



The Lynchmere Society

IN THE BEGINNING

- Judy Rous writes:

There have been many changes since the Society was started and "new" residents are often unaware of its aims and the work that is going on. So we thought it was time for a brief outline....

As the result of a wave of enthusiasm generated by the "Village Appraisal 1989" the Society was formed by Michael Tibbs in 1991. A registered Charity, the interests included planning and architecture, education, and protection and improvement of features of historic, environmental and historic interest, so when the Commons came up for sale in 1996 Michael "led from the front" and the Society embarked on a huge fund-raising effort, which was, of course, wonderfully successful.

A leaflet went to every house in Lynchmere, Hammer and Camelsdale, local Councils and organisations began to help, and for several weeks Michael and Anne were receiving £1,000 per day. What rejoicing there was when the Heritage Lottery Fund came up with the maximum grant! This was given towards the purchase and a Five Year Management Plan for the restoration of "lowland heath" - a very endangered landscape. A plan had been drawn up, trees were felled, heather and gorse returned, as did Dartford Warblers, Woodlarks and Nightjars.

While we started with Contractors, our own Volunteers are now fully responsible.

A few years ago, through the generosity of the late Peter Burkitt and his sister Sheila we were given five fields and the ancient Mare Barn to manage as Wild Flower Meadows in the traditional way. Morale is high in the knowledge that all this land is now safe for future generations.

The guiding genius behind all this has always been Michael Tibbs, our first Chairman and now Life President. His father was Vicar here and when the family arrived in 1932 life was very different. All the cottages below the Church were occupied by farm labourers and there were six working farms. At the outbreak of war Michael joined the Home Guard, then the Navy, and later the Sudan Political Service - where he and Anne spent their early married life. He and his wonderful wife have been involved in every aspect of village life, and now, in his tenth decade, with a mind as sharp as ever, they have recently published their fourth book, (*Hello, Lad. Come to Join the Navy*) which gives fascinating insights into life during the war years at home and on the high seas

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Friday 9th May Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall at 7.30 for 8pm. Followed by a talk by Tim Winter 'Forestry Practice and Rural Crafts'

Fernhurst Society Special Exhibition: Saturday 10th May Fernhurst Village Hall 2-5pm 'The Margaret Shaw Collection / The First World War'

Fernhurst Revels: Sunday 18th May

Shulbrede Priory Open Days: Sunday and Monday 25th and 26th May and 24th and 25th August

Barbeque at Shulbrede Priory: Saturday 30th August at 5.30 pm. £2/head and members guests are welcome

AUTUMN 2013 TALK - SUSSEX WILDLIFE by Richard Williamson

Those amongst you who read the Midhurst and Petworth Observer will be familiar with the wonderful articles on Sussex wildlife in that paper. They are contributed by the well known author, Richard Williamson, who together with his wife operating the projector, gave us a wide-ranging illustrated talk about wildlife in Sussex.

We had a most enlightening and entertaining evening in the Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall in the middle of October last when RW covered a wide range of wildlife topics from the flora and fauna around where he lives close to the Weald and Downland Museum, north of Chichester, to a riveting description with lovely photographs of the many winter visiting water birds of the extensive wetlands of Chichester Harbour.

Footnote. The Lynchmere Society would like to hear from anybody, what relevant wildlife topics they would like to hear talks on. Please contact any of the trustees including Nic Mann on 01428 642359 or nicmann86@yahoo.co.uk

CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE

- Mark Allery writes:

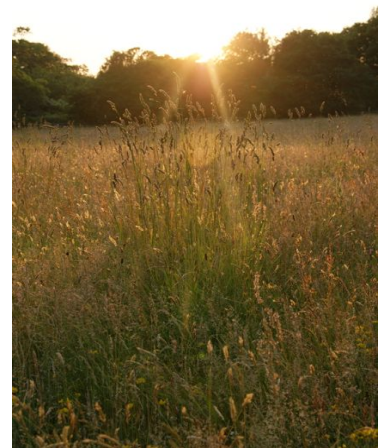
Please write an article for the newsletter about Conservation they said. How could I refuse? But Conservation can mean so many different things to different people. If you ask four Conservationists I imagine you'll get five answers! That does reflect the many different aspects that come together in each case and on one site and there may be no obvious right and wrong answer for how best to carry out conservation in practice. So here are a few of my thoughts on the subject.

It can seem to be a bit simpler if you are able to focus just upon one species. 'Help save the Trees/Tigers/Three Toed Sloth (please delete as applicable)' is a classic approach but nothing exists in isolation. I well remember the Lynchmere Society's original appeal coming through my letterbox - 'Help us save the Lynchmere Commons'. That raised a lot of questions in my mind. What? How? Why? and Who? Normally to save something you need to know what it is you are trying to achieve - what are we trying to conserve? But it seemed a good idea at the time and I paid up - and look where that got me!



It does make me smile when the bat-people, the bird-people, the flower-people, the reptile-people and Uncle Tom Cobley and all tell me just how they think a site should be managed. Rarely is it that simple - very few sites are managed just for the benefit of one species above others - and normally conservation involves a balanced approach. Raising the number of species that a site supports is called increasing the Biodiversity and supporting a wider range of plants and animals is a good conservation objective.

It's not just about biodiversity either. Nowadays there is always Environmental Conservation to consider. Often they do go hand in hand but sometimes they can seem to be in conflict. I am often asked why we are cutting down trees on the commons when growing trees is good for the environment? The short answer is that reducing the number of trees restores the rare heathland species and can result in an increase in Biodiversity. If we can use the wood produced as fuel and products in the local economy then it's carbon neutral provided we grow more trees. Most of the time it's hard to stop them growing on the commons.



Conservation sites like the Lynchmere Commons did not just appear overnight. They have been fashioned over hundreds, and often thousands of years by people of local communities as a

workplace and more recently as a recreational amenity and they have become an integral part of the local landscape. The landscape of the Western Weald is recognised to be special enough that it has been included in the South Downs National Park.

The history of a site and its association with the local community can be very useful in learning how best to conserve the site for a sustainable future (sustainability is another buzz word - and perhaps they'll ask me to write about that next?) Conserving the landscape together with its history and archaeology have been high priorities for our work on the commons, though they don't tend to get as much funding as biodiversity aspects. As a local conservation group our volunteers have been leading our work. It's good to see that these aspects of conservation are now being given more prominence and I think that they have been a key to our success in managing the commons and recently the traditional wildflower meadows of the Ridgcap fields as well.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Chris Pooley writes:

Until a few years ago sphagnum moss was harvested in the Oaken Bottom area. I spoke to a man from Whitehill gathering there for the funeral, floristry trade. He recalled supplying Connaught Hospital on Bramshott Chase. He believed it was used for wound dressing as he was told it had antiseptic properties.

Mrs Martineau of Moses Hill Farm remembered during the War sitting at a table with others picking sphagnum moss clean of debris, for wound dressing she believed.

REPTILES

- Eva Venny writes:

Those of you who know Liphook may have noticed that Taylor Wimpey Homes are about to develop the remaining rough ground between Canada Way and Beaver Industrial Estate. As part of their planning permission they had to ensure that any reptiles on site would be translocated. Land on Stanley Common was chosen as a suitable receptor site and improved accordingly by us. In January 2013 self-seeded birches were felled, bare earth scrapes created and hibernacula (log piles) built.



In the summer of 2013 authorised ecologists then spent 45 days collecting any reptiles they could find and transferred them to Stanley Common.

In total 361 Slow worms and 132 Common Lizards were transferred with the highlight being a melanistic (all black) Common Lizard.

We hope that these new residents will flourish and be yet another beneficiary of our continued management of the Commons.

'Our' melanistic Common Lizard

ARE YOU CLEARING A HOUSE?

CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL HISTORY?

Don't know what to do with all the 'stuff'? Please consider submitting any collections of documents, maps and other material or records to your local archive group who are dedicating themselves to extending your local archive. Please contact Nic Mann on 01428 642359 or nicmann86@yahoo.co.uk

WET WINTER AND TREES FALLING

- Mark Allery writes:

'The succession of winter storms left us with well over 100 trees fallen across the Commons, caused both by the very high speed gusts of winds and the waterlogged roots. Early in the New Year I mapped over 30 trees down in the small triangle formed by the B2131 and the Lynchmere and Hammer lanes. Mostly they fell in out of the way places, but a good number across paths, tracks, Rights of Way, fencelines, boundaries and even over the new Disabled Path. There were several down in the short stretch of bridleway from the B2131 to the ponds on Lynchmere Common. A few were across the roads and the B2131 was blocked after the Christmas Eve and Valentine storms.

The task of clearing these fallen trees was in addition to the full Winter Work Programme. We prioritised the clearing, - first the roads (where we could do so safely - and thank you to the West Sussex Police in their Landrover who assisted me on Christmas Eve) - then Rights of Way and then any trees which were dangerously close to paths and tracks. Because of the great number, we dealt with the urgent ones first and will cope with the rest later. In some cases access was difficult in the waterlogged conditions, so those had to wait. Our planned winter work finished at the end of March at the start of the growing and nesting season, but trees can and will fall at any time so the work will go on but with appropriate care for wildlife.'

DONATION

We would like to thank Charlotte Spensley and family for giving the Society such a generous gift from the collection taken at her brother Ben Horne's funeral at St Peter's, which, including a few later cheques, came to over £350. Their father, Robin, was Vicar here in the 1970s when they were growing up.

A REMINDER TO DOG WALKERS

Please do remember that the Commons we love so much are, primarily, a Local Nature Reserve, and the nesting season is now upon us, so dogs should not be roaming freely through the scrub between March and July.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We are working at getting and keeping our website more up to date – please have a look at it occasionally and feel free to get in touch with any comments. Anybody who wants to get involved with this or the volunteer blog please contact Eva Venny (01428 725767)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Those Trustees who are due to retire by rotation are Richard Appleby, Chris Pooley and Lou Searight, and they are all willing to continue.

Trustees: Richard Appleby, Nic Mann, Laura Ponsonby, Chris Pooley, Judy Rous, Ian Russell, Louise Searight, Peter Searight

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 Dogsboddy: Eva Venny (01428 725767)

Trees: Mark Allery (01428 641708)

Wardens

Marley Common: Chris Pooley (01428 653034)

Burkitt Fields: Chris Pooley (01428 653034)

Stanley Common: Roy Wolfe (01730 821290)

Lynchmere Commons: Judy Rous and Louise Searight

Winter Work Programme: Roy Wolfe (01730 821290)

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