



"Today (Thursday 19 May) we were welcomed at Withymead by two of the trustees. There were 2 main tasks. If you were wearing wellingtons, it was off to the board walk to clear encroaching vegetation. The rest of us tackled the nettles and sycamore seedlings in the area of the Forest School reserved for the youngest children. We started in the centre by the log seats and worked outwards concentrating on the nettles for a start. The sycamores were rather more stubborn and needed a tougher strategy to remove roots and all. We were asked to remove the items which had been used to make a teepee, stored under a tarpaulin. Imagine our delight upon finding a male slow-worm, *Anguis fragilis*. He moved so fast but I managed to get a few photos, before he was taken and shown to the visiting schoolchildren. The male slow-worm is much lighter in colour than the female. They are legless lizards and are great slug eaters. They usually live where there is a good cover of grass, scrub or stones but hibernate underground from October to March. They mate in Spring and bear their young late Summer. They are preyed on by hedgehogs, adders, rats and kestrels."

Susan



The new sickle/slasher, as pioneered at Ewelme, great for cutting out waterside foliage but Chris here tries it out on the Aston Rowant thistles.

Well done Julia for spotting the Marcel Proust reference and to Arch Cake Maker Diane for contributing these little objects for our delight. In his novel 'In Search of Lost Time' on tasting one of these dipped in tea, Proust wrote:..

"No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder rang through me and I stopped intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me'.

You never know what will happen to you at a GG session!

Robin gets down to things at Withymead!

This was part of a path clearing exercise in the Forest school area.



Lopper Editor: Mike Saunders
michaelbsaunders@yahoo.co.uk

Tel 01491 872965

The Green Gym

C/o Health Centre, 39 Wood Lane,

Sonning Common

Enquiries - Robin - 0118 972 3528

Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 49 September 2016

From the Desk with a View

What a start to my endeavours. Here the hon. ed. cycles home from Cleeve Court. Come on people this is supposed to be the Ridgeway!

But what a lot of contributions, from the flowers of the fields to the mud of the paths you have poured them in. Many thanks to all. Here is a selection but mark ye this we have only four pages.

Quite a good idea I think to have bits on what we see as well as what we do. So not just a catalogue of events but how about something 'educational', yes that's right, informative, interesting, reflective even. After all other people read The Lopper not just Ggers!



Cleeve Water Meadow

Susan writes

"As usual on this wonderful site there were many tasks which included clearing the path to the river, clearing the path on the opposite side to the first bridge, as well as removing stinging nettles from the tow path beside the river and of course bonfire duty. The vegetation had really taken over in the last few weeks with all the rain, interspersed with some quite warm, sunny days. Shears and rakes were the most useful tools although it was very satisfying to pull up the nettles, roots and all. It was a special occasion today as we said goodbye to Chris and Shelagh who are off to Australia for a year. Julia had managed to go along to Richard Forsey's signing session at The Bell Bookshop in Henley and buy them his book, "The Wood for the Trees" from us all. We wish them a wonderful trip."

(09/06/16)

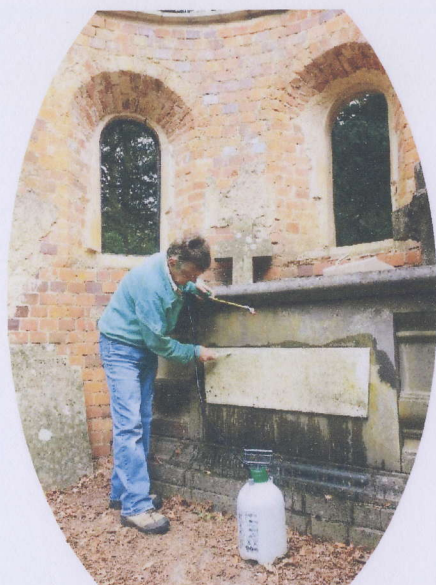
And so we say farewell to Shelagh and Chris as they sail off into the sunset.....(ed).

It's not often we get involved in stonework preservation, but this was one of the tasks waiting for us at the church of St. John the Baptist at Mongewell, a romantic semi-ruin by the Thames near Wallingford. Removing moss and algae safely from the stones required tools not stocked in our tool shed: denture brushes (just try putting in a chit for denture brushes to our tools officers). However Beverley Turner of the Churches Conservation Trust had brought plenty, together with a dustpan and brush, so most of the moss in the roofless part of the church was safely dealt with by the end of the morning.

Meanwhile, some of the gang were doing more traditional Green Gym work with the long-handled pole saw, letting in more light at the church entrance and along the south side. During the coffee break (iced banana cake and jam doughnuts) Jane read us some information about the church, whose history included names suitable for a gothic novel: The Hon. Shute Barrington, Uvedale Price, Spencer Slingsby Stallwood and Hugh Vaux.

We enjoyed our novel tasks and hope the Churches Conservation Trust will come up with some more needy churchyards for us to tackle

Julia



Our job at Moor End common was- as ever- pulling ragwort on the north meadow. The whole area was full of wild flowers and with the airy heads of the grass was a magic scene. But adding a special dimension was the mass of greyey, pinky white orchids that grew in clusters across the meadow. They are the heath spotted orchid, (*dactylorhiza maculata*) widespread and quite common from May to June in habitats such as you find on Moor End. They grow up to 40cm high with as many as 50 flowers on each plant in warm areas. The leaves are spotted – maculata—and the flowers can be washed with pale pink and mauve marks. Growing in profusion as they were, they were an enchanting sight

Jill
(27/07/16)



The delights of Ewelme

The meadow at Ewelme was full of flowers in August when we went to help rake the hay, including the frothy flowers of meadowsweet. This may have been named initially because it was used to flavour mead, the drink. Meadowsweet has different scents in different parts of the plant: a marzipan-like aroma tinged with musk and honey in the flowers and a pickled-cucumber sharpness in the leaves – the difference between 'courtship and matrimony' according to one cynical observer! Early in the 19th century salicylic acid was isolated not only from willow bark but also from meadowsweet (both plants of damp places). This led in 1899 to the synthesis of acetylsalicylic acid which the Bayer pharmaceutical company called Aspirin, after the old botanical name for meadowsweet *Spiraea ulmaria*.

Julia (12/08/16)



Orange hawkweed *Pilosella aurantiaca* growing in Gillott's Field, where we pulled ragwort at the end of June. These wildflowers are native to alpine Europe, growing on mountains at up to 2.6km above sea level, and were introduced to the UK as a garden plant. Their common name of 'Fox and Cubs' refers to the way that many of the as-yet un-opened flower heads hide beneath those that have opened. The seed-head of orange hawkweed is both smaller and coarser than that of the dandelion, to which it is related.

Julia (25/06/16)



A reminder from Tony.....

It's just as important to consider all stages of hedge laying and subsequent growth to evaluate your effort.

Here he shows our hedge at Dunsden Church from first appearance to laid situation and subsequent even and managed growth