



## Suffolk Tree Warden Network

### Spring Forum & first AGM - a celebration

**Red Feather Club, Denham, Eye, IP21 5DG**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018, 10am-4.30pm**



#### **Making the Most of your Woodland - an Introduction to Redlingfield Wood**

Redlingfield Wood is situated on the valley side of a small tributary of the River Waveney. The tree layer of the wood is dominated by Oak and Ash with smaller amounts of Field Maple and Hornbeam. Other trees and shrubs which occur in the wood include Crab Apple, Hawthorn, Hazel, Dogwood and Elm. Beneath the tree canopy is a dense understory of Hazel coppice dominated by several very ancient oak veteran pollards.

Although the origins of Redlingfield Wood are not clear it has a number of features which indicate that the wood is of some antiquity. When David Mitchell bought the 22-acre wood in 1988, all the tracks were impassable due to the great storm of 1987. Virtually all David knew about the wood was that it was a mostly secondary plantation at the heart of the Horham WW2 American Airbase. This meant there were lots of really good aerial photos to show what the wood looked like in 1942.

On starting to manage the wood, David quickly realised that the story was more complex than just a block of secondary woodland. After removing many fallen trees blocking the tracks, it became clear that the central ride was very old and features on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps of the fields. These maps showed most of the area had been two meadows, but the southern end coincided with a wood on a map of 1723 called 'The Little Grove'.

David soon discovered that the wood was planted with Oak and Hazel in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, almost clear felled in 1957, subsequently replanted with a timber crop of pine, larch, poplar and sycamore and the stools from the previous felling had regenerated well. Between 1973 and 1988 no management was carried out at all - leaving a wood hugely overstocked with trees in need of management.

David knew that management decisions had to be based on knowledge, so he started surveying the wildflowers. This revealed that actually this was mostly a wood growing on an ancient meadow! Gaps and glades were populated with a wide range of wet grassland flowers. Ancient woodland indicator plants which are present, include Hairy St John's-wort and Wood Spurge. After submitting the first survey to the Suffolk Biological Records Centre (now Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service), Redlingfield Wood became a scheduled County Wildlife Site.

*“Woods are amazing places for drawing people together. We had expected this to be a private and secluded space, but we realised after a couple of years that we were never going to manage it properly on our own. Almost immediately up popped a small number of local people who it seemed were happy to help manage the woods in return for firewood.”*

Over the years, many people have helped work the wood and shared the resource in exchange for labour and friendship.



Thirty years on, David can rightly be very proud of achieving his aims; he has improved the natural capital of Redlingfield Wood whilst using best forestry practice and at the same time maximised the varied benefits that people from all walks of life and all ages have gained by being engaged with the natural environment and from the properly-functioning ecosystems within it.

