



also be a Community Debating Area where local MPs have been invited to discuss graffiti as an art form. The location is being kept under wraps but in the style of early raves they will let us know a week before the event. However, reports on MySpace are hinting at Dunsfold Park, which is seven miles south of Guildford.

All festivals are cultural events, but a literature festival is usually a bit more of a highbrow affair where hotels are usually the order of the day. Not so at the Port Eliot Lit Fest in Cornwall – although it is held in a stately home, there is plenty of

**Above and right:
The Big Green
Gathering in
Somerset**

camping space. Zadie Smith, DBC Pierre and Hanif Kureshi are the main attractions and promise more than mere readings; Chris Salewicz will be showing a visual version of his new Joe Strummer biography, and Fiona Banner will be painting a male nude word-portrait. Evening entertainment comes from 'the ultimate showgirl' Immodesty Blaize who will perform from her Burlesque repertoire on an eight-foot rocking horse, all in the name of literature of course (www.porteliotlitfest.com).

The campfire, the stars and the camaraderie of festivals is enough to



bring out the spiritual nature in any of us. The festival listings guides are chock-a-block with festivals of a spiritual bent and the daddy of these is the Buddhfield Festival (www.buddhfield.com). Another offspring of Glastonbury, here you can join in discussions on what it means to be a Dharma Warrior and how to unite transformation of ourselves with transformation of the world. Please note they don't want you drinking alcohol or taking drugs at the festival and definitely, definitely, no dogs. Other than that you are free to enjoy yourself.

Buddhfield is a niche event for hardcore Buddhists but everyone is welcome to celebrate the Summer Solstice. Join several thousand druids, pagans, new age-types and bongo drummers at the World Heritage site of Stonehenge, just off the A303 in Wiltshire on the year's longest day on June 21. Celebrating the Solstice dawn has been done for thousands of years and is perhaps the very epitome of festival magic or madness, depending on your point of view. There is no music, no beer tents, just a couple of thousand people and some old rocks. You stay up all night with a bunch of strangers and hopefully catch a glimpse of sunshine in the morning. Rock on.

The Criminal Justice Bill has done away with many of the 1980s/early 1990s spontaneous events. However, the future for festivals looks positive as more organisers realise that a successful festival can be generated by fulfilling the needs of increasing numbers of niches. The spirit of festivals is elusive and sometimes fleeting, but people's desire to get together and party, create, and get covered in mud will always be strong. ■