

Watlington Hill



There was enough cut scrub awaiting us on Watlington Hill to fuel 2 bonfires when we arrived for our session in March. Despite the damp scrub and foggy conditions Diane and her team soon got one going, likewise Brian and John with the other. We haven't worked before on this patch of the hill which is away from busy footpaths and consequently more favourable for wildlife. Clearing back the Whitebeam and



hawthorn creates space for the wildflowers that grow here, including Chiltern Gentian, Frog Orchids and Twayblades. Julia

From the Desk with a View

It's all very well for apologies to Keats, Chris and Sheelagh, what about Shakespeare? Come on a word from the man who practically invented the English language in this his quatercentenary year (hope I spelled that ok). Here is the man who (together with the Bible) is more often quoted everyday without a thought of the original source. Thus my bowlderised version and a warning for Green Gymers sending me text and pics.

I take up the editorship of The Lopper keen not to play fast and loose with readers though with possible contributions I want my pound of flesh and that's the naked truth. Don't send me on a wild goose chase with your pictures which I wait for with bated breath. The short and long of it is with whatever I write here although it sets my teeth on edge I'm going to tell the truth and shame the Devil.

Great fun.

PS Sometimes we are allowed to pause in our labours and take in the view, see below. Boat on river from the towpath at Cleeve Court. Pimm's anyone?



Aston Rowant

Another session attacking the scrub invasion on the warren at Aston Rowant. Slightly easier this time than previously because



we were operating on the less steep part of the slope. Using the same fire site meant dragging everything uphill though. We had a satisfying day and cleared a large area and burnt the arisings. Chris

Parsons Wood

We cleared many piles of cut material by means of 2 bonfires at our March visit to Parson's Wood. The wood now has a much more open aspect,



which has encouraged many bluebells to come up where we saw none before. They were not yet in flower, but a wood anemone was showing appreciation of the extra light. A very satisfying time as we got rid of so much. Sustained by delicious chocolate cake.



Julia and Susan

A fallen tree had partially destroyed the far end of the Cleeve Water Meadows' stockade so we rebuilt it from the bottom up during our May session. By June nettles were growing rampant through the stockade and over the Thames path. As we cut it back we came across three members of the parsley family: cow parsley, wild angelica and hemlock water dropwort, a clump of which we gave a wide berth until it could be dealt with safely.

Hemlock water dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* is also known as horsebane and is the most poisonous of our indigenous plants. By contrast cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* is not poisonous and its leaves can be fed to rabbits as greenstuff. Also known as Queen Anne's lace, it is the commonest of the hedgebank parsleys and the earliest to flower. Wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris* was known as 'angelic' by herbalists since it was a sovereign remedy for colds, coughs, digestive problems and rheumatism amongst others. The garden variety which may be candied to make cake decorations is *Angelica archangelica*.

Julia

Angelica



Hemlock Water Dropwort



Cow Parsley



Dunsden Churchyard Momento mori

Well not quite a reminder of death but one GGer seems to be thinking about it in contemplative pose. This was an amazing mass of holly and ash sprouting through in Dunsden churchyard during one of our regular visits. Once again multifarious tasks for the team lopping and clearing, weeding and path clearance.

Beyond that astounding hedge laying gem around the car park we set about clearing old gravel from the churchyard extension to lay a weed proof membrane before re-covering with new and old gravel. We recovered later (sans hyphen).

Back to that hedge.....I must say it looks too good, too beautiful, too even, to be true are you sure Tony and Chris and Brian you don't have a massive machine where you turn a handle and it comes out like a piece of ribbon?

Refreshment break against the church wall, where else?

A chilly rainy day with bursts of sun but who remembers another churchyard foray we had in snow and blue sky? Mike S



Hurst Water Meadows

After a good session clearing and burning at the meadows by the bridge in Dorchester we had a lovely message form our sponsor:

Many thanks for all your efforts today. I am amazed at the amount of work your group gets through. I was so pleased we managed to keep that bonfire going. I've updated our blog with some of Lisbet's pictures and attached a group one for you to use. But please feel free to download and use any of our pictures. Lots of nettle scything during the next few months. It will be interesting to see how Old Bridge Meadow looks when you visit in the Autumn. Have a good summer. Best wishes Andrew



Withymead

The derelict summerhouse near Richard's well at Withymead had become a hazard, so we erected a chestnut paling fence all the way round it while others worked in the reed fen. Rotten treads on the boardwalk needed replacing once the chicken wire had been removed – painstaking work but very pleasant in the reedy suntrap. Julia



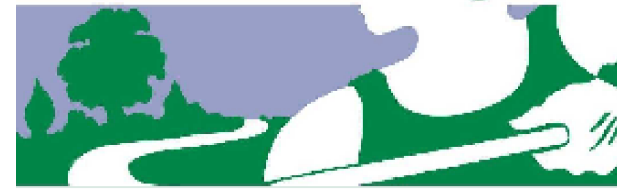
Nuffield Place

A very satisfying if rather prickly morning clearing holly to make way for the increase of bluebells in future years at Nuffield Place NT. Celebrated the Queen's and Greg's birthdays with delicious cake. Susan



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Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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Adieu !

Adieu! adieu! my plaintive anthem fades; Past Temple Island Meadows, over the Withymead stream, Up Aston Rowant hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep in the Moorend mud. Was it a vision, or a waking dream? Fled is your editor to pastures new: Adieu! (Chris and Sheelagh - apologies to Keats)

Cleeve Water Meadows

A busy morning in glorious sunshine at Cleeve Water Meadow on Thursday 17th March. There were so many and varied tasks with some valiant souls uprooting brambles.....a tough job indeed; some clearing the Drove Road; some turving a path; others busy keeping the bonfire well loaded; and some clearing along the stream and the path with the help of Greg and Saskia, who's last day it was. We welcomed Lily, who is joining us from now on to bring Greg. Delicious cake was provided from both Diane and Charlotte to sustain us midway through the morning. Charlotte was very excited to spot a kingfisher flying across the first meadow. One task was to remove a mass of dead willow by the stockade, attracting interest from ramblers on the Thames path. It was a good way of promoting the Green Gym, and it was especially pleasing to hear one passer-by already knew about Green Gyms from their local one in South London!



Susan and Julia

Moorend Common

A select team of five of us turned up for our February visit to Moor End Common, but we proved the maxim that the smaller the number the greater the amount of work completed. It was very satisfying to clear the last patch of birch saplings and bramble remaining from our previous mammoth session. What was thickly growing scrub is now open grass, the wide glade almost unrecognisable from before. After coffee (treble rations, but someone had to eat it), we cleared back heavy bramble from one edge of the ride leading south from the glade. Our instructions were to create scallops, so our embroidery skills were used to great effect. Julia

