



Suffolk Flora Preservation Trust

Kelsale cum Carlton PC — 6th April 2022

As your historians know very well, Kelsale was the principal manor allocated after the Norman conquest to the Bigod family. Roger Bigod founded a deer-park here and, in the 12th century, created a massive earthen dam to enclose a large fish pond fed by the Fromus stream. The Bigods went on to build Framlingham Castle, which became their principal residence, while the Kelsale deer park and fish pond remained essential to their economy. In due course, childless despite two marriages, the last Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, bequeathed his lands and titles to the monarch in exchange for a generous annuity. On the death of his widow Alice, Countess of Norfolk, in 1313, among other properties, ownership of the Kelsale deer-park passed to King Edward I who gave the whole estate and titles to his son Thomas. Subsequently, by succession, the property passed to the Howard family, Dukes of Norfolk, who retained Kelsale deer-park until the early 17th century, when it was sold. Maps made at that time show that the great pond had been drained and the south-western part of the deer-park (including the area of the present nature reserve) had become farmland.

This fascinating history is still apparent in the landscape of the Trust's Fromus Reserve, which consists of Mediaeval meadows including Meremeade (the drained fish pond), a deep central gorge wooded by veteran trees of great antiquity, and bisected by the monumental earthwork, once the dam that held up the huge fish pond in the 12th and 13th Centuries. The river Fromus, flowing through the wooded gully out into the lower meadows, is a winterbourne — a raging torrent in wet winter weather and a clear, blithe trickle in summer days.

As in Mediaeval times, the mixed grassy sward of the pastures is maintained by grazing by the Trust's small herd of rare breed British White cattle. The flowering plants of the thick hedgerows and ancient woodland enhance the floral richness of the reserve.

Open Days for the public at the Fromus Reserve are scheduled from 10am to 5pm on 23rd April 2022 (for Spring flowers) and on 16th July (summer natural history).