



# Suffolk Flora Preservation Trust

Trustees: Earl of Cranbrook, Mrs Sybella Zisman,  
Charity reg. no. 802804  
VAT reg. no. 902 0121 01

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF TRUSTEES AND GUARDIANS**

at  
THE VILLAGE HALL, KELSEA === SATURDAY 19TH JANUARY 2019

### **10.00am Trustees' meeting**

*Present:* Gathorne Cranbrook (Chairman), Sybella Zisman (Hon. Treasurer).

*Minutes of last meeting:*

Noted that, last year, two Trustees had resigned and, on the meeting date, SZ was stuck in New York by weather conditions. GC therefore cancelled the meeting.

*Finance:*

Cash-flow accounts for 2017-18 were approved, noting that the cashflow deficit was £2,626. SZ will send to the Charity Commission.

2018-19 expenditure to date and balances were reviewed. It was noted that £135k remained from Francis Simpson's bequest. It was agreed to retain £35k as bank deposit, to provide working capital, and to invest the balance in two suitable investment trusts to produce an annual income and prospects of capital appreciation.

The meeting closed at 10.10am.

### **10.15 am Guardians Meeting**

*Present:* Gathorne Cranbrook, Sybella Zisman, Rosemary Lincoln, Jenny Nutbeem, Flora Gathorne-Hardy, John Fisher, Janet Barnes, Judy Rainer, Keith Dickerson, Steve Stocks, John Rainer, Pete Southgate, Edwina Galloway, Rose Battye, Janey Cullen.

*Apologies received from:* Bill Batten, Sally Hartley, Kirsten Hecktermann, Serena Inskip, William Longe, Gabriella Marlesford. Paul Parry (Hon. Secretary), Sally Sampson, Lindsay Simon, Kaaren Whitney.

*Minutes:* In the absence of Hon. Secretary, Sybella Zisman kindly agreed to act as Minuting Secretary.

*Chairman's Address:* The Chairman welcomed all present. Accompanying his words with a powerpoint presentation, he said: "The core business of our Trust is the management of our two reserves, (1) for their nature conservation value and (2) for the benefit of the people of Suffolk, in

particular. These purposes reflect the wishes of founder trustee, Francis Simpson, whose bequest provided core funding.

(1) ***For reserves management***

2018 was a difficult year, not least because of the unusual climate. A cold, late spring, featuring the 'Beast from the East', was followed by an exceptionally dry summer. Dry conditions extended into the autumn and winter, coupled with mild temperatures which have persisted right into January (2019). Perhaps because of this unusual weather, Janey Cullen and I counted only 7 flowering spikes of Southern Marsh Orchids in the Long Meadow at Simpson's Fromus Reserve, as opposed to the peak 29 last year -- up from 10 in 2013.

Other meadow flowers have increased in richness. This is the result of our management practices. Although it is not forbidden by our Stewardship agreement to bring in extra species as plantlets or seeds, apart from a little hay from a flower-rich meadow at Great Glemham scattered in 2014, we have not done so. The process that we are managing is natural regeneration. A fashionable term is 're-wilding'. We could debate exactly what this means but, for some people at least, this concept includes bringing back wildlife that has been lost altogether - lynx, wolf, bear etc. The one step to increase mammal life taken in 2018 was the release of ten captive-bred Harvest Mice, kindly donated by Abrehart Ecology, of Brandeston.

The recommended management system to restore the rich natural meadow flora at Fromus Reserve is grazing with cattle. After mixed experience with other cattle owners, we decided to take in hand SFPT's half share of the small herd of rare breed British White cattle, housed and managed from 2010 at White House Farm, Hasketon, by Amanda Daniel and her family, representing Sinfield Trust for Nature Conservation, with half costs passed to our Trust. We are grateful to Philip Baskett, who agreed to take responsibility as the Trust's Cattle Manager.

In winter 2017-18, plans to find alternative winter quarters fell through, and the 6 cows remained on Simpson's Fromus Reserve, causing some concern about poaching and trampling the ancient monument. Under Sinfield Trust management, no cows had been bred since 2012 so that, of the six allocated to us, four were still virgin heifers. Philip's sensible advice was to breed from them. We borrowed a young pedigree bull, Drakkar, who ran with our small herd through the autumn 2017, with no results. Early in 2018, we tried AI, twice (as recommended): again no results. We decided to sell three unproductive animals and, as replacements, we bought three in-calf heifers. These were predicted to calve in July but our first calf appeared in May. A young bull, registered as Fromus Premier, he is now being trained by Philip who hopes to lead him into the ring at the Norfolk Show this summer. Please come to cheer them. Drakkar has since passed a fertility test. Friendly and good-looking, we have now bought him by instalments, and he has proved himself with one of the old cows and with Premier's dam.

The long year and a half that the cattle remained on Fromus Reserve showed that, with no inputs of artificial fertiliser or sprays, at the end of 2018 season, the sward of these meadows was in ideal condition for the diversity of grasses and broad-leaved flowering plants. With Philip's experience, I hope we shall bring some commercial discipline to the management of the herd, while still bearing in mind that grazing by cattle is the ideal method of restoring Mediaeval pasture to a semi-natural abundance of wild grasses and wild flowers. We are grateful to the Scarfe Trust, who awarded funds to purchase a solar-powered electric fencing kit, which will be set to protect the Ancient

Monument from excessive treading by cattle without an unsightly and inappropriate permanent fence.

The 10-year Entry and Higher Level stewardship at Fromus ended in February, 2018. We were advised by Natural England to apply for Mid Tier stewardship, under the new schemes. This I did, on time. The Secretary of State for Defra has since decided to run the stewardship schemes directly, rather than through Natural England, and in November I was informed by the new team that my application was inadequately supported by necessary documents. I have asked for the return of all documents submitted, which may clarify the defect, but I apologise to the meeting for this failure which will lose the Trust around £900 not achieved. I shall seek professional advice for an application under any new scheme in 2019.

One difficulty that I did face was the requirement for a complete botanical survey of every separate parcel of land. While our marvellous website shows the variety of plant species in the Reserve as a whole, it does not treat each small meadow separately. If anyone would like to join systematic botanical surveys at Fromus in the summer of 2019, please spring to your feet. Thank you. Let's fix dates and times in Spring!

Management of Orchid Glade reserve at White House Farm, Hasketon, is much nearer re-wilding, although it does still need human intervention. Originally an arable field of heavy clay land, in 1996 this was planted under FC grant by the previous owner as mixed broadleaf woodland. Bought in 2005 by Sinfield Trust, (using funds from Francis Simpson's bequest to SFPT, Orchid Glade was included in a separate 10-year Stewardship agreement commencing in 2012. In 2013, ownership was finally transferred to SFPT, but the Stewardship continues to stand in the name of Sinfield NCT. Since 2013, SFPT has followed this agreement, fenced a peripheral 15 m band of dense woodland, cleared a large glade in the centre, and removed dense stands of willow and sallow that were shading and starving the single pond (dug on 1993). The terms of the Stewardship specify restoration by cattle grazing to a flower rich meadow. The British White cattle were introduced in late summer 2014, but there was no grass for them to graze, and (apart from windfall apples) they showed no interest in browsing the woody vegetation.

Since, in this case, cattle-grazing is demonstrably not going to achieve the Stewardship target, Orchid Glade has been open to wild herbivores: deer (fallow and muntjac), rabbits and hares. A rich flora is now established, dominated in the summer by the plants that must have plagued arable crops on Suffolk clay-lands in the old days. Most prominent is golden yellow fleabane, with a creeping rootstock and leaves that are unpalatable to every herbivore. Creeping and clambering brambles spread rapaciously, and suckers of alder threaten to re-form as dense thickets. Both need managing. Never the less, at all times of year, Orchid Glade offers the visitor dramatic wild flower diversity, matched by a richness of animal life, especially abounding large insects in season: dragonflies and butterflies.

## **(2). *What is our offer for the benefit of the people of Suffolk?***

In addition to subscriptions from our Guardians, in 2018 SFPT received grants from Kelsale Parish Council and Saxmundham Town Council, for which I express our gratitude. The receipt of public money from these two local authorities sharpens our examination of the ways in which we fulfil the second part of our Trust's purposes.

In 2018, we held 3 open days at Fromus (11 April, 16 June and 29 September) and two at Orchid Glade (17 June, for the orchids, and 12 August for the national butterfly count). I am grateful to the hard core team of volunteers who turn out to introduce visitors to the glories of our two small

reserves. Visitors averaged 12 on each day, usually including one or two who had been attracted through the website.

The marvellous website, freely accessible to the public, was reformed during the year. We thank Matthew Morling, IT Manager of OneSuffolk, and most emphatically, Steve Stocks, who voluntarily undertook the revival and reformation of [www.suffolkflora.org](http://www.suffolkflora.org). Steve generously accepted appointment as the Trust's Website Manager, and we are deeply grateful for his IT skills. Please look at the website regularly for posting of news and events. We no longer operate on Facebook or Twitter. As the best way to express our thanks, we have been happy to appoint Steve Stocks to be an Honorary Guardian, the only other being Laurie Forsyth.

Also important for our public offering, in 2018 we published the 5th Annual in the adult education series. titled this year in our alliterative tradition: ***Ripples and reflections***. Many thanks to our two editors who, once again, brought together a collection of skilled writers and knowledgeable authors on the subject of the aquatic environment of our reserves.

Hard-working in field archaeology at important sites throughout Suffolk, we are very grateful to John Rainer for his dedication to the Trust, and his willingness to stand on the great earthwork at Fromus for long hours on Open Days, helping visitors to understand so clearly the background and history of this fascinating ancient monument.

Paul Parry has generously fitted into his busy life the role of Hon Secretary and is, for all Guardians, the medium through whom we are reminded of key events in our annual programme. Contact with Guardians is also managed by Janey Cullen who, in addition to her meticulous work as editor, has also taken on the complex task of Membership Secretary.

And, finally, I express my deepest thanks to my sole colleague Trustee, and our Hon. Treasurer, Sybella Zisman, who somehow, while holding a high position in a large, international company, still manages to keep a firm eye on the finances of the Trust and the complexities of subscriptions, standing orders, invoices and the unprofitable business of our small cattle herd!

I have probably spoken for too long. we must now move to the formal business, to be followed by a presentation on public benefits through landscape by Flora G-H, on Touchstone Collaborations."

**Hon. Editors' Report:** Rose Battye provided the following report on behalf of the joint editors of the Trust's publication in 2018, 'Ripples and reflections'.

"Sticking to our convention of alliterative titles, our 2018 publication was called **Ripples and Reflections**. This was the fifth annual volume published for the Guardians of Suffolk Flora Preservation Trust in our Adult Education Series. It dealt with the aquatic environment of our two reserves: Simpson's Fromus Valley Reserve in Kelsale through which: the river Fromus runs; there are also four ponds of different character. The other reserve, Orchid Glade, in Hasketon parish, has a single pond, dug in this heavy clay soil in 1993 and now an important habitat for a diversity of aquatic wildlife, visitors and residents!

As promised, we used this volume to publish the winners and runners up in the Trust's 2017 Poetry competition. We also decided to include more photographs than in previous books. The 2018 book is generously illustrated throughout with wonderful and intriguing photographs. At the very end, we have another of Janey's lovely drawings, a pastel of reflections in the Orchid Glade pond.

We are particularly proud of this fifth annual volume, and especially grateful to chapter authors who wrote so authoritatively on their special subjects, and the poets who gave us such memorable verbal images. Our Chairman, Gathorne, had the idea for the theme of the aquatic environment of the Reserves. We would like to acknowledge the immense and tireless work he has put into the book. The idea and organising of the poetry competitions was his idea. Gathorne invited, as well as contributed to the wide variety of scientific studies, that makes it such an enjoyable and interesting read. It is truly educational.

The book was published in November, but we have held back the distribution for most Guardians: if you have not yet received a copy, please come forward now. If you have received your personal copy, please buy extras now for your friends. The published price is £14, including packaging and postal costs. We offer a discount of £2 for all copies collected here, this afternoon. Come and get them!"

The Editors were thanked by the Chairman for the outstanding quality of the 2018 publication. Copies of the publication were handed out to Guardians and the Editors confirmed that they would send copies to those Guardians not present.

It was agreed that digital versions of the previous publications would be put on the website. The Editors will provide the digital files to Steve Stocks. John Rainer suggested that Julia McLean should be asked for the digital files of the first two publications.

It was agreed that the 2019 publication would be entitled 'Rewilding and Recovery'.

It was also noted that it had been agreed following last year's AGM Sally Hartley's oil painting: 'Endeavour and Crocus: daughter and dam', would be auctioned on E-bay. Keith Dickerson kindly agreed to look into this once more.

***Hon. Membership Secretary (Janey Cullen):***

"I thank my predecessor, Judy Rainer, for her good work in the past. She is a hard act to follow, but I appreciate the support of Sybella and Gathorne.

Very sadly, two Guardians have died in the past year. Eight Guardians have left us, 6 have not renewed their Standing Orders and we have not received cheque payment from 11. However, 16 new Guardians have joined, and we now have a total of 65 paid-up Guardians. I believe we need to double this number, or a little more, to give sustainability to our Trust through the subscriptions of supporters, without losing the sense of shared purpose and commitment that I feel so strongly at this meeting today."

***Historical and Archaeological Report:***

John Rainer reported that no additional historical or archaeological work had been done at the Fromus reserve this year. He is keen to explore the meadow by the entrance but his investigative group has been unable to plan this into their schedule so far. 2018 has, however, seen the establishment of another link with other ancient deer parks. A few years ago, John investigated an old dam in the boundary of Framlingham Castle's former deer park, as a result of the landowner visiting the Fromus Reserve to see if his earthwork resembled the one at Fromus. This was thanks to the keen eye of John Fisher.

In early 2018, there was a similar "spot", this time by James Carr from the Environment Agency. He recognised a similar feature in West Suffolk and the result was a visit to Fromus by a landowner at Hawkedon. She was very excited to see that the Fromus dam did indeed bear marked similarities to an earthwork on her land. As a result, John visited the site with Rosemary Hoppitt. It is very likely that the Hawkedon site was part of another medieval deer park, known as Thurston. The pond system there was a series of three stepped dams, much narrower than Fromus but extending for nearly a mile along a valley. One major earthwork remains. Rosemary Hoppitt is going to research this park further. JR noted that it is pleasing that the archaeological remains at Fromus are gradually attracting more attention.

In answer to the Chairman's question, JR advised against restoring the dam and recreating the historic Pond in Mere Mede. He noted that the dam was largely held together with tree roots and that if the dam was rebuilt it would be likely to fail again for the same reasons as it had failed historically. He did, however, suggest that one or more pools or scrapes could be dug in the field to provide additional water features to reflect the history of the site.

**Financial Report:** The Treasurer circulated the final Guardians' Statement and Cashflow numbers for the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. She noted that in that year Guardian Subscriptions had been £1,929 and that the total amount contributed by the Guardians' activities was £1,709. The Treasurer also noted that 2018 was the last year of the Environmental Stewardship grant to the Fromus reserve of £985. In terms of costs she noted that the veterinary costs had been relatively high as had insurance costs at over £1,100. The total deficit in the year was £2,626.

The Treasurer then circulated the draft Guardians' statement and Cashflow numbers for the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, together with a detailed analysis of the costs of managing the cattle. She explained that the numbers represented the position to mid-January. She noted that the contribution from the Guardians had been very significant with subscription revenue of £2,564 and generous donations from Guardians of £457. She thanked Kelsale Parish Council and Saxmundham Town Council for their support and noted that the Scarfe Trust had provided a grant of £1,000 for the installation of electric fencing to protect the dam from the cattle. Sales from books, cards etc. had also been strong at around £500.

The Treasurer explained that the overall cashflows had benefited from the payment by the Sinfield Trust of the OELS/HLS grant outstanding since 2016 of £1,650. The insurance costs had been cut substantially to £725 by the replacement at the suggestion of NFU Mutual of the Commercial Direct policy with a Farm Direct policy. The total cattle costs were £9,309 of which the largest amount was the purchase of three in-calf heifers and a 50% instalment on the cost of the bull amounting to £4,122. The Treasurer noted that these costs had been offset partly by the sale of three cull cows for £1,956. Two more will be sold before the end of the financial year. Given the establishment of the herd on a more appropriate basis, the Treasurer noted that it was a significant achievement that the overall deficit in the year to date is only £60 greater than in 2018 (£2,686).

The capital of the Trust at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 was £135,332.

KD asked if the herd could ever run on a commercial basis, to which the Chairman replied that that was the aim but, since cattle grazing was the preferred means to restore the traditional flora of these Mediaeval meadows, the cost of alternative management had to be considered by comparison.

**Activities for 2019:** It was agreed that the Trust would aim to undertake an ornithological survey and Pete Southgate agreed to identify volunteers.

It was also agreed that to support the environmental stewardship application that a detailed botanical survey would be undertaken by Rose Battye and Janey Cullen supported by Rosemary Lincoln and Janet Barnes in late May and mid-August. Keith Dickerson and Edwina Galloway also noted that the Biodiversity Action Group in Kelsale could willingly cooperate in such a survey.

The following open days were agreed: Fromus – 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> June and 28<sup>th</sup> September; Orchid Glade – 15<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July. All open days would be from 10am to 1pm.

***Election of Officers:*** All officers stood for re-election. In the absence of other nominations, all were re-appointed.

Chairman – Gathorne Cranbrook; Hon. Treasurer – Sybella Zisman; Hon. Secretary – Paul Parry; Hon. Membership Secretary – Janey Cullen; Hon. Editors and Recording Co-ordinators – Rose Battye and Janey Cullen; Hon. Archaeologist and landscape adviser, John C. Rainer; Webmaster - Steve Stocks; Cattle Manager - Philip Baskett.

***Discussion of the Purpose of the Trust and Pathways to achieve this, particularly for the benefit of people of Suffolk.***

Flora Gathorne-Hardy of Touchstones made a short presentation as an introduction to a discussion amongst the guardians and trustees of the SFPT on the theme of 'Purpose and Pathways'.

Flora has a background in landscape architecture and the arts, and has a particular interest in how the SFPT two reserves are places that enrich both people's lives and the biodiversity of each site. She began by recognising and celebrate all the careful, imaginative and collaborative work already achieved by the community of guardians and trustees to open both practical and imaginal pathways to the reserves and thus realise its charitable purpose. This includes: the research into the history and ecology of the sites; their skilful management; creating entrance-ways and walking routes; the open days and volunteer work days; the excellent website; special events; and the beautiful and interesting annual publication. This lead to an exploration within the group of ways to gently enhance different activities on each of the reserves extend the invitation to wider groups of potential guardians. These discussions ranged over ideas of entrance-ways, seating, all-weather parking at Orchid Glade, printable maps, interpretation boards, and other interventions noted in the minutes of the meeting. It was recognised that the small scale of the Trust was one of its unique qualities, and that this allowed guardians to play a very creative and active role in working sensitively *with* each site to shape its evolution over time."

It was agreed that the following works at Orchid Glade could enhance public benefit and improve the conservation of the herbaceous flora and other wildlife of this reserve:

1. New entrance with appropriate provision for off road parking.
2. Removal of the conspicuous metal gate on the west side of the pond. This metal gate could be reused on the road entrance.
3. It will probably be economical, in the long term, to dig out the stumps of invasive alder in the cleared 'glade'.
4. In digging out these two areas of invasive alder, consideration could be given to creating a new ponds.
5. Simple log benches could be provided at strategic viewing points, partially concealed by beetle banks in the form of piled branches.
6. The barbed wire fence on the peripheral track could be removed.

**1.15 LUNCH** Many thanks to all who bought delicious food to share.