

# Green Gym<sup>®</sup>



## Sonning Common

# "THE LOPPER"

**full of little cuttings.**

Issue 75 March 2023



Enjoying cake provided by Sheelagh and Chris at Dunsden Churchyard

### Welcome

We will soon be celebrating 25 years of protecting vital habitats for wildlife, enhancing green spaces for the enjoyment, and wellbeing of visitors. At the same time making many new friends, keeping fit, and enjoying cake in the great outdoors.



Congratulations to everyone, and keep an eye out for news of the celebrations and a special publication.

**[martin b](#)**

### Once more-the delights of the GG Spud Roast 2022!

Yes, once more at the welcoming slopes of **Aston Rowant NNR** for the spud roast as ever organised and arranged by Tony.

12 of us hearty souls appeared on site to find we had lost (for the moment) our local host Steph who had driven off with the tools and assorted kit. Well Aston Rowant is a very big area to lose and to find people - with at least 4 meeting places - not to speak of paths wandering around and numerous gates and fences.



Our task was using the 'poppers' on the thorn bushes (such fun to use) as well as the usual array of loppers, spades, saws, and rakes.

The fire took a little time to take on a good glow but the fantastic breeze, well almost a gale at times, helped no end.



Spuds, partly cooked already, into the ashes and a little bit of a wait.....

Then a crowd round the table of assorted eats, set a little out of the wind but with that amazing view down the little combe and across the plain to Oxford. Really so enjoyable one really ought to pay to come here.

A great morning with thanks to Julia for hot berry juice drink, to Tony and to Steph and colleagues. Can we do this again next year? **Mike S-**





## Cleeve Water Meadow October 2022

"Another dry mild day in October and just right to be working at **Cleeve Water Meadow**. A few of us set about moving chippings to make up the paths. This is a task which needs doing most years.



Near the board bridge there were some specimens of **Shaggy Ink-cap**. What a wonderful little fungus, growing happily amongst the older chippings. For once we were actually able to finish the task, which is always very satisfying



Susan

## Priest Hill, Nettlebed Dec 2022

"What a frosty morning! Sometimes I think we are all mad to go off when the day looks just a tad chilly. I hadn't really got a good excuse not to go as this is my home territory.



The heather looked very pretty in the sunshine and the frost, very sparkly, just right for Christmas time.



Even the brambles were photogenic.



In the end there were eleven hardy souls pulling bracken and bramble and two GGers using tree poppers.



Peter K. was very proud to have pulled out the most enormous oak root from the heather.



Julia found an interesting fungus with crystals all round its gills which my phone app, Seek, tells me is an Agricomycetes.

We were treated to **delicious tea bread** made by Ronnie which was just right to restore our energy when the temperature was below zero. And actually, in the sunshine, it wasn't really that cold.

Susan



## Flowercroft Wood Jan 2023

Apparently this has been the wettest January on record (another record!) but little or nothing defeats the Green Gym.

Flowercroft – I dream of warm sunny days lying back on the chalk grassland gazing across at the green and pleasant fields and hills across the valley.... then come back with a start to what I actually see – thick hill mist which eventually turns into steady rain completely obscuring the view.

The first attempt to ferry tools to the site was abandoned as a car got bogged down in the saturated terrain , so bags in hand we walked along a somewhat slippery and muddy track to the site.

But as the mountain mist lifted a little we set off on the task of clearing the slope of invasive dogwood which crowds out the low growing flowers the butterflies feed on in those halcyon summer days. This is fine chalk environment where many butterflies can flourish, but so can invasive scrub. So this was our task which we tackled with our usual gusto – for a while.



Calls of 'coffee's up' were warmly greeted as we trod cautiously along the one narrow slippery path to be greeted by a splendid array of cake as well as welcome cups of coffee to warm our hands round.

Alas this was the moment the rain decided to begin in earnest; cake was hastily covered up – and eaten up. In spite of a little drop of water it was remarked on what inroads we managed to make into it in a short time!

As we cleared up it was decided that perhaps it was time for a judicious retreat.. Tools were gathered up and taken back to the tools car and most of the party began a muddy wet walk back home.

In spite of every thing we had made quite an advance into the dogwood and would be ready to continue later in the year.

Jill



## Ewelme in December

Pollarding the willow avenue

Julia



## Lopper. Eye and Dunsden What a very fine hedge!

It is some time since we were last at **Dunsden Church** where on previous occasions we have worked at churchyard clearance and hedge laying both around the car park and along the side edge of the churchyard. The hedge around the car park is in fine shape growing nicely and our task today was to size up and burn the trimmings.



So here is the 'before' picture.....



...and here a well clothed GGger sets to work



With this amazing result all tight and tidy.....

... with the cuttings all ready to be dragged down to the end of the churchyard site for burning.

**Mike S**

## *Julia's photo memories*



A heavy frost didn't deter us from attacking the brambles and birch amongst the heather at Nettlebed Common in early December.



Carol fought and won with this humungous rhododendron root at Home Farm Wood in December.



Peter making room for more arisings in the skip at Dunsden Churchyard November 2022



## Ewelme in January

In all my years with Green Gym, I cannot remember such a continuously wet number of sessions with Green Gym. And January 2023 was one at Ewelme, not exactly raining but not far off. Luckily it is one of our most civilised sites so we were able to enjoy a dry, warm coffee break indoors in which to enjoy [Mike Mcleod's lovely historical fruit cake](#) ( he assured us that it was in fact recently baked!)

The job, you couldn't call it a task, was mud and silt removal from some of the watercress beds and removal of weeds.

As the cress was not looking at its best it was fairly easy to spot that the green and flourishing plants were in fact the weeds, - not too easy to remove as their roots were well established in the gravelly bottom of the stream.



However the skilled workers of Green Gym set to with energy and managed to pull/dig out the silt and plants and then came the task of barrowing all that wet mud away to deposit in the meadow.

Luckily one or two barrows had useful holes in allowing some of the what seemed like buckets full of brown water to drain away.



Our leader, Mike, praised our efforts fulsomely. For once we did finish rather promptly though!

**Jill with photos by Gill**

*(Hoping that by the time the Lopper comes out all this wet weather will be a fading memory)*



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