

Chairperson's Report 2020

Thorney Lakes

Our planning for the 2020 Green Scythe Fair started with great optimism in January, with exciting discussions about what the Land Workers Alliance could bring to the Fair. In particular, they would have their own marquee in the East Field from which they would organise a Land Skills Day on the Saturday and more public-facing activities through Sunday, therefore complementing the existing scything courses and green craft workshops, and the Sunday XR workshops run by the FAB Green Info Cafe team from Willis Lane.

We were also planning to upgrade our access and entry systems by engaging Bradsons to manage the Gate and access routes as well as the ticketing.

Also, having examined the stats of where our wonderful visitors come from (provided by Bradsons) and having calculated that if all the car journeys of those driving to the Fair were put end to end they would stretch one and a half times round the World, we decided to expand our bus routes, if cautiously, and add a service from Wells, Glastonbury, Street and Somerton, with the intention to add more routes in the future.

Then the World changed. In our March meeting, we decided to include a Corona Virus contingency in our Event Management Plan. Internally, we agreed our decision trigger would be that if Glastonbury cancelled, so would we. Within in a week they had, and reluctantly we decided we had no choice but to follow their lead.

Before March was out, we all went into lockdown and within a couple of weeks half the World was too. It did not go down well with all the committee and some scythers in particular felt that we should press on regardless, at least with a much smaller event.

But extraordinary things were happening. The weather turned beautiful, the skies were blue and clear, not even any jet trails, the A303 fell silent, town centres were deserted, and of course there was a run on toilet paper. More interestingly, there was a run on flour!

Before long many of us were actually enjoying lockdown. Simon Fairlie wrote to me thus: *"My own opinion has changed radically since we started to self-isolate here at Monkton Wyld. I'm enjoying the lock-down and don't really want it to end. I now consider the loss of the scythe fair to be a small price to play for the temporary collapse of capitalism, the drift of the Tory party towards socialism, the absence of planes, the radical reduction in motorcar use, and the growing interest in local self-sufficiency."*

Eight months later we've plunged into another Lockdown.

So that about sums up our year. Covid has done what no amount of campaigning would have been able to do, as Simon so eloquently described.

The big question is, will it last? I think the clear answer is no, judging by how everything edged back towards normality pretty quickly after lockdown was lifted. However, some things will stick and 'Build Back Better' is an extraordinarily widely used slogan.

So the Green Scythe Fair is still needed, and therefore we need to start planning for next year, and make sure it comes back better than ever!

Francis (Herbi) Blake, November 2020