



We made a welcome return to the blue-bell

promise of Felix Wood at Greys Court.

The task was to clear out an ancient boundary ditch bordering the wood so that a fence could be put in.

In addition we were briefed to clear bramble from around trees in the wood.

Contractors are coming in to clear the bramble but their cutting equipment cannot get close to trunks without injuring standing growth



Clearing bramble on Kingwood Common showing the huge glade we created. Here are the tools of the trade..... and David in pensive mood (they also serve who stand and watch!)

Our clearance was mostly bramble but some gorse as well although this was only at head height to leave some cover. We made a 'funnel' course to link up with another glade giving more light to incipient heather



Clearing the old boundary ditch at we came upon this obstruction and dealt with it accordingly in GG fashion! Amazing what can be done in a short time of a morning's work!



Gill seems to be enjoying herself at the Withymead fire. This is blazing away with bits of shed, dried leaves and assorted clippings and cuttings



Looking down Ferry Lane at South Stoke where the water is rising up along the slipway following heavy rain. Pruners and Loppers at work twisting and nipping and pinching with a clear and clean cut approach. You can get trailer and boat down there now without a scratch!



A memorial bench together with a plaque has been installed on the Millennium Green, Kennylands in memory of Ian and June who contributed greatly to the Sonning Common Green Gym. Ian was also heavily involved in the setting up of the Millennium Green and in designing the Millennium feature. At the wish of the family, the bench has been installed facing the feature



What a wonderful morning on Sue Ryder Triangle-was it 24 or 25 of us raking and scraping under the trees? And all before the publicity drive! Our tasks were to clear surface dead leaves to allow heather to grow in, build the dry brush boundary hedge and clear log piles.



And so they gather for coffee break with Brian playing with the hedge break. Just look at the line of cars beyond Gill, luckily plenty of parking



A tricky job at Withymead was changing the top rope running round the slipway. It was more difficult than it looked as the old rope had been nailed in inside the holes in the support posts Robin and hon ed pulled and wrestled, wiggling and jiggling until nails came out and rope with sharpened end finally came through. Mmm.....the vaguely Turks Head look alike knot came with the rope.



GG skills do not quite extend to such things....well not yet!

A note from Susan, keen-eyed GGer:

A little while ago we were busy raking nettles and the remainder of cut rushes at Cleeve Water Meadow. Someone asked, "What is the difference between rushes and sedges?" "Well", said Robert, "I only know that there's a rhyme which starts Sedges have edges".

Hadn't I seen something about this somewhere? Hmm, of course, in one of my Plantlife magazines.

So...Sedges have edges, Rushes are round, Grasses are hollow right up from the ground.

If you feel the stem with your finger and thumb, a sedge will have three corners and rushes and grasses will be rounded. If there is pith inside the stem of a rounded one, it will be a rush, whereas a grass will be hollow. Well, that is the general rule.

There are 39 rushes (Juncaceae) of two types in the British Isles. Their flowers are more flower-like than sedges and grasses with the structure looking like a very small lily flower, often stalked and grouped on a large inflorescence.

Sedges (Carex) have 78 species with the stems having a triangular cross-section. Separate male and female flowers are tiny and grouped into spikes. Pendulous sedge is common in southern England and very invasive on some of our local commons. We often have to remove it from Kingwood and Nettlebed commons. People think it looks lovely in their gardens but the wind blows and so it escapes!

Grasses (Poaceae or Gramineae) have hundreds of species. It can be quite difficult to recognise each one I found when I was trying to identify some along a green path in Nettlebed. A massive subject and best looked at in a book such as Roger Phillips: Grasses, Ferns, Mosses and Lichens.

With thanks to some facts from Frances Watkins, botanist and recently retired from Plantlife Board.



Hedge cutting on this scale does not usually fall to us but at Peppard War Memorial Hall, this was the task. Sssssh.....we don't usually use power tools but this was a big hedge! Tony at work here but Peter does a hands on closer up. Strangely the power trimmer does not replace the hand shears they are complementary. Long straight stretches suit the former, irregular spaces and angular growth suit the latter.



We had two very enjoyable sessions at Dunsden churchyard for our annual continuation of the hedge laying project. We worked also on the churchyard stretch of the hedge side lopping and pruning growth from our laid hedge from our earlier sessions

That riverside shed at Withymead.....now you see it.....
.....coming down and apart



now you don't.....



.... Shed? what shed? I see no shed!

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"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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From the Desk with a View

Well the view today is a bit dour and overcast as I write this, but not to worry. A merest glimpse of the North Wessex Downs is a treat. However a very long stone's throw from here is Ferry Lane, South Stoke a new site for GG where we engaged in a spot of ivy bashing recently. We also tried our hands at hedge cutting at Peppard War Memorial Hall another new site and then more clearance work at Binfield heath to make a third. We continue to work on our regular sites-always a pleasure as far as I'm concerned. Ironically enough when we are about to start a publicity drive for new members a few come along. We welcome Jonathan Tate and Tom Lowery and of course delighted to see a returning Alison Holdsworth once more. It was good to receive a sitrep from Chris and Shelagh. Will they suddenly appear one wonders? But as the old hands creep inexorably towards 70 or even 80 (90?) new recruits matter. Do chat people up, ask around, show that you can do up your own shoe laces still without lifting your feet. It's awfully impressive and you may shake out some would be candidates!

PETER GUGGENHEIM

Remembering Peter Guggenheim, whose enthusiastic participation enlivened many a Green Gym session until his death in December. He had us enthralled with tales of sailing exploits on the high seas and inshore waters, not to mention the intricacies of sewing machine sales and maintenance. We discovered at his memorial service that these were but two strands to a life lived to the full. Though he made clear he would rather be sailing, Peter worked with gusto at Green Gym sessions, regarding nature conservation as of vital importance. He particularly enjoyed our sessions on Watlington Hill, his local patch, under the watchful eye of Jerry Page. Peter's genial presence will be much missed.

Julia



We have had three good sessions at Aston Rowant this quarter. More bramble bashing and a good bonfire on a well neglected area which means we have contributed three sessions here this winter.

The other two sessions involved scrub and fence repairs around areas that have been naturally allowed to regrow without grazing. Dr Tim King (the ant man) over saw these projects with help from Nigel Adams.

Is this a first? At Withymead Julia read out our brief for the morning on cards written by Sue one of our Withymead client partners. We had an interesting morning with tasks ranging from demolishing a shed by the river to clearing out a land locked boat and re-threading a rope along the boundary rails of the slipway. Not to speak of a huge fire to consume all the bits no longer wanted!