



Stowey Green Spaces Group

AGM Reports given on 27 April 2023 for the year 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 and ADDENDA

Chair's Report	1
Litter Picking Report	3
ADDENDUM.....	4
1.1 Volunteer hours 2022-23	4
1.2 Summary Accounts Stowey Green Spaces Group 1.4.2022 to 31.3 2023.....	5

Chair's Report

Another successful year for Stowey Green Spaces Group. I thought last year that it would be hard to match our achievements in the previous year, but I think we have done so.

Most of you know, but for those who don't

What do we do? We carry out tasks in and around the Stoweys, roughly every second Tuesday afternoon. We litter pick every third Saturday of the month. Summary report to follow. We hold a very informal meeting once a month to take stock of where we are and where we're going. We carry out management work at Stowey Castle Mount, around the recreation ground, along the Bypass Wood, in Plot 173 (Secret Garden), in Stowey Millennium Wood and various extensions, including the new Platinum Jubilee wood, and on some of the footpaths.

We couldn't do what we do without our volunteers, whose willingness to turn up even in the most inclement weather never ceases to amaze me. We have had invaluable support from the QLPS, the AONB and Parish Council.

What have we done since our first AGM, in May last year? We have installed new interpretive panels at Castle Mount, the recreation ground and at the entrances to Stowey Wood and Millennium Wood, thanks to a grant from the QLPS and Terry Sackett's superb design work. Our work to remove bramble and bracken from Castle Mount contributed to Nether Stowey Castle being removed from English heritage 'At Risk' register.

In July we cleared Stowey brook, from the fire station to the cemetery entrance. The brook had become clogged with vegetation and posed a flood risk. We were thanked for our efforts by Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue. We hadn't seen many wasps until then but came across three nests in the stream bank. Martin Trout discovered the biggest one and was stung 9 times! Volunteering sometimes comes with risks! In August we removed the plastic tree guards and canes from the hedge alongside Over Stowey playing field.

On (4) October we cleared nettle and bramble from alongside the cemetery wall and planted primroses.

In November we cut back encroaching holly on the footpath from New Stowey farm to South Lane.

On 26 November we invited the community to bring saplings to plant in a new Platinum Jubilee extension to Stowey Millennium Wood. Almost 50 people turned up. Some planted trees to mark special occasions or memories. There are now 120 mixed saplings, almost all coming into leaf. We had previously done a lot of work to tidy the site, but the only cost was £80.00, kindly paid by NSPC, to "top" the paddock in advance. Meanwhile volunteers cleared the site of all sorts of things, arranging for bits of agricultural machinery to be removed, selling abandoned batteries and fencing wire, taking away bags of rubbish and burning an old chicken shed.

We litter-picked after Party in the Park, purchased and planted an oak tree on Nether Stowey school playing field and planted three crab apple trees in the Secret Garden. Taunton's Mid-Week Conservation volunteers have helped us with bracken clearance on the Mount, with

bramble clearance on the Bypass Wood and with removal of a fence which separated the new Platinum Jubilee Wood from Millennium Wood.

After the success of the Platinum Jubilee planting our attention turned to the adjacent quarry area at the entrance to New Stowey farm. The QLPS offered us 200 mixed native saplings and the AONB were able to provide guards and support stakes so we decided to go for “guerilla” planting in the quarry area too. It was a mix of bare mud and clay, brick and building rubble but on 17 January we planted almost 300 saplings there, helped by QLPS – funded “Young Somerset” apprentices. On 9-10 February the same apprentices began “thinning” the Millennium wood to allow more light to the woodland floor. I’m sure that you will have seen the results, which are uplifting.

I have to mention litter-picking. Paul Brierley, our Vice-Chairman, can’t be with us this evening but has done a wonderful job of matching routes with pickers.

We have taken on responsibility for some footpath work (after the retirement of Colin Falla) and have replaced rotten steps on the path leading to Castle Mount.

Thanks to Parish Council for agreeing to bid for portacabin hire and public liability insurance.

Looking ahead. Time spent on footpaths. New Stowey barn site. Somerset CC say barn will be demolished and a new “shed” (?) erected in its place. This is currently in the hands of contractors, so the time frame isn’t known. Meanwhile a management plan for land at New Stowey farm is almost ready to be submitted to the new Council. There is expected to be scope for SGSG involvement in turning the plan into reality on the ground.

Roy Osborne – Chair

Litter Picking Report

I have been organising the Litter Pick of both Stoweys for the past year and believe we have achieved very satisfactory results.

We now have 37 separate routes in Nether Stowey with 20 pickers, and 13 separate routes in Over Stowey with 10 pickers.

Arrangements changed during the COVID pandemic as litter picking in groups was not possible. Our pickers began to pick their routes individually and as this was largely more convenient than assembling on the 3rd Saturday of the month to collect litter, arrangements have not changed since the end of the pandemic. Apart from those who pick on the A39 where I would be unhappy for lone working to take place, individuals now pick along routes which cover the entire built up area of the Parish of Nether Stowey, and most of the roads lanes and footpaths in settlements of Over Stowey and Friarn as well as some of the adjacent Common.

Picking still takes place over the third weekend of each month and I am generally present at the Portacabin in the recreation ground either at 10:00 AM or at 12 noon to provide replacement rubbish bags, hoops, pickers, gloves and high viz jackets to anyone who needs them.

Many pickers now recycle the collections that they make in their domestic refuse but we still have the option of collecting in the bright blue bags provided by Sedgemoor clean surroundings which can be left at the Portacabin at 12 noon on Saturday where I will then take them to Parsonage Farm where Richard Ince kindly makes space available for Sedgemoor to collect them on Mondays.

The best or possibly the worst, haul was 1 month ago when we recovered 7 full bags of rubbish which were collected by Sedgemoor clean surroundings although the number can vary and the weekend following the Easter holidays resulted in just one bag being left for disposal.

Our pickers are very conscientious and indeed the main problem I have in organising the routes is where more than one person wants to cover a particular route or even worse we find that one person turns out to collect along a particular route and finds that someone else has already covered it!

I am grateful to all the pickers who turn out to keep the surroundings of our parishes clean and find myself astonished when I visit other areas and find litter in the streets and wonder how other areas can tolerate unpicked litter literally at their feet. I do ask myself why no one else is as organised as we are here.

Long may this continue!

Paul Brierley – Vice chair

Buddleia@hotmail.com

ADDENDUM

Terry Abbiss was hors de combat for the AGM and emailed the Volunteer hours and Summary accounts through to committee on 12 May 2023

1.1 Volunteer hours 2022-23

from Terry Abbiss 12 may 2023

Stowey Green Spaces Group: Record of Volunteer hours worked April 1st 2022 to March 31st. 2023

A39 Bypass Wood	95 hours	Millennium Wood*	37 hours
Stowey Wood	73.5	Castle Mount	31
Recreation Ground	19	Plot 173	6
Stowey Brook	14	Over Stowey Cricket Ground	12

Total Hours worked = 287.5

(* = includes work in Diamond Jubilee Wood and establishment of the Platinum Jubilee Wood)

There were several occasions when volunteer work wasn't the usual clearing of brambles and keeping footpaths passable! These included clearing weeds in Stowey Brook alongside the Fire Station and cutting back the hedge which was almost covering the brook, plus the discovery of a wasps' nest! On Over Stowey cricket ground a hedge had been planted along the north east boundary of some years ago and a pleasant, sunny afternoon was spent removing tree guards and some weed growth. A major new task was the clearing of ground for the Platinum Wood extensions, installing tree guards and organising a public planting followed up by more work by our volunteers plus help from Gem Gibson and the Somerset Partnership apprentices. The Somerset Partnership apprentices also did a great job thinning trees in the original Millennium Wood planting which was followed by our volunteers heaping the brash to make suitable insect and small mammal habitats plus stacking the larger logs into piles ready for sale as firewood. The Recreation Ground doesn't normally feature much but one work day was spent widening the footpath leading from Stowey Rocks farm alongside the RG to South Lane, and another planting primroses along the cemetery wall leading to the Memorial Gate. (These flowered very successfully this spring). Finally, a short afternoon was spent repairing the steps in Butcher's Lane that lead to Castle Mount and another widening the entrance to Plot 173 plus sowing grass seed on the area left exposed.

1.2 Summary Accounts Stowey Green Spaces Group 1.5.2022^{*1} to 31.3 2023

(*1=Accounts cover 11 months after 13 month accounts for financial year 2021 to 2022)

Group Income	2022	2023
Donations	56.00	112.10
Sale of timber	nil	500.00
Sale of scrap from Platinum Wood	nil	60.00
Sale of hi-Vis jackets	12.00	nil
Total Income	68.00	672.10
Total Group Expenses	147.43	0.56^{*2}
Profit (Loss) on year	(79.43)	671.54
Carried over	362.91	283.48
Group Balance	283.48	955.02

(*2 = 2022 AGM income on door was £335.00 less food costs of £335.56. No other expenses incurred in this financial year)

Grants Income and Expenses

Nether Stowey Parish Council Grant	182.00	165.31
Hall hire for Committee and AGM Meetings	(37.00)	(100.00)
Zurich Insurance	(99.31)	(99.31)
Profit (Loss) on year	45.69	(34.00)
Carried over from previous year	65.69	111.38
Balance at account year end	111.38	77.38

Somerset Fund Balance at account year end	70.39	70.39
--	--------------	--------------

TOTAL FUNDS at account year end	2022	2023
Stowey Green Spaces Group	283.48	955.02
Parish Council Grant	111.38	77.38
Somerset Fund	70.39	70.39
TOTAL FUNDS	465.25	1102.79
Bank Statement	465.25	1102.79

T.P. Abbiss, Treasurer May 4th 2023