
A few years ago, I mentioned that I would be able to achieve more if Confest would only acquire better machinery. I’m so happy that Mark and Troy stepped up to purchased the JD front end loader. This tractor is very versatile. It’s easy to switch from the forks to the loader bucket. The cab is comfortable. The machine is powerful and trouble free. This allowed me to work longer hours and achieve far more than ever before. In conjunction with the tipper, I was able to build all the cooking circles and fire circles by myself, in good time. The 4-in-1 bucket allowed me to pick up logs easily. The forks allowed me to move skip bins and pallets. So, if anyone was sceptical about purchasing this machine, surely the benefits are now plain to see. Being the sole operator is a huge responsibility but I love it. This year I was also able to help the villages more. I know some were expecting the tractor to be trashed, I certainly got a few comments in the beginning. But after the entire setup and pack down, the machine is still in pretty much the same as-new condition. Paint scraped off the bucket is about all.
Hopefully the tractor will be well cared for in the future and only driven by accredited operators. This is a must as a powerful machine like this can do a lot of damage in the wrong hands. Plus, I would hate to see this machine trashed.

It was money well spent in my opinion. As the old machines, I was forced to use in previous years were very, very dangerous, cumbersome and a total health risk. My personal safety is important so thank you for listening. (finally)

In addition, this tractor could do with a standard bucket so I can then dig Trenches and Wastewater pits. A rotary broom is also available and that may be handy for cleaning up the prickles in the market place, after slashing.

Being able to use my chainsaw on site also allowed a great deal of flexibility when moving logs and clearing fire circles. Plus, removing dangerous trees or limbs. I find it far more efficient to just get a job done when it needs to be done. In my spare time, I carved faces into logs that people really enjoyed. The tractor also allowed me to raise my gate to the Arts village with no trouble.

The fuel cube was a great benefit to the workflow. It allowed fuel to be stored on site. I didn’t need to waste time in scrounging for a fuel shed key. Hydraulic oil and chainsaw oil and chainsaw fuel also needs to be stored with the cube.

In previous years, some villages left rubbish after pack-down. But this year, because I had the forks, I made the effort to deliver skip bins where needed. This minimised the rubbish left behind. And it also made people very happy.

Next year the site will have a lot of the infrastructure in place, and I won’t need to work quite so hard. I envisage only light maintenance will be required. (Hopefully) This will then allow more time to be put into creative projects, like statues and totem poles, grand gates etc.

The Hub/Hive needs a better kitchen space. We were lucky it didn’t rain during the festival. Had it rained the kitchen would have been a disaster. So hopefully there will be the time and money to improve the current structures. I prefer pole constructions so if I am permitted to take timber from the property or order in a truck load of bush poles then we’re in business.

I was given a lot of leeway this year and pretty well left to work at my own discretion. Which I much prefer. It creates a faster, more efficient work flow. At times, I worked in conjunction with other facilitators, fire circle, cooking circle, market place, Arts village, permaculture Village and Vege-out. At all times, I was happy to do whatever work was required. There were a few moments when I didn’t have time or I didn’t deem the task a priority and I hope these facilitators understand that near the start of the festival I was working from sun up to sundown, with barely any breaks so it wasn’t possible to do everything. I suggest that people come earlier next year.

This year was just amazing. I hope I’ve sent a clear message that I work more efficiently when treated nicely. The younger volunteers at the Hub were awesome in this regard. It was just so lovely to get their constant support, simple things like a whole bag of grapes or a special meal, and all the encouraging hugs and comments.
I work solo most of the time, and I’m separated from other crews. But having a radio in the cab kept me connected and I could respond to emergencies.

At all times, I made it my mission to help wherever help was required, be it with a tractor or chainsaw or in other ways. I do believe that a smaller front end loader would be useful for lighter jobs in tight spaces, and for training new operators. (Most important.) The younger volunteers are DTE’s most precious resource and so it’s important to encourage, support and protect this resource whenever possible.

So, that’s about it. I would like to do the same next year, but much better. I still believe that a decent ride on lawn tractor with a grass catcher will deal with the prickle problem. These prickles do not mulch down and slashing only spreads the seeds, creating more of a problem in the future. A site container would be handy to store my tools and equipment.

I’ve probably forgotten a few things. I had a few clashes with delusional folk who still think they can control me. But all in all, I’m extremely happy with the way things went. I totally appreciate the trust that Mark and Troy have in me and I hope I’ve proven myself worthy. Hopefully my set up experience will only get better from here.

~Juliet.

PS: The Future. As I understand it, I am to become facilitator of tractor operations.

Please don’t put me in a box as I don’t fit. Primarily I’m an Artist. Then I’m a carpenter/builder. I’m creative and inventive and have a love for the bizarre. But I also love tractors and chainsaws. I began driving tractors because there was no outlet for my artwork and I wasn’t allowed to use my chainsaw. But now that I am and have a versatile tractor, the sky is the limit and I will certainly devote more time to creating wonderful installations (see above). Plus, constructing a better kitchen space. I definitely want to keep doing what I’m doing. The setup would be boring without the JD and a sand pit to play in. But can we please think of a better title?