

30th October Coffee Morning: Report

Committee Decision after the 30th May Coffee Morning

The attendance at the Tuesday 30th May coffee morning was so low (probably no more than 20 or so, inclusive of Committee Members and RUGS) that the Committee agreed at their subsequent meeting on 14th June that no bookings would be made for Coffee Mornings in 2024 until after the October 30th event. Numbers attending the October coffee morning would be assessed and a decision made on whether we should continue with Friary-based coffee mornings.

Attendance at the February Coffee Morning, held on Tuesday 21st Feb had been good so the low attendance at the May event was a surprise but factors contributing to low attendance could have been:

- It was held on the day after the late May bank holiday and in Crawley's schools' half-term. We now show Crawley schools' holidays on the Trustees calendar and avoid scheduling events with flexible dates in those periods
- There had been no advance publicity other than the usual listings in the monthly newsletter and on the website. Whilst in the past we had attracted good numbers using just these mechanisms, the timing of the previous newsletter, published 1st May, more than four weeks beforehand, meant that there was a particularly long gap between this and the event.
- The summer effect – attendances at Groups and monthly Friary meetings seem to be lower than during the winter, perhaps because members are more likely to be on holiday/going out for the day/involved in their garden during the summer
- It may have been overshadowed in members minds by the later Midsummer Eve's Celebration Event, held on 23rd June.

30th October Coffee Morning: Measures of Success

- Approximately 100 members attended in total (inclusive of Committee Members and RUGS), as counted by Maggie Berrill and Jean Manuel using the clicker devices.
- Of these members probably somewhere between 30 and 40 (this is an estimate based on the numbers sitting at the hastily allocated tables for new members) were new members who had been sent a specific invitation to attend by the Members Coordinator.
- The second-hand book sale raised £44.60 (£22.30 of which goes to the Friends of Crawley Hospitals). Also many members bought their own old books so by the end of the morning the Friends' stock of books had increased, despite the numbers sold.
- The St Andrews Craft Group raised £255 for St Catherine's Hospice. Monique Tovey-Mansfield organised this and the Committee agreed that they would not take any part of the proceeds for rent since the Craft Group had made the items sold themselves and paid for the materials personally.

What was done well

1. Sue Parker sent out an e-mail to all members 5 days previously on 25th October, as well as placing a post on the Cawley u3a Facebook page 3 days before.
2. In both of these communications Sue mentioned that there would be, besides the usual jigsaw and DVD swap, a sale of craft items for which the proceeds would be going to St Catherine's Hospice. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the craft sale was the reason why some members decided to attend.
3. The circular tables worked well and they looked attractive. The number and spacing was such that there were sufficient spaces at the tables for all members attending without the hall seeming too large for the number of people present, and hence inhospitable, as was the case at the May coffee morning.

4. The flow of attendees to the counter to receive their drinks and biscuits was very even; at no point did the queue become too long or unwieldy.
5. The long tables set along the side of the hall, with those for the St Andrews craft Group next to the books worked well.
6. There was a steady buzz of chatter and members seemed to be enjoying themselves.

What could be done better another time

1. The Committee should have allocated specific roles amongst themselves, particularly with regard to the meeting and greeting. Fortunately Maggie Berrill took on this role inside the hall but perhaps a committee member should have been in the Friary hallway as well.
2. Only five New Members Application forms were bought along though fortunately two spare Renewal forms were available and were adapted so meeting all demand.

Relationship with the Friary

1. The Friary has informed us that in future, if there is a funeral that clashes with one of our events, then they will be restricting the number of parking spaces available to us to only four. It is not clear how we control this unless we ask for the code on the barrier to change – it is suggested that we leave that to them to suggest. This restriction would also mean problems for Blue Badge holders.
2. The Friary administrator contacted the Treasurer to say that we should have been paying a separate charge for the hire of the microphone. The current and previous RUGS leaders have no recollection of this being charged.

Decisions made by the Committee at 8th November Meeting

1. The Crafts stall would feature in just one coffee morning each year, the one held in the first term.
2. The u3a would continue to hold a dedicated meeting for New Members similar to the one in September 2023 for New Members after the Open Day but otherwise continue with the monthly small gatherings at St Pauls (the responsibility of the Members Coordinator & Membership Support). New members would be sent a special invitation to the 1st Coffee Morning subsequent to their joining.
3. There would be dedicated tables at future coffee mornings for new members
4. One of the Committee Members would be based in the Friary hallway to steer new members to one of the dedicated tables.

These will feature in the [Events Checklist/Guidelines](#) under preparation.

Margaret Lloyd, Crawley u3a Secretary, 30th Nov 2023