

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

Lockdown Issue March 2021

Spring is in the air

Thanks to Tony for this beautiful photo of daffodils, planted by [SGGG](#) a few years ago in the wild flower area on the Millennium Green. These donated bulbs were planted in small patches, and this photo shows how well they are doing and that they have spread.



I'll leave the words to William Wordsworth:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;

--martin b--

Cleeve Water Meadows

Charlotte kindly sent a couple of photos showing the state of the Meadows at the height of the flood. This year saw the highest river levels since 2014, luckily the flood has now retreated and Charlotte is looking forward to a visit from the [SCGG](#) as soon as practical.



The graph (top right) shows the height of the River Thames for the past 8 years. This year it reached 0.87m. The highest recorded was 1.31m in 2003.



HIGH-CUT COPPICING

Way back in SCGG's first year of operation in 1998, one of the basic tasks we learnt was hazel coppicing, always cutting the stools close to the ground. Every autumn and winter since then our programme includes coppicing at our other sites such as [Flowercroft Wood](#), [Green Broom Wood](#), and [Pack and Prime Lane](#) and many of us have attended day training courses on the aims and technique of coppicing. We use the cut wood for stakes and binders for our various hedge-laying and dead-hedging projects and stack the rest of the arisings into habitat piles, laying the brush over the cut stools to deter deer from browsing regrowth.



Low-cut coppiced hazel from our work session at Greys Court April 2013

There are now many more deer about than in the old days of traditional coppice regimes, and a few layers of brush are no obstacle to determined deer. For this reason, a new technique of coppicing has been trialled by [Shotover Wildlife](#) in [Brasenose Wood](#) as described in the book [Shotover, the Life of an Oxfordshire Hill](#) edited by [Ivan Wright](#) and [Jacqueline Wright](#) (Pisces Publications):

"In 2008 Shotover Wildlife began investigating a coppicing technique to maximize the benefits to wildlife while minimizing the resources required, and so initiated an experiment to test this method. Hazel stools were cut at an

intermediate height (0.8 metres) to give the regrowth a head-start over the detrimental effects of browsing by deer, together with control plots cut at ground level as was traditional, and at 1.2 metres from the ground to be beyond the reach of the deer. The objective is to simulate a traditional coppicing rotation frequency (about 12 years in Brasenose Wood) without the need for fencing (Wright and Bartel, 2017).

"The experiment ultimately indicated that, although the method does not protect all ground flora from deer browsing, cutting at 0.8 metres resulted in much greater woodland ground flora diversity compared with cutting either lower or higher. The experimental trials also showed that, with this technique, the mortality of Hazel stems and stools was no worse than with other methods of coppicing. In Brasenose Wood, since 2015, cutting Hazel stools at 0.8 metres from the ground has been adopted as the optimal height for overall wildlife benefit."

Perhaps SCGG could try this high-cut method, with the permission of the land owner/manager, when next we coppice hazel.

--Julia--

Some outdoor kit...



...to keep you fit!

Soon be back

If all goes well, hopefully we will soon be able to resume our conservation activities and benefit from the exercise and sense of well-being of being in the great outdoors.

I for one have a few Lockdown pounds to lose.

Icy Little Meadows

A couple of icy photos taken at Little Meadows in Goring on a very cold day soon after the recent flooding. The meadow is managed by the team from Withymead, with help from the [SCGG](#).

In comparison a couple of photos taken in the summer of 2015 on hot sunny days when the [SCGG](#) were helping with raking at the site. Apparently shortbread and malt loaf was served with the coffee.

--martin b--



Talking of cake

Thanks to [Julia](#) for a scrumptious selection of SCGG cake photos:



Kiwi sponge: Borocourt Wood September 2009 (left)

Chocolate birthday cake: Crowsley Wood November 2009 (Top Right)

Pink Fancies and fruit cake: Borocourt Wood August 2016 (Bottom Right)

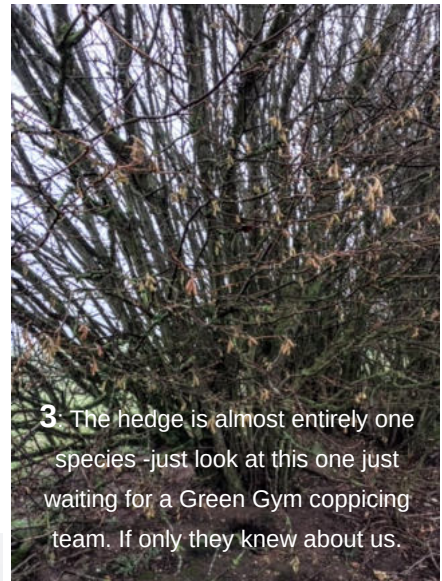
Photos from another Lockdown walk with Michael (Jan 2021)



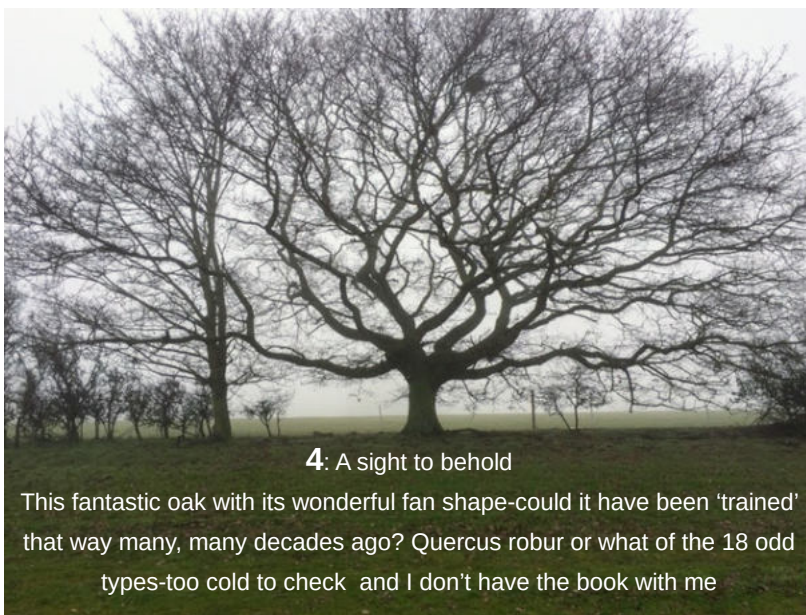
1: You'll never Walk Alone
(well sometimes!)



2: What do you think this is-
Scotch mist?



3: The hedge is almost entirely one species -just look at this one just waiting for a Green Gym coppicing team. If only they knew about us.

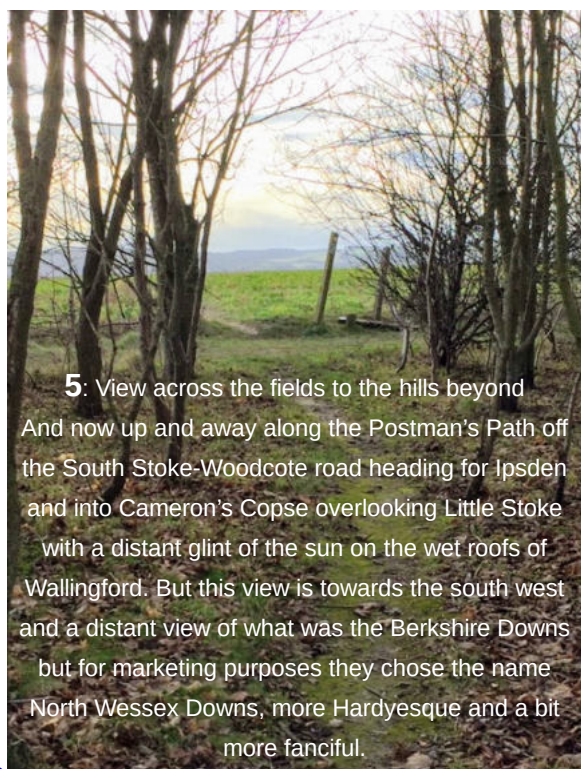


4: A sight to behold

This fantastic oak with its wonderful fan shape-could it have been 'trained' that way many, many decades ago? *Quercus robur* or what of the 18 odd types-too cold to check and I don't have the book with me



7: What's that Teddy - is that Michael taking photos of my house again!



5: View across the fields to the hills beyond

And now up and away along the Postman's Path off the South Stoke-Woodcote road heading for Ipsden and into Cameron's Copse overlooking Little Stoke with a distant glint of the sun on the wet roofs of Wallingford. But this view is towards the south west and a distant view of what was the Berkshire Downs but for marketing purposes they chose the name North Wessex Downs, more Hardy-esque and a bit more fanciful.



6: And in the other direction the Chiltern wooded ridge and Mr Bean's palatial mansion (though he no longer lives there)

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 01189 724228