

Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 21 September 2009

New Sites

ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD, STREATLEY

During the last quarter of the year we will be visiting St Mary's Churchyard in Streatley to do some clearance work. One section of the boundary has become somewhat overgrown and some of the scrub needs to be removed. In addition there is a section of fence that will have to be removed and reinstated nearer to the boundary. There is also a yew tree in the grounds in which two other trees have established themselves and the PCC would like these taken out. So there is quite a lot of work to be done and we have provisionally allocated two sessions for it. For those of you who don't know, the church lies some way back from the road just up from the Swan hotel at the end of a short lane. For our sessions however you should drive in to the Swan Hotel entrance and park at the far end of the hotel car park. The Swan is just over the river on the right hand side coming from Goring. See you there.

John Hasler



Borocourt Wood

We have already cleared the footpath from what used to be called Rummerhedge Bottom (Busgrove Lane: the Gallowstree Common to Stoke Row quiet lane) up to the edge of the Wyfold Court grounds, for the Forestry Commission. Further to the southeast of this path is a large area of conifer woodland with stands of mature western hemlock managed by the Forestry Commission. The task for the Green Gym would be to clear the invasive understorey of rhododendron and western hemlock saplings.

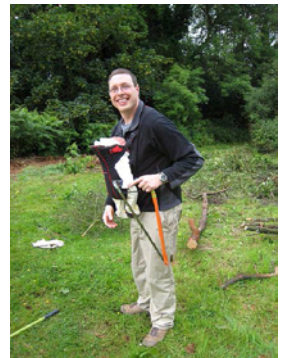


Shepherds Green

Another new (to us) footpath successfully cleared and accessible to the public.

Zoe at Green Gym

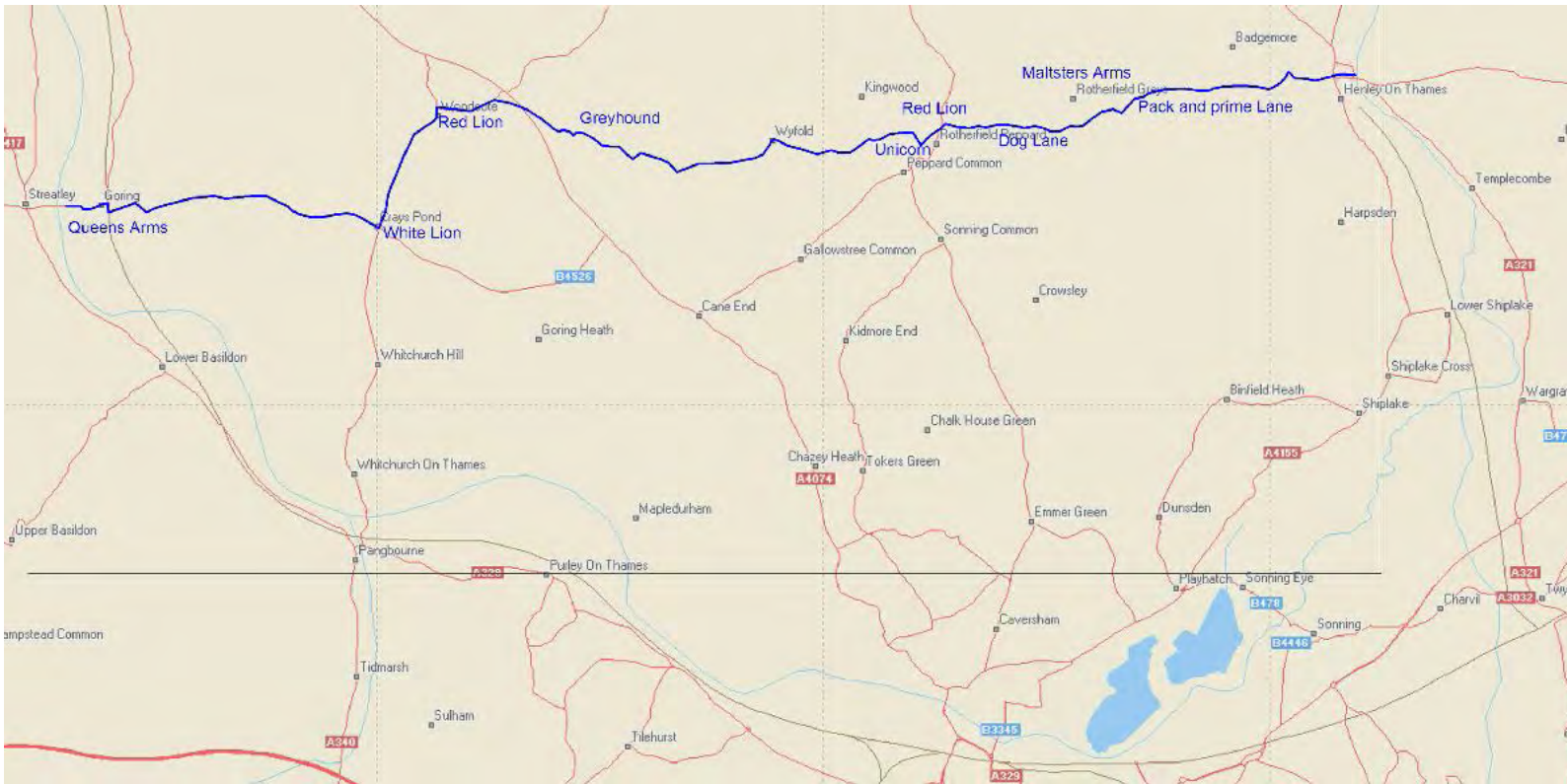
Zoe attended her first Green Gym at Shepherds Green and was given her introduction to the use of tools by Mark.



Site Focus:



The map shows the direct pack route from Henley to Goring (in dark blue) and the meandering course of the river via Reading. The pack route derived from old maps seems plausible, as it either passes next to or is within easy walking distance of the old Pubs/Inns in the area (which came first the Inns or the pack route?). The distance is virtually halved. The Greyhound at Exlade Street is now called the Highwayman.



Where does the name Pack and Prime originate? One possible explanation is that the London to Oxford coach would stop by the entrance to Gravel Hill Henley and Pack and Prime the guns ready for protection against highway robbers further up the road.

The full Pack Horse route is: Gravel Hill, Pack and Prime Lane, the path through Hernes Farm and across the road to Dog Lane, Colliers Lane, Wyfold Lane then through the woods to Hook End, Exlade Street, Woodcote, Cane End and then down the hill to Goring and the river. The growth of London in the 17th century brought demands for goods from the North. The choice for the 'hauliers' was between the long difficult course of the river, or a hard slog up and down the hills and muddy lanes. The river locks were Flash locks until 1787, when they were replaced with pound locks which we use today. Flash locks were basically dams gated with removable boards (paddles) set against vertical posts (rymers). When a boat was moving downstream it lined up against the paddles and was carried downstream on the resulting flash of water when the paddles were removed. Upstream the boat had to be manhailed against the flash flood through the lock. Boats stranded downstream in shallow water could be re-floated in a flash flood, but travel through the locks in either direction was dangerous and many boats and their cargo were lost. Both transport means were dependant on the weather, if it was dry the river would become unnavigable, if it was wet the Pack Horse route could become impassable.

Pack and Prime lane is a single track left turn of Gravel Hill and once past Henley College is a simple path through the woods, now heavily rutted and covered with exposed tree roots. It does not look as well worn as the ancient sunken ways of the Chilterns, so it is likely that it was not heavily used. The path dips down into a valley and then back up the other side to the Henley Borough boundary which is about 500 metres from Gravel Hill. This is the field boundary which is where our hedge laying task will end.



At the start of 2009 we prepared and laid about 100 metres of hedge-line which was reported in an earlier Lopper. The picture on the right shows how rapidly a laid hedge starts to regenerate, the Hazel, Hawthorn and Field Maple already need trimming. During the Autumn and Winter we will be clearing out and then laying the next few hundred metres before the nesting season of 2010.



Mikes Alphabet

The trouble with my alphabet is that there are too many things you can link to each letter. Green gym is a bit like that. Well for me it is. Ho-hum. What I really mean is that some associations are obvious and some are what shall we say not quite as obvious. More like indirect or put it another way, on a different level. So let me look at all the **S-words** in my hefty dictionary. I come to **Safety**. This is taken seriously, seriously at GG.. We have a first aid box, first aiders on hand and someone put a sticking plaster on my skin the other day and I've got the scar to support it. But really this all goes in its way to make a session of GG **Satisfying** and **Superbly Satisfactory**. And those are enough S-words for me.

I have been dying to get to **T**. I know I go on about it but the **T break** is welcome (even if I for one usually have coffee). For some amazing reason a hot drink and a bun, cake or sandwich in the open air with lovely familiar friends is a tremendous experience. It seems doubly pleasant when you have been hard at it and you survey all the work achieved around you. The one sort of meets the other. I just can't let **T** go by without mentioning **Tools, tools and more tools**. It really does make a difference not only to have sharp, clean tools but the right tools in the right numbers and the right sizes. And it's all down to **TC** the **Toolman** or maybe I should call him the **Toolmaster**. You will recall I am a confirmed biovertagoraphiliac or lover of all things green in open spaces growing there, well I have to sign **T** off with **Trees**. They are lovely and believe you me if you come to GG you do get to see an awful lot of trees. Those where you can touch the top and those you can see the top of only by craning your neck back and back and it's aloft there with the crows and clouds. Those bare and stark and black and scary against a darkening sky and those heavy with leaf and ponderous of branch beneath whose welcome embrace tea is taken. Oh, stop me before I go on all day.

I first thought of **Unsung** heroes (and they know who they are) for **U**, all those whose hard work and continuous effort make GG so wonderful and so eminently pleasant. But really it has to be **Unworldly** for me. Not exactly out of this world for a session of GG is very much in touch with this world but more accurately it is very much in touch with this earth. For me, that 3 hours is something very special, it is away from the material world. Cares and concerns of this present and everyday world drop out of your mind and off your back like the lightest shimmering silk. Why is this? Away from cars and noise and phones and clatter? The sound of wind and water instead? The subliminal heartbeat of Mother Nature? The brain deceived and confused by so much green? Whatever it is, is in a very real sense **Unworldly** and that's good enough for me.

(looking forward to **V-Z** !)

Stop Press:

SCGG nominated for a Green Heroes award

Just to let you know that I've nominated Sonning Common Green Gym for a BTCV Green Heroes Award. These are given annually and are an appreciation of all the volunteers we work with. Nina Spernick

Winter working at Ewelme

Diane recommends bringing a spare set of clothes, as you are liable to get very wet and cold.

Trees and Shrubs at Risk

Phytophthora ramorum and *kernovia* – what a mouthful! What are they? They are 2 plant diseases that are spreading through Britain. They cause damage and possibly death to some trees such as oak, which can succumb to sudden Oak Death. The disease is carried on various hosts, the main one being the rhododendron ponticum. Among other carriers are Camellia, pieris and syringa. For the past 5 years the National Trust and Forestry Commission have been coping with the disease but this spring 2009 - *phytophthora kernovia* has very worryingly jumped and been found on heathland in Cornwall and Scotland spreading rapidly and killing off wild bilberry plants.

Disease symptoms caused by *Phytophthora Ramorum* are usually characterised by the presence of dark red to black sap oozing from the trunk. This may girdle the tree and cause rapid death. Horse Chestnuts (see below) are also prone to another form of *Phytophthora* and sweet chestnut and beech are also thought to be at risk. The disease is spread aerially probably in mist or rain.

On the bright side it appears that English oaks are fairly resistant to the diseases but if not tackled gardens across the UK could be seriously threatened in the next 20 years. The Government has announced a five year programme to manage and contain the diseases which was to be launched in March 2009 - apparently in spite of the recession.

PS There are hundreds of these *Phytophthora* organisms – the most famous being that which devastated Ireland – *Phytophthora infestans* which caused the potato famine of 1845.

Jill

The Horse Chestnut below was healthy 4 years ago



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