

## **The Landguard Trust**

In February, David Gledhill, came to talk to us about his role as Chair of the Landguard Trust which he took on in 2022 following his retirement as CEO from the Port of Felixstowe. He started by announcing that if anyone hadn't heard anything new, they could see him at the end of the night and get their money back! As it turned out, nobody was able to say that as our entertaining speaker was full of surprising facts and figures.

The Landguard peninsula charitable trust was formed to manage an area which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The Landguard peninsula at Felixstowe has a rich history and heritage, and unique wildlife including an 80 acre nature reserve with bird observatory, plus Landguard Fort, Felixstowe Museum, Viewpoint and a thriving café. Mr Gledhill likened it to a three-legged stool for milking (money out of the government).

Natural Landguard is a mosaic of habitats – a wild and windswept place of 33 hectares (with the Port as its noisy neighbour) where the nature reserve is a designated SSSI. It is nationally significant for its flora and fauna. At present the brush is being reduced to let the indigenous species thrive, such as cottonweed which is being reintroduced there. There are over 600 different species of plants and over 70 varieties of mosses. Regarding the wildlife, there are 28 different mammals, including rabbits, mice and voles and 11 different varieties of bat. The area known as The Butts, a former rifle range, is popular with the ground nesting birds such as the diminishing Ringed Plover. The bird observatory, set up in 1983 in the disused military buildings of the Right Battery, is not just for twitchers but a migration watch point. Birds come first into Suffolk from the North Sea and it is interesting to keep track of the comings and goings. Daily records are reported on a blog. Ringing goes on all summer in association with a University in Holland. Moth and insect counts are also carried out. A video will shortly be launched on the website [landguard.com](http://landguard.com). One concern has been the effect of people letting their dogs off leads. David took the attitude of 'If you can't beat them, join them' and a responsible Dog Walking Club was started.

Historic Landguard is the second branch of the Trust. Landguard Fort was built in 1543 by Henry VIII to protect Harwich harbour at a cost of £2417. Built of earth and timber, it was later dismantled by James 1 and the army disbanded. However, in 1666 under Charles II a brick wall was constructed round the fort. In 1657, the Dutch Invasion was attempted. Captain Darell and his 200 men beat off the 800 strong Dutch marines. In 1717 a new brick fort was constructed and in 1744 the pentagon shape we can see today was built with a bastion at each corner. In 1871 the fort was remodelled using yellow London bricks with the addition of 7 huge guns. During the Georgian period, Philip Thicknesse, governor of Landguard Fort, commissioned a painting of the fort by Gainsborough. In 1878 a Submarine Mining Establishment was set up. During the first and second world wars it was classed as a Class 1 fortress and saw the development of the flying boat. RAF Felixstowe played its part in the D - day landings (Operation Overlord).

Maritime Landguard is the third branch of the Trust. There are extensive plans to extend and improve the outer appearance with a new fence and public art area. At present, revenue from the car park and a percentage of the income from the café goes to the Landguard Trust. Fort admission fees pay for the Ranger. The overall conservation plan includes 12 new brown signs pointing the way to the fort. Future plans include out of town marketing, new toilets, new pond and education centre and anti-social behaviour preventative measures. Other possibilities could be more events, such as car shows and even weddings. Watch this space!!

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