



**The Lynchmere Society**

For Lynchmere, Hammer and Camelsdale

**Autumn Newsletter**

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

**Chairman:** Michael Shaw (01428 643406)

**Treasurer and Secretary:** 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:** Stanley: Roy Wolfe (01428 723005)

Lynchmere; Judy Rous (01428 723251) and Louise Searight (01428 723715)

Marley: Chris Pooley (01428 653034)

**Trustees;** Robert Dows-Miller, Louise Searight, Christina Heath, Stuart Ibbotson, Nic Mann, Laura Ponsonby, Judy Rous, Ian Russell, Michael Shaw.

**Dates for your diary**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September**

Fernhurst Furnace Open days

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September**

Lynchmere Village Fete

**Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October at 7:30pm for 8pm**

Lynchmere Society Autumn Lecture. David Elliott, the local senior warden of the National Trust will speak on "Bees and Beekeeping". Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall, Hammer.

**Volunteer Dates for 2010/11 are included on a separate sheet.**



Six-Spot Burnet Moth in Mare Barn Field



Mare Barn

The above photos and newsletter editing by Sebastian Dows-Miller

## **Chairman's Report**

By the time you read this we will once again be reaching the end of another summer and looking forward to the autumn. We have had a busy year so far.

The joint project with the National Trust on Marley Common is in full swing and the Trust is looking at increasing their small herd of cows there. We and they are also continuing to look at the possibility of a larger project, taking in, among other areas, the remainder of our holding on Marley where, despite valiant efforts by volunteers, nature is outstripping us. It maybe that such a project might be managed under the auspices of the new National Park. (It is pleasing that the new National Park Authority is taking over the staff of the South Downs Joint Committee – with whom we have always had a fruitful relationship and whose future had been in doubt.)

One early result of the arrangements for the new National Park seems to be that the proposed Chichester District Council Local Development Framework has been put on hold. If it is not approved by April 30<sup>th</sup> next year (which seems increasingly unlikely) any future framework will have to be subject to the approval of the Park Authority, which may well take a different view.

We have had other engagements with the National Trust. One has been in support of their allotment initiative near Shottermill Ponds. We have been very pleased to offer pea and bean sticks to the new “allotmenters” and propose to arrange a day on the commons this winter (9 January) for them to cut more – under the supervision among others of our Secretary – the pea stick king of Hammer (seen right presenting pea sticks to one of the allotmenters). We are also planning to join with the Trust and our friends in the Haslemere Society in the restoration of the plaque at Shottermill ponds commemorating the restoration of the ponds in 1955 in memory of Colonel and Mrs Hume, founders of what, in its early days, was called the *Haslemere Preservation Society*.



The “Burkitt Fields” and Mare Barn on Lynchmere Ridge were finally transferred to us in April and those of you at our AGM in May will have seen the presentation to Sheila Burkitt of a fine volume of Yeats’ poems to commemorate that and to say thank you. Our existing grazier (Stephanie Holloway) has signed a two year agreement to use the fields and part of the barn in addition to her existing grazing on our commons. This arrangement will make for a much more efficient use of the whole of our land holdings. The Highland cattle (which some of you may have noted on the two upper fields) belonged to another grazier, were there by separate temporary agreement and moved away in the early summer.

We are now concentrating on improving the fields. If you were at our celebration barbeque at the barn in late June you will have noted the magnificent display of wild flowers in Barn Field. A subsequent article in the Times in late July (reproduced further on by courtesy of that newspaper) has given us confidence that we (inspired by our

Commons Manger, Mark Allery) are getting the right balance between the need to take hay off the fields and the need to manage them as wildflower meadows.

But the upper two fields do not have a proper water supply and the provision of that is now high on our list of priorities. We are replacing much of the fencing (greatly helped by South Downs Volunteers). We are also looking at the possibility of putting an electricity supply into the Barn and we have already promised that one day we will do something about its roof.

The posts for a fence round the new Apple Orchard are in place and we expect to plant out the trees towards the end of the year in an area where the grass will have been cut with scythes. It is a project which has been widely welcomed and has received much local support. Nearly all the trees will themselves be local (and in some cases endangered) varieties. The orchard will receive a grant from the South Downs Joint Committee, for which we are most grateful. But a number of people and organisations have indicated they would like to sponsor a tree (likely to cost about £17.50 each) If you have not yet offered but would like to do so please get in touch with me. And finally by the time you read this we should have completed quite extensive repairs to the track up to the barn.

At our AGM on 14<sup>th</sup> May Robert Dows-Miller, Laura Ponsonby and Judy Rous were re-elected as Trustees (the full list is at the top of this newsletter). The AGM was followed by an interesting talk by Gillian Edom on the West Sussex Tithe Map project. (We are still working on our own records and hope to transfer some of them to the County Record Office before long). Our autumn lecture (by David Elliott on Bees and Beekeeping is already noted in Dates for your Diary.)

We are grateful to Martyn Fillis for leading another Bat Walk on 13 July (and to the weather for being clement this year). Inspection of the 16 bat boxes which Roy Wolfe put up on Lynchmere and Stanley Commons has shown that this summer about half of them contained Blue Tit squatters – you can't win all the time – but at least the birds have appreciated the caterpillar infestation (see below).

### **Volunteers and Volunteering**

Enclosed with this newsletter is a list of volunteer days and dates for the forthcoming autumn through to spring. We have a small dedicated group of active volunteers (boosted from time to time by the South Downs volunteers and by a splendid group from Southampton University). But we need more. In particular we need more of those who have registered with us as volunteers actually to turn out. We try to send out reminders to all those with email addresses. Please come, even once or twice a season would do (or if you really cannot ever come, then do ask for your name to be struck off the volunteer mailing list.). We do also need volunteers for other tasks than working on the commons. There are several other things to be done which do not involve gum boots and loppers and which you could do from home! You can get in touch with any of our trustees – their telephone numbers are at the top of this newsletter. I fear for the success of the projected Big Society if a microcosm like TLS cannot get its act together and find volunteers.

### **Legacy**

And finally, do think about leaving a legacy to the Society in your will to help ensure future generations can continue to enjoy what we enjoy. Details are on [the reverse side of] the Volunteer Dates page.

Michael Shaw  
Chairman

### **Funding the activities of the Lynchmere Society - Robert Dows-Miller, Treasurer**

Dickens summed up the principal of how the Trustees approach TLS' financial affairs neatly:

*'Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery'*

However, given the complexity and range of the Society's activities achieving a balanced budget is now more complex than it was when Dickens wrote this in 1849 and the Trustees now have to consider:

### **Matching income and expenditure over time**

This is not as straightforward as it would appear; TLS' income has to cover not just current expenditure but to allow for capital expenditure and capital replacement of a range of assets.

As a result on an annual basis the society has to be run in surplus to create reserves to facilitate capital expenditure and to cover future replacement expenditure based on the forecast costs and the expected useful life of the capital assets involved which range from fencing to a range of agricultural equipment.

### **TLS' expenditure is essentially fixed**

Each year, in simple terms, TLS' land management increases the area of heather, controls scrub & bracken, removes trees and maintains paths, hedgerows and fencing. These activities have to be continual and therefore the income generated must be sufficient to ensure that they can be maintained in perpetuity as only relatively short periods of inactivity would significantly degrade the condition of the commons and fields which have been created by generations of continuous management.

### **Income from membership, on its own, is not sufficient to fund TLS' activities**

As a result the Trustees fund activities from four broad sources:

1. *Membership, donations & legacies*  
This varies with the number of members and the availability of donations and legacies, core membership subscriptions equals approx 15% of annual expenditure
2. *Rural payment agency payments (RPA)*  
This is applied for each year and is linked to size of the land holding and activities carried out on them, it is essentially a form of European agricultural subsidy. The amount does vary due to a complex process that sets the subsidy levels and the fact that it is calculated in Euros and converted into sterling when paid, however the impact is not material
3. *Higher level scheme payments (HLS)*  
This is a grant that competitively awarded by Natural England on the basis of the submission of a 10 year management plan to maximise the environmental value of the land. We are currently in year 2, the funding is set at the beginning of the period so is fixed but does include non recurring capital elements so the amount can vary from year to year. All funding is linked to activity.
4. *Specific grants*  
Each year grants are sought to fund or part fund specific expenditure. For example thanks to the generosity of Lynchmere and Fernhurst Parish councils, areas of hazel coppice are created for a number of years on the commons and another committed supporter, the South Downs Joint Committee, has helped us improve the track / bridle way / footpath up to Mare Barn and create an orchard in Barn Field this year.

Any member wishing to better understand the operations of TLS can access financial and operational information either from the Charities Commission website ([www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk)) and look up The Lynchmere Society (registered number 1103123) or contact me at [dows-miller@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:dows-miller@tiscali.co.uk) or 01428 658954 and I will forward copies of our annual financial accounts.

### **Neolithic Find**

While walking along the sandy track near the hard standing on Lynchmere (big) Common in late July, one of our younger members, Felix Dows-Miller (right), found a flint object about 1x1½ inches, which has now been identified by Haslemere Museum as a Neolithic knife. The museum tells us that it does not originate from round here but would have been brought here by a hunter (and probably then lost by him). They estimate it dates from around 5000BC to 2000BC and would have been used for skinning and cutting up animals - perhaps the aurochs, which roamed this area at this time. Well spotted Felix!



### **Peter Captures Local Beauty**

Photographer Peter Searight, who runs the Remarkable Studio in Lynchmere, has recently won second prize in a competition run by the Royal Horticultural Society. Peter won his prize in the plant category of the society's annual photo competition, which attracts thousands of entries from across the world.

Peter said "I was delighted to win this prize, having won the first prize in the tree and shrub category in 2007. The Plant portrait category is also particularly popular and attracts a lot of entries."



Peter's Photo, Entitled 'Wavy Hair Grass'

"My picture was taken in the evening light on Lynchmere Common, a few hundred yards from our house. It's great to know that you don't have to travel to the ends of the earth to find beauty in the countryside, and a credit to the Lynchmere Society who have worked so hard to restore the commons."

For more information about The Remarkable Studio, visit [www.themarkablestudio.com](http://www.themarkablestudio.com) or phone Peter on 01428 725067.

(This article originally appeared in the Haslemere Herald)

### **Scything (contributed by Chris Pooley)**

A couple of years ago I was moaning about using a brush cutter; it was heavy, noisy, hot and smelly. Mark Allery handed me a scythe and said I might prefer to use this.

He was right. It had a Swiss "snath" (or handle) made of ash with two movable hand grips and a choice of eleven Austrian steel blades.

Roy Wolfe suggested I went to the "Scythe Festival" held on the levels near Langport in Somerset. Not only could I learn how to use a scythe but I could revisit scenes of my youth, since I once had relations who had a market garden, a farm and a pub in that area. We were a mixed bag of thirty on the course from all ages and backgrounds.

We were taught how to fit the handle and sharpen the blade and set to work to cut grass under the beady eye of a tutor. Many were barefoot or wore sandals but actually the arc of the blade is 3 or 4 feet away (from the user if not from bystanders).

I learned the finer points of sharpening the blades such as peening, which is hammering the blade edge to thin and temper it before using a whetstone,

Our food came from three cauldrons of simple rib sticking stew washed down by milk with a golden scum of butter virtually straight from the cow. Later there were talks and practicals.

The following day there was a country fair. Some came in horse drawn carts. There were thatchers, withy makers, potters, blacksmiths and more. A couple of wood fired devices caught

my eye – a stove with an offset flue to make room for a cooking pot and another made out of a paint can with a right-angled ceramic tube for fire bed and flue. And of course there were scything demonstrations as well.

It was a great weekend, helped along by splendid weather and some real characters – Simon the wonderful organiser who would not have looked amiss in a field scaring crows, Phil the self sufficiency man from Wales with his cast off clothes and alarm clock in pocket and Big George (6 foot 10 in a bright yellow shirt and the biggest swing of a scythe you could hope to see) - and others too.

A great weekend on the Somerset levels but they are restricted for walking and .it really made me appreciate how lucky we are here to have so much open access land to walk.

Now I know a bit about scything, so if anyone would like me to scythe their grass (for a fee!), or even just look decorative with my scythe in Old Father Time pose at some event or other, do get in touch; my phone number is on page 1! (Pictures were requested but none was received)

NB Next year Chris will be scything Barn field single handed.

### **Save the Hay Meadows and Save the Planet**

*(Taken from the Times of 24 July 2010 by permission and with thanks)*



*A New Project to Save Britain's disappearing Hay fields Will Also Protect Some of Our Best-Loved Flora and Fauna says Jack Watkins.*

A golden field stretching as far as the eye can see. A resident audience of softly droning bees and multicoloured butterflies. A carpet of ox-eye daisies, cowslips and orchids at your feet; overhead curlews, lapwings and skylarks. This is the idyllic scene you might expect to find in a British hay meadow, unchanged since the Domesday book.

Sadly, though, a hay meadow, bursting with flowers and humming with insects could soon only exist in the past. The last major survey of traditionally managed meadows – essentially grass fields managed with a minimum of inputs and cut for hay in summer to provide a winter supply of livestock feed – took place in 1987. It found that only 3 per cent of the old grasslands extant in the 1930s remained. The situation has not improved in the meantime, says Professor John Rodwell, consultant ecologist and hay meadows expert. “Subsequent regional and local surveys tell us that meadows, as integral parts of farming systems, have continued to decline substantially. Even in designated areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, favourable conditions have not always been maintained.”

Hay meadows were an integral part of farming systems in this country at least as far back as the Domesday Book. Agricultural advances precipitated their disappearance, but it was new methods of cutting and storing grass for winter feed that marked new levels of decline, At Runnymede, however, the hay mowing tradition has been preserved and the meadow continues to thrive, with a profound impact on the surrounding countryside, The head warden, Nigel Boden, explains; “We do it for biodiversity reasons, and a recent survey showed high numbers of skylarks, more than ten species of butterfly, and traditional grasses and meadow plants such as knapweed, scabious and ox-eye daisy. Because the hay is taken off as late as possible, the plants provide a rich nectar source for insects, and they and the grasses are able to set seeds. Once the hay crop is taken off, the farmer can bring his cattle on for ‘aftermath’ grazing and their dung provides a natural fertilizer”.

Hay meadows are ecologically the richest forms of grassland habitats, their diversity providing a stark contrast to the species-poor silage grasslands that have largely replaced them. They support a litany of plants as well as those that flower and set seed in early summer. They also serve as feeding areas for invertebrates, bats and other mammals, and as nesting sites for birds. Because they often lie under water in winter they can attract flocks of wild fowl.

It is not only for ecological reasons that hay meadows are desired elements of the countryside, however. Inextricably linked with paintings such as John Constable's *The Hay Wain*, the very term can provoke a wave of nostalgia, even though the generation that can recall their part in the farming calendar must be shrinking fast.

Many of the meadows that remain are found on National Trust and county Wildlife Trust reserves and estates, managed as closely as possible in the traditional way. Hay Time is a project between the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and the Yorkshire Dales National Park authority to restore at least 200 hectares of meadows. Don Gamble, the project manager says; "meadow restoration doesn't happen overnight, but given time and continuing traditional management, the fields should become more botanically diverse."

No one is predicting hay meadows making a comeback on a national scale. Yet Gamble thinks they may become more attractive if the realities of global warming loom larger. "Research suggests that productive disturbed landscapes such as 'improved' grasslands may be more vulnerable to climate change than older, traditional ones. Hay meadows as complex ecosystems may be more resistant".

For information on the Hay Time project, visit [www.ydmt.org/haytime.html](http://www.ydmt.org/haytime.html)

### **Lynchmere Commons – Defoliating Moths and the 'Devil's Thread' (Contributed by Mark Allery)**

It has been an interesting year on the commons. With the warm dry weather it's hard to remember just how cold it was over the winter and how late it was before spring arrived. In May, shortly after they came into leaf, a large number of trees were attacked by an infestation of caterpillars. The main area affected stretched from Lynchmere Corner across the commons and down to Danley and Lower Brookham Farms. This was quite an amazing sight as the infestation extended over perhaps a square mile and several hundred trees and although it seemed to start in oak trees it rapidly spread to the birch as well.

If you were walking on this area of the commons at the time the experience was enhanced by the silken threads that some of the caterpillars used to descend from the trees, making it impossible not to become tangled in the threads and covered in caterpillars.



Defoliation in May 2010



Silken Threads

It seems that two of the caterpillars causing the defoliation were the Mottled Umber and Scarce Umber (which is apparently not scarce). The Latin name for the Mottled Umber is *Erannis Defoliara* which implies that it has been known for causing this effect in the past. From my research on the internet it's possible that the Oak Tortrix (*Tortrix Viridana*) was also involved as it's renowned for feeding on oak and descending on threads. Our small birds had a very hard winter and the infestation provided a feast for them, which may be one reason why some of the



August Lammas Growth



Dodder on Lynchmere

boxes intended for bats were inhabited by blue tits by June.

At the time it seemed hard to believe that the trees would recover fully and they struggled to releaf throughout June and early July, but by the end of July a thick new growth of leaf started to appear. This phenomenon is known as Lammas Growth as a second flush of leaf growth typically appears around Lammas day. It seems that one effect of defoliation may be to increase the amount of Lammas Growth so the tree actually produces a thicker crown in compensating. Another feature of this year has been the appearance of Dodder (*Cuscuta Epithimum*) on the ling (Common Heather or *Calluna Vulgaris*) on the common for the first time in a few years. It's not easy to spot at first but once you've seen it and got your eye in the patches are unmistakable.

Dodder is a true parasite, in that it has no roots and no capability to photosynthesise. Under the right conditions of temperature and moisture the seeds in the soil germinate and wiry red shoots are thrown up searching for a host. It only has one chance to find a plant to use as host otherwise it fails and dies. But if it succeeds it grows rapidly into a wiry mass of red tendrils which can easily drain the vitality from its host – in this case Ling. Dodder has long been associated with the destruction of important crops, hence it's many names such as the 'Devil's Thread' and 'Strangleweed'. Nowadays with the use of pesticides/herbicides and seed cleaning it is no longer a major crop problem and is associated with Furze, though only reported on ling. Probably because of its ability to destroy arable crops and possibly also because of its toxicity Dodder has had a bad press. Like many toxic plants it may also have herbal and medicinal uses for good which we have yet to discover – Culpeper and other herbalists suggested it for a range of medicinal purposes probably based upon its diuretic effect. But John Peachey said of Dodder (1694) 'This fawning parasite and ungrateful Guest, hugs the herb it hangs upon, with its long Threads and reddish twigs, and so closely embraces it, that at length it defrauds the hospitable herb of its nourishment and destroys it by its treacherous embraces.'