

Aston Rowant - what goes around, comes around!

In July 2008 we started to put up a fence around what became the goat pen. The goats were imported to experiment in using them to keep down the scrub and return the area to chalk grassland. It turned out that they did not thrive in the environment and were good at eating the wrong plants! So now the pen is being de-fenced and returned to being managed by humans. So we spent a happy day in the sun taking out posts and rolling up wire - ably assisted by three work experience lads from the local school. a couple of the posts put up strong resi-



stance but succumbed in the end. The rather overgrown footpath was attacked by Gill, Christine, Julia and Robin and



cleared to give a good wide passage. During the fence removal Eric spotted a Privet Hawk-Moth in all its glory.



Bishopswood

The home of Rotherfield United Football Club and a wonderful local amenity which the club allows responsible people to use and indeed allows us to securely store all our valuable tools. The aim of all this work is to deter people with motor bikes coming on to the pitches and ruining the surface. And it's our contribution to what has become a very successful venture. After the destruction of the top kissing gate by a mad pickaxeman' it was eventually time to replace it and add some fencing. We increased the gate size from 3ft to 4ft to make it easier for buggies to get through. The one remaining post was dug out and we started again. Meanwhile team two was at the bottom of the field putting up another self closing gate and a fence on the entry to the skatepark. The side fencing was completed later on by an extra work party at the end of August. Well done Tony, Brian, John, Peter and Robin! Let's hope the new gate withstands all-comers. Julia



The re-built kissing gate



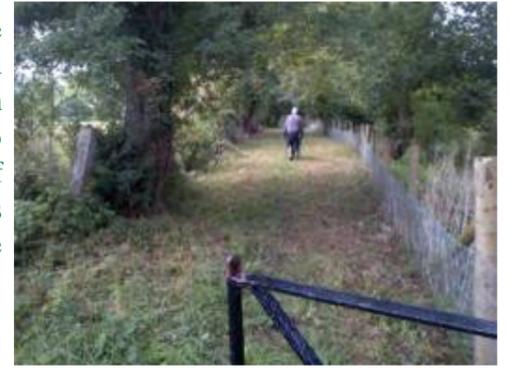
It takes five blokes to miss-hit a nail !



The completed Gate and fencing

Cleeve Water Meadows

The drove road at Cleeve Water Meadow had become very overgrown in the August rainstorms, so we made a good job of clearing it with slashers and shears and burning the material on the bonfire.



Julia

Stop Press !

Christmas dinner

Tuesday 15th December , 7 for 7.30

Badgemore Park Golf Club. Cost is the same as last year £24 + £1 for gratuities.

Menu will be circulated in November.

Dunsden Churchyard

A lovely sunny day greeted us at Dunsden for a massive hedge trimming, entrance clearing, waste burning and path extending session.

Wim excelled himself at the entrance to the car park, by clearing all the internal and external scrub to give good sight-lines for exiting cars. He even managed to re-lay the rockery and improve the signage.

Meanwhile most of the others attacked the hedges that were laid two years ago and finally conquered the scrub all along the roadside hedge. The fire trailer was burning for three days with all the cuttings.

Chris



Coffee Table Upgrade

Not simply content with finding us 2 new easily portable tables (which look like smart laptops until opened up), Tony has used his metalworking skills to adapt one of them for the cup holder. General consensus is that it should now be windproof and Robin-proof!

Julia



How old is that Hedge? by Mike Saunders

Working on hedges is an integral part of the tasks we Green Gym'ers undertake whether it is trimming them, thinning them, cutting them back or exercising our skills in laying them.

Hedges have always played a key role in boundary management along with stone walls, ditches and raised banks. They represent (in the past, present and future) political and economic statements of ownership, territorial rights and agricultural practice. Nearly all of our landscape and countryside is man-made and hedges are an essential part of this. Many hedges follow the strict lines of demarcation of the maps drawn up by an Enclosure Award whether under an individual parish or the general Enclosure Acts. Some of these hedges may be more than 200 years old and since they were initially planted out for rapid growth, may consist of one or two dominant species especially hawthorn, known for obvious reasons as 'quickset'.

But some hedges are much older than these. Some have been traced to be on the line of ancient boundaries, so called 'Celtic' fields, Romano-British villa farms and later Anglo-Saxon estates. A particular well known example is the Black Hedge. This great boundary marker, thirty feet wide in places with a double hedge and central ditch marches along between Monks and Princes Risborough parishes in Buckinghamshire not so far further along the Chiltern ridge from Aston Rowant. It is actually mentioned by name in a boundary charter dated 903 and has been surveyed in part by the Bucks Archaeological Society (BAS). It may be even older than 903.

The survey used the technique known as Hooper's Hedgerow Hypothesis. Dr Max Hooper first suggested in the 1960's that the age of a hedge correlated to the number of woody species contained in a measured length. The principle has been tested out many times and remains controversial but is a worthwhile approach to hedge dating. Using this technique BAS found the Black Hedge was not of a uniform age, the oldest being seventh or eighth centuries well before the dated boundary charter.

Here is the Hooper approach:

- 1 Take a sample length of 30 yards and count the number of flowering shrub species and trees.
- 2 Leave out Brambles and woody climbers such as Ivy and Honeysuckle.
- 3 Include Alder, Apple (including crab), Ash, Beech, Blackthorn, Briar, Broom, Buckthorn, Cherry, Dogwood, Elder, Elm, Gorse, Guelder Rose, Hawthorn, Hazel, Holly, Hornbeam, Lime, Maple, Oak, Pine, Plum, Poplar, Privet (wild), Rowan, Sallow, Wild Service Tree, Spindle, Sycamore, Wayfaring Tree, Whitebeam, Willow and Yew.
- 4 Count the species in 3 or more stretches, measured by taking long strides marking the length then walking back and counting. Calculate the average number of trees per stretch.
- 5 Hedges with 2-3 species are likely to date after the 18th and 19th Enclosure Acts, those with 4-6 species are 16th and 17th centuries and those with 7-10 species are likely to be medieval or earlier.

Our hedges? Pack and Prime Lane? Reading Golf Club? Let's check them out!

Nuffield Place

We were pulling ragwort in the field at Nuffield Place this morning. It was full of wild flowers, insects and butterflies, including this one identified as a gatekeeper. After that we worked on 2 large patches of nettles, one with slashers and the other by pulling out. The black caterpillars (Peacock) found in one patch were moved to another patch and left intact.



Barry showed off his new arm protectors - great idea in t-shirt weather when tackling holly and brambles. Julia



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Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 45 September 2015

The book entitled **In Common Memory** by **Sue Nickson** has been purchased by SCGG
(Reminiscences of 75 years of Kingwood Common and Peppard Common 1939 - 2014)
This available for loan, from Robin

Little Meadow and Withmead

Summer means hay raking at Little Meadow - Robin and Peter take a well-earned rest. Another item of kit being modelled by Peter at Little Meadow in July. Ear protectors proved



necessary when raking hay close behind Keith Tomey's strimmer.

Work started in August on the first artificial nesting box for sand martins at Withmead. Robert had meticulously prepared all the materials and constructed a safety platform out of pallets. He had also made a template for positioning the 6 posts which were to carry the heavy box with soil-

bearing roof to contain the nest pipes and insulation. Digging out the heavy clay beside the Thames took a long time, but by the end of one session the 6 posts were installed, vertically true and all of the same height. How we built the first box was semi-experimental, to be used as a guide in the construction of a further 2 boxes by us and other groups. A couple of sand martins were spotted flying past as we worked, so let's hope they've made a note of where to look for next year's 'des res'.



Julia