

Chairperson's Report 2025

Thorney Lakes

Looking back at one of the driest and hottest years, it seems strange to think that the weather was only just OK for us in June, just staying dry & not overly hot. It certainly reduced the spring grass growth, but luckily not our visitors. There were more people coming for the first time, as well as plenty who come again and again, and gleefully tell us 'it's the best day of the year', and the 'Green Scythe Fair is even better than Christmas!'



Our online ticket system took another leap forward this year, with thanks to our tech wizard Henry. And so did the numbers. Online sales were 3146 adult by car tickets (c/w 2800 last year), 369 cycle tickets (c/w 417), 93 bus (c/w 65), 661 children (611) – total 4269. Gate sales totalled 290 car, 163 bike, 78 children – total 531 (c/w 390). Local sales 5. Grand total 4805 (c/w 4300), of which some 388 were crew/stallholders/performers/volunteers. Dogs 199 online and 18 gate (total 217). And our carbon tax miles raised £6,750 (c/w £3669).

There was excitement about bus passenger numbers passing the 100 people mark, with Taunton recording 39, Wells 38, Castle Cary 18, and Bridport 11, though actual numbers boarding is sometimes lower, and even fewer returning – but we don't think anyone is still there...



SET UP AND VOLUNTEERS

Set up and take down was again led by Al with a great team from Tinkers Bubble and other friends, including Ree and Ged's and Sam and Chris's wonderful horses. Our new wood-fired kitchen under Meg's skillful control proved hugely successful, sustaining all the hard workers with excellent fare. Sian reported that 'it seems to have been a 'mast year' for volunteers - we had a surprising abundance! There was great flow throughout the day, really wonderful crew, bike MOT chaps were wonderful as usual'. Special thanks to all our volunteers: site

crew, Rainbow Scouts carpark marshals, stewards, glasswashers, bar, Green Info Café and Green Kidz, bike MOTs. It wouldn't happen without all of you!

STALLS AND CATERING

Over 100 stalls covered the spectrum of local artisan crafts, clothes, plants, and other products, plus environmental information and campaigning. The food was exceptional this year by Two Trees Catering and others about the site. BUT waste is becoming a challenge as each year we seem to be collecting more not less waste even though caterers & the bar are using less single use packaging.

SITE INFO

The site info tent was busy with a good rota of volunteers on the desk, giving out info, receiving lost property and selling locally made cakes and drinks. The only Incident of note was finding dog poo in the hay for play area, and the only Accident was one dog bite on Saturday evening outside the music marquee – the same dog as last year. We are grateful for our excellent security team were really helpful & enjoyed the event as ever.

SATURDAY COURSES

There were 18 Saturday courses on offer, from Garden Trug Making, Folk Amulets, Smocking, Copper Smelting, Felt Hat Making, to Hay Rake Making and Stone Carving, with a good uptake of 70 people attending.



SCYTHING

The 19th West Country Scythe Championship was a challenge for the organisers, with a very short sward height and much bare ground due to a waterlogged winter and a baking dry spring. So they reduced the number of finalist plots from 25 to 21. Competition was intense, with the closest call anyone can remember. Dan Brittan of Somerset scored the only 9 for quality, but Richard Stump of Gloucestershire was quicker. Dan's quality-adjusted score just pipped Richard to the trophy (also winning the Quality Cup). Michael Gerrard of Somerset was also very close with the fastest time of all the competitors, but slipped to 3rd place with a quality score of 6.5. The Women's Cup winner was Andi Rickard of Somerset, who was also 5th in the Open trophy. Hannah Holden was 2nd and Beth Tilston was 3rd in the Women's Cup. The English Scythe Cup was won by Danny Hodgson, who was also 6th in the overall championship proving that the old English blades can compete with the Austrian blades if you have the skill and knowledge to use them. Terry Standen finished in 2nd place (10th overall), and Richard Brown took 3rd in the English cup. The Veterans Cup was won by Chris Riley, with Richard Brown a close 2nd, and Jane O'Reilly 3rd doubling up as the best Women's Veteran as well.





GREEN CRAFTS

20 Green Crafts stalls displayed and sold a variety of local hand made crafts, traditional materials and recycled items, including: Sustainable Timber, Ancient Technology, Willow Basketry, Fibre Crafts, Pottery, Sign Painting, Clothes, Plants and Flowers, and Green Woodwork. Jya Raine's beautifully decorated and bigger 'We Are Wild' Music Yurt hosted superb nature inspired live singer songwriter music and was well supported.

COMMUNITY TENT

Meg reckons that this 4th year of the Community Tent has been the best yet. All the talks and workshops were well attended and the artwork found its scale and coherency, having an overall theme of 'Hay' this time. Also, the new 'Village Green' in the space outside set it off nicely, filled with art projects/museum, a local herbalist clinic, bike repairs, the library bus, etc, all surrounding Jozef's games (though he was too central in the space so had to contend with a constant flow-through of people).



GREEN KIDZ

Green Kidz welcomed having a bit more space this year, and were delighted to host: - the Bluebirds Theatre Company who performed with puppets, and music from a beautifully converted shepherds' wagon; - More puppets with Rattle Box theatre and the 'Misadventures of Thor' and storytelling with Solstice Storyteller Helen Bruce; - Bear Cat collective running recycled fabric craft workshops in the Kidz Marquee; - hair braiding, henna tattoos, willow wand making, face painting, circus skills

and whittling in the outside space; - the Merry Go Round; - decorating with flowers a new willow lady made by Kim Creswell. Walkabout Performance Special thanks go to our friends in the XR Samba Band for kicking off the festivities with their Opening Procession. The walkabout highlight has to be the 'Sounds of the Streets Roving Band' which entertained large crowds wherever they stopped to play.

ENTERTAINMENT

The main change to our music provision was to bring the Ceilidh, again organized by the David Hall, back to the Music Marquee, but outside it, so as to maintain momentum in this central area through the early evening. This allowed it even more space and it worked a treat, being even bigger and madder than last year's ceilidh! Otherwise our two main music stages hosted line ups of high quality music, curated in the Music Marquee by Fanny Hatstand, and on the outside Acoustic Stage by South Petherton's David Hall and all



powered by solar and wind power supplied by Tarn Aitken & our very own Green Energy Trailer. In its third year as a Parley, the subject this time was 'Can Growth be Green?', proposed by entrepreneur and chair of Langport Town Council Sean Dromgoole, and opposed by Green Party economic spokesperson and former MEP Professor Molly Scott Cato. Both agreed that growth is a misleading measure, more important is quality not quantity, and a critical issue is inequality. Green technologies, etc. have to grow, but there has to be a corresponding degrowth in polluting industries, and a drive towards localisation.



GREEN INFO CAFE

Jacque reported another super year for the Green Info Café and the Workshop tent. The layout inside was slightly different, giving more room to work in, with both earlier and later shifts of wonderful volunteers easing workloads.

BARS

Last but not least, the bars did particularly well with the increased price (to £5/pintwine) not seemingly deterring drinkers. Total bar income was £23,182, giving us a bar surplus £10,137, almost double last year.

GRANTS

We conducted our 2024 grants in the early part of 2025, and 12 grants totalling £4000 were given out to local community groups that meet our criteria. We welcome 2 groups tonight to present to us what they've done with this money: Friends of Langport Library, Jane Fitzgerald, and Able 2 Achieve, Joe Knights. So overall the 2025 Green Scythe Fair was another huge success – it is steadily growing in popularity and I think also in our organisation of it. That is all thanks to a brilliant team working together to make it all happen.

THANK YOU ALL!

Francis (Herbi) Blake, October 2025