

Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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The "Vampire Plant" Proving the Worth of Woodland Restoration



Steph recently shared this photo from [Aston Rowant's](#) new woodland, highlighting the discovery of a [Bird's Nest Orchid](#). This find is a testament to the value of your hard work invested in the restoration efforts there.

The bird's nest orchid is a fascinating example of a "vampire plant." Unlike most plants, it doesn't photosynthesise. Instead, this true parasite obtains all its nutrients indirectly from beech trees through a network of fungi connected to their roots. It essentially "sucks" nourishment via these fungal connections, thus earning its intriguing nickname.

Found in European woodlands, this orchid is entirely brown or yellowish-brown, allowing it to blend seamlessly with dead leaves on the forest floor. Its unusual appearance and complete reliance on a hidden fungal network make it a compelling illustration of nature's diverse and often surprising survival strategies.

[martinB](#)



Burning previously cut holly in Spring Wood on a sunny morning in March. There was a partial eclipse of the sun halfway through, though we were too busy munching cake to notice. Mike felled a few more holly trees along the bottom path.

[Julia](#)

The Kennylands Field Monster Bramble Bush.

Saturday 26 April dawned bright and clear. We intrepid 11 green gymmers put on our best attitude and descended on Kennylands Field to tackle bramble bushes growing in the wrong places.

Whilst Simon, Lyn, and Henri attacked the overgrown bramble on the edges of the field that was beginning to obstruct walkways, 8 others marched/ambled to a large bramble bush in the centre of the field that was spreading out at an alarming rate. If left to grow, it would soon cover the whole field!

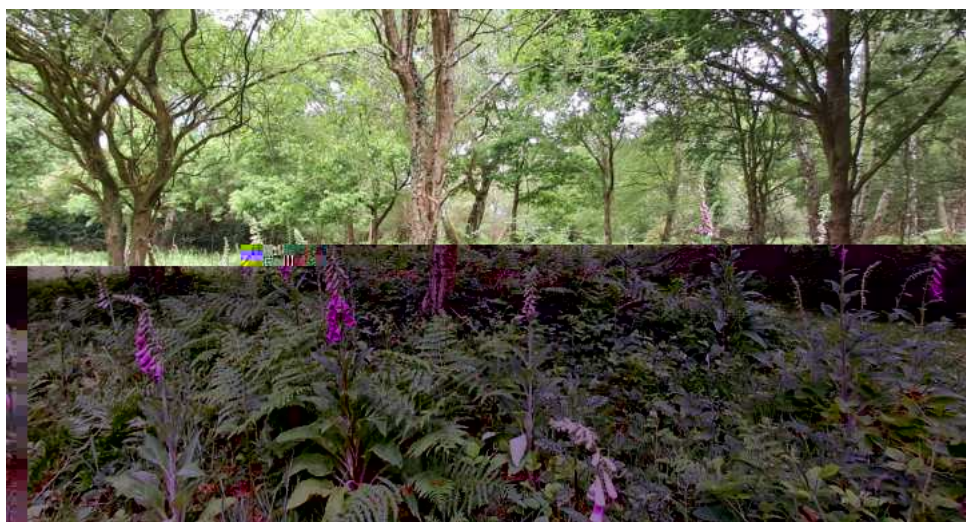
First, we cut the bramble back to close to ground level and then set about getting the roots out with mattocks, mini mattocks, and digging forks. Some were quite small and easily removed, but most were huge and deep.

It was hard work, and the mid-session coffee and cake break came just at the right time. After break, we continued to remove the bramble roots and pile them up in three ever-increasing piles.

By the end of the session, it was almost all removed from the ground, and would need a couple of the Kennylands volunteers to complete the work.

After a good morning's work, we all left tired but content that we had made this small part of the world a better place where people could walk without fear.

MartinR



Foxgloves thriving in the glade next to **Stoke Row Road, Kingwood Common**. Bracken was also making the most of the open aspect, so our delicate task in May was to cut it down or pull it out without disturbing the foxgloves

Julia (Photo: Alison)

Green Gym Thrive at Cleeve Court Wetland Meadow!



The Green Gym has been actively engaged at the Cleeve Court Wetland Meadow over the past months, tackling a variety of tasks that benefit both the environment and the "gymmers" themselves!

Recent visits have been packed with various activities, contributing to the health and biodiversity of this important wetland area. Activities have included:

Raking and Stacking: Teams have been diligently raking up and stacking material from the previously mowed reedbed, helping to manage vegetation and create open areas.

Creating Basking Spots: Using scythes, "gymmers" have carefully crafted scalloped-shaped amphibian basking areas in the reedbeds, providing essential habitat for these specialist wetland wildlife.

Repairing the Thames Dead Hedge: The group undertook the crucial task of repairing the dead hedge along the Thames, replacing damaged stakes and weaving in living willow to strengthen the structure and providing a riverside wildlife corridor.

Flood Flotsam Cleanup: Collecting and sorting woody flood flotsam from the wetlands has helped clear debris and prevent damage to machinery.



Building Habitat Piles: Two new log habitat piles have been created, offering shelter and resources for a variety of creatures.

Sustainable Disposal: Some material that was not suitable for habitat creation was carefully burned on a bonfire, ensuring responsible disposal.



The Green Gym's efforts at Cleeve Court Wetland Meadow are making a real difference, supporting biodiversity and enhancing the local environment as can be seen in the thriving **Loddon Lily** population.

martinb



LEFT: Will, Charlie and Tom took turns with Peter Keel at winching out a large tree trunk by the footpath in **Pissen Wood** at the end of April. Our task was to extract previously felled pines for a contractor to collect later.

The timber was heavily overgrown by herbage, so it was rather like a treasure hunt, but by the end of the session we had found most of it.

Julia

RIGHT: Two bonfires were needed at **Greys Court** in March, one to burn the cut branches of a fallen tree and the other for the remains of a bramble patch by the gate at the back of the car park. The patch was enormous and we had started its demolition in a previous session.

Julia



The Joy of Bramble Clearance

Oh, the brambles, the bane, a **thorny** green mess,
Tripping and snagging, causing endless distress.
 Armed with our loppers, a valiant crew's plight,
 Each snip, a small win, a **scratch**, a new blight.
"Ouch!" and "Is anyone bleeding?" the chorus rings true,
 Trousers **torn**, hair **snagged**, feeling **sticky and blue**.
 "This is for nature!" we groan, aching backs,
 As we clear the green chaos, along thorny tracks.

But then, as the last tangled fortress is felled,
 A clearing emerges, where **beauty** once dwelled.
 Light hits the ground, **new wildflowers can bloom**,
 Birds find new homes, escaping bramble's gloom.
 The scratches now fade, the aches start to ease,
 Replaced by a quiet, contented peace.
 For in all of the struggle, the sweat and the toil,
 We've given new life to this patch of good soil.

Idea by Julia - Words: Anon



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