

A Day in the Life of a Festival Goer

by Lesley Dawson

The sun was shining as I turned into the festival site. As I drove towards the Booking Office, I looked at all the fields turned into car parks with different coloured flags to remind you which field you had parked in.

“Remember to park somewhere you will be able to recognize in the dark,” Sue said as I left the house that morning. “I am thinking of the hours you and I spent on previous occasions walking around in the dark with a torch trying to locate which large tree we had parked near, or which fence we were closest to. This time, park somewhere that you will recognize”.

I checked in to the Booking Office and was duly stapled into my festival arm band and presented with my A4 size Festival programme.

Jorj had said, “better get the Festival App. It will be much lighter than all this paper.” Now I regretted I had not listened to him.

I had already prepared myself with change for the buggies – the price had doubled from last year- and hopped aboard the next free one with my backpack and folding chair. Happily waving to those walking down to the festival entrance I was relieved to avoid the long walk down the hill through the camp site.

“On top of a night when I couldn’t sleep because the wind blew so wildly, they won’t let me into the festival site,” moaned Katie, “we are never going to be organized in time. I wonder if Lesley is stuck outside waiting to come in.”

Looking forward to seeing the team at the ABCD stall, I was surprised to see a crowd of people waiting to go in. Apparently, the high winds the previous night had left doubts about the safety of some of the venues. We would not be allowed in until 10am at the earliest.

“Is this your first time at Greenbelt?” Carrie asked the woman sitting next to her, to be told that she had been coming since 1999. “I can beat that. I first came as a child with my mother, and I am now forty-three years old. I am an old hand.”

“This is a good opportunity to sit on this wall and chat to people we have never met before and will probably never see again amongst the thousands visiting the festival this weekend. Don’t worry. Fine weather, though windy, is assured for today but tomorrow is a different matter. The forecast is for rain.” The middle-aged man spoke to his wife sitting next to him but smiled at all within hearing.

Next morning before she left the house, I checked that Lesley had waterproof clothing as the rain was pelting down. I knew she would need to spend the day wearing waterproof trousers and a thick raincoat and wanted to be sure she wouldn't get too wet. Pat was concerned that her car would get bogged down in the car park.

As at most festivals the toilets got smellier as the day went on until the van arrived in the early evening to pump everything out. My visit that afternoon should have been uneventful, but fate intervened. To get inside the cubicle one had to climb three metal steps. Probably in relief that I had negotiated the steps up and coped with the earth closet inside, I became a little too confident as I swung on the wooden door and launched myself down the steps.

I was waiting at the bottom of the steps when suddenly I heard her hurtling through the air and then she landed on her backside next to me. Of course, everyone within sight dashed to help her up. Sensibly she stayed where she was recovering from the shock. Eventually realizing that nothing was broken, I helped her up to look for her phone.

My phone had been in my back pocket all afternoon and was now upside down on the gravel beside me. At first, I thought only the front cover was damaged but closer inspection showed that not only was the face shattered but the whole thing was spectacularly twisted.

Grateful that she felt reasonably OK I led back to our stall to sit on a chair and be plied with hot sweet tea. She was quite the hero as I told everyone that she had rolled and landed beautifully.

Fancy not knowing what your Apple ID is when you come to buy a new Apple phone. I couldn't believe how damaged it was. How did she manage to do all that damage? These two old women walked into the shop and presented this shattered phone. Bits of glass scattered on the floor and they didn't really seem to know what to do.

Buying a new phone but keeping my sim card was expensive but I was grateful to not be more injured. So much so that the next morning on my way to meet the others for the communion service I walked down from the car park.

Maggie and Jim commiserated with Lesley about the phone and expressed relief that no bony damage had been done and not too many bruises. As they chatted together, Maggie mused on all their experiences of yesterday, saying, "it is good that we don't walk down the same street as the person walking beside us."

My companions had not experienced a fall down three steps, but their day had involved many other experiences unknown to me. Each day had been similar but different.