

of grazeable wood pasture. The non-selective browsing of Grimsthorpe's Longhorn cattle helps reduce the encroachment of bracken and bramble. Restocking is purely by natural regeneration, with selection of specimens made after grazing. Some discussion followed as to fencing methods, 'fenceless' collars and even grazing species with the explanation that neither Natural England nor Historic England would accept pigs in such historic woodland.

The day concluded with the President eloquently voicing the thanks of all present to the Grimsthorpe team for such a hugely enjoyable and informative day.

### **Tuesday 14 May – Boston Woods Trust, Lincolnshire**

The Boston Woods Trust manages 60 ha of woodlands split between three sites around the town of Boston. The Trust is the brainchild of Founder and President, Adrian Isaac, and was formed in 2001 to take over the management of a woodland that had been planted by the Woodland Trust. Since then it has expanded its operations, with the ambition of creating a 7 mile band of woodland around the town.

The woodlands are managed by a group of volunteers led by Chairman Stephen Elwood, and sustained in part through membership fees, donations, grants and legacies. However, the Trust has looked to diversify its sources of revenue, and while the woods are primarily managed for the amenity of local residents, timber production, and the silviculture necessary to make this happen, are important long-term management objectives. The theme for the day was the management of peri-urban woodland for multiple objectives.

The day's delegates started the visit at Dion's Wood, named after the farmer who donated the site to the Trust, where planting had taken place between 2021 and 2022. While former arable sites located on fertile fenland – most of it top-grade silt – offer huge potential for the planting of a variety of tree species, they bring their own management challenges.

The planting comprises 17,000 new trees, of which hazel accounts for 8,000, pedunculate oak 3,000, and sessile oak 1,200. All newly-planted trees have benefited from the addition of mulch derived from operations in other woodlands, both to suppress weeds and encourage the formation of mycorrhizal associations. But competition from weeds is still a challenge, and rabbits and voles, rather than deer, are the chief mammalian obstacle to successful establishment.

The site has been carefully designed and constructed to maximise public amenity, with a pond dug out and

its spoil used to create a small hill that is potentially the highest point in Boston. Like all of the Trust's woodlands an avenue has been planted to frame a view of St Botolph's Church, or the Stump, a Boston landmark. The woods have been realised with limited support from the local authority, and throughout the visit it was clear that the Trust and its volunteers have had to deploy considerable ingenuity to achieve their management objectives.

The 9 ha Pioneer and Beech Woods were the site of the second stop, and were planted in 2001. Species include beech, oak, birch and lime, though beech has probably performed the worst of any species at this location. Some trees have been cut down at chest height for safety reasons, though the woods have also suffered from attacks from a mystery tree feller. In general, the Trust's woods suffer heavily from antisocial behaviour, including vandalism and dog fouling, though the Trust's volunteers deal with these challenges with unfailing good humour.

In both Dion's Wood and Beech Wood creating and maintaining suitable paths is as important as – and much more expensive than – establishing and maintaining woodland. These paths improve public access and facilitate maintenance, and in the case of Pioneer Wood allow for access by undertakers to a green burial site. The sale of burial plots, along with sponsorship of seats and trees, is an important source of revenue. The Trust hopes that in the future wood sales will also be an important source of revenue and the volunteers carry out pruning to make the sale of high quality timber possible.



*Dion's Wood (Boston Woods Trust): a former arable site planted in 2021 and 2022 where weed growth and browsing has made establishment challenging.*