Chairperson's Report 2026
Thorney Lakes



Well, what a scorching, global-warming summer it's been this year, but it hadn't properly started for the Green Scythe Fair. Instead we had 'Goldilocks' weather and excellent grass for the scything, leading to a sell-out event where we were knocking up against our 5000 maximum capacity. We are always gratified by the amazingly positive feedback we receive - 'the best day of the year', etc. And more people seem to be staying into the evening to enjoy the music & catch up with friends – yes the Fair is the event for reconnecting with old friends and making new ones, as well as learning new things or skills, appreciating local artisans and their crafts, and generally getting a bit of a green fix!

Total sales were 3509 online + 566 gate adult-by-car tickets, 395 + 64 cycle tickets, 57 bus, 687 + 111 children – total 4648 online (c/w 4269 last year), and gate 741 (c/w 531). Grand total 5389 (c/w 4805), of which some 783 were crew/stallholders/ performers/volunteers. Dogs 167 + 27 (total 199). And our carbon tax miles raised £7,568 (c/w £6,750) representing a horrifying total of 37,840 miles, but at least that all goes to Reimagining the Levels for tree planting across Somerset to help remove the carbon emissions so caused, and the tree planting will also help to reduce flooding & increase shading & biodiversity.



SET UP AND VOLUNTEERS

Set up and take down worked like a well-oiled machine ably led by Al and a brilliant team from Tinkers Bubble and other friends, including an expanded roster of horses. Thus we set up the event with no or minimal fossil fuel use and that continues through the day itself with everything powered by solar, wind and batteries.

And a key aspect of the well-oiled (or should be wood-fired) machine is the crew catering, under Meg and Sam's incredible management. It and they continued to bring the scythe crew, committee and site crew together more throughout the set up and take down. Geatan made pizzas on the Wednesday evening which gave a welcome break, and the Friday night BBQ was very special (but it's become a huge task to undertake and maybe needs revising).

Volunteer supremo, Sian organised a successful recruitment of wonderful helpers. She had a few gaps in the schedule but there are always heroes who turn up on the day and roll up their sleeves. The new dog warden was a great addition to the team. And the new Steward's HQ location was very helpful with visibility and sign ups for next year. Special thanks to all our volunteers: site crew, Rainbow Scouts carpark marshals, stewards, glasswashers, bar, Green Info Café, Green Kidz and Info tent, and bike MOTs. Cara also reported she was lucky to have a very passionate volunteer to help with the recycling this year who has offered to take on improving the recycling for next year.

STALLS AND CATERING

The stalls and catering were, as ever, a great success. A new layout in the East Field was particularly welcome, making the stalls felt like a bazaar and an exciting warren to get lost in, rather than a straight high street. We had almost unequivocal positive feedback from all the traders about this.

The traders really love being with us ('My favourite event of the year', being heard many times as always) and while some reported lower sales (potentially because there are so many traders there - we have about 100) there are also others who are extremely pleased with how well they did.

Our caterers did a sterling job, staying on for long hours, and serving a lot of food. Obviously they benefit too, but feeding hungry, tired-and/or-cidered people well is a real pillar of the success of the event. The lead up wasn't plain sailing - in the final few weeks we had no fewer than three caterers drop out, which made things a little hairy(!), but we filled the gap (special shout out to Mahesh for pulling out all the stops and providing a monstrous amount of food) and all was well.

On the other hand the arrival of traders split between the Saturday and Sunday was well balanced and went super smoothly. Zofia was a massive help to Ed both before and during, and there are already improvements planned for next year

SITE INFO

A new lime green gazebo housed the Site Info point which was run by a competent team of volunteers fielding questions and giving directions, as well as selling kids cakes and drinks. On the safeguarding front, having Sarah come in as deputy made a huge difference, spreading Marie's load, also enabling more patrolling of the site. There were only a couple of lost children this year, and these were dealt with swiftly, being returned to their families in no time. And big thanks to our excellent security team who are always on the ball.

SATURDAY COURSES

On Saturday, we had over 150 people attend the 22 courses on offer: Copper Smelting, Weave a Willow Platter, Hay Rake Making, Sharpening Edge Tools, Forging a Knife, Beaten Copperwork, Shamanic Drum Making, Self Sufficient Medicine and Spoon Carving and several more. A satisfying increase on last year.









SCYTHING

The 20th West Country Scythe Championship was another fantastic year for promoting scything and hay making. Many more people experienced the scything championships for the first time watching the incredible skills & pace of cutting grass without the use of fossil fuel. One of the highlights of the weekend were teams from Belgium and Brittany visiting to compete in the event, and give talks and demonstrations about their traditions and the renaissance of scything in their countries.

Dan Britton (Somerset) won the overall West Country Championship with a time of 1min 10s and a quality of 8.5 (which saw him retain the title having won the 2025 event). Kevin Austin (Cornwall) was a close second with a time of 1min 14s and a quality of 8. Peter Blackwell (Lancashire) was third with a time of 1min 35s and quality 8.5.

The Women's cup was won by Beth Tilston (Gloucestershire) 2min 40s quality of 6. The English scythe cup was won by Danny Hodgson (Somerset) time of 1min 2s and quality 4.5. The Quality cup was won by Matilin Furic (Brittany) with the only quality of 9 awarded by the judges, even more impressive was the fact this was his first time entering the competition and he is 13 yrs old! He also won the best under-18 award, clearly some expert tuition was involved as his Father Sebastien Furic (Brittany) won the best newcomer award.

GREEN CRAFTS

26 stalls were displaying and selling a wide variety of crafts, traditional materials and recycled items, including: sustainable timber, ancient technology, willow basketry, blacksmithing, pottery, sign painting, clothes, plants and flowers, and green woodwork.

A key feature in this area is Jya Raine's beautifully decorated We Are Wild Music Yurt. She also ran a well attended song writing and performance workshop on the Saturday 'Giving Voice to the Land'. The Sunday sessions included the renowned folk singer Sam Lee, who led an engaging singing session about mowing.






COMMUNITY TENT

The community Tent centered on the theme of tools this year, featuring art and talks, such as Fifty Bees CIC, Sam Copsey's kinetic sculptures and Samuel Lewis's artwork on hoe farming, who also gave an excellent talk and a workshop.

The surrounding Village Green area really found its formula this year. With shows, interactive games, crafting, herbalism, art and music, there was a great energy in the space through the whole day.



GREEN KIDZ

We were joined once again by friends old and new and the Kidz Area was teaming with families all day long. Highlights in the Kidz Area and roving around included:

- Scratchworks Theatre Company with their fun yet educational Mushroom Show;
- The Insecurity Guards who collected everyones' insecurities and then ceremonially burnt them;
- Roving Fish puppet carried by our team of lively volunteers;
- The Flea Circus from Prom-Prom Promotions;
- The Sounds of the Streets high energy roving brass band;
- and old favourites - Circus skills, the beautiful Merry Go Round, Bear Cat collective swap shop and craft workshops, Storytelling, Face painting, Hair braiding, Try your strength, Willow Wands, Skool Beanz gardening, Brutones Choir and Glastonbury Border Morris;
- The flower decorated Hay Lady watched with a rather crone like head this year and the hay for play area was as popular as ever.

ENTERTAINMENT

Our two main music venues, the Music Marquee and the Acoustic Stage, curated by Fanny Hatstand and South Petherton's David Hall, respectively, produced a continuous flow of great music, interspersed in the Music Marquee by the Parley and the Scythe Championships prize giving.

To calm down the excessive high spirits that build up towards the end of the day, Sarah chose a more mellow final act which rather split opinion… But high spirits were certainly the order of the day for the Ceilidh, which is now even outgrowing the space outside the Music Marquee! Is it time to move into the scything arena??

The subject of the Parley was 'Levels Flood Management – Sinking or Swimming?' . We pitted the Environment Agency against FLAG, Flooding on the Levels Action Group, and both were sceptical about finding common ground but, true to the spirit of the Parley, they were pleasantly surprised. Both recognised the physical and financial limits of what could be done, and agreed on the need to future-proof developments, and to improve liaison and communication.



GREEN INFO CAFE

This was Peter's first year running the Green Info Café and his baptism of fire seemed to be a great success. Lots of old friends were on hand as volunteers which helped to provide continuity, and the cakes were certainly as good as ever!

BARS

Our new DPS, Bertie Clarke, did us proud and, in his words, had 'no major cock-ups'!

All bars worked well, including Trevor in the revamped Craft Bar, and the Tinker's Bubble cargo bike bar, and record sales of over 900 pints in the Cider Bar!

GRANTS

We conducted our 2026 grants programme back last winter, approving 12 grants totalling £4992 which went to some fabulous local and community projects that met our criteria. We welcome some of them tonight to tell us how they've used this money.

So we can look back on a record-breaking Green Scythe Fair, in what was also a record-breaking summer. As global warming intensifies it highlights the need for the Fair to continue our mission, to engage the local community in green issues and raise environmental awareness through activities and entertainment for all ages.

And thanks to all of you, and our volunteers and friends who dedicate so much time and energy over the whole year and of course on the day itself, working together to create 'the best day of the year"!

Francis (Herbi) Blake, October 2026