



Happy Christmas

Green Gym facts of life - Julia

1. The perfect tool for the task (we discover, after trying out all the likely ones) is back in the toolshed.
2. The leader's car arrives stuffed to the gills with every tool possible. But see 1.
3. There is no right tool for baby brambles.
4. Waders are fun as long as they are too big rather than too small.
5. Ragwort pulling: hooray! (Gill and Mike).
6. Ragwort pulling: do we have to? (everyone else).
7. Scrub bashing: hooray!
8. Lavender management: boo!
9. Coffee break at last. I'll ignore the shouting from the coffee pourers while I just finish this tree/bush/patch.
10. I couldn't possibly eat another slice, Diane. Oh go on then.
11. Time for announcements. Robin?
12. Where is that saw? Kindly returned to the tool bag when you weren't looking.
13. There is a lopper patiently awaiting rescue in Spring Wood.
14. Jill's keys are somewhere on site, possibly in her pocket.

Nuffield Place

The new task to help Nuffield Place get some of the area near the car park under control is to cut down the rampant Laurel. This must have been pollarded 10 to 15 years ago and has grown out of control ever since. The complication in the task is that a substantial new deer proof fence was erected under the Laurel and some of the 6 metre long branches are overhanging the fence. We tackled the job from both sides and it looks as though we have now cleared enough so that

Tony can get in with the chainsaw and cut the remaining branches while the rest of the group tackles the other stretch of Laurel. There is going to be an enormous bonfire when conditions allow!



Know Your Gloves!

Gloves with the CE mark on them come with four digits which mean they have been mechanically tested to EN 388. The tests are made on the palm of the glove and are on a scale of 1-5.

The picture shows a glove with the digits 4234 which mean:-

- 4 Abrasion resistance
- 2 Cut resistance
- 3 Tear Resistance
- 4 Puncture resistance

Not all gloves show this but it does not mean they are not just as safe. It also comes down to comfort and price.

Tony



Cleeve Court Meadows



On one of our recent visits to this lovely riverside site Charlotte the owner presented Eric Yarrow with a gift for all the hard work he has put in over the last few years in organising the Green Gym visits. Eric, while continuing to participate in the Green Gym sessions has temporarily given up being a site representative and leading tasks. We all look forward to him returning to these roles in the future....

The next session with Keith holding the reins we continued to burn the reeds that had been cut a few weeks back and in addition started



the refurbishment and strengthening of the perimeter stockade fence that we built a few years ago. We were joined by one of Charlotte's kittens which presented us with a mouse - just what we needed (not for the coffee break where Charlotte presented us with a delicious Victoria sponge).



Peppard Common

We had two visits in this last quarter. Our first enabled us to tackle the acid grassland area. Encroaching scrub, particularly bramble needed removing along with a couple of silver birch trees. It was evident that a previously turf scrapped area (Oct 2008) had yielded substantial heather regeneration without the need for seeding. In view of this three more areas were scrapped. Nearby footpaths were also cleared to good effect.

Our second visit enabled us to rake up and clear the ski slope and to tackle the remaining footpaths and bridle way.



From this

Autumn in Parsons Wood



We have been blitzing Parsons Wood of an enormous number of invading Holly trees. This is a major task and is likely to take many months of regular sessions. The purpose is to get more light into the Beech woods and encourage the re-growth of the understory flora. We had a lovely sunny day for this session and the sun could be seen streaming into the previously gloomy dark woods - so we could immediately see what the previous sessions had achieved. Edward is proudly displaying the giant bracket fungus that he discovered on a tree trunk.

Ipsden Wood

After what seemed like a very long wait from the first session, we finally replaced the fencing alongside Emmens Lane for the Forestry Commission. The final stretch of 100 metres was completed in a morning with teams: clearing the ground ahead of the post hole borers, followed by the post drivers and then the wire 'stringers'. The wire we had been given was incompatible with the monkey strainers we normally use but once we realised what was wrong the manual wire tensioner was used successfully. Many thanks to all who contributed to this task. We are not yet sure if the wire needs to be continued up the hill from where we started - but maybe that is a task for next summer.



To this

Aston Rowant

On Thursday 20th November, Tony insisted via his cake that he was still not quite 70 by having his age calculated to the nearest 1/1000 of a year displayed for all to see. They nevertheless sang a rendering of "Happy Birthday"



Aston Rowant

On a lovely Autumn day a small select group gathered on Tent Peg hill for a raking and burning session. Tent Peg (so called because of the shape of the compartment viewed on a map) had been recently mowed using a large tracked flail. This was to start reducing the bram-



b l e
i n v a s -
i o n

and return the area to chalk grassland and allow the wild flowers to return. The flail had covered about half the area which was more than enough to keep us busy raking, carrying and burning....



In the next sessions, the attack on brambles continued on Beacon Hill the other side of the motorway and we were joined by Alie and a group of work colleagues to slash, cut and burn.

Dunsden Churchyard

In preparation for the concert on the 8th November commemorating the life of Wilfred Owen, we were asked to continue with the tidying of the hedges we had laid as well as lay weed control fabric on the new storage area at the edge of the graveyard. The top of the laid hedge was rapidly cut down to be level with the top of the stakes (it will be allowed to grow about 30cm above this level eventually), but it is very gratifying to see how the hedge has thickened into an impenetrable barrier so quickly. All arising were burnt on the day including waste already there and cuttings from the car park hedge.



Did you know?

We've worked many times at The Sue Ryder home, Joyce Grove. How did it get its name?

Here is the result of some research.

Cornet George Joyce was born in 1618 in the village of Blackfordby and became a London tailor. When the Civil War broke out he joined the Parliamentary New Model Army. Despite his lowly rank of Cornet he became famous when, in 1647, he gathered 500 hundred men and seized King Charles 1 from Parliamentary custody at Holdeby Hall and delivered him to General Fairfax at Taplow Heath .Possibly as a reward for this he came to live in the woods at Nettlebed. Which may account for this being called Mr Joyce's Grove in later years. Falling between the two Parliamentary factions meant that he soon fell from grace and was stripped of his commission and imprisoned for a time by Cromwell in 1653. However this may well have been due to his property dealings which are thought to have included Thomas Cromwell's son Richard. With the Restoration in 1660 Joyce was accused of being Charles's executioner by William Lilly. It is believed that he then fled to the Netherlands and was not heard of after 1670. However there is a story that he returned to his home village of Blackfordby in the disguise of a woman and lived as Jane Joyce. A Parish Record notes the murder of a Jane Joyce and it is possible that he was assassinated for his role in the King's execution!

Most of the above is verifiable but there are other tales. Apparently he was living in Joyce Grove when Charles 11 returned to the throne. It is said that he dallied with Nell Gwyn, who apparently lived for a while at Soundess house in Nettlebed and for this heinous crime he was hanged by Charles!

Thomas Stonor, who owned the woods mentions Mr Joyce's Grove as part of a Chilterns Woods walk. (Date unknown). It was known as Joyce Grove when the Flemings bought it. Recently the house has been featured as Bletchley Park in 'The Imitation Game' starring Benedict Cumberbatch and also in 'Arthur and George' starring Martin Clunes in Julian Barnes's Conan Doyle story.

Thanks to Antonia Davies for some of the research.

Jill Kendal

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