

# Chairperson's Report 2016

## Thorney Lakes

### Overview

The Community Green Fair, founded in 2002, exists to put on the Green Scythe Fair (so named since it joined with the South West Scything Championships in 2007). Its ongoing popularity (with minimal publicity) owes much to the incredible atmosphere at the Fair which is a combination of the critically important message it exists to promote, the positive ethos we all bring to this, along with the huge amount of hard work that so many wonderful volunteers put into making it happen.

Last year's Fair was something of a 'learning by doing' exercise for the several new committee members who were taking up their responsibilities for the first time. With that experience under our belts (and welcoming only one new committee member, Jen Butler-Joseph, as Event Coordinator), this year was not quite so hectic, although there were plenty of challenges to overcome, improvements to introduce and new ideas to try out. The overall result was that we produced another excellent event, of which we can all be very proud.

### Numbers

Based on our takings at the gate, the number of people attending was down by 30% compared to last year, making a total estimate of around 3000. This was due primarily to an ominous weather forecast for the day – there were indeed heavy showers during the afternoon – so fewer people came and they tended to leave earlier. This was noticeable around the site, but it was still plenty busy enough and the better stocked bar enjoyed significantly increased takings.

We also put considerable effort into contacting non fossil fuel transport users, walking groups and cyclists, etc, and encouraging them to come by foot and bike. Paul from Rock and Road ran a fab bike MOT station at the entrance, although numbers were a little lower than previously – the weather forecast must have put off our fair weather cyclists!

It is hoped to encourage canoeists next year, and we have been in discussions about a water taxi service from Langport which we hope will be possible next year.

### Setting up the infrastructure

Our excellent site crew was excited about having a pair of horses to help with the setup, which was far more useful than the single horse last year. Another new feature was the electric van, generously supplied by Wellington Motors, which everyone was impressed by. After the success of last year's Thunderbox composting toilets, the committee decided to commission our own and these worked well, though constructing them for the first time added some extra work. However, they will reduce our costs and emissions in the long run.

The clear-up after the event was hard and depressing work: it was hampered by lots of rain and the quantity and state of the recycling turned out to be a nightmare – something to resolve in 2017. However, all was done by lunchtime on the Wednesday, helped by having our new container for storage just up the road.

### Volunteers and stewarding

We need lots of volunteers on the day and after a slow start, luckily enough people came forward, though coordinating them to ensure coverage in the right places at the right times is still a challenge. However, we had at least 3 stewards on duty from before 11am until after 9pm, the best coverage we've had to date.

We are building up better contacts ... hoping they will want to again! One couple got soaked in the heavy downpours around lunchtime bravely manning the entrance and never managed to get their free meal, but Peter, our quick thinking gate manager, gave them a bottle of champagne which kept them onside!

Thanks go to Carole Melbourne for the superb website and for managing the changes that we ask for, and for her atmospheric photography. Two press releases help to spread the word, the first particularly aimed at attracting new helpers and convincing them it is fun and the later one about the event itself so that people know what to expect.

Last year, I ended with some lovely quotes from stall holders. We've had some more this year.

*"I just wanted to send my thanks to you and everyone for the fair this year. It was great! You're all fantastic!"*

*"Just wanted to send you a quick note of thanks for the efforts of all the volunteers at the Fair on Sunday. We have been doing stalls at festivals for the best part of 30 years and in that time they have changed hugely. But your fair reminds me of the old style festival, where people actually care about the environment and have similar ways of thinking to us. We met so many nice people and the vibe on the day was just brilliant. So a big thanks to all of you and we look forward very much to next year... you all deserve huge credit for producing what I know will be my favourite festival of the year. Plus everyone seemed to like our fair trade clothes which is always nice as we put a lot of effort into sourcing the goods and designing the garments."*

*So there you have it in a nutshell – old style festival, brilliant vibe, favourite festival of the year, stalls that put a lot of effort into sourcing, etc, huge credit to everyone – you're all fantastic!*

*I couldn't have put it better myself – it's what makes all the hard work – and most of you do much more than me – worthwhile. So a BIG THANK YOU also from me as chair to all of you who make the Green Scythe Fair what it is!*

*Francis (Herbi) Blake  
October 2016*