

Stickney Car Boot Sale

The Stickney Car Boot Sale was started in the spring of 1991 by Eric Staples after several previous events showed encouraging signs of success. Eric's ancestors have farmed in the village for many years now, after his grandfather first bought a farm near Bar Bridge in 1918. A large grass field of over thirty acres that lies to the East of The Grange was always poor farmland and for many years was meadow and kept to grow hay, mainly for winter fodder on the farm. An area of approximately ten acres is now frequently mown and often taken up by the stalls and pitches and as much again is used for the parking of the visitors' cars and vehicles. The main entrance to the Car Boot site is about four hundred yards north of Pinfold Lane, via a tarmac road on the left of the Main A16 road that passes through the village. This is also the only vehicle access to "The Grange", that is now a privately owned listed dwelling that stands on the bank of the West Fen Catchwater, although it has a pedestrian access also, via a narrow wooden footbridge over the drain. Another entrance to the field is by a footpath that joins the north east corner of the site and is an ancient right of way across the land. This starts at Hall Lane and continues through the fields to the Grange Bridge on Pinfold Lane, and is regularly used by ramblers and dog walkers.

The site has been set out with lightweight roads covered with discarded sea shells and rope fences to separate the stalls and the pedestrians from the moving vehicles. Eventually the main entrance had to be widened some years ago to accommodate the increase in the traffic on the Saturday mornings during the summer months. Another exit road towards Pinfold Lane was later created for cars leaving the site in the Boston direction and a designated Taxi pick-up point was established.

Several personnel in high-visibility jackets start very early in the morning and are engaged at the site to oversee the arrival and parking of the many vehicles. One hot August day in 2012 there was over six hundred stalls on the site and one particular stall holder was overheard saying that he'd arrived at half past five that morning and the field was already a quarter full with vendors.

The original primitive toilet in the field soon became inadequate for the increase number of visitors attending and a new modern toilet block with an underground septic tank had to be installed. This often has to be substituted by another eight port-a-loos placed around the site. These have been ingeniously mounted on low trailers for instant transportation to and from the site. Also facilities for the disabled are available.

The event is advertised weekly in the local newspapers and the goods for sale vary from the average house holder wanting to dispose of unwanted things to some who appear to be trying to make a living from it. Many trade stands have appeared in the recent years with almost anything from hand power tools for the DIY market, fishing tackle and pet foods, even live chickens and ducks at £10 each are often available, while several are selling cut flowers and pot plants others are dealing in fresh fruit and vegetables. There's always plenty of second hand garden tools for sale as well as lengths of timber and wooden garden furniture. The Pitstop Barber occupied a pitch for a few weeks with his specially adapted trailer and silent running generator; he did a steady trade in cutting the gentlemen's hair.

Many types of refreshments are available from the numerous outlets including the customary hot dog and burger vans, a Polish sausage vendor with a megaphone and also roast pork in a bread roll with stuffing and apple sauce. Usually two or three ice cream vans attend when the weather is favourable and many others are there selling hot teas or coffee, bacon butties and even pot noodles and pop corn.

Every week a lorry that has been converted for use as a butcher's mobile shop arrives at the site selling cut price meat. A pre-recording announcing his best bargains of the day is repetitively played over a speaker system and can become a bit tedious after a while. In the summer holidays a children's traditional fair-ground ride is sometimes set up at the side of the field, and quite often a giant slide and a bouncy castle are inflated when the weather is reasonably calm and warm.

Occasionally children get separated from their guardians and become lost among the stalls and crowds of buyers. Most of the supervisors that patrol the site carry personal radios now and can contact each other to deal with such eventualities. Often the proprietors of the site will waive the fee on a pitch for the Church or any Village club or committee wanting to raise funds for their organisation, usually by selling home baked cakes or other donated items.

Most of the traders and buyers have packed up and left the Car Boot Site by one o'clock. All of the eighty large waste drums positioned around the field have to be emptied and the mass of rubbish left behind has to be removed, sorted and disposed of. Four or five people scour the entire site in the afternoon picking up all the discarded litter that would otherwise be blown over onto the adjoining properties

In 2010 a serious incident occurred early in the morning of April 24th when a vendors Transit van suddenly burst into flames and was totally destroyed along with some of their possessions. The fire services attended and extinguish the fire and fortunately no one was injured.

One weekend in the summer of 1997 a Small Travelling Show arrived in Stickney and having previously arranged permission with the owners of the land, they set up their Big Top and Circus on part of the grass field that is now used for the Saturday car boot sales. Although the show used mainly ponies and other domestic animals it seemed quite well attended for the few days that the performances were held. This was the only time they came to Stickney and haven't been back since.