

## **A Report on the 2022 Arlington Bluebell Walk, Farm Trails & Garden**

Marvellous to again run a 'normal' Bluebell Walk and welcome so many regular visitors back, to enjoy the hospitality offered by the 22 local charities and the chance to again walk along the Farm Trails, kindly offered by our farming neighbour the Appleton Family.

The weather was kind, in that we had no rain until the last week, so no mud to contend with in either the Car Park Field or along the various walks, so the load of gravel especially brought in was not used, it can wait until next year! The bluebells looked spectacular by not beaten down by heavy rain and wind, also the white wood anemones just lasted and lasted.

I was disappointed that our visitor numbers were significantly down on previous years, which was highlighted by the fact that our mobility scooters were requested only 300+ times compared to 2019 when they helped over 500 visitors to access Beatons Wood. It confirms that vulnerable persons feel they should still isolate, as Covid is out there lurking. Fortunately for me I was only affected during the preparations prior to opening and being fully vaccinated, I needed to only take three days off.

The insulation of the Bluebell Barn and new layout was appreciated by many visitors and all the charities. Next year marks a significant anniversary, being 50 years that the Arlington Bluebell Walk has been open, so preparations on how to mark this occasion are being discussed. Two major investments are to enlarge the kitchen area, which will give the charity volunteers more room in which to work, plus by modernizing the tills this will make them quicker and easier to use.

I am so grateful to those individuals who helped me in both the preparation and its running, practically and behind the scenes, to ensure our precious Bluebell Walk is back after two years. The new idea of displaying the winners of the Photographic Competition outside gave much interest, so as I understand it the entries for this year have substantially increased, thus the judges will have to give up more of their time!

What legacies Carolyn has left, by creating Bates Green Garden into this tranquil area enjoyed by both plantspeople and others, then coming up with the idea of opening Beatons Wood, so all can enjoy what nature provides year on year, with the carpets of white wood anemones and then the bluebells, whilst raising substantial funds for local organisations.

**John McCutchan**