

## The 2007 Arlington Bluebell Walk & Farm Trail

What a difference a year makes! Last year being open over the same period we initially had no bluebells for the first two weeks, so had to put up signs saying 'Sorry due to the late spring, bluebells are not yet out, but enjoy the white wood anemones'. This year the bluebells were at their best for the first two weeks with hot sunny weather day after day, then the weather broke and it was downhill all the way to the end, with cold wet weather, diminishing visitors and bluebells well past their best. The numbers of visitors was a good average of 12,000, but with two thirds coming in those two first bumper weeks, it came as quite a shock for the R.S.P.B. & the Leukaemia Research Fund, who coped admirably. Their success was in contrast to the N.S.P.C., St Pancras Church and Cruse Bereavement Care, whose main concern was what to do with their surplus cakes!

It has always been difficult trying to plan the dates we open, as the decision has to be made by the end of December, so giving time to get the various Charities on board, and arrange to get the proofs to the printer, as the demand for our publicity leaflets start in January. Any year we get the date right, when dealing with our unpredictable weather patterns, is due entirely to luck!

The Hailsham Old Pavilion Society (H.O.P.S.) who run the Farmers Mini Market, Action for Medical Research who are responsible for supplying and categorizing the hundreds of secondhand books they have on offer, the R.S.P.B. with their table of cards & gifts, and of course the Arlington Church Plant Stand who so many of you supply with plants, all tell me they had a useful and profitable Bluebell Walk.

This year we had four motorized wheelchairs available and over 130 people signed to take one out, which is 50% up on last year. We are grateful to AJ Motorbility from the Diplocks Trading Estate Hailsham who supplied and maintained them. Their increased usage proves what a wonderful facility we can offer the less able, to be able to get out into the countryside and enjoy the bluebells. This was reflected in so many kind words we read from our comment cards.

The diversity we offer in the range of Walks is due entirely to the co-operation and support of my two neighbours Andrew Johnston and Peter Appleton, for which I am most grateful.

The planning with Carolyn, Anne and myself for the 2008 Walk has already started, whilst many fine tuning ideas gleaned from our visitors, the Tourism Quality Control inspection, and odd mishaps, are still in our heads and can be written down, as so much could get forgotten before next April!

John McCutchan