



# "THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 4 July 2005

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING April 26

A good turnout attended the AGM in Rotherfield Church's very attractive new meeting room.

Jules Thomson gave a summary of the year's activities drawing attention to the varied range of activities that the group had participated in.

It was also good that several members had renewed their first aid qualifications.

The finances were in a healthy state with income from landowners increased. As a result accumulated surplus income had risen to £6703.

Julia drew attention to Challenge 2007 which will celebrate 3000 years of Oxfordshire and asked for ideas for a large project to mark the occasion.

A plea was made to extend the group's activities to include more youth participation. This received a mixed response and it was decided to go away and think further.

There was a general plea for more leaders to train as numbers at some sessions were getting more than one leader could monitor safely. A plea was made for other Gymmers to supply cake and take some of the load from Diane.

Jules read out the president's address from Dr William Bird - this is reproduced in full as it was most interesting.

*The evening finished with a most pleasant event - the presentation to Ian Munro of a beautiful plaque to celebrate his 80 birthday (not all spent in GG I hasten to add)*

*He had already been serenaded with 'happy birthday' at a work session and a splendid birthday cake passed round.*

*In return Ian penned the following poem illustrating his feelings about Green Gym.*

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OPENING UP THE WAY  
 Take the spirit of Green Gym where'er you go,  
 As you open up ways not seen before,  
 Clearing paths so others find the beauty of our land,  
 Making space to find release from darkened lives  
 And gain the friendship of shared tasks, no matter where.  
 So begone that pride of place dividing out the human race,  
 As we share a simple care  
 To turn bleak places clear,  
 We can start to realise eternal peace.

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At one time Withmead was the home of Saunders boat builders, and one of the Green Gym's tasks is to try and open up the old dry dock. The two pictures show the workers clearing machinery used to winch up the boats. A metal plaque shows it was made in Rotherhithe. So far the rails

## WITHMEAD



Work? What work? It's really just a social outing didn't you know!!



No, here they are getting down to the hard work



on which the boats ran and the dock sides have been revealed much to everyone's excitement.

Photos by Mike MacLeod

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS 2005

(READ OUT AT THE AGM )

Dear All

First of all apologies for not being able to be present in person. I have heard from Jules that the SC Green Gym has continued to grow from strength to strength to the point that one leader is not enough on each session.

I think you should be very proud of your achievements since each person taking part is able to achieve better physical, mental and probably spiritual health. The environment, of course, also becomes more healthy as a result of your work and this in turn can lead to the increased health of others who may be able to take part in its diversity.

The Sonning Common group remains a blueprint for other groups since sustainability is key to success.

There are three developments that have brought the GG further to the front of the Government's agenda.

The first is the publication of the White Paper from the Dept of Health called "Choosing Activity". This is the strategy to increase physical activity in England. There are three goals in the section "active communities".

A. To do with sport.

B. Ensuring high quality, well targeted and attractive provision for walking and cycling.

C. Continuing to make our spaces and the countryside more accessible and attractive. It talks about social networks and community participation and £660 million is being spent by local authorities to develop parks and open spaces. This means that the link between the NHS and the natural environment has been made.

The second but smaller development is a report I wrote called 'Natural Fit' This has drawn together evidence to look at the potential of green space in both health and monetary terms. For example a small 20 hectare green space in South Oxon open to the public could save the economy £48 000 each year as people use it for exercise. In reading a similar space saves £2.8 million each year due to a denser population.

Finally BTCV are slowly pushing Green Gym up the agenda and have the chief executive Tom Flood as its main supporter. As a result GG is developing more sites and currently there are 62 Green Gyms in the UK with a further 20 being developed.

With increased Government focus there is now the best opportunity for GG to develop in the way you want. Should there be greater ties with the local PCT to help with funding? Would that lead to patients only and deter others? Should there be a national health organisation such as a major health charity or NHS body to work with BTCV? What is needed locally to help growth and achieve its aims?

My personal view is for the Green Gym to become a true alternative to the indoor gym. However the main environmental work is to increase biodiversity since this can lead to more people coming out into the countryside. I must include the healthy as well as those with special health needs. It will become a national treasure like the National Trust known by everyone and where there is a common recognition that any town or village without a Green Gym will be poorer in both health and spirit.

I wish you well and would be pleased to discuss any ideas you have for the future of the Green Gym.  
Thank you once again for all your hard work.  
William Bird.

Editor's Apologies.  
Who on earth is Mike Leonard?  
Mike Saunders please accept my humble apologies for an incomprehensible error in the last edition JK

DIDN'T WE DO WELL?  
A SPLENDID PIECE OF DEAD HEDGING WELL UP TO GREEN GYM  
STANDARD WHICH WAS ON DISPLAY AT THE OPEN DAY AT  
CLAYFIELD COPSE.



## THE FUTURE OF THE COMMONS

In the last edition of The Lopper Jules Thomson began to outline future plans for maintaining the Commons, of which he is a conservator.

One of the options that is being considered is to allow grazing by stock. This was one of the main ways the area was managed in times gone by.

Jules continues as follows:-

The concept of grazing involves a lot of complications; for stock control and safety reasons fencing is essential. But fencing of common land has to be approved by a Secretary of State- at present Mr Prescott, and such approval is not easily gained. Furthermore such approval is generally given for the total enclosure and not for parts. However, as in the Nettlebed Commons the area does not lend itself to this solution because of the various roads and tracks across the land.

The conservators therefore have to proceed very carefully. They must also respect the rights of the Commoners and the opinions of the local residents.

All this will involve a lot of public consultation. Later this year the public will be invited to presentations about the Commons followed by questions and discussions which will give a chance for worries and suggestions to be aired.

Initial plans will then be gradually drawn up which



No we haven't begun to recruit child labour in the Green Gym. This picture was taken at Sonning Common Primary School when the Gymmers were joined by parents and children who all worked hard- as you can see- to open up the school's amphitheatre for use in the summer term. An amazing number of barrow loads of earth were shifted - some barrows being bigger than others!!

will be sensitive to the spirit of the commons  
Like so many things in life it is a question of balances between different pressures.

I hope I have given you some idea of how things are going and I am always happy to clarify anything that is unclear. Whatever the Conservators decide to do will have effects well beyond their lifetimes so it must be carefully thought out.

Jules Thomson

### **THE PASSING YEARS**

Does the Green Gym's insurance policy still provide cover for me at the age of 70?...or 80?...or 90? Be reassured that our Public Liability insurance sets no age limit for volunteers.

Just as important are the underlying expectations that the group will....'take reasonable care in the selection and supervision of volunteers..... Volunteers of any age can take part provided they are capable and the group is happy they are not carrying out tasks detrimental to their health or to the safety of other members of the group'.

This will serve as a reminder to all members that we must behave responsibly at all times...in deciding for example what tasks to take on ourselves and for how long, and in supporting the task leaders and alerting them to any concerns we may have about matters of health and safety.

Once a member reaches the age of 75 there are differences in the Personal Accident insurance cover - the benefits are significantly reduced. Speak to Robin if you would like to know more of the detail.  
Robin Howles

# STRE-E-E-E-TCHING !!!

**Is stretching worthwhile?** A report came out of Australia in the autumn of 2003 stating that stretching is a waste of time. It was quickly denounced by those who promote stretching and seems to have gone away. Nevertheless, as individuals, how do we know that stretching is good for us? Feel good factors are pure conjecture. Even if we consider an endurance activity like running a marathon where lots of stretching is done, how do we know that we would not have run the same time if we had not stretched beforehand? It is very difficult for individuals to really decide so we are left to the promoted evidence that the stretching gurus provide.

## There are a number of rules of stretching that we need to observe.

- **Warm up before stretching.** Like stretching, this is an area of debate. The RYA coaching manual states that one should warm up with light exercise such as jogging on the spot for five minutes to raise the heart rate to 140 beats per minute. A bit much for most of us. If we accept that stretching is worthwhile, then we should accept warming up likewise.
- **Static postures only.** All stretching that we do should be static. We do this anyway but it is included to ensure that we do not do ballistic stretching. Those old enough will remember the latter at school. An example is the violent horizontal out swinging of the arms accompanied by the words "I must, I must improve my bust". (Didn't work for me).
- **Minimal effect.** Static stretching requires minimal effort. You should not adopt postures that require undue effort. Always protect your back.
- **Strain not pain.** All postures should produce a strain in the target muscle. Do not take this further which may lead to pain and possibly injury. If you do not feel a strain, you are not stretching. Never stretch an injured muscle.
- **Valid postures only.** We should only adopt postures that the stretching gurus say we should use. If there is not a picture for it, don't do it. Lunging forward is an example of an invalid posture – the calf and quad muscles in the bent front leg and the lower back muscles are locked solid to hold this uncomfortable position.
- **Standing postures only.** Our worst case scenario is the middle of a sloping field when it is raining. No place for sitting or lying down stretches.
- **Postures for all.** In producing a stretching manual, I have looked at all the standing stretches and filtered out those that most of us cannot do. This has left a set of postures that everyone can join in.

More next time –with pictures!!

Tony Chandler

### MORE OF MIKE SAUNDER'S INIMITABLE REASONS FOR LIKING GREEN GYM

He's reached the D's.  
I must squeeze in D for Diane. Diane the marathon-running-Cake-Queen. Spoken of in hushed and awed secret whispers from the portals of BTCV HQ to the highland fastness of a remote Bill Oddie bird hideaway, let us be clear about this. Diane's range of homemade cakes, bread pudding, to fruit cake to walnut and banana to chocolate surprise served to GG members at coffee break are the main (to some the

only) reason for attending GG each week. How she manages to produce these delights so regularly, heaven knows. Week after week the sound of 'coffee break' resounds over woodland glade or sunlit hillside and we all troop over to our little plastic table and steaming mugs. What has Diane brought today? Whatever, I'll enjoy it gazing at the view perched on this convenient tree stump and reflecting on my patch of cleared brushwood.

NEXT TIME ENERGY, EFFORT,  
EFFICIENCY, ENJOYMENT  
AND MANY MORE.....

### First Aid

As a result of all the attention recently given to First Aid, John Hasler has fitted up a new RED box and brought all the contents up to date. Foam cut to shape holds all the items snugly in place and they are all readily visible and easily accessible. Naturally it is devoutly hoped that we won't need to make use of them.

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