

# Green Gym



## Sonning Common

# "THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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## Happy Christmas 2010 and a prosperous, healthy 2011



### Lashbrook Pond

Two sessions at Lashbrook saw the removal of road signs, piles of dead branches and a tree that just got bigger the more we pulled it onto the bank. The wader clad river walkers had to stand on pallets to support themselves, hopefully the water level will not rise before the next session.

It's shallow over there



It just got bigger



It looks better already



A message from Geoff Thomas: This is to thank you, Brian and the rest of the Green Gym team for the excellent work you have done in clearing the Lashbrook Pond. It has made a vast difference and is just what we envisaged. I had a chat with the landowner, Brian Doble, on the bridge yesterday and he was very pleased with what has been accomplished, So well done!

### Pack and Prime Lane



So often we return to a site only to find that nature has reclaimed it for her own and there is no trace of all our hard work of the previous season. Imagine then our delight on returning to Pack and Prime Lane, to the hedge we had worked so hard to



lay to find that it had grown and flourished and looked just as a hedge ought. .... Jill

## Site Focus: St. Katharine's Parmoor

Picture courtesy of St. Katharine's Parmoor



The trees in the orchard have not been tended for many years and have become very overgrown to the extent that they are competing with each other and are far too tall. Most of these trees are very old and could be unusual varieties not seen in modern orchards. We have started to coppice some of the trees which were shading the apple trees. We have also started to thin and reduce the south facing side of the trees. This should let in the light and encourage new growth. Once the south side of the trees are regenerating the remaining branches can be thinned and pruned. This will be ongoing project for the next few years.



Everyone at St. Katharine's has been very welcoming and we were delighted to be invited to a lovely lunch at one of our sessions - many thanks to all the staff.

We have returned to work in the gardens at Parmoor after several years away. The specific project in which we will play a part is the restoration of the Victorian walled garden and the regeneration of the overgrown apple tress in the orchard to the south of the house. The main picture shows the garden when it was well staffed and cared for and all the glasshouses were intact. The only glasshouse visible in the pictures which remains nearly standing, is the one in the far left corner where there are several grape vines growing. The picture to the right shows the smaller glasshouses adjacent to the door to the furnace room, shortly before they were demolished.

We have started on both tasks already with some summer pruning of the very overgrown box and honeysuckle hedges which surround the vegetable patches and walkways between them and next to the espalier fruit trees which line the walls. Robert has also donned his spacesuit and started spraying the invasive weeds in the untended vegetable patch and the beds outside the garden walls.



Picture courtesy of St. Katharine's Parmoor



### Some of the history of Parmoor:

The earliest records discovered relate to the 1370's where the owners were Henry Edmund de Malyns and Reginald de Malyns and the estate (called Pyremere) was described as having two messuages (the legal term for the combination of dwelling house, outbuilding, courtyard, orchard and garden) 140 acres of land and 2 acres of meadow. The estate changed hands many times over the centuries until it was sold to Henry William Cripps Q.C. in 1860 by George Romsey and Ambrose Stephenson.

The house itself was altered by the Cripps family. They added a new kitchen and a servants hall. They later added the large panelled

room which is now the chapel. Little Parmoor, the adjacent William and Mary period house was built containing four panelled rooms, a powder closet, a fine four flight staircase and a vaulted brick cellar. On February 8<sup>th</sup> 1892 the Revd. Richard Wallace Deane of Skirmett Manor sold Little Parmoor to Henry Cripps. The 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Henry Cripps, Charles Alfred KCVO became the first Baron Parmoor in 1914. He was succeeded by his sons Alfred Henry Seddon and Frederick Heyworth. The 4<sup>th</sup> Baron was (Frederick Alfred) Milo Cripps who passed away in 2008. The present Baron is (Michael Leonard) Seddon Cripps.

Parmoor House was let to King Zog of Albania, who was forced into exile when Mussolini invaded Albania in 1939. King Zog lived with his Hungarian wife Queen Geraldine, their young son Prince Leka, members of his family, their servants and pets. King Zog had new kitchens and a bathroom installed at Parmoor House, but otherwise left it unaltered. King Zog relinquished Parmoor House in January 1946, when he moved to Egypt. The house then lay vacant for a year.

On February 11<sup>th</sup> 1947 the second Lord Parmoor sold the house and 12 acres to the Community of St. Katharine of Alexandria, a High Anglican Religious Community. In 1995 The Sue Ryder Prayer Fellowship took over Parmoor, now a Grade 2 Listed Building. The house currently has a small permanent staff which is supplemented by volunteers, most of whom come from eastern Europe. With their help the house is slowly being renovated and refurbished.



The footpath gate on the Hernes Estate has finally had the memorial plaque attached. When the adjacent field gate and fence is completed the fields in the valley will be separated from the one opposite Rotherfield Greys Church to allow cattle and sheep grazing.

Len at Withymead in April 2008



## Sonning Common Green Gym - 'We're in this together'

It is a great strength of our Green Gym that so many of us are involved, in so many roles, in seeing the show gets on the road twice a week throughout the year. These contributions are supported by training in leadership, first aid, technical skills, countryside interests ..... note for Eric: when is next training due in cake-making for people like me? Perhaps Diane will hold a masterclass.

Thanks are due all round to participants, organisers and leaders. Everything is running smoothly and we have stability.

### NOW FOR THE IMPORTANT BIT!

In every organisation a breath of fresh air now and then can help prevent staleness, add momentum and bring significant benefits.

What else can we each do to support the running of the Green Gym?

Have you got new ideas?

Can you offer something different?

Are you ready to tackle a new role or make a nomination for or be nominated yourself for one of the existing roles/offices'?

Please get thinking. April is AGM-time every year. Please speak up - we all have limited shelf-life! - Robin



### Return to Withymead

After many months we returned to one of our favourite sites near the river where Brian and Joyce made us very welcome and there was a warming fire at coffee time. There was lots of willow trimming and fence replacement to keep us busy.

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