

# Friends of the Flich Way and Associated Woodlands

## 20<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting minutes

**Date:** Friday 10 May 2024, 6pm

**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, Graham Dalby  
Park Ranger Tom Hamilton

**Apologies:** Andy Hobster

**Attendees:** Roger Ashdown, Sue Baumbach, Val Blamire, Carl Blamire, Marina Breed, Chris Butcher, Lesley Gilman, Pete Hanks, Alan Harris, Dick Hughes, Pat Hughes, Pete Lane, Bob Lucas, Sue Lucas, Pam Maskell, Micheal Neal, Rosie Schoenenberger, Wendy Taylor, Stuart Warwick, Dawn Walters, John West

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the 20th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Flich Way.

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.

The Chairman explained that the meeting would proceed as per the issued Agenda starting with a peek into the "Secret Life of Dick Hughes". There will then be a short refreshment break before the formal part of the meeting which consists of the acceptance of the annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the election of trustees for the following year.

### AGM Agenda

1. "The Secret Life of Dick Hughes" with guest speaker Dick Hughes – everything you wanted to know, but were too polite to ask...

#### *Refreshment Break*

2. Reports and accounts – To receive, consider and approve the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2024.
3. Committee members/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 - stepping down as committee member and trustee
  - o Member - Andy Hobster - standing for election
  - o Member - Dick Hughes - standing for election

4. Members proposed resolutions.

5. Any other business.

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

Welcome to the 20th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Flitch Way. You should all have seen copies of the charity's annual accounts and associated paperwork. There will be opportunities for questions after each report has been given.

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 which is the same as last year.
- We have a total of 43 active volunteers. 5 in the Footpath group, 32 in the Flitch Way work party group and 14 in the Carriage. Some of our volunteers work for more than one group.
- 3,745 total volunteer hours recorded from the Carriage Stewards, Flitch Way work parties and the Footpath work group, down slightly from 3,808 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. This has been a more "Business as Usual" year with more regular work parties and increased attendance which is good news.

The most worrying part of my report is the continual barrage of development applications being put forward along the borders of the Flitch Way and the total disregard for the environment when planning or even building along the borders. One particular development of concern is the Weston Homes development in Little Canfield/Takeley which Sandra will update us on in her report.

It was good to have a number of Social Activities again this year which I know everyone enjoys as enables everyone the opportunity to get to know each other more outside of the normal working environment.

It is pleasing to report that we finally installed the new Mr Garnett statue in Garnetts Wood – it was a big task trying to get him manoeuvred as the original concrete base was larger than expected and was extremely awkward to move, but after some hard graft and a few dodgy moments we finally got him in-situ. Thanks to Graham Dalby for managing the project.

Thank you to Little Dunmow, Takeley Parish Councils and Branson Leisure for funding replacement benches which will be installed in the summer.

We also improved the area around Rayne station, reseeding the grass and replacing the old fencing helped with a contribution from the Booking Hall café.

Thank you to Honeycomb Storage for allowing us to store our people carrier to prevent any further vandalism.

Two members moved onto pastures new as we wished Andrew and Pauline well in their new home in Devon.

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 – "The Boss" - Along with John, Wendy was one of the founder members of the Friends and can always be relied upon for sound advice on all manner of things. Her organisational skills are second to none and not 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, volunteer and Foreman

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 Secretary who does an outstanding 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. There is a lot of work done 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 – also for representing the Friends at various key events promoting our cause.

John Moss and Stan Davies for the DIY work they do behind the scenes.

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.

Our Ranger Tom Hamilton who always tries to ensure that work parties remain interesting.

Thanks to Bob Wright for his contribution to the Committee over the last 12 months.

Thank you also to Graham Dalby for his project management of the Mr Garnett project and contribution to the Committee over the last 12 months - unfortunately he is stepping down from the Committee following his recent move to Tiptree - we wish Graham and Karen well in their new home.

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 other members for their support over the last year. Without you, our volunteers and members, none of this would be possible. So a big thanks again to you all – It is very much appreciated by your Committee.

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

You would have received a copy of the Balance sheet via the website.

Our total funds to be carried forward are £7,709.00 with £381.00 in the current account and £7,622.00 in our deposit account. Unpresented cheques totalled £294.00.

Our total Receipts for the year being £6,796.00 and Expenses £11,115.00 giving us a net loss of £4,318.00.

Due to the rise in interest rates and the fact we put money from our current account into the savings account, we have this year received £91.00 in interest against £20.00 last year. We claimed Gift Aid and received £193.00. Please let us know if your tax paying situation changes.

This year the Carriage has made a loss of £813.00, this is mainly due to the rise in the cost of electricity costing £460.00 more than last year. The insurance stayed level with only an increase of £4.00.

Our biggest expense was the carving and installing of Mr Garnett for £2,300.00. This shows in the general figures. However, I'm sure you will agree that was money well spent.

We paid for new benches along the Flitch Way costing £798.00 which is also within the general figure.

Donations are down by nearly a £1,000.00 which contributes to the loss shown. This unfortunately seems to be the pattern over the last 3 years.

Santa in the Carriage was a success again this year, we planned to have 2 Santa's but unfortunately one had covid, Stan stepped in to cover the whole day, the extra elves helped to make the day easier. Thanks go to all the volunteers who helped, including the ones who came both ends of the day to set up and clear away, we made a profit of £500.12.

We also receive donations regularly from PayPal.

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

Last year we once again had our Christmas lunch at Weavers. 35 of us enjoyed a wonderful 2 or 3 course meal, everyone enjoyed the meal and meeting up and chatting with friends. We have booked the Friday 13 December 2024 for this year's meal, details will come out later in the year.

In July, 17 of us went to West Stow House, another 13th century house. The coat of arms of Queen Mary of France, Henry VIII's younger sister is displayed above the entrance. Following our visit we enjoyed lunch in the nearby Guinness Arms.

In October, 17 of us enjoyed a visit to Columbine Hall a medieval manor house surrounded by a spectacular moat. Inside the moat sits an acre of formal gardens while the house contains many interesting things to look at. We followed our visit with lunch at the nearby Shepherd and Dog.

In April, 22 of us went to Braxted Park where we listened to the owner talk about the history of the Queen Anne House, his family and how the estate works in today's world. We then toured some of the rooms and garden. We finished our day with lunch in the Green Man.

We will be looking for more places to visit this summer and will send details out as soon.

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

It has been another busy year regarding neighbouring development alongside the Flitch Way. UTT/22/0267 The application by Wren kitchens to create a new depot at Start Hill were refused by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) and the Planning Inspectorate.

UTT/23/1470/OP Stansted Distribution Centre redevelopment including new buildings of over 10m high directly next to Flitch Way. ECC Highways have included £25,000 for the Flitch Way to improve connectivity with Bishops Stortford. Awaiting decision.

UTT/22/2185/FUL Land at the former Takeley Service Station. The developer Weston Homes has breached the boundary of the Flitch Way to build 8 homes. I have complained to the UDC Planning Enforcement who said it was down to the owner ECC, I've raised it with the ECC portfolio holder Mark Durham twice but still have not had a response and finally completed a Freedom of Information request to try and establish the facts within ECC.

A public consultation has taken place for Bellway to build 100 homes on land west of Station Road, Takeley next to Bonningtons Farm. It does include a buffer. We have told them we are very disappointed they are trying to build where a Planning Inspector has refused permission. We expect they will apply for planning permission. Ongoing.

UTT/21/3272 The Squires 90 house development in Little Canfield was refused by UDC and then the Planning Inspectorate in November.

Former Winfresh banana depot now being used by UDC. We are trying to agree a safe route alongside the depot boundary which will avoid using the narrow lane.

UTT/22/3013/OP and 23/2964 A third reworked application for 14 self-build sites at Highwoods Farm, Buttleys Lane has been refused by UDC in March 2024. We wait to see if they appeal.

UTT/23/0918 Round House Buttleys Lane have lodged an appeal to build an additional house between the Round House and the Flitch Way which is ongoing.

Sadly there has still been no more no activity 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.

UTT/22/3470 An application to build an additional 72 houses adjacent to Flitch Green was refused by UDC.

UTT/21/3596 160 house development at Moors Field Little Dunmow was fully approved and includes £86,720 for Flitch Way improvements and £120,000 towards a new bridge over the river Chelmer.

UTT/22/0007 The solar farm which will surround Great Notley Country Park was given planning permission.

BDC/22/0342 Crest Nicholson are developing the 120 homes to the rear of Gilda Terrace in Braintree and the finalised plans are waiting to be reviewed. We have asked them to re-locate the pump house and play area as they are close to the Flitch Way. The Flitch Way should benefit from £40,000.

BDC/23/02722/OUT Land south of Springfields for 74 houses directly next to the Flitch Way. Planning refused by BDC February 24. Planning appeal held on 23 April 2024 and I spoke against the application.

Most of our work updates are posted on our website and Facebook and we have 3,167 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 13 waymarkers, 31 steps and carried out work on 11 bridges, gates or styles. Report 1 outlines what has been achieved this year.

41 work parties have taken place this year with an average 4.3 volunteers each day, providing 187 volunteer days. This equates to 990 volunteer hours in total.

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

This will be our twentieth year of volunteering and working alongside the rangers to improve the Flitch Way and other locations under ECC responsibility and it is amazing to see how many places we have been able to change and improve over those years and still we go back each year to maintain that improvement. We are very proud of this but it would not be possible if it were not for Tom's support and the many volunteers who turn up week after week to help out, so thank you all.

This year has been slightly better than last year in that we have been able to run a few more work parties. This has been surprising considering that we have had so much bad weather due to the deluge of rainy days when it has been too wet to work safely. You can see from the detailed report that the majority of the work this year has been carried out on various sections of the Flitch Way. The Rayne to Clap Bridge section has had quite a lot of attention as Rangers were cutting the trees with the cherry picker while volunteers concentrated on cutting back the verges. Bollards

were installed on the entrance to the Rayne village hall and Rayne station had a replacement information board installed in front of the flower bed and some of the damaged grass area reseeded. We spent several weeks at Felmoors Farm ditch digging and cutting the banks but unfortunately that had to stop to allow Electricity cables to be laid and this is still ongoing so we were unable to return as Tom and we had wished. We commissioned a new Mr Garnett statue to be carved and this has now been erected in Garnetts wood. The old Mr Garnett statue was laid to rest in the woods for bugs and beetles to carry on munching away and enjoying this habitat. Dunmow Cutting wildflower banks and the boardwalk had the usual yearly facelift and we also visited other parts of the Flich Way that needed the odd work party to open up the verges. We made other visits to the Blackwater Rail Trail clearing footpaths and Langford Halt opening up the footpath and clearing overgrowth from the platform. More recently we have been opening up several areas around the lake at Great Notley Park and cutting out some of the poplar trees that had become overcrowded there. There are now several areas around the lake where the views have been improved considerably for everyone to enjoy. We had a very successful Santa in the Carriage day at Christmas and a most enjoyable social event at Great Notley Park in the New Year, both events were well attended by volunteers. So, to sum up I consider it has been another good year for all concerned we have gained some new volunteers and old friends have come back to join us again as well. We now look forward to the springtime and going back to visit some of the areas that have missed our attention so far this year to replace some of the missing and damaged information boards and perhaps spend some more time re-vitalising the grass at Rayne station.

Report 2 shows that 53 work parties have taken place this year with an average 8 volunteers each day, equivalent to 423 volunteer days. This equates to  $423 \times 5 \text{ hours} = 2120 \text{ hours}$  in total

### **Carriage Museum report Stan Davies:**

The Carriage has been open on 248 occasions this year, comprising 139 mornings and 109 afternoons, equivalent to 635 volunteer hours. In addition, Brian and Richard have attended on most Wednesday mornings, primarily looking after any work needing to be done on the model railway. Almost 3,000 visitors have been welcomed during the year, for many of whom the occasion was the first time that they had been inside the Carriage. Their enjoyment and appreciation of what they found can be judged from the many positive comments posted in the visitors' book. The number of people living in the local area who claim not to have been aware of the café or the Carriage at Rayne continues to be a surprise. There is no charge for individuals or groups visiting the carriage and it is disappointing that we don't see many Clubs or Organisations using the Carriage, that being one of the reasons that it was acquired.

Railway related items including rolling stock and magazines continue to be donated with items surplus to our requirements being put up for sale, generating an income of more than £800 towards the increasing Carriage running costs including power and insurance charges.

For security and safety reasons, the Carriage can only be open to the public when a volunteer is able to be there to welcome visitors and to provide information on the history of the branch line and the work that the Friends do. The low number of regular Carriage volunteers continues to be disappointing, therefore, resulting in the number of open days being restricted accordingly. We have been able to achieve a full day's opening on almost all Saturdays during the year, however, and have tried to open on weekdays during school holidays whenever we have been able to do so. Weekday openings have been limited this year due to the ill health of our most regular weekday volunteer and that situation is unlikely to improve in the future. Efforts to recruit new Carriage volunteers continue by advertising and by word of mouth but without success thus far. New volunteers are not expected to be experts from day one and full training and support including written guidance is given to any potential volunteers. Welcoming visitors to the Carriage is very rewarding and if you would like more information on what is involved, please get in touch with Pam Maskell, Wendy Moss or Stan Davies.

The deteriorating condition of the Carriage bodywork continues to be a matter for concern and we have been unsuccessful so far in finding somebody prepared to do the work necessary to slow the relentless spread of corrosion. Reasonable costs of doing the work would be covered and we would be happy to have the work done on a "section by section basis". Please get in touch if you would like to take it on or know anyone prepared to do so.

Thanks are due to everybody who has helped in and around the Carriage in whatever capacity. Special thanks are due to Pam Maskell who regularly issues reminders and rotas to get volunteers for the Carriage.

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

Alan Trigg confirmed the changes to the committee members and trustees, thanking Graham Dalby for his service and welcoming Dick Hughes and Andy Hobster.

### **Members Proposed Resolutions**

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

Tom Hamilton thanked the Friends for their continued support which was much appreciated by Essex Country Parks.

There being no other matters to discuss, Alan thanked everyone once again for attending and brought the Annual General Meeting to a close at 8.10.

## Report 1 – Footpath Work Group Volunteer statistics

Site	No. of volunteers	Hours	Manhours	Clearance	Way Markers	Steps	Bridges /gate
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>990.5</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11</b>
North Weald, Matching	5	6.5	32.5	yes			
Clavering	5	6	30	yes			
Takeley	4	6	24	yes			
Takeley	6	5	30	yes			
Matching/Harlow	6	6	36	yes			
Leighs, Pleahey, Felsted	5	6	30			12	
Harlow	5	6	30	yes			
Hatfield Broad Oak , Epping	5	6	30	yes			
Halstead, Sible Hedingham,	7	6	35	yes			3
Harlow Roydon	3	5	15	yes			
High Ongar	4	5	20	yes			
Runwell	5	5	25	yes	4		
Writtle	4	5	20	yes	3		
Gestingthorpe	4	5	20				2
Clavering	5	6	30	yes			
Little Canfield, Little Leighs	4	6.5	26	yes	2		
Braintree	6	4	24	yes			
Bocking	4	5	20	yes			
North Benfleet	6	5	30	yes			
North Benfleet	7	6	42	yes			
Braintree	7	5	35	yes	2		
Birchanger	5	5	25	yes			
Bradwell	4	5	20	yes			
Little Baddow	2	3	6	yes			
Elsenham	5	5	25	yes			
Hempsted	3	5	15	yes			2
Epping	5	5	25	yes			
Wimbish	4	5	20	yes			
Radwinter	4	6	24	yes			
Hempstead	5	4	12	yes			
Topplesfield	2	1	2	yes			
Hempstead, Radwinter	5	6	30	yes			
Ovington, Radwinter	5	6	30	yes			
Bradwell, Tiptree	3	6	18	yes		7	1
Stisted	3	5	15				1
Messing, Tiptree	3	5	15	yes		12	
Rickling	3	5	15	yes			1
Gransmore Green	5	6	30	yes	2		
Rivenhall	4	6	24	yes			1
Stebbingford	5	5	25	yes			
Colchester	5	6	30	yes			

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## Report 2 – Flich Way work party group statistics

Date	Location	Task
5th April	Rayne Station	Installing renovated information board adjacent to the flower bed
27th April	BWRT Wickham Hall	Clearing and cutting back verges and opening up overgrown footpath
16th May	Rayne Mill lane	Cutting back over 120 bridge around Mill Lane bridge and clearing back ramps
23rd May	Rayne Gore Road bridge and Flich Way	Cutting back entrance to Flich Way and clearing access to Dog bin general tidying area
8th June	Langford Halt	Cutting back and clearing the platform and access way
13th June	Dunmow cutting	pulling invasive sweet pea and rosebay willow herb
23rd June	Dunmow Boardwalk	Cutting back and mending boards working on the cutting
29th June	Felsted	Cutting back slope and footpath while rangers cut trees
3rd to 5th July	Rayne towards Clap bridge	Cutting back footpath while rangers cut trees
5th July	Great Notley	Carrying out flower survey
6th July	Garnetts wood	installing new Mr Garnett statue
1st August	BWRT Witham	cutting back verges
12th September	Gt Notley	Cutting and raking the wildflower banks
13th September	Rayne Station	1 week spent renovating the grass section using grids and grass seed opposite the cafe
14th Sep to 19th October	Dunmow cutting	Cutting and raking the wildflower banks and clearing the boardwalk for access
26th and 28th September	Rayne	Installing bollards in the village car park and cutting back along the Flich Way
31st September to 30th November	Felmoors farm	Cutting and clearing the banks and ditch digging
9th November	Little Dunmow	Clearing debris from fallen tree and cutting verges
22nd December	Rayne	Santa in the carriage event
11th to 31st January	High cross lane East and West	Clearing the picnic area and all along the Fitch way that runs alongside
1st February	Rayne	Cutting back and clearing the ditch line up to Gore bridge, Litter pick
6th February	Start Hill	Clearing the footpath from the road and along by the iron bridge
13th February to 21st March	Great Notley Country park	Opening up several areas around the lake and cutting out poplar trees

53 work parties have taken place this year with an average 8 volunteers each day, equivalent to 423 volunteer days. This equates to 423 x 5 hours = 2,120 hours in total