

# **Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands**

## **Notes from Annual General Meeting**

**Date:** Friday 15 May 2020

**Venue:** Video Conference

**Present:** Chairman Alan Trigg, Secretary Sandra Reynolds, Treasurer Margaret James, Committee members, Val Blamire, Stan Davies, Bob Lucas, John Moss, Wendy Moss. Guests Bob Wright, Ranger, Tom Hamilton.

Chairman Alan Trigg welcomed the attendees to the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Flitch Way. Due to the Corona Virus lockdown the meeting is being held by video conference as previously explained by our Secretary Sandra in an earlier communication to all existing members. We will go through our normal terms of AGM Business which will then be communicated to all members within two weeks of the AGM.

### **Reports and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019**

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 proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. All agreed and Sandra signed accordingly on behalf of Alan.

### **Chairman's Report Alan Trigg:**

- It is nice to report on yet another interesting and successful year for the Friends.
- Our membership now stands at 83 members with a net addition of 7 members this year. We have a total of 67 volunteers (10 in the Footpath Work Group, 50 on the Flitch Way Group and 24 for the Carriage)
- Details of the last 12 months will be reported on by other Committee members and included in the notes as previously explained.
- As Chairman, I am pleased to report that the objectives contained in the Constitution when the charity was first set up continue to be met.
- We have had a very mixed year with fewer work parties due to weather and staffing reasons but a lot of effort has been put in by all volunteers over the year. We still managed to clock up 6,505 volunteering hours.
- One of the main highlights of the year, was that one of our long serving members received an award in last year's Queens Birthday Honours list for services to the community - Congratulations to Stan Davies for being awarded the British Empire Medal – well deserved for all the incredible work he has done not only for the Friends but also for the Lions Club and other parts of the community over the years and he continues to do so.
- We now have three new First Aiders – congratulations to Ian Cresshull, Peter Hanks and Bob Jenkins.
- We co-opted an additional Committee Member onto the Committee during the year – Bob Wright – who will be standing for election for the coming year as a Committee Member.
- Some of the Friends featured taking a summer walk along the Flitch Way on an ITV Anglia news article, including Lesley Gilman on her horse.
- We had some enjoyable Social get-togethers in the last 12 months which Margaret will elaborate on in her report.

I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for all their support over the last 12 months and I wish to record special thanks to the following people:

**Wendy Moss**, our chief organiser for work parties for keeping us all in line. Wendy, as you know is one of the founder members of the Friends and she is the person to contact about joining the group and she continues to be a valued committee member and volunteer.

**Margaret James**, our treasurer and social secretary, who continues to manage our increasingly complicated finances and organize our group outings along with help from Wendy.

**Sandra Reynolds**, our amazing Secretary who continues to do a tremendous job re-vamping and improving the Friends website. Sandra was instrumental in getting the Flitch Way declared as a Local Nature Reserve and she continues to keep her eyes on the developments which continue to threaten the Flitch Way and putting in objections on our behalf. Some good news on the developments front which Sandra will report on. Sandra liaises regularly with Tom if she spots or hears anything untoward along the Flitch Way.

**Pete and Ann Lane** for their work in organising the P3 Footpath Work Group work parties which receive many plaudits and messages of thanks around the Essex area and which involves a lot of work behind the scenes in surveying prospective sites etc.

**Pam Maskell**, coordinator for the Carriage Stewards who has the task of organising people to fill the Rota. The Carriage volunteers play an important role and continue to be needed, mainly at weekends but also during school holidays and I urge members to keep in touch with Pam if you have any time to help us out.

**Stan Davies**, for his much appreciated advice, support and Minute taking skills.

**Andrew and Irene Adair** for all the work put in on the Friends' behalf in lodging objections to the proposed Brook Green development as well as issues including trying to obtain heritage status for the Flitch Way.

**The Ranger Service** especially Tom Hamilton, who tries to ensure the work parties remain interesting as well as getting us all out into the fresh air.

Finally, on behalf of my Committee and myself, a big thank you to all the volunteers whether on the Flitch Way Work Parties, the Footpath Work Group or in the Carriage. Thanks also to all the other members for their support over the last year. We have undertaken an enormous amount of work over the last 12 months and without you "Our Volunteers and Members", none of this would be possible. So a big thank you again to you all.

#### **Treasurer's Report Margaret James:**

Attached is a copy of the Financial Statements. As you can see we are carrying forward a balance of £8811.00. Our total Receipts for the year being £6228.00 and Expenses £7106.00 giving us a net figure of -£878.00.

As with past years the Carriage is paying for itself. We are just about breaking even. We receive on average £20.00 a week from the collection boxes. We still carefully monitor the electricity reading weekly to ensure costs are kept to the minimum. Our monthly Direct Debit is at the moment £78.00 per month.

Santa in the Carriage was an unexpected success as we were not sure how changing it to a Friday would work. We had presents left from last year so we made a good profit of £260.00.

We submitted our claim for Gift Aid and received £296.00. If you have not already done so please fill in a form and send to either Sandra, Wendy or myself. There are full details of expenditure and expenses if anyone would like to see them.

### **Social report Margaret James:**

As in past years our Christmas lunch at Wildens was a complete success.

We have, due to popular demand, booked it again for Wednesday 16th December 2020, hopefully by then life will have got back to normal and we can again enjoy meeting up with our friends. We will when the menus are available, send them out with a request for full payment and menu choices to secure your place and as usual it will be on first come, first served basis.

It all seems a long time ago now, but in April 2019, 22 of us enjoyed a visit to the Abbey at Coggeshall with lunch in the White Hart pub, we all enjoyed it very much and found the old guy who showed us round very interesting. Our next trip was an evening walk around Quendon through beautiful bluebell woods with dinner in The Chequers village pub at Ugley afterward. Our last trip of the year following lunch in a nearby pub was to Talliston House and Gardens in Dunmow. That tour will stay in the memories of the 17 who went forever. Well worth a visit if you get a chance.

We had arranged for a trip to go to Bardfield Vineyard for a tour, tasting and lunch on the 11th May but unfortunately due to the current situation this has not happened and we have sent refund cheques out to everyone who had paid.

We have pencilled in a visit to Copped Hall near Epping for the 22nd June 2020 if we are able to make this visit we will get details out to you as soon as possible.

I hope you have enjoyed the trips we have made and look forward to many more in the future.

### **Secretary's Report Sandra Reynolds:**

We have increased the number of followers on Facebook from 1150 to 1444 people and get many positive comments for our work. This year we also have set up online payment services with Virgin Donate and PayPal and with the help of Brian and Richard, started selling excess museum stock on eBay.

We have had a very successful year protecting the Flitch Way from neighbouring development. In addition to the Planning Application comments, I represented the group at three Planning Inspector Inquiries in 2019 and one in 2018, all of which were dismissed by the Inspector. These include 1,600 homes at Brook Green between Rayne and Braintree, 240 homes near Flitch Green, 37 and 135 homes both in Takeley. The only development that has been agreed is for 7 homes on a brownfield site near Felsted ramp, and they moved the build line back, in part due to our comments. We are awaiting decisions on 5 more developments.

Talks were held with the head of Maldon Council and Countryside Properties about opening up the tunnel under the road near Langford Halt on the Blackwater Rail Trail. Countryside Properties have committed to producing a costed report which we can use to work with ECC and help with funding.

The Flitch Way Action Group have been working to connect the Flitch Way at Great Dunmow, and have seen the first sections of the new bridleway open through the Redrow and Taylor Wimpey housing developments. Further details are on the Flitch Way Action Group website.

We have continued to refresh and extend our information boards along the Flitch Way thanks to a donation from the festival ran by the Booking Hall Café in Rayne in 2018. New boards have been created for the Rayne telephone box/station car park area and in memory of Nigel Wood at Gatewoods Pond and a memorial plaque for founding member Jim Cloke is on display in the Carriage.

### **P3 Footpath Work Group report Pete Lane:**

We have had another great year getting out and about the County. There have been several new Public Right of Way Officers this year. Some of these officers have already got us working in their areas. We do have several PROW Officers that we work with a great deal and they are always appreciating the hard work put in by the team.

We have had our normal range of work from installing way marker posts, steps, gates and bridges. We have had some fairly demanding jobs that have taken several visits to complete the job. We have had some interesting jobs, one on a military training ground and another on one of the worst footpaths we have encountered. We are very lucky to have a new volunteer join us after two of the old team moved out of the area. It is really impressive how the team gel, all happy to get on with the various tasks assigned to us. Everyone has their own skills and preferences which are always put to good use.

I have been very impressed with the commitment of the team, nothing seems to daunt them. The last few weeks have been very hard to get used to. I look forward to getting back to our usual work parties. There will be plenty of work in the pipeline by the time life returns to normality.

I have attached a spreadsheet (Report 1) to outline what has been achieved this year which included 41 work parties totalling 1,542 volunteering hours. All the PROW Officers appreciate the effort we put into our work for them. We have a fantastic team and I thank them all for their dedication.

### **Flitch Way Volunteer Co-ordinator's Report Wendy Moss:**

We have had a very successful year with a number of new volunteers joining us throughout the year and a great variety of tasks carried out. As well as the clearing up after the tree felling in Garnetts Wood we were able to protect the regrowth of the trees and also carry out some tree planting. Several areas of the Flitch Way desperately needed cutting back and drainage ditches cleared and opened up to stop flooding of the paths. We were also able to utilise our hedge laying skills and have created a beautiful stretch of hedge along the Takeley section. This also allowed some of our new volunteers an opportunity to be taught the craft by our expert volunteer hedge layers. Apart from all of this we have revisited some of the halts that needed some TLC and carried out work on fencing and the signage as well. It is always good to return to areas where we have worked before to see the result of our efforts and the Dunmow cutting in particular is one such site. Due to the stalwart work carried out every year on this site we were able to see, during our survey, the return of many beautiful wildflowers and as a result the influx of butterflies and in particular a first sighting of the Marbled White butterflies feeding on Field Scabious flowers. How wonderful!!

A total of 52 work parties have taken place with 567 volunteers and an average of 11 volunteers each day. This equates to  $567 \times 5 \text{ hours} = 2,835$  volunteer hours in total. See the details in Report 2.

### **Carriage Museum Report Stan Davies:**

Another good year for the Community Carriage with 4721 visitors in 2019/20 making a total of 25,901 visitors since the carriage was opened in 2014.

Over 20 different volunteers acted as stewards this year, opening the Carriage on 288 days for a total of 532 sessions, which equates to 2,128 hours. In the weeks up to 17th March when the carriage was closed due to the Coronavirus restrictions, the carriage was opened for an average of 5 days every week, from Thursday through to Tuesday. Without

volunteers' input, there would be many disappointed visitors to Rayne Station and the comments made in the visitors' book are a testament to peoples' enjoyment and the welcome they receive from the Carriage Stewards. Thanks go to everyone who has helped with the Carriage, inside and out, and to Pam, our Carriage Volunteer Co-ordinator.

A variety of pre-arranged visits to the Carriage took place during the year including local Beaver groups, a local school and several visits by Essex Dementia group. All such visits took place with accompanying carers or responsible adults. A walk from Braintree Station to Rayne organised by Essex & South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership ended with a talk in the carriage on the history of the Flitch Way. Dependent on restrictions applicable at the time, another such walk is being organised for the end of July. Several talks on the Flitch Way and its history have also been given to other organisations at different venues during the year.

Three windows needed to be replaced this year, two because of faulty seals causing misting in the sealed units and one broken because of a stone thrown by an unknown individual. Disappointing though that was, the biggest downside of the year was the mindless vandalism which occurred around Rayne Station and which included cretins attempting to cut through the cable providing power to the Carriage and which resulted in the Carriage being closed for a short time in November while the cable was replaced.

Although the Carriage is weatherproof and generally in good condition, the outside badly needs re-painting. It is hoped that volunteers will be able to paint the sides and undercarriage and a quote from a local business for the roof to be cleaned and painted has been accepted. A grant application to cover the cost of the work has been submitted to Essex Community Foundation for their consideration. When the work will be done is uncertain due to the awaited decision on funding and the current coronavirus advice on social distancing but the anticipated reduction in volunteer work party activity during the summer should hopefully give the opportunity for the work to be done before the Autumn.

### **Rangers Report Tom Hamilton:**

Firstly, I'd like to thank all this involved in the winter work program this season, we've managed to complete against the odds at times, three great projects in Garnetts Wood and on the Flitch Way. Thanks also need to go to all that support the work of the friends be it in on the carriage, during events, on the committee, P3 or just supporting those that come out to work. The work that is carried out on the Flitch and other related sites by the group would not be done in the same manner with sensitive and improvement for wildlife if it were not for the time and effort of all involved. Lastly, thanks to the committee for the work they do and to Wendy for the additional work she does to organise our work parties.

The Flitch Way Local Nature Reserve designation is in the very final stages now, the application has been processed and approved, ECC have advertised the designation, we are awaiting the final approval of the new bylaws for the site. I have been told that the Flitch should show on the Natural England database and Magic Map sometime this month. Special thanks needs to go to Sandra for the amazing work she has carried out to enable the application to go forward.

As you are aware things are anything but ordinary at present. As I write this Essex Country Parks have been closed since Monday 22nd March until further notice. This of course had the impact of cancelling all volunteer activities across parks until further notice. It will be quite some time I think before we can look to restart things again, we will need to look at the way we work in the coming months so that we meet government guidelines and ensure that everyone can work with minimal risk.

### **Appointment/re-appointment of committee and Trustees**

Following normal practice, Chairman and Secretary stepped down from their posts at the end of the financial year. There were no new candidates put forward for either role and, both being prepared to stand again, Alan and Sandra were re-appointed as Chairman and Secretary respectively for the year to April 2021.

Alan said that he would be entering his fifth and last year as Chairman. A new Chairman would therefore need to be found to take over from him in 2021 at the latest.

Chairman confirmed that current committee members were willing to continue and there were no objections from the Members. Bob Wright was appointed to join the Committee and become a Trustee. Alan said that the full committee for 2020-2021 would therefore be: -

Chairman - Alan Trigg

Vice Chairman - Stan Davies

Secretary - Sandra Reynolds

Treasurer - Margaret James

Committee members - Val Blamire, Bob Lucas, John Moss, Wendy Moss, Bob Wright.

### **Members Proposed Resolutions**

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

There being no other matters to discuss, Chairman thanked everyone once again for attending and brought the Annual General Meeting to a close.

## Report 1 – Footpath Work Group Volunteer statistics

Date	Site	No. of volunteers	No. of hours	Manhours	Clearance	Way marker	Bridges(m)	Steps	Gates	Other
03/04/2019	Braintree/Bradwell	6	6.5	39	yes					cleared bridge
10/04/2019	Braintree	8	6.5	52	yes					
17/04/2019	Bocking	6	7	42	yes					
24/04/2019	Bradwell, Bocking, Braintree	6	6.25	37.5	yes	2				put handrail on bridge
01/05/2019	Elsenham	7	7.75	54.25	yes		1(5.5m)			
07/05/2019	Elsenham	4	8.75	35		1		9		
22/05/2019	Elsenham	7	7.5	52.5	yes	2	1(2.5)			
29/05/2019	Elsenham	7	7.25	50.75	yes	3		5		
05/06/2019	Ugley	5	7.5	37.5	yes					
03/07/2019	Little Yeldham	5	7.25	36.25	yes	3				
10/07/2019	Cressing	5	6	30	yes					
17/07/2019	Wickham St. Paul	4	6	28	yes					
24/07/2019	Rettendon	4	7				1(4.5)			
31/07/2019	Takeley, Surrex	6	7	28	yes					
06/08/2019	Surrex	8	6.75	54	Yes					
14/08/2019	Braintree	6	2	12	yes					
21/08/2019	Braintree/ White Notley	9	6.5	58.5	yes	2				
28/08/2019	Quendon	8	7.75	62				7		2handrails plus secured FOOTPATH with road plannings
04/09/2019	Quendon, Arkesden, Elmdon	8	7.75	62	yes					
11/09/2019	Halstead	5	8.25	41.25	yes	10				
18/09/2019	White Colne	4	6	24	Yes					
02/10/2019	Quendon/Elmdon	6	7.5	45	yes		1(4m)			
16/10/2019	Hatfield Peverel	6	7.25	43.5					1 field 1 kissing	
23/10/2019	Mashbury	4	5	20	yes					
30/10/2019	Clavering	6	6.75	40.5	yes					
06/11/2019	Hatfield Heath, Sheering	6	5.5	33	yes					
13/11/2019	Dunmow, Roxwell	5			Yes					
27/11/2019	Little Maplestead	5			yes					
04/12/2019	Little Maplestead	6	5.5	38.5	yes					
11/12/2019	Earls Colne, Little Henny	7	6.75	47.25	yes					
08/01/2020	Henny Street, Wethersfield	8	6.5	53	yes					
15/01/2020	Braintree	2	2	4	yes	2				
22/01/2020	Friday Wood Colchester	5	5.5	27.5	yes					
29/01/2020	Little Waltham, Braintree	6	5.5	33	yes					
05/02/2020	Lindsell, Radwinter	6	7.25	43.5	yes	2				
12/02/2020	Braintree, Blackmore End	6	6.75	40.5	yes					
19/02/2020	Blackmore End	6	5.75	34.5	yes					
25/02/2020	Greenstead Green	8	7.25	58	yes					
04/03/2020	Greenstead Green	5	7.25	58	yes					
11/03/2020	Greenstead Green	7	7.25	58	yes					
18/03/2020	Greenstead Green	5	5.5	27.5	yes					
<b>TOTALS</b>				<b>1541.75</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	

## Report 2 – Flitch Way work party group statistics

Date	Location	Task
2nd & 4th Apr 2019	Garnetts wood	Clearing coppiced area creating wood stacks and protecting regrowth area for the cut trees.
25th Apr	Rayne Station to Gatewoods	Clearing verges, installing new gate & mending other gate at Gatewoods, Washing white gates at the station
30th Apr	Garnetts wood	Clearing coppiced area creating wood stacks and protecting regrowth area for the cut trees. Planting new trees
9th May	High Cross picnic area	Installing new bollards repairing broken bench and clearing overgrowth and cleaning interpretation boards
11th May (Saturday)	Dunmow Byway	Combined volunteer effort to install barriers to protect the surrounding area from misuse
14th May	Dunmow Boardwalk	Cutting tree roots and repair of boardwalk general cutback of overgrown foliage
21st May	Witham	Cutback and litter pick of the area
20th Jun	Dunmow Cutting	The wildflower and butterfly count carried out today along the Dunmow Cutting was very successful. Common Spotted orchids and Bee orchids were seen in good numbers and the highlight of the day was the appearance of several Marbled White butterflies feeding on Field Scabious flowers. This is the first they have been recorded here and lovely to see.
25th Jun	Felsted	Cutting back invasive snowberry
9th Jul	Stebbing	installing bench
8th Aug	HCL and Stane Street	Weeding and clearing the Stane street site mending and restoring the benches at High Cross Lane picnic area
5th Sep	Stane street and Rayne	reinstating the repaired signs at Stane Street and Rayne station
12th to 19th Sep	Dunmow Cutting	Annual clearance of the wildflower banks
26th Sep to 3rd Oct	Gatewoods pond to A120 bridge	Clearing around the pond and cutting back the verges and overhanging branches removed
8th Oct	Graunts court	Clearing and cutting back renovating signage
10th to 24th Oct	Felmores farm	Clearing and cutting back
5th to 14th Nov	Langford halt	Cutting back along entrance lane and clearing the platform then cutting back all along the track towards the gate. Cleaning and preserving the signs
19th Nov to 10th Dec	Garnetts wood	Opening up the butterfly rides including some tree felling to open it up to the sun
14th Jan to 12th Feb	Stane Street halt	Cutting back ramp and verges along the Flitch removing larger overhanging trees opening up the waterlogged pathway and repairing the fence on the halt.
13th Feb to 17th Mar 2020	Takeley	Cutting back verges along the Flitch removing larger overhanging trees opening up pathway and hedge laying a large section

Although in all there were fewer work parties this year a great deal of varied and valuable work has been carried out by our volunteers as can be seen above.

From 2nd April 2019 to 17th March 2020 a total of 52 work parties have taken place with 567 volunteers and an average of 11 volunteers each day.

This equates to  $567 \times 5\text{hours} = 2,835$  volunteer hours in total