

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Number 54 December 2017

Seasons

Greetings to all!

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE TOOLSHED....

It's Christmas Eve in the toolshed,
And Robert is sharpening the shears,
Mike M is updating the tools list –
When a shiny red light appears.

"Would you lend us a hand?" says Rudolph.
"The sleigh's caught a thicket and stuck."
Green Gym to the rescue! They bag up some tools
And lob them inside Robert's truck.

They speed down the lanes to a hillside,
Rudolph's nose with its glow lights the way
To a tangle of brambles and blackthorn
Trapping Santa and gifts in his sleigh.

"Don't worry", they call out to Santa,
"We'll cut your way out in a jiffy".
(Though Doom-and-Gloom raises an eyebrow –
A quick rescue looks a bit iffy).



So they get on the blower to Tony
And Brian, both Peters and Jill.
Word gets around and others arrive
To wield loppers and saws with a will.

Says Robin, "I have an announcement",
As they pull the sleigh free with their rakes.
"One-match Gordon is starting a bonfire,
What's more she has brought along cakes!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" chuckles Santa, "I'm partial
To cakes and a hot cup of cheer.
What better to stiffen the sinews
When working out in the fresh air?"

However, I'd better get going -
Greg's Lego is on my next call".
With a wave he directs the sleigh sky-wards –
"Merry Christmas, Green Gym, one and all!"

-JMB-



Nettlebed Common

In order to encourage the heather to regenerate on the Common, tasks mainly involved bracken pulling and scrub clearing, uncovering some interesting fungi and friendly visitors along the way!



Golden Spindles found within the bracken is a grassland fungus.



A couple of friendly common frogs posing in the damp undergrowth!

Aston Rowant Spud Roast

This took place on the 16th November this year rather than in December. It was dry and bright with only a hint of motorway traffic noise. The tasks were slightly different from that proposed with an added one.

We worked in four parties. A couple spent time installing a hanging gate post, while another group set about clearing a fence line in readiness for replacement. A third group dragged material to the fire site and a fourth group tended to the needs of the fire.

After coffee break and the fire had died down a bit and a spud roasting oven was prepared, the spuds in tin foil placed in it and then were covered in hot ash. Thereafter burning resumed as normal. At 12.15 we gathered for lunch and the spuds were dragged from the fire.

Many thanks to everyone who came for an excellent day and all the contributions, in particular thanks to Julia for the hot berry drink.

Mike, Kate and Leo were very pleased with the work and we must not forget to thank them for the spuds.

-Tony-

Glad the group enjoyed their Christmas warm up celebration. Would you please pass on my sincere thanks to one and all for your continuing support for the reserve. It would be a much poorer place without you all.

-Mick Venters-



RAKING

It was Patrick Campbell who said "It seems to me that you can go sauntering along for a certain period, telling the English some interesting things about themselves, and then all at once it feels as if you had stepped on the prongs of a rake." That's one hazard we try to avoid in the Green Gym, having been told in our tools talks always to place our rakes on the ground with prongs facing down. For a nifty demonstration of the consequences of stepping on a wrongly-placed rake, ask Tony.

Late summer and early autumn are the main times to find us raking, whether reeds at wetland sites or grass at places such as Greys Court. There was a bumper turnout for our October session at Greys Court, where we raked the cuttings to the edge of the grassy areas by the main house for loading into a trailer to be taken away for composting. Whilst raking we came across various brightly-coloured fungi as a reminder that autumn was on its way.

-Julia-



The cut grass was raked up into piles and loaded onto the trailer, quite a few trips were needed!

A wide range of fungi in the long damp grass.

Badgemore Primary School

Our second visit to the school this year saw us embark on a major first for the Sonning Common Green Gym- the installation of two sections of Clef Chestnut Linked Fencing. This type of fencing comes from Sussex and will have been seen by visitors to that area and to what has become The South Downs National Park. Everyone lent a helping hand and despite difficulty with the digging of some of the holes creating a time overrun, we completed the tasks.

Going on alongside this was a major bramble clearing task and scything of the wild flower area around the orchard trees. -Tony-



Thanks very much! I went up to the school yesterday to see your results and was blown away. That's a beautiful fence and I'm sure it wasn't easy to erect. And thank you for clearing the bramble, working on such a steep slope couldn't have helped. -Comment from Tuc (Parent)-

SONNING COMMON GREEN GYM AT 20

FIRST CELEBRATION ON SATURDAY 13TH JANUARY 2018
MILLENNIUM FIELD

9.30 Green Gym Members assemble for the morning task
Coppicing the copse we planted at the 10th anniversary and removing the cuttings

10.30 Guests arrive to join us for coffee break
Welcome by Chairman

11.10 Task continues with guests taking part as well if they wish
or alternatively chatting to GG Members about their work

12.00 All repair to the Bird in Hand for a buffet lunch where a display will be mounted

Glass of bubbly and a special cake
Short talk by Dr William Bird

14.00 Depart

South Stoke Recreation Ground

Ggers seem to be very lucky with the weather and the rain only came along at South Stoke when we were nearly through. The task here was to clear a piece of land for a possible community orchard or allotment. Fair enough. A bit of ground ivy a few saplings but mainly a mass of bramble usually rabbit haunted but not today. Bramble is fair game for us, you approach with a choice of tools. Shears yes very flexible and you can poke the points down to the underneath of a massed bunch. Slashers again to make sense of a twisted heap of thorn and leaf and to feel you are making progress. The small recently introduced hand slashers seem to combine the attributes of main slasher and shears. Very good. Finally some people like loppers but really best for thick stems only.

By a lucky chance we were able to make use of the fire site across the recreation ground where the village PTA had their fireworks evening. Even more useful was Robert's pick up to get the cut material over to the fire, thanks very much Robert. All cleared away and burnt to order at close of play.
-Mike Saunders-



PHYSICAL EXERCISE – THE ‘MIRACLE CURE’ TO AGEING

Did you know that...

- Regular Exercise can help older people increase their fitness levels to that of a person ten years younger
- Losing your fitness increases the risk of needing social care
- Ageing and loss of fitness are commonly confused

A recent article in the British Medical Journal has highlighted how regular physical activity helps older people maintain their independence and reduces their chances of needing social care. ‘Frailty can be prevented’. Loss of ability is not an inevitable part of ageing. And decline in fitness starts as early as 30. So remaining sedentary is one of the top causes of ill health in the UK. Tell your friends – don’t sit around! The NHS and Social Services can’t afford to have many more people in nursing homes or needing care at home. Join the Green Gym!

-John Hasler-

DEAD-HEDGING ON KINGWOOD COMMON

Autumnal drizzle gave way to sunshine during a visit to Kingwood Common in November. We cleared back bracken and bramble by the Stoke Row road and cut down small birches to open up the heathland. To deter vehicles from driving through the new clearance onto the Common we made a dead hedge with the brush, spending some time on making it look neat! We can look forward to lengthening the dead hedge in the New Year, helped by some brush-cutting from Rod D’Ayala.

-Julia-



Mill Meadows Caterpillar!

A very hairy Ruby Tiger Moth Caterpillar (*Phragmatobia fuliginosa*) spotted on a sunny morning at Mill Meadows. The adult moth has two main generations in the South, between April and June and in August and September.

Lopper Editor: Imogen Lloyd
imogen.lloyd@dbmail.com
Tel 07557917884

C/o Health Centre, 39 Wood Lane,
Sonning Common

Enquiries- Robin- 0118 972 3528