THE FRIENDS OF HILBRE (Press release)

Hilbre is one of three tidal islands in the Dee Estuary and is a Local Nature Reserve, a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Ramsar Site.

The Friends of Hilbre (Charity number 1103822) was formed in May 2001. We aim to preserve all aspects of this Local Nature Reserve which is owned by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and to repair and maintain these beautiful islands.

In 2023 we are delighted to announce that Ann Cleeves OBE has agreed to become our patron.

Ann Cleeves is an award winning crime writer. She is the author of over thirty-five critically acclaimed novels and winner of the CWA Diamond Dagger 2107. She’s created detectives Vera Stanhope, Jimmy Perez and Matthew Venn, who can be found in ITV’s Vera,BBC1’s Shetland and ITV’s The Long Call. She lives in Northumberland where the Vera books are set.

On 9th January 1978 it was reported in the Liverpool Echo that 26 year old Tim Cleeves was appointed custodian of the Hilbre chain of islands. A keen ornithologist and nature historian ,he had previously worked for the RSPB on Bardsey Island.” I found the job and the way of life even better than expected” he said.

His wife Ann (22) was taking a social worker’s course at the university of Liverpool and soon became familiar with the 40 minute walk across to the mainland.

“ I get off shortly after 6 am to catch the train at West Kirby to the university on 2/3 days a week. If I cannot get back before high tide I stay the night with friends”.

‘The island is an ideal place to study with only the birds and seals for company” she added.

Ann also helped to operate the coastguard radio and collect drift wood to supplement their fuel stocks.

The Liverpool Echo reported that both Tim and Ann had fallen in love with their island home which is cut off for twelve hours each day by the tide.

Ann went on to spend the first four years of her married life living on Hilbre. She once said “It’s a wild, wonderful lonely location-the perfect place for a murder”.

<https://www.anncleeves.com>

David Gregson (Chair of The Friends of Hilbre)

The Friends of Hilbre have been in existence for over twenty two years and are the custodians of the island just as Ann’s husband was all those years ago. It is important to us that as we are moving into another phase of the development of the charity we need to raise our profile. With Ann’s link to the island we thought that she would be the perfect person to become our patron. Hilbre is much more than a nature reserve, there are people who have been involved with the island in one form or other for many years, some of whom Ann knows. Hilbre is a unique place with a living history. We were delighted when Ann accepted our invitation.

Ann Cleeves

I’m delighted to confirm that I’ve agreed to be patron of the friends of Hilbre.

I spent four happy years on the island with my husband. I wrote a chapter there for “

‘Hilbre, The Cheshire Island’, edited by Prof J Craggs and published by Liverpool University Press. This was my first published writing! Our daughter spent her first six months in the Telegraph House. It was lovely to visit last month ,and I hope it’s not too long before I’m there again.

31/03/2023.

The Friends of Hilbre are looking forward to having Ann’s support in the years ahead.

If you would like to join The Friends of Hilbre contact David Gregson (Chair) at inforhilbreisland@gmail.com.