

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Annual General Meeting report

Date: Friday 6 May 2022, 7pm

Venue: Great Notley Country Park Great Notley, Braintree, Essex CM77 7FS

Present: Chairman Stan Davies, Secretary Sandra Reynolds, Vice-chairman Stan Davies, Committee members - Val Blamire, John Moss, Wendy Moss, Bob Wright, Graham Dalby

Apologies: Treasurer Margaret James, Park Ranger Tom Hamilton

Attendees: Bob Lucas, Sue Lucas, Wendy Taylor, Pam Maskell, John West, Andy Horder, Carol Horder, Roger Ashdown, Pete Lane, Carl Blamire.

Referring to the minutes of the previous year's AGM which had been sent to members following that meeting, Stan asked if there had been any comments on their content and whether any amendments needed to be made. There being none, Stan and Pete proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record and all agreed, and Stan signed the minutes.

AGM Agenda

1. Reports and accounts – To receive, consider and approve the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022
2. Appointed committee members are also trustees.
 - Chairman – Alan Trigg – standing for election
 - Vice-chairman – Stan Davies – standing for election
 - Secretary - Sandra Reynolds - eligible for re-appointment
 - Treasurer - Margaret James - eligible for re-appointment
 - Member - Wendy Moss - eligible for re-appointment
 - Member - John Moss - eligible for re-appointment
 - Member - Bob Wright - eligible for re-appointment
 - Member - Graham Dalby - eligible for re-appointment
 - Member - Val Blamire - stepping down as committee member and trustee
3. Members proposed resolutions.
4. Any other business

Chairman's report Stan Davies:

Welcome to the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Flitch Way.

I am sure everyone shares my pleasure at being able to get back to face to face meetings after the restrictions of lockdown. You should all have copies of the charity's annual accounts and associated paperwork. We don't have a guest speaker this year and the format of the meeting will be for reports to be given on the progress we have made during the year and there will be opportunities for questions after each report has been given. The formal part of the meeting involves acceptance of the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 and the election of trustees for the following year.

It is good to report to members that the objectives which were written into our Constitution when the Friends charity was first drafted in 2004/05 continue to be met.

You will shortly hear reports on the various aspects of what has been achieved during the year so I don't intend stealing anyone's thunder by commenting too closely on those areas now. What I would say is how good it was to get back to working as a group on work parties and although a concern was that volunteers would have found other activities during the pandemic and not return when restrictions eased, that has not proved to be the case thankfully.

- Our membership now stands at 90 members with a net loss of 5 members this year.
- We have a total of 66 volunteers. 10 in the Footpath group, 50 in Flitch Way work party group and 20 in the Carriage. Some of our volunteers work for more than one group.
- 4,653 volunteer hours recorded from the Carriage Stewards, Flitch Way work parties and the Footpath work group, up from 2,189.

This has been my first year back as Chairman after a few years break and would take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members and trustees for their support over the past 12 months. A lot of the work gets done behind the scenes by the Trustees which all helps to ensure we have a well-run charity and organisation.

I would like to thank Margaret, our Treasurer and Social Secretary who continues to oversee our sometimes complicated finances as well as organising our days out which give the opportunity to dress rather better than usual and mix socially with our friends.

Special thanks are due to Sandra, our Secretary who does a tremendous amount of work for us, not least in what is to me the baffling field of IT. There continues to be no let-up in the number of Planning Applications being submitted affecting the Flitch Way and Sandra continues to keep her finger on the pulse of these, objecting or commenting on our behalf and on behalf of all the users of the track. The Friends website is one of the best around and, again, that is down to Sandra's expertise in maintaining and updating the site.

Along with John, Wendy was one of the founder members of the Friends and can be relied upon for sound advice on all manner of things. Her organisational skills are second to none and not the least of her skills is her ability to remember who everybody is and put names to faces and vice versa.

Although not a Trustee, thanks are due to Pam Maskell the Carriage Volunteer Co-ordinator, not the easiest of jobs with the reduction in numbers of available volunteers.

Can I also give special thanks to Val Blamire who is stepping down as a Trustee for her contribution to the good running of the Friends. Val's knowledge and sound advice have been much appreciated over the years and will be greatly missed.

Thanks also go to the other Trustees, John Moss, Bob Wright and Graham Dalby for their valuable contributions and to Pete and Ann Lane for the work they do with the Footpath P3 group. The positive comments made on Facebook are a testament to the valuable and appreciated work the Footpaths group do all over the county.

The Friends continue to receive the fullest support from Country Park Ranger, Tom Hamilton, and that too is most appreciated.

Finally, my thanks and the thanks of my fellow Trustees go to all our volunteers wherever they put their time in, whether on Flitch Way or P3 Footpath work parties or in the Carriage.

Treasurer's report Margaret James:

Attached is a copy of the Balance sheet. Malcom our previous Auditor was unable to check our figures this year. Dawn Walters was able to do them for us, she has made a few changes to the layout of our Balance sheet to update the reporting of our figures. As you can see, we are carrying forward a balance of £8,416 with £4,011 in our savings account making a balance after outstanding cheques of £12,407. Our total Receipts for the year being £8,866 and Expenses £ 6,140 giving us a net figure of £2,726.

As with past years the Carriage is paying for itself, and just about breaking even. We receive on average £20 a week from the collection boxes. We still carefully monitor the electricity reading to ensure costs are kept to the minimum. Our monthly Direct Debit is at the moment £64 per month.

Santa in the Carriage was a success again this year, everyone was pleased to see us back, and we put a second day on to be able to see everyone who wanted to come. Having two Santa's worked really well but was hard going for the elves. Thanks to volunteers who came both ends of the day to help. We had some presents and wrapping paper left from previous

years. The presents we had to buy, we got with a good discount and we made a profit of £700.

We submitted our claim for Gift Aid and received £200. If you have not already done so please fill in a form and send to either Sandra, Wendy or myself.

We receive donations regularly from many sources including Virgin, PayPal and Amazon Smile. Grange Farm & Dunmow Runners gave us a £2,000 donation. We have also just received £1,188 from ECC which has paid for the Carriage to be re-carpeted.

Due to not being able to car share to work parties there are no travel expenses but going forward we will be paying that again.

Social report Margaret James:

Last year we were once again able to have our Christmas lunch, 28 of us went to The Bell at Panfield where we all enjoyed a wonderful 3 Course meal. Everyone was excited to be able to meet up and chat again with our friends.

21 of us went to Copped Hall in April and enjoyed a very interesting walk round the grounds of this house, dating back to before Tudor times, followed by a tour of the house which was badly burnt in 1917. It was amazing to see the work being carried out to restore it to its former glory. We then went to The Bull in Theydon Bois for lunch.

We will be looking for further trips in the very near future, and will plan Christmas lunch for December (hopefully the 15th).

Secretary's report Sandra Reynolds:

We have had another busy and successful year protecting the Flitch Way from neighbouring development. Since we started responding, the District Councils have received applications to build 6,212 houses and 5 non-residential developments over 27 sites. We do not object to every application particularly if there is clear public benefit and have started to request S106 funding for improvements. District Councils have refused permission at 14 of these sites, and 10 of the developers decided to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. Of these, an appeal for 32 houses in Takeley was dismissed. 60 houses west of Buttleys Lane, Great Dunmow and 120 houses south of Glida Terrace, Braintree were approved by the Planning Inspectorate. The appeal to convert Takeley Station into a House of Multiple Occupation is ongoing. Council planning decisions are still awaited on a commercial development at Start Hill, 90 houses at Little Canfield, 14 houses at Great Dunmow, 160 houses at Little Dunmow and a 114 hectare Solar Farm alongside Great Notley Country Park.

We should receive £40,000 of funding from the Gilda Terrance development and the 332 house Staggs Farm development includes a surfaced bridleway creation and £54,000 for the Flitch Way, providing a safe route from Buttleys Lane to Ongar Road in Great Dunmow.

Elsewhere in Dunmow, the landowner has signed an Express Dedication at Common Law to upgrade footpath 90 to a bridleway near the river Chelmer crossing, which is an important stepping stone to getting the sub-standard footbridge replaced with a bridleway bridge.

Most of our work updates are posted on our website and Facebook and we have 2,199 followers receiving numerous positive and supportive comments for the different groups work.

By the end of the May we should receive a custom-made people carrier trailer which will be used to transport volunteers to work sites. This was funded as part of the BDC Welcome Back fund for Health and Wellbeing.

Footpath Work Group report Pete Lane:

The team carried out clearance work on every work party and also installed 25 waymarkers, 35 steps and 3 bridges. Report 1 outlines what has been achieved this year which includes 36 work parties, 182 volunteer days and an average of 5 volunteers each day. This equates to 1,141 volunteer hours in total.

Fritch Way Volunteer Co-ordinator's report Wendy Moss:

This has been another challenging year for us all but we have managed to carry out significantly more work parties than we did last year. You will see from the detailed report 2 that there has been a good deal of time spent working on the section of the Fritch Way at Graunt Courts, at Rayne at the station and surrounding area, Dunmow cutting, the boardwalk and High Cross lane picnic area. Many new benches and interpretation boards have been installed (and some reinstalled when they had been damaged) along the Fritch Way as well. We have also spent some time at Great Notley Park on a variety of tasks and also the Blackwater Rail trail. We have had new volunteers join us and have seen some of our old friends returning to us after a break. So, all in all I consider we have had a good year and I very much look forward to the coming year when we can look forward to revisiting some of the areas that have missed our attention in the recent past.

Report 2 shows that 63 work parties have taken place with 489 volunteers and an average of 8 volunteers each day. This equates to $489 \times 5 \text{ hours} = 2,445$ volunteer hours in total.

Carriage Museum report Stan Davies:

To quote the statistics first, the Carriage has been open on 201 days this year when we have welcomed over 2,000 visitors. 13 volunteers have acted as stewards and put in a total of 1,067 hours in doing so. Last but not least, almost £1,000 has been generated by the Carriage, either as donations from visitors or from sales of books, DVDs or other similar items and that helps with covering the running costs of the Carriage including insurance and power. Special thanks go to Derek Atkinson who contributed many hours as a Carriage steward and for selling fundraising items.

Structurally, the Carriage is in reasonable condition and no major work is planned for the coming year. The Carriage has recently been re-carpeted, photographs have been updated and displays are in the process of being re-vamped.

We have a small core group of Carriage volunteers but could do with others, particularly at weekends. Anybody interested in becoming a Carriage steward should contact Pam Maskell or any of the committee members to arrange a visit and get an explanation of what is involved.

Once again, thanks are due to everybody who helps with the Carriage in any way.

Appointment/re-appointment of Committee and Trustees

Val Blamire stepped down as a committee member and trustee. Stan Davies stepped down as chair and Alan Trigg was unanimously proposed and accepted as the new Chair along with the remainder of the current committee.

The full Committee and Trustees for 2022-2023 are: -

- Chair – Alan Trigg
- Vice Chair – Stan Davies
- Secretary - Sandra Reynolds
- Treasurer - Margaret James
- Committee members - Graham Dalby, John Moss, Wendy Moss, Bob Wright.

Members Proposed Resolutions

Sandra confirmed there were no resolutions or questions put forward by the membership.

Stan also confirmed that the Friends would be applying for a grant for community litter pickers based at Rayne Station. The litter picking will be managed on a day to day basis by Josh at the Booking Hall café.

The next Committee meeting date is Wednesday 18 May at 2 pm. There being no other matters to discuss, Alan thanked everyone once again for attending and brought the Annual General Meeting to a close at 7.47pm.

Report 1 – Footpath Work Group Volunteer statistics

Site	No. of volunteers	Hours	Manhours	Clearance	Way Markers	Steps	Bridges
TOTAL	182	220.6	1141.1	36	25	35	3
Wimbish	5	6	30	Yes	4		
Little Sampford	5	7	35	Yes			
Rayne	5	6	30	Yes			
Bocking	6	6.5	39	Yes			1
Braintree	6	5	30	Yes			
Gransmore Green	6	6.6	39.6	Yes			
Gransmore Green	5	6	30	Yes			
Stagden Cross	4	6	24	Yes		5	
Great Bardfield	4	6	24	Yes			
Roswell, Great Bardfield	3	6.5	19.5	Yes		4	
Great Bardfield	6	6	36	Yes			
Braintree, Great Bardfield	7	7	49	Yes			
Great Bardfield, Barnston	6	7	42	Yes		4	
Braintree	6	5	30	Yes			
Boreham	2	4	8	Yes		2	
Braintree	6	6	36	Yes			
Great Bardfield	5	7	35	Yes			
Takeley	4	6	24	Yes			
Great Bardfield, Dunmow	6	7	42	Yes			
Blackmore End	4	6	24	Yes			
Braintree	4	4	16	Yes			
Blackmore End	5	6	30	Yes			
Coggeshall, Braintree			0	Yes			
Elsenham	6	6	36	Yes			
High Easter	5	7.5	37.5	Yes	7	4	
Bures	9	6	54	Yes	5		
Bambers Green	6	7	42	Yes			
Great Bardfield, Rayne	6	6	36	Yes			
Bambers Green, Bocking	7	6.5	45.5	Yes			
Wendons Ambo, Newport	6	6	36	Yes			
Wimbish, Little Sampford	7	6	42	Yes			
Hempstead	2	6	12	Yes	4		
Quendon	5	6	30	Yes	4		
Dunmow	6	6	36	Yes			2
Little Canfield	3	15	45	Yes	1	16	
Stanway Green	4	4	16	Yes			

36 work parties have taken place with 182 volunteers and an average of 5 volunteers each day. This equates to 1,141 volunteer hours in total.

Report 2 – Flitch Way work party group statistics

Date	Location	Task
1st & 13th April	Great Notley park	Planting and mulching new trees
8th April	Colne Valley	Installing new handrail to steps
22nd April	Gatewoods pond to Warners Close	Tidying Gatewoods area and cleaning and preserving bench, cleaning signs cutting back overhanging foliage up to Warners close.
22nd April	Rayne station	Installing new interpretation boards, repairing and reinstalling large sign near the gates. Mending three fences, washing and cleaning the large white gates and painting the blocks.
27th April to 6th May	Felmoors farm	Digging ditches to allow water flooding the track to drain away and barrowing away the mud off the surface
11th May	Great Notley park	Removing wire fencing etc
20th May	HCL Flitch way	Installing picnic benches
25th May	Rayne to pods brook Flitch way	Installing new benches and interpretation boards
2nd June	Rayne station	Thoroughly clean and tidy Railway carriage ready for reopening
8th and 9th June	Great Notley park	Replacing fencing around the pond
10th June	Rayne Station	Installing new sleepers and bench and laying bark around telephone box
22nd June	Rayne Station	Installing Barbara's bench
24th June	Dunmow cutting and between HCL East and West	Installing new interpretation boards and cutting back footpath at High cross Lane West
6th July	Blackwater rail trail	cutting back
7th Sept to 16th	Great Notley park	Conservation of wildflower meadows
21st Sept to 21st October	Dunmow cutting & Boardwalk area	Yearly cut and raking of the banks, Clearing and repairing the boardwalk
5th October	Rayne station	Cutting back vegetation East and West of the station
2nd November to 9th December	Great Notley park	Cutting back willow arch and various clearance tasks around the lake
30th November	Rayne Station	Planting daffodil bulbs
11th Jan to 15th March	Graunts Court to Bannister Green	Cutting back verges to hedgeline removing dead trees and opening up the hotspot banks along the Flitch Way from Graunts court towards Bannister Green
17th March	High Cross Lane East	Clearing picnic area
24th to 31st March	Garnetts wood	Protecting the new tree growth from deer and clearing the meadow picnic area of dogwood

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