

Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Lockdown Issue 9

PROGRESS TOWARDS RE-OPENING

We've been working hard sorting out the arrangements for re-opening in September. We've decided both for our clients' sake and also to ensure that as many people as possible get the chance to come that while the current regulations stay in place, we'll have two working parties of six at each session. These could be on separate parts of one site or on two different sites. And I'm sorry that people will need to book so that we know who's coming and so that we can control the numbers. Obviously, we won't be providing refreshments (I'm going to miss the cake!) and people are going to have to keep 2 metres apart and bring their own gloves. But the work will still be as varied as ever and we'll finally get the chance for regular exercise. The programme will be out before too long and I'll hope to see you (or six of you!) soon. In the meantime, stay well.

--John--

Photos of seasonal wild flowers and a scarlet tiger moth from Tony



Centaury



Chalk Milkwort



Scarlet Tiger



Wild Candytuft



Horse Shoe Vetch

Ferns

When we are pulling bracken, *Pteridium aquilinum*, we sometimes come across other ferns which we don't want to pull up, so it is important to be able to tell the difference between them. The main example is broad buckler fern, *Dryopteris dilatata*. This is a native species which isn't very common, so we want to keep it wherever it occurs. It grows on Priest Hill on Nettlebed Common and in amongst the heather on Peppard Common.

Bracken grows much taller than other ferns in the UK, but we are often pulling it where it has been pulled many times before and, in this situation, it doesn't grow so tall. Hence, if the fern is higher than waist high it will be bracken and is to be pulled. If it is much shorter, particularly if it is less than knee high then you need to make sure that it is bracken before pulling it. If you are in any doubt, please consult the Green Gym session leader.

The fronds of bracken are more obviously branched than other ferns but possibly the most noticeable difference between bracken and broad buckler is the scales at the base of the fronds. Broad buckler has a lot of brown scales around the base of the frond, but bracken doesn't have these.



Hopefully you can make out the brown scales on the frond of the Broad buckler fern ([Left Photo](#)) and you can see there are no brown scales on the Bracken frond ([Right photo](#))

Male fern, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, ([Below Right](#)) is another fern we shouldn't pull but we don't often find that growing with bracken.

Hard fern, *Blechnum spicant* ([Left](#)), is another one we encounter on Nettlebed Common, but it is quite different from bracken so hopefully no one will confuse the two. It is unusual in that it has two types of fronds which look quite different, spore bearing and non-spore bearing fronds. Spores develop on the underside of the fronds of ferns. Being more primitive (lower) plants, ferns reproduce via spores, whereas higher plants like the flowering plants reproduce via seeds.



Photos of Cleeve Water Meadow from Charlotte



Left: Reedbed nearest the river, improved after the flooding

Top Centre: Stockade, parts of which are 'growing' well

Top Right: Reedbed nearest the river, improved after the flooding

Lower Centre: Re-growth on the Hazel that was coppiced in the autumn

Lower Right: Path near Cleeve Court boundary showing docks that have invaded this area

WONDERFUL WADERS – Binfield Heath

Waders! There is always excitement when a session leader announces waders will be worn, so this is a first look at our deeper-water activities. Not that Binfield Heath is the first of our sites to come to mind, but we cleared a section of reeds out of the small pond by the well back in April 2007. The photos show Robert resplendent in waders, and Rebecca (who recently re-joined after starting a family) and friend during coffee break. You never know how deep the water may be, so we brought the life-belt just in case, as Bert and Jill could testify. Our next visit was in 2016, when the pond was sadly dry, so Robert, Peter T. and Mike M didn't bother with waders.

The following year we were asked to clear the river Bin by the bridge. It had been reduced to a trickle by fallen branches and vegetation, but we soon got a decent flow going. South of the bridge Robert is seeing to the final sweep and he is joined north of the bridge by Fiona, with Jane and Sian on bank duties.

--Julia--



Preston Crowmarsh

In May 2009 we reported “We have helped construct a boardwalk in Millbrook Mead, a spall nature reserve in Preston Crowmarsh, cleared a footpath to the site of the old ferry and created a flight of steps in the access slope to the recreation ground by the river Thames” these tasks were led by Julia and Tony. The reserve can be found at SU614915.

A week ago, we walked to the nature reserve to see how the intervening decades had seen the flora develop. We were amazed at the variety and beauty of the plants growing in the well maintained area. This has been mainly due to the efforts of one volunteer who took on the task despite the politics of the local council. Hopefully this standard of work and dedication can be maintained so that everyone can continue to enjoy the reserve. See photos attached for typical views of the reserve.



If you walk back around the reserve and follow the boardwalk, you can walk alongside the crystal-clear chalk stream. If you could follow this upstream you would come to the Ewelme watercress bed, another of our familiar sites for Green Gym operations.

--Chris--

Limerick Corner

Green Gym's First Aid guru is Jane
But she'd organised classes in vain.
The lockdown put paid
To the plans she had made,
Now she's starting all over again.



--Julia--

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