

Happy Christmas

At this festive season, let's take this opportunity to thank all gymers for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

Over the past year, you have worked at numerous sites, creating and restoring habitats for wildlife, as well as maintaining community green spaces that benefit the local community

We believe that being outdoors and active is good for our mental and physical health, and we especially value the companionship and support that gymers offer each other.



We hope that you will continue to join us in the New Year as we continue to work together to make the world a better place.

Merry Christmas to everyone at the Green Gym! **martinB**



Repairs to Robin's bench at Greys Court



The bench we had helped install at Greys Court in memory of Robin Howles had started to crack at the edge of the seat, so Leo found a better replacement beech plank made from a beech felled on the estate. The new seat was put in place during our hazel-coppicing session in October, and the plaque reinstated. The edges were then given a smooth finish to make for comfortable sitting!

Julia



Bench Originally installed 2021



Owl Habitat at Cleeve Water Meadows

Charlotte is keen to attract **owls** into her meadow. So a few months back she invited Lu who runs the **British Owl Project** over to survey the meadow and suggest the best way forward. Lu suggested that **Little Owls** would be the most likely owls to take up residence as they are in the area. She also suggested some habitat improvements that would help them set up home.

One suggestion was to create a low dead hedge adjacent to a grass area which would attract beetles, spiders, and small mammals which are prey of the little owls. Over a couple of visits the gymmers went about creating this...



Left: A base of wood chips was laid along the line of the dead hedge



Right: Then short stakes were cut and inserted along the length of the wood chips.



Left: Stage 1 complete



Right: The space between the stakes was then filled with brash (larger material at the base).



Left: Until the desired height was reached.



Below: The final dead hedge - the chopping blocks will be left as perches for the little owls.



Let's hope the **Little Owls** like the habitat we created for them...

martinB



Unearthing the Forgotten: Restoring Dignity to Lost Graves



One of our regular tasks at Streatley Church is uncovering overgrown and lost graves.



We are privileged to be able to restore the dignity of the forgotten souls buried in this cemetery, in the hope of reconnecting the relatives of the deceased with their ancestors and honour their memories.

The team carefully unearth the hidden gravestones and clean the headstones with brushes and water to reveal the inscriptions sometimes lost for decades.

This is a noble and compassionate service for the community which the Green Gym is rightly proud.

[martinB](#)

Home Farm Wood



The woodland floor at Home Farm Wood from the parking field to the pond is opening up as we get rid of more and more rhododendrons. Wildflowers are emerging on the woodland floor, foxgloves in particular.



In early September Carol and Peter Keel were determined to remove one giant rhody (**Left**) which had escaped attention in previous sessions. It took all morning, so after coffee break (**Right**) they were joined by Geoff and later Martin.



They all together gave the roots a final **heave-ho-ho-ho**, just as it was time to pack up.



Hats off to the team!

Julia

Christmas Lights

It was coming up to Christmas when **Robert Watson** and **Mike Macleod** were hard at work in the Green Gym toolshed fixing blades, sharpening loppers and checking the replacement list. As the winter afternoon darkened they could hardly make things out, so Robert set up a hurricane lamp on a hook in the corner.

"We need some real Christmas cheer around here" said Robert, not normally one to err on the bright side. *"Let's stick fairy lights on the toolshed roof."*

Mike, a bit taken aback, pointed out there was nowhere to plug them in. But Robert opened up a holdall to reveal several strings of coloured lights and a large battery. *"We can fix them on with this special putty which won't harm the metal."*



It took only a short while (with resorts to a coffee thermos) for them to install the lights along the roof and around the door. Robert attached the battery clip and voilà! Chasing lights!

"Isn't that a bit Blackpool?" frowned Mike. They flicked the switch to static, and he had to agree that the lights enhanced the rugged industrial aesthetic of the toolshed. They admired their handiwork while finishing the thermos, then turned everything out and went home.



The next evening they returned to finish off sharpening the sickles, with a few mince pies as fortification. No sooner had they switched on the Christmas roof-lights when suddenly a cluster of Christmas lights blazed out on the neighbouring shed. How did that happen? Trevor appeared from the back with a big grin. "I watched you two last night on CCTV, quite entertaining once I realised you weren't burglars. That gave me the idea that we should do the same with our shed. It may have sailed the seas once on a container ship, but fairy lights give it a certain je-ne-sais-quoi. Now wait till you see this," and he disappeared inside to fire up his shiny new tractor. He reversed it out, and that, too, was festooned in Christmas lights. "I'm off to do a few wheelies round the sports pitches," Trevor beamed.



*Merry Christmas and pass it on to all
your Green Gym pals!*



Julia

Ewelme



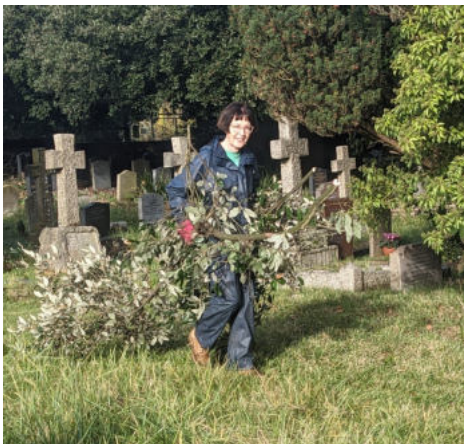
The sun came out through a rain shower, producing a double rainbow (though Peter could have magicked it).



Julia



More from Streatley Churchyard



Julia clearing low hanging branches from a yew tree.

Martin & Martin spent a long time extracting an overgrown shrub from a grave. Photo taken before the grave was respectfully reinstated.



Peter cutting back one of the hedges.

Five builder sacks of green waste generated by the Green Gym waiting to be collected and recycled.

martinB



More Nettles at Cleeve Water Meadow



Merry Stingmas!

Nettles are always a problem at Cleeve Water meadows but thanks to the hard work of the Green Gym they are kept under control to allow other more beneficial plants to grow.



martinB

Aston Rowant



A good-sized patch of hawthorn was cleared by the footpath at the top of The Warren at Aston Rowant in October, using tree-poppers. We also cleared back the vegetation growing into the north side of the footpath, so as to give more space for walkers.

Julia

Did you Know:

The **Glastonbury Hawthorn** used to flower at **Christmas** and in May. The Bishop of Bath and Wells started sending a sprig of hawthorn to the monarch for their Christmas table during the reign of James I. **(Ed)**



Tokers Green Pond

Local residents joined us in August when we cleared back the margins of Tokers Green pond, including the hedge by the wooden walkway. Lyn and Carol made sure the job was done thoroughly.

Julia



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