

Chairperson's Report 2017

Thorney Lakes

Around the Fair

Stalls, Catering and Green Crafts

The redoubtable Louise packed in a record breaking 94 stalls this year covering an amazing range of environmental information, tools, books, crafts, plants and clothes. They all conformed to our ethical trading policy and contributed so much to the great vibe that is so evident at the fair. We upped the number of caterers somewhat to ensure better coverage around the site which worked well.

25 Green Craft displays this year including thatching, timber framing, sustainable timber, greenwood and charcoal, iron and copper smithing, potting and basket making, leather working, plus quality bric-a-brac and kitchenalia. Perhaps the stand out was recycled aluminium roof shingles.

The layout of this area, with the second bar and acoustic stage, makes a really lovely focal point at that end of the site. Visitors and stallholders alike praised the quality of the music, powered by our own green energy trailer and managed by Camelot Acoustics.

Music and the Marquee

For the second year running, Fanny Hatstand managed the Music Tent, producing another fine line up of musicians who entertained us throughout the day.

The lunchtime debate this year was "Carbon Neutral Communities", which was gentle by comparison to last year's. Peter Harper, centrally involved in CAT's Zero Carbon Britain, argued that achieving carbon neutrality was still physically possible but questioned if it was politically possible. However, households can do a lot, by reducing consumption, sharing transport and concentrating on localising everything possible. Anna Francis, Resilience Manager at Frome Town Council, outlined just such initiatives being implemented as part of their "clean and healthy future for Frome", including community-wide renewable schemes (all south facing roofs), share shop (library of things), car clubs, electric bicycles, etc. Sonya Bedford, head of renewable energy at Exeter solicitors, Stevens Scown LLP, spoke about the growing interest there is all around the country, with over 400 other community renewable schemes, despite the government making it harder to innovate. There are now good templates and examples to follow, to build on the experience of those who have forged the way.

Green Kidz Children's Area

The Green Kidz area was once again enhanced by colourful flowers donated by Northwing Nurseries in Curry Rivel. It was packed and buzzing with happy families immersing themselves in top quality entertainment, all sharing the same green message that childhood can be low impact, fun can be had from sticks and stones and the most creative electrical item is a reused one!

Highlights were:

- the Wild Toy Puppet Theatre telling their original story of Laura the Fisher Knight who goes on a quest to save wildlife and the trees;
- The Cleaning Lady at the end of the Universe and the Twitter Litter Bird, Giant promenade puppets highlighting the problems of plastic pollution;
- Storylight Tales of connection, beauty and kindness;
- Wooden Circus Games with sticks & stones;
- The Bullzini Family tightrope workshop;
- Interactive Pedal Generators making music and bubbles, made from bits of old bicycles and domestic electrical items, showing the value of rubbish as an educational and creative resource;
- Imagine, Learn & Create with their fun & crazy Fortune Telling;
- Music Box Music for babies; Songbirds Singing for all

Also here were our fantastic regular performers: Steve Apelt & his Magic Bike, Fuse Misguided Tours on their Tricycle, The Bear Cat Crafts and Swap Collective; Serena De La Hey creating another Queen of the Meadow interactive creation out of hay & flowers; Soft Stone carving, Facepainting, Henna Tattoos, Flower Garland making, and of course the Willow man of Kingsbury!

Site Info

The site info's great team of helpers looked after everyone seeking information, and sold tickets to win fab prizes in our 'Skills For the Future' Raffle. Prizes included a Scythe donated from the Scythe Shop, Books from local artists, rural crafts and green woodworking, a Veg box from the Plotgate Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) project, also places on local environmentally friendly courses such as No Dig Gardening, Willow basketry, Natural dyes and peg loom weaving, Wild foraging.

We collected a selection of Lost Property and recorded no accidents.

Green Info Café and Workshops

Key features of this year's Green Info Cafe were lots of foraged ingredients in the cakes, our fab newly improved wood powered hot water set up, and a new self-washing station for punters to DIY their own washing up which worked a treat. We also benefitted from more volunteers, enabling a supervisor on each shift. Customers enjoyed learning more about why we chose to use Zapatista Coffee this year via our info boards and to learn more about CSAs and the benefits of consuming nettle and garlic.

The Workshop Tent next door hosted seven informative talks this year, some so well attended it was standing room only and crowds at the door! Workshops ranged from drop spindle spinning and designing an outdoor kitchen, through no dig gardening and composting, to CSAs and WWOOFing (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms).

13th West Country Scythe Championship and scythe courses

The beginners' and improvers' courses in the days prior to fair day were successful and well attended. A new arrangement for camping, endorsed by the Thorney Lakes Camp Site, was the designation of a Scythers' Camp adjacent to the parking field.

The Scythe Championship and games on Sunday were generally regarded as the best ever, as everything went so smoothly. The usual mix of demonstration mowing, team games, hay race and scythe versus strimmer, entertained the crowds. There was an exciting climax as big George Montague retook the title of overall champion with a record time of just 40 seconds. Andi Rickard retained her women's title but also came third overall.

Land Workers Alliance

The second Land Skills Day organised by the LWA (Land Workers Alliance) elicited great feedback from participants, but was less well attended than the first year, due primarily to a clash with other similar events, combined with reduced and delayed marketing due to organisational and personal issues getting in the way.

Publicity

The second Land Skills Day organised by the LWA (Land Workers Alliance) elicited great feedback from participants, but was less well attended than the first year, due primarily to a clash with other similar events, combined with reduced and delayed marketing due to organisational and personal issues getting in the way.

We have something of a schizophrenic attitude towards publicity, as we don't want to stimulate so much growth that it all becomes unsustainable. So our two press releases are aimed, if anything, at attracting new volunteers, rather than more visitors. However we take pride in our website, and particular thanks go to Carole Melbourne for managing it so well, and for her wonderful photography.

I started with thanks, and I'll end with thanks. Of course, we all get involved in this brilliant event because we believe in the message it is promoting. But it's hard work, and very hard work for some, so it has to be rewarding too. Part of that is the satisfaction of putting on another successful event. Part is also working with like minded friends and enjoying good times together doing it. That's what makes it worth it for me, so A BIG THANK YOU to all the committee and volunteers for your amazing contribution, your support and camaraderie, which after all is what makes the world go round.

Here's to the Green Scythe Fair 2018!

Francis (Herbi) Blake

October 2017