

A Report on the 2023 Arlington Bluebell Walk and Farm Trails

The excitement of our 50th Bluebell Walk was in the planning, certainly not in its delivery!

I will remember it for several significant, but wrong reasons; seeing various vehicles, that could only leave the Car Park Field with the assistance of a tractor: nobody sat in our Sun Terrace for the first two weeks, as it was so cold and wet: the date it was scheduled to close, the sun continued to shine day after day, plus the bluebells were at their peak!

One noteworthy thing to celebrate the 50 years milestone, was our garden bird feeding station, viewed on the large screen in the Bluebell Barn. Modern technology allows those on our mailing list to watch, via YouTube the birds busy feeding, from the comfort of their home.

Our visitor numbers were sparse for those early days, then there was a crowd surge, so charities were tested by their ability to provide food and drinks whilst ensuring the queue kept moving forward. The volunteers and organizers for Arlington Village and Church managed the May Bank Holiday record number of visitors superbly, without running out of food and always keeping the tables quickly cleared and cleaned.

The monies raised by the 20 involved charities was £77,893 still a significant sum over the four weeks we were open, but down from last year in which 26 charities benefited from over £82.5K during the usual five week period.

It is always a gamble in choosing the dates, as it is the weather that determines whether it is onside. I was truly caught out, as initially the dates included Easter. Once the charities had chosen their dates, I reflected that with extremes of weather, there was a chance that if the car park field became too wet, companies who could deliver stone for any muddy areas, as they were closed for four days. I then changed the start date to immediately after that Holiday, thank goodness! The downside was that several charities could not reschedule to cover any extra May date, thus we lost that crucial last week ending 17 May.

The dates for 2024 I am basing on last year, so this time next year it will be either another abject apology or being very pleased with myself! These are the suggested provisional dates: Wednesday 10 April until Wednesday 15 May 2024.

My thanks go to those certain individuals, whose invaluable help and advice ensures the Bluebell Walk keeps moving forward, thus satisfying our Ethos Statement.

John McCutchan