

## About SCRUB

‘Scrub’ is defined as a habitat dominated by shrubs or bushes, forming the margin between grassland or heath and woodland, and in coastal locations. Now recognised as ecologically valuable, it is also seen as a threat: scrub encroaches, and its species can be invasive. In built environments, scrub marks the ever-moving border between the human-made and the other-than-human.

*SCRUB Management Handbook* is a series of poetic and language art works, this first series undertaken during a five-day residency at Singing Apple Press in Mere, Wiltshire.

The works involve and mirror processes described in *The Scrub Management Handbook*, produced by English Nature as a conservation guide. The guide identifies four approaches to scrub ‘management’: Enhancing, Maintaining, Reducing and Eradicating.

This series has been made directly and indirectly with plants at the Singing Apple Press garden – which has been deliberately left relatively uncultivated. The works include video, cyanotype prints, letterpressed text (using the SAP press in Mere), and text poems – some of them taking words and phrases from the English Nature guide, others written in response to the videos.

I chose cyanotype because it allows direct contact with the plants, which you can lay on the paper to produce photograms. The depth effects were achieved by placing the plants and seeds I had severed or collected on to the paper at different time intervals during the exposure. And yes, I do think of the plants as severed – because strangely, by the end, it did feel as though I was doing some sort of violence to these living beings that I was supposed to be “listening” to.

‘Cyanotype is the earliest photographic technique, and the first photo book was a series of algal prints by botanist Anna Atkins (1843). It works with the elements of sun and water, alongside the chemical solution that when exposed to UV light produces the distinctive Prussian blue. I was struck by how plants work with the sun and a different compound, chlorophyll.

‘The text poems came from reflections on the plants, the garden, the making of the prints and the English Nature handbook. They themselves have been “reduced” during the editing process. Similarly, in making the bookwork I have been cutting, ordering, trimming – to make it fit a particular human cultural form: the pamphlet. I hope to continue the series in other locations.’

Caroline Harris

## Biography

Caroline Harris is a writer, publisher and educator. As a child she kept a nature notebook detailing the park life around her suburban home and went on wildflower hunts with her mother. She was fascinated by ‘waste ground’ and edgelands. Harris + Wilson, the book creation business she co-founded, works with global publishers, authors and brands, and Caroline is Course Leader for the BA Publishing (Combine) at Bath Spa University. She is the author of *Ms Harris’s Book of Green Household Management* (John Murray) and in 2017 completed the MA Creative Writing (Poetry) at Royal Holloway, for which she was awarded the University of London prize.