



**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 (07765 145089)

**Membership Secretary:** Louise Searight (01428 723715)

**Membership Records:** Stuart Ibbotson (01428 658179)

**Commons Wardens:** Stanley: Roy Wolfe (01730 821290)

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, Richard Appleby, Chris Pooley.

**Dates for your diary**

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April at 7:30pm**

Parish Meeting in Camelsdale School Hall

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30pm for 8pm**

**AGM** of The Lynchmere Society followed by a talk on “The Wildlife of the West Sussex Heathlands” by Michael Blencowe, Community Wildlife Officer of the Sussex Wildlife Trust in the Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall Hammer. There will be a glass of wine if you get there in good time.

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at 9:30am**

Her Majesty the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Celebration Service in St Peter’s, Lynchmere.

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> to Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June and Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> August**

Shulbrede Priory Open Days

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June**

Sussex Day – the feast of St Richard, Sussex’s Patron saint

**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June**

Volunteers barbecue at Mare Barn

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September**

Barbecue at Shulbrede Priory

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

Fernhurst Furnace Open Days

## **Chairman's Report**

We have had another busy few months and I must pay tribute to the small bands of volunteers and the individuals who have put in so much work over the winter and also to the good work of the splendid conservation volunteers from Southampton University who have been coming to us for several years now.

Our community apple orchard is now complete. Mark Allery and his team have completed the planting of 36 trees of rare or local varieties, all appropriately labelled and with a plan you can take round as you look at them. Alexandra O'Grady, whose idea this originally was, has offered to bring a team of volunteers every spring and autumn to tidy up and keep it accessible for visitors.

The new hazel coppice on Lynchmere Common, for which the trees and guards have come from a legacy through our friends in the Haslemere Natural History Society (HNHS), has been part planted (Richard Appleby and Richard Naylor, who appear in this photo have done sterling work). We plan for it to be completed by November in time for a visit from our Haslemere friends. Meanwhile we are working with the HNHS on a butterfly survey and have commissioned an entomological survey of the fields.



Our fields have had much of their fencing replaced or restored, using traditional locally sourced materials (we are grateful to Natural England for a generous contribution which has eased the financial burden of this). Where possible we have used reconditioned rails from the fencing which was being replaced. The last section near the barn is due to be replaced shortly and may indeed have been done by the time you read this. We are very pleased with the results.

We had a good autumn lecture on Dormice by Jim Jones. He subsequently came back to help us find traces of dormice in the Common near Danley Farm and has now returned again to set out some 30 Dormice boxes. If you come across one of these boxes please do not disturb it or try to look inside. You will scare off the occupant if there is one and run foul of the law, since they are a highly protected species.

We have installed near the ponds a new bench provided by Penny Portman and her family in memory of Berkeley and we hope that this will give pleasure to those who enjoy that view and who remember Berkeley and his love of Lynchmere. We have agreed a year's extension of a grazing agreement on the fields and commons with our current grazier. Please respect the countryside code and avoid walking through the fields. They are being managed as hay meadows and at other times have cattle in them and are not open access land. But we are of course open to serious requests for study or educational visits to them.

The basis on which Trustees plan to manage them – in effect our “mission statement” – is;

“We plan to manage our fields as hay meadows and pastures to promote and restore flora and fauna diversity. To this end Trustees have agreed nine principles:-

1. Roundabouts and Barn Field will be managed as hay meadows and Upper Barn Field, Stoneyfield and Valley Field as permanent pastures
2. The latest possible date (and no earlier than 15 July) for cutting hay will be adopted to give wild flowers the chance to set their seed
3. The permanent pastures will be topped once a year to prevent a build up of dead material in the base of the sward. This will not be undertaken within 30 days of hay cutting in the other fields
4. When cutting hay or topping, headlands and field edges of at least 2 metres wide will be left to enable wildflowers to finish seeding
5. Cattle will be removed from the Hay meadows before the first mild conditions lead to the germination of wild flowers and no later than March 15<sup>th</sup>.
6. All fields to be chain harrowed before the onset of the new year's growth to maximise the potential for wildflower germination and to reduce the build up of dead material in the sward.
7. Winter grazing will be managed to avoid overgrazing and poaching
8. The storage of bales and feeding will take place on the headlands to avoid the loss of sward through overgrazing, poaching or piling of bales.
9. No herbicides or fertilizers will be applied to any fields without the express consent of the trustees.”

So far as Mare Barn itself is concerned we are in discussion with Natural England about what needs to be done to preserve this historic barn and how that might be funded. It will not be cheap, but Natural England are enthusiastic and we may be able to get an 80% grant. Watch this space!

Meanwhile the Shetland cattle will shortly be back on Stanley and Lynchmere Commons and the National Trust will be putting a small herd of Belted Galloways back on to Marley – cattle which graze on our part of that Common as well. We are pleased to be able to cooperate in this way with our colleagues in the National Trust.

The South Downs National Park Authority has appointed a heath land restoration office (Jonathan Mycock) who will be producing a plan in the autumn for which grants will be required for a major restoration of heath land. Given the geographical location of our land holdings we will be at the heart of the project.

**Our AGM is on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May** and will take place at 8:00pm immediately before the lecture in the HHMH. Drinks will be served from 7:30pm.

There will be a brief report on the year's activities and our Treasurer will explain the accounts (which are to be found on our website – [www.thelynchmeresociety.org](http://www.thelynchmeresociety.org)). The following trustees are due to retire and are presenting themselves for re-election - Stuart Ibbotson, Chris Pooley and Louise Searight. Any further nominations should reach our Secretary by 20 April.

## Michael Shaw

### Chairman

#### **Our local archives – Nic Mann**

As you may be aware, Camelsdale, Hammer and Lynchmere have a fairly extensive set of archives, which are currently stored at the Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall. They are being worked by a small team of volunteers to sort and list them as part of a larger project being run by the County Records Office in Chichester. The future of that project is uncertain but all the work done so far will endure for posterity. Those of us involved in this work in the parish are determined to keep our archives in the locality, close and accessible to our community. With this in mind we would like to make it known that anyone wanting to do local research is welcome to contact us and arrange access to these parish archives. Please call Liz Knapp on 01428 729311 or Nic Mann on 01428 642359. If anyone has material they would like to donate to the archive we would be happy to receive it and add it to the appropriate section.

Similarly if you would like to come along and see what we are doing, perhaps with a view to becoming involved in helping us please ring Liz or Nic on the numbers above. A small selection of images can be seen on the Society's website ([www.thelynchmeresociety.org](http://www.thelynchmeresociety.org)).

#### **Weed control in our fields – Judy Rous**

For the past two years we have been experimenting with a chisel hoe (see photo) to control an infestation of creeping-thistle in our fields. It is a plant which reappears each spring in grassland. Each shoot is connected to a rhizome where it stores its energy and by which it spreads vigorously. Regrowth is always from a new point in the rhizome which is weaker and is unlikely to set seed.

We noticed a marked improvement in the second year and we shall be continuing to use this economical and eco-friendly method of control and eradication. The hoe is lightweight and easy to use and does not require you to bend down. We are looking for more volunteers to use it!



#### **Ragwort – Laura Ponsonby**

Ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea*, is well-known as being extremely poisonous to horses and other animals. Horses however tend to avoid eating the living plant and it is only when dried in hay that poisoning occurs, causing liver damage. It seems that many claims about the number of horses dying are often exaggerated. There is in fact a great deal of hysteria about Ragwort and much of the information on the internet is inaccurate. Ragwort is an injurious weed specified in the Weeds Act 1959, although there is no automatic requirement for landowners to control it, except in extreme conditions where agricultural production is directly affected. The Ragwort Control Bill is implemented through the Code of practice which gives guidance on how to prevent the spread of this plant. The Code can be seen at: [www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb9840-cop-ragwort.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb9840-cop-ragwort.pdf)

Some councils have mounted campaigns against Ragwort and remove plants when they do not pose a threat. In some instances plants have been misidentified and the wrong plants removed and needlessly destroyed. There are concerns that the anti-Ragwort campaign will result in the destruction of wild flowers and associated wildlife and sadly this is indeed happening. In Norfolk, Richard Mabey, author and naturalist, was horrified to discover that a whole area had been sprayed with a systemic broad-leaved herbicide and all the flowers were killed and contorted. Ragwort in fact has its own control in the form of the orange and black striped caterpillar of the Cinnabar moth which feeds on this plant, transferring the poison for its own protection. For a balanced view and reliable scientific information see [www.ragwortfacts.com](http://www.ragwortfacts.com).

A recent review by Buglife, the Invertebrate Conservation Trust, identified at least 30 insect species which rely on Ragwort and about a third of these are scarce or rare. Ragwort is a critically important source of nectar for hundreds of butterflies, bees, moths, flies and other invertebrates. In addition 14 species of fungi are totally reliant on this plant. Buglife has produced a leaflet entitled "Ragwort; Yellow peril or precious Flower" and is working to ensure that the facts about Ragwort are checked and verified and myths and misinformation are dispelled.

Ragwort is frequently just pulled up and left lying on the ground; this is a very dangerous practice as horses are much more likely to consume the dried plant, as they find it much more palatable. It is therefore imperative that plants should be completely removed from the site and destroyed. Most Ragwort poisoning results from the use of contaminated hay.

Information for this article has been taken Buglife's Website – [www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/currentprojects/Habitats+Action/Ragwort](http://www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/currentprojects/Habitats+Action/Ragwort) and from the River Wey Trust's newsletter, for which many thanks.



### **Choughed to be home – Anita Martin**

Some residents of Marley Common had the pleasure of a rare visitor to their gardens for a few days in the middle of February.

There are less than 500 pairs of breeding choughs in the UK and these are all to be found on the western coasts of the British Isles (Wales, W. Scotland, N Ireland and Cornwall - the chough is the county bird of Cornwall). Their natural habitat is coastal areas where they nest in rock faces and caves and feed off insects, dung beetles and larvae.

The chough visiting Marley clearly stood out from the more common members of the crow family due his remarkably striking red bill and legs. He spent his days picking off moss from the various walls, roofs and driveways in search of his natural diet of insects. A very messy eater! Becoming less timid as the days went on, he eventually obliged us with the opportunity of a photo shoot as he paraded around some nearby scaffolding. The photo meant we could get a positive ID from an RSPB forum which until then, had, understandably, been rather sceptical about the claimed sighting.

After further investigation it emerged that Bird World in Farnham had recently seen their young pair of choughs escape from their netted enclosure. Concerned about his chances of survival out of a suitable environment they immediately sent over one of their team with a large cage baited with all sorts of tasty morsels (well to a chough anyway!) and within no time he was safely on his way back to Bird World, where he was to spend a couple of days in rehab before being reunited with their adult pair. The team at Bird World were so delighted to have their young male chough back home that they have officially named him "Marley" in recognition of his escapade.

But don't stop twitching... Marley's young female friend is still at large somewhere.

Other more genuine visitors which have been delighting people in Lynchmere Hamlet have been the huge flocks of Redwings which have been feeding in Roundabouts field.



'Marley' the chough

The Lynchmere Society's Website is [www.thelynchmeresociety.org](http://www.thelynchmeresociety.org)



*The logo of Bell Heather (Erica cinerea) indicates the Society's ownership of the Lynchmere Commons*