

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Notes from Annual General Meeting

Date Friday 30th April 2010

Venue Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park

Persons present

Trustees and committee members: Jim Cloke, Wendy Moss, Pete Lane, Ann Lane, Andrew Bloomfield.

Rangers: Steve Bunn, Claire Jones.

P3 & PROW: Adam Jenkins

Special Guest: Mary Smith

24 members of the Friends

The meeting began with an entertaining and informative presentation on Fungi by Mary Smith, a local botanist which was appreciated by all. This was followed by a short break for refreshments.

Acceptance of the Minutes of the 2009 AGM were proposed by Carl Blamire and seconded by John Moss. Agreed unanimously.

Chairman welcomed everybody and gave a brief outline of the constitution and aims and objectives of the association registered as a Charity Trust known as "Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands." He described how the range of activities undertaken by the volunteers has grown over the last five years to meet our aims and objectives which are twofold :- *"for the benefit of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment, and to "advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment."*

Reference to some of the other sites included:

Garnetts Wood near Barnston

Levelly Wood near Shalford

Tarecroft Wood near Rivenhall

Border Wood near Little Waltham

The Blackwater Rail Trail old Maldon to Witham Railway Line

The Colne Valley Linear Park White Colne

In addition to these sites work has been carried out for the Parish Paths Partnership, known as P3, which involves a variety of tasks related to maintaining the many public footpaths and bridleways across the County.

As an enthusiastic group of volunteers from many walks of life it is probably true to say we have all learnt a lot about the countryside over the years we have been working. There has been a steady increase in the number of volunteers in the last year. Thanks to all of the Volunteers who have given a lot of their free time to achieve this and in particular: -

- Wendy carrying out the duties of Secretary and Volunteer Coordinator
- Wendy and John for organising just about everything else including the tea breaks
- Pete for the very efficient work involved as Treasurer.
- Pete and Ann for organising the growing work of the P3 activities
- Stan Davies for a lot of behind the scenes work for example getting the new notice boards and way markers produced for the Flitch Way.

- Val Blamire for organising the planting at Rayne Station and the plant surveys to date.
- Andrew Bloomfield for all the lovely photos he produces each week on our Website and for setting up the display board,
- Andrew and Pauline for organising the walks
- Margaret James for taking over the organisation of our social activities
- Don Morecombe for the work he has done on the Dunmow Link and liaison with William Chastell.

The Friends made a successful application to Greenfields Housing Community Investments for a grant in excess of £30,000 for the benefit of the people of Braintree which would cover the whole of the Flitch Way. The funds provided equipment and tools including a Woodchipper and Wood Processor. We are now able to speed up much of our clearance work and also be able to benefit from the sale of logs. We are reporting back to Greenfields and Braintree District Council on the progress of activities undertaken and the outcome/effect of how we have spent the money.

In the summer a specially engraved bench at Gatewoods Pond was installed in recognition of the enthusiasm and hard work by former Ranger Nigel Wood, in setting up the Volunteer group for the Flitch Way the forerunner of Friends of Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands.

Other notable achievements include the growing success of the Rayne Station Café which Robert has worked hard to achieve.

We are now getting a number of positive comments from users of the Flitch Way on the work we carry out, these are passed on to the Rangers along with suggestion for further improvements.

Overall it has been a successful and enjoyable year of achievements, The 2010 programme for the work parties is being drawn up and will start much needed new signs and way markers along the Flitch Way.

Treasurer's report was made by Pete who distributed copies of the Charity's balance sheet. Copies of the full accounts are available for members' scrutiny on request. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Jim, seconded by Sid and accepted unanimously. An explanation of entries was given by Pete who also spoke of the donations received from the Booking hall café collections supported by Rob Branch. He also spoke about the possible purchase of a railway carriage for Rayne Station for which he is currently seeking funding.

Secretary's report was given by Wendy who thanked everybody for their continued support regarding attendance at work parties. Reference was made to the terrific amount of work done by volunteers on the Flitch Way this year using the new tools and equipment from the Greenfields grant funding and other work carried out in woodlands and at Great Notley. She also mentioned that all the new bat boxes have been put up on the black water rail trail bridges now. A number of wildlife surveys had also been done during the year particular mention was made of the successful finding of a dormouse nest in Garnetts wood. Wendy gave details of membership numbers and referred to the handouts showing how attendance has increased this year with the change to two day working. At the moment there are more volunteers attending on the Tuesdays than the Thursdays but having the choice gives increased opportunities to volunteer.

Report on P3 work by Ann gave the meeting details of work undertaken on behalf of Parish Paths Partnership 2009 -2010, illustrated with handouts as follows:-

Wickham St. Paul* Bridleway clearance.

Great Yeldham *Opening up new PROW at station.

Dedham - 2 kissing gates

Roxwell/Chignal - Major re-opening of lost footpath, installing waymarker posts.

Bardfield Saling* - Byway clearance

Little Burstead - Installation of waymarker posts and repairs.

Dunmow - Clearance of overgrown footpath and waymarker post installation.

Black Notley * - Installation of waymarker posts, steps and clearance.
Sewards End - 2 bridges and waymarker post installation and clearance.
White Notley * - Remedial work on John Ray walk.
Bocking* - Opening up lost footpath.
Panfield* - Clearance and installation of waymarker posts.
Mashbury - Opening up 6 lost footpaths and installation of waymarker posts.
Epping General clearance of footpath.
Garnetts Wood Installing waymarker post.
Witham* - Clearance, re-signing, installing and re-instating waymarker posts on John Ray walk.
Wrabness - Re-instate and install waymarker posts.

*means work within BDC area.

Volunteers attending: Wendy, John, Andrew, Pauline, Andrew A, Terry, Pat, James, Carl, Jim, Stan, Keith, Don, Michael, Ann, Pete, Jerzy

Ann thanked everybody who had taken part in P3 work parties during the year and also thanked Adam for his support.

In response, Adam said that the work done on behalf of P3 by the Flitch Way volunteers was very much appreciated and said that they were the most active group in the County.

Report on the Dunmow Link was given by William Chastell who gave an in depth update of the Dunmow link proposal and the progress so far.

Rangers report was given by Steve Bunn, manager of the Country Park. He expressed his thanks and appreciation for the work done by the volunteers.

Election of Officers and committee.

Chairman referred to the voting form sent to members prior to the AGM. All candidates remained as shown, no other names having been submitted to the Secretary. Apologies were tendered on behalf of Stan Davies and Don Morecombe who were unable to attend the AGM. John proposed the persons shown on the list be accepted as trustees and committee members for the coming 12 months. The proposal was seconded by Val and carried unanimously by the meeting.

Under AOB, Terry queried the range of tasks being carried in the Country Park. After a general discussion, the issues were clarified.

The meeting was then brought to a close.