

Summary

Oak timbers from two buildings in St Andrews have been subjected to recent dendrochronological analysis, and provide interesting comparisons with earlier work undertaken by Professor Baillie at a third building in St Andrews. The most extensive study is for St John's House, South Street, where a master chronology has been dated to AD 1072 to 1248. Sapwood on two timbers indicated that they were felled within the period AD 1249 to 1289. This is much older than the known date of St John's House, and indicates re-use of timber from an earlier structure. Similarly, earlier timbers have also been identified in the 16th century building known as Queen Mary's House, also in South Street (Baillie 1995, 132). However, the source of the St John's House timbers is most probably Scotland while the Queen Mary's House timbers are an example of early import from the eastern Baltic (ibid, 132). Analysis of a single oak timber from the Old Students' Union in North Street proved it to be western Baltic in origin, and it represents a later period of building activity, having been felled in AD 1521.

Given that two of the three St Andrews buildings analysed so far have revealed this interesting story of re-use of earlier timbers, there is a strong possibility that the ghost of the early town survives in many of the later structures. There is also great potential for a diverse range of native and imported timbers to be represented, and therefore the historic buildings in St Andrews must be regarded as a very important dendrochronological resource for Scotland.

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