

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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Revitalizing Charlotte's Cleeve Wetland Meadow



Recently, the Green Gym team embarked on a revitalization session at Charlotte's Cleeve wetland meadow. Armed with shears, slashers, and a keen sense of environmental stewardship, we tackled a variety of tasks to enhance the local ecosystem.

One of our primary focuses was to **restore the dead hedge** along the towpath by the River Thames. We began by partially pollarding a small willow, processing the cut material into stakes and binders. These materials were then used to repair the hedge, as well as weaving in the willow regrowth that had occurred from previous stakes. This effort will create a wildlife-friendly corridor, providing valuable habitat for a variety of species.



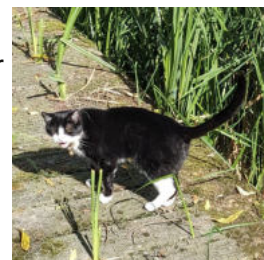
To promote biodiversity and encourage the growth of wetland wildflowers, we **cleared vegetation from the top fence line and scythed the overgrown area** around the fire site. By removing excess growth, we hope to create a more suitable environment for these specialized plants to thrive.



Additionally, we **cleared the footpath leading to the bridge** near the Loddon Lilies area, ensuring safe and accessible passage for visitors. All the cleared material was responsibly disposed of, either by adding it to a wildlife habitat pile or a composting area.

As we worked, Charlotte's cat, **Angel**, kept a watchful eye on our progress, ensuring that our efforts were up to her high standards!

The Green Gym session was a rewarding experience, not only for the positive impact we had on the wetland meadows but also for the



opportunity to connect with nature and contribute to a healthier environment.

MartinB

"Bracken Busting at Priest Hill"

A dedicated group of volunteers recently tackled the **annual bracken-pulling task on Priest Hill**. Despite the challenging terrain, around a dozen individuals came together to clear away the invasive plant, significantly reducing its presence on the hillside.

Their efforts not only helped to **restore the natural balance of the ecosystem** but also allowed the native heather to thrive. As a result, we can expect to see increased biodiversity in the area, attracting a variety of insects and other invertebrates.

The accompanying photos vividly illustrate the transformation of the site, demonstrating the powerful impact of collective action.

MartinR



Aston Rowant



A hot July morning at Aston Rowant **clearing steps and a footpath** on the southern edge at the top. At least we could keep cool during the break.

Julia



New Copse



We had a sort of **treasure hunt at New Copse** – collecting up redundant plastic tree guards from a section of the wood next to the bridle path. Most of them were on the woodland floor, many well-hidden, and we had amassed about **1,000** by the end of the morning. Finding a pile of horse-dung on the bridle path was an unusual bonus, for it showed that our clearance work in past sessions has brought back horse riders after many years.

Julia

Bracken Bashing on Kingwood Common



We returned to Kingwood Common on Saturday 24 August and this being the height of summer, we were a little disappointed to find that after a bright and sunny Friday, there was **incessant rain forecast throughout the morning**.

Nonetheless around 10 hardy **(foolish) volunteers** met at Cherry Croft to carry out Sally's bidding. It turned out that her bidding was to uproot bracken from the southern triangle of the common. This was a little surprising as we had undertaken this identical task out at the same spot in Q2. But as we all know, nothing appears to deter bracken and there it was once again 3-4 foot tall and very abundant and widespread.

We began our work with gusto, **getting wetter and wetter** and consequently heavier and heavier and soon had a good area cleared of

bracken. At the same time, the dead hedges on the roadside were becoming taller by the minute.

Break provisions were provided by Lyn and Geoff and were much appreciated by all. Post breaktime, a few volunteers decided that they had had enough and departed, but around 6 volunteers continued until close of play.

By 12.15 the task area was devoid of bracken and we all felt much better in ourselves. We departed **joyful and singing** (as well as very wet).

I just hope that the heather and the foxgloves appreciate our efforts. **MartinR**



Henley Community Orchard



The south **fence-line had become very overgrown** by the time we arrived in July, just how much can be seen from these before and after photos. All the cut material was stuffed into drag bags and taken to the bonfire site.

Julia

The Wonders of the Wood

First, the GG bit....

Lots of comments, 'lovely day', 'nice and warm', 'gorgeous weather' and all 11 of us are at **Park Wood, Nuffield** for another bit of bramble bashing on a fantastic Saturday morning. Surprise, surprise. The brambles are coming up like on greased wheels, I have not seen as good since Tartary Wood. There is something incredibly satisfying when you **pull a bramble** and tendrils in all directions come with the main stem. It makes you reluctant to leave at quitting time....wish we were carrying on after a lunch break!

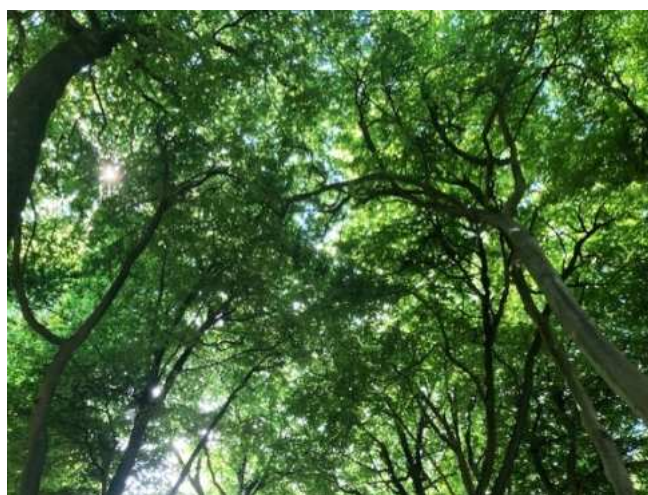


Now for the fulsome bit....

As readers know, **I am wont to muse....**

We know GG is good for exercise and social interaction key contributors to health and wellbeing. **Release of endorphins** so called peptides produced in the brain that block the perception of pain-there you go Brian- and increase feeling of wellbeing. Important too, release of serotonin possibly, the **power of happiness** through social interaction.

But today another plus plus... the **beauty of nature**, the joy of our natural surround midst those sturdy beech trees and the towering overhead branches, patches of sunlight dappling trunks and lighting a clearing, **a close knit canopy overhead vivid greens and blue** appearing through and between blackish rafters, purlins and wind braces.



Am I in a cathedral certainly, a fan vault, lierne ribs, ribs galore? Yes, Whipsnade Tree Cathedral, I know, but this one is uncelebrated.

The **beauty is palpable**. Research shows universal qualities of beauty are simplicity, pattern, rhythm, symmetry, certain juxtapositions of colour, combinations of musical notes and physical elements arranged in certain ratios and geometries. Activity is registered, it seems, in the region of the brain called the medial orbitofrontal cortex. Wow, thanks sciencefocus.com.

I think we can see and recognise beauty but better still **'feel 'it**. Next publicity ad for Green Gym 'Come and excite your neural pathways. Why not activate your medial orbitofrontal cortex'



The harmony excites as in buildings as in nature the one informs the other and here is **King's College Cambridge Chapel ceiling**.....wow!

Thanks GG.....it's been a pleasure. Pulling up brambles and 'feeling' that canopy **Michael S**

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