

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

September 2020

'Last of the Summer Wine'



Welcome to the first post lockdown issue of The Lopper. Judging by the articles, it has been a busy month, with lots of conservation work already completed. Those who saw David Attenborough's 'Extinction: The Facts' know how important this work is.

Thanks to all the leaders for making all this work possible and everyone who has sent in all the delightful words and photos.

Special thanks to John for this 'restful' photo, taken at Streatley Churchyard, and the suggested title for this article.

--martin b--

Aston Rowant

Our first visit to Aston Rowant for seven months meant we picked up where we left off, popping small hawthorn regeneration. This time it was in the Event Field. It was good to see Steph again and a new member Holly. Eagle eyes, while leaning on his popper, spotted a plant that had not been recorded before in the Event Field, an [Autumn Gentian](#). We had our "coffee" break at the usual time and caught up on goings on and jokes.

--Tony--



Badgemore Primary School

On Friday morning, Tony's fan belt broke which may have scuppered our visit. Fortunately, the local garage managed to fix it that afternoon so all was well. When we arrived on Saturday the gates were locked and we had not been told the code. Peter Keel was stomping around inside the gates when they started to open. It is thought that the underground metal sensor reacted to his steel toe capped boots.



Finally underway under a clear blue sky, we completed the three jobs. Group one worked at the orchard and this was scythed and raked. The paling fence was cleared of brambles. Both lots of cuttings were placed on the compost bins. The second group worked on clearing the pond and the surrounding area.

--Tony--

Lovely feedback from the School

"Your work was tremendous, as always. It is really appreciated especially under present circumstances. We are incredibly grateful that the Sonning Green Gym allows us to maintain an environment that is enjoyed by our whole school community."

South Stoke re-visited



A lovely sunny Saturday morning and we are back at South Stoke hoping to get the chicken wire task finished.

This time out we had a hardy team of four not even the statutory six but we think we can achieve it in one go. And we did! All trenches dug out, wire fitted, tags tied, and backfilling completed just before 12 o' clock.

Slight problem at the end, as the second wire coil was shorter in width than the first so the top level had to be dropped a little.

All looking good, let's hope the invasive rabbits agree!

--Mike S--

Cleeve Water Meadow



There is usually a lot of raking required on a visit to Cleeve Water Meadow but this year, thanks to some machinery from Garsons Farm Ipsden and a skilled operator, it was a lot easier.

Top left to bottom right:

- The Cutting session with a 'Vintage' Tractor
- Windrowing ie 'raking' with a modern tractor
- Tractor, with a grab and trailer collecting cuttings which were taken to the Crowmarsh green waste recycling facility
- The completed job!

--Charlotte--

SPRING WOOD



Ne'er the twain did meet – our 2 groups of 6 in Spring Wood in early September were out of sight and earshot of each other, one group near the chapel. It has been a few years since we worked in this area, but although there was some holly regrowth it was not as rampant as we feared. Some of us tackled that while others dealt with larger thickets, piling the brash ready for a bonfire at the next visit.

The second group was meanwhile doing similar work, but also clearing logs and debris from around the spring, ready for some TLC on the structure over the outflow. Contractors have now pressure-washed the façade, removing the blue paint over the elephant. They will be installing a pipe so that the water will no longer pool by the building but will be directed further down the channel.

Apparently there are several springs in Spring Wood, this one being called Sedgemoor Spring. It was built by the Knollys family who bought the Blount's Court estate in 1841. The meaning of the elephant over the entrance is unclear. The words on the plaque are from John 4:13-14: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall never thirst."

--Julia--

First day back at School....Err... no: GG at Kingsdown Common

So back again to Cherry Croft, Parking always a pleasure as there is lots of room. Then as directed two parties setting off at 5 minute intervals to our own stamping ground, near the road, and so handy for dropping off and collecting the tools. Crossing the glades we noticed good patches of heather pushing through the grass.

Stretching? Nearly forgot how to do it but Julia and Sally obviously not!



Fantastic apple trees [Left] we saw and some full of fruit, a veritable cornucopia around the bracken and foxgloves. We were pleased also to see how our previous efforts had produced some lasting clearance as we set to pulling up material (trying to avoid plentiful foxgloves pushing through) piling up the dead hedges and even clipping and sawing overhanging branches.

Not the least of GG pleasures is spotting and naming various flora-and even fauna at times (though mostly invertebrates). This is a complete blank for me, I seem to stop at cowslips and primroses. Well maybe the odd Dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) if only for the marvellous name.

So here we have masses of foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) (had to look all this up of course doing my Carl Linnaeus bit) all around us as we worked. And to check Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) [Right] which unlike garden or common sage has no culinary value.



We also had pointed out to us by Sally the easily missed Hypericum [Left] (*Hypericum pulchrum* or *perforatum*) or St John's Wort. Well at least I knew the second bit in Latin means 'beautiful'.

All seemed to go well as we edged into the routine of two work parties one on each side of the path. Coffee time sitting apart keeping gloves on if you like. I did take a mask but was told nicely this is optional just as well with the usual banter (at a distance) of the social interchange that makes a GG session so great.

Well we were in the open air!

--Mike Saunders--

Lopper Editor: Martin Barrett
mdb.scgg@gmail.com

The Sonning Common Green Gym
c/o Health Centre, 39 Wood Lane,
Sonning Common

Enquires: Martin Rhodes 0118 972 2448