

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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SPECIAL COMMENDATION FOR SONNING COMMON GREEN GYM



On 12th November Tony, Jules, Chris, Robin, Diane and myself drove through beautiful countryside in glorious sunshine for the presentation of a certificate in the Chilterns Conservation Award 2008. SCGG had received Special Commendation for our sunken track project at Watlington Hill NR, and the presentation was to be made during the course of the annual Chilterns Forum at the Green Park Conference Centre in Aston Clinton. There were many people there - representatives from parish, district and county councils, wildlife trusts, National Trust and Natural England, many other official bodies and farm-

ers. Staff from the Chilterns Conservation Board gave a review of all they are doing under various headings such as Chalk Streams, Special Trees, Historic Environment and many more. It was very interesting, with plenty of photographs on the screen, and it was impressive how they made sure nobody overran their time slot (someone sat in front of them with boards printed 3 mins; 1 min; stop! If that didn't work there was a trapdoor in the floor).

Eventually they announced the 2008 Awards, giving a little background to the 3 top projects, including ours, each of which had received very close marks. They mentioned how attractive our sunken trackway was now it was cleared of the thickly growing yew trees, and how pleased they were to see the wildflowers regenerating on the chalk bank which had once been scrub. Sir John Johnson, Chairman of the Chilterns Conservation Board, presented me with the SCGG certificate, and also one to Jerry Page, who said some very kind words about the Green Gym to the forum. Jerry, we couldn't have done it without you.

Another project to be commended was the small nature reserve at Benson/Preston Crowmarsh - and we were gratified they particularly mentioned the boardwalk because SCGG had played a large part in its construction! The top prize, a carved wooden hare, went to a farmer at the Nuffield end of Ewelme who is using traditional farming practices to encourage a wide diversity of wildlife with excellent results. The wooden hare is rather like the FA cup - you can 'receive' it but you can't take it home!

Our certificate should by now be on display at the Health Centre, so we can all feel proud of our achievement. The trackway project had a very high satisfaction rating - and our record for the highest number of bonfires at once! Well done everybody. Next target: winning the wooden hare.

Julia Booker

FIRST AID

You'll have all seen the rather nice new red first aid pack which Jane Starkey found for us and which has replaced the rather large box we used to lug around. You're probably wondering how on earth everything we need to could be in it. And that is a problem. It's so well packed that the best advice is unzip everything until you find what you want!

There is a larger pack which unzips to reveal contents on each side and a smaller pack which lifts out. There are then more zips!

When you unzip the **main pack** there are various things which are loose:

1. Emergency numbers list
2. Sealed brown envelopes containing each person's contact and, where appropriate, medical details (plus spares)
3. Notebook and biro for recording detail of any accidents/emergencies
4. First aid guidance leaflets

The main pack unzips to reveal two sides with various goodies:

Side 1

1. Resuscitation pocket mask
2. Aspirin (suspected heart attack) and antihistamine tablets (allergies)
3. Triangular bandages and black waste bag

Side 2 (some inside further zip)

1. Dressings, swabs and antihistamine cream
2. Micropore tape, scissors, safety pins and plastic gloves

The inner pack has compartments at the front and an inner section with another zip:

1. Dressings, bandages and wipes
2. Foil blanket
3. Burns dressing (Burnshield) and instant ice (for severe bruising)
4. Whistle

If you have to deal with any emergency situation **always complete a sheet** in the notebook with the person's name, the date, and action taken. Then tear it out and give it to

Robin for filing in a secure place.

The only times you have to move fast is when someone collapses. Unzip the main pack and grab the resuscitation shield in its yellow container (much better than blowing into someone's mouth - it can be mucky!) and if they need CPR one or two of the first aiders can get to work. If necessary open the relevant brown envelope (they are all in surname alphabetical order). Phone 112 for an ambulance. Otherwise you can take your time and start unzipping everything in sight!

Leaders please note: New persons should be asked to complete the form inside a brown envelope straight away. (There are spares with the completed ones.) If anything happened to them they are the people about whom we would have the least information and sometimes none at all. At the time of writing there are still people for whom we have no envelope.

John Hasler

EMERGENCY PHONE

To improve our communications, we now have a mobile phone to complement the new first-aid kit. The phone is primarily to guarantee emergency contact, but is also a publicly available number to contact in case of confusion about the location of the days task. The phone will be kept in the tool shed, so will only be activated from about 08:45 on Thursday and Saturday. The number is 07748410729. Task leaders will be given full instructions on its use

We are delighted to have Robert back and recovering well from his operation. Here he is overseeing the work in his own inimitable way.



First Impressions of a New-comer to the Green Gym.

I first heard about the Sonning Common Green Gym when chatting to Jill Kendall during a Mid-Berks ramble in 2007. She successfully conveyed her obvious enthusiasm for the work of the Green Gym and I thought that it all sounded very interesting. I remembered what she had said and went along for the first time in June 2008 to a session at Grey's Court.

The first time that one attends any new activity with an established group of people can be a bit daunting, but the first thing that was very noticeable was how welcoming and pleasant everybody was. The overwhelming mood of cheerfulness stood out markedly, and at the end of the task of thinning out laurel bushes, I felt that a morning spent working in the countryside in the company of such a friendly group of people was most rewarding. In fact every time I have attended a Green Gym session since, I have really enjoyed the good humour, jokes and camaraderie. Also I have certainly appreciated the delicious cake and coffee which we have at each session.

Another striking thing about the Green Gym is how well organised it all is. There are some members who have a great deal of practical expertise which is so important with the more difficult tasks. The programme of activities at such a variety of different sites is carefully thought out, the Lopper magazine is well produced, the tools are excellent and the leaders have worked hard to ensure that the sessions are successful.

In fact, there is little doubt that the Sonning Common Green Gym embodies the very best qualities of the British character and it is something of which it can be rightly proud!

Nick Odell.

WITHYMEAD



Robert, David and Jules cutting up and clearing willow that had fallen down by the water's edge

Everyone in Green Gym enjoys working at Withymead Nature Reserve. It is a lovely site which offers so many different things to do. It has an ideal setting by the River Thames, whose numerous boggy areas, pools and streams support a wide range of flora and fauna. More areas are continually being opened for the public to explore. This means there is always a variety of jobs on offer as can be seen from the photographs. These five different activities were all tackled in one session in November.



John filling up the sand pit which he and others had just built for the Forest School



Tony and Gill building a new section of boardwalk that heads out into the marsh and will have a hide at the end to watch the birds



Brian and Mike putting the finishing touches to a bird hide



Bert and Mark, having finished making the sand pit, demolishing some of the sycamores that grow like a weed everywhere.

THE HORSE CHESTNUT



A sad and worrying sight this summer has been the brown and shrivelled leaves on horse chestnut trees.

One cause is attributed to Guignardia leaf blotch. This is a fungal disease that causes yellow blotches which become reddish brown covering most of the leaf surface. Affected leaves often drop prematurely. It is believed that its impact on the tree is low particularly if the early season leaf growth is strong and green; but it is upsetting as it spoils the look of the tree.

Shrivelled brown leaves can also be caused by the leaf miner (cameraria ohridella). This pest arrived in the UK in 2002 and is now spreading rapidly. Research is under way to assess the impact of this infestation, but it is feared that repeated infestations will leave the chestnuts far more susceptible to another and more serious disease, bleeding cancer.

This is a newly identified and serious bacterial disease caused by the bacterium *pseudomonas syringae* that can cause bark death, canopy thinning and death of the tree. It starts with patches on the trunk that range from rust to yellow and black. A thick sticky liquid then oozes from these. The inner bark becomes orange brown, mottled and striated. Though little is yet known about the disease it is thought it starts at wounds in the bark. Again there is current research ongoing to find out more about this potentially fatal disease.

To be very up to date this problem was raised on the BBC Gardeners Question Time programme. They gave a gloomy outlook for the trees as the triple effect of these diseases was weakening the species so much that many are in danger of dying and at the least will be so weakened that branches will fall and present a danger to passers by. One can only hope this will not be a disaster of the magnitude of Dutch Elm disease.

Sources Royal Horticultural Society; Forest Research and Purdue University.

IF YOU GO DOWN IN THE WOODS TODAY.. YOU COULD BE IN FOR A BIG SURPRISE!!!



THE LOPPER WISHES
ALL OUR READERS A
HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND
CONTINUINGLY
SUCCESSFUL NEW
YEAR

Astom Rowant Update by Chris Ash

On a grey and dry day in October there was a record attendance (18 or 19?) at Aston Rowant for some fencing and brush clearing work next to the goat enclosure (the heaf)



than others.

Next year the goats and their kids should be totally accustomed to their environment (hefted) and can be let loose to interact with the public. The goats are becoming quite friendly (provided you have some food for them) and even coped with a visit from most of the Green Gym members. Some people look more interested

Contrary to previous rumours, the juniper that we planted about a year ago is thriving. The grass surrounding it had grown so quickly it had become swamped and was invisibly growing sideways. So far about 60 healthy plants have been discovered and supported and protected inside wire cages.

Magazine contact; Jill Kendal
kendalwoodbury@supanet.com

Tel 0118 972 2201

The Green Gym

C/o Health Centre, 39 Wood Lane,

Sonning Common

Enquiries - Robin - 0118 972 3528.