

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Annual General Meeting report

Date: Friday 7 May 2021

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, Bob Wright

Guests - Graham Dalby, Lesley Gillman, Susan Baumbach, Sue Lucas, Claire Malone-Lee, Cheryl & Alan Harris, Rosie Schonenberger, Wendy Taylor.

Chairman Alan Trigg welcomed the attendees to the 17th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Flitch Way. Due to the Coronavirus restrictions, the meeting was held by video conference.

Reports and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020

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:

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

- Our membership now stands at 95 members with a net addition of 12 members this year. We have a total of 72 volunteers Footpath – 11; FW – 55; Carriage – 25, note some volunteers work for more than one group.
- The total number of volunteer hours was 2,189 compared with 6,505 the previous year.
- 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 very disappointing year with limited activity due to the Coronavirus outbreak, which I know has been very frustrating for everyone, including myself, not being able to get out in the fresh air and make a difference.
- Although we have not been as active as normal, we have been fortunate to have received a number of kind donations which Margaret will elaborate on later.
- As most people are aware as Chairman, I have now served my maximum period of 5 years as per our Constitution, so will be standing down this year. I will however be standing for a position as Vice-chair.

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. Wendy as you know is one of the founder members of the Friends and is the person to contact about joining the group. Wendy 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 organise our group outings when we are allowed along with help from Wendy.

Sandra Reynolds, our Secretary was instrumental in getting the Flitch Way declared as a Local Nature Reserve which was finally rubber stamped this year. She continues to keep her eyes on the developments which continue to threaten the Flitch Way and put in objections on our behalf. Sandra also 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 Footpath workgroup parties which continue to receive many plaudits and messages of thanks around the Essex area and involving a lot of work behind the scenes in surveying prospective sites etc. I'd like to thank Pete for his work as a trustee.

Pam Maskell, coordinator for the Carriage stewards who would normally organise people to fill the rota. The Carriage volunteers play an important role and will continue to be needed once we are allowed to re-open.

Stan Davies, for his much-appreciated advice, support, fund-raising and Minute taking skills. **John Moss, Andy Horder, John West, Stan Davies** and **Brian Render** for all the DIY and maintenance work they do behind the scenes.

Derek Atkinson and Susan Baumbach for their work on the Carriage steps, answering questions and raising funds through the sale of second hand books.

Andrew and Irene Adair for the work put in on the Friends' behalf in lodging objections to the proposed Land South of Gilda Terrace (junior Brook Green) development as well as trying to obtain heritage status for the Flitch Way.

The Ranger service especially **Tom Hamilton** who always tries to ensure that work parties remain interesting. It has been particularly difficult during the last 12 months trying to arrange work parties following the "rule of 6" Covid guidance when we were allowed.

Also a special thank you to **Bob Lucas** who has decided to stand down from the Committee after the AGM. Bob will however, remain as a valued work party member and First Aider.

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 workgroup 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 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 £10,271.00. Our total Receipts for the year being £9,855.00 and our Expenses £8884.00, giving us a net figure of £971.00.

This year due to the pandemic things have been very different. The Carriage Museum has not been open for a whole year, therefore losing all the income we usually get from visitors, but we have had many donations via PayPal and Virgin Money. Josh from the Booking Hall café was kind enough to give us £250.00 and we had an anonymous donation from a friend! A member's sister died who loved the Fitch Way and Rayne Station, and we received a generous donation in her memory, some of which we will use to buy another seat for the Carriage area and the rest to be used for general costs.

We did not have Santa in the Carriage at Christmas last year, therefore also losing that income. The high expenditure of the Carriage is due to the renewal of the roof at the beginning of the year. Due to the Carriage not operating we received a refund from EDF and our current payment for energy is £10.00 per month.

We were made aware of a Covid grant from the Government which as a charity we were able to apply for. We were successful in our claim and received £4,416.00. We submitted our claim for GiftAid and received £151.00. If you have not already done so, please fill in a form and send to either Sandra, Wendy or myself.

Social report Margaret James:

Due to the pandemic we had to cancel our much looked forward to Christmas lunch, which was to take place on Wednesday 16th December 2020 at Wildens. I understand that Wildens no longer operates as we know it therefore, if we are able, we will be looking for another venue for December 2021. Fingers crossed.

We had arranged a trip to Bardfield Vineyard for a tour, tasting and lunch on the 11th May 2020 but unfortunately due to the situation this had to be cancelled and refund cheques were sent to everyone who had paid. I hope if we can, to arrange this for a later date this

year. A trip to Copped Hall near Epping was also being looked into and will be arranged as soon as we are able to meet up and start getting out about again
I hope we can start looking forward to trips again in the very near future

Secretary's Report Sandra Reynolds:

We have increased the number of followers on Facebook from 1,444 to 1,825 people and get numerous positive comments for our work especially as many more people have been using the public rights of way network during the lockdowns. I posted a wildlife/local interest post on Facebook every day for a year to try and highlight the wonderful things all around us in the midst of the pandemic.

We have had another busy and successful year protecting the Flitch Way from neighbouring development. Since we started, the District Councils have received applications to build 5,947 houses and 4 non-residential developments over 21 sites. We do not object to every application particularly if there is clear public benefit. District Councils have refused permission at 12 of these sites, and 9 of the developers decided to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. Of these, five appeals have been dismissed including in the last year one for 80 houses at Takeley, one appeal was approved (for 8 houses in Takeley) and three sites are still under appeal including 27 houses at Takeley, 60 houses at Great Dunmow and 120 houses at Braintree. Council planning decisions are still awaited on a commercial development at Start Hill, 23 houses in Takeley, commercial at Little Canfield and 332 houses at Great Dunmow.

Further protection is in place with the designation of the Flitch Way as a Local Nature Reserve. In early 2021 it finally became visible on DEFRA MAGIC map which enabled the designation and protection to be included in the plans of Braintree and Uttlesford Councils. The Flitch Way Action Group have been continuing the work to connect the Flitch Way at Great Dunmow, and the key section connecting Ongar Road to Buttleys Lane is dependent on the 332 house and school development in Great Dunmow.

Footpath Work Group report Pete Lane:

We have had a very erratic year due to Covid restrictions. We have adhered to the guidelines given to us by ECC. Having said that we have managed to get out working on footpaths, bridleways and byways, installing bridges, steps, way markers and general clearance. The team have been so versatile taking it in turns to attend work parties and traveling in separate cars. I am sure everyone has enjoyed getting out into the countryside and having something different to do.

Report 1 outlines what has been achieved this year which included 24 work parties totalling 864 volunteer hours (based on work parties of 6 people and 6 hours duration volunteering hours).

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

I think everyone will agree this has been our most difficult and challenging year so far but as always, our volunteers have risen to the challenge, working in small groups to achieve as much improvement to the areas that we love. Rayne station in particular had an early facelift with the Carriage being painted and the replanting of the flower beds has resulted in a host of golden daffodils on show this spring, bringing cheer to everyone who sees them. Dunmow Cutting and the boardwalk were also visited and the annual task of cutting the banks was achieved and several areas along the Flitch Way were visited and cut back to improve access. Garnett's wood was also given some attention from volunteers clearing bramble from the area around the stools and newly planted trees. During lockdown our volunteers have not been idle as I know many have spent their days litter picking along the Flitch Way and around the places that they take their daily walks and some have also volunteered at the many vaccination centres in the county and in some of the school testing centres. So, as we face the coming year, I am optimistic that we can look forward to getting back together once again and making a difference in the way we do best!!

Report 2 shows that a total of 56 work parties have taken place with 265 volunteers and an average of 5 volunteers each day. This equates to $265 \times 5 \text{ hours} = 1,325$ volunteer hours in total.

Carriage Museum Report Stan Davies:

The start of the pandemic meant that it was necessary to close the Carriage to visitors on 17 March 2020 to protect the health of visitors and our volunteer stewards. Although consideration was given during the year to re-opening in the periods not covered by the lockdown rules, it was felt that to do so would require much closer management of visitors than before with constant sanitising of the interior of the Carriage. Ultimately, it was felt that even if sufficient volunteers were prepared to resume stewarding duties, COVID-19 restrictions would impose too heavy a burden on volunteers to allow for re-opening. Contact with potential visitors was maintained by Derek and Susan from outside the Carriage in the period between lockdowns, by speaking to visitors and raising funds from the sale of books and surplus items from the Carriage. Brian has also continued to keep an eye on the Carriage interior and worked to maintain the model ready for whenever the museum re-opens.

On the positive side, a local roofing contractor was engaged to successfully repair and repaint the roof in August and volunteers did an excellent job in re-painting the Carriage sides to a good standard once the roof had been finished. A BDC Councillors Community Grant of £1,050 helped cover the cost of repainting the Carriage and planting the wildflowers in the Signal Box base. We also gained a grant of £1,605 from the ECC Locality fund to purchase and install 4 benches and information boards between Braintree and Rayne, along with the purchase of hi-visibility vests, tools and safety clothing.

Appointment/re-appointment of Committee and Trustees

Alan stepped down as Chair as he has been in the post 5 years along with the Vice-chair and Secretary. Stan was proposed as the new Chair, Alan as Vice-chair and Sandra as Secretary for the year to April 2022.

Stan, as new Chair confirmed that with the exception of Bob Lucas, current Committee members were willing to continue and there were no objections from the Members. Graham Dalby was proposed to join the Committee and will become a Trustee. Pete Lane is stepping down as Trustee. Therefore, the full Committee and Trustees for 2021-2022 are: -

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

Members Proposed Resolutions

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

The next Committee meeting date was changed to 11 June at 2 pm. There being no other matters to discuss, Stan thanked everyone once again for attending and brought the Annual General Meeting to a close.

Report 1 – Footpath Work Group Volunteer statistics

864 volunteer hours based on work parties of 6 people and 6 hours duration

May	20th 27th	Sheering & Wimbish Rayne & Bradwell
June	3rd 13th 17th 24th	Sheering & Gibberd Gardens Felsted Stansted Mountfitchet Stansted & Elsenham
July	1st 7th 15th 22nd 29th	White Notley Little Dunmow & Radwinter Radwinter Gibberd Gardens Great Saling
August	12th 26th	Rayne & Shalford White Colne
September	2nd 9th 16th 22nd 20th	Little Dunmow Little Dunmow Manuden Black Notley High Easter
October	7th 28th	Sheering & Gibberd Gardens Black Notley & Gosfield
November	4th	Stagden Cross
December	9th 10th	Little Sampford Takeley
March	31st	Gibberd Gardens

Report 2 – Flitch Way work party group statistics

Date	Location	Task
23rd July to 6th August	High Cross Lane East and West	Clearance of picnic area and opening up parallel track for access this was carried out on both sides of the road.
23rd July to 6th August	Rayne station	Preparing signal box and corner garden for planting, moving bench along platform, repairing broken back fence, cleaning around carriage and renovating Rayne interpretation board
6th to 20th August	Dunmow boardwalk	Renovating the broken boardwalk and cutting back foliage on both sides for access
6th August	Rayne station and Gatewoods pond	Cleaning and painting both benches, installing no cycling on platform sign, Clearing scrub around bench at Gatewoods pond and reinstalling interpretation box.
27th August	Felmoors Farm	Cutting back for access and reducing the reeds overhanging the path
1st September	Rayne station	Planting up the signal box garden and the corner garden with pollenating shrubs.
3rd September	Felsted slope and beyond	Cutting back slope for access reducing the snowberry and clearing the path to the next information board for access.
8th, 9th,15th,17th, 22 nd ,24th, 29th September and 6th,8th, 14th and 15th October	Rayne Station	Renovating the railway carriage ...filling rubbing down and undercoating and painting
10th September	Start Hill and Forest road ramps	Cutting back for access
15th September -22nd October	Dunmow cutting	Raking Banks removing grass cuttings after Tom had cut with the flail
17th September	Felsted and Takeley	Cutting back and rubbish clearance at the Flitch Way near traveleer site and cutting back the verges at Takeley station area of the Flitch Way
23rd September	Rayne Station	Installing new bench
8th and 13th, 27th October and 3rd November	Garnetts Wood	Clearing around the stools removing encroaching bramble and small trees.
29th October	Rayne station	Creating new storage cupboard in carriage

This year's challenges have resulted in fewer and smaller work parties however a great deal of varied and valuable work has taken place as can be seen above. From 23rd July to 3rd November 2021 a total of 56 smaller work parties have taken place with 265 volunteers and an average of 5 volunteers each day. This equates to 265x5hours=1325 volunteer hours in total.