

# "THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

No 2 January 2005

## GREYS COURT

One of the more unusual jobs the Green Gym has tackled recently was the removal of a fence at Greys Court for the National Trust, at which we learned some new and sometimes painful skills. Removing staples that have rusted in is harder than some of us realised! On Thursday the workers were joined by Ilene Sterns. She is a volunteer for the Trust and she is Community Learning and Volunteering Stories Coordinator for the Thames and Solent region. This very grand title means that she goes round meeting volunteer groups and writing up interesting stories about their work. These can be used in many National Trust publications for publicity.

Ilene said she thoroughly enjoyed her visit and was most impressed at our skills and the friendly welcome she received. The Green Gym in their turn very much enjoyed meeting her. Ilene's account is being used internally to spread best practice, as it is felt to be a good example of how volunteering can promote healthy living, and also it demonstrates how both groups- the Trust and Green Gym- receive important benefits.

The story will be put on a new web site to be launched next year.

## FIDDLE HILL

This is one of the favourite Green Gym sites in spite of being on a one in three hillside covered with rabbit holes. As most people know we have been clearing the hill of privet, hawthorn and other invasive scrub and opening up areas for the grass to re-grow so that, in particular, a suitable habitat will be established for the Adonis Blue butterfly to flourish. Since Green Gym has been working, the numbers of the butterfly have been on the increase.



Diane by the fire Nov 20

Mike at Greys Court sorting out wire.



Copyright National Trust/Ilene Sterns

[Congratulations!](#)

***Congratulations from the Green Gym to Freddie on the occasion of his recent marriage. We wish you and Jean both well and we hope you have many happy years.***

# WISHING ALL 'GREEN GYMMERS' MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2005

## WHACK ON THE WADERS

A very personal account of our travels (travails?) on a BTCV working holiday removing duck weed choking a pond, for more gory details ask Alison, Gill or Diane.

### Friday pm

Arrive at Heyshott Village Hall to find that due to unfinished building work there were no inside toilets or washing facilities. Yes there were portaloos outside. Food in local pub excellent but ambiance/ atmosphere was nil.

### Saturday 9am

After a restless night arrive at site. Difficult to see where grass ends and duckweed begins. Local ducks forced to paddle at snails pace it is so thick. Whack on the waders and get stuck in – literally- in the mud. Forced to fell a tree to replace vanished boom across pond. Long, hard, wet, muddy day.

### Saturday 6pm

Stagger back to minibus. Go to local leisure Centre for shower and paddle. Go down the water slide- twice! Decline invitation to pub, completely knackered.

After midnight  
OUT COLD.

### Sunday 9.30am

Back to pond. Ducks absent. They must have heard the Green Gym was about. Getting the hang of the job by now (three large logs in action) Output doubled, huge pile of weed removed.

### Sun 3pm

Time to go home – hope the ducks eat the rest of the weed!

### Questions

- Will Alison's husband ever lend her his car again?
- Will Diane find a recipe for duckweed cake?
- Will at least some of Gill's photos show us working and not drinking tea?
- Will I ever be the same again?
- e.

A great weekend in spite of the problems but would I ever return there again? I may be mad but not that mad!

Robert

### Why I like GG

#### **The A to Z of a confirmed BVAP**

When I started to write a list of the things I liked about GG I ran out of space very quickly. Well not so much space but ways of putting words to feelings and phrases to thoughts. **BVAP?** Well, I wanted improve on **biophilia** or 'love of all things alive and growing' which is a word not found in my dictionary so I put in '**agora**' as in agoraphobia or a pathological fear of open spaces. Only here it is love of open spaces and all things green (vert) found alive there. So I am a confirmed **biovertagoraphiliac**. With me so far?

So to bring order to chaos and synthesis to **diastasis** I thought I'd give you an A to Z of what I like about GG. And maybe at the same time pick out some of the more engaging features and characteristics of spending to 3 hours twice a week in a dripping wood, a sunlit meadow or a chalkland quarry.

(Continued on P3)



**DEEP IN THE DUCKWEED.**  
**Alison, Diane, Gill and Robert**



## FIRE & BRIMSTONE



On November 4<sup>th</sup>, we were coppicing hazel and clearing scrub at Warburg NNR. This was the first opportunity for the gang to see and use the fire trailer, nicknamed "**Chariot of Fire**", which has been constructed from an aged caravan because of its jacking points, angle iron attached by dubious welding and two garage doors (taken with owners' consent). It turned out to be a glorious sunny day and we even saw a Brimstone butterfly, possibly woken by the warm sun and our activity. When the normal finish time arrived, everyone kept working!

### Answers to questions

Last time I left you with two questions to think about.

**Q.** When felling trees, how high above the base of the bird mouth should the back cut be made?

According to the book it should be on or above but no more than 2½ cm (one inch) above. The obvious target therefore is half an inch above leaving an equal margin of error up or down. In all cases it is important to make the cuts horizontally, parallel to each other and at right angles to the felling direction.

**Q.** Why use the dry wood blades with smaller teeth on the small triangular saws when cutting green wood?

A. Its not because they are cheaper, and both types cut dry and green wood well. But dry wood raker blades have wider spaced teeth that tend to snag on bark and small diameter wood. Often you need to hold the wood you are cutting and use the saw single-handed. Clearly a blade that is easy to start and stays in the wood is ideal for the job.

### STRETCHING - 1

A couple of years ago, I went on a course on pre-activity warm up and post-activity cool down for Green Gym groups organised by BTCV. It proved very useful, complementing and

supplementing my knowledge on this subject as a RYA Windsurfing Coach. Like most people, I did not take notes and forgot some of it. To do justice, I decided to try and put it in writing but stretching postures are difficult to describe in words. I decided to search the internet for websites that promote this sort of thing. Wherever I looked, the same stretching postures were used and the name Bob Anderson kept popping up. So, I decided to visit a bookshop in Reading and found his book aptly entitled "**Stretching**". It contains nearly 200 pages including the desirable stretches to use for twenty-five major sports such as running, skiing, swimming, golf etc, stretches for indoor and outdoor work and over 50's. The pictures used are black and white outline diagrams of faceless humanoids. Hatching is used to demonstrate the area influenced by the postures. Not the most elegant of pictures but it kept the price of the book down! In order to produce a better looking manual for us, I used where possible freely downloadable

images of people in stretching postures.

The manual not only provides pictures and descriptive text of stretching postures that suit the Green Gym, it includes mobility exercises (suppleness of joints) and a picture showing the primary muscles in the body together with the names of those muscles. Stretching is a precise science and it is important that it is done correctly using postures that the stretching gurus provide.

Next time, I will try and answer the question "Is stretching worthwhile?" and look at the rules of stretching.  
Tony Chandler

+++++

## **THE A TO Z OF A BVAP**

(cont from page 2)

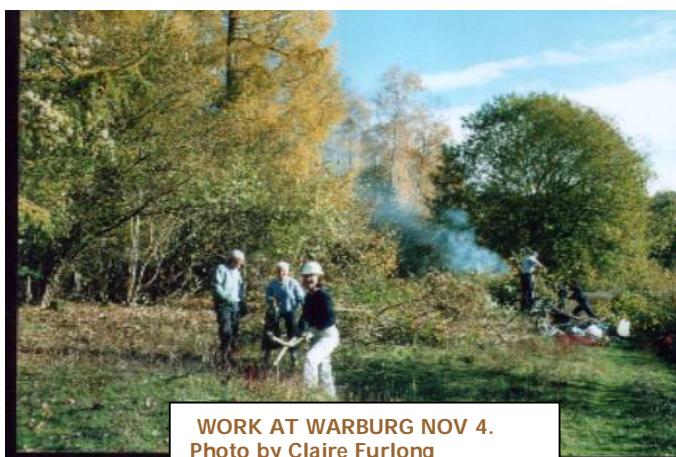
So A is for Agora, the open air or a public space. That's where we work. And it really can be anywhere, mainly in woods and fields it's true, but also in parks and gardens, along footpaths and by the side of a public road. That's one of the principal charms of GG, you are always outside, under the heavens, feeling the sun and rain, the ice and the snow and wind. Yes, out in the open is way up near the top of my list.

Next B. Well Bio or Botany or Beauty or Bounty. Take your pick. But it is all things growing and alive, trees and bushes, flowers and weeds, plants of all kinds. Wherever we work we are surrounded by bio. Not concrete, not metal not man -made fibre but wood and root and fern. Nice, eh?

C is for Conservation but also for Cutting. We cut to conserve. Yes, some life is destroyed but with a view to balance needs of users and consumers, of access and maintenance, of the aided survival of the many living things as opposed to the unrestricted survival of the few.

And D is for Digging and Danger and Diane. Which to choose? As they say, watch this space!

Mike Saunders



WORK AT WARBURG NOV 4.  
Photo by Claire Furlong



TREE FELLING INSTRUCTION OCT7  
KINGWOOD. Photo by Claire Furlong

### CAN YOU HELP?

Wallingford Green Gym has invited us to join them for two sessions of hedge planting. It is a very big job and they would be very glad of the assistance of SC Green Gym. The dates for the task are the mornings of Tuesdays 11 January 2005 and 8 February. If you would like to attend these extra sessions, please contact Robin Howles on 0118 972 3528 for all the details.

## OFFSHOOTS

"The Green Gym is going to become a country wide phenomenon", Dr Bird told us at that long ago launch meeting in Sonning Common Village Hall. The idea seemed far fetched at the time but recently some of us have been finding out how Green Gyms are taking solid root.

Tony, Robin and I attended a training day in Birmingham on how to attract and keep green Gym participants. We were invited because our group is running successfully and has the most experience. The others attending were leaders from all over the country and they showed us we don't have the monopoly of good ideas.

We shall be trying out some of the approaches that have worked for them, including new ways of contacting NHS providers, friendlier systems for dealing with enquiries from potential volunteers and making sure the way we talk about the Green Gym is not off putting.

Yes, there are certain words which make a tentative enquirer turn tail like a frightened rabbit!

Exercise – use warm up and warm down stretches, task – session, volunteers – participants, join- try out, and (horror of horrors) Gym. Can't do much about the last one....

We were really encouraged by the quality and enthusiasm of these young leaders. There was talk setting up some joint sessions –fancy a weekend in Stockport?

Closer to home Diane and Robert visited Aylesbury Green Gym to encourage them in their transition to self-management. They are struggling as their work is based on organic allotments, which somewhat restricts the pool of potential participants. It was suggested they broaden their range of sites and we will offer what support we can from Sonning Common.

Abingdon Green Gym is also preparing for self-management and seems well set to continue successfully. Alison Smith invited Robin and I to a path clearing session at Cothill Fen to discuss this step and afterwards we all gathered in the Merry Miller (how come we've never done this?). To our amazement there was no shortage of volunteers to share in the running of the group. All credit to Alison for getting the Abingdon group to this stage.

Julia Booker

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.