

The Arlington Bluebell Walk and Bates Green Garden 2021

We should have celebrated this being a significant year, firstly to mark 50 years since Carolyn McCutchan came up with the idea of opening Beatons Wood for the public to enjoy its display of bluebells, secondly Stanley Ross McCutchan moved to Bates Green in 1921, but Covid changed everything!

In 2001 The Foot and Mouth epidemic stopped the Bluebell Walk opening, so looking forward to 2023, we will publicize that year, as it that it marks the 50th year that the Bluebell Walk has been open, noting the considerable amount of money raised for local charities over that period.

2021 will mark how we amalgamated Bates Green Garden into the Bluebell Walk Partnership, and the formation of the Bluebell Walk Advisory Group (BWAG). It is chaired by our accountant and comprises of eight others, who support me in the running of Events at Bates Green. To be kept up dated as to what we plan throughout the year, sign up to receive our Newsletters on the Home Page of www.bluebellwalk.co.uk

Arlington Bluebell Walk

It has been a very strange year, in that due to Covid we had to introduce online booking for those who wanted to come on the Walk. We were unable to open the Farm Trails, so our visitors only had the choice of two one way round walks round Beatons Wood. The Bluebell Barn could not be open, meant our charities could not supply their delicious food or drink. We were able to relocate the Arlington Church Plant Stall into the well-ventilated Petting Animal Barn, where they beat previous record by raising over £9,000. The Action for Research second-hand book stall was not open, also those who relied on our mobility scooters were disappointed.

The positives are that the booking system supplied by our webmaster, then crucially adapted by Tim Church worked well, but halved the number of visitors we would have normally expected. It was vital for it to be user friendly for each Duty Charity, as they had to ensure we had a Track and Trace record of each adult visitor. Tim and I never imaged the volume of emails from those who had made bookings for a particular day and time, but for a variety of reasons had to change! I would like to thank Tim for generously giving up so much time to make these many changes and refunds, thus we crucially retained the goodwill of our visitors.

The weather was remarkable in that we experience the driest and coldest April for 60 years, meant we had the best and longest display of the white wood anemones known, followed by a late spectacular vistas of bluebells, which sadly meant the date we closed they still looked great.

This year to illustrate the 5 sequences that Beatons Wood goes through each spring, as listed on the Home Page of www.bluebellwalk.co.uk , we had Paul Gibson of Films@49 producing videos of the sequences, thus nos 2 – 4 can be seen on the GALLERY page.

We look forward to planning a normal Bluebell Walk next year, but I remember writing similar words in 2020!

Bates Green Garden

In 2002, I Emma Reece joined the Women's Farm & Garden Association in the hope of making a career in horticulture. I enrolled on a horticultural theory course at Plumpton College and was lucky to obtain one year's work placement with Carolyn McCutchan at Bates Green Garden.

Little did I know how pivotal that placement was. Not only was I learning the most excellent horticultural practices from a knowledgeable gardener, but I also gained a true friend who shared my love of nature, food and the Archers!

I went on to have an exciting career in the industry, working primarily in the heritage sector. Botanic Gardens are my true passion as they display such a diverse collection of plants. Wakehurst Place and the Chelsea Physic Garden taught me not only about gardening but also about conservation and the importance of biodiversity-and plant labelling. I am also a true believer in education and have taught various RHS and City and Guilds courses at both Plumpton and Chichester Colleges.

Bates Green Garden is typical of the English style of gardening. It is planted in a relaxed, naturalist way with self-seeders positively encouraged. The garden sits comfortably surrounded by fields and woods and is always full of birdsong.

I now find myself responsible for the restoration of this Plantswoman's paradise. This is no mean feat as, sadly, many areas had been neglected for a number of years. Luckily, I have gardening help when COVID permits, so together, we make a great team.

We are keen to celebrate Carolyn's achievements by opening the garden to the public on a regular basis. From June 9th 2021, the garden will be open every Wednesday from 10-4 pm for visitors who pre book on our website www.batesgreengarden.co.uk . Carolyn's daughter Philippa Vine www.bluebellfarmhousekitchen.co.uk will be providing delicious refreshments in the form of light lunches and of course the obligatory cakes.

The garden will be open at other times for groups of 12 people or more when a guided tour will also be available.

Please contact us via email: info@batesgreengarden.co.uk

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John McCutchan on behalf of the Bluebell Walk Partnership