

# Tree Pollarding

- The tree planting scheme in Thornhill dates from the 1850s, a gift to the village from the then Duke to mark a family wedding. The original scheme was composed of lime trees and most of the existing trees are still limes, though not all are original.
- The traditional method of managing lime trees in a town or village environment is by pollarding, which is a pruning system in which the upper branches of a tree are periodically removed, promoting a dense head of foliage and branches, primarily to maintain trees at a predetermined height. This prevents the trees reaching a height at which they would become a danger to surrounding buildings.
- Pollarding is supposed to be carried out at intervals of about six years. It is somewhat longer since pollarding was last carried out in Thornhill, but most local residents will recall its being done in the village from time to time during their lifetime. The trees will regrow their foliage and, indeed, their longevity is assured by the practice of pollarding, which can only be carried out during certain seasons of the year.
- Many local residents have been contacting the Community Council and, we believe, Buccleuch Estates, over the past few years, urging that the trees were long overdue for pollarding. Historically, Buccleuch Estates have borne most of the cost of this work but there has been recent debate as to whether they would be able to continue to do so, or whether alternative sources of funding for tree maintenance would need to be found. On this occasion, in any event, Buccleuch Estates are paying for the work, as well as organising it.
- There is some confusion, locally, as to ownership of individual trees. The contractor, Richard Gauld, was anxious that the position should be clarified as far as possible before work commenced. To that end, the Community Council was asked to contact all those whose property had a tree directly in front of it, and to enquire, firstly, whether they *thought* they, or the property owner, in the case of tenants, owned the tree or not and, secondly, if, whether they thought they owned the tree or not, they were happy for it to be pollarded. This enquiry was carried out and the owners or occupiers of all these properties (except in a small handful of cases, where the owner/occupier could not be traced, or could not be contacted) agreed to the work being carried out. Most of those spoken to were of the view that 'their' tree belonged to Buccleuch Estates and all, in any case, agreed to the work, provided they were kept free of expense. Most, further, indicated that it was high time something was done and cited problems with sap, bird mess and the like dropping on cars, windows etc.
- The discussion, preparation and enquiry for and about the pollarding work has been going on for more than a year, as is recorded in the Community Council's Minutes, which are published both in Thornhill Library and online ([www.visitthornhill.co.uk/community-council](http://www.visitthornhill.co.uk/community-council)) and 'Digests' of these are also published online and in the Community Council noticeboard. The Community Council's regular meetings (7.15pm on the third Monday of the month at the Friendship Club, West Morton Street, Thornhill, except July, August and December) are open to the public and are regularly attended by three out of four of our local councillors, (the fourth having a regular commitment to another Community Council, which meets on the same pattern as we do). No enquiries about the proposed pollarding were raised (other than as mentioned

above) with the Community Council by anyone, or, so far as we know, with Buccleuch Estates.

- It will be noted that the Gala Committee has not commented on the pollarding, as they were aware that the work was to take place (indeed there are Members of the Gala Committee on the Community Council), have accepted that it had to be done and merely stipulated (see Minutes) that West Morton Street should be done first, to be sure that this main focus of Gala activity would be sure to be completed before the Gala was due to take place. Had the work been postponed until after the Gala, the problem of the Tattoo planned for September would have arisen in its place, and so on.
- Finally, there seems to be the question of whether the pollarding might have been 'overdone'. No member of the Community Council pretends to expertise on trees. Advice was taken by Buccleuch Estates, both from their own in-house professionals, as well as from the respected local contractor who is carrying out the work, and also from Dumfries & Galloway Council's Planning Department, who had to grant consent before work could start. The Community Council feels that the best available advice and expertise has been sought and followed and, although the village may look less attractive at present, the right course of action has been taken for the long-term appearance and appeal of Thornhill.

Thornhill Community Council  
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