

Green Gym[®]



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Lockdown Issue Jan 2021

Hoping for a Better 2021



I hope everyone managed to enjoy Christmas and the New Year as much as restriction allowed. 2020 was not a great year, but let's hope that better times will return in 2021 and look forward to when the Green Gym will be able to meet up again.

Thanks to everyone who sent in words and photos for this issue, and please continue sending in material for the upcoming Lockdown Loppers - anything considered.

--martin b--

Spring Wood x2



What a great pleasure it was to visit Spring Wood for a spot of holly bashing not once but twice, Saturday 12 and Thursday 17 November. This time we were on the far end on the left of the entrance gate where there are still extensive stands of trees and smaller growths springing up round them.

It was good to see the impressive difference that we have made in holly clearance from previous visits. We are certainly winning this one though plenty more to be done.

How enjoyable it is, as with the bramble clearance, to try pulling up small shoots by the roots. Sometimes this is impossible and you have to lop them off at ground level where attached to a larger stem, sometimes a whole string of material comes up the ground being soft and moist with the wet weather.



No burning this time round but we leave huge piles of cut material ready for another time.

--Michael--

No Mow May



Letting the flowers bloom on your lawn helps to provide a vital source of nectar for bees and other insects. So why not take on a special challenge to support Plantlife's '[No Mow May](#)' project. Gardens can really make a difference to the number of wildflowers in this country. To get started click [here](#) for details.

Sally has offered to help identify any flowers you find, and why not send in photos of your unmowed lawn for a future Lopper.

I go a Musing on a Saturday morning.....

Well, here I am a-logging and a-chopping on a sunny morning and the scene is the church of St Mary's in Streatley. The graveyard in fact. Trimming holly outcrops and shoots of ash or whatever all over the place betwixt the tombstones. Hope that wild rose is not someone's *memento mori* but churchwarden John says it's ok to clip it low down.

As ever one is wont to muse. And a spot of Thomas Gray comes readily to the mind.¹

I thought a bit of parallel prosing (is there such a word?) might be fun and even apposite. Here goes.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day

Not sure about that but the church clock did strike 11 so John should be calling coffee break sometime soon

The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea

Mmmm. Not sure about this, no sign of cows but a couple of well-padded horses t'other side of the wall. Not much lowing of GGers tugging huge sacks of material to the far gate. A few grunts maybe.

The plowman homeward plods his weary way

Didn't see many blokes with ploughs but did see Brian plodding back to the car park with a pole saw over his shoulder

And leaves the world to darkness and to me

Not quite left in darkness but hanging about the car park when everyone has long gone, sorting out GG socks, boots, gloves etc and with bits and pieces still a trifle damp from Thursday

Shall I go on? Dear Thomas has another 28 verses. Probably better not....

¹ Thomas Gray, alongside Alexander Pope, is among the most important poets of the eighteenth century. His 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. (published in 1751) is probably his best-known and the most loved of his poems. Alexander Pope can be left to another day and another Green Gym site.



Mike Saunders

Spindle



Thanks to Tony for this lovely photo of these bright pink spindle fruits with bright orange seeds, which look a bit like popcorn.

I hope this photo was taken quite late in the year as in some places, it was thought that if the spindle flowered early, an outbreak of the plague was on the way.



Mill and Marsh Meadows

September last year saw the 25th anniversary of the Town Council giving the Henley Wildlife Group a licence agreement to manage parts of Mill Meadows for wildlife.

The parts managed are the area of tall vegetation on the Mill Lane side of the River and Rowing Museum, the stream and its margins except for the part in front of the Museum, the Mill Lane pond and strips either side of the grassy triangle.

Ponds always enhance areas for wildlife so the management plan included digging three ponds in the area beside the Museum. Work first started by digging the small pond, followed in 1996 by the pond nearest the railway line, and lastly the third pond in 2004.

Like many wildlife sites, the aim is to maintain a mosaic of habitats to avoid having a boring vegetation stand dominated by the more aggressive species. Hence, management largely consists of removing invasive aliens like **Himalayan Balsam**, and **Japanese Knotweed**, and knocking back things like **nettles**, and **bramble**, when they take over too much.

Other dominant species that need to be cut back are the **Reeds** and **Greater Pond-sedge**. If these were not cut the **Fritillaries**, and species like **Ragged Robin** would be lost. Hence they are cut back in parts of the pond area but leaving some in other parts.

The most flowery area on the Meadows is the pond area by the Museum. The season starts with the **Fritillaries** in early April which are followed by a lovely display of **Meadow Buttercup** and **Ragged Robin** from mid-May to mid-June. In the summer flowers like **Meadow Crane's-bill** [Below Right], and **Meadowsweet** [Right], The latter is an old strewing herb meaning that, in times gone by, it was strewn on floors to make rooms smell pleasant. A favourite of Queen Elizabeth 1.



The Henley Wildlife Group is now the nature conservation arm of Greener Henley <https://greenerhenley.org.uk/> and besides maintaining the Meadows it is also involved in other projects like a Wildlife garden in front of the Museum, and managing the Valley Road chalk bank.

Thanks to Julia for these archive photos [Right] as a reminder of the GG's past work at the Meadows.



--Sally--

News from Millennium Green

There is always something happening on Kennylands Field, the Millennium Green.

The swallow hole has been dealt with. The sunken graded material was scooped out and store at the side. Then three barrow loads of subsoil from the middle of the field was dug up and put into the bottom of the hole. The graded material was put back on top. It was then compacted by driving over it with my off-road 2 x 0 (car).

A large willow tree next the Abbeycrest Nursing Home peeled down a branch leaving the tree heavily weighted in the direction of the Home. Tree surgeons were employed to pollard it leaving it safe. We now have a pile of chippings we can use and the pile of logs has mysteriously ended up in my back garden.

Close inspection has shown the two leaves of bluebells showing through. These grow all round the boundary.

I am pleased to report that the sloe gin produced from blackthorns lovingly tended by myself is another vintage winter warmer.

-- Tony --

C'mon baby light my fire.....



Come on, ba - by, light my fire, _



The refrain comes readily to mind as we feed not one but three bonfires at [Bishopswood](#). We have masses of hedge and tree cuttings from previous sessions to deal with and it takes most of Saturday morning, 20 December, to burn the whole lot. This is our last visit before Lockdown comes crashing down and we are cursed into the outer darkness of no GG. It is strange with nothing Christmas-like to charge the occasion especially when huge tree trunks glowing amidst soft grey ash makes one want to



get out the butter, salt, King Edwards and silver foil. Ah me those were the days.....

2020 what a year..... but we managed some great and fulfilling sessions thanks to meticulous planning and name/number crunching by Martin! Oh, the delight at opening one's e-mail to be greeted by 'You will be delighted to know.....' Almost like winning the Lotto!

-- Michael --

Buckler Fern



Uncovered at [Nettlebed Common](#) by clearing away bramble and bracken from a glade by Jack's pond

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