

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

19th Annual General Meeting minutes

Date: Friday 5 May 2023, 7pm

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

Present: Chairman Alan Trigg, Vice-chairman Stan Davies, Secretary Sandra Reynolds, Treasurer Margaret James

Committee members - John Moss, Wendy Moss, Bob Wright,
Park Ranger Tom Hamilton

Apologies: Graham Dalby

Attendees: Val Blamire, Carl Blamire, Andy Horder, Carol Horder, Dick Hughes, Pat Hughes, Pete Lane, Bob Lucas, Sue Lucas, Pam Maskell, Wendy Taylor, Carol Vinton, John West

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

AGM Agenda

1. Reports and accounts – To receive, consider and approve the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023
2. Appointed committee members are also trustees.
 - o Chairman – Alan Trigg - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Vice-chairman – Stan Davies - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Secretary - Sandra Reynolds - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Treasurer - Margaret James - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Member - Wendy Moss - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Member - John Moss - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Member - Bob Wright - eligible for re-appointment
 - o Member - Graham Dalby - eligible for re-appointment
3. Members proposed resolutions.
4. Any other business

Chairman's report Alan Trigg:

Welcome to the 19th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Flitch Way. You should all have access to copies of the charity's annual accounts and associated paperwork. There will be opportunities for questions after each report has been given.

The formal part of the meeting consists of the acceptance of the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 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.

- Our membership now stands at 89 members with a net loss of 1 member this year.
- We have a total of 43 active volunteers. 9 in the Footpath group, 28 in Flitch Way work party group and 18 in the Carriage. Some of our volunteers work for more than one group.
- 3,808 volunteer hours recorded from the Carriage Stewards, Flitch Way work parties and the Footpath work group, down from 4,653.

Details of the last 12 months will be reported on by other Committee members and included in the notes as previously explained. We have had a reasonable year of activities but work parties have been less than expected over the winter. We received a £8,500 people carrier trailer used to

transfer volunteers as part of the Braintree District Council Welcome Back fund for Health and Wellbeing and £1,000 from the Chair of Braintree District Council as one of her nominated charities. The trailer had its maiden run earlier in the year and was a great success. It was good to get back to some Social Activities again after the pandemic of the previous two years. Hopefully we will soon be putting the new Mr Garnett in place in Garnetts Wood, as the statue is now ready – we just need to wait for some drier weather so we can remove the old concrete base from the old Mr Garnett. Thanks to Graham Dalby for managing the project.

This has been my first year back as Chairman after a year's break and I would like to 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 wish to record special thanks to the following people:

Wendy Moss, our chief work party organiser. 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. Wendy continues to be a valued committee member and volunteer.

Margaret James, our Treasurer and Social Secretary who continues to manage our finances and organise our group outings along with help from Wendy – which allows us to socialise outside of the work party environment.

Sandra Reynolds, our brilliant Secretary who does a tremendous job. She continues to keep her eyes on any developments which threaten the Flich Way and put in objections on our behalf. Sandra also liaises regularly with Tom if she spots or hears anything untoward along the Flich Way.

Pete and Ann Lane for their work in organising the P3 work parties which continue to receive many plaudits and messages of thanks around the Essex area, involving a lot of work behind the scenes in surveying prospective sites etc.

Pam Maskell, co-ordinator for the Carriage Stewards. The Carriage volunteers play an important role in promoting what we do and we continue to seek new Carriage volunteers.

Stan Davies, for his much appreciated advice and support and also for representing the Friends at various key events promoting our cause.

John Moss, Andy Horder, John West and Stan Davies for the DIY work they do behind the scenes. Graham Dalby for his project work to replace the old Mr Garnett (Not Alf) and representing us at the recent Rayne Parish Council meeting.

Brian Render and Richard Wansbury for maintaining exhibits and train set in the Carriage.

Derek Atkinson for his sterling work manning the Carriage for a large number of days during the last 12 months. Last but not least, Bob Wright for his work on the Committee and Tom Hamilton for all his work organising the work parties.

Finally, on behalf of my Committee and myself a big thank you to all the volunteers whether on the Flich Way Work parties, the P3 group or in the Carriage. Thanks also to all the other members for their support over the last year. Unfortunately, we have not been able to undertake the amount of work we normally would do but without you "Our Volunteers and Members" none of this would be possible. So, a big thanks again to you all.

Treasurer's report Margaret James:

Attached is a copy of the Balance sheet. Our total funds to be carried forward are £12,027.00 with £8,148.00 in the current account and £4,531.00 in our deposit account. Unpresented cheques totalled £652.00.

Our total Receipts for the year being £7,596.00 and Expenses £ 7,976.00 giving us a net loss of £380.00.

Due to the rise in interest rates, we have this year received £20.00 against pennies in previous years. We claimed Gift Aid and received £208.00. Please let us know if your tax paying situation changes.

This year the Carriage has made a loss of over £1,000.00 this is mainly due to the rise of the cost of electricity and the fact that the Carriage is not open as much as in past years. The insurance stayed level with only an increase of £10.00.

Santa in the Carriage was a success again this year, having two Santa's worked really well, and with the extra elves help, it made the day easier. Thanks to volunteers who came both ends of the day to help. We made a profit on the day of £534.75.

We receive donations regularly from many sources including Virgin, PayPal and AmazonSmile. We look forward to another good year.

Social report Margaret James:

Last year we once again were able to have our Christmas lunch at Weavers. 37 of us went, we all enjoyed a wonderful 2 or 3 course meal, everyone enjoyed the meal and meeting up and chatting with friends. We have booked the 14th of December 2023 for this year's meal, details will come out later in the year.

29 of us went on the Ongar and Epping Train trip in July, it was a wonderful warm and sunny day, everyone enjoyed the chance to sit and chat with friends, the lunch time spent in Epping was a great success everyone choosing their own venue to eat from the many cafés and restaurants.

In September, 17 of us went to Stanstead Bury, a Grade II property of Tudor origin. We were amazed to see how much work was being done to restore it. We followed the tour with lunch in the Jolly Fisherman in Ware.

A couple of weeks ago 19 of us went to Camfield Place home of Barbara Cartland, we were shown round by her granddaughter who told us many family stories. We were all amazed at how much Dame Barbara had done in her life as well as writing 700 books. The tour finished with afternoon tea in the amazing dining room served just how Barbara would have entertained her guests.

We are planning a trip to West Stow Hall later in the year, details will come out to you once there have been finalised.

Secretary's report Sandra Reynolds:

It has been a mixed year regarding neighbouring development alongside the Flitch Way. Two applications by Wren kitchens to create a new depot at Start Hill have been refused by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and they have now made a direct Section 62a application to the Planning Inspectorate. We have objected but if it does succeed, we have asked for maintenance funding for the Flitch Way and provision of link to Bishops Stortford. The appeal to convert Takeley Station into a Home of Multiple Occupation was refused. The Squires 90 house development in Little Canfield was refused on grounds of sustainability and historical illegal dumping. A second application for 14 houses on Buttleys Lane is ongoing.

No activity has yet taken place on the approved Staggs Farm and new school development at Great Dunmow which also includes provision of a bridleway connecting the Flitch Way between Buttleys Lane and Ongar Road and £54,000. We expect work to start soon as the Planning Inspector has upheld the appeal to develop the current Helena Romanes school site.

An application to build an additional 72 houses adjacent to Flitch Green is ongoing and we have asked for a contribution. 160 houses at Moors Field Little Dunmow was approved and includes £86,720 for Flitch Way improvements and £120,000 towards a new bridge over the river Chelmer.

Regrettably UDC gave permission for Felstead Station to be demolished and be replaced by 8 houses as it had been so badly vandalised despite objections by ourselves and the local parish councils.

We are awaiting further details on the solar farm which will surround Great Notley Country Park but it has conditional permission. A 79 park home application on the outskirts of Rayne has been withdrawn. Crest Nicholson are developing the 120 homes to the rear of Gilda Terrace in Braintree and are submitting finalised plans. The Flitch Way should benefit from £40,000.

Most of our work updates are posted on our website and Facebook and we have 2,720 followers receiving numerous positive and supportive comments for the different groups work.

Footpath Work Group report Pete Lane:

The team carried out clearance work on most work parties and also installed 10 waymarkers, 20 steps and carried out work on 13 bridges, gates or styles. Report 1 outlines what has been achieved this year.

42 work parties have taken place with 205 volunteer days and an average of just under 5 volunteers each day. This equates to 1,160 volunteer hours in total.

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

This has been a particularly challenging year for us all sadly carrying out significantly fewer work parties than we did last year. However, you will see from the detailed report that a lot of work has been achieved with the majority of time being spent working on different sections of the Flitch Way, in particular Felsted, Stebbing Road and Little Dunmow were tackled by Tom using our new trailer allowing us to get volunteers further along the track without the long walks in between. Felmoors Farm was a challenge where a great improvement for access was made by draining the ditches clearing the pathway and cutting back the banks there. Bannister Green Halt was given a much needed makeover with all the fences rebuilt and new interpretation boards installed and of course Rayne Station was given a tidy up and the interpretation boards cleaned and replaced as necessary. We made our usual visit to Dunmow Cutting clearing the banks and raking them and did some tidying up at High Cross Lane picnic area more recently renovating and reinstalling the interpretation board as well. Stane Street Halt finally got its two new interpretation boards although we do need to order a new bench as the old one has badly deteriorated. We also went to Great Notley Country Park opening up some much needed viewpoints around the lake and clearing out some of the invasive weed and Langford Halt had a yearly facelift too. We have had new volunteers join us and have some 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 49 work parties have taken place with 391 volunteers and an average of 8 volunteers each day. This equates to 391×5 hours = 1955 volunteer hours in total.

Carriage Museum report Stan Davies:

This year, the Carriage has been opened on 147 mornings and 126 afternoons, i.e. either from 10am to 1pm or 1pm to 3pm, those times being dependant on the weather, the day and the number of visitors, particularly for the afternoon sessions. We have welcomed over 2,169 visitors and put in 693 volunteer hours. We have also hosted the Essex Dementia Group and Beaver groups from Braintree and Rayne.

10 different volunteers have welcomed visitors to the Carriage this year. In addition, Brian and Richard have been regular attendees on Wednesdays, monitoring the good running of the model and taking care of any glitches which may appear. The majority of Carriage stewarding has been done by a small core of volunteers, one of whom accounted for 169 of the total of those 273 sessions. An input of new volunteers would therefore be welcome. Nobody is expected to be an expert from day one and full training including written guidance is given and mentoring can be done until a person feels confident. Any prospective volunteers should contact Pam Maskell or any of the committee members for an explanation of what's involved.

Almost £900 has been generated during the year, mainly from visitors' donations but also from the sale of items such as books, DVDs and commemorative mugs and that figure goes towards the increasing cost of power, insurance and other running costs.

Like many of us, the Carriage, which was built in 1968, is beginning to show its age. Although the roof is sound after the work that was done on it, urgent attention needs to be given to several areas of corrosion on the bodywork in order to extend the Carriage's life. Enquiries to find a local tradesperson willing to do the work are ongoing.

Once again, thanks are given to everyone who has helped look after the Carriage and its visitors during the past year.

Rangers Report – Tom Hamilton

Tom has been the ranger of the Flitch Way for 19 years and over that time the regular work parties have made a real difference. He thanked everyone for their continued support and understanding about the recent volunteer day changes. Now the overhead tree work is complete, we will be back to the once a week summer programme of work.

Appointment/re-appointment of Committee and Trustees

Alan Trigg confirmed that all committee members and trustees were happy to continue in their existing roles.

Members Proposed Resolutions

Sandra confirmed there were no resolutions or questions put forward by the membership. There being no other matters to discuss, Alan thanked everyone once again for attending and brought the Annual General Meeting to a close at 7.45.

Report 1 – Footpath Work Group Volunteer statistics

Site	No. of volunteers	Hours	Manhours	Clearance	Way Markers	Steps	Bridges /gate
TOTAL	205	232.5	1159.8	38	10	20	13
Stanway Green	6	5	30	yes			
Littley Green	5	6.5	25				2
Stanway Green	3	6	18	yes			
Great Waltham	4	6.5	26			2	
Maplestead/Bradwell	5	6	36	yes		1	1
Wendons Ambo/ Clavering	6	7	42	yes		1	2
Great Waltham	4	7	28	yes	1	2	
Bocking	6	6.5	39	yes			
Hawkspur Green	7	7	49	yes			
Hawkspur Green	3	4	12	yes			
Stebbingford	3	5	15	yes			
Stebbingford	4	6	24	yes			
Hatfield Peverel	6	6	36	yes			
Bannister Green, Lindsell	3	5	15			2	
Hempstead, Rayne	4	5	20	yes			
Little Dunmow, Rayne	5	6	30	yes			
Little Sampford	6	6.5	39	yes			1
Little Sampford	5	6.5	32.5		3		1
Blackmore End	6	6.5	39	yes			
Rayne	4	3	12	yes			
Leez Priory	5	6	30	yes			
Leez Priory, Braintree	6	6	36	yes			
Halstead	5	5	25	yes			
Elsenham	5	7	35	yes			
Little Hallingbury	6	6	36	yes		5	
Stebbingford	6	4.5	27	yes			
Great Henny	6	6	36	yes			
Twinstead/Middleton	7	5	35	yes	2		
Great Henny, Dunmow	5	6	30	yes	1	7	2
Little Sampford	3	5	15	yes			
Castle Hedingham	3	5	15	yes			2
Castle Hedingham, Earls Colne	3			yes	1		
Radwinter	5			yes			
Shalford Green	4	6	24	yes			2
Cressing	4	5	20	yes			
Finchingfield	6	6	36	yes			
Hedingham Twinstead	4	6	24	yes			
Twinstead	4	6.5	26	yes	1		
Stansted Mountfitchet, Little Hallingbury	7	6	42	yes			
Tilbury juxta Clare	6	6	36	yes			
Mashbury	6	7	42	yes			
Braintree	4	5.5	22	yes			

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Report 2 – Flich Way work party group statistics

Date	Location	Task
21st April to 12th May	Langford Halt	Clearing platform and cutting back footpath renovating signs and interpretation boards
19th May	Witham	Clearing footpath and cutting back the area
24th May	Rayne to Gatewoods Pond	Cutting back verges to improve access and tidying up around Rayne station also cleaning all information boards
7th June	Stebbing Road	Cutting back verges to improve access and tidying up area
15th June	Little Dunmow	Cutting back verges and overhanging vegetation from the path behind the travellers site
21st June	Felsted slope	Clearing the slope and mending the fence
30th July to 3rd August	Bannister Green Halt	Complete rebuild and refurbish of fencing and signage
4th August and 23rd August	Great Notley	Removing invasive weed from sections of the lake
27th September to 20th October	Dunmow Cutting	Raking the wildflower banks
8th November to 6th December	Great Notley	Clearing open spaces around the lake and working on the willow walk
12th to 17th January	High cross lane	Clearing the car park and picnic area and pathway
18th Jan to 19th February	Little Dunmow Flich Way	Cutting back verges
22nd to 2nd March & 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th March	Felmoors farm Flich way	Digging out ditches and clearing path of mud and debris and cutting back the overgrowth opening up large area of wildflower banks
14th March	Rayne Flich Way	Reinstalling interpretation sign and opening up viewpoint opposite bench area cutting back overgrown area.
23rd March	Stane street and High cross lane	Installing 2 new interpretation boards and clearing halt reinstalling interpretation board at High cross lane

49 work parties have taken place with an average of 8 volunteers each day, equivalent to 391 volunteer days. This equates to $391 \times 5 \text{ hours} = 1955$ volunteer hours in total.