



Tree: Heather, Celtic: Ur, Gaelic: Fraoch

Made By :Black Isle Writers Group

Location: Bird hide in car park overlooking
Munlochy Bay, Munlochy



The Celts believed heather to have healing properties and to be a great cleansing agent, breaking up blockages in the body. It was also used for making brooms, a further link to cleansing, cleaning and purity.

Heather's totem creature, the bee, was believed to carry messages between this world and the next. At the top of the mosaic two bees can be seen flying off to the heavens.

The image in the centre of the panel shows the summer solstice complete with standing stone and setting sun, summer being the time when heather is in full flower blanketing hills and moors in rich purple.

Heather was also used for making mead so it's no surprise that romance, intoxication and attraction are also associated with it.

Although there is none of the moorland most associated with an abundance of heather on the Black Isle, patches can be found growing in much of the local woodland.



Tree: Pine, Celtic: Ailim, Gaelic: Giuthas

Made by: Avoch Primary School

Location: Avoch Primary School, Avoch



The Scots Pine is an iconic tree of Scotland and the Caledonian Pine forest in the Highlands is the only remaining true pine forest in Britain.

Scots pine trees usually live for around 200 years but the oldest recorded specimen was 700 years old. Its thick tough bark with flakey coppery orange near the top of the trunk make it easy to recognise. Finches love the seeds of the Scots pine and are often to be found in pine forests. Owls nest in these trees so Avoch Primary School have included owls on their mosaic.

The Celts used the resin produced by Scots pine trees to make torches and it was known as the fire tree. The trees were also used to create huge bonfires at the winter solstice to celebrate the passing of the seasons when glades of pine would be decorated with lights and shiny objects as can be seen on the trees in this mosaic.

The Celts also used pine trees to mark important burial sites of warriors, chiefs and heroes, linking the trees with reverence and remembrance.

B

Tree: Birch, Celtic: Beith, Gaelic: Beithe

Made By: Fortrose Academy 4th yr ASDAN Group

Location: Fortrose Academy Main Entrance, Fortrose



Birch is a pioneer tree, the first to colonise the wilderness. It can be seen growing all over the Black Isle, often in areas where woodland has been felled. To the Celts it signified beginnings and had links to fertility. The Gaelic name for Birch, Beithe, also means inception or beginning.

Known as the 'Lady of the Woods', birch, is one of the first to come into leaf in spring. Its dainty leaves and open canopy make the earth beneath birch trees welcoming to other vegetation. In the autumn its tiny leaves turn a beautiful golden yellow.

Birch wood is tough and flexible, it burns well and makes useful kindling. The distinctive silvery white bark of the birch has been used as parchment and for dressings, whilst birch sap, collected in the spring, has uses including the treatment of kidney stones or bladder problems and the making of beer, wine and vinegar.

The sun features quite strongly in the mosaic because Birch is associated with the sun, passion, energy and growth as well as renewal. All lovely qualities to link to the young people at the Academy.

T

Tree: Holly, Celtic: Tinne, Gaelic: Cuileann

Made By: Culbokie Out of School Summer Club

Location: Culbokie Church Centre, Culbokie



Holly was seen as King of the Wintertime during Celtic times. Its Celtic name means sacred tree and is also the Celtic word for fire. The wood of the holly tree creates a fierce fire, and the word "tinder" relating to kindling fires is derived from this Celtic word.

Its dark green prickly leaves and bright red berries that provide a valuable food source for birds make it easily recognisable.

The Celtic people associated holly with courage and male energy, vitality and strength. The totem bird for holly is the Robin as depicted on Culbokie Out of School Club's design.

Tree: Blackthorn, Celtic: Straif, Gaelic: Draighiann

Made By: Culbokie Youth

Location: Findon Hall, Culbokie



In Celtic folklore the Blackthorn tree is associated with darkness, the unknown and the mysterious. In Scotland it is said that the winter begins when the goddess of winter, Cailleach, strikes the ground with her Blackthorn staff.

Blackthorn is one of the few trees that blossoms before it produces leaves, with an often abundant display of tiny white flowers showing up in stark contrast against its dark branches and long thorns. Blackthorn trees fruit in the autumn bearing sloes, which are at their best after a hard frost and are traditionally used for flavouring gin.

The Celtic people understood from this that blessings come after a challenge, and it was thought that Blackthorn gave the strength to accept and persevere in the face of adversity.

Blackthorn is found all over the Black Isle and is common in hedgerows as its dense habit and sharp thorn-covered branches are ideal for keeping livestock in.

The pupils at Tore Primary School based their design on the Hazel tree and the panels at either side of the design show the leaves, fruit and flowers of the tree. The centre panel features a red squirrel, hazel nuts being a favourite food source for these delightful but shy animals, which can be seen in woodland across the Black Isle.

In the top right corner is the Ogham symbol for A. In the centre at the bottom of the design is a salmon which features in a mythical tale where hazelnuts were believed to be the source of great wisdom. The salmon ate hazelnuts that had fallen into its river; it was then caught and eaten by a man who as a result became extremely knowledgeable and wise.

Tree: Hazel, Celtic: Coll, Gaelic: Calltainn

Made By: Tore Primary School

Location: Tore primary School, Tore

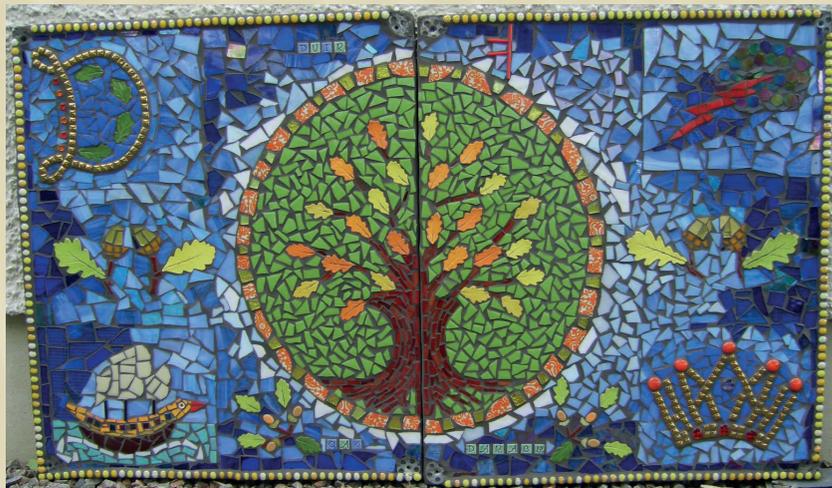


D

Tree: Oak, Celtic: Duir, Gaelic: Darach

Made By: Members of Resolis Friendship Group

Location: Resolis Hall, Resolis, Balblair



The oak was considered a hugely powerful tree amongst the Celts. Its tendency to attract lightning, as depicted in the top right hand corner of the mosaic, and its longevity, make the Oak a powerful and life-affirming symbol. It has associations with strength, stability, loyalty, honour and wisdom.

Considered King of the Trees, it is attractive to a huge range of insects and wildlife, and with its distinctive wavy-edged leaves and acorns in the autumn is one of our most easily identified trees. Oak timber was traditionally used for boat building as illustrated in the bottom left of the mosaic. The Celts believed that door made of oak would keep out evil spirits.

Willow was thought by the Celts to be a very feminine tree; its silvery leaves were associated with the moon, creativity, intuition and emotion. Birds, hares and swans are all totem animals of the willow and two swans can be seen in the mosaic made by Fortrose Academy.

Often found growing by marshland, ponds and rivers, willow trees have a strong connection with water. Willow is able to thrive in extremely challenging environments and can take root from a single branch. This ability to regenerate is demonstrated at several Black Isle primary schools where pupils have created 'living shelters' crafted from willow sticks pushed into the ground and woven together which have taken root and sprouted.

Because of its flexible nature and long slim branches willow is ideal for basket making and fencing whilst willow charcoal is the best for drawing. The tree also has medical properties with the bark and leaves being a source of aspirin.

S

Tree: Willow, Celtic: Saille, Gaelic: Seileach

Made By: Fortrose Academy 6th yr ASDAN Group

Location: Entrance to Fortrose Library, Fortrose



R

Tree: Elder, Celtic: Ruis, Gaelic: Droman

Made By: Marine House Care Home

Location: Rear wall, Marine House Care Home, Rosemarkie



To the Celts Elder signified regeneration and renewal of spirit; it represented the cycles of life and death, birth and renewal. Elder is a robust and adaptable tree easily regenerating after damage and known to root and grow from any part.

In folklore it is know as the 'Elder Queen' or 'Good Mother' and is considered to be a women's tree offering protection and healing properties, sometimes called the poor man's medicine chest.

Elder leaves create an effective insect repellent whilst the large white blossom heads made up of dozens of tiny white flowers can be made into elder flower cordial. The deep purple berries were used to make cough mixture. Elder flowers and Elder berries are popular ingredients with home wine makers to this day.

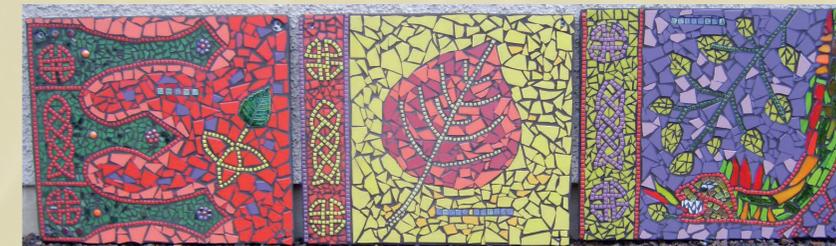
In the winter months elder berries provide much needed food for wild birds and animals.

E

Tree: Poplar (Aspen), Celtic: Eabha: Gaelic Critheann

Made By: Ferintosh Primary School

Location: Low wall in front of Ferintosh Primary School, Easter Kinkell



Aspen was chosen to represent the poplar family because aspen trees are widespread in this area, in fact an aspen tree grows just inside the front gate at Ferintosh Primary School.

These trees are known for their distinctive quivering leaves, which tremble and dance in even a light breeze due to their broad leaves sitting on the end of long flexible stalks.

The Celtic people believed the wind was a messenger from the spirit world and that the Aspens' 'whisperings' in the breeze were sacred messages of peace and fearlessness. An Aspen leaf placed under the tongue was believed to give eloquence.

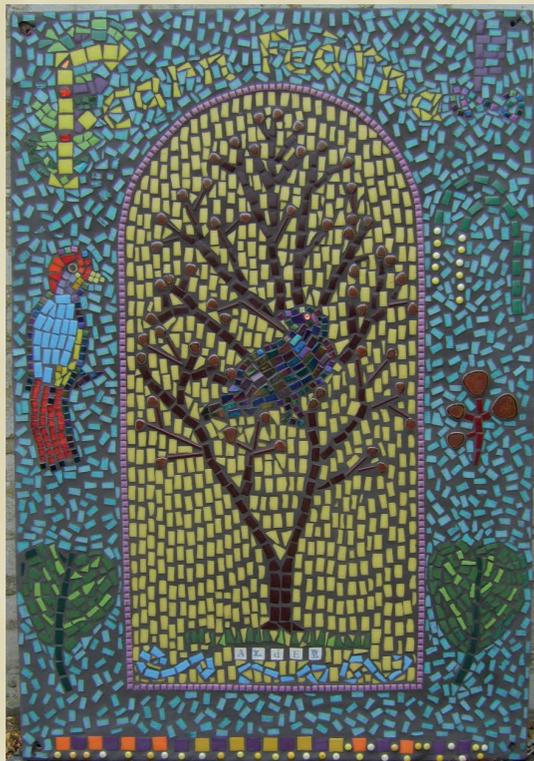
The light-weight, buoyant wood of the aspen is used for making oars and paddles, and its leaves were used as cattle fodder when other food was scarce.

F

Tree: Alder, Celtic: Fearn, Gaelic: Fearna

Made By: Cromarty Youth Group Juniors

Location: Bus shelter outside Victoria Hall, Cromarty



The Alder was the magical tree of Bran, god or mythical king of the Celts. Bran means Raven and Cromarty Junior Youth Group chose to show a Raven prominently sitting in their Alder tree.

The Alder tree is associated with courage and teaching, and it was thought to reduce nervousness and anxiety. However it was believed that if you felled an Alder tree your house would be burnt to the ground.

Alder has both male and female flowers. The male flowers are purplish and develop into golden catkins whilst the female are tiny green cones blooming in early spring; when ripe in the autumn they release small red brown seeds eaten by a wide variety of birds.

In Celtic times Alders were used for making harps, clogs, charcoal, pipes and flutes that were said to have the power to summon the fairy folk when played.

The Celts prized the apple tree and viewed it as a symbol of creativity, an emblem of art and poetry. Apples are one of the oldest cultivated fruits and were particularly valued by the Celts for their ability to keep for long periods of time without rotting.

The beautiful pink and white blossoms of the apple tree have a lovely scent and are popular with a variety of insects.

Apple trees are now a common sight in gardens and a few can be seen on the Black Isle growing by the side of roads. An apple orchard has been established at Ryefield Farm, Tore, where the trees full of fruit in the Autumn can easily be seen from the road.

The Brownies were particularly keen to show some local wildlife in their design so in the top right corner of the mosaic is a Red Kite, a bird commonly seen around the Black Isle. In the sea behind the apple tree there are three dolphins representing the pod regularly sighted in the Moray Firth and a fox and a red squirrel are also shown.

Tree: Apple, Celtic: Quert, Gaelic: Ubhal

Made By: Avoch Brownies

Location: Avoch Harbour Toilets, Avoch



Q



Tree: Gorse, Celtic: Ohn, Gaelic: Conasg

Made By: Groam House Museum Volunteers

Location: Low wall outside Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie



Gorse is extremely unusual in that it can flower at any time of the year, thus to the Celts it symbolised continuous fertility. At their most abundant in March/April the vivid yellow flowers of the gorse were symbolic of intelligence, vibrancy and energy.

The druids recognised it as a light seeker, spreading its seeds as far as possible to form new paths of sunshine and light.

To the Druids bees symbolised community activity and opportunity so they are shown on the mosaic as attracted by the fragrant flowers of the gorse. Also incorporated into the design are a hare and a cormorant: hares are at their most active, boxing madly in March when gorse is in full bloom about the time of the spring equinox, and the cormorant is the totem bird of gorse.

Ivy is evergreen and a very hardy plant able to grow in environmentally difficult places. Because of this ability to survive almost anywhere, the Celts used Ivy as a symbol of loyalty.

Ivy's spiralling growth with many twists and turns was thought to show the twists and turns of friendships. The spiral was a very important sacred symbol for the Celts with links to expansion, development and rebirth.

The tiny flowers and fruits of the ivy are attractive to butterflies and bees, in particular Red Admirals and Small Blue butterflies which inspired the design of the butterflies on the Munloch PS mosaic.



Tree: Ivy, Celtic: Gort, Gaelic: Eidheann

Made By: Munloch Primary School

Location: Munloch Primary School playground wall, Munloch



H

Tree: Hawthorn, Celtic: Huathe, Gaelic; Sgitheach

Made By: Avoch Friendship Group

Location: Rosmarkie Beach Café, Rosemarkie



Hawthorn is sometimes known as Whitethorn or the May Tree. It was thought to be cleansing and said to clear the mind of negative thoughts, to bring clarity and give patience. Cutting down a Hawthorn was believed to bring bad luck.

The Hawthorn formed the maypole around which Celts would dance at Beltane, the onset of summer, traditionally a time of marriage, and it was a symbol of love, betrothal and fertility.

Part of the rose family, Hawthorn produces beautiful small white blossoms with an erotic perfume often used as an aphrodisiac. With well-known medicinal properties its leaves and fruits help to reduce blood pressure and are used in herbal medicine to treat heart and circulatory disorders.

Respected as a tree of enchantment, it often guards wells and springs and is the magical protector of small birds and fairy folk as depicted on the mosaic.

Ng

Tree: Reed, Celtic: Ngetal, Gaelic: Cuilc

Made By: Resolis Primary School

Location: Resolis Primary School, Balblair



Reed although not a tree, is included in their tree alphabet as the Celts viewed any large plant with woody stalk as belonging to the tree family.

In Celtic times the landscape would have been quite different: swamp areas would have formed habitat for reeds growing up to 20 feet tall! Today, much smaller reeds can be seen growing all over the Black Isle in damp areas of fields and near water.

Reeds were very useful to the Celts and thus were very important. They gained a symbolic association with protection being used as roofing material, floor covering and candles. Whistles, flutes and pens were also made from reeds.

The symbolic animal associated with Reed in folklore is The White Hound as can be seen on Resolis Primary School's mosaic.

N

Tree: Ash, Celtic: Nuin, Gaelic: Uinnseann

Made By: Fortrose Pre 5's Group

Location: Fortrose Pre 5's, next to Black Isle Leisure Centre, Fortrose



Ash trees are common across Britain and can be found growing widely all over the Black Isle. They are particularly common near water, by rivers and close to marshland. Unfortunately Ash DieBack has recently attacked many trees in the UK.

The wood of the ash tree is extremely strong. Amongst its traditional uses were broom and tool handles, boat building, and for making wands. The Celtic people believed ash trees signified prosperity, protection and healing, and used the fresh sap of the ash tree to heal wounds as it has mild disinfectant properties.

The Fortrose Pre 5's mosaic shows a full grown ash tree with its extensive root system. During workshops the children were taught about the importance of trees within our ecosystem and that Celtic people believed they were magic!

Yew is one of the longest lived of all British native trees with the oldest known specimen being over 3000 years old. The yew is still found in many church and graveyards as many of these sites were once sacred sites used by the druids.

In Celtic times Yew symbolized life, death and rebirth, and it is sometimes known as the death tree, presumably because of its highly poisonous nature. Its distinctive multi-stemmed shape and dark green glossy needles often cause branches to droop to the floor where they will root and grow to form new trunks.

Shields and weapons fashioned from Yew wood were admired by the Celts and considered auspicious on the battlefield. A bow and arrow are shown in the top left corner of the mosaic. Divination rods are also traditionally made from Yew.

Tree: Yew, Celtic: Ioho, Gaelic: Iubhar

Made By: Resolis Friendship Group

Location: Kirkmichael Church (ruin), Balblair

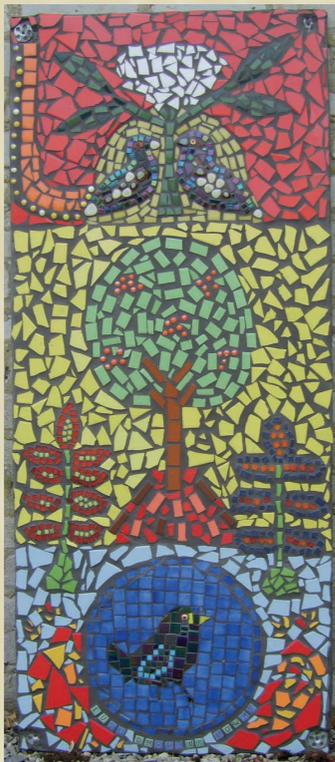


L

Tree: Rowan, Celtic: Luis, Gaelic: Caorann

Made By: Cromarty Youth Group Seniors

Location: Bus Shelter outside Victoria Hall, Cromarty



Luis, the Celtic name for Rowan, means flame, represented in the mosaic made by Cromarty Senior Youth Group by the bright red and orange flames at the bottom of the panel. The abundant red berries found on the trees in late summer and autumn attract much bird life including Blackbirds and Thrushes, which are also depicted.

The Celts considered Rowan to be a 'lucky' tree, a tree of vision, healing and psychic powers. It was a source of personal empowerment helping to protect people against control by others. It could help reconnection with universal love and give spiritual strength.

A rowan tree can live for over 100 years. Its creamy white flowers, which appear between April and June, are attractive to bees, whilst the wood of the rowan tree is traditionally used for making spinning wheels. Rowan trees are found all over the Black Isle growing at the roadside and in woodland.

M

Tree: Vine (Bramble), Celtic: Muin, Gaelic: Fionan

Made By: Groam House Museum Volunteers

Location: Low wall outside Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie



The vine is a theme repeated over and over in Celtic design and it has been interpreted as various plants including Honeysuckle. Groam House Museum Volunteers, however, chose to depict the vine as Bramble. Although today we would not recognise Bramble as a tree, the druids classified anything with a woody stalk in the tree family hence its appearance in the alphabet.

Vines are used to indicate connectedness, eternity and diversity, and to symbolise the intertwining of the conscious and unconscious mind. It has associations with enjoyment of the finer things in life, food, wine, music and art, hence the full wine glass!

The vine is strongly associated with the Faerie folk, as it was thought to be fairy food and that bramble thickets guarded fairy mounds. As well as fairies, blackberries provide winter food for a variety of small birds and mammals and the mosaic shows mice and a blue tit.



Project Developed by Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie
www.groamhouse.org.uk



KNOTWORKS & NETWORKS

A Celtic Tree Alphabet Mosaic Trail



Funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and
Scottish Natural Heritage for the Year of Natural Scotland 2013



INTRODUCTION

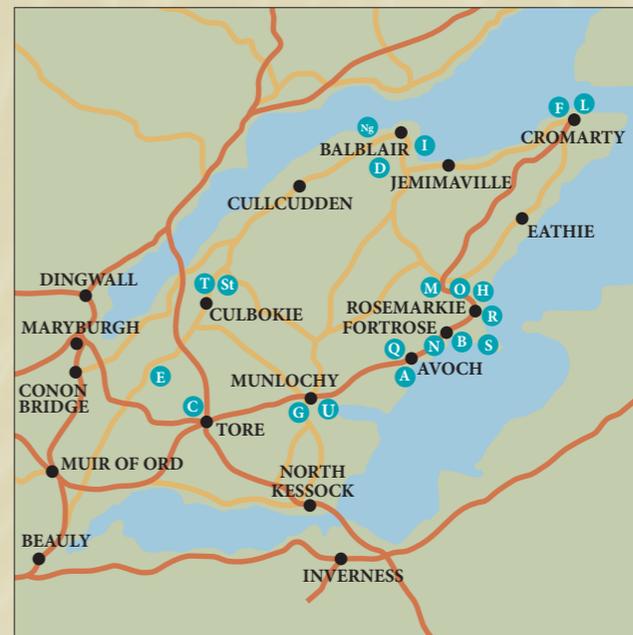
Eighteen different community groups from across the Black Isle, Ross-shire took part in this project, each taking a letter from the Celtic Tree Alphabet and creating a design inspired by that tree, its associated folklore, flora and fauna. Our research soon revealed that there are many different variations on the Celtic Tree Alphabet. For this project we tried to use the most commonly found versions and spellings. Each group worked with local artist Sally Purdy to produce a design to which everyone contributed, followed by a series of workshops to make the individual mosaics. To stimulate ideas during the design stage, inspiration from the natural world outdoors, and images and books were introduced including the work of George Bain. Many of the participants also ventured out to identify specimens of 'their tree' in their communities. We were particularly keen to involve young people and older adults and succeeded by working closely with the Area Youth Officer, local care home and Friendship Groups. Also involved were local primary and secondary schools, Brownies and special interest groups. Once complete, each one of the twenty mosaic panels was sited within the community where it was made, to create Knotworks and Networks – A Celtic Tree Alphabet Mosaic Trail.

Thanks must go to the group leaders who 'volunteered' their members and to all the participants who showed such enthusiasm, without whom the project would not have been such a success.

*Wendy Sanders
Groam House Museum
Project Co-ordinator*

The project was made possible by funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage for the Year of Natural Scotland 2013.

LOCATIONS



A Tree: Pine, Celtic: Ailim, Gaelic: Giuthas
Made by: Avoch Primary School
Location: Avoch Primary School, Avoch

B Tree: Birch, Celtic: Beith, Gaelic: Beithe
Made By: Fortrose Academy 4th yr ASDAN Group
Location: Fortrose Academy Main Entrance, Fortrose

C Tree: Hazel, Celtic: Coll, Gaelic: Calltainn
Made By: Tore Primary School
Location: Tore primary School, Tore

D Tree: Oak, Celtic: Duir, Gaelic: Darach
Made By: Members of Resolis Friendship Group
Location: Resolis Hall, Resolis, Balblair

E Tree: Poplar (Aspen), Celtic: Eabha, Gaelic: Critheann
Made By: Ferintosh Primary School
Location: Low wall in front of Ferintosh Primary School, Easter Kinkell

F Tree: Alder, Celtic: Fearn, Gaelic: Fearnna
Made By: Cromarty Youth Group Juniors
Location: Bus shelter outside Victoria Hall, Cromarty

G Tree: Ivy, Celtic: Gort, Gaelic: Eidheann
Made By: Munloch Primary School
Location: Munloch Primary School playground wall, Munloch

H Tree: Hawthorn, Celtic: Huathe, Gaelic: Sgitheach
Made By: Avoch Friendship Group
Location: Rosmarkie Beach Café, Rosemarkie

I Tree: Yew, Celtic: Ioho, Gaelic: Iubhar
Made By: Resolis Friendship Group
Location: Kirkmichael Church (ruin), Balblair

L Tree: Rowan, Celtic: Luis, Gaelic: Caorann
Made By: Cromarty Youth Group Seniors
Location: Bus Shelter outside Victoria Hall, Cromarty

M Tree: Vine (Bramble), Celtic: Muin, Gaelic: Fionan
Made By: Groam House Museum Volunteers
Location: Low wall outside Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie

N Tree: Ash, Celtic: Nuin, Gaelic: Uinnseann
Made By: Fortrose Pre 5's Group
Location: Pre 5's Building next to Black Isle Leisure Centre, Fortrose

Ng Tree: Reed, Celtic: Ngetal, Gaelic: Cuilc
Made By: Resolis Primary School
Location: Resolis Primary School, Balblair

O Tree: Gorse, Celtic: Ohn, Gaelic: Conasg
Made By: Groam House Museum Volunteers
Location: Low wall outside Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie

Q Tree: Apple, Celtic: Quert, Gaelic: Ubhal
Made By: Avoch Brownies
Location: Avoch Harbour Toilets, Avoch

R Tree: Elder Celtic Ruis Gaelic Droman
Made By: Marine House Care Home
Location: Rear wall, Marine House Care Home, Rosemarkie

S Tree: Willow, Celtic: Saille, Gaelic: Seileach
Made By: Fortrose Academy 6th yr ASDAN Group
Location: Entrance to Fortrose Library, Fortrose

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Made By: Culbokie Youth
Location: Findon Hall, Culbokie

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Made By: Culbokie Out of School Summer Club
Location: Culbokie Church Centre, Culbokie

U Tree: Heather, Celtic: Ur, Gaelic: Fraoch
Made By: Black Isle Writers Group
Location: Bird hide in car park overlooking Munloch Bay, Munloch