

Friends of the Flitch Way & Associated Woodlands

Notes from Annual General Meeting

- Venue:** Discovery Centre, Great Notley Park
- Date:** Friday, 13th May 2016
- Attendees:** See footnote
- Guest Speaker:** Carol Jolly, Correne Allcorn, Visit Essex

Chairman welcomed everybody to the 12th AGM of the Friends and confirmed that all present had copies of the annual accounts and other associated papers. After introducing the guest speaker for the evening, Stan said that there would be a short break for refreshments after the opening presentation, followed by the formal part of the evening, primarily the acceptance of the year's accounts for the charity and the election of trustees for the following year.

An interesting presentation on a variety of places to visit in Essex followed, at the conclusion of which Stan thanked Carol and her colleague, Correne. Following a 15 minute break, Stan moved to the first item on the agenda.

1. Referring to the minutes of the previous year's AGM, a copy of which had been sent to all members, the meeting was asked for their comments and/or amendments. There being none, a proposal to accept the minutes as a true record was made by John Moss and seconded by Derek Cottis. A unanimous vote in favour followed.

2. Chairman's report.

Stan said that it had been another interesting year for the Friends, details of which would be reported on by other speakers as the meeting progressed. Overall, it was pleasing to note that the objectives contained in the Constitution when the charity was first set up continued to be met.

Chairman said that he wished to record the Trustees' thanks to the following people: Wendy Moss, who has been secretary from the start and is one of the founder members of the Friends. Wendy has been the "go-to" person about all things connected to the group since then and although stepping down as secretary, she would continue to be a valued committee member and volunteer coordinator.

Margaret James, treasurer and social secretary who continued to expertly manage our increasingly complicated finances and organize our group outings.

Everybody on the committee for their support and guidance.

Sandra Reynolds, for the tremendous job she continues to do on re-vamping the Friends website and who will be taking over as secretary from Wendy for next year.

Pam Maskell, coordinator for carriage stewards who has the often frustrating task of organizing people to fill the rota. The meeting was reminded that carriage volunteers continued to be needed, mainly at weekends but also during school holidays and members

were urged to keep in touch with Pam if they had any time to spare.

Andrew Adair for all the work put in on the Friends' behalf in lodging objections to the proposed Brook Green development and, together with Sandra, dealing with matters arising from the application to have the Flitch Way listed.

Pete and Ann Lane for their work in organizing P3 work parties which involved a lot of work behind the scenes in surveying prospective sites etc.

The Ranger service with the contribution of Tom as volunteer coordinator being particularly worthy of thanks.

Finally, thanks are due to all volunteers, whether on the Flitch, in the carriage or on P3 duties. Without our volunteers, where would we be?

3. Treasurer's report.

Margaret referred to the balance sheet and accounts, copies of which had been distributed which showed an overall credit balance of £6,500 being carried forward to next year.

Treasurer added that she had fuller details of expenses and receipts if anybody wished to see them.

Good to see the carriage paying for itself with an overall profit in the region of £550, even after taking into account the very large electricity bill paid at the start of the year. The new heating system and close monitoring of electricity used in the carriage has seen the monthly direct debit for heating and lighting reduced from £25 to £15.

Insurance costs for the carriage show a decrease from 2014/15 and will be reduced further if possible when up for renewal later in the year.

Membership receipts have increased by £103 over 2015.

Dick Hughes commented on the substantial difference between 2015 and 2016 in total receipts and asked whether there was any cause for concern over that reduction.

Treasurer and Committee felt not, the main differences arising from donations and grants and wood sales made in the previous year. Unfortunately, there had been little or no wood sold in 2016 due to the need for a new area to be found to process the timber felled along the Flitch Way.

A proposal to accept the accounts was made by Carl Blamire, seconded by Andrew Adair and unanimously accepted by all those present.

4. Secretary's report.

Wendy said that it had been a very successful year for volunteering and referred the meeting to the record of volunteer tasks and locations which had been provided. To summarise:

Flitch Way: 69 work parties, 625 volunteer days, equal to 3125 volunteer hours.

P3: 33 work parties. 216 volunteer days, equal to 1080 volunteer hours

Carriage: 214 open days, 307.5 volunteer days, equal to 1223 volunteer hours

In total, a magnificent total of 5428 volunteer hours had been achieved and Wendy thanked everybody for volunteering and giving up their precious time.

Wendy echoed the Chairman in thanking Pam for coordinating carriage volunteers and for keeping meticulous records which showed a magnificent total of 5807 people having visited the carriage in the year to March 2016.

Wendy said that some of the carriage volunteers would remember Jo Jocelyn who had worked alongside her husband, Ron, in the carriage. Jo sadly passed away recently and Ron

had been sent condolences on his loss from all the Friends.

The meeting was told that several issues were ongoing with efforts being made to protect the Flitch Way for the future, as follows.

Brook Green development. A joint objection has been lodged with BDC on behalf of the Friends with a number of other objections submitted by individual members. Stan said that it was good to see the actions being taken by local residents and visitors against the plans which, if allowed to go ahead, would have a devastating effect on the Flitch Way. The current developments taking place alongside the Flitch around Takeley with wholesale encroachment onto the track were a perfect example of developers ignoring planning rules and give a warning as to what could happen at Brook Green. The Brook Green developer has clearly stated that any refusal by BDC Planning Committee would be challenged and Stan said that it was important that pressure was maintained by objections continuing to be submitted to BDC by anyone who hadn't already done so. All in all, it was likely to be a long running process.

Listing of the Flitch Way. Wendy said that the Friends' application to English Heritage to have the whole of the FW listed as a means of giving protection to structures was turned down. That decision has been appealed on the grounds of the threat by current and future developments along the track, Takeley being cited as an example, and the outcome is awaited. Thanks were given to Andrew Adair and Sandra Reynolds for completing the application and to all the volunteers who had helped with the comprehensive survey which had been done prior to the original application.

Local Nature Reserve listing. Consideration is being given by the Rangers to putting together an application to have the whole of the Flitch designated as a Local Nature Reserve which would give some further protection against threats from development.

Thanks to having been alerted to the funding opportunity by Tom, and having been successful in our applications to Tesco "Bags of Help "scheme, we have two exciting new projects for the coming year. A grant of £12,000 has been awarded for work at Langford Halt where we plan to improve footpaths, renovate the old station platform and install interpretation panels. Garnetts Wood has been awarded £8,000 and Tom advised of plans to improve the car park and footpaths within the wood and install way marker posts, benches and interpretation panels.

Pete and Ann not being able to attend, Stan spoke on their behalf in thanking all those who had taken part in P3 work parties during the year. As mentioned by Wendy, there had been 33 work parties at a variety of locations and the Flitch Way P3 group continued to enjoy a good reputation for the quality and range of tasks undertaken. New volunteers were always welcome and anybody interested in joining the group should get in touch with Pete.

Although stepping down as secretary for the coming year, Wendy said that she would continue as volunteer coordinator and would be working closely with Sandra during the year as she gradually took over the role of secretary

In concluding her report, Wendy said that the 10% discount on food purchased at the Discovery Centre café no longer applied due to new owners having taken over the premises.

5. Railway carriage.

Stan said that the carriage continued to provide a good service to users and it was good to receive so many positive comments from visitors about what was in the carriage as well as the helpful service given by stewards.

The roof was scraped and re-painted in April and thanks were given to everyone who took part in doing so. The carriage sides will be repainted during the coming year when any necessary repairs to the bodywork would hopefully be done by Andy Horder.

The fundraising event held in and around the carriage prior to Christmas had been another success with volunteers pitching in to man stalls and many children and families visiting Santa inside the carriage. Once again, Val came up trumps with her raffle.

A birthday party for a small number of children had been held in the carriage recently with a donation to our funds made by the organizer. The carriage has also been booked for a visit one July evening from Wethersfield Local History Group, with a talk on the history of the Flitch Way being given to them.

Thanks were again given to Pam for organizing the stewards' rota and to Brian and Roy for their work in maintaining and repairing the model each week. John Moss was also thanked for all the valuable maintenance work he undertook, both inside and outside the carriage.

6. Rangers report.

On behalf of himself and the other Rangers, Tom thanked all the volunteers for the work done during the year. Tom also thanked Stan for the work he has done as Chairman during the last 12 years.

7. Members proposed resolutions

None received

8. Election of Officers/Committee

Forms listing candidates for 2016 had been distributed to members and returned.

Nominees and their prospective roles were listed as follows:

Chairman, Alan Trigg. Vice chairman, Stan Davies.
Secretary, Sandra Reynolds. Treasurer, Margaret James
Committee members, Wendy Moss, Val Blamire, Bob Lucas, John Moss

There being no further nominations and no objections to those listed, Stan asked for a show of hands to vote for those listed as Officers and Committee members for 2016-2017. The meeting voted unanimously in favour and good wished were given to Alan and Sandra in their new roles.

9. Social Events.

Margaret reported the Christmas meal at Wildens' to have been a complete success and, due to popular demand, the same venue has been booked for December 15th 2016. Menus will be sent out when available together with a request for a deposit to secure places which will

be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Next social event is the boat trip from Paper Mill Lock on 14th July, the full cost of which is £13.20 per person, including cream tea. Now fully booked, the remaining balance of £8.20 to be sent to Margaret as soon as possible.

Margaret, Wendy and Val recently attended a travel show organized by Carol of Visit Essex and had subsequently had a tour of a number of potential places for the group to visit, as follows:-

A morning visit to Ingatestone Hall has been arranged for 10.30am on 7th September with refreshments afterwards. Cost with a ploughman's lunch is £16 per person. Numbers are limited to 25 so first come first served.

A proposed visit to Layer Marney Tower is proposed for April 2017. This will be an afternoon tour with tea and cakes and total cost will be around £18 per person.

Margaret is also enquiring about a trip to Fingringhoe Wick nature reserve. This will be in June/July 2017 with lunch in a nearby pub. Further details to follow.

Leaflets on the various places were available after the AGM and Margaret also left lists for people to enter their names if they were interested in any of the proposed outings.

10. Any Other Business

Dick Hughes raised the question of what was to be done about the area of the Flitch adjacent to the travellers' site at Felsted. The path and surrounding area is in a very bad state and the site occupants do everything they can to deter people from using the Flitch at that point.

Tom responded by saying that it was a long standing problem that the Rangers and Country Parks senior management were aware of. Anyone encountering problems there was encouraged to put their complaints in writing which could be sent to him or directly to Essex County Council in order to exert pressure on solving the problem. To give some background, Wendy said that the Friends have been trying to do something about it for a number of years. One major difficulty was that Rangers and volunteers were unwilling and unable to undertake any clearance without getting somebody from the Travellers' Liaison Unit from County Hall involved and being present when any work was carried out. That has so far not been achieved, one previously arranged day having been cancelled by the TLU because of what they saw as bad weather on the day.

Tom said that it was still very much on the agenda for something to be sorted out at ECC level and it was, unfortunately, a case of waiting for something to happen.

Although not really an answer to the problem, Sandra said that a temporary alternative route avoiding the site had been found through the Flitch Green housing development and publicized as such. Unfortunately, a kissing gate had been installed by an unknown party on the footpath which currently prevented cyclists and pushchair users getting through.

Jen Tibbett, one of the carriage stewards, expressed concern about the control panel for the model railway being open to little, and not so little, fingers playing with the switches etc., and thereby causing problems. John will explore the possibility of enclosing the panel in some way.

There being no further matters to discuss, Stan once again thanked everybody for attending the AGM and brought the meeting to a close at 8.50pm.

Andrew Adair
Brenda Allard
Malcolm Allard
Roger Ashdown
Carl Blamire
Val Blamire
Derek Cottis
Stan Davies
Angela Fuller

Attendees:

Mike Fuller
Terence Gilbey
Gordon Glanfield
Keith Hind
Andy Horder
Dick Hughes
Pat Hughes
Pam Maskell
Elizabeth Miller

John Moss
Wendy Moss
Sandra Reynolds
Tony Robinson
Wendy Taylor
Jen Tibbetts
Alan Trigg
John West