

Green Gym



Sonning Common

THE LOPPER

full of little cuttings.

Christmas 2020

Welcome to to the 2020 Christmas edition of the Lopper. As always a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed words or photos for this and all the editions this year.

It has been a strange year but the Green Gym spirit has burned bright and is continuing to give nature a helping hand at so many sites (see tree below).

Hopefully 2021 will see this valuable work continue under more normal conditions - yes cakes!



--martin b--

Nature based Yuletide traditions

Many Yuletide traditions are based on nature, How many can you spot on a Christmas walk

Yule log

In pre-medieval Nordic tradition, winter solstice celebrations involved the burning of a Yule log. An entire tree was felled and brought into the house with great ceremony. The largest end of the tree was placed into the fire and lit from the remains of previous year's log. The tree was then slowly fed into fire over the festival. After twelve days, the remains of the Yule log were stored to protect the house against evil spirits for the following year.

Holly and Ivy

Taking holly into the home was thought to protect the house against malevolent mischief-causing fairies. It was considered bad luck, however to fell a whole holly tree. It was a known fact that witches ran along the tops of hedges, and a well-placed holly tree caused an excellent obstruction.

Robin

The association of the robin with Christmas comes from a connection to the postman. Victorian postmen wore red jackets which earned them the nickname 'robins'. The bird became a popular feature on

Christmas cards as a symbol of the postman delivering the card.

Christmas tree

The fir tree is the traditional Christmas tree and fir branches have been used for centuries to decorate houses during the winter festival. The evergreen nature of the fir represented life and fertility and a celebration of the coming spring.

Mistletoe

This folklore comes from Norse mythology. When the god Odin's son Baldur was prophesied to die, his mother Frigg, the goddess of love, went to all the animals and plants of the natural world to secure an oath that they would not harm him.

But Frigg neglected to consult with the unassuming mistletoe, so the scheming god Loki made an arrow from the plant and used it to kill the otherwise invincible Baldur. According to the myth, the gods were able to resurrect Baldur from the dead. Delighted, Frigg declared mistletoe a symbol of love and vowed to kiss all those who passed beneath it.



Merry Christmas

Burnt Platt Walk

Judith and I recently enjoyed a lovely walk across parts of Burnt Platt - a popular GG work-site!



The autumn colours were superb. I would urge Green Gymmers to enjoy these scenes for themselves. They will be relieved to find the patches of heather we have nursed for many years looking in good state. Nevertheless the inevitable struggle continues with rampant bracken and saplings and the heather will benefit again from a winter GG session or two.

--Robin--



FLOWERCROFT WOOD



Hazel coppicing is one of our favourite tasks, so after the long months without any Green Gym we were even happier to tackle some overgrown hazel stands in Flowercroft Wood during two October sessions. The hazel was conveniently growing socially-distanced along the ride leading from the 5-barred gate, so it was easy to keep our small group safe as we worked. All the

arisings were processed into piles of stakes and long whips, with log-lengths and the brash stored inside the tree-line. Tony loaded up the best whips and stakes for our imminent hedge-laying project (postponed alas in the second lockdown).

--Julia--



Sinking Feeling

A swallow hole has appeared on the graded path around the Millennium Green (Kennylands Field) in Sonning Common. This is small and only three inches in depth but has caused quite a stir. It has been taped off for a while to see if there was any further subsidence. Fortunately there has been none. The graded material will be scooped out and the hole filled in with soil from the field and then back filled with the graded material. It will be rolled by the weight of my car.

--Tony--



Fungi Photos by Ian taken at Kingwood Common



Top Left to Bottom Right
(Ids by iNaturalist seek app)

- Deceiver*
- Gymnopus Villosipes*
- Lilac Bonnet*
- Ugly Milkcap*
- Fly Agaric*
- Candlesnuff*
- Fly Agaric*
- Fragrant Funnel*



Dear Santa (if we're not in lockdown)....

All I want for Christmas is a Green Gym slot,
My muscles have gone flabby, I've nearly lost the plot.
I've polished up my steel-capped boots so now they're hot to trot -
I'll look under the Christmas tree,
Please send a Green Gym gift for me.



I've tried to do some gardening, I've been quite well-behaved,
I used my loppers carefully and didn't twist the blade,
And only once with bonfires have I called the fire brigade,
My record's good, you must agree,
Please send a Green Gym gift for me.



I email out my place request and wait on tenterhooks,
But answer comes there none – have they left me off their books?
I long to join the others wielding bowsaws and billhooks.
But here I am on bended knee,
Please send a Green Gym gift for me.



Alas the Christmas spud-roast now we're not allowed to mix.
Will Boris let us meet again above the rule of six?
I'd even dig out bramble roots to get my Green Gym fix.
Oh, Santa won't you hear my plea –
Please send a Green Gym gift for me!



--Julia--



Kingwood Common



Some before and after a morning work by the Green Gym Photos taken at Kingwood Common
--lan--



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Charlotte at Cleeve Water Meadow,

After a difficult year I look forward to seeing everyone again in 2021 when hopefully we can all return to normal. The meadow is settling into winter, including a good supply of ivy flowers and berries. Best Wishes, Take Care and Stay Safe.

Charlotte



DOWN MEMORY LANE



Our communal coffee break with home-made cake is temporarily on hold, but many of us will remember the days when our hot drinks were served from polystyrene cups. We soon found out that the wind would blow these off the picnic table, but we were soon presented with a solution unique to SCGG. John Fowler's line of business was metal engineering and he designed and had made for us a metal tray with coffee-cup-sized holes. This photos shows the tray's inauguration at Oak Farm on 31st March 2007 with his wife Jean pouring the coffee. Jean was our treasurer for many years, and although John did not attend Green Gym sessions, he would greet us all, sitting alongside Jean to help collect the payments for our Christmas Dinner.

John sadly died recently, but he will be remembered as part of our Green Gym history.

Our sympathies go out to Jean because



--Julia--

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