

Chairperson's Report 2023

Thorney Lakes

Despite some threatening weather in the days leading up to the Fair, we were relieved and delighted when the sun shone, but not too much, the punters came, but not too many, the cars streamed, but didn't back up, the food was delicious, but didn't run out, the beer and cider flowed, but could have flowed a bit more, and most important of all, it was a brilliant Fair and everyone had a really good day ... and for us behind the scenes there were no major hiccoughs! WELL DONE all of you wonderful people who made it happen!

Having cut our teeth on several new innovations last year, we refined them this year and all these ran pretty smoothly – the online ticketing system including all the Saturday workshops, the buses on 3 routes, the Community Tent. And we successfully added some new ones – the Opening Parade with the XR Samba Band and Sovereign Nature, the giant puppet, wrist-bands for kids, the Cider Tent, the Parley, and the crew catering welcoming the scythe team.

Our ticketing website worked smoothly, though getting it all up to date in good time with workshop information was a challenge. The website handled about 90% of sales, with the gate doing about 10% and local outlets 1%. The total on-site on the day was about 4100 people.



On the buses

Richard and Anita record that Vickery's are good to work with **on the buses**. All first pickups were busy (Taunton 49 passengers, Yeovil 15, Wells 29), the second pickups not so (3, 2, 4 respectively). Maybe something to review?



Set up and Volunteers

We had a brilliant team managing all the **set up and take down**, led by Al and including FAB volunteers Steph and Chris with their respective horses.

Meg says “crew catering was a joy this year, if quite exhausting. Eating with the scythe team was a wonderful addition and really brought the GSF community together more. The Friday night BBQ was delicious and felt to be a touching celebration. Cooking on the fire pit for me was a brilliant development to the process, eating local wild meat, vegetables and processing local dairy into cheese etc was an exciting display of what the Green Scythe Fair is about and hope was a nourishing experience for all involved”.

A few weeks before, we were worried about the lack of **volunteers** but Sian magicked up enough for the day, and she and they had everything under control, on the gate, as stewards, glasswashers, bar and bike MOTs. With huge thanks to them, and of course all other volunteers, on set up, the carpark and road marshalls (Rainbow Scouts), and the Green Info Cafe.



Layout and stalls

The tweaked **site layout**, with the new Cider Tent (complete with sofas and a cider competition), turned around Green Info Café and Workshop Tent, together with the also-tented Craft Bar and bigger Community Tent (with its own fantastic programme of activities) all worked brilliantly. And all **stalls and catering** were very happy with the day. The three bars operated a Cash Only system which worked well (after the card reading problems last year) enabling people to be served quickly with a minimum of queuing. However, sales were down on last year, partly because of fewer visitors and partly because the music finished 40 minutes earlier than scheduled.



Saturday Courses and Green Craft Area

The 10 **Saturday courses** were attended by 62 participants and included earth pigments, pottery, copper jewellery, tool sharpening, spoon carving, drop spindle and tin-casting. There were other workshops taking place in the Workshop Tent (on Self-organisation around the Climate Crisis) and the Community Tent (Collaborating on Appropriate Technology) so it's really nice to see this element of the Fair developing steadily.

New for this year in the **Green Craft Area** was a beautiful decorated yurt venue with live acoustic music all organised and set up by Jya. There were 19 Green Craft Stalls including green woodwork, handmade furniture, tool, rope and basket making, thatching, natural pigments and painting, pottery, tin casting, weaving and spinning, handmade upcycled and bushcraft clothes and copper jewellery along with kitchenalia and quality bric-a-brac.



Green Info Cafe

The **Green Info Cafe** had a very successful 2023, with plenty of volunteers (all pre-briefed for H&S), and somehow it was a better layout being the other way round. Next year there will be a bigger focus on more 'green information' for the general public. And the talks in the next door **Workshop Tent**, curated by XR, were popular and well attended.

Scything

Last year's improvements to the **scything** events and demonstrations continued this year. They were more integrated with the rest of the Fair, especially during set up, which brought everyone together more. An increased field of 69 scythers entered the championships, and a new champion was crowned: Richard Toogood with a time of 1m 19s and quality 8 (up from 2022's 'fast but crap' 4.5). Women's champion was, as ever, Andi Rickard on 1m 43s quality 7. The Quality Cup (and 3rd overall) went to Adeon Waters 1m 50s and quality a faultless 9.5. There were also team competitions, hay races, scythe v strimmer, and various demonstrations.



Green Kidz

The **Green Kidz Area** enjoyed more space this year, which was duly filled with more activities and fun for children and families. There were great performances including old favourites Rattle Box theatre, Bear Cat Collective Swop Shop and Crafts, Woodcraft, Face painting and of course the ever popular Flea Circus and the test your strength 'Mighty Striker', and an extended Circus skills workshop. New this year was the new willow 'Queen of the Meadow' decorated with flowers by the public, Bubbles (a real life human fairy!), Pick Pedal and Pour (where children to pedal their own smoothies), a labyrinth, and a beautifully painted hand powered traditional Merry-Go-Round.

Around the site was 'Sovereign Nature' a giant puppet highlighting the importance of the natural world in the Coronation Year, The Brutones a green community choir, the Red Rebels, Tim Hill and musicians, Glastonbury Border Morris, and Captain Ginger.

Our **Raffle** was drawn at the **Green Info Tent** which worked a lot better and most of the prizes were happily won & received on the day. Also new this year at the Green Info tent, we sold some ethically sourced snacks, drinks and cake, which was very successful.

No incidents, Accidents or Lost children were reported.



Entertainment

In the **Music Marquee** Fanny Hatstand delivered another fabulous lineup of music, which sadly ended early so that LWA favourite Edwin of the Burning Glass could get back to his Sussex smallholding to pick lettuces for early Monday delivery.

The new **Parley** was a considerable improvement on the old Debate format, with the topic ‘Up in Smoke – Is burning wood sustainable?’ And yes, we did reach agreement between the opposing sides of the argument: in the right circumstances and with properly sourced and dried wood, burning wood is sustainable, but not in cities where even dry logs cause considerable nano-particulate pollution, and not in quantities that require massive imports of other peoples’ timber, as with Drax.

Over on the **Acoustic Stage**, the David Hall from South Petherton once again curated a lineup of great local talent playing music from around the British Isles and across the Pond.



From the inside, 2023 was probably our most successful Fair, with everything running as it should do and no significant issues or problems, perhaps with slightly less pressure from the slightly fewer visitors. And from the outside, from visitors (and stallholders), there was universal praise for a wonderful weekend, with our expanding range of workshops on Saturday, and something and more for everybody on Sunday – about which one hears over and again ‘my favourite day of the year!’

Of course there’s plenty to improve upon, which we already started thinking about on the Monday after the Fair. So watch this space .. for some exciting new developments to help promote the green message which is at the core of our Fair, and the technologies that can help to deliver a greener world!

Finally, a special thank you to you amazing committee members and key volunteers who contribute so much time, energy and commitment which all helps to make the Green Scythe Fair such a unique and special event.

Francis (Herbi) Blake, October 2023