



## The Lynchmere Society

**Lynchmere's D-Day link**- *from Adrienne Blaikie, Robert Lochner's daughter*

"Calm the Waves" was the personal request from Churchill in 1942. The tallest order, you may think, since King Canute tried to stem the tide – and failed! On this occasion, however, failure was certainly not an option. In order to halt the relentless invasion of Northern France by the Germans, there had to be some way of protecting the vast supplies of men and equipment that were needed and they had to land on the beaches of Normandy.

At this time my father, when war broke out, had government's Development Department specialist unit was made up scientific minds, charged specific wartime problems, many. Led by Lord 'Wheezers and Dodgers' as included Sir William Wallis, among many team of scientists and mathematicians like himself and it was for them to solve this specific problem.



Robert Lochner tests the first prototype of the Bombardon on the trout pond at Rat's Castle. Shottersmill.

having joined the RNVR been seconded to the Miscellaneous Weapons in Portsmouth. This of the Country's greatest with the task of solving of which there were Mountbatten, the "Mad they were known, Penney and Barnes others. My father led a

Fortunately, for my father problems didn't exist. They were challenges and there to be solved. This one did cause him some sleepless nights (according to my mother! But it was here at Rats Castle one evening, whilst having a bath, that he was playing around with one of those face flannels that were in the shape of a bag. He filled it with water and held it on the surface, rippling the water on one side. The water on the other side remained still and at that moment he knew the answer to the problem. Leaping from the bath shouting, "Eureka, I've got it" he and my mother rushed to an out-house where there was an old lilo. They folded it to make a tube shape, attaching an iron pipe as a

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**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Shulbrede Priory Open Days:** Sunday and Monday 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August

**Barbecue at Shulbrede Priory:** Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August. £2 per head, and Members' guests are welcome – as are contributions for dessert, able to be eaten with fingers.

**West Sussex Archive Society Conference:** Fernhurst Village Hall. Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October, "The North-West Corner of West Sussex – A Revealing View of its Past". The Society will have a small display and provide three speakers.

**Extra Log Day :** Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October – as a result of last winter's storms.

**Autumn Talk:** Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October, Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall, Hammer, 7.30 pm for 8.00 pm. Peter Searight, our own Gold Medal winning photographer, "Lynchmere Commons – Magic on your doorstep". £2 per head for non-members.

**Volunteer Dates** for Winter Working Parties are enclosed for Members in Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex.

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keel. With this and an old cricket bat (he played for Essex County) they rushed down the lawn to the pond and floated the lilo, making waves with the bat. Sure enough,, it worked again and Churchill's brief, which had seemed so difficult, was in the early stages of a solution. Mulberry Harbour was born!

The first official prototype of the Bombardon Floating Breakwater was ready to go. My father flew to Washington to the Quebec conference for a meeting with Churchill and Roosevelt to present his invention. After that it was flat-out to complete all the tests. This amazing structure consisted of partially submerged concrete blocks containing air pockets to keep them afloat. The Caissons themselves were built in the U.K. by 20,000 men and rigorously tested in various top-secret locations around the country. In 1943, they were ready to be transported to the D-Day beaches in an operation known as "Overlord" led by Admiral Tennant. This hugely difficult task was made more challenging by the worst storm in the channel for 40 years, but the Bombardons withstood all that nature threw at them and remained intact. Once in place they formed a sheltered harbour (Mulberry) so that vast numbers of men and supplies could land safely on the beaches on June 6 1944.

He was a truly remarkable man, and inspirational and much loved husband and father – David (his grandson) and I are so proud of him.

### **Shulbrede Priory - Part 1**      **- Laura Ponsonby writes:**

Shulbrede Priory is one of the most interesting houses in Lynchmere and certainly the oldest, being founded in 1190 for Augustinian canons.

Over the years many people have visited and written about Shulbrede. Arthur Ponsonby, Kate's and my grandfather, first saw Shulbrede in 1902 and immediately fell in love with it. His wife Dorothea or Dolly (Hubert Parry's elder daughter) wrote in her diary - "Arthur scouring the country in



search of our country house (on his bicycle). A. looked in on the Midhurst Agent to inquire if they had anything suitable – they presented him with one house – the description of which raised hopes in our heart. A. went off to see it next day. He came back to me in bed (*she was always resting!*) panting with excitement (sic) & described certainly the most ideal house I had ever heard of. My first expedition to the house will remain forever engraved on my memory. We went by train

to Liphook on rather a dull day, but when we reached Liphook the sun came out & we drove in a little Victoria (eating our Luncheon) through the most absolutely beautiful country up & down steep winding hilly lanes on to a common covered with purple heather & with a fabulously extensive view of far away blue hills. We got to Lynchmere the village & proceeded to drive down the steepest hill it has ever been my lot to go down – at the bottom was a small rough common or green – known as the marsh with a pond & a stream – dotted about were very old cottages of redbrick & thatch with luscious gardens filled with scarlet flox(sic). A little further on one saw a curious hill or hump composed of beech trees on a small hill, very soft and round, which excited my admiration. Under this hump seen from a distance was a house "Shulbrede Priory" our house.

## **A bit about our grazier!**

**- Lou Searight writes :**

Dave Izard was born on a farm. His father was a farmer and so Dave has always worked the land, in the Surrey/Sussex area. After school, he started milking cows and did so for 14 years. Then he moved down our way and was Foreman for one of the Sainsbury brothers on a property of 2000 acres. There were 120 cows, 400 beef, 300 or so sheep, 2,000 tons of potatoes and 800 tons of wheat, so that kept him busy to say the least!

His next move, after Mr Sainsbury died, was working with the National Trust with Belted Galloway cows on Woolbeding, which is how he found out about The Lynchmere Society.

He then bought some Sussex cows for himself, once he retired. This is Dave's second year with us and the young cows came back onto the Common in April, while the older ones, who had spent the winter in the field with the bull, have recently had five lovely calves (see picture).



Dave is thrilled to be able to have his cows on the common since it is so close to his smallholding, near Midhurst. Quote "It is lovely to be able to be here. I am a one man band and it is a pleasure to come and check on them every day".

Descended from draught oxen, long used on the Weald they were selectively bred from the late 18th century to form a modern beef breed which is now used in many countries around the world. They have a thin summer coat and many sweat glands, but grow a thick coat in winter, so they are suited to both hot summers and cold winters. They have a placid temperament and do well on land such as ours, eating quantities of brambles and birch as well as the grass and trampling the bracken which weakens it for the following year.

## **Volunteers Working – what it is all about!** - Mark Allery writes :

An enthusiastic team of Volunteers leads the Society's practical conservation work on the land (woodland and heathland, fields and orchard) that the Society owns and maintains.

Organised Volunteer working tasks mostly take place over the winter months (October to March) – all are welcome with a wide range of tasks across all ages and activities (children need to be accompanied by a responsible adult).

The dates are published in the Society newsletter, parish magazine and on the Society's website and the volunteer's blog site.

Please join in and learn practical conservation skills, local and natural history, get exercise in the open air and contribute to the management of the commons, fields and orchards. It is great fun and a wonderful feeling of camaraderie so come and join us. Let's face it...there is nothing quite like a jolly good bonfire!

The commons are a Local Nature Reserve and are managed under a Higher Level Stewardship grant from Natural England – it's important that all volunteer working is coordinated with the Society's management plan.

For volunteers who are working on the organised winter dates there are also opportunities to work on the commons throughout the year on ad-hoc organised tasks and also occasionally working individually on the commons at simple tasks. Our Volunteer Wardens are Chris Pooley, Louise Searight, Judy Rous, Roy Wolfe and Mark Allery

Besides the more physical aspects of the winter work programme we are always keen to hear from anybody who might want to help with the newsletter, website, archives, possible surveys or simply record what they see on the commons on their travels.

## **Botanical Surveys**

**- Eva Venny writes:**

A few weeks ago a group of interested volunteers enjoyed a day's plant identification training courtesy of Senior National Trust Ranger at the lovely Swan Barn in Haslemere. We (hopefully) learnt a lot and have started to put this newly gained knowledge into action. We want to build on Laura Ponsonby's expert work over the years and although we are mere beginners we hope this will spread the load of building a picture of the different plant communities on our land.

If you are interested to join us please contact me via the website or call 01428 725767.



## **Bracken**

**- Lou Searight writes:**

We curse it and hit it and slash it and beat it but it isn't **all** bad!!

One year I used it to suffocate the weeds around my courgettes and it worked a treat and mulched the soil at the same time.

Our Chairman puts a pile of freshly pulled bracken onto the freshly cut stump of the invasive *Ponticum rhododendron* and there is hardly ever a sign of regrowth (the ptaquiloside must be busy at work!).

Here's a little bit of info about the composting virtues of bracken.

Bracken can be successfully composted to produce a mulching or growing material, using either summercut or autumn cut material, although the less lignified summer cut material composts much more quickly taking only about 4-5 months. Freshly cut heaps should be turned frequently to encourage the aerobic microbial activity, which is required for composting and consequently the breakdown of ptaquiloside.

It is not necessary to add fertilizer to achieve successful composting, but a low pH material can be produced more quickly this way. The composted bracken is then probably best used mixed with other materials such as loam, coir or manure to enhance its water holding capacity when used as a growing medium. It is suitable without any further treatment as a mulch. It has even been successfully mixed with sheep's wool!

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)

Stanley Common: Roy Wolfe (01730 821290)

Lynchmere Commons: Judy Rous and Louise Searight

Work Programme: Mark Allery (01428 641708)

**See also** Web Site [www.thelynchmeresociety.org](http://www.thelynchmeresociety.org) & Volunteer Blog: <http://lynchmerecommons.wordpress.com>