The Southern Upland Way
tree & shrub guide
Whether you are walking the whole length of the Southern Upland Way or just out for a short part of it, we would encourage you to look around at the trees and shrubs beside you. Some species are newly planted while others are hundreds of years old; some are associated with intriguing folk tales; some originate from distant parts of the world; but all of them contribute to the ever changing landscape and natural history interest of the Way. This leaflet highlights the most notable trees and shrubs that you will encounter.
1 Portpatrick to Castle Kennedy

Juniper *Juniperus communis* is a low growing conifer with small berries that are used to give gin its distinctive flavour. It is quite scarce in Southern Scotland except on the coast of the Rhins and a few other sites. Two or three juniper bushes grow to the right of the first finger post, about 6 or 7 metres up the cliff face. It was once more widespread but has declined due to grazing pressure and land improvements. You won’t see any more bushes along the Way until you get to the Scottish Borders.

Along the cliffs between Portpatrick and Port Mora there is plenty of Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. Its brilliant yellow flowers are strong smelling and at any time of year there are always some bushes in flower – hence the saying that kissing is out of fashion when gorse isn’t flowering! It used to be cut for fuel, especially for baking ovens.

**Fuchsia** *Fuchsia magellanica* grows wild in the hedges leading from Broad Moor down towards Spout Wells. This shrub, with its attractive pendulous red flowers, is an introduced species that only survives here because frosts are so rare near the coast.

2 Castle Kennedy Gardens

Many exotic trees grow in the gardens. In spring look out for the outstanding display of colours from Azaleas and Rhododendrons. If you pay to go into the gardens you will see the old Monkey Puzzle Avenue that leads from the lily pond to Lochinch Castle. **Monkey Puzzle** trees originate from South America and are also known as Chile Pine *Araucaria araucana*.
This is the first of several large commercial forestry plantations along the Way. Glenwhan was first planted in the 1960s and some of this crop has now been harvested. Here and elsewhere in Southern Scotland Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* is the predominant species. Originally from the Pacific northwest coast of North America, and named after the Alaskan island of Sitka, it is highly prized by the paper industry.

On the slope down towards Craig Burn bridge there are some Western Hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla*, a species that casts very dense shade, planted because the Forestry Commission thought there might be a commercial use for it – but there isn’t. In this vicinity there are also some tall Larch *Larix*, a deciduous conifer that casts only light shade. They provide a splash of light green colour to the forests in early spring and are a rich golden brown in the autumn, until the needles are shed. Most planted larches are hybrids of European and Japanese Larch.

Did you notice the small bushes of Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* near the western entrance to the forest? The leaves have a pleasant smell to humans but not to insects. They were once added to mattresses to keep fleas away and they can also be used to keep midges at bay. You will see Bog Myrtle in many places along the route, especially along the Water of Trool.

The scrubby Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* beside the Way are an under-rated but important wildlife habitat for a variety of insects and several species of small breeding birds. The berries are an important winter food source for Redwings, Fieldfares, Mistle Thrushes and Blackbirds.
5 Laggangarn to Wells of the Rees

After crossing the Tarf Water, heading east for 400m, look out for a small number of Noble Fir *Abies procera*, with silver grey bark and foliage even more bluish-white than that of Sitka Spruce. They sometimes have large cones (that grow upwards), and the side branches are sometimes pruned to provide foliage for the floral trade. More Noble Firs can be seen on the hairpin bend just before reaching Polskeoch bothy.

6 Loch Ochiltree

Most of Galloway was wooded in times past. Clearance, burning and ceaseless grazing by sheep, cattle, deer, hares and rabbits prevents most natural tree regeneration. The islands in the loch are covered in a mixture of Willows *Salix* because they are relatively inaccessible, perhaps giving a minute example of what the rest of Galloway would look like without man’s influence – pretty dense cover.

7 Garchew

This is the best birch wood on the western section of the Way, mostly Downy Birch *Betula pubescens*, with Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and a variety of willows. Grazing by stock is preventing regeneration; when a tree in this wood dies it is not replaced and the wood may eventually disappear.

8 River Cree, Water of Minnoch & Water of Trool

Some of the conifers along the Cree are Norway Spruce *Picea abies* – a species that is not often planted now – except for Christmas trees. In this vicinity, woodland management along the corridor of the Way is carried out by the Cree Valley Community Woodlands Trust. The Trust is linking the isolated native woodlands along...
the valley by felling and removing thousands of exotic conifers and replacing them with native hardwoods. The Way passes through some of these young woods as well as through magnificent old stands of Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* near the Holm of Bargrennan. Just after crossing the concrete bridge at the Holm there is an exceptionally large Birch tree.

9 Water of Trool
Although *Holly* *Ilex aquifolium* is a feature of the understorey of the Holm of Bargrennan oakwoods these stunted hollies are heavily grazed by deer. A little further east on the more inaccessible banks of the Water of Trool (at NX377782) there is a group of much bigger holly trees, the best examples along the Way, many of them producing their familiar red berries in autumn. Trees can be either male or female, only the latter have berries.

10 Glentrool Oakwood SSSI

The oak woodlands around Caldons, and on the north of the loch below and to the east of Bruce’s Stone, are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. These Sessile Oaks are important remnants of the once extensive broadleaf woodlands of the Galloway hills, and are noted for their lichen communities, insects and breeding birds.

11 Loch Trool
Conifer species to look out for on the south side of the loch are the old *Scots Pines* *Pinus sylvestris* and *larches* that were planted in the 1800s on the first hill to the east of Caldons. Just downhill from the pines are three huge specimens of *Grand Fir* *Abies grandis* (the Way goes right past them). Further along, and much harder to find, is a single young *Coast Redwood* *Sequoia sempervirens* to the right of the path, on the edge of a larger stand of other conifers, planted around 1956. At the east end of the loch, look out for more *Scots Pines* that date back before 1900. There is a large old *Yew* *Taxus baccata* in front of Glenhead cottage.
12 **Loch Dee and Clatteringshaws Area**
In the 1970s *Sitka Spruce* were planted high on the slopes of the Rhinns of Kells to see if they would come to anything – they didn’t.

13 **Hannaston Wood SSSI, Garroch Glen**
Hannaston Wood is a fine example of mixed deciduous woodland, with a diverse ground flora including some species indicative of ancient woodland. Many of the trees are *Sessile Oak* that in summer are host to breeding Wood Warblers, Pied Flycatchers, Redstarts and Nuthatches.

14 **Dalry Churchyard**
Yews have been planted in churchyards from earliest times but are not thought to be native to Southern Scotland, the northern limit being Cumbria. They can be very long-lived but the ones here are relatively young. The driveway to the church has a splendid avenue of *limes Tilia* planted in 1828.

15 **Butterhole Bridge**
There is a fine old *Ash Fraxinus excelsior* on the east side of the road, just where the Way cuts across to Culmark. This species is often the first to lose its leaves in the autumn and the last to get them in the spring – many Ash trees in the uplands are not fully in leaf until mid June.

16 **Stroanpatrick**
At Kiln Knowe NX647925 there are the remains of an old farm settlement that was already in ruins in the mid 19th century. The site is marked by a single *Aspen Populus tremula*, a relatively uncommon species in Galloway (there are only a few examples along the whole route). Aspens can reproduce by suckers that sprout up from their lateral roots, but this does not happen at this tree because the shoots are regularly grazed by livestock.

17 **Sanquhar**
There is an avenue of old *Ash* leading from the main road down to the ruins of Sanquhar Castle.
Walking the Southern Upland Way is an unusual botanical experience. One moment you may be wandering through oak woodland or commercial plantation, while later in the day you may be tramping through the Heather with scarcely a tree in site. Sometimes you will be in natural...
settings, at other times you will be among conifers, or in the more formal setting of town or country gardens, where the majority of the trees and shrubs may be from other parts of the world.
18 Wanlockhead

The area around the village is almost treeless; the heather is heavily grazed by sheep as well as being managed by burning for the benefit of Red Grouse.

The cemetery at Meadowfoot is a reminder that trees will grow in these upland areas provided they are protected by enclosures. There are several Yews, Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* and other species inside the walls, all of them now large enough not to be troubled by the sheep that cut the grass. There are several recent tree enclosures within the village.

Don’t forget that the hills here are covered with a dwarf shrub! The Heather *Calluna vulgaris* is managed intensively to create the ideal habitat for Red Grouse: careful burning, each year, of small patches of heather creates a mosaic-type habitat offering young shoots for the birds to feed on and larger plants to shelter and rest among.

19 Brattleburn

On the descent to the bothy and a little further eastwards along the Way there are clumps of Broom *Cytisus scoparius* – its nitrogen fixing root nodules enabling it to grow on the very poorest of soils. It was commonly cut to make brooms, and indeed still can be used to sweep out the bothy in the absence of a brush!

There is a single large Aspen in front of the bothy, dating back to the times when the house was inhabited. The gully further downstream is thickly wooded with Birch, Hazel, Rowan and Hawthorn, many of them festooned with lichens.

20 Holmshaw

Some of the knolls here have mature Birch and Rowan trees but they are slowly dying out.
21 Beattock
The enclosed avenue of trees to the east of the Old Brig Inn provides a stark contrast to the nearby M6: a Beech *Fagus sylvatica* hedge on either side of the Way has grown unchecked since this minor road was closed off in the 1960s.

22 Oak Rig to Drumcrieff
Many of the streamside trees here are Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* - the cherries being not particularly palatable for humans but a great attraction to birds. The dead trees are Wych Elms *Ulmus glabra* that have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease.

23 Drumcrieff
This is the finest Beech wood in Annandale, with many magnificent specimens that are well over 200 years old. The wood is especially beautiful in the spring when the new leaves first appear, and again in autumn when the leaves turn golden brown and yellow. There are also a few large Pedunculate (English) Oaks *Quercus robur* – that have acorns on long stalks.

24 Moffat Water
The parkland by the river includes several Lime *Tilia* trees and a Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*. Notice the distinct browse line about 2 metres high – any vegetation that starts to hang down below that height is quickly nibbled away by livestock.

25 Wamphray Burn
Many of the last trees on the western section of the Way are Lodgepole Pines *Pinus contorta* planted in the 1960s. Poor seed stock was used and the trees did not grow straight, but by then millions had been planted all over Scotland. Many of the pines planted here also suffer from winter snow damage. Lodgepole Pines are often almost worthless and it will be surprising if they are all harvested from these steep-sided slopes. David Douglas, the great 19th century plant hunter, once wrote “Little can be said in favour of this tree either for ornament or as a useful wood.” Even in North America it is notorious for the lack of wildlife it supports. The specific name *contorta* might have been taken as a warning but in fact refers to the twisted nature of its needles.
SITKA SPRUCE - the wonder tree

Berated by conservationists for the blanket coverage that was inflicted upon raised bogs and other important habitats. Berated by path managers (and even at times by foresters) for its spreading side branches and irritating ability to self-seed almost anywhere. But beloved by the forest industry for its long fibres and immense strength-to-weight ratio that makes it ideal for the timber and pulp industry. Love it or loathe it, Sitka Spruce has a thousand uses, and you handle it every day:

All aircraft up to WW II including
The Spruce Goose (one of the largest aeroplanes ever built)
Bat boxes
Bibles
Cheap furniture, such as flat-pack bunk beds
Chip board and panel board
Daily Telegraph
Junk mail
Kitchen Units
Harry Potter books
Model aeroplanes
Pit props (in former times)
Roof trusses
Sterling board
Southern Upland Way leaflets
Toilet paper
Tongue and groove floorboards
26 Blackhouse Tower
There is an impressive specimen of Ash beside the remains of the old tower house. Unfortunately the beautiful large Wych Eims succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease in the late 1990s.

27 Traquair House and Gardens
Reputedly the oldest continuously inhabited house in Scotland, Traquair was traditionally a base for Scottish kings as they hunted in the Ettrick Forest of old. Although there are no formal gardens at Traquair, there are many fine specimen trees. There is also a hedged maze that was planted in 1980 and an old orchard within the walled garden.

28 Kailzie Gardens
A large domestic garden on a grand scale, Kailzie occupies a beautiful position beside the Tweed, 4 miles / 7 kms north-west of Traquair. The fine old Georgian House was demolished in 1962 but is survived by a variety of mature specimen trees. The Kailzie Larch Larix europea, dating from 1725, was a gift to the Laird of Kailzie by his friend Sir James Nasmyth of Posso (near Peebles). Some of these trees stand today and are the oldest specimens in Scotland. Within the walled garden are greenhouses, herbaceous borders, many unusual species of shrubs and an arch of Laburnum Laburnum anagyroides.

29 Gala Policies
New Gala House was built by the Scott family in 1876. Unfortunately the house had to be demolished in 1985. Policies are defined as “the enclosed grounds of a large house, the park of an estate”. As was common with many designed landscapes of that date, Gala policies included many native and foreign tree species, and much of the original planting is still in evidence. The remains of an avenue of Giant Redwoods Sequoiadendron giganteum, natives of North America, can be seen at the entrance next to the swimming pool. These trees have thick spongy bark in which it is possible to see small roosting holes pecked out by Treecreepers. The grounds also contain fine specimens of Douglas Fir Pseudotsuga menziessi, Noble Fir Abies procera and
a **Weeping Ash** *Fraxinus pendula* (just next to the track opposite the site of new Gala House). In the open parkland to the west of the grounds can be seen many fine old specimens of **Sessile Oak**; possibly remnants of the old Ettrick Forest. A separate leaflet describing the policies in more detail may be picked up at Old Gala House museum or Galashiels public library.

### 30 Abbotsford House and Gardens

The gardens and grounds of Abbotsford were designed and laid out by Sir Walter Scott, who built Abbotsford House 1812-1824. There are extensive grounds with spring flowers, **Rhododendrons** and **Azaleas**. The walled gardens contain an **Orangery**, and herbaceous and annual borders. When Sir Walter bought the estate it was practically devoid of trees and shrubs, as was much of the Scottish Borders countryside at that time. We have him to thank for the beautifully landscaped grounds that we can see from “the Spur of Gala Hill” and the mature trees that we walk through along the bank of the Tweed opposite Abbotsford House.

### 31 Melrose

Harmony and Priorwood Gardens are owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland. Harmony Garden has colourful flowerbeds, a vegetable patch and a fruit garden. Priorwood Garden contains an old orchard and superb flowerbeds.

The Nutwood is a small area of woodland, lying between the square and the youth hostel, that contains many mature **Hazel**, as well as **Holly, Yew** and other species. It is likely that the area was first planted with hazel trees by the monks of Melrose Abbey and may have been part of a much larger orchard providing a source of hazelnuts, apples and other fruits which the monks would have stored and eaten over the winter. The monks also reared pigs and so it may have been used to provide food for those animals or to allow the animals to forage for fallen nuts beneath the trees.

Just west of Gattonside Weir, on the north side of the Tweed, there are some fine specimens of **Aspen**, as well as many other mature tree species.
32 Kedslie Hill

Most of the shrubs growing on both sides of the track across Kedslie hill are Gorse. Approximately half way between the two public roads, at NT 535 408, there are two large clumps of Juniper on the right hand side of the track as you walk towards Lauder.

33 Abbey St. Bathans Oakwood SSSI

Much of the charm of the Whiteadder Valley at Abbey St. Bathans is due to the remnants of indigenous Sessile Oak woods that have survived here, clinging to the side of the valley where it was too steep to cultivate. Amenity planting along the banks of the river around Abbey St. Bathans House has added attraction with varieties such as Copper Beech Fagus purpurea, Cypress Chamaecyparis sp., and Gean or Wild Cherry Prunus avium. The latter is a native species much planted in parks and gardens and along streets. The timber is fine-grained and strong with a beautiful colour, but is not very durable. This cherry is used as the rootstock for most other flowering cherries that need to be grafted.

34 Pease Dean Wildlife Reserve SSSI

The Dean below Pease Bridge is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, owned and managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Sessile Oak is the dominant species in the upper Dean along with Ash, Wych Elm, Hazel and other native species. Sycamore, an invasive non-native species, was planted here before the Trust bought the Dean. Some of the mature trees have been felled and natural regeneration of young seedlings is controlled to prevent Sycamore becoming the dominant species. Because the Dean has been almost continually wooded throughout the ages, the ground flora is especially interesting, with many native species including Ramsoms Allium ursinum, Dog’s Mercury Mercurialis perennis, Primrose Primula vulgaris and Red Campion Silene dioica that flower in the spring and early summer.
The Southern Upland Way wends its way from coast to coast across the hills of the Southern Uplands. Additional leaflets in this series include SUW Information, Accommodation, Archaeology, Geology, Place Names, Killing Times, (Covenanter History), Birds in Conifers and Wildlife.

Leaflets and further information about walking the Southern Upland Way can be obtained from:

**Dumfries and Galloway Council Ranger Service**, Militia House, English Street, Dumfries DG1 2HR or

**Scottish Borders Council Ranger Service**, Harestanes Visitor Centre, Ancrum, Jedburgh TD8 6UQ

**Official website** for up to date information: www.dumgal.gov.uk/southernuplandway

The upkeep, development and promotion of the Southern Upland Way is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, Dumfries and Galloway, South Lanarkshire and Scottish Borders Councils.

Photographs by the Countryside Ranger Services
Designed by the Technical Support Team, Planning & Environment, Dumfries and Galloway Council August 2004