

Kingwood

After a winter of seemingly endless rain including overnight rain, we joined with the Kingwood & Peppard Conservation Volunteers to enjoy a chilly but dry and sunny morning. The main central area had been brush cut the day before. Raking and weeding the heather was the name of the game and everyone worked extremely hard throughout the morning.

We first visited this area about ten years ago when the brambles were head high. Year on year management has ensured that the glades are now well open. Determined raking of areas covered with leaves and bracken and using a dumpy bag to collect the loose material enabled more ground to be exposed. Tony



Nuffield Place

We had a very satisfying time clearing a pathway for a deer-proof fence to be installed at a later date and we just about finished all bar a little bit at the end of the run..... Susan

Hay-raking on a wet winter's day is somewhat unusual, but the wildflower meadow at Nuffield Place hadn't been mown in the summer for weather reasons and was finally cut in January. Meadow flowers prefer short grass, ideally cropped by animals. When done by a machine the clippings have to be removed before they enrich the soil too much for the flowers' liking. Our task was to rake the hay into heaps ready to be taken away by trailer.

Raking wet hay gives a good work-out, and our reward at the break was a Sheelagh's special cake topped with bride and groom figures to celebrate Sheelagh and Chris's return from their Australian wedding trip.... Julia

Ring out the bells!

Sheelagh and Chris are one at last,
Some years ago the spell was cast;
From the ash of a green gym pyre
Rose a romance of uncommon fire.

Yet on the common they had met,
There their love was firmly set.
After cake and Diane's cuppa
Off they went to share a supper.

An ancient proverb comes to mind,
When two hearts become entwined:
All dissent you now must shun
For two can work as well as one.

Ring out the bells!

.... Mike



Dunsden

During the winter storms a massive old Oak tree was blown down. Luckily it barely damaged the church but it unfortunately stripped an old Yew of all its branches. The major clear-up operation (although not complete) generated masses of brush for burning. We added to this with plenty more from the next section of hedge-laying and tidying. We also installed a post and rail fence and a gate at the entrance to the graveyard.



Watlington Hill

There is a beautiful view from where we were working on Watlington Hill at the end of January – but we couldn't see it for low cloud and drizzle. We soon warmed up by starting 2 bonfires, using cut scrub remaining from a previous work party. Meanwhile there was plenty of new scrub, mainly hawthorn, to cut and haul to the bonfires.

Jerry showed us some of the flowering plants which will benefit from a more open aspect and which are important for a variety of butterflies. He offered to give us a guided tour of the Reserve on a summer evening to learn more about its wildflowers. This could be followed by a pub supper – information will be circulated nearer the time. Julia



Green Broom Wood

As we arrived for our February session at Green Broom Wood a tremendous gale blew up and the rain fell in stair-roads. Woodland working in these conditions could be at best uncomfortable, and when there was no sign of the coffee car there was talk of calling it a day. We decided to give it a go, whereupon the sun came out to shine all morning, capped with Jane appearing with cakes and hot drinks.

A bonfire was ruled out, what with the wind and sodden materials, but we cleared pleasingly large sections of bramble and piled up the cut branches we found underneath ready for future bonfires. At the end of the session we got back to



our cars just as the heavens decided on a further deluge. Julia

Moor End Common

Never say you don't learn anything at Green Gym! "Sedge's have edges and Rush's are round and Grasses have knobbly knees" (Say it fast).... A fascinating mnemonic conveyed to me by Chris Ash our extra knowledgeable leader. It was just one facet of a lovely visit to Moor End Common. Bright sunshine, mud, a flowing stream, a mouse, a bank vole and lots of sex; what more could you want! The sex, I hasten to say, was, provided by a host of randy frogs whom we disturbed 'at it' as we tried to clear the stream. We were quite proud of our efforts but maybe our amphibian friends were less happy. At the end after a morning of clearing the overgrown and muddy area one Gymmer was heard to say –“ well it certainly looks different. – but perhaps I might not go as far as saying it looks better....” Jill K



Nettlebed

Thanks to 2 SCGG sessions, the clearing of the heathland site for lowland heather recovery has been completed well before the nesting season. We cleared logs and burnt brash in the designated area, to prevent nutrient increase from mulching:

'The Mulcher' transforms Joyce Grove Triangle

This extraordinary machine appeared at the end of February, and in the course of just one week its massive 400 HP engine proceeded to chop up the fallen trees and deposit them back on the ground as a carpet of mulch. The mulched area, comprising the outside of the triangle, will be returned to amenity grassland, while the patch of heathland in the middle will continue to be managed sensitively by volunteers, to encourage a greater variety of native flora. Elizabeth, Tony



Kennylands

In a deep and dark December, we tackled two important jobs on the Millennium Green. Overhanging blackthorn was cut back from the west path and Ian and Jill dug a couple of holes so that the revamped notice board could be moved. The latter was in need of some TLC and it was an opportunity to rotate it 45 degrees to reduce notice fading in sunlight. Thanks to Keith and Val who were out walking when the new sign was being installed and who kindly held it in place while it was tamped in.

Tony

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Green Gym



Sonning Common

"THE LOPPER"

full of little cuttings.

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Don't forget to attend the 2014 AGM

Monday 14 April at The Elizabeth Room, Rotherfield Greys Church, 7 for 7.30 pm.

Christmas 2013

Just in case you thought that Christmas was done and dusted - here are some of the cracker jokes that Tony collected:

Q Why did the robber have a bath?

A Because he wanted a clean getaway.

Q What did the big phone say to the little phone?

A You're too young to be engaged.

Q What do you call a three legged donkey?

A A Wonkey.

Q Why did the strawberry get a lawyer?

A Because it was in a jam.

Q What do you call a woman who stands between two goal posts?

A Annette.

Withymead

The well at Withymead has been transformed into a wishing well with the addition of a roof and winding bucket in memory of Richard Harris. The materials were supplied by SCGG with contributions from Wallingford GG members, and the design and most of the construction was carried out by Robert, with a lot of input from Brian on the wooden roofing shingles.

The well received an official opening ceremony on 8th March during our scheduled work session. Members of Richard's family and friends joined us for the cutting of the ribbon. It is hoped that passing visitors will throw coins into the well, a small source of revenue towards the upkeep of the nature reserve. Julia



Cutting The Ribbon



The first coins into the well