

Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 25 September 2010

Len Saunders' Memorial Gate

As a memorial to Len Saunders' contribution to the Green Gym over the years, we purchased and installed a kissing gate on the Hearn's Estate. This is on the footpath opposite Rotherfield Greys church. When the existing fences are repaired and extended this will enable stock to graze the meadow. When the engraved plaque is ready we can officially dedicate the gate.



Photos from Julia

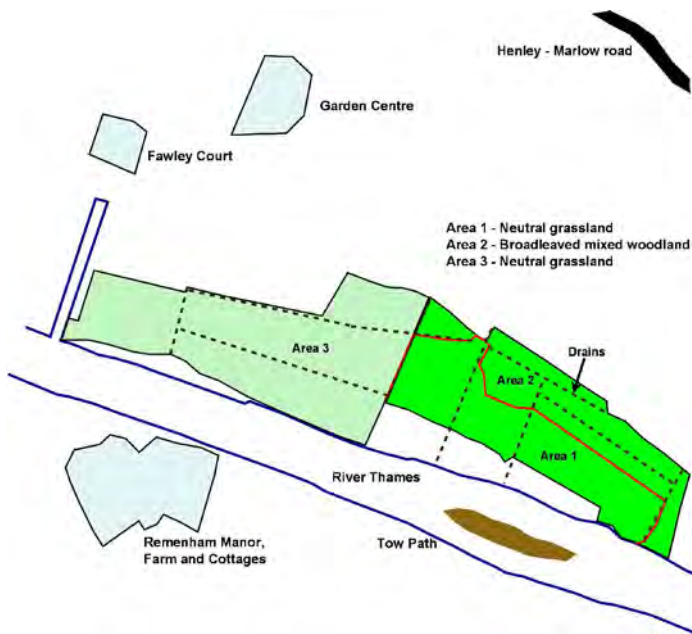
Treasure Hunt

On a perfect sunny Summer Sunday afternoon, six of us did an intellectual treasure hunt following clues around Henley and Mill Meadows. Jill had made it doubly difficult by scrambling the order of the clues so that they were not in the walk sequence, but we managed most of the clues by combining our scouting and observation skills. To refresh body and brain, we ended up having a very pleasant cup of tea and cakes in the sun outside the Chantry House by St Mary's Church. It was a most enjoyable and fascinating afternoon and a good chance to meet some Green Gym relatives as well as members. Certainly an idea to be repeated - those who didn't come missed a fun event. Edward

Thanks to Jill for setting the questions and doing all the preparation

Don't forget to put the XMAS dinner in your diaries - Julia will be issuing details

Site Focus: Temple Island Meadows SSSI



In 1987 the Henley Regatta Stewards bought Temple Island, the famous landmark at the start of the Regatta Course. Extensive renovation of The Temple, built by James Wyatt in 1771, was completed and the important wall paintings in the main room were restored to their original appearance. There is a long-term programme of conservation and tree planting, notably on the downstream portion of Temple Island and also upstream on the Buckinghamshire bank. This area of water meadow has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.) by Natural England and provides a managed sanctuary for flora and fauna, the day to day management (by Tony Austin) taking place under a High Level Stewardship agreement.

The areas designated as SSSI are three adjacent low-lying wet meadows adjacent to the River Thames. They are subject to seasonal flooding and in places, long term waterlogging. There is a mixture of grassland, fen vegetation and carr (boggy ground) with scattered mature and immature alder, willow and scrub. There are few remaining examples of these habitats in Buckinghamshire. The meadows are some of the most species rich remaining along the Thames, with an area of the nationally rare Loddon Lily or summer snowflake. The shallower ditches that cross the meadows support sparse vegetation where the rare water violet and frog-bit have been recorded in past years. In addition both marsh and early marsh orchids can be found, all of these species are associated with a long history of undisturbed grassland management.

Some of the less common flora are illustrated: The 2 metre tall Reed Sweet Grass, Yellow Loosestrife, Marsh Ragwort, Marsh Woundwort, Square-stalked St. John's Wort, Gipsy Wort and Skullcap. The poisonous Hemlock Water Dropwort, which was present, has hopefully been eradicated as both cattle and sheep are now part of the regime to control the scrub re-growth.

The diversity of habitats also attracts a variety of birds. Common woodland birds recorded from the site include great and lesser spotted woodpecker, woodcock and spotted flycatcher, while the scrub and marshy reed vegetation supports reed buntings and both sedge and reed warblers.

Reed Sweet Grass



Square-stalked St. John's Wort



Marsh Woundwort (or Allheal)



Skullcap



Gipsy Wort



Marsh Ragwort



Yellow Loosestrife





Redhill Wood

On the last section of the 400 metres of fencing we replaced at Redhill Wood, for the Forestry Commission; there was a multi-stemmed sycamore partially blocking the fence-line. Keith, Jill and Nick battled with a saw too small for the job (we had not packed one large enough) but finally beat it into submission.



Nettlebed Common

We had our annual late August visit to Nettlebed Common and racked up lots of brush cut bracken and removed some leggy gorse that had collapsed under last winter's snow. We also had time to visit the other heather site that we have not worked on for a couple of years and members were delighted to have the chance to see the results of those efforts. Hard ferns growing on a shady north facing slope were also part of the tour, where there were dozens of juvenile frogs. Hopefully the full appreciation of the Green Gym's input to Nettlebed Common is highlighted in the two photos taken five years apart. (Photos from Tony)

2005

2010



A lovely bunch

When we cleared an area of Nettlebed Common of Himalayan Balsam and Bracken, Jill found a coconut lurking in the bushes. Luckily it was not growing.



Burnt Platt Wood

The borders of the Forestry Commission access road is another area of heather regeneration. The heather was growing strongly but was being choked by birch saplings and bracken. We soon had it back in full view. (Photos from Julia)



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