

Chairperson's Report 2021

Thorney Lakes

After a year of inactivity and separation, we were all hopeful that the Green Scythe Fair could return in some shape or form in 2021. But that was soon dashed – we met online in January and decided with great regret that we could not hold the Fair due to the uncertainties of when and how lockdown would end and the fact that we therefore could not satisfactorily meet the March deadline for submitting our event management plan to SSDC.

However, all was not entirely lost, as a) the redoubtable scythers were considering if they could hold a small event over the Fair weekend, and b) in order to recognize the wonderful grass roots activities that the pandemic had stimulated, the committee agreed we would run a Community Green Awards to recognise and support some of the best local initiatives.

It turned out that SABI did run the Somerset Green Scythe Workshop over the 12/13th June. It was FAB weather and the (less than 30) participants (committee, instructors, other event hosts, volunteers and competitors) had a very successful and much more informal weekend. They shared experiences of scythe teaching, tried different competition formats, even tried each others' scythes, sometimes with startling results! Although not official, Andi Rickard successfully defended her crown in what was apparently the best grass conditions they've ever had at Thorney Lakes. Such a shame no one else could join them in scythe celebration.

Our Community Green Awards stimulated a magnificent 11 entries, giving the judging panel (Hannah, Jo and Nick) a tough job, so much so that they decided to give five awards, three of £500 and two runners up of £250 each. These were:

- Transition Town Wellington, for their Gardening for Wildlife Campaign
- Bear Cat collective, for The Honesty Jar Henstridge
- Beautiful Bourneville, for Covid-safe nature inspired outdoor community projects in Weston-Super-Mare

And

- ACE ARTS, for their Woodland Well Being sessions
- Milborne Port Primary School, for creating and developing a wildlife meadow on the site of a disused sports pitch

And a further two were Commended:

- Friends of Horse Drawn – offered a free stall at the next Fair
- Sharon Jacksties – Storytelling in Care Homes – asked to apply after the next successful Fair.

Lastly, we decided to come together at the end of June to, well, just come together, for a magical evening at Pigpen's pop-up garden restaurant. It seemed to be a mini-revolution in itself!

So, as things really do seem to be retuning to some kind of normality, sadly but unsurprisingly, it's clear that not so much has changed. We were brimming with ideas for the 2020 Green Scythe Fair before it got cancelled, and with all that pent-up enthusiasm, we are rearing to go for 2022!

Francis (Herbi) Blake, October 2021