



"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.
Issue 74 Christmas 2022

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year



As we crawl to the end of the year and prepare for the festive season, let's take a moment to remember all the sites that the Green Gym has supported this year, and how all your hard work has improved those sites both for nature and for the many people who visit and enjoy them.

martinB

And where were you-Tony, Brian, Chris??

After all, it's the **43rd National Hedge Laying Championships** here at Clacks Farm, near Wallingford. Saturday 29 October. **Cars** there are in the stubble field, 200 or more.

A long line of hedge with sections devoted to the various regional styles. **Hedgers working away**, their **trucks of tools** and entourage backed up.

Noticeboards proclaim the style and the place of the hedger in the prize stakes. Amazing. I knew the **Midlands** or 'Standard' (basically the GG style) but not the Welsh and would you believe the subtle difference between the **Devon** and the **Dorset**. Both cut flat and low to fit on earth bank and dry stone walls but with different ways of placing the 'crook' fastenings.

The marquee is resplendent with countryside stalls and food offerings, **billhooks** and thumb sticks. Plenty of chairs and table for the lunch on offer and a stage for the trophy presentations. **Dogs** all over the place.

Lots of Barbour's, jeans and Wellies but thornproof three piece Tweed as well. Viyella shirts and woollen ties. Heavens, am I really in Oxfordshire not in the Yorkshire Dales?

What a heart warming cheer for a GGer to see country pursuits alive and well!

Mike S



Mapledurham Village Hall



I have memories of waiting outside this hall at 11pm waiting for one or other of my offspring to emerge from a night of noisy gaiety. This hall was a very popular venue for parties in the 1980's. It was somewhere where their noise could annoy few people!

So it was nice to see it in daylight and to help with cutting the hedges which had been somewhat neglected. We soon got on top of the job and filled both a trailer and grab bags with cuttings.

It was fascinating to look inside and see a beautiful hall notice board incredibly carved in memory of our Robert's parents for all they had done for the hall. The board was a wonderful piece of work made by a real local master craftsman. (Ask Robert all about it).

If you can ever look in I well recommend it.



A forest of Ash

A fine Saturday morning and we are in **Parsons Wood** after a long absence. But no-not holly as expected and as customary in these Chiltern beechwoods. This time a certain ash tree has deposited helicopter-like a million (at least) seedlings on the nutritious leafy soil beneath the beech trees and a host of saplings has sprung up. I say seedlings, some are minor weeds, some more sturdy **'treelings'**.

Our task is to start downhill and working uphill to remove the lot.

But-and wait for it -mirabile dictu- they pull up as easily as nettles in damp soil. Well maybe not all. Our small forks are needed here and there for the slightly more mature ones.

Steadily we work upwards leaving huge piles of waste behind us.

With only 11 of us it is quite surprising what we achieve in one morning but once again that comes from experienced hands and GG stamina!



Mike S



We remember with fondness **Bert Gill**, who died recently aged 98, an enthusiastic volunteer with SCGG for several years. Ewelme was one of his favourite sites, and he enjoyed being photographed with our youngest volunteer at a work session in May 2016, as well as the cake! His genial presence is much missed.

Julia's Photo Memories



Lyn and Carol collecting hay at Ewelme in September

Geoff and Peter Taylor showed how effective tree poppers can be against dogwood on a wet day at Aston Rowant in October



Leo giving us instructions for a couple of gate installations in addition to bramble clearance near the mound at Greys Court



Home Farm Wood Jill and Robert relaxing at the break from their August assault on rhododendrons. Carol found an old bird's nest.

No comments about old birds please



Halloween at Spring Wood, with Jane's spooky cake



Three Oaks Community Orchard Making an early start in September on building the bonfire for Guy Fawkes night, using the branches from damson trees we had pruned in a previous session



Sonning Common hedge planting



Earlier in the year a group of us went to the new Memorial Field in Sonning Common to plant a hedge using some whips that had been given to the new project.

Unfortunately the plants had had to spend all winter in a big window box as conditions had been poor and it had not been possible to do the job earlier.

However we were pleasantly surprised to find most of the plants were in really quite good condition and we were able to fill in all the gaps in the hedge.

A few days ago I went up to see how they had fared in the dreadful drought conditions of the summer. Well I was amazed to see that what I estimate was about half the whips had survived the summer. They were somewhat overwhelmed by grass and weeds and wind but not looking too bad. Let's hope for a kind wet winter and spring to give them a boost.

So it wasn't all bad news and let's hope they prosper next year.

The field is looking good and do look in if you are passing as it is a real asset to the village. (It's opposite Chiltern Edge school)

Jill K



Oh joy oh joy oh jubilay!



Joy indeed. In the sad and regrettable absence of Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Master the delightful bonfire task falls upon me. I say fall but I did put my hand up. The scene is our second visit to Cleeve in the space of a couple of weeks or so.

This time we are using the normal fire site nearer the house unlike last time. There are masses of material heaps to be consumed including all that grass resulting from Tony's scything under the trees.



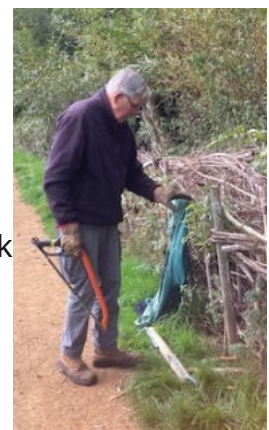
Last time the fire site was in the lower field with material for burning coming from various sources. Some of this was wheelbarrowed in some being dragged across the field. All great work under a warm spot of sunshine.

Of course, there is as ever on both occasions work on the stockade attracting again as ever encouraging comments from walkers on the towpath.

Unfortunately, no shots of 'my' fire as I was too busy enjoying myself for three hours stacking and turning. Really one should pay for the privilege but better not say that too loudly!



MikeS



Lopper Editor: Martin Barrett
mdb.scgg@gmail.com

The Sonning Common Green Gym
c/o Health Centre, 39 Wood Lane,
Sonning Common

Enquires: Martin Rhodes 01189 724228