



The Lynchmere Society

LUMPS AND BUMPS - WHAT LIES BENEATH THE BRACKEN? - Alison George writes:
- a brief summary of her talk at our Annual General Meeting

It all started when Mark was bracken-rolling and got his Landrover stuck in a hole. We realised the hole was part of a trench system and wondered what else might be hiding beneath the bracken. Canadians had been stationed at Bramshott Camp in both wars so could this be the result of training from WW1? Lynchmere was a convenient marching distance from Bramshott and the varied landscape provided scope for a number of training exercises. WW1 archaeology is a particular interest of mine and I belong to 'No Mans Land', a group which often digs on the Western Front - so we decided to find out more if we could.



Canadian troops arrived at Bramshott in November 1916. Accounts of training on Lynchmere appear in letters/diaries held in the Canadian Archives and in our local papers. We walked the commons, specifically the Little Common following possible trench lines, scratched our heads over strange lumps and bumps and stuck flexible cameras down holes. We found a wide range of training features including crenellated trench systems, a bombing range, a possible small arms range and entrances to a number of tunnels. There may have been no single plan for the trench-system. They may have just developed but unlike many training trenches they are

more than an exercise in trench construction and appear to be using the landscape for battlefield training.

It's hard to know exactly where the men who passed through Lynchmere served, as Battalions were often disbanded at Bramshott and men drafted to replace losses overseas, as happened to No 4 Tunnelling Company. It was the only tunnelling company to pass through Bramshott and most likely responsible for the enigmatic tunnels on the commons. They were sent to the Western Front to replace heavy losses and were active in the Battle of Messines Ridge. Some of the theatres of war these men took part in were Mount Sorrel, Thiepval, Fromelles, Somme, Vimy Ridge, Polygon Wood, Langemarck, Passchendael, Cambrai and Messines.

contd.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Shulbrede Priory Open Days: Sunday and Monday 30 and 31 August

Barbecue at Shulbrede Priory: **PLEASE NOTE CORRECT DATE** - Saturday 5 September at 5.30 pm. £2 per head and members' guests are welcome – as are any contributions for “dessert”!

Fernhurst Furnace Open Weekend: Saturday and Sunday 12 and 13 September

Extra Log Day: A free car-boot load for members: Sunday 18 October

Autumn Talk: Friday 23 October, Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall, Hammer, 7.30 pm for 8.00 pm. “Wildlife of Brazil” by John Richardson, who has recently surveyed the birdlife on our Commons for the Sussex Ornithological Trust. £2 for non-members.

Along the way we also found a machine-gun and search-light emplacement, foxholes, slit trenches, tank-training circuits, spent and unexploded ordnance/smoke mortars(!) and a possible Iron Age enclosure. We are becoming aware of what we have and what may still be beneath the bracken. More surveying needs to be carried out with the possibility of excavations in the future so all the features can be protected. If any one has any information regarding the history on the commons etc. please contact Alison George at mark@markallery.com or 01428 641708.

THE BUNCHFIELD AUNTS GO TO CHURCH

- Anne Tibbs writes:

My Great Aunts Helen and Ethel Pott built Bunchfield, the first house on the northern end of Lynchmere Ridge in 1912. They were brought up in the family home in Cornwall Gardens, Kensington. With the 'acid drop' money that their father left them they decided to have a country cottage where their family – five brothers, four sisters and an invalid mother, could enjoy their summer holidays.

Bunchfield garden was laid out with two large lawns, not just for croquet and tennis, they wanted as many people as possible to enjoy 'the pleasure gardens'. Their pony, Brownie, pulled the mower to cut the lawns, and for this he wore leather galoshes. Another of his duties was to be harnessed to the dogcart every Sunday to take the Aunts to church. They drove straight over the top of the Ridge through the 'Pines' and stopped at the Meridans who lived in Mare Barn Cottage (Mr Meridan was one of the Lynchmere House gardeners). Here they left their dog, Warden, then continued down Wilcox Lane to the Green where Brownie was tethered while they attended the service.

To feed Brownie, their hay fields were cut by Mr Rupert Madgwick (Eric's father) with his beautiful Percheron cart horses. A fiery cross was sent round all their young relations to come and make the hay. The aunts established a large poultry farm to provide some income and had an extensive kitchen garden. Every week the Southern Railway carrier (horsedrawn) would collect the large hamper to take it to the station on its way to Cornwall Gardens. Their annual garden fetes in aid of various charities became a feature of Lynchmere life, especially during the two world wars when they raised funds for the Red Cross.

The 'Pott Aunts' as they were universally known were part of our village life for 50 years. They would be delighted that Bunchfield has been enjoyed by another four generations of their family.



The Aunts are pictured here on a hassock in St Peter's Church

LYNCHMERE LINKS TO WATERLOO

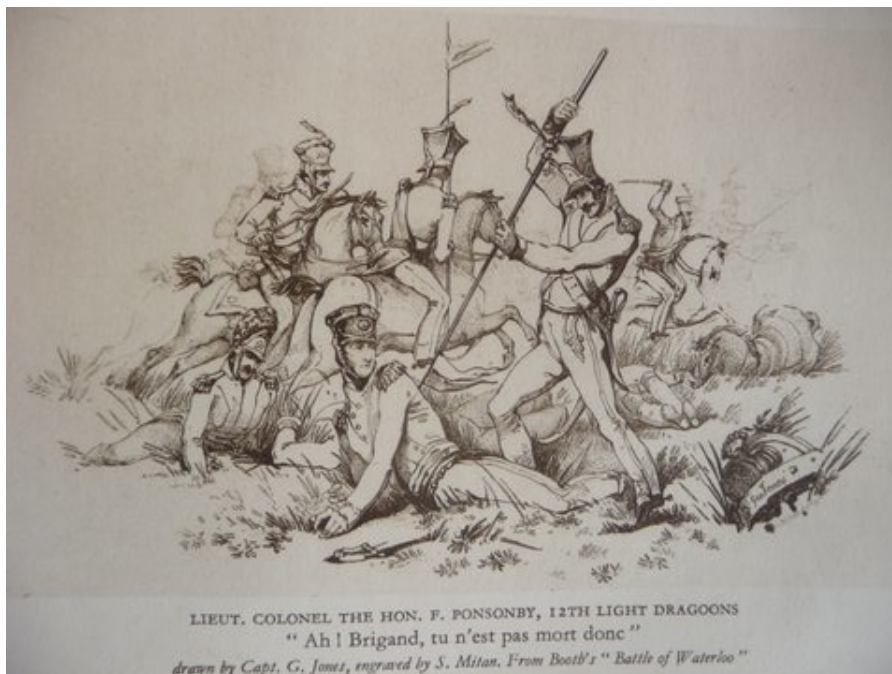
- Laura Ponsonby writes:

Two hundred years ago Frederick Ponsonby, great-great-grandfather to Laura Ponsonby and Kate Russell of Shulbrede was badly wounded on the battlefield while commanding the 12th Dragoons (The Light Cavalry). He received two severe sabre wounds, a lance thrust into the left side of his chest which resulted in blood gushing from his mouth, and other wounds. He was plundered by *tirailleurs* and recorded that one found "three dollars and some cigars". A passing lancer exclaimed

"tu n'es pas mort coquin!" and then stuck a lance through his back. A French officer gave him some brandy and a knapsack under his head.

Amazingly he survived, married Emily in the 1820s and had 6 children. Later he became Major-General Sir Frederick Ponsonby, and when Governor of Malta, he met the man who had saved him.

As his right arm was too damaged to write properly, Emily wrote the account of his experiences at Waterloo in a small red notebook. It is fascinating reading. In Peter Snow's "To War With Wellington" there is much about Frederick taken from this small red book.



WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING:

- Judy Rous writes:

MARE BARN OPEN DAY

Attracted over 60 visitors and a good deal of interest in this unusual building and the work needed to secure its future. The Society is able to provide the first £ 30,000 towards the repairs, and we shall have to raise around £ 70,000 more. Any ideas would be welcome. We have just been given a very generous donation of £ 3,000 by the Tangye Trust. We hope to start work very soon.



Volunteers and visiting 'Learners' cutting grass and bracken in the Orchard at the Open Day

MEMBERSHIP

We have updated our membership/information leaflet, raising the subscription for the first time in 20 years. The increase will only apply to new members. The trustees agreed that those who are already supporters can continue at the old rates.

CONSERVATION WORK

On Lynchmere and Stanley Commons we have more cows this year – Belted Galloways and Sussex. They are doing a great job of scrub control. Several volunteers have been pulling bracken which is also being attacked by Mark, Eva and Gary with scythes. The fields are full of wildflowers and butterflies and we are hoping for a successful hay harvest for which we have recently acquired a second-hand baler.

Eva and Gary finished planting the hedge – thanks to them and the Woodland Trust for the saplings.

SURPRISE VISITOR - *Peter Searight writes:*



Out for a walk on the common one Sunday morning I could hardly believe my eyes! Luckily, I had my camera with me and here is the result – proof of a visiting emu!

It took a couple of days to track down its owner who came to catch it and take it home. After a week of freedom 'Wilfrid' is now happily back with his friends in Fernhurst.

Volunteer Dates for Winter Working Parties are listed on the Society's website and will be circulated to all the volunteers on the data base. The first one of the season will be on Sunday 13 September on Lynchmere Common. Contact Richard Appleby on 01428 64308

Life President: Michael Tibbs

Chairman: Judy Rous (01428 723251)
Treasurer: Peter Searight (01428 723715)
Company Secretary: Ian Russell (01428 653049)
Membership Secretary: Louise Searight (01428 723715)
Digital Dogsbody: Eva Venny (01428 725767)
Trees: Mark Allery (01428 641708)

Wardens

Marley Common: Chris Pooley (01428 653034)
Burkitt Fields: Chris Pooley (01428 653034)
Lynchmere and Stanley Commons: Judy Rous and
Louise Searight
Winter Work Programme: Edwin Brooks

See also Web Site www.thelynchmeresociety.org & Volunteer Blog: <http://lynchmerecommons.wordpress.com>