

A study of practical pollarding techniques in northern Europe

**Report of a three month study tour
August to November 2003**

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‘Most of the human-induced and human dependent vegetation types are under great pressure from extensive encroachment and disuse, vanishing due to inexperience to maintain and preserve them’

Ingvild Austad

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Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Contents	iii
Introduction	viii
Norway	1
Havråtunet	
Mundesheim	
Stekka Nature Reserve	
Grinde	
Pollards in the area restored in the research project	
Traditional pollard management on the farm	
The practicalities of pollarding	
Making bundles of leaves	
Restoration work	
Research on the production of the wooded meadows at Grinde	
Tussvik and Tenndalen, Sognefjord	
Kussalid (and discussion with farmer Kare Solhaug)	
Description of tree pollard management	
Modern use of dried leaves as fodder	
Research on the use of dried leaves as sheep fodder	
Between Skei and Lunde	
Lærdal	
Galdane	
Loi (Luster)	
More information in traditional cutting of trees in Norway	
Types of human induced vegetation types	
The survey project	
Summary – Norway	
General points and lessons learnt	
Norwegian terms	
Sweden	27
Some general notes on farming systems in Sweden	
Historical management of oak trees	
Swedish wooded meadows	
Management of tree for leaf fodder	
Abandonment of pollarding	
Sites in Småland (with Jan Karlsson)	
Målaskogberg	
Rashult (Linneaus' house)	
Sjösåsäng	
Skäraskog	
Sites in Blekinge	
Ire	

Steneryd	
Sites in Småland	
Krokshult	
Conversation with Ivar Andersson	
Brabo	
Misterfalls äng	
Botkyrka Parish (with Håkan Slotte)	
Sturehof Castle	
Notes from Hakan	
Ekholmen	
Uppsala area	
Kungshamn-Morga	
Krusenberg	
General comments on pollarding in Sweden	
Notes from people met	
Incentives for pollarding	
Numbers of pollards	
Summary – Sweden	
General points and lessons learnt	
Swedish terms	
Åland Islands	54
General comments on pollarding in the Åland Islands	
Historical information about pollarding	
Management of wooded meadows	
Traditional management of wooded meadows (based on Nåtö)	
Restoration of wooded meadows	
Recent work on pollards	
Number of pollards	
General comments on pollarding and practical demonstration	
Nåtö	
Järsö	
<i>Picea abies</i> forest	
Brämbolstad	
Kulla Tallen	
Espholm	
Ramsholmen	
Gotby/Brändö junction	
Ekerö	
Marja Häggblom's sheep pasture	
B. Häggblom's land	
Skarpnåtö	
Strömman	
Selskar Island	
Summary – Åland Islands	

Romania	75
Maramureş area	
Botiza	
Comments from Slotte 2002	
Valley beyond Poienile Izei	
Ruscova Valley	
Viseu river valley	
Prahova County, Wallachia	
Brebu	
Forestry system	
<i>Salix</i> pollards	
Road to Talea	
<i>Salix</i> pollard	
<i>Fagus</i> pollards	
Pasture/hay meadows	
Transylvania	
Poiana Mărului	
Metes	
Izoru Ampoiului	
Summary and additional comments	
Additional comments on the agricultural systems	
Horses	
Work in the fields	
Comments from others about Romania	
Why shred trees?	
Romanian terms	
Take home messages	
Questions we couldn't answer	
Hungary	99
Kiskunság National Park	
General information	
Woodland and forestry	
Grazing	
<i>Salix</i> and <i>Populus</i> pollards	
Ópusztazer – New tree planting	
Ópusztazer – Mulberry pollards	
Fejer County	
Iszkaszentgyorgy	
Alcsutdoboz	
The Balcony Mountains	
Olazsfalu – North of village	
Olazsfalu – South of village	
Zirc to Pénteszgyőr	
Pénteszgyőr	
Hárskút	

Nyirád	
Summary	
Hungarian terms	
General comments about pollarding	
Austria	117
Zillertal Valley	
Finkensberg – Picea abies shredding	
Native tree species	
Pollards in Austria	
Brandberg Parish	
Kaarwendel Alpen Park	
Summary	
Austrian terms	
Comments about traditional agricultural methods	
Comments about forestry	
France	131
Boursay (Loir et Cher)	
Around Gacé (Orne)	
Coulmer Village and Osmoderma	
Discussion with farmer	
Cisal St. Aubin	
Limousin area	
Pays Basques	
Historical information	
Fôrest de Sare	
Fôrest de St. Pée	
Summary	
French/French Basque terms	
Spain	150
Bosque del Irati	
Gistain Valley (Aragon)	
Leitza Commune (Navarra)	
Aiako Harria Natural Park (Gipuzkoa)	
Oianleku	
Artikutza	
Take home messages	
Sierra Urbassa Natural Park (Navarra)	
Ermita de Aitxiber (Navarra)	
Goñi (Navarra)	
Historical aspects of pollarding in Basque region	
Methods of pollarding	
Ship building	
Decline of pollarding	

Orgi (Navarra)	
Picos de Europa	
Parque Natural de Somiedo (Asturias)	
Day with Alfonso	
Woodland of Vildeu	
Local breeds of farm livestock	
Summary	
Spanish terms	
<i>Fagus</i> pollards in Spain	
Comments about countries not visited	195
Compilation of comments on pollarding	197
Arboricultural notes on pollarding practices seen and described	209
Final discussion and conclusions	214
Glossary	220
Bibliography	222

Introduction

This report has been produced as a result of a three month study tour, the main aim of which was to find out more about pollarding techniques in different European countries. 11 countries and some 75 sites were visited but inevitably it just provides a snap shot view. Others, notably Carl-Adam Hæggröm and Håkan Slotte have also looked at pollarding across Europe but their reports have tended to look at a smaller range of places in more detail. In addition, much of their work is not published in English. I hope that this report provides an overview of the status of pollards in Northern Europe and helps to put the work in the UK in perspective. It does of course have many shortcomings, some of which are listed below:

- ◆ I concentrated my visits to places where pollarding had taken place on species of tree that are native to the UK. This limited my travel to northern Europe but the area was not defined by any method other than tree species.
- ◆ I was particularly interested in *Fagus sylvatica* so this also influenced the sites visited, especially in those countries where *Fagus* has been pollarded.
- ◆ Generally I searched for pollards of deciduous species native to Britain.
- ◆ Willow & poplar pollards were not generally included except in a couple of places which were particularly interesting (Hungary) or discovered incidentally (Romania).
- ◆ I visited places that I had either been told had pollards or had previously read about. Rarely did I actually search for trees.
- ◆ Pollarding is not an easy concept to explain to people when the local term is not known (or where there is not one). In many instances I was reliant on a local contact or contacts to help locate suitable sites for me to visit and in general this worked remarkably well. However, in Romania this was a problem and led to serious shortcomings in terms of the knowledge gained about pollarding here.
- ◆ The choice of places to visit was biased by the knowledge of the people I made contact with and their understanding of what I wanted to see as well as my prior knowledge. I hope that they were representative of sites with pollarding in the various countries but this might not always have been the case.
- ◆ A few places were visited for reasons other than the pollards, for example because they had notable old trees or interesting examples of interpretation, but generally this was unusual and by far the majority of the sites did have pollards.
- ◆ The knowledge gleaned did depend on the language skills of the people I met and my ability to understand them. Inevitably this was variable!
- ◆ I am aware that there are some countries I did not visit that are omitted from this review, notably Bulgaria and Italy. In three months it was not possible to do everything so I concentrated on places where I had contacts and/or could travel easily.
- ◆ Some countries visited (notably France and Spain) certainly have more regions where pollards occur that may be different to those that I was able to visit in the time.
- ◆ The original intention was to carry out more quantitative work, measuring various aspects of the trees. It quickly became evident that this was not realistic as the trees occurred in an almost infinite number of situations and of course the tree species was also variable. Also, lack of time would have made it unrealistic to both do this and talk to the owner/managers of the sites. However, the people I met hold a wealth of

information and I hope that this report will tap a little of their knowledge and also assist people to find relevant publications.

- ◆ I have tried to check as much of the information as possible but all mistakes in understanding are my own!
- ◆ Inevitably there will be places that readers will know of that I did not visit.

Comments made under the descriptions of the sites are usually the views of the people I met but sometimes I have expressed opinions and hopefully clear which are my views.

This report has been substantially longer in gestation than I anticipated and inevitably more knowledge has been gained and some situations have moved on. In general I have not updated the report with extra sites and detailed information unless it would have been misleading not to have done. I also hoped that the report would have been properly edited and formally laid out, but eventually it seemed more important to make it available even though it might not look very professional. I hope that the result is interesting and readable.

Notes on the bibliography

The list of references is not intended to be a complete bibliography of published material on pollarding. Those listed are given because they provide more information about the case studies described by my site visits or about pollarding in the country concerned. I have also included a few review documents and some UK papers to help the reader to access published material in this country.