

## SUMMER FESTIVITIES

An evening's get together and barbecue at Withymead was greatly enjoyed by Green Gym members, partners and friends on a warm July night. It was a pleasure to see Ian Christie the Chairman of the Trustees of Withymead who said that they were enormously grateful for our help in setting up the Nature reserve.

It was good to see so many of the group enjoying themselves with a glass in their hand and not a saw or lopper in sight.





## MORE OF THE AMAZING ALPHABET

BY MIKE SAUNDERS

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And so we come to **H and** that oh so illusory and fickle **Happiness** and really that state is so often coupled with **Health** and in all sorts of senses **Heart**.

Yes, isn't it strange what makes us happy, we can't see happiness or touch it or smell it or even sometimes describe it but when we meet it we know it instantly. It seems to creep up on us maybe from nowhere in particular and suddenly you just know you're happy.

It seems to be a strange amalgam of various things for me this GG happiness. It comes from doing something worthwhile for others, whether other GG members or the wider community. 'Doing your bit' in the team brings happiness and somehow physical labour seems to touch it more so. The open air does something as well, being so detached, away from phones and bills and cars and people being horrible to each other.

**Happiness and Health** are often linked and who is to say which comes first. Despite all the scratches and bites and 'GG elbow' and aching fingers from gripping slashers and shears one always feels so much better afterwards. Sometimes, as when pulling ragwort or bracken or raking endlessly, time may drag a bit, but the glow of physical achievement afterwards when we do stop seems to cancel out all thoughts of 'why am I doing this when I could be sitting at home reading the newspaper?'. Without doubt, doing GG regularly is of great benefit to one's body, muscles, joints and so on, hence one of its great attractions. But for me beyond this is a sort of all over well being and I think it is the mind as much as the body. All this mens sana in corpore sano stuff of course. Can't beat it.

Getting the **Heart** working of course is what it is meant to be about. But for me the emotional heart as well as the physical one is what matters. 'Ya gotta have heart' says it all. You have to want to do it and feel you are making a contribution and you feel a sort of commitment to other people to turn up if you can even if you often come late (like me, Fred!

Sadly we say goodbye to Mike after this issue of 'The Lopper' as he is

### Spareathought

We all know the need to pull ragwort to prevent it being included when the grass is cut for hay making which can then affect cattle, sheep and horses when used as a winter feed. But one creature thrives on it, the day flying Cinnabar moth



moving away southwards. We shall greatly miss his individual alphabet of Green Gym. But we wish him all the best in his new home.

(I wonder what he'd he'd have done for X and Z?)

### FOREST SCHOOL

by Kate Cheng

If you go down to the woods today you won't see bears but you will find Goring and Cleeve pre-school enjoying their new Forest School site at Withymead Nature Reserve. All thanks to Sonning Common Green Team and Brian Shaw warden for Withymead Reserve. On an overcast Saturday I briefly joined Brian and the Green Gym to clear an area on the reserve around the old orchard. The aim of the morning was to clear nettle, remove dead branches and raise the canopy to create a safe area for children for a Forest School.

The Forest school itself is set in a secure area of woodland which acts as an outdoor classroom where children can explore, investigate and discover the natural environment for themselves. We will use the site to create an exciting all year round experience for young children from the local pre-school. The programme allows children to grow in confidence, independence and discover their own abilities as well as learn about the nature world around them.

Forest School originated from Sweden and Denmark in the 1950s. It has since spread and reached the UK some twenty years or so ago. It has grown in popularity and there are now nearly 30 forest school sites in Oxfordshire alone. The experience of Forest School is fun, exciting and quite often child-led. The children splash about in puddles, roll in the leaves and because of the high adult/child ratios children can safely experience the types of activities that are so often prohibited

such as simple tool use or lighting fires. The children from Goring and Cleeve Pre-School will attend Forest School sessions, weekly, throughout the year, therefore experiencing all weathers and the changing seasons.

So what do we do at Forest School? A typical session involves both adult-led activities and child-led activities. They might look for minibeasts in the leaf litter or look for a hidden object in the woods or just play an imaginary game. During the first term activities will be focused on getting to know the woodland and learning basic safety rules. Each session follows a simple routine and always includes a drink and snack at campfire where they learn how to approach the fire safely. In spring term we will encourage the development of their observational skills such as looking for signs of spring or measuring the height of quick growing plants. We also move onto using simple tools and props such as ropes, saws, hammers where appropriate. The summer term is spent building on our newly acquired skills. We cook over an open fire and use the natural materials around us to create all sorts of art work. At the end of the year we will invite parents/carers to spend a celebration session with their children in the woods.

Without the help of the Green Team it would have been very difficult to set the site up. I would like to thank you all who helped on the day and I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Brian and the Trustees of Withymead Reserve for allowing the project to go ahead.

If you would like to know more about Forest School then contact Kris Tutton

at [Kris.Tutton@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Kris.Tutton@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)

She is the coordinator of Forest School in Oxfordshire.

## Stretching

|            |        |
|------------|--------|
| Upper body | 10 sec |
| Triceps    | 10 sec |
| Hamstring  | 20 sec |
| Quads      | 20 sec |
| Calf       | 30 sec |
| Touch toes | 20 sec |

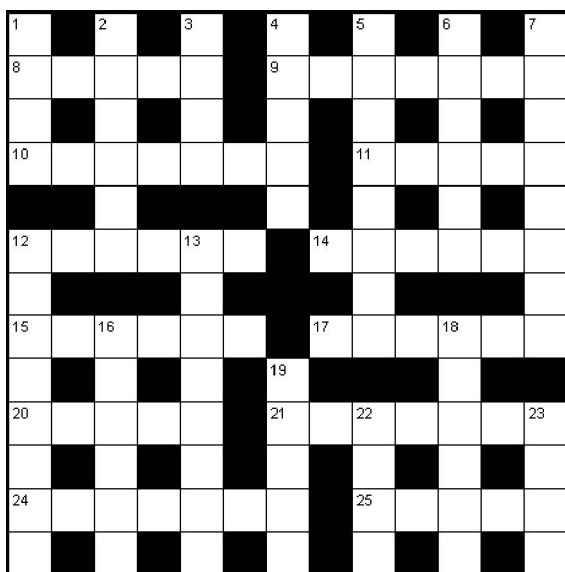
During the last few Loppers, we have established the need to use static, standing postures and we have looked at schematics which highlight the target muscle and area of influence. We have also looked at a couple of real people as well. The question now is how long to stretch. I hear various comments from "waste of time" to "30 seconds". The

table shows duration in seconds for some of the stretches we do according to Bob Anderson's book "Stretching".

There is clearly no single value that would make life easy and who looks at a watch anyway. Ideally, one should induce a stretching strain (not pain) in the target muscle and hold that posture until the strain disappears. The length of time for this will depend on the level of strain. A light strain will disappear quicker than a moderate one so even these guideline figures are variable. If you do not adopt a correct posture then you will never feel a strain anyway. Is there any conclusion to all this? As a minimum we can argue that stretching using a correct posture for at least 10 seconds begins to cover all options but is not ideal.

Tony

## CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD



### Clues Across

- 1 A short stony place (5)
- 9 Cart had rear lit badly (7)
- 10 A non-drinker is caught by fake pickaxe (7)
- 11 Kit is an Eastern joke! (5)
- 12 Unwell, the French follow cutter (6)
- 14 All the rubbish is fatal (6)
- 15 Insects are concealed in sticky sap (6)
- 17 Traders' pincers? (6)
- 20 Hard outline for bushy fence (5)
- 21 Hill is split by stream (7)
- 24 Animal lays eggs on two rivers (3-4)
- 25 Type of wheat grown here? (5)

### Clues Down

- 1 Building is a long way from motorway(4)

- 2 Its cat disturbed stable (6)
- 3 Data comes from centre of mini Foreign Office (4)
- 4 Post upset Keats (5)
- 5 Plant poor beer in entrance lobby (8)
- 6 Dig beside quiet lake (6)
- 7 Grasps grand ice-creams (8)
- 12 Less rash to destroy cutters (8)
- 13 With steps the French duke cuddled snake (8)
- 16 Concealed study kept secret (6)
- 18 Place to see sheep with odd bits of lumber (6)
- 19 Direct assault by old marine on street (5)
- 22 Animals return for plant (4)
- 23 Fellow furrow turns to grass (4)

## CHRISTMAS PARTY MENU

### First course

Roast parsnip Soup with chive creme fraiche

Grilled Goats Cheese Crostini on a mixed bed of leaves with chilli and onion marmalade

or

Prawn and Smoked Salmon Timbale with lemon dressing.

### Main Course

Traditional Roast Turkey with sage and walnut stuffing, wrapped smoked bacon chipolatas with thyme and rich red wine gravy

Baked Cod Fillet with smoked garlic mash served with a Sicilian tomato and cream sauce

or

Sweet Potato and sun dried tomato galette topped with Hall-umi cheese (v).

All served with a selection of seasonal vegetables & potatoes.

### Desserts

Panacotta with cranberry and port coulis

Christmas pudding and brandy sauce

or

Cappuccino & chocolate mousse.



Answer to Crossword

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# Green Gym<sup>®</sup>



## Sonning Common

# "THE LOPPER"

## full of little cuttings.

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### WELCOME PACK

For some time it has been felt that new members ought to have more than a verbal welcome when they first come to Green Gym. Some kind of welcome pack would help them and give everyone a similar idea of what the group actually does.

Accordingly John Hasler and Mike Saunders set to drafting a document that would outline the aims and objectives of GG whilst at the same time making new visitors feel welcome and reassured.

The pack includes details of the sites we go to, what we do there: giving details of the sort of tasks that they may find themselves doing.

There is a detailed outline of the precautions taken to conform with 'Health and Safety', insurance requirements and self protection.

It stresses that the Green Gym has two prongs one of which is to do as good a job as possible for the clients who give us tasks to do, and the other is to offer the volunteers a friendly and worthwhile experience while working.

The group never forgets that the groups were formed to offer another way to keep fit and healthy without having to sweat on soulless machines in the gym.

The pack has been shown to members who have made suggestions for change and is near to completion. It is hoped it will be available to all in the very near future.

### NEWS FROM THE SITES.

The Green Gym were asked back to the Watlington chalkpits to create and refurbish steps leading up the very steep bank of the

site.

After admiring the gate that they had installed some time previously the hard work began.

Robert Watson almost singlehandedly cleared and refurbished one existing flight of steps many of which needed new posts and risers. He had brought plenty of lengths of wood and advanced measuring skills were expended in marking and cutting as many useful pieces as possible from it, some of which were skilfully pointed for posts by Fred and Christine.

While this went on the heavy mob dug steps out of the bank, inserted the planks and hammered in posts to make a flight of steps.

### TRENCHING HOES

In the April 'Lopper' Tony Chandler gave a detailed account of the plan to regenerate heather on Kingwood and Nettlebed Commons. An impressive



Heather on Nettlebed Common

amount of heather is fighting with the grass in some of the open spaces and GG has spent several sessions working to give the plants light and air. This is where the trenching hoes come in, as they are first rate for taking off the top layer of grass to reveal light soil ideal for heather regeneration. It is heavy work but worthwhile and it is not hard to see why this tool has been a staple agricultural tool for generations all over the world.



Heather on Peppard Common

### CHRISTMAS DINNER

Julia has once again done us proud and has arranged for us to have Christmas Dinner at Badgemore Golf Club on Monday Dec 18.

Time- 7.00 for 7.45pm

Cost £19.00.

A mouth watering menu can be found on page 4.

Julia will be round to take orders in due course.