

A Report on the 2024 Arlington Bluebell Walk and Farm Trails

This is the year we broke records! Arlington Church Plant Stall in its new location, raised over £10,000 in 5 weeks. We have now raised over one million pounds over 51 years, the provisional total is £1,058,331, as three charities still to confirm their final total. It all started in 1972 from an idea of Carolyn, who wondered whether the public would be prepared to pay, so they could view the bluebells in Beatons Wood and at the same time raise funds for Park Mead School. That concept has meant that Arlington Church and the Village Hall, when they first become involved in 1975, have benefited from £260,209, with more to come year on year! The weathervane atop the Village Hall, depicting Carolyn with her gardening hat, pushing a wheelbarrow through bluebells, will always be a reminder, that this small village of Arlington, which my father moved to in 1921 buying Bates Green and Beatons Wood, will continue to be enriched.

The usual unpredictable early spring weather added to our challenges, starting with the white wood anemones that so quickly flowered, replaced by the bluebells, at least 10 days earlier than last year. Fortunately we had a period of cold weather, so they lasted well. The usual luck of the organizers of the three day Village May Bank Holiday weekend, deserted them on their Monday, as it rained and rained, with only around 200 visitors instead of the expected ten times that number!

This year there were 27 different charities involved, who raised in excess of £90,000 due to the very hard work of their respective volunteers. Without exception, the charities welcomed our many changes, especially the enlarged kitchen, the two coffee machines and all those other changes, which made my investment very worthwhile.

Many people help me each year to seamlessly run the many elements of what has become quite a complex operation. There are three individuals I want to identify and thank, whose input was vital to ensure our visitors had a memorable visit. Firstly, Tim who manages the pages of www.bluebellwalk.co.uk to ensure they are always regularly kept updated, also kept abreast of those ever important social media postings. Gary who quickly became our onsite guru of the EPOS tills and their respective card terminals, as we had to change to a new card payment supplier, not an easy process when the Bluebell Walk was busy from day one! Finally, to Stuart whose visionary ideas, plus his many days of sheer hard work, all freely given, inspires me, so managing the many facets of this unique Attraction, is still a fulfilling challenge, which certainly keeps me fit!

I am now away for a much needed rest, then the priority, while it is still fresh in my mind, will be planning to try and perfect the 2025 Walk! Pity the weather is always the unknown!