

## SNIPPINGS

This has been a very eventful quarter with excursions all over England and working at new sites as well as seeing progress at old favourites.

## MICKLANDS

This was a new venue at the primary school who have a lovely piece of woodland they wish to open up for the children to walk in and learn about the flora and fauna that inhabit it. After a hard morning of cutting and clearing we had created some new paths.

The work was obviously much appreciated by the pupils!



## WARBURTON'S WALKS

Green Gymmers know that exercise is good for you and so it's not surprising that many of them also walk regularly. We will all have seen the Lopper editor bursting out of the Henley Standard at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Sonning Common Health Walks.

In 2004 Paul Warburton, an Oxfordshire farmer, was tragically killed in an accident on his farm. Among his many activities he had formed a Walking Group and the members, who include several doctors convinced of the benefit of regular walking, have produced a book in his memory. The book contains 24 of their best walks in and around South Oxfordshire and all the profits are going to the Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance Trust. The walks are circular and are about 6 miles in length although there are short cuts in some. They all start and end near a pub.

The books have sold like hot cakes – nearly 2000 in the first month – but there are still some remaining, price £5.95. For a copy contact John Hasler 01491 628478.



escorted around by Tom Flood and he had a few words with everyone before we moved onto the BTCV awards. Sarah Worthington, who was filmed at Watlington Hill with us, received the International Volunteer Award. A dvd will be available and some of us appear in the footage! Tony Chandler

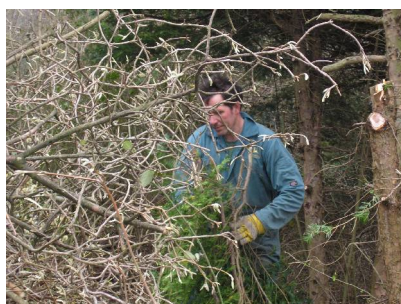
## Watlington Hill

This was a new site working with the National Trust warden. We were set to clearing vegetation back to open up what was once an old track bordered with yew trees. It was one of those satisfying tasks where one could really see an improvement at the end - though there is still plenty to continue with!

Whilst we were working a film crew from BTCV were filming Sarah Worthington who would be receiving the International Volunteer award (see above). The camera and sound men also gave us a hand from time to time. The Warden who worked with us was a most interesting chap and we are hopeful of going there again. (The only drawback was the steep walk back with tools and tired legs!)



## The Warden busy on Watlington Hill



Green Gym award winners in Leeds were invited to join the reception at Buck House for the BTCV Green Heroes award ceremony. We all met at the Royal Institution for a briefing and walked down the Mall to Buck House. Inside, we chatted for 30 minutes and were supplied with wine and a finger buffet. The Duke was



## THE LODDON LILY

Also known as the summer snowflake - *leucojum aestivum* or Gravetye Giant. It thrives well on the waters edge and the conditions at Withymead are ideal.

It is a comparatively rare plant but it has been cultivated since the sixteenth century and is named after William Robinson of Gravetye Manor..

It has 6 tepals hanging as a bell. It is a bulb and in the right conditions spreads widely.

They were a lovely sight at Withymead Reserve in early May surrounding the pond and carpeting the boggy area near the River Thames..

Other names for it are Devon Snowflake, St Agnew's flower or St George's violet.

## STRETCHING



Well, I promised you two ladies stretching their calves (lower leg back).

The top picture shows how to stretch when you have something to lean against. You can also lean against an upright using your forearms but the posture shown provides an additional forearm flexor muscle stretch.

The bottom picture shows what to do when there is nothing to lean against, as on a typical Green Gym site.

The horizontal support for the upper body in the top picture is replaced by a vertical support in the bottom picture. The upper body support is essential to provide protection for the lower back.

In the top picture, the position of the front foot is not important but it definitely is in the bottom one and should be directly below your head. In both pictures, the head, hip and heel (3 H's) form a straight line. Correct body alignment is essential for stretching to work. The back foot must point forwards and not out to the side and the back leg must be straight.

Next time, we will be looking at the thorny question of how long to stretch each muscle.

Tony

## VISIT TO THE GARDEN ISLE

Ten of us took a trip to the Isle of Wight to do a joint session on 15th March with the local Green Gym. We worked in the exotic surroundings of Ventnor Botanic Garden, which is sited in the Mediterranean-like microclimate of the famous 'Undercliff'. They run a very large group, and we made 40 all-told to help a delighted Curator and staff clear and level an area in the Americas Collection, make a path with bark chippings and rake out prunings from surrounding beds.

The IOW group were very welcoming, and we found they operate in a similar fashion to us, although we did wonder where the warm-ups went! We had all met up the night before for a pub supper and a talk given by Ray of the Footprint Trust. Ray worked in conservation in Reading when Yvonne was setting up the Green Gym.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our away-day, and we came away really pleased to have seen another group continuing the Green Gym idea so successfully.

Julia Booker



## THE WIGHTS ALRIGHT

Some reflections by Mike Saunders

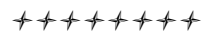
*The great yellow orb of the setting sun cast a broad path of gold over the gentle swell of Freshwater Bay touching exposed fangs of rocks each circumscribed with its creamy ruff of foam. The cliffs rose beyond standing dramatically out to sea half concealed by a late afternoon brume. The coastal path snaked enticingly in great up and down swoops, the green sward begging to be walked. It was Green Gym's visit to the Isle of Wight.*

*But this was Wednesday. A cold cold wind had greeted us on Tuesday afternoon as we were shepherded around the Botanic Gardens at Ventnor a wonderfully intricate and concealed series of plots, fountains and terraces grouped around national themes. Here was the Mediterranean garden, over there was New Zealand and beyond Japan. And at last the Green Gym 'garden', our task for the next day working with our friends from the IOW GG to clear undergrowth, uproot unwanted plants, lay a wood chipping path and clear dead trees. And what a task it was with at least 30 of us next morning scratching, raking, gathering, loading, spreading, resting, drinking, eating and chatting,*

*ruminating, gossiping.....-  
...It was a sheer biovertagoraphiliac paradise!*

*So lovely a time and such good fun. The bustle of the 'Hare and Hounds'? at Arreton, the three cars chase coming back in the dark trying to keep up with Irene's Laguna, the view from my room over the sea, the silence of deserted streets, the woody romance of the Undercliff, the look alike of an Italianate Ventnor as if a Positano or Amalfi had been transported from the its Neapolitan Riviera idyll and dumped protesting on our south coast.*

*Where to next, Julia?*



[Seen in the WWF magazine -](#)

*"Get fit and help your local environment, by signing up to the BTCV Green Gym, a scheme that offers you the opportunity to work out in the open air through practical environment or gardening work."* ✨ ✨ ✨ ✨ ✨ ✨ ✨ ✨

HENLEYSHOW

SAT SEPT 9

WE SHALL ONCE AGAIN BE  
PUTTING ON A DISPLAY.

MORE DETAILS LATER.

PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY.



## Sonning Common Primary School PTA

Dear Tony

Based on the weather ever since it seems we were quite lucky on Saturday! Once again a big thank you to you and your team with helping us with so many jobs. the amphitheatre looks great now and ready for any performances that are thrown at it and once we have tidied up the side entrance a bit we can get it seeded.

We were pleased to see some parents and children helping you this time but it is wonderfully reassuring to know we will always have a strong core of workers from the Green Gym. please pass on my thanks to the rest of your team.

Have a good summer and see you in the autumn!

Best wishes Ione Stacey.

### RATHMULLEN PLC

Most of you are familiar with the "Gordon Catering Co", - where would the Green Gym be without it?

But there is another division, a 'Minder Service' with one exclusive customer - me - which means she accompanies me to other GGs. However as she could not accompany me on the latest jaunt, to East London she arranged for a top quality stand in, and Gill Vaughan found herself on the train bound for Newham Green Gym who wanted our help in achieving self run status.

As a member of the 'original' Green Gym I enjoy visiting other groups and hope our input helps their progress. This was an inner city group and quite unlike the SC set up. But I have since heard that they are restarting at the end of June and wish them luck. Perhaps some of us can visit them at some stage in the future.

With such top notch and fearless operatives as Gill I will definitely be using Diane's Minder service in the future.

PS More minders required. Only the utterly fearless (or foolish) should apply. Embarrassment guaranteed (or joining fee refunded).

Thank you Gill for a very good day.

Robert Watson



### THE VIEW FROM BOZEDOWN



Well Green Gym is all about getting fit! Everyone climbed a few metres that day as the picture shows. The task was to clear a path so that visitors could go out on to the hill to see the cowslips, which (believe me) were a yellow carpet all over Bozodown and quite made up for the aching legs. Apologies by the photographer her camera didn't do justice to the display!



Your favourite sites - a completely unscientific survey.

Some people loved them all, and everyone found it hard to choose but overall Withymead came out most often closely pursued by Ewelme, Watlington Hill, Flowercroft and Fiddle Hill. It was felt good that we had been involved at Withymead from its beginnings and could see progress.



A lovely day at Greys Court in the wood with the sun filtering through the trees dappling the ground as yet more habitat piles were created clearing the debris of the winter tree felling. A truly magical spot.

### SMALLSNIPPETS

As well as doing a first rate job minding the finances the Treasurer Jean Fowler passed on a couple of statistics that might be of interest.

In the year 2004-5 the average attendance at work sessions was 13 and a massive 4230 hours were worked by Green Gymmers. What a help to the environment!! Not to speak of the health benefits....

One of the nicest letters that Jean received was from Enna Carr, who owns Fiddle Hill,

"I was standing on the escarpment" she wrote, "when an Adonis Blue butterfly landed on my arm, (which reminded me to send you your cheque)".

The money was nice said Jean but how lovely to hear the butterflies are back

### WELCOME PACK

For sometime it has been felt that the group ought to have a pack to give new volunteers. This will help to make it clear what the aims and objectives are and give valuable advice concerning safety, the type of work, individual sites etc. To this end John Hasler and Mike Saunders have been drawing up a possible pack to give newcomers. After being perused by various leaders it is near to being finalised and should be available in the autumn.

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# Green Gym<sup>®</sup>



## Sonning Common



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## DIDN'T WE DO WELL !!!



On 30 March last a bold band of six ventured north to Leeds to attend the first BTCV Green Gym Awards Ceremony. The Green Gym now being eight years old BTCV felt that this should be celebrated by giving awards to acknowledge the valuable part that groups have played in spreading the idea of Green Gyms around the country.

Groups had been invited to enter various categories and Sonning Common felt that they should try for two - Tony Chandler was nominated for the Volunteer Leader Award and Robert Watson for the most Committed Volunteer Award. John Hasler did an excellent job of coordinating this group's recommendations and the upshot was that both Robert and Tony reached the last three!

Thus it was that six 'gymmers' travelled up to Leeds to represent Sonning Common.

Presentations were made by Tom Flood the chief executive of BTCV, William Bird and David Stone of English Nature who praised all Green Gym members for their sterling work in spreading the idea of the

Green Gym throughout the country and how taking part

was proving to help health and well being. As well there were community and conservation benefits. It was hoped to extend the work to include more young people and those with disabilities as well as bringing in ethnic minorities.

At a very good lunch the awards were presented by the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Health the Hon Caroline Flint MP. She too drew attention to the contribution Green Gyms were making to the health of local people and how this worked with the aims of the NHS to reduce the burden of heart disease, obesity etc.

Finally imagine our delight when we learned that Robert had been given a runners up award in his category and Tony was the

winner in the best leader category!!

Two popular and well deserved awards for Sonning Common members. Congratulations to them both from everyone.

Sonning Common group also gained a sustainability award - for running such a successful independent programme for six years (approx).

WELLDONEEVERYONE!!

