

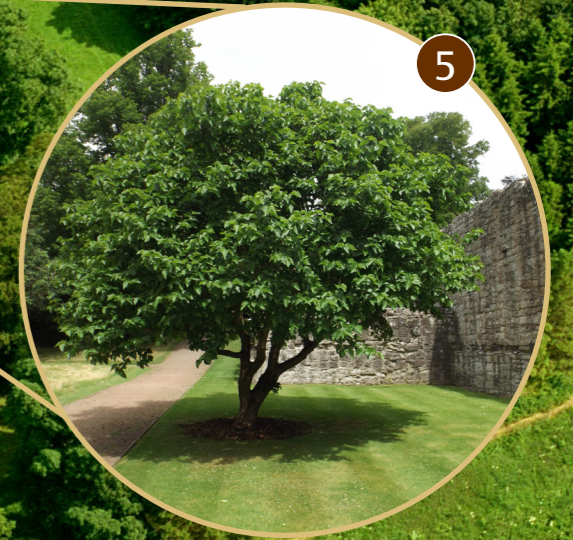


HISTORIC SCOTLAND
ALBA AOSMHOR

Dryburgh House,
home of the
Earl of Buchan

THE TREES OF DRYBURGH ABBEY

The beautiful and tranquil landscape that surrounds the abbey today is the result of one man's vision. David Stuart Erskine, 11th Earl of Buchan, enhanced this romantic landscape by planting exotic parkland trees. The spectacular tree specimens tell some of Buchan's colourful story as well as stories of their own.



 Visitor
information

River Tweed

Buchan began landscaping the estate and planting exotic trees in the 1700s. This work was continued and enhanced by his successors.

His ability to use his land for pleasure, rather than for making money, would have been seen as a status symbol. The prestige was enhanced by the planting of unusual or exotic species.

Buchan's planting project was an investment in the future: he himself would never see the full majesty of the established trees.

1 ATLAS CEDAR (*Cedrus atlantica*)

Native to the Atlas mountains of North Africa, the Atlas cedar is hardy: it grows at altitudes of up to 3,000m, and is well suited to the Scottish climate.

Introduced in the 1840s, these trees postdate the original planting, but they continue the tradition of 'showing off'. For the Earl of Buchan, planting recently introduced species that were rare and expensive was a display of wealth.

2 GIANT SEQUOIA (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)

This giant is the tallest tree at Dryburgh. However, compared to sequoias in its native California it is still quite small.

These colossal trees were vital in raising the profile of conservation globally and helped lead to the creation of the National Parks in the USA.

3 STUMP OF CEDAR OF LEBANON (*Cedrus libani*)

The trees that surround the abbey are monitored and tended to maintain the striking look of Erskine's romantic vision.

This cedar was felled in 2015 due to a fungal infection in its roots. Seeds have been taken from existing trees and propagated by Historic Scotland to ensure replacement specimens share the same genetic code as the originals.

4 DRYBURGH YEW (*Taxus baccata*)

This tree was reputedly planted here by monks in 1136 – making it older than the abbey itself. Due to their growing habits, yew trees are difficult to age. However, based on historical records, it seems possible that this specimen is the original.

Yews are often found on old religious sites and graveyards. Their longevity may represent eternal life; their poisonous berries may be considered a symbol of death.

The oldest yew tree in the UK (and the oldest living thing in Europe) is the Fortingal Yew in Perthshire – estimated to be 5,000 years old.

Yew trees have been used for medical purposes throughout history. The anti-cancer drug, Taxol, is synthesised from yew bark.

5 BLACK MULBERRY TREE (*Morus nigra*)

Varieties of mulberry are found all over the world and have many uses, such as making medicines as well as food products like jams and sherbets.

Mulberries were first brought to Britain in significant numbers in the 1600s. The mulberry is the foodstuff of silkworms and as such was cultivated in an attempt to produce the valuable fabric silk. Efforts failed chiefly due to the planting of black mulberries rather than the white variety (*Morus alba*) preferred by silkworms.

6 TIBETAN CHERRY (*Prunus serrala*)

As the fashion for landscaped gardens increased so did the desire for unusual and exotic plant species.

The plant hunters of the 1700s and 1800s risked life and limb to explore the globe and bring unusual and striking plants home.

The beautiful Tibetan cherry was introduced to Europe by the plant hunter Ernest Wilson in 1908. During an expedition to China, Wilson narrowly escaped death in a rockfall, sustaining a broken leg in the process. He resourcefully used his camera tripod as a splint!

7 BEECH (*Fagus sylvatica*)

This tree – or rather what remains of it – was one of Buchan's original plantings. The crown was removed for safety after the tree was damaged in high winds. The standing bole was retained and is now a fantastic example of biodiversity, providing a home for a variety of plants, fungi and animals. Nearly half of all species found in woodland actually live in and around deadwood.

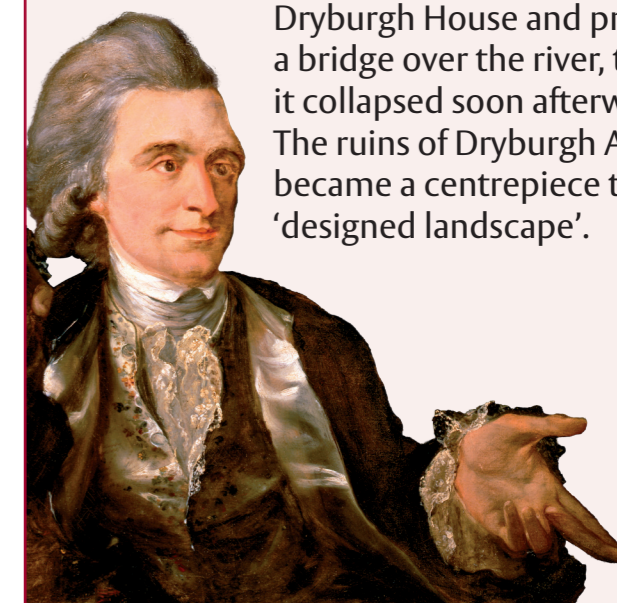
A PIONEER PLANTER

DAVID STEUART ERSKINE,
11TH EARL OF BUCHAN
(1742–1829)

Buchan bought the abbey and the surrounding estate in the 1780s and took up residence in nearby Dryburgh House. He had founded the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1780, and later corresponded with George Washington, first president of the USA.

Not content with planting around the abbey, Buchan extended his influence over the surrounding valley. He commissioned the neo-Grecian Temple of the Nine Graces and Scotland's first statue of William Wallace, overlooking the valley. He also re-developed

Dryburgh House and provided a bridge over the river, though it collapsed soon afterwards. The ruins of Dryburgh Abbey became a centrepiece to this 'designed landscape'.



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