



### **The Lynchmere Society**

For Lynchmere, Hammer and Camelsdale

#### **Spring Newsletter**

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

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

**Treasurer and Secretary:** Robert Dows-Miller (07776 145089)

**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:**

##### **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May - 7:30pm**

The Annual General Meeting followed by a talk on the escape of Charles II through Sussex during the Civil War (see below).

##### **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June at Mare Barn - 6pm**

Volunteers barbecue. Meet at the Barn earlier for an afternoon of work and clearing up in the barnyard and surrounding fields. Park at Lynchmere Green and walk up the track or at the Barn itself. You do not need to be a member (or a volunteer) to come. Please bring your friends if you think they will subscribe to the ideals of the Society.

##### **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September - 5:30pm**

Shulbrede Barbecue. This is another event to which you could bring your friends. It is a historic environment and we are grateful to Laura Ponsonby and Ian and Kate Russell for inviting us once again. Barbecued food and drinks will be provided. Please bring £2 per head and something sweet for the second course.

#### **Other Dates:**

##### **South Downs National Park comes formally into existence**

1<sup>st</sup> April

##### **Haslemere Society Spring Lecture**

Jeanne Dolmetsch on her grandfather Arnold – 15<sup>th</sup> April Haslemere Hall 7:30

##### **Shulbrede Priory open days**

29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May and 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August 2-6pm (call 653049 for details)

##### **Wildfire Awareness Day**

28<sup>th</sup> May - Punchbowl car park May 10am - 4pm (Mark Busby 01428 643991).



Fly Agric Mushrooms on Lynchmere



Mare Barn in the Snow

The above photos and newsletter editing by Sebastian Dows-Miller

## **Chairman's Report**

### **AGM**

Our **AGM** will be held at the Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30pm for 8pm. Three trustees (Stuart Ibbotson, Chris Pooley and Louise Searight) are due to retire by rotation. They have all indicated they are willing to stand again. Any other nominations should reach our secretary Robert Dows-Miller at 22 Heath Road Hammer GU27 3QN by 5<sup>th</sup> May. We are not constrained by our constitution to electing just three trustees this time. If you have something to offer and would like to join us do let Robert know.

The AGM will be followed by a talk by local historian Helen Poole on the Escape of Charles II (as he became) through Sussex during the Civil War. Helen's own forebears helped in the escape so it should be a fascinating evening. Do bring your friends along; it is a good opportunity to introduce them to our Society.

### **Mare Barn and Fields**

We now have electricity in the Barn. Apart from the power it gives us on site, it will now enable us to have a pumped water supply to all the fields. Hitherto water pressure at the bottom of the Ridge had been insufficient to supply the upper fields. You may have noticed the trench for the pipe snaking up the fields. It is already disappearing as the new season's grass begins to grow. I should mention the sterling work Chris Pooley has done connecting up all the water pipes – not a pleasant job in the cold weather we had at the beginning of the year. And Mark Allery along with all the other work he has done this year has started replacing the rail and post fencing.

### **Apple Orchard**

The Orchard is now well underway. The orchard area has been fenced and the first twenty trees planted. The fence line, which is at present barbed wire, is being supplemented and eventually replaced by a traditional hedge of native species intended among other things to provide a safe haven for dormice (and we acknowledge the support we have had from the People's Trust for Endangered Species in creating this hedge). Dormice may have been a culinary delicacy for the Romans but they are now a highly protected and species and you need a licence even just to handle one.

Individual fruit trees are being sponsored by local residents and organisations and we are grateful for their support (lists of both donors and trees will eventually be placed at the orchard itself). We will be planting a further 20 or 30 trees next winter and although we are almost there, we would welcome further sponsorship (@£20 per tree).

The project has received generous support in cash and labour from the South Downs Joint Committee, an organisation with which we have worked closely over the years and which is now to be amalgamated into the new South Downs National Park Authority which comes into being at the beginning of April. Many of the South Downs volunteers who worked for the joint committee and have been of considerable help to us are also transferring to the SDNPA. While on the subject of external volunteers I should mention the splendid group from Southampton University; we like them and they must like us, since they keep coming back!

### **Marley Common**

The joint project with the National Trust is up and running and the three Belted Galloway cattle (which belong to the National Trust) will probably be back on the Common by the time you read this, augmented by another two which are in calf - so there should be plenty to see on Marley this summer.

On our other stretch of land on Marley (on the other, western, side of Marley Lane) Roy Wolfe and his small band have worked wonders this winter. The results are there for all to see. Go and see for yourselves! Given the progress which has been made restoring the heathland on Marley, West Sussex County Council has now declared most of Marley (National Trust and The Lynchmere Society) a *Site of Nature Conservation Importance* (SNCI).

### **Membership and Finances**

Our membership is not just holding up but has increased markedly this year. Do encourage others to join – they can do so by going to our website or taking one of our leaflets from the dispensers on the notice boards or by phoning any of our trustees or wardens. It has been great to see so many of our members turning out on volunteer days. Our finances are reasonably healthy – though we are not as well placed as a first cursory glance at our accounts might lead you to think, since we need to put considerable funds away for the replacement in due course of some of our more expensive items (like our tractor and the several miles of fencing round the Commons. And we rely on government grants for much of our expenditure.

Outline accounts for the last financial year will be available at the AGM.

Michael Shaw - Chairman

### **Roundwood Building – Robert Dows-Miller**

As some of you may be aware, Dave Elliott, the Head Warden of the National Trust for Black Down, is working with Ben Law, ([www.ben-law.co.uk](http://www.ben-law.co.uk)) the renowned local Woodsman, to create a roundwood timber building to house the long-term volunteers at the Trust's local headquarters at Swan Barn Farm, behind Haslemere High Street.

This is a fascinating project, not least because the National Trust are seeking to construct the building from materials sourced from the lands that they manage in and around Haslemere. This sort of creative, imaginative approach to the design and construction of dwellings is something that the Lynchmere Society was in part set up to promote.

Whilst much of the work being undertaken in preparation for the construction is done by the team at Swan Barn Farm, they are dependent on the efforts of volunteers for the production of such things as 'Shingles', wooden roof tiles made, in this case, from Chestnut. To demonstrate tangibly our support for the project, on Wednesday the 2nd of February I joined Dave Elliott's happy band making some of the 15 000 shingles that will be required for the house.

A 'Shingle' (or 'Shake') is a piece of wood a foot long, around five inches wide and half an inch thick, it is a testament to the ingenuity of the human race in that their manufacture is based on the properties of certain woods that split well across their grain.

With the availability of oak and chestnut in this area, this roofing technique has been used locally for hundreds of years. Why? With a few simple tools, it is possible to manufacture a cheap, very effective and adaptable waterproof covering which although significantly lighter than roof tiles, will last for up to 75 years.

The theory of how to make shingles is fairly straightforward:

1. Take a section of wood approximately 9 inches diameter and a foot long.
2. Square the section longitudinally using a froe.
3. Split the shingles from the block, discarding the shingle with the pithy center in, as well as any that split or are too short.
4. Remove any sapwood from the edges using a drawknife.
5. Ensure the sides are straight and parallel.
6. Bevel the bottom edge of the 'face' side to encourage water to run off.

Like many things, the execution of this theory is a little more difficult.



Froeing



Bevelling

If any of you want to try your hand at this ancient activity and make a tangible difference to the project, I recommend that you go along to Swan Barn Farm at 9am on a Wednesday and spend a day in the woods with Dave and his team. For those of you who cannot join them you can see how shingles are made and follow the progress of the build at [swanbarnfarm.wordpress.com](http://swanbarnfarm.wordpress.com).

### **Our firewood keeps us warm three times! – Mark Allery**

Having been out on the commons over the winter cutting trees and clearing the resulting logs I am reminded that there is a saying in this country that your firewood keeps you warm three times. Once when you cut it, again when you split and stack it and finally when you burn it.

While it's certainly true, it is far from the whole story and I thought I'd write more about it in front of my log fire rather than out in the cold for a change. Are you sitting comfortably? Good then I'll begin...

Most of the Birch trees on the common sprang up shortly after the Second World War after the area had been used as a training ground and they are largely of a similar age. Birch trees are fast growing pioneers and will typically live

for between 60 to 80 years so although very attractive in the winter many of these trees are nearing the ends of their lives.

We are seeing many signs of disease in the trees, with typical black weeping lesions low on the trunk, possibly brackets, often Birch Polypore or Razor Strop fungus (*Piptoporus Betulinus*) further up the tree. Most of the trees we remove during the winter are diseased, dead or dangerous (hanging over paths, tracks and boundaries). In doing this we are removing the weaker trees, leaving space for new saplings to grow and encouraging a wider mix of trees in the woodland areas, a form of woodland management which has been carried out for millennia and shaped all of our woods and hedgerows across the country.



Mature Birch Trees on Lynchmere



Not so happy at ground level

At the same time we are making the most of the Birch wood that arises. Indeed you may have seen our Birch on TV in the form of racecourse jumps at courses like Towcester! The uses of Birch wood are many and ours is now being turned into besoms, beanpoles, pea-sticks, charcoal, treen (household wooden items like spoons), designer furniture, stools, bowls and of course plenty of firewood, about 20 tonnes of it at the Log Day this year. Since we grow as many trees as we cut, and in encouraging heathland are laying down more carbon, this woodland work is local, sustainable, provides carbon neutral fuel and sequesters more carbon than it uses. Yes, it really is good for the environment to cut down trees on the Lynchmere Commons!

### **Website**

As hopefully many of you will already be aware, the Lynchmere Society has a website ([www.thelynchmeresociety.org](http://www.thelynchmeresociety.org)).

Like many similar organisations, TLS has a wealth of information that it wishes to share with its members and the wider world, and what better way to do this than via a website.

If you have not looked at it before or for a while, I urge you to try it; it is laid out to make navigating it as easy as possible and contains useful resources such as; newsletters, volunteer information, flora and fauna surveys conducted on the Society's land, photo galleries of both new photos (provided by Mark Allery) as well as older ones from the archives and a contact page which enables members to get a message through to the Chairman and a number of the other Trustees even if they do not have their email addresses.

If there are any things that you would like to see on the site please email the Lynchmere Society's web designer and IT consultant Seb Dows-Miller ([info@thelynchmeresociety.org](mailto:info@thelynchmeresociety.org) or via the website's contact page) and we will try and include your ideas.