

Christmas Nonsense

*In Sonning Common, where the green elves play,
 The Green Gym folks work in a merry way.*

*With saws and loppers, they trim the trees,
 And sing carols to the buzzing bees.*

*They deck the hedges with holly and cheer,
 While reindeer prance and volunteers steer.*

*"Ho ho ho!" cries Santa, with a wink and a grin,
 "Let's plant some saplings, let the fun begin!"*

*They clear the brambles, make paths so neat,
 With mistletoe hanging, it's quite the feat.*

*The squirrels join in, with acorns to share,
 As snowflakes twirl in the crisp winter air.*

*Oh, the joy of the Green Gym's festive spree,
 Restoring nature, as jolly as can be.*

*With laughter and love, they work hand in hand,
 Making Sonning Common a winter wonderland..*



Merry Christmas to everyone at the Green Gym!

martinB



Aston Rowant



As part of an experiment to find the best conditions for our native junipers to thrive (a never-ending mystery), our October task at Aston Rowant was mattocking out a metre-wide strip of turf on the north-facing side of a juniper enclosure. Janet and Fiona installed most of the poles marking the strip edge. **Fiona is moving to pastures new and we shall all miss her.**

Julia



Gym Volunteers Revitalise Cleeve Wetlands

Over the past few months, the dedicated gymmers have rolled up their sleeves to give Cleeve Wetlands a much-needed boost. Their primary mission was to tackle the reed bed.

Earlier in the season, Farmer Jed had cut the reeds, but persistent rain left the ground too soggy for machinery to clear the debris. Undeterred, the Green Gym volunteers waded through the flooded patches, raking up the reeds **(right)** and transporting them to designated areas. There, Charlotte **(left)** expertly compressed the piles into compact stacks.



In addition to reed clearance, the volunteers took on various other important tasks:

Invasive docks were removed from wildflower areas to protect native species. **(Right: Anne with one of the larger dock roots)**



Logs and branches from recent tree work were assembled into new habitat piles, providing shelter for wildlife. **(Left: Brian assembling a new habitat pile)**

Wood chippings were used to repair paths around the wetlands.

Specific areas were carefully scythed to encourage the growth of delicate wetland plants.



Through this hard work and dedication, the Green Gym volunteers have made a significant contribution to the restoration and conservation of this important wetland.



martinB

Streatley Churchyard



Our annual pilgrimage to Streatley churchyard was a labour of love. Green Gym members worked tirelessly to:

Lift the Spirits: Elevate a tree's canopy **(Top Left)**, opening up the sky and lifting visitors' spirits.

Nurture Nature: Clear the way for wildflowers to bloom, bringing life and colour to the sacred space.

Respect the Departed: Thin the encroaching irises **(Top Right)**, allowing the grave sites to breathe, and unearth forgotten stones **(Lower Right)**, reconnecting families with their lost loved ones.

Preserve the Past: Tend to the ancient stone walls **(Lower Left)**, ensuring their legacy for future generations.



martinB

Ewelme

Sloshing and sluicing.....it must be Ewelme again!

I've said it before and I'll say it again. There's something deeply satisfying about **sloshing** about in running water, the **gurgle sloppy** sound, the occasional cold **splash** up to your chin, the **squelchy** Welly sound on gravel, the flash of light on the water, an investigator pair of mallard ducks...

And we have all that at the Ewelme water cress beds and more. So, another Saturday and we are clearing a mass of weedy material clogging the bunds (concrete walkways). It is thick clinging stuff so easy to haul up wet and clogging, so easy to slice through with slashers, so easy to fork up and out onto land or load to a wheelbarrow.

This is sheer bucket and spade stuff, making moats and ditches, channelling the flow of water, making a dam, then releasing the flow.



<<< Here it is piling up on the bund **(Left)**.....
and here it is cleared away **(Right)**.... >>>



We did some sterling work **(Above)** on the banks and along the fence, lots of nettle, willow shoots and off loaded material from many previous GG sessions. What a way to spend a warm Saturday morning, **marvellous!**



Michael S

Grey Day, Green Spirit

Many's the time I've woken to a cold dawn and
Eyed dark grey clouds through the window –
Rain again - and been tempted to stay in bed, but somewhat
Reluctantly I drag on my unflattering
Vet comfortable Green Gym waterproofs, set off in the
Car, wipers at full tilt,
Soping the
Rain won't spoil our bonfire plans, and arrive to find that,
In spite of the gloomy
Skies, people are cheerfully chatting away while
Taking up their tools ready to clear a footpath or
Mattock out rhododendrons,
And I suddenly feel - as always happens -
So glad I came.



Julia



Introducing new SCGG member Simon Harris



My wife and I moved to Sonning Common after living for more than 40 years in the Stour Valley on the Essex-Suffolk border. I was originally brought up in Cheshire where my father had been an estate manager, land agent and a true countryman. The typical reading in our household was Country Life, The Field, Horse & Hound and (not so often) the Quarterly Journal of Forestry.

My career took me away to London and the media business leaving rural matters completely behind. But when I then moved to a place in the country some deep-seated association with woods, streams and fields came to the surface. In my district there was a network of Tree Wardens for each group of parishes under the management of Melvyne Crow the Council's Countryside Manager, so I signed up.

Melvyne was a wonderful man, a great teacher and organiser, and we recruited many working parties to do planting schemes in the Essex and Suffolk table lands, where many hedges and copses had been grubbed up after the war to enlarge arable production. Over ten years or so in my parish alone we must have planted several kilometres of hedging and hundreds if not thousands of trees. (It's one thing to plant a tree, but quite another to protect it with a cane or stake, a tube and a mulch mat until it gets established). As I left the Eastern Counties for the last time I made a tour of some of these sites, delighted to see how well our hedges and trees are flourishing.



Simon

A Busy October - Photos by Julia



Bishopswood



Community Orchard



A Halloween session at New Copse



Dunsden Churchyard



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