

The Lynchmere Society

For Lynchmere, Hammer and Camelsdale

Spring Newsletter

Life President: Michael Tibbs **Vice President:** John Hooker

Chairman: Michael Shaw (01428 643406)

Treasurer: Robert Dows-Miller (07775 548309)

Membership Secretary: Louise Searight (01428 723715)

Membership Records: Stuart Ibbotson (01428 658179)

Commons Manager: Mark Allery (01428 641708)

Commons Wardens: Hilary Adair and Chris Pooley (01428 653034)

Volunteer Coordinator: Hilary Adair (01428 643219)

Trustees: Stuart Ibbotson, Nic Mann, Laura Ponsonby, Judy Rous, Ian Russell, Louise Seagrave, Chris Pooley, Christina Heath, Robert Dows-Miller, Michael Shaw

Dates for your Diary

Annual General Meeting - Friday 15 May 7.30 for 8.00pm, Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Robin and Carla Barnes on "Iron, Wood and Water" in the Western Weald.

Volunteers Barbecue - Saturday 4 July 6.00pm

Our usual evening of food and fun in the woods at Danley bottom charcoal site as a special thank-you to all who have helped in any capacity during the year.

All are welcome. Contact is Hilary Adair

Shulbrede Barbecue - Saturday 5 September

For members, guests and anyone who would like to join us in this historic environment by courtesy of Laura Ponsonby and Ian and Kate Russell. It will begin at 6pm and barbecued sausages etc and wine and soft drinks are provided. The cost is £2 per head and it would help if you could bring something sweet for the second course.

Volunteer Days - 3 and 17 May 2009. Meet at the original Lynchmere Society Notice Board on the B2131 to Lynchmere Green Road; contact Hilary Adair
The dates for the 2009/10 season will be in our late summer newsletter

Fernhurst Furnace - Open days 12-13 September

Friends of St Peters - Bluebell Sunday 10 May; St Peter's Day 28 June;

Friends Dance 11 July and Lynchmere Fete 13 September

Haslemere Society - Summer Drinks Party 12 June

Chairman's Report

Since our last newsletter there have been no outstanding developments – more a question of steady progress. A Year ago I wrote about our purchase of **Stoneyfield** on Lynchmere Ridge and the acquisition at some future point of **Peter Burkitt's fields**. There has been no further progress since then. The “law's delay” of which Hamlet spoke so eloquently still operates and we wait on the Inland Revenue to finalise the arrangements, so that the fields and barn can be transferred to us.

Meanwhile it is sad to have to report that the last three of Peter Burkitt's Belted Galloway cattle on Lynchmere Ridge have recently died, ending an association of 40 years on those fields.

Things have moved more positively where our cooperation with the **National Trust on Marley** is concerned. Our planning applications for fencing (one for each organisation) were submitted late last year and such consequential interventions as there were have been positive. We await final confirmation that the applications have been approved, but in the meantime we have cleared the scrub and holly thickets through which the fencing would have to go. All being well the fencing could be in place and the cattle introduced before this time next year.

After prolonged negotiations we have been awarded a 10 year grant under the **Higher Level Stewardship scheme** which will contribute substantially towards the implementation of our current updated management plan, together with capital grants to cover part of the cost of the fencing on Marley, some fencing on the “Burkitt fields” and the renovation and completion of the disabled track on Lynchmere Common. This is contingent on our providing volunteer labour to supplement the grants.

The **AGM** will be held at 1930 for 2000 at the Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall on Friday 15 May. Three members of your committee are due to retire by rotation. They are Nic Mann, Ian Russell and Michael Shaw and they have all indicated they would like to stand again. During the year the committee invited Christina Heath to become a trustee and she now will require formal election. Any other nominations should reach our secretary Robert Dows Miller at 22 Heath Road Hammer GU27 3QN by 1 May. During the year Hilary Adair resigned as a trustee. We are grateful for her contribution and are fortunate that she will continue to be closely associated with the Society's activities as a Commons Warden and Volunteer Coordinator.

Our accounts will be available for inspection at this meeting.

Our proposal to have representatives of Lynchmere and Fernhurst Parish Councils as trustees of the society has foundered on problems of conflict of interests. We are not now pursuing that proposal, but we do of course remain in close touch and as always are grateful for the financial support we receive.

As you may have noted from the heading of this letter we have changed somewhat arrangements for **management and maintenance of the Commons**. Mark Allery has now become the Commons Manager with defined and documented responsibilities and will report to the Trustees. Hilary Adair (Lynchmere and Stanley)

and Chris Pooley (Marley), working to Mark, are now the Commons Wardens and Hilary will also act as Volunteer Coordinator.

In addition Stuart Ibbotson has taken over responsibility for the membership records and is in charge of our new database, which takes over from Judy Rous' long-standing (and very reliable) card-based system. We hope the digital version will be as reliable, and in the enclosed letter we ask you to check your details to make sure that the information transfer was accurate. Stuart will support our membership secretary, Louise Searight, who will remain the first point of contact for new members.

On the Commons, you can see the way that, year on year, the heath has been re-established. On Lynchmere, Stanley and Marley there are now some splendid views as our band of dedicated volunteers have cleared the scrub, gorse and young birch.

On Stanley, the ponds have been scraped, the pump reinstalled (which involved Chris Pooley working nearly waist deep in icy water digging out a sump for it) and this spring there have been large quantities of frog spawn. All would be even better if we could persuade dog walkers and others not to throw sticks and logs into the ponds and not to vandalise them when they are frozen over.

There have been one or two distressing cases of dogs pulling down deer. If you have a dog on the commons please ensure it is kept under close control at all times and in particular during the nesting season. I understand the likelihood of any great increase in Dartford Warblers is greatly diminished since their nests (which are quite low down on gorse) are so often destroyed by dogs whose owners probably have no idea of the damage they are doing. (It is always someone else's dog not yours!)

An unusual activity has been the harvesting on the commons of young birch by the aptly named firm of Gill and Punter which makes jumps for racecourses. It is good to know that our birch is being put to good use, though we have had no tips from them!

Another first is the manufacture of **bird boxes** by some of our own volunteers from wood which was itself harvested on Marley. Eight owl boxes and 28 smaller boxes are being made; a really worthwhile effort and our thanks to them. We have approached some local schools to offer them the chance to join us in supporting this activity. Fernhurst School actually have a class called "Owls" so that is particularly appropriate. And we are pleased to see local groups of Beavers and Cubs on our land. We would like to do more to encourage the children in the district to take a constructive interest in the wild life on our commons, so if any of you have other ideas do let us have them; we are in a receptive mode! We are also putting up bat boxes and will be organising a "bat walk" on an evening during the summer.

As last year we are particularly grateful to Mark Allery, Roy Wolfe and Mark Busby for the hard work they have put in on the commons during the year. It is hard, sometimes in poor weather, and largely unseen by most of us who enjoy the commons, so it is good to have this opportunity to thank them. But at the same time we do rely on you all to help us spot any problems there may be on the commons. If you see a problem, such as a dangerous tree or evidence of vandalism do tell a member of the committee or one of the wardens.

We have traditionally made available to our members the **logs** which are the result of our clearing operations on the commons. This service has become almost too popular. People have come from far and wide with ever larger trailers, while the need to continue to fell and clear has tended to diminish and the pressure on our small group of trained volunteers to assemble the logs has grown. As a result we have decided that this coming winter we will only have one log day. This will be in March next year.

Our **membership** has increased and currently stands at 433 individual members (which includes 29 life members) and three corporate members (Highfield School, Strutt and Parker, and Clements Windows, for whose support we are grateful). Membership forms for the year beginning 1 May 2009 are enclosed with this letter. If you pay by standing order and are renewing that way you do not need to submit a form *unless* your personal details have changed. If you do not use a standing order please consider doing so. It does make life easier for you and for our administration.

We would really like to increase the proportion of members we can reach by **email** so that we can let you know about events, so please do let us have your email address if you have one. You can now do this on the renewal form, or by email to tls.membership@btinternet.com , but please include your name and the first line of your address so that we can attach it to the right record!

We have managed to increase our membership numbers this year, but if we do nothing those numbers will gradually subside again, so please encourage others to join and consider whether there are any corporate members you might ask. Life membership @£100 remains a bargain and we will not be able to hold it at that level for ever.

As noted earlier the **volunteers** barbecue will be on 4 July. Although we publish the list of volunteer days at the start of the season (September), we continue to remind by email those on our list of volunteers in the week before a working party. Do inform our membership coordinator if you would like to be removed from those reminders by replying to the email. If you are not currently registered as a volunteer, please consider whether you are able to help out on an occasional basis (there's no commitment), but do also look out for new volunteers for us – not just for work on the commons but to take on specific responsibilities, some of them on the administrative and organisational side for instance. Our volunteers coordinator Hilary Adair is always pleased to advise on what may need to be done. Please do let our membership coordinator know if you would like to be added to the list of volunteers, or if you have previously indicated that you are willing but we don't have your email address. Stuart can be reached on 01428 6568179, or at tls.membership@btinternet.com .

We have been lucky this year to have the help of a splendid group of conservation volunteers from **Southampton University** to work on Lynchmere and Marley commons, and we hope to see them again next winter season. They were enthusiastic, knowledgeable and hard working.



Gorse, Furze or Whin.

Nature note by Mark Allery

Gorse, originally known as Furze, or Whin used to be managed for its usefulness as a fuel, as an animal feed and as bedding. Gorse is highly flammable and was much prized as a fuel, particularly before coal became widely available, the tops for bakers ovens and the stems for firing brick and tile kilns.

It's not hard to recognise Gorse, you can do it by feel alone, and it needs a thick pair of gloves to harvest it without feeling the spines. It's amazing yellow flowers are very conspicuous and on the common gorse they can smell strongly of coconut in the summer. It apparently makes a good wine, but I've not yet tried it.

There are actually 3 species of Gorse in the UK. Common Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) is the one we normally see. Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) grows on heaths and coastal areas to the west and finally there is Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*). As its name implies this last grows to only about 3 feet. It is less robust than its common relative. So not as useful for fuel or animal feed but it is just as prickly. It is less common than its relatives and only inhabits the acid soils of heaths in the South East of England.

We have quite a lot of dwarf gorse on our commons. With a little practice it is not hard to recognise it. The spines are shorter, about 1/2 inch (1cm) and its colour is a softer green than Common Gorse and it grows only to a height of around 3 feet whereas common gorse can tower up to 8 or 10 feet.

The photograph shows plants of young dwarf (on the left) and common gorse (on the right) on Marley common where we worked on a Volunteers day in early January. The dwarf gorse flowers are a deeper yellow and appear from July to September whereas Common Gorse flowers mainly from February to May. The commonly held belief that Gorse flowers throughout the year is not true and may stem from seeing mixtures of Common, Western and Dwarf Gorse in some locations on heaths in the west of England.



The Hobby – Falco Subbuteo

Nature note by Hilary Adair

The Hobby is one of our most beautiful birds. In flight it has few rivals as it soars, hovers, dips and loops, finally swooping on its prey. They were prized by falconers in days gone by for their ability to catch Larks, often performing flying feats for sheer joy. They are also great travellers. They spend the winter in Africa, south of the Sahara Desert, arriving in England in late April or May after a 2500 mile journey. They come here to breed and stay until late September or October. The adult Hobby has a slate coloured back, a dark crown, and a black “moustache”; also red-brown thighs or “trousers”. In flight it has long scythe-shaped wings angling back, resembling a Swift. It has a short tail, which distinguishes it from the Kestrel. The Hobby is one of our rarer birds, but we did have a pair nest on Stanley Common two years ago. Please do look out for these birds as you walk the commons and let one of the Commons Wardens know if you spot one.

