



Friends of the Path Annual Report, October 2015

Those with long memories may recall that our last AGM was held in July 2014. This year, we are a little later holding the meeting, but this report concentrates on the year up to about July 2015.

Workdays

We've held four community workdays:

- 19th July 2014, Rabley Lane Bridge and Marlborough: this dealt with trees on and near the Rabley Lane Bridge and cleared a small tree blocking the path near Barnfield, Marlborough.
- 6th December 2014 and 8th March 2015, hedgelaying south of the M4.
- 23rd May 2015 around Rabley Lane Bridge and Marlborough

We also, for the first time, had five unprompted approaches from corporate teams who held workdays:

- 5th and 29th September: Nationwide. From Chisledon south to Gipsy Lane
- 9th Oct and 13th November: Intel. From Rabley Lane bridge north towards Ogbourne Maisey, and at Whitefield Farm.
- 16th October: Vodafone. South from Ogbourne St George.

Altogether, the various teams contributed 362 volunteer hours, or over £2,300 if costed at minimum wage rates. The work has largely focused on keeping the Path clear, where possible to a width of 2m or more, and a height of 3m or more. We have also made habitat improvements, particularly at the hedge south of the M4, and on the grassland at Whitefield Farm.

The local group of Sustrans Rangers have also been out on several occasions after bouts of strong wind, removing fallen or overhanging tree.

Other events

There is a wide variety of habitats along the length of the Railway Path, which support diverse plants and animals. We organised some walks to take a look at some of them:

- Two enjoyable evening bat walks in 2014 in Chiseldon on 7th August led by Dani Linton; and in Marlborough 23rd September led by James Shipman. At Chiseldon, we detected common pipistrelles, soprano pipistrelles, one of the myotis species, and a noctule; and at Marlborough we found common and soprano pipistrelles, a noctule and a Daubenton's bat.
- A butterfly walk at Whitefield Farm on 12th July 2015, led by Peter David. Although the day was damp, we found a ringlet (which Peter managed to capture in a container so we could have a look at it). Participants enjoyed not only the butterfly but also the opportunity to see the variety of plants and discuss how they support the insect population.

Partnerships

A team from TWIGS, a horticultural therapy service helping people recovering from mental health difficulties, have helped to maintain hedges planted last year (between Coate Water and the motorway, and just north of Chiseldon Firs).

The Woodland Trust has continued to provide hedgelaying materials from Stratton and Warneage Woods.

Sustrans have made improvements to the path surface in several places including past the allotments in Chiseldon, the Path entrance by the Three Trees Farm Shop, south of Dukesmead Kennels towards Ogbourne St George, and south of the car park at Ogbourne St George. The Path surface is now in a better state than it has been for some time and provides a better experience for many different kinds of user.

We continue to have support from several organisations which represented on our committee:

- North East Wiltshire Ramblers
- Wiltshire Bridleways Association
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Sustrans

Into the future

We will continue with the volunteer workday programme, which is both enjoyable, and creates a noticeable impact on the places where we work. This year so far, we have had one unprompted approach from a corporate team. We will do some work to see if we can stimulate some more interest.

We have applied to the Woodland Trust under their community tree pack scheme for a further 420 hedge saplings to continue planting the boundary with the field just north of Chiseldon Firs and fill gaps elsewhere.

We have surveyed along the Path to identify access locations at which to post notices informing users that motorised vehicles are not permitted. Some locations will need the erection of a suitable post and we propose to buy some sleepers, about 7 in all.

The stock of tools that we use is ageing, and we will review the need to refresh this.

Committee

The committee is currently
Dick Millard (Chair, Secretary)
Nick Stedman (Treasurer)
Mark Spreckley
Alistair Millington (Sustrans)

Norman Beardsley (Wiltshire Bridleways
Association)
Peter Gallagher (North East Wilts Ramblers)
Oliver Cripps (North Wessex Downs AONB)

Getting involved

As always, we can do more if more people chip in to help. If you would like to get involved (as a project manager, leaflet designer, fundraiser, committee member, ...) please let us know.

Accounts

Friends of the Railway Path					
Unaudited accounts from 15 th May 2014 to 15 th May 2015					
<u>Petty cash</u>	<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>		
			Opening balance	£82.18	
	Subs rec'd	£10.00		£10.00	

			Closing balance	£92.18	
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<u>Lloyds bank account</u>	<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>		
Subscriptions and gifts	£110.00		Nil		
Walking leaflets	£66.00				-----
		£176.00			£0.00
			Opening balance 15/05/14		£2,598.23
				Income	£176.00
				Expenses	£0.00

			Closing balance per statement 15/05/15		£2,774.23

Dick Millard
 Chair and Secretary
 Friends of the Railway Path
 20th October 2015

<http://www.friendsofthepath.org.uk/index.htm>