



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

The value of national dendro meetings: By participants of the 2017 UK Dendro Meeting

Ulf Buentgen (2018). The value of national dendro meetings: By participants of the 2017 UK Dendro Meeting. *Dendrochronologia*, 48, 30-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dendro.2018.01.003>

Published in:
Dendrochronologia

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

Publisher rights

Copyright 2018 Elsevier.

This manuscript is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits distribution and reproduction for non-commercial purposes, provided the author and source are cited.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.

Open Access

This research has been made openly available by Queen's academics and its Open Research team. We would love to hear how access to this research benefits you. – Share your feedback with us: <http://go.qub.ac.uk/oa-feedback>

1 **The value of national dendro meetings**

2
3 On behalf of the UK dendro-community

4
5 For submission as a short '*Communication*' article to *Dendrochronologia*, 18 December 2017

6
7 From the 4–5 of December 2017, the first United Kingdom-wide dendro meeting was held
8 at the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, attracting 28 participants. The goal
9 was to gather as many as possible of the UK's dendrochronologists for a day of discussion and
10 familiarization. With talks covering a variety of topics – from archaeological dating, to the
11 highly technical and exacting analysis of annually resolved, isotopic concentrations in tree rings
12 – the meeting provided a unique opportunity for participant exposure to the diverse ways in
13 which different tree-ring data and techniques are used; as well as the breadth of
14 dendrochronological expertise that currently exists in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and
15 Wales. By the end of the day, all agreed the meeting positively contributed towards bringing
16 the UK dendro-community closer together, and welcomed the suggestion of convening more
17 regularly.

18 Today, UK dendrochronologists are nearly equally divided amongst private practitioners
19 using tree-ring measurements for archaeological and historical dating, and those affiliated with
20 academic institutions using dendrochronological data and methods in various aspects of
21 archaeology, climatology and ecology. In addition, the dendrochronological challenges have
22 changed. As archaeologists and historians delve into more exotic and rare material, of disparate
23 provenance, and researchers develop improved analyses and reconstructions of greater spatial
24 and temporal extent, more than ever before there are opportunities for collaborations of
25 significant mutual benefit.

26 Like many countries, public and private support for tree-ring research in the UK, whether
27 for climate reconstructions or construction histories, is becoming decisively more challenging
28 to obtain. In response to this changing environment, underlying much of our discussion, were
29 steps we as a “national group” could take to be more collaborative to make proposals more
30 competitive. Amongst the many suggestions there was agreement to create a national protocol
31 for the conservation of samples and their measurements – be it jointly or independently – as
32 well as a practice for objective, peer-to-peer, review of cross-dated measurements. That such a
33 suggestion would come up in a group of high intra-discipline diversity is testament to how
34 familiar the UK’s dendro-community has become, not only with the material they work with,
35 but amongst themselves as well. The archiving of data serves the purpose of long-term security
36 and provision for the next generation of dendrochronologists. Both, physical and digital
37 archives, housed in an agency chartered to protect natural and historic environments, as well as
38 the intellectual property of contributors in perpetuity, would be acceptable to the majority, if
39 not all of the participants.

40 One of the more pressing topics that came up at this meeting was the future fate of UK
41 dendro-archaeology and -history, in particular how existing expertise and materials will be
42 passed to the next generation. Coincidentally, the situation in the UK is not unique. In many
43 European countries, prominent dendrochronologists, who started their careers and businesses
44 some 40 years ago, are also approaching retirement. It was suggested increased collaboration
45 with academia, with its educational mandate and relative immutability, be considered a valuable
46 asset for attracting and training the next generation of “us”. The inclusion of applied
47 dendrochronology in UK curricula, with elements that include participation by the private
48 sector, museums, and dating services, and the creation of mentoring partnerships amongst these
49 associates, would benefit both the professional and academic branches of our discipline,
50 increase public awareness, and raise the status of dendrochronology in the UK as a whole.

51 Given that most national funding agencies operate in conjunction with their national
52 educational systems, initiatives that address a perceived loss in national expertise could be a
53 positive attraction.

54 This first UK dendro meeting was warmly received and gathered groups and individuals
55 who otherwise rarely meet. As a result of having the occasion and time for extensive
56 discussions, the meeting offered participants a rare opportunity to explore novel collaborations
57 and create supportive channels of communication between those who know each other less
58 well. The meeting further improved professional courtesy and respect amongst its 28
59 participants from 18 different institutions. From the response of this initial event we envision
60 similar meetings in other countries would be equally well received. We propose this type of
61 meeting be a complement, rather than an alternative, to international conferences such as
62 TRACE, Euro- and WorldDendro that draw a more international attendance and often have a
63 more topical prospectus. We believe national meetings should be as inclusive as possible, and
64 that they contribute towards increasing the visibility of dendrochronology.

65 In closing we wish to express our deepest regret and sorrow over the recent loss of one of
66 the World's greatest dendrochronologists: Professor Keith Briffa. Many more pages than
67 afforded here would be needed to only summarize Keith's contributions to our discipline. As a
68 scientist, friend, and avid supporter of tree-ring research in the UK and abroad, Keith's lovely
69 British-wit and scientific brilliance will be sorely missed.

70

71



72

73 *Neil Loader, Rob Wilson, Coralie Mills, Annemarie Eckes, Martin Bridge, Ulf Büntgen,*
74 *Rachael Turton, Tom Melvin, Paul J Krusic, Fredrik C Ljungqvist, Mary Gagen, Alison Arnold,*
75 *Alma Piermattei, Robert Howard, Tim Osborn, David Brown, Roderick Bale, Giles Young,*
76 *Mike Baillie, Andrew Martin, Ross Cook, Anne Crone, Iain Robertson, Cathy Tyres, Nigel*
77 *Nayling, and Dan Miles (from left to right), representing the UK dendro-community at its*
78 *meeting held at Cambridge's Department of Geography, 4–5th December 2017.*