

FRIENDS OF THE FLITCH WAY AND ASSOCIATED WOODLANDS

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2015

URGENT APPEAL

On Bank Holiday Monday 4th May we are holding a Model Railway Exhibition in the Scout Hall at Rayne Station to raise funds for the Friends and we desperately need volunteers to assist at the entrance, around the hall or with parking on the day. Can you spare some time to help? Morning, afternoon or both.

Any assistance you can give to make the event a success would be appreciated. Please contact Gordon on 01245 354267, Wendy on 01376 329245 or Stan on 01376 348054.

Thank you

We like to believe that we look after our volunteers well which may account for the number of people who have been part of the Friends group for a number of years and continue to attend regular work parties. As mentioned in the January Newsletter, it was very pleasing to be informed that we had been short listed to receive a High Sheriff's Award for the way we care for our volunteers. We had an assessment visit from representatives of the High Sheriff and subsequently attended a presentation evening at Hylands House where we were proud to receive a shield, a certificate and, last but not least, a cheque for £1,000 from the High Sheriff towards our funds. The shield and certificate are currently on display in the carriage. During the presentation it was very gratifying to hear the compliments given to the Friends for the work that we do and similar praise was given by the people we spoke to during the post-presentation bean feast.

It seems like Spring may have finally arrived with everything greening up and the first wild flowers appearing at many places. As the weather improves, take a walk along the track, especially in the areas where we have been working over the winter period. Listen to the birdsong and look out for spring flowers and the first butterflies such as the orange tip. The Dunmow Cutting is a joy to walk towards the middle of April into May when primroses and cowslips are in abundance on several of the banks. In the boardwalk area, Giant Horsetails will be peeping out of the ground. Although the ground is drying up in the cutting, it is still advisable to wear boots or heavy shoes as it may still be muddy in places.

Flich Way work parties

Having finished the clearance and cutting back at Little Dunmow, the final task was the installation of a bench for visitors to rest and enjoy the beautiful views across the fields to Felsted. This was the final bench installation and consideration will be given in due course to placing an information board here showing details of the area and the wildlife to be found in the surrounding area.

Clearance work has also been done in the Stebbing Road bridge area with fencing reinstated and the old steps removed to provide safer access to the Flich.

The visit to Danbury Country Park mentioned in the last newsletter took place during the February half term break and several volunteers joined more experienced colleagues to help with a further stretch of hedge-laying. More remains to be done and Andrea, the Ranger at Danbury, looks forward to further visits from our volunteers to continue the work.

Most recently, volunteers have undertaken maintenance work around Rayne Station, re-painting the gates and fence, re-varnishing the benches and renewing the white line along the edge of the platform. The area immediately in front of the platform was re-seeded but after having been much trampled during the Easter school holidays, it will be interesting to see how much has taken.

Parish Paths Partnership (P3)

P3 work parties continue apace and there is no shortage of work for volunteers to undertake. Work parties are led by Peter Lane who liaises with the Public Rights of Way officers in deciding what needs doing and where. They are based at County Hall, each has responsibility for an area of the County and they are the people to be informed should you come across any problems with footpaths around the county. Problems on the Flich Way remain the responsibility of the Country Park Rangers based at Great Notley. More work has been done at the Rodings since the last newsletter, kissing gates have been installed at Sible Hedingham and a variety of tasks were recently done at Chignal St James. An emergency visit to Bannister Green was also made to replace a badly damaged bridge.

Photographs showing work done on the Flich Way and at the various sites worked on by P3 volunteers can be seen on the Friends website. You may also have seen information on P3 in the Essex Chronicle and Braintree & Witham Times which Pete sends to them.

Railway Carriage

There are no apologies for repeating the request for volunteers to step forward and offer some of their time to manning the carriage while open to visitors. When we were first planning to have the carriage, our intention was that it would be open to visitors 7 days a week. That has not been possible as we have been unable to attract sufficient volunteers to man the carriage every day and that is essential in view of the model railway and other items which the carriage now contains. We have managed to be open on most Saturdays and

Sundays during the winter but is an ongoing struggle to get people to volunteer to enable us to continue to do that. Gordon and his colleagues can usually be found working in the carriage on Tuesdays and Thursdays and we would like to be able to open on other days during the school summer holidays. You don't have to be an expert to be in attendance in the carriage as you will be taken through everything beforehand by Gordon. What better way to pass a couple of hours than playing with model trains and meeting lots of nice people and you will be given every assistance. Please pop in to see Gordon or give him a ring on 01245 354267 if you would like to volunteer or get more information.

In the carriage itself, photos and displays are changed on a regular basis and we have a good collection of rolling stock on the model railway. Various items of railway memorabilia can now be found inside, together a good selection of books and DVDs.

Thanks to Richard and John, we will shortly have a restored goods trolley on the platform. The original, or something very much like it, can be seen on the photograph of staff at Rayne Station inside the carriage at the end of the model railway.

We would like to see schools and community groups making use of the carriage. If you would like to know what we can provide and more information, please contact Gordon as above.

Other News

The Fritch Way leaflet has been re-printed and is now available. It incorporates a number of changes and updates.

If you have any comments or observations about this newsletter or any suggestions as to what you would like to see in it, please contact Stan on 01376 348054