

Friends of the Flich Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from Annual General Meeting

Venue: Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park

Date: Friday 8th May 2015

Attendees: See footnote

Guest Speaker: Barry Kauffman-Wright

The meeting was opened at 7.10pm by the Chairman thanking everybody for attending and confirming that all had a copy of the Agenda and the Annual Accounts. Stan introduced and welcomed the speaker for the evening and said the meeting would follow the usual format, commencing with a talk by the speaker on his time as a Police Wildlife Crime Officer, followed by a 15 minute break for refreshments before the formal part of the meeting. There then followed an interesting and informative talk on the chosen subject followed immediately by a short break.

1. Minutes of 2014 AGM.

There being no matters arising from the minutes of the previous year, acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Carl Blamire and seconded by John West. All voted in favour.

2. Chairman's report.

Stan commented that the previous 12 months seemed to have flown by but much had been achieved in the period. While other speakers would give more detailed accounts of what had happened during the year, Stan said that he would mention a few highlights. A lot of things had centred on the carriage, starting with the tremendous effort put in by volunteers to get the carriage finished in time for the Tour de France weekend in June. That was achieved and it was good to hear the many positive comments on the carriage from visitors. The formal opening of the carriage in July also went very well with a good turnout and the ceremony performed by Mrs Sue Wilson, then leader of Braintree District Council. The weather smiled on us and it was lovely to hear music from Bocking Concert Brass Band wafting across the platform.

We were pleased to have a visit from Santa at Christmas who spent time in the carriage meeting children and handing out gifts. Everyone enjoyed themselves, not least Santa, and we made some money for our funds in the process.

A lot of work was put into getting the Flich Way leaflet updated during the year with 19 alterations to the previous one.

The year concluded with the Model Railway Exhibition on the previous Monday, May Bank Holiday. Stan felt that it had been a great success from everybody's point of view, visitors and exhibitors alike and gave a further boost to Friends funds. Stan singled out Gordon Cameron and thanked him for the tremendous amount of work which he had put in to organize the event and make it such a success.

Stan said that recognition and thanks were also due to all the volunteers as none of the events mentioned could have taken place without their input. Volunteers were an integral part of the Friends of the Flitch Way and a number who had been part of the group since it started in 2014 had continued to come out on work parties ever since. It had been very rewarding, therefore, to receive an award in March from the High Sheriff recognizing the Friends for the work they did with volunteers. On behalf of the Committee, Stan thanked everybody who had volunteered in the past year in whatever capacity, whether on work parties, in the carriage or helping with events. Stan concluded his report by thanking Committee colleagues for their advice and support throughout the year.

3. Treasurer's report.

The Treasurer referred to the copy of the annual accounts which everybody had, the layout of which had changed to follow guidelines set down by the Charities Commission. The accounts showed a credit balance of £8060 in the Charity's current account being carried forward to the new year.

Many of the entries in the accounts reflected the work done in the carriage during the year and showed the biggest expense to be related to the maintenance of the carriage.

Donations to help with carriage expenses continue to be received, however.

Margaret said that she had a more detailed breakdown of the items available for members' scrutiny if necessary.

Membership receipts increased by £189 in the year and £75 was received via Gift Aid. Any members who qualified to claim under Gift Aid but had not done so were invited to do so.

Although not included in the presented accounts, Margaret gave a breakdown of figures from the Model Railway Exhibition which had taken place after the year end.

Entrance Charges	£810
Raffle	£260
Tombola	£80
Nail Game	£15.80
Total	£1165.80

Outlay was in the region of £100, 146 adult tickets were sold, 22 children and 21 family.

Stan thanked Margaret for all the work done during the year and in particular the work done at the year end in re-formatting the accounts. Some further changes to accounting procedures would be introduced in the new financial year with regard to cash transactions. A proposal to accept the charity's Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 was made by Keith Hind and seconded by Dick Hughes. There were no objections to doing so from members.

4. Secretary's report.

Secretary reported that 28 new people had joined the Friends during the year, 9 of whom had chosen to be paying members only, receiving information on our activities. 19 are active volunteers, 12 in the carriage and 7 on Flitch Way working parties.

A detailed list of the sites worked on during the year and the work done had been prepared by Wendy. The list showed a total of 69 work parties having taken place on the Flitch. An average of 9.81 volunteers had attended each work party, equating to 677 volunteer days or 3,386 volunteer hours.

Lots of work had been done at Rayne Station, creating the new footpath, painting gates and fences and re-seeding grassed areas to name a few of the tasks completed.

At Great Notley CP, fences had been replaced around the ponds while at Danbury, garden renovation and hedge laying had taken place.

The usual Autumn conservation work had been done at Dunmow Cutting. 15 work parties on cutting the banks had taken place and a further 4 in the boardwalk area. A stretch of hedge laying had also been done there.

Several visits had been made to High Cross Lane picnic area and to the Halts to tidy and repaint where required. Hedge laying also took place at HCL.

Clearance work was done during the year at Little Dunmow, Felsted slope, Stebbing Road, Gore Road in Rayne and, most recently, Felmoors Farm and Bannister Green Halt areas.

Wendy concluded by saying that Ranger Tom had managed to come out with volunteers on most of the work parties and had given guidance on the occasions we had gone out on our own. Wendy thanked all the Rangers for their support, Tom Hamilton in particular.

Chairman said that having a good secretary was fundamental to any organization and the Friends were fortunate to have one without equal in Wendy. Stan spoke for all the members in thanking her for the work she did in keeping us organized and on the straight and narrow.

Parish Paths Partnership (P3)

Pete Lane said that Essex County Council had introduced a number of changes to the format of Public Rights of Way during the year, not the least of which was that a survey had to be made at every site where ground was to be broken, to install a waymarker post for example, to ensure that no gas or electric lines were below ground. There had been concerns that that would delay or reduce the work to be done by the P3 group but it has not been a problem to date.

Pete explained the methodology of the group getting work from PRow arising from surveys done by PRow officers and/or complaints from the general public regarding the poor state of footpaths, bridges etc.

39 work parties had taken place during the year of which 26 had been on clearing overgrown or disused footpaths. 60 way marker posts, 12 bridges and 2 kissing gates had been installed at a number of sites including Ashdon, near Saffron Walden, the Rodings, High Easter, Rayne and Little Waltham. The P3 group also installed a dipping platform at the pond at Oak Meadow Nature Reserve, next to the Village Hall at Rayne.

Pete said that 2 new volunteers to P3 work had joined during the year and he thanked all the volunteers for all the hard work which they had done during the year. He said that further volunteers would be very welcome.

Stan said that Pete and Anne Lane had run the Friends P3 team since the scheme started and he thanked them for all the work they did behind the scenes as well as organizing the Wednesday work parties. They had made the group what it is today, in demand across the County and doing the variety of jobs which Pete had spoken of. The Public Rights of Way officers know that if something needs to be done quickly, effectively and responsibly, Pete and the Fritch Way team are the people to go to.

6. Carriage Project.

Stan said that Gordon was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting. He added that Gordon had joined the Friends around the time that the carriage had arrived and felt it fair to say that if that hadn't happened, the carriage would not be in its current state. Gordon's drive, organizing skills and experience in a wide range of areas have been a great asset to us. Gordon can sometimes be quite forthright in his manner and while that hasn't always been popular with some people, Stan said that he has always acted with the best interests of our charity at heart.

Chairman said that he had already talked about the recent Model Railway Exhibition and the model in the carriage had been a great draw for visitors since it was installed. Brian Render had been Gordon's right hand man in installing and maintaining the model and thanks were due to him accordingly.

A large group of students from Felsted School had visited the carriage during the year as had a local walking group who spent a pleasant afternoon in the carriage celebrating one of their members' birthday. The local Scout group were planning to hold an evening meeting in the carriage and a booking had been taken for a daytime meeting of local Scout leaders in June. It continued to be an aim to persuade local schools and organizations to use the carriage and although that had not been achieved so far, efforts would continue to get the community involved.

Positive comments had been made by most visitors which was very satisfying and over 4,000 people had visited the carriage since the opening day.

Wendy said that 12 new volunteers had been recruited for the carriage during the year making a total of 452 volunteer days. Stan said that there was a continuing need for volunteers to come forward and offer to spend time in the carriage, however, when it was open to the public. It was not an onerous task and involved running the trains, talking to people about the Flitch Way and its history and generally keeping an eye on what was happening inside the carriage. Stan said that if he could operate the train, anybody could. At present the carriage was open on Saturdays and Sundays and usually on Tuesdays as well but it was hoped to be able to open on other weekdays during school holidays. That could not happen if nobody was able to be in attendance and Stan encouraged volunteers to contact himself or Pam Maskell if they felt able to offer a couple of hours in the afternoon. Anybody coming forward to volunteer would be given a full explanation of what is expected of them and shown how to operate the model railway.

7. Ranger's report.

Steve spoke on behalf of the Great Notley Rangers and ECC Country Parks. Tom was unable to attend the AGM as he was moving house on the day but Steve said that he had prepared notes for him to refer to. He commented on the number of faces new to him and said that his responsibilities as area manager for several country parks unfortunately gave little opportunity for him to get out on work parties with the Friends and get to know people. He recalled meeting the Friends when he joined FW in 2008 to discuss the future for the volunteers and any concerns that he might have had then had been more than dispensed with in the intervening time. The Friends continued to be a great asset to Essex County Council, the Flitch Way and the local community in all that they did.

Steve referred to some of the work done by the Friends in the last year and in previous years including clearance, maintenance, fundraising to enable the purchase of machinery and

equipment, culminating in the installation of the carriage at Rayne Station which continued to be a great success. He admired the Friends' commitment to the local community and knew of many good friendships which had been formed between volunteers as a result of their involvement in work parties.

On behalf of himself, Tom and the other Rangers and Essex County Council, therefore, Steve gave thanks to the Friends and their volunteers for all that they continued to do so well and wished them good luck for the future.

Stan offered everybody's best wishes to Steve and Claire for their forthcoming wedding and to Tom and his partner who had, hopefully, moved into their first home together earlier in the day.

The Rangers were thanked for their continuing support and Tom in particular who had responsibility for the volunteers while on work parties.

Stan also thanked Steve and Country Parks for their generous contribution towards the legal costs involved in the purchase of the lease at Rayne Station.

8. Members' proposed resolutions.

Wendy confirmed none to have been received and there were none from members present.

9. Election of Officers and Committee.

Stan said that current committee members had agreed to stand for re-election. A nomination for Alan Trigg to join the committee had also been made. The meeting was asked, therefore, to vote in favour of re-electing current committee members together with Alan Trigg as committee members of the Friends of the Flich Way and Associated Woodlands for the year 2015-2016.

All members voted in favour. There were no objections or abstentions.

Stan said that Alan would act as vice-chairman for the coming year and take over the role of chairman for 2016-2017 in due course.

10. Social events.

Margaret said that the Christmas meal at Bocking Village Hall had been a great success and she had made a booking for the coming Christmas accordingly, on Thursday 17th December 2015.

The evening out at Romford dogs had also been popular and Margaret asked the meeting to let her know if they wanted to repeat the event.

A similar request for another sail from Paper Mill Lock was also made following a member's suggestion.

11. Any Other Business.

Stan said that a bill of approximately £700 for electric usage in the carriage had recently been received which was much higher than anticipated and had caused much concern. Having given a lot of consideration to the reasons for the high usage, the consensus was that it could only be due to the heating in the carriage and was clearly something that needed to be addressed in order to avoid similar bills occurring in the future. Stan asked all carriage volunteers to be aware of the costs incurred in having the heating on when they were in attendance and to do so only when absolutely necessary. It was agreed that heating

was unlikely to be needed until the Autumn at the earliest and it was essential that if a heater was necessarily switched on, it was switched off at the end of the session. Consideration to more efficient use or methods of heating the carriage will be given before colder weather returns and Stan said that the committee would welcome any suggestions on the subject from those present. Although it had been the intention to take meter readings on a weekly basis during the year in order to monitor usage, that had not happened but will be re-instated as from now.

An appeal for help had been received from the group working to re-connect the separate sections of the Flitch Way around Great Dunmow and Lesley Gillman was invited to explain what was required. She said that because of the Dunmow bypass and other development which had taken place along the line of the former track, it was necessary for users to come off the Flitch Way onto the main road and get back on again along the bypass. Discussions to get agreement to constructing a new bridleway linking the two separate sections of the Flitch Way had been taking place over the last 5 years and much had been achieved towards that goal. The people involved in the group wanted to make the group a more formal more powerful organization and to that end they were looking for new members to join them. The Friends of the Flitch Way having a vested interest in restoring a safe route around Dunmow, an invitation was given to having somebody from the Friends join their organization to report progress to the Friends and give feedback.

Lesley said that their first meeting would take place at Dunmow Library at 11.00am on Tuesday 26th May. Stan asked if anybody was willing to take part and Sandra Reynolds said that she had an interest in the project and was prepared join in on behalf of the Friends. Stan thanked her for doing so.

Stan thanked everybody for attending the AGM and the members who had helped with refreshments. Steve was also thanked for letting us have use of the Discovery Centre for the meeting. The Meeting was brought to a close at 9.29pm

The first Committee meeting will take place at 31 Kidder Road, Rayne, at 7pm on Tuesday 12th May.

Attendees

Lesley Gillman	Wendy Taylor	Roger Ashdown
Andrew Bloomfield	Pauline Brenner	Richard Wansbury
Keith Hind	Peter Lane	Carl Blamire
Val Blamire*	Sandra Reynolds	Michael Scade
Alan Trigg	Bob Lucas*	Sue Lucas
John West	Pam Maskell	Dick Hughes
Pat Hughes	John Moss*	Wendy Moss*
Stan Davies*	Margaret James*	Derek Cottis
Jim Cloke		

* Committee member 2014-2015