



Gullivers Spinney

Management Plan 2017-2022

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Gullivers Spinney
Location:	Souldrop
Grid reference:	SP983614, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 153
Area:	2.05 hectares (5.07 acres)
Designations:	Area of Landscape Value, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This wood has two separate and contrasting areas of planting. The southern half is made up of mature conifers and broadleaf high forest with a diverse understorey whilst the northern half is relatively even -aged and contains a large number of exotic species that were planted by the former owners until 1990. There are a number of access points but the paths within the wood can get slippery in wet weather. The wood is used by local people as a tranquil spot to visit.

2.2 Extended Description

This trowel-shaped wood of approximately 2 hectares straddles a shallow valley to the southwest of the village of Souldrop just south of Rushden, Beds. The western boundary is formed by Back Lane whereas the eastern boundary is formed by Church Farm in the north and farmland to the southeast. The southern boundary is separated from the mainline railway by only a narrow meadow.

The wood is made up of two contrasting types. The narrow southern arm is mature mixed conifer and broadleaf high forest, planted initially in the nineteenth century, with a well developed understorey and field layer; whereas the northern section is a mixed conifer/broadleaf plantation of exotic and native species planted by the Gulliver brothers of Church Farm from 1977 onwards. The plantation, on former agricultural land and with low light levels, supports a minimal understorey and a dense field layer of nettle with occasional bramble and elder. Recently there has been an uptick in the levels of windthrow within the plantation sub-cpts.

The canopy of the southern high forest is made up of large specimens of Austrian pine, European larch and ash which represent the initial planting, with sycamore, horse chestnut and poplar making up the subsequent planting from the mid twentieth century. The understorey is variable in both structure and composition. In some locations blackthorn thickets dominate whilst in others hawthorn and regenerating sycamore are more prevalent. There was an attempt to plant beech in the 1990s but these have largely failed to thrive. The ground flora is composed of grass species together with localised occurrences of herb robert, ground ivy, nettle and dogs mercury.

The woodland habitats are enhanced by two silted and semi-derelict ponds on the western edge of the plantation and by a stream/drainage ditch which emerges from under from Pear Tree Cottage and flows south along the eastern boundary of the southern block of high forest. Compartment 1a, the mature woodland, is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Within the plantation are a large number of exotic broadleaved and coniferous trees planted in single straight rows. This represented the desire of the Gulliver brothers to establish both a commercial plantation and a collection of interesting trees from all over the temperate world. Northofagus from southern hemisphere, western red cedar and grand fir from the Pacific coast, silver and ash leaved maple from the Atlantic coast of North America as well as cultivars derived from our native trees such as Dawych and cut-leaved beech. The wood was donated to the Trust by the Gulliver family in the hope that some aspects of the initial vision would be maintained. The Trust will manage the plantation in order to make the most of the 'collection' whilst at the same time fulfilling the corporate objectives of protecting native woodland and inspiring people to enjoy and value woods and trees.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Park in the village and walk south down Back Lane towards the railway viaduct. There are 3 pedestrian access points off Back Lane and a linked internal path network.

3.2 Access / Walks

Management access is on the western boundary adjacent to Rose Cottage. There are also pedestrian access points at the northern end at Old Church Farm and towards the SW corner off Back Lane.

The earth path within the plantation has been provided with wooden steps where it descends quite steeply to cross the two streams where it can get muddy and slippery when wet. Each stream is crossed via a wired sleeper bridge.

The path within sub-compartment 1a follows a benched grassy track.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

A diverse and resilient mature woodland with open and safe public access. Management will ensure that the public access and appreciation of a local cultural curio is maintained at the same time protecting native trees and woodland biodiversity. The species mix originally planted by the Gulliver brothers will be retained wherever possible.

The mature woodland (sub-compartment 1a) will be managed as high forest and some limited felling and restocking of the declining ash is planned for this management period. The plantation (sub-compartments 1b and 1c) will be lightly thinned to favour the best stems and increase the wind firmness of the woodland. Some nettle control and restocking/underplanting will be undertaken to develop the structure of this part of the wood, and pond restoration work will be undertaken to further increase the habitat diversity within the site.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Informal Public Access

Description

Within the plantation of mixed broadleaves and conifers which forms sub-compartments 1b and 1c a permissive path has been established which links the pedestrian entrance by Church Farm in the north-east with the grassy benched track which runs the length of the mature high forest of sub-compartment 1a. A further pedestrian access is onto Back Lane adjacent to Rose Cottage. There is approximately 500m of permissive paths.

Significance

The area around the village of Souldrop is well-provided with public footpaths but most of these cross agricultural land with the additional restrictions. Gulliver's Spinney as well as providing an alternative amenity landscape does not raise the same restrictions. Additionally the woodland, which was planted somewhat idiosyncratically and subsequently donated by the Gulliver family, former occupiers of Church Farm, is valued by the village as part of their local heritage. A key objective of the Trust is to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees and by allowing free public access Gulliver's Spinney can contribute to this.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity to retain the involvement and interest of the local community by making the site interesting, attractive and easy to visit for relatively able bodied people.

The footpath, which runs the length of sub-compartment 1a, does not provide a circular route. However it does follow a benched grassy track passable in all weathers and gives the public views of the brook, the mature woodland and the countryside beyond.

Factors Causing Change

Derelict and declining mature Ash
 Ash Die Back
 Maturing trees and windthrow risk
 Saturation of ground near ponds
 Proposed diversion of PRoW through woods by Network Rail (in order to close pedestrian railway crossing)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A woodland that contains a small network of well-maintained attractive paths and safe infrastructure. The wood will remain open to the public for quiet informal recreation predominantly by local residents.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Operational Objective:

Easily accessible, attractive, well-maintained and safe woodland that a wide range of public can enjoy. Entrances, facilities and path network are appropriate for level and type of use and in line with access category C.

Work Programme:

Cut all paths twice a year and maintain entrances and signs in good condition.

Repair and replace as necessary furniture, bridges, and gates.

Carry out annual tree safety inspection along roadside boundary.

Carry out internal tree safety inspection along paths every 2 years.

With appropriate consents clear and restock windthrow vulnerable area adjacent houses on Back Lane with low/woody shrub species. (Hazel, Field Maple, Yew, Rowan, Holly, Hawthorn).

With appropriate consents selective fell as necessary derelict and declining ash alongside paths.

5.2 Feature Trees

Description

A collection of exotic broadleaved and coniferous trees of special interest. The two sub-compartments, totalling 1.28 ha were planted from 1977 onwards by the Gulliver brothers of Church Farm and represent an idiosyncratic collection of largely exotic broadleaved and coniferous trees. The conifers comprise western red cedar, grand fir, Norway spruce and maritime pine. The broadleaves contain some unusual species and varieties such as ash-leaved acer, Dawych beech, cut-leaved beech, silver maple and southern beech. See Appendix A for full species list.

Significance

It is almost unique that such a variety of species should be planted with representative specimens from all over the temperate world and this novel situation provides the Trust with the opportunity to create something different which should appeal both to the public and as a memorial to the Gulliver family.

Opportunities & Constraints

The plantation has been largely unthinned and as a consequence many of the trees are heavily suppressed. This is particularly true of the native broadleaves such as pedunculate oak and common beech.

Care should be taken on such a small site when selective thinning to produce a high forest with a great variety of native and exotic specimen trees. Despite the Trust's core aim of protecting native trees, there is scope to cater for non-natives at the site without impacting on the woodland biodiversity. The exotic species should enhance the public amenity of the site and may provide additional educational interest if the specimens were labelled.

Factors Causing Change

Natural succession to high forest

Pests and diseases (current and forecast) with wide range of potential host tree species present

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Healthy, mature and attractive woodland with native and exotic species, varying structure and mixed habitats. A mixture of trees, woody shrubs and tall-herb communities. Well functioning streams and ponds with associated flora and fauna, fully integrating as part of the overall woodland habitat.

The essential elements of the collection of exotic and native trees will be identified and managed in such a way that individual trees will be a prominent feature of Gulliver's Spinney. This will have the effect of preserving the original vision of the Gulliver brothers, enhancing public and educational interest and protecting the biodiversity of the woodland.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Operational Objective:

To manage ongoing maturing of the wood, allowing the development of an attractive and structurally diverse secondary woodland with key exotic and native species retained in a sympathetic way.

With appropriate consents thin and selective felling to favour best and most wind firm specimens within the woodland and help develop the understorey by breaking up the closed canopy.

With appropriate consents clear and restock wind throw vulnerable area adjacent houses on Back Lane with low/woody shrub species. (Hazel, Field Maple, Yew, Rowan, Holly, Hawthorn).

With appropriate consents selective fell as necessary derelict and declining ash alongside paths, restocking if natural regeneration cannot be recruited.

Clear and restore ponds and drainage ditches

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	0.80	Ash	1880	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Area of Landscape Value, Tree Preservation Order
<p>This sub-compartment is bounded by Back Lane to the west and the south-flowing stream/drain to the east. The stream and steep associated banks at the northern end separate this sub-cpt from those to the north for management purposes. A management access gate is located at the northern end adjacent to the cottages.</p> <p>The sub-cpt is approximately 220m long and 40m wide. The largest trees, Austrian pine (<i>Pinus nigra</i> var. <i>nigra</i>) and ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) have dbhs of 81 and 66 respectively, 26m top height and were probably planted at the end of the C19th. There are also a number of mature larch (<i>Larix decidua</i>), poplar (<i>Populus</i> var.) and horse chestnut (<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>). There are a number of ash trees which form the eastern field boundary which may pre-date the bulk of the wood but some of these are increasingly decrepit and tumbled down.</p> <p>A number of beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>) were planted in small groups in 1990 but have struggled to establish.</p> <p>Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>), sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) and hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) form the sub-canopy in those locations where it is present. The field layer is both varied and diverse being made up of dog's mercury (<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>), herb robert (<i>Geranium robertianum</i>), nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) and ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>).</p> <p>The compartment is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.</p>							
1b	0.75	Mixed broadleaves	1977	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access	Area of Landscape Value

The drainage ditch which emerges from under Pear Tree Cottage, along with the cottage itself, forms the physical western boundary of this sub-compartment which is roughly rectangular. To the north a remnant ditch forms the northern boundary, whilst the eastern and southern edges are defined by the surrounding agricultural pasture land. Tree planting runs down the slope towards the ditch/drain with a block of Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) in the centre. The planting, which was undertaken largely before the Trust's acquisition, can best be described as idiosyncratic. Subsequent small-scale planting of broadleaves by the Trust in the mid 1990s also conformed to the established pattern. The species list is lodged as Appendix A.

A pond/wet hollow is located in the north-western corner of the sub-cpt, fed by the pond in sub-cpt 1c to the north. The pond overflows to the south with ground between it and the drainage ditch often saturated and sodden with a consequent increased risk of windthrow of vulnerable stems. A permissive footpath runs parallel to the eastern and southern boundaries.

1c	0.50	Mixed conifers	1980	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access	Area of Landscape Value
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This sub-compartment is roughly triangular with its apex to the north. It is bounded by Back Lane to the west and the outbuildings of Church Farm to the east. The planting structure is very similar to that of sub-compartment 1b being generally of one species in one row. The estimated planting year is 1980. The species selection of both broadleaves and coniferous is largely exotic and includes some interesting specimens such as cut-leaved beech, northofagus and ash leaved acer. A complete list is submitted as Appendix A.

The area was thinned in 2005 and 2010.

There is a derelict pond in the south-western corner which is encircled by a few coppiced poplars (last cut 2016) and horse chestnuts of a greater age than the rest of the plantation.

The western edge of this sub-cpt adjacent Pear Tree Cottage and its outbuildings suffered some windthrow in 2017 (storm Doris) with all stems falling towards the east.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2020	1a	Thin	0.54	37	20
2020	1b	Thin	0.68	29	20
2020	1c	Selective Fell	0.10	50	5
2022	1a	Selective Fell	0.40	75	30

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.