

As well as all these new sites, work has continued at other venues.

As ever, happy wet and watery work went on at **Ewelme**. The wet, warm weather (what alliteration!) made the water cress grow enormously and it was amazing to see how the water channels had become silted up even since the spring. So the group had a hard, heavy and hectic session clearing channels each side of the beds so that the water could flow faster and keep the river bottom clear and gravelly. Lets hope this will last till next spring!

In September a party of 8 Gymmers travelled up to **Woodstock** to give support to the newly formed Chipping Norton Green Gym. On a beautiful sunny day we were welcomed by 8 members led by Nina Sperinck.

Woodstock is lucky enough to have water meadows which are the property of the town. On the lush pasture a little group of Dexter cattle were grazing and it is a haven for insects and birds. Along one edge runs an ancient ditch which had become choked with lush growth. One of our tasks was to climb down into the mud at the bottom to pull out the greenery. As we steadily progressed, amazingly, the water crept back and began to flow again.

A second group were set to hanging a gate at the end of the bridge leading on to the meadows. And though this was more of a problem than expected, commonsense and skills finally won the day and the gate was ready to use.

In both tasks SC and Ch Norton worked in harmony together and everyone agreed it had been a delightful occasion.



Tree cutting and coppicing has gone on at **Oakley Wood** though the autumn session was not as hot and sunny as earlier, on a day when not only was there the usual cake but our employer also plied us with ice cream and doughnuts. And this is meant to make us healthier?



Neglected hedge laying hard work, but a very creditable result was achieved. It was made easier by the pointing of the stakes by a skilled team.

CLAYFIELD COPSE



PLEA FROM PETER

Plea from Peter Warrick - he of the jokes and Delicious chocolate cake- Please save your Christmas stamps and give to him and he will see they go to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

10 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

1 March A working morning planting trees at Kennylands Millenium field to which staff from Sonning Common Health centre, Local parish Councillors will be invited and it is hoped Dr Bird, the founding father (as you might say) will come as well.

6 March The 5 Oxfordshire Green Gyms will be meeting at Aston Rowant. Members

from Abingdon, Chipping Norton, Bicester, Wallingford and, of course, Sonning Common along with Yvonne, Mark and Chloe from BTCV will be there for a working session and get together.

Sometime in the summer there will be a barbecue at Jules Thomson's house for Sonning Common Green Gym members.

If you have any other suggestions for ways in which we might celebrate, contact Julia Booker or the Lopper editor.

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Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

No 14 Jan 2008

IN MARCH 2008 THE GREEN GYM WILL BE TEN YEARS OLD!

IT IS PROPOSED TO MARK THIS MILESTONE WITH EVENTS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE OVER THE WHOLE YEAR

They include celebrations at Kennylands Millenium Green, Sonning Common, an Oxfordshire gathering at Aston Rowant and a BBQ at Jules Thomson's house'.

For full details see page four.

The Wedding

Rebecca and Mark were married in the beautiful tithe barn at Ufton Court on Saturday 27th October. The barn is set within the grounds of the Elizabethan Ufton Court. Rebecca's credentials as a history teacher made this Tudor setting a particularly appropriate location for her marriage to Mark.

The huge timbers of the tithe barn, supporting the entrance, were clad in ivy and twinkling lights. The length of the barn was dominated by pairs of queen posts, illuminated by soft lighting, making their own procession across the roof-space. Below over a hundred relatives and friends gathered, facing a wall with an ancient brass depicting a man and wife, joined in matrimony several hundred years ago.

Rebecca, looking lovely in a white ivory wedding dress, processed with her father up the central area towards Mark and the Registrar. The highlight of the formal ceremony was the declaration of promises spoken from the heart antiphonally by Rebecca and Mark and, appropriately, learned by heart.

The celebrations ended with a magnificent hog roast and ceilidh.

Then out into the night with the sound of music ringing in our ears and the warm satisfaction that two of our company had plighted their troth

The Green Gym wishes them the very best for the future.

Mike Macleod



Members of the Green Gym supported the couple's obvious love of the countryside and commitment to humanitarian causes, by giving, at the request of Rebecca and Mark, two Oxfam packages containing first aid equipment, sanitary kits and simple drugs designed to support the work of a community health officer.

We look forward to seeing you both at many GG sessions.

WELCOME BACK

It was good to see Diane back and walking well . She is once again working hard and keeping us all on our toes. She and David have kindly taken over tea and coffee making but cakes are being provided by a majority of the Gymmers, and very good they all are too.

Particular mention must be made of the historic cakes provided by Mike McLeod. (Historic in theme, not in age by the way.)



On 24th November Gillotts Corner Field was the scene of eccentric feasting. A dozen or so members of the Green Gym coven slashed and lopped themselves to mid-morning refreshment. This took the form, first of an American cranberry nut cake, baked and eaten to celebrate the survival of the first English colonists in America. The second cake took us a few decades on when Robert May compiled The Accomplishd Cook in 1660. His sub-title The Art & Mystery of Cookery does not quite accurately describe the experience of this Green Gym cook who detected less art and more mystery in the process of baking what May described as "An Extraordinary Cake." The art comprised forcing the mixture into a shape that did not represent Damien Hirst's latest creation; the mystery came in translating such quantities as "half a bushel of the best flour" into measurements which any reasonable kitchen scales would accommodate. Now that the cake has been consumed I can reveal that

a previous recipient of May's cooking was his employer, Lord Castlehaven, who was executed in 1631 for sodomy and assisted rape. There is no other evidence that the ingredients of the cake corrupt the soul but whether they rot the gut only time will tell.

Mike Macleod

BADGEMORE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

For those of you who only come on Thursdays we'd like to introduce you to one of our new sites, which will only be available on Saturdays when school is closed.

Badgemore Community School provides us with some interesting and varied work. First, we are clearing an area opposite the classrooms under the trees with the object of producing a forest school. All the rubbish has to be manhandled up to the playing field for a bonfire. Up there the laurel is marching steadily across the field up to 14 or 15 foot high and we have to shove it back. But that's not a straightforward job because in the bushes we have to create a forest trail. And then between the two sites there is a path to create which will involve erecting a sturdy fence to prevent the children falling over the wall. What more could you want?

We'll be there for a few sessions yet; come and join us! And have a look at all the things this enterprising school is doing on their web site.

www.badgemore.oxon.sch.uk

Post Script:

a second session at the school was well supported and with a smoky bonfire managed by Tony much of the dense laurel was cut back and an intrepid party cut an adventure trail through the shrubbery. This involved twisting in and out of the ancient laurel trunks, clearing briars and cutting branches.

Children from the school tested it out and thought it was @cool'

The necessary task of testing the trail was carried out by children from the school and - we are happy to say - was declared 'cool'.

On Nov 24 members gathered at Gillotts field in Henley, not this time to pull the dreaded ragwort but to perform a liberating task.

In the year 2000 100 trees were planted in the field in commemoration. These trees have - as is their wont - grown and so have the brambles, briars and old man's beard, to the extent that despite attention by Andrew Hawkins it was difficult to see any of the trees at a first glance. The job then was to free them, of, chiefly, the old man's beard. This proved a most satisfying task and with a good turnout a good many trees were cleared. In some cases one could almost feel them gasp with pleasure to see the sky and feel the air.. Lets hope that now the canopy will spread and wipe out the undergrowth and the trees will flourish.

WISHING
EVERYONE
A VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY NEW
YEAR
EDITOR

The changing face of Watlington Hill

Chris Ash

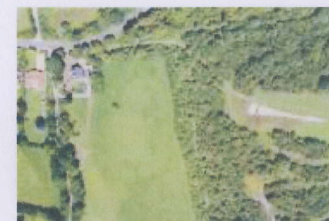
The Green Gym has been leading the uncovering and restoration of the sunken way on the south side of Watlington hill (with the occasional help of The Friends of Watlington Hill, The Oxford Conservation Volunteers and The French students). GG has also opened up the footpaths below the west facing white mark, which can just be seen on the picture on the right.

What is a sunken way? Official definition:

"Settlements are linked by a network of ancient, commonly sunken lanes, some running straight along valley bottoms or ridge-tops while others wind up the scarp or valley sides. The sunken lanes pass through woodland, creating an enclosed landscape with an over-arching canopy of trees. On plateau areas and in some valleys the lanes can be lined with species-rich ancient hedges, the height and dense nature of which offer only limited views into the fields beyond. Much of the wider landscape is 'hidden' from the user of these lanes."

"A Drovers Walk follows typically Chiltern sunken lanes. This network of ancient green lanes would have been used over hundreds of years to move livestock from the villages of ... to their common lands. This movement of livestock was called droving. The paths used for droving had to be wide enough to accommodate cattle at least two abreast."

The work on the sunken way will probably be complete in the spring of 2008 so a 'before and after' report will be compiled at that time.



The White Mark (reportedly cut in 1764 for the vicar to view as a church spire from the vicarage) seems to have changed shape slightly over the years as indeed has the vegetation on the hill. The picture below is from a postcard taken in 1907. It shows the view from hill road of a treeless, bush and brush free chalk grassland hill. The White Mark, hill road and the chalk pits are clearly visible. The yew forest and south side sunken way are



hidden behind the hill top at the top right of the picture.
Chris Ash

Bint's Farm Pond

This is a new site northeast of Dunsden and consisted of



a long pond running north/south that has open water at either end but in between the water saw little daylight as a result of tree growth on the two long sides. The pond was created by damming the southern end to prevent the water running across a field farther down the hill. Apart from just

seeing the traffic on the Reading to Henley road, the site was remarkably tranquil and



a pleasant place to work.

Our task for the morning was to open up some small areas on the long sides of the pond to allow light to reach the water thereby creating a better balance of light and dark areas. We split into four groups, two on each side and carefully created the required openings.

Tony

