

Green Gym®



Sonning Common

# "THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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"In these testing times, it is my hope that you can draw strength and inspiration from what we share, as we work together towards a healthy, sustainable and prosperous future for all."

Her Majesty The Queen 1926 - 2022

## Streatley churchyard

One of Green Gym's tasks at Streatley Churchyard was to remove the turf from the graves in order to expose the names of the people buried in the churchyard.

Dismissing all the graveyard jokes, I was drawn to a literary reference from Thomas Gray's poem 'Elegy written in a country church-yard', In particular:

*'Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade  
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,  
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid ...'*

So with archaeological enthusiasm, we did indeed heave the turf into a mouldering heap and uncovered the past, much to the church Warden's delight.



We found a lost family with the surname Dix - a **Jane Dix** (died 1910), Rose Dix (died 1916) and Thomas Dix (died 1882). A very quick search on Google reveals the name Dix is a variation of the surname Dick, both names being a diminutive of Richard and also found that Thomas Dix was born in 1839.

Really enjoyed this community task so looking forward to our return

Carol

Firstly congratulations to everyone who have turned out on very hot days and few sessions had to be cancelled which just goes to show how tough the Green Gym is. Luckily we often have beautiful sites under the trees and can enjoy nature's shade.

We have had some very enjoyable visits to favourite sites; pruning at the community orchard; going mad with that rhododendron at home farm (I don't think I have ever seen droopy rhododendron before); as ever enjoying being in the water at Ewelme ( the water was pleasantly cool to fall in I can tell you!)

But there were also a couple of new sites I remember.

### **River and Rowing museum.**

This was a very hot day and when we saw what our task was - removing pendulous sedge -, hearts did sink but as ever the job was tackled with enthusiasm. We were opening up a hidden garden down one side of the museum, this had been devised for children but was now buried under clumps of sedge which had loved the damp conditions. A winding boardwalk was completely overgrown. However the hot dry weather was helpful as it was found that after the application of fork, spade or mattock it was not too difficult to dig out big clumps of the invader and remove it.

The really hot job of dragging the bags of rubbish away was much eased by help from two of the museum muscle men – many thanks for your help!

And we did some wildlife rescue by freeing Mole, Badger Ratty and Toad into the daylight! Wooden sculptures of the 'fab four' appeared from the jungle into the daylight, hopefully to be used again when the garden is refurbished in the future.

It was indeed very hot but Julia found a lovely cool spot for what was a much appreciated coffee break before finishing a little earlier than usual.



### **South Stoke Church**

The peace and cool of the churchyard was much appreciated and enabled the workers to really get on with the task of cutting back and clearing trees and shrubs that had grown out of control. A venerable



yew tree was pruned back so that members of the congregation ceased to be hit by a wet branch as they passed by. Several gravestones were cleared of ivy and some lime trees were cleared of low growth that was growing on the ancient wall. A lovely spot.

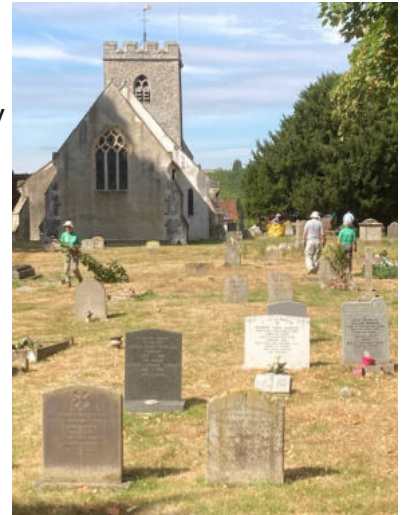
**Your Saturday Tea Lady**





A warmish Saturday greeted us at South Stoke churchyard for our inaugural visit to this site. Well, I say this, but **warmish plus** might be a better description as the morning wore on. Not to say hot.

The task was a matter of clearing and cutting and dragging away, a routine very familiar. Interestingly this was our second churchyard site after our regular visits to St Mary's Streatley. Well, maybe third, taking in Dunsden churchyard quite some time ago. Are we to see a whole succession of GG churchyard clean ups when the word gets around?



One key task was clearing ivy from gravestones something we have spent a good deal of time on at St Mary's Streatley. The result is a much improved appearance as well as revealing much of what was previously quite hidden by turf and vegetation.



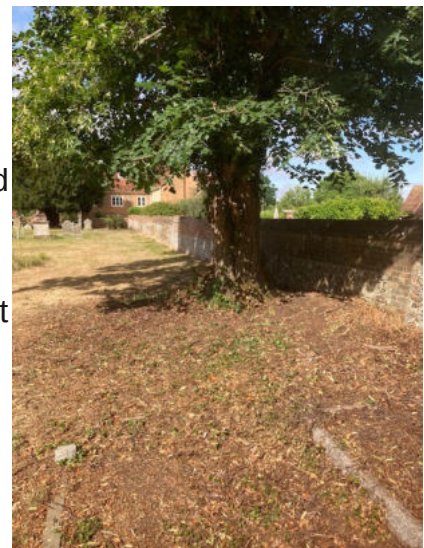
Lots of the work involved cutting low overhanging branches of trees on the surrounding fences and walls. Once this was done the resulting cut material could be dragged to a growing pile and the end of the churchyard. Fortunately, there was plenty of room here to be perhaps burned another time.



We found a convenient tomb chest area for the tools to be laid out and for the coffee and cake impedimenta set up beautifully in the shade. Our host and client churchwarden Lou was able to join us for coffee as well as ensuring we were doing what we were supposed to be doing and where we did it.

We don't always see the client on site and quite welcome when we do. An enjoyable morning and the usual good work-out in a lovely setting

Mike S





## Sedge has edge rush about.....

That's if I have got it right from Sally! Probably not quite. Well we have a lot of sedge here at the Henley River and Rowing Museum on an extremely hot Thursday morning. And it has an edge and a sharp one at that.

Our task today is to cut it with shears or slasher or- better still- put a fork under various clumps and yank it up by the roots scattering earth in the process. We are working in a long thin stretch between the building itself and the boundary fence. This is, as the notice says, Ratty's Refuge.



And there you are subsequent clearing, digging and cutting and dragging or wheel barrowing away reveals, yes Ratty himself. And not only Ratty, but Toad of course. Mole pokes his head through the earth a bit battered and there over by the bee and Bug House is Badger. I had a good look but could not discern a door, a door mat or even the famous boot scraper then Mole caught his shin on.

At the end of the session we had cleared most of the sedge only to find another row of it at the front of

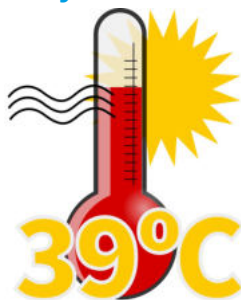
the building. Well another time but not for a bit as the order book is rather full.

Final thought plenty of willow strands overlooking us as we work but not a trace of wind rustling them !



Mike S

## Streatley Meadows



Due to the extreme heat, gymers were unable to visit **Streatley Meadows** to finish the Ragwort pulling.



Charlotte joined me and together we were able to clear the meadow,



Continued...



## Streatley Meadows cont



We collected quite a pile of ragwort!

**martin b**

Just in time as a couple of days later the farmer came to cut, rake, and bale the hay.



## Once more into the breach.....

Or so it seemed. Well, here we are back at [South Stoke](#) on 20 August only 28 days since we were last here. last time the village churchyard this time the village [recreation ground](#).

The task this time is similar namely trimming back scrub and low branches gradually impinging on the sports area. We are working back from and close to the chicken wire rabbit-prevention that Green Gym had put in some time ago along the railway fence.

One area of particular attention was the corner patch where the footpath comes in from the back gate newly installed. Here we were able to clear both sides of what one might call, the throat of the path, as it emerges from a mass of overhanging branches and greenery with plenty of trip hazards.



Job well done, the way forward seems to be, in agreement with our hosts and clients Pat and Jenny to share a later visit with what remains to be done in the nearby churchyard. There seems to be some residual hedge trimming and general tidying up in both paces. Easy and straightforward!

**Mike S**

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