors of the 1735 wood, but could be either natural regeneration, or replanting after the

completion of the 1811 felling, a rather long delayed period of some eighteen years before re-establishment.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## **Research into the Origin of the Ancient Forest of Enzie** by M T T Phillips Greenacres, Newton, Elgin, Morayshire.

### **Introduction**

In 1995 research was undertaken regarding the origin of a scattering of old Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris* L.) at Speymouth Forest owned by the Forestry Commission and planted by Gordon Castle Estate in 1762, in the shire of Banff in NE Scotland. The location reference is: Ordnance Survey 1:50.000 Map 28, Grid Reference NJ365585, Leitch's Wood, Speymouth Forest above the village of Fochabers. It has been recorded by a number of authors that there was an ancient 'natural' forest mainly of fir (Scots pine, early definition), and known as the Forest of Enzie or Boyne in the shire of Banff (Anderson 1967, MacFarlane 1906, Johnston 1892. Gilbert 1979. Duncan 1912, McLean 1933, Matthews 1949).

In 1994 ten old Scots pine in the Winding Walks area of Speymouth Forest were core sampled to determine the age. The average ring count was 215 years, which allowing for estimates of missed pith and growth to breast height, was near to the planting year of 1762 (Phillips. 1996). In March 1999 the Forestry Commission funded further research (pertaining to Gordon Castle Estate) at the Scottish Records Office which included work on both the older Scots pine planted in 1762 and more recent adjacent plantings in 1930 and 1931.

### **History 1097-1713**

There is a long history of an ancient fir forest, now largely covered by Speymouth Forest. Anderson (1967) writes that during the Period of Feudalism (1097-1400): "In 1362 John Hay of Tullybole was permitted by David II to appropriate the whole district between the River Spey and the town of Tynot in the Forest of Awne (Enzie)". This area, known as Enzie is recorded by Bleau (1654), as Ainze and by Pont as Ainie (Pont 1583-1596, Stone 1989). There are various other spellings, (Johnston, 1892; Anderson. 1967) but doubts as to its real connections. Gordon (1782) in the Statistical Account of Banff, writes:

"It is generally supported, that a considerable part of this parish towards the south west has been covered with woods, and belonged to the ancient forest of Boin, Borne.

(Boyne). A simple distich which had been handed down, by tradition confirms this:

"From Culbirnie to the sea You may step from tree to tree".

In earlier times in an excerpt of George, Earl of Huntly, there is mention of 'Forest of Anzie' (CR8/201. 1490). Anderson (1967) writes that in 1264 Gilbert Hay of Locheswood was made Keeper of the Forest of Byne and Enzie, and writes extensively on the Forest of Boyne (Buyn. Boyn, Boeyn and Alnete, Aune, Awne and Enzie). Gilbert (1979) writes that in 1490 James IV granted George, Earl of Huntly. "terras domini foreste de Azne", while in 1498 Huntly, was referred to as the Forester of Boyne and Enzie. It is accepted that the term forest did not necessarily mean trees in the medieval sense and could refer to waste land though the continued reference to foresters strongly suggests woodland (Steven and Carlisle. 1959). Gilbert's very interesting book gives 24 references to Enzie and Boyne both as indications of open and forest hunting ground. On page 257 there is a reference to John Hayt of Tolyboyle in 1362 regarding certain lands in the forest of Enzie and the rights thereof. There is also a note on page 249 "In 1327 Gilbert Hay, the forester, was permitted to graze etc. in Boyne and Ensie".

In the Gordon Book (Duncan, 1912) there are references to the "Primeval Fir Trees" in the local scenery of Fochabers. Approaching the Bogmore, Dallachv and Auchinhalrig corner of the Gordon Estates and on the Portgordon Road is the prehistoric landmark, the Gavin Brae, rich in local associations and embowered in dense brushwood and 'patriarchal Firs'. Also with reference to the Deer Park by Wisharts Burn, venerable fir trees. On the Hill of Fochabers there are lichen covered giant firs, the Dramlachs and Charlies Brig on the old county road (Duncan, 1912).

### **1714-1765**

In more recent times, as a result of research into the Gordon Castle records at the Scottish Records Office in 1995, maps and documents were uncovered. Correspondence from William Bell, factor to the Duke of Gordon dated the 16th February 1762 mentioned (SRO, 1995a) that:

"I have caused the planned measure of the parts that is enclosed and planting of the Hill of Fochabers on the way to Mulben, it contains 203 acres and there are already planted in it this season 400,000 fir plants".

Also attached is a map (SRO, 1995b), which shows the whole hill area of Fochabers including Litchs Wood (old spelling) as a plantation of firs, covering 742 acres which could have been planted from 1714 onwards. The scattered surviving 1762 planting can be seen to this day, mainly about the Winding Walks area and above Christies Nursery (Phillips. 1996).

It is, however, of considerable interest to note an area above Litchs Wood and below Whiteash shown on current OS and FG maps as the “old Wood” which in order to merit the word ‘old’ as regards fir, at least, suggests an age in the region of 200 years. This takes us back to about 1562 which is considerably before any large scale plantings were recorded. It is therefore postulated that this area could, in 1762, have been the last remaining remnants of the ancient Forest of Enzie.

Detailed information in the Scottish Records Office records numerous cases of cone collecting, seed extraction, the raising of plants and planting by estate staff. The seed indicates local origin as the records strongly suggest and the seed, as indicated, would have derived in all probability from the ‘old wood’, which was the nearest source at the time.

### **1766-1961**

In 1961 when deep ploughing was carried out by the Forestry Commission over much of the poor and higher ground, many old pine roots were brought to the surface, and the cultivation effect on the old poorly grown trees, scattered throughout the area was dramatic with a considerable increase in growth. (R. Allison. *pers. comm.*).

From 1766 to 1931 (and as early as 1714) there were almost continual collections of fir seed, using estate labour, indicating that the seed was from local sources, i.e. the Old Wood. The last remaining remnants of some 50 acres still stand in 1999, many more were blown down in the 1953 gale. The seed was extracted, sown in the estate nursery and planted back on estate ground.

The records from the Scottish Records Office tell of ‘Rooting Up’ trees and collecting cones. The system of rooting up trees, as informed by local sources in Fochabers, was a method widely used on the estate where firs were poorly grown on poor soil. Such relatively large trees, up to 4 feet (1.2 m) were then re-pit planted. This would have been standard practice over much of the higher ground (Whiteash). At the same time, cone collecting would have been carried out from the larger slow growth trees. It would appear that the whole of this large area would have been, at least in part the site of the ancient forest of Enzie.

The next record of seed collection (according to researchers so far) occurred in 1930-31 again showed and recorded that cones and seed were collected and extracted by estate employees and the plants raised in the estate nursery. Table 1 contains data extracted at the Scottish Records Office (SRO 1999). The SRO records give full information on other work during the period, such as names of all the persons involved, their wages and work in detail. It is of interest to record that in May 1937 there were 625½ acres of ‘old’ woods in the Fochabers district with a value of.£21,135 15s. (Brown. 1937).

### **Place Names**

The place name Enzie is quoted by several authors, as previously mentioned. From 1097 to 1603 there are references to the Forest of Enzie, as Forest de Alnete, Aune, Awne and Angyne, during the Period of Feudalism to the Union of the Crowns (Anderson. 1967). In Johnson’s ‘Place Names of Scotland’ in 1654, we have Ainia (Ainyee). The River Inny, west Meath, c670 in Tirechan there was Ethnem who was daughter of an Irish King. All somewhat doubtful. Eang is a nook or gusset, something angular.

In MacFarlane’s ‘Geographical Collections’, the “Thaindome belonged to the Lairds of

Boyne fforrest and by marriage to the Earl of Huntly, who got the forrest of Boyne and the lands of Einzie''. Translated from the Latin, there is reference to tall oaks between bog of Gight and neighbouring Boyne.

## Conclusions

It appears that Gordon Castle Estate always collected their own fir seed, at least from 1714 to 1931, they owned the firs, it was on their doorstep and there was a large staff employed. At one point there were as many as 55 men planting at one time. They extracted their own seed and raised the plants in [heir own nursery.

There is only one mention of the 'Old Wood' in the old records, although not specifically as regards seed, *i.e.* when on "1 7/12/1774 Peter Thomson was rooting out and crosscutting fir in the Old Wood and trenching in parts (£30.ls.6d.)"

As early as 1613 Scots pine were being collected or planted throughout Scotland. Native pine was being distributed and used in the seventeenth century and cones were opened by spreading them in the sun (Steven and Carlisle, 1959). This was the practice at Gordon Caste Estate from al least late 1722.

We now know with considerable confidence that a large part of what is now known as Speymouth Forest was an ancient forest mainly composed of fir and it is from this source that most if not all, the seed derived (the ancient Forest of Enzie). The old planted remnants, planted in 1762, still to be seen, will ostensibly be of the Enzie source and therefore most probably of local native origin. In the 1930 and 1931 plantings, although much later on, still follow the same pattern, according to records, and in this respect are therefore considered to be of the same original Enzie source.

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See attachment on page below:

**Table 1.** Extracts from the Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh, May 1999

|                  |                                                |                                                                                       |             |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| CR8/201          | 1490                                           | Excerpt from Charter of George Earl of Huntly. Mention of "Forreste de Anzie"         |             |
| CR8/75 Cash Book | 1713 to 1715                                   | Many references to Glenmore                                                           |             |
|                  | 24/2/1714                                      | To Wm Tam and Lowey Jinny for 2 p and a half of Birk Seed                             | £10.17s.10d |
|                  | 17/11/1714                                     | To Louis Innis fir seed from ?                                                        |             |
|                  | 9/6/1715                                       | Alistair Brander for growing Walnut Tree                                              |             |
| CR8/76 Cash Book | 3/5/1722                                       | James Wishart planting and raising fir seed                                           | .10d        |
|                  | 23/3/1723                                      |                                                                                       | .5s.6d      |
| CR8/77           | 1722 to 1724                                   | Very difficult to read, requires more study                                           |             |
| CR8/88           | <b>Day labourers employed at Gordon Castle</b> |                                                                                       |             |
|                  | 15/2/1766                                      | Making ? for the planting in the hillpark                                             |             |
|                  | 8/2/1766                                       | Rooting up hedges and trees                                                           |             |
|                  | 5/3/1766                                       | Rooting up hedges and trees                                                           |             |
|                  | 15/2/1766                                      | Burning whin, felling and transplanting (20 men)                                      |             |
|                  | 15/3/1766                                      | Burning whin, felling and transplanting (20 men)                                      |             |
|                  | 20/2/1766                                      | Planting (30 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 15/3/1766                                      | Planting (30 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 15/3/1766                                      | Rooting out trees and gathering cones (10 men, 1 woman)                               |             |
|                  | 12/4/1766                                      | Rooting out trees and gathering cones (10 men, 1 woman)                               |             |
|                  | 15/3/1766                                      | Planting (50 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 26/4/1766                                      | Planting (50 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 28/4/1766                                      | Drying fir seeds                                                                      |             |
|                  | 3/5/1766                                       | Drying fir seeds                                                                      |             |
|                  | 25/10/1766                                     | Planting (14 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 22/11/1766                                     | Planting (14 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 20/3/1766                                      | Building earth dyke to enclose planting on the hill                                   |             |
|                  | 8/4/1766                                       | Gathering fir seed and birk seed                                                      |             |
|                  | 8/4/1766                                       | Fir seed for planting. 16 bolls fir cones gathered by the boys                        |             |
|                  | 5/7/1766                                       | Cleaning the nursery                                                                  |             |
|                  | 26/7/1766                                      | Cleaning the nursery                                                                  |             |
|                  | 27/9/1766                                      | Planting                                                                              |             |
|                  | 25/10/1766                                     | Planting                                                                              |             |
|                  | 6/12/1766                                      | Planting                                                                              |             |
|                  | 20/12/1766                                     | Fencing trees peeled by deer                                                          |             |
|                  | 27/9/1766                                      | Wm Geddes in nursery                                                                  |             |
|                  | 16/2/1767                                      | Fir seed for planting                                                                 |             |
|                  | 11/4/1767                                      | Drying fir cones                                                                      |             |
|                  | 6/6/1767                                       | Drying fir cones                                                                      |             |
|                  | 26/4/1767                                      | Fir seed for nursery                                                                  |             |
|                  | 24/10/1767                                     | Fir seed for nursery                                                                  | £9.4s.8d    |
|                  | 13/2/1767                                      | Planting                                                                              |             |
|                  | 12/3/1767                                      | Planting                                                                              |             |
|                  | 31/2/1778                                      | Gathering cones and drying                                                            |             |
|                  | 13/5/1778                                      | Gathering cones and drying                                                            |             |
|                  | 4/7/1768                                       | Nursery                                                                               |             |
|                  | 20/7/1768                                      | Nursery                                                                               |             |
|                  | 13/2/1769                                      | Planting (55 men)                                                                     |             |
|                  | 8/4/1769                                       | Planting (55 men)                                                                     |             |
| CR8/80           | 17/3/1769                                      | Collecting cones                                                                      |             |
|                  | 27/3/1769                                      | Collecting cones                                                                      |             |
|                  | 10/4/1769                                      | Planting                                                                              |             |
|                  | 6/5/1769                                       | Planting                                                                              |             |
| CR8/57           | 1771                                           | Enzie, price of wood sold                                                             | £23.19s.4d  |
|                  | 1772                                           | Sallerys (sic) to officers and foresters                                              | £46.3s.8d   |
| CR8/58           | 17/12/1774                                     | Peter Thomson rooting out and crosscutting fir in the Old Wood and trenching in parts | £30.1s.6d   |
|                  | 14/2/1775-1778                                 | Rooting out trees                                                                     |             |
|                  | 22/11/1776                                     | John Taylor rooting out firs above the kennel                                         | £7.7s.1d    |
|                  | 22/1/1779                                      | Gathering 19 bolls of fir cones                                                       |             |
| CR8/465          | <b>Enzie Factory A/C crop</b>                  |                                                                                       |             |
|                  | 13/11/1930                                     | John Thomson carting cones to the nursery                                             | 13s         |
|                  | 11/12/1930                                     | Wm Allan carting plants for the nursery                                               | £4          |
|                  | 8/1/1931                                       | John Thomson carting plants for the nursery                                           | £1.2s.6d    |
|                  | 5/2/1931                                       | Wm Allan carting plants for the nursery                                               |             |
|                  | March & April                                  |                                                                                       |             |
|                  | Dec 1930-31                                    | Wages of boys gathering cones                                                         |             |
|                  | <b>Wet Letter Books</b>                        |                                                                                       |             |
|                  | 5/9/1930                                       | FC grant aid for planting 130 acres                                                   |             |
|                  | 23/6/1931                                      | FC grant aid for planting 85 acres                                                    |             |

## **Notes on the Origin of Old Scots Pine at Whiteash Hill Wood, Speymouth**

At the summit of Whiteash Hill (OS Grid Ref: NJ375578), part of Speymouth Forest managed by Forest Enterprise, there are five small scattered areas of old Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris* L.). Elevation is 250 m, very exposed from the north with a podzol and strong iron-pan soil overlying middle old red sandstone. The average age (from core samples) is 107.5 years, the samples being taken from eight trees with a range of 67 to 125 years.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of these trees is the extremely poor form with some of the stems forming, what can only be described, as a complete circle in the lower stem. The form of many individuals in area 4, in particular, is very bad with heights of up to nine meters. In many cases there are multiple stems from below ground level suggesting clumps of natural regeneration, which raises the question of origin. Where did these trees derive from, were they part of the 1762 planting carried out by Gordon Castle Estate (Phillips, 1996) or did they subsequently arise from the Ancient Forest of Enzie (Phillips, 2000)? Site vegetation is typical of a native pinewood which in itself strongly suggests a long association with Scots pine.

Tuley and Phillips (2000) suggested various conservation factors thought to be of importance within the overall management of the commercial conifers in the Whiteash Hill area. These areas have been written into the F E Management Plans and will be retained as part of a conservation element so that they will be preserved, at least in an historical sense, though their scientific value cannot, as yet, be ruled out.

Terpene analysis to gauge possible similarities within the native pine zones criterion would be useful. Similar work has been undertaken at Elchies forest (above Archiestown) on 107 year old Scots pine and peat eroded pine stumps, the latter being radio carbon dated at 6000 years (Phillips, 2000). However, correspondence with Dr Ian Forrest regarding the 1762 and 1930 plantings on the lower reaches of Whiteash Hill indicate the difficulties and values of a biochemical Terpene analysis:

“it would not determine whether either population is native to Scotland since there are no known native markers, and neither would it determine with certainty their “biochemical regions”, it would simply indicate to which of these regions they showed the greatest similarity. We would be able to state with some confidence whether or not they belonged to either of the Exclusion Zones in the west; but the variation within the remaining regions is very very great, and the subtle differences between these regions which came out of the original analysis many years ago have doubtless changed over time as a result of gene-flow, genetic drift, and other processes, and it is impossible to produce completely reliable population markers using biparentally inherited components such as terpenes”.

Whilst the basic ground research is ongoing from personal interest it undoubtedly could be furthered as a scientific (university) study on the whole question of 'origin' of Scots pine as applied to this part of the north east Grampian area.

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