



"THE LOPPER"

FULL OF LITTLE CUTTINGS

No. 15 March 2008

10th ANNIVERSARY

FOUR WHO HAVE BEEN HERE FROM THE START



FROM ONE BIG BIRTHDAY TO ANOTHER

By Gill Vaughan

Sonning Common Green Gym's first days - excerpts from the diary of a 40 year old who found she burnt more energy at a Green Gym session than she did at a step aerobics class.

Thu 5.2.98 As usual went to Veronica's step class; she asked for bodies to join her in doing some conservation work.

Sat 7.2.98 Turned up at Sonning Common Health Centre; just me and two girls from BTCV. Went to Marshlands Square Emmer Green and cleared laurels and sycamore. Hard but rewarding work.

Sun 8.2.98 Ached from the waist up!!

Wed 25.2.98 Received letter and form to fill out for Green Gym and return.



Fri 6.2.98 Details of next week's start up.

Sat 7.2.98 Got up late making most of my last Saturday lie in.

Thu 12.3.98. Not starting till next week (great, another lie in!)

Fri 20.3.98. Got phone call, starts tomorrow - Oh dear what shall I wear?

Sat 21.3.98 To SC Health Centre, had fitness assessment, did 14½ minute mile walk. to Emmer Green

again. Did litter pick as it was RESCUE day - a good job done.

Thu 26.3.98 Veronica announces this will be her last step class so she can concentrate on the Green Gym project.

Sat 28.3.98 To Old Copse Sonning Common, cutting back brambles, (some jobs never change). Hands ache but not too hard work. Not many of us

Sat 4.4.98 Kingwood Common, clearing bracken; only 4 of us.

Sat 11.4.98 Kingwood again but this time 7 of us.

Sat 25.4.98 I ache before I start the rest is history and we've gone from strength to strength in more ways than one.

Only good girls keep diaries, bad girls don't have the time! ...

Gill

AROUND THE SITES

As usual Green Gym has been working in a wide range of locations.



EWELME

Mark Lewis celebrating doing what Green Gym does best - moving things from one place to another! This time it was extremely heavy wet planks that needed a new and final (we hope) resting place. On the last two sessions the group worked hard on the bank behind the meadow. The task was to cut down old ivy clad trees. Then these were cut up and burned. A less enticing job was to pile up the rotting compost piles which had spread too wide. Finally new young trees were planted along the bank to replace those cleared. It was remarked that the hedge planted by the Green Gym along the boundary looked to be doing very well which was a source of satisfaction to all.

READING GOLF COURSE

It was a wild and stormy day when the tea cups kept flying away and the damp cake got even damper. But naturally this didn't faze Tony Chandler who, as ever, lit a successful bonfire although the wind swirled around so much that no one could escape the smoke and went home well kipped. One job was to cut down scrub and bramble tangled round some trees on the edge of the fairway, and guess what was found - 40 golf balls.

As well small trees and brush were cleared to open up a chalk bank and it is hoped this will encourage plants that grow in this environment.



FILMING

As part of the 10 birthday celebrations BTCV wished to make a film about the various Green Gyms around the country. So on Thursday 7 February whilst working at Kingwood Common the group was joined by a camera man who proceeded to shadow everyone while they were working.. The two tasks for the day were first, to clear bramble and bracken which was strangling the growing heather and second to cut down small trees to open up the wooded area. Workers were asked for their comments on Green Gym and why they did it and they were filmed while working. Trees were felled and cut up with great energy and gymmers struggled under great forkfuls of briar and rubbish throwing it into the undergrowth. The cameraman was most impressed by the amount done in the time.



EDWARD GETTING A WET FOOT WHILST WATERING IN THE HEDGING PLANTS THAT WERE BEING PUT IN ROUND THE BOUNDARY AT WITHYMEAD



JULIA INTERVIEWING POTENTIAL RECRUITS TO THE GREEN GYM THEY DON'T SEEM TOO KEEN

Special events to mark the anniversary

SATURDAY MARCH 1

A working session at Kennylands Millennium field was held, to which members of the Sonning Common Health Centre, representatives of the parish and county council, trustees of the Millennium Field and friends and family were invited. They were set to work at tasks that were typical of Green Gym activities (including doing stretches). After which a much appreciated buffet spread was laid on at the Bird in Hand Pub. William Bird said how delighted he was at the way his original idea had spread and grown and was so flourishing in Sonning Common.



The day was made more special as Natural England had kindly donated a seat to be erected in memory of Fred Denton one of the founder members of Sonning Common Green Gym. We were delighted that his widow, Rose came along to see it dedicated to his memory.

To round off the occasion there was an amazing picnic laid out on the hillside with sausages and spuds cooked in the bonfire and everyone tucked in hungrily.

It was generally agreed that this had been a very special way to celebrate the tenth anniversary and all had had a great time.

GREEN GYM CELEBRATES IN STYLE. TUES MAR 11

The Green Gym movement proudly celebrated its 10th birthday in the sumptuous surroundings of the Café Royal on 11th March. Now with 95 Green Gyms across the UK, including three in Australia, no one was left in any doubt that the first Green Gym was founded in Sonning Common by William Bird. It was good to meet up with Yvonne and

Veronica whose efforts in the early days helped to establish the group. Many fine words were spoken about the value of Green Gyms to the mental and physical well being of individuals and the ties of friendship which make Thursdays and Saturdays such an important commitment in the weekly diary.

After lunch Diane Gordon and the four other Sonning Common representatives (Jules, Tony, Gill and Mike) led the assembled company in some warm-up exercises, while the remaining talks were interspersed with short video extracts of various Green Gym participants talking about their experiences.

The day ended with the cutting of a birthday cake and wishing each other many happy returns. And so say all of us.

Mike Macleod

THURSDAY MAR 6

A working party and spud roast was held at Aston Rowant hosted by The Nature Reserve. Representatives from all the Oxfordshire Green Gyms came along; there were members of Abingdon, Chipping Norton Bicester and Wallingford and it was an extremely friendly get together. Groups set to work energetically clearing scrub and burning it. Members of each Green Gym intermingled and in spite of a cold wind and the steep slope - or perhaps because of it- it was a very worthwhile occasion.



MORE OF MIKE'S ALPHABET

Well my first thoughts on the letter O strayed to **Olives** but we do not see many of these at **GG** sites nor do we serve them at cake break. So maybe, not **Olives**. We do see **Oblanceolate** leaves quite often of course and Tony or Julia or Robin often say, 'just look at those **Oblanceolate** leaves' all of a sudden like. Well that's another O. No, all these 7 O's must give way to **Octogenarian** and we have at least 3 of these and maybe more for all I know. Now what came first the age attracting the person to **GG** or **GG** enabling the age to be reached? But it is another lovely plus for **GG** and shows what can be achieved. Isn't it wonderful there is no official retirement age for **GG** members? So you might as well settle in for the long haul. **And speaking of age we celebrate 10 years of GG on 1 March or thereabouts** I wonder how many octogenarians in the making will benefit from 10 years of unremitting joyful toil.

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So much for the letter O, I could ramble on but maybe let's turn to P. Well I wrote of marshes and we certainly do work, oh joy of joys in a **Paludal** environment from time to time. This means Wellingtons or even waders, it means oozing ooze and squelchy mud. What great fun to be sure. Occasionally there is a bit of **Pandemonium** at a **GG** meeting which my dictionary defines as wild uproar and confusion but this is usually caused by whoever is due to bring cake not turning up or coming late. P is inevitably for **Paths** that we are tasked to clear from time to time and very satisfying this work is too as you can see both what you have cleared and what is ahead of you remaining to be cleared. This is so important and helps motivate us and indeed one of

the great delights of **Green Gym** is to look back over a cleared field or hillside and see what 3 hours x 15 people can actually achieve. It's amazing! But above all my favourite P stands for **Pastoral**. We are nearly always operating in a pastoral environment, out in the countryside, away from the 'maddening crowd', deep in a wood, far up a stream. It is just so therapeutic, so restful you want it to go on and on. But there I go again.....

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I thought and thought about Q. There must be something, **Quixotic** maybe some of us and that's nice too, but we don't come across many windmills so maybe not. I really like the **Quips** and **Quotes** you get at **GG** they are such an erudite bunch of biologists, historians, scientists, doctors, computer buffs. The banter keeps you going especially from he-who-brings-the ham-rolls. The knowledge freely shared adds to what you thought you knew already. Or didn't realise you didn't know. Where else can you develop and exercise mind and body at the same time?
Mike Saunders



TREE PLANTING ON THE HENLEY ROAD

For the last couple of decades there has been a problem with travellers camping the verge of the Henley Road between Caversham Park Village and Play Hatch, with the associated cost of moving them on and the resulting clearing of debris. David Woodward, the chairman of the Eye and Dunsden Parish Council organised the digging of a ditch to prevent motorised access and proposed the planting of 200 trees to beautify the area. **Green Gym** agreed to perform the planting honours, but after a site survey the old Henley Road was discovered under the majority of the area to be planted. So ambitions were reduced and 75 trees ordered by South Oxfordshire District Council on behalf of Eye & Dunsden from **Nicolson's** near Banbury. When it came to the crunch **Green Gym**, ably assisted by **Andrew Hawkins**, took over the project and ensured the trees were available on time. So an intrepid team, with **Barry Hatch** representing Eye & Dunsden, braved the elements and the traffic noise and planted all 75 trees in a couple of hours. We look forward to seeing them flourish as the years progress.
Chris Ash

CONTRARY TO HOW IT MIGHT APPEAR: IT WASN'T ALL CAKES AND COFFEE, THEY DID PLANT LOTS OF TREES