

Chairperson's Report 2018

Thorney Lakes

Overview

In a brilliant summer, the Green Scythe Fair was set to exceed itself with possibly the smoothest preparation and build up we've ever had, thanks to our fantastic committee and all our other volunteers and helpers. But excess brings its own problems and by lunchtime, the number of cars entering the site had backed up a mile along the road. Our H&S team decided we had to close the gates and disperse this queue, to safeguard emergency access and keep visitor numbers within bounds. We reopened again at 3pm, and of course we apologise to all those who were affected.

Interestingly, our numbers seemed to be not much different to last year (~1000 cars and 2817 people), but of course we must have turned away perhaps 300 cars and therefore up to 900 visitors.

It has been clear for some years that we were nearing our limit with our current set up but this crunch still came unexpectedly. So we have been looking at options to accommodate this ongoing growth whilst also maintaining the ethos of the fair. Expect some exciting new developments next year!

Set up

Set up started on Monday 4th with Al, Pedro, Ed and Larf sharing management roles so they could get off site (or arrive later) as they needed. Besides inevitable hiccoughs, most things seemed to go according to plan and with time to spare! We also engaged a specialist waste contractor to deal with all recycling which took a big load off many shoulders and generally worked very well.

Set down was marred by a wheel falling off the horse cart. Geof managed to fix it and the use of a van and trailer kept things on track. We were off site by Wed 13th.



Scything

We are proud to host the West Country Scythe Festival Competition and Sunday saw great competitions and demonstrations, preceded by two days of training. The beginners' course on Saturday was well attended, though the Masterclass on Friday was under-subscribed. We also tried to hold a short course for children, but for a number of reasons this didn't work out.

The competition culminated in veteran Simon Damant regaining his crown as overall champion. The Ladies Cup went to Beth Tilston who was 8 months pregnant at the time! What a way to mark the Suffragette Centenary!



Stalls

Our trading stalls this year hit the 100 mark which was both exciting and challenging to find space for everyone. We had a full range of craft stalls from pottery, soft toys and home-made soaps through to ethical clothing, plants, preserves, poultry, bushcrafts and the favourite of all - the tools! Alongside these we had an eclectic mix of campaigns and information stalls, including newcomers such as the Ecological Land Cooperatives and Friends of Palestine group. Our varied catering stalls were dotted around the site, and we thank all the caterers for making extra effort to limit their waste by doing more on-site washing up of crockery, reducing use of containers and offering deposits to bring back plastic cups to be recycled.

Louise ends her report thus: 'After ten years of organising the trade stalls and catering, I have decided it is time to hang up my tape measure. It has been a really enjoyable and stimulating ten years and I have enjoyed working with all the Green Scythe Fair Committee members. A huge thank you to all the stallholders I have met over the years and who made the fair for me. When I started we had just thirty stalls so we have expanded the number, range and style considerably. I look forward to seeing how things develop and I wish Ed, the new stalls co-ordinator, every success.'

Green Crafts

21 Green Craft displays this year included log bee hives, rope making, a coppersmith, thatchers, a timber framer, windsor chair maker, sustainable timber supplier, blacksmiths, charcoal, basketry, greenwood, leather, and artisan made clothing.

Green Kidz

The Green Kidz area had shows & walkabout characters with an environmental message as well as workshops with a focus on nurturing a relationship with the natural environment.



Highlights were

- Isabella's Bicycle: Sarah Hurley with stories of hope and renewal from the Amazon rainforest
- Tara Joy telling her magical story along with her illustrated book "the Inner Sense of Trees"
- The Cleaning Lady at the End of The Universe - giant puppets raising awareness on litter especially plastic
- Songbirds - environmentally themed singing workshop with Emily Janes
- Pedal power generators making music and bubbles

As well as these we had the fabulous

- Tricorn Shanty with Pirates Stories, Songs, Jigs & Reels from the High Seas
- Bullzini Family Tight wire comedy act
- Queen of the Meadow, made of hay and willow, presiding over the Hay for Play area
- Fire show - beautiful shapes in the dark led by Sophie Liengard and other local performers

Site Info

Next to Green Kidz, our wonderful Site Info volunteer team helped people seeking info, wanting to chat and to buy tickets to win the fab prizes on our 'Skills for the Future' Raffle. As well as a selection of topical books and a Scythe donated from the Scythe Shop, prizes included places on local environmental courses such as No Dig Gardening, Trill Farm Organics, Wild Foraging, also local sparkling wine and for the first time prizes donated by the stallholders.

We collected a selection of lost property items, some of which we managed to reunite with their owners, but the rest went to Charity Shops after 2 months.

We had no Accidents reported and no Lost Children.

Green Info Café

The Green Info Café featured post-Brexit agriculture, the 4Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) and the story of Zapatista coffee. It made a profit of £860, with wild nettle cake and wild garlic muffins being popular additions. Thanks to all the volunteers and the amazing rocket stove team.

Workshop Tent

The Workshop Tent had extra borrowed wooden benches and these were full during most talks. The space has certainly grown in popularity over the years as it has become known. We had local environmentalist Julia Hailes talking about plastics, making and using a drop spindle, the bees struggle for survival, seed saving and our very own Cara Naden drumming up support for local green issues.

Bike MOTs

Dava and friends managed the 'free' Bike MOTs and had nice feedback about the work done and advice given. New this year was having the Bike Vet alongside so that folk can have more complex issues fixed there and then.

And thanks particularly to Natalie who has managed the café and bike MOTs over the last 4 years, and also started up the workshop tent. She has also been an invaluable part of the committee with her clear thinking and amazing efficiency.

Bar and Music

The bars were once again efficiently run by Geof and Calum and stocked with local ales from Stocklinch Ales and Fine Tuned Ales, and ciders from Burrow Hill, Harry's, Tom Dunbar, Parrett Cider and Transition Town Langport. Apple juice came from Tinkers Bubble. The good weather ensured the thirsty crowd drank 2520 pints of beer, 1780 pints of cider and 450 glasses of apple juice! A new record!

Our two music promoters, Fanny Hatstand in the Marquee, and Camelot Acoustics on the Acoustic Stage, provided a succession of fine music acts throughout the day, with the headliners, Super Cumbia y la Liga de la Alegria (the League of Happiness) rounding off the evening with their exuberant Latin vibes. Both stages were powered entirely by the wind and sun.



Debate

At its new time of 2pm, the Debate this year was titled 'Post-Brexit Agriculture'. Molly Scott Cato, MEP for the South West, James Small, SW Region Chair of NFU, and Rebecca Laughton of the Land Workers Alliance addressed the 100 or more audience. Despite their different perspectives, there emerged a surprising level of agreement about the challenges and the opportunities British agriculture faces as we contemplate Brexit: clear policies for the long term, based on healthy and affordable food, promoting diversity in farm scale and type and distribution for greater resilience, and better connecting together farming, rural communities and the wider society.