



The Lynchmere Society

Ex-Chairman (almost) Judy Rous

Like every one of us, and every organisation, the last two years have had their difficulties, but this – our first proper newsletter since 2021 – comes with good news for the future of our Society and its aims.

We have a major injection of talent and, as you will see from the enclosed page giving details of our new Trustees and our new “Chairman-elect” who has given so much thought in his “Vision” for the way forward. It is very exciting to be handing on the baton to such an excellent team.

Lynchmere Society: A Vision for Building on Success (2023-2029)

Mike McCart (Chair Designate)

I would like to share the Vision for Building on Success which I believe the Trustees and Membership could deliver together.

It is informed by what I heard and learnt from my 1;1’s with the existing Trustees, and others closely associated with the Society’s work, earlier in the year as well as my own thoughts on the scale of ambition I believe we should aspire to.

Clarity of Charitable Purpose

What is Lynchmere Society?

Lynchmere Society is a charity that owns 150Ha (357 Acres) of land comprising:

- 128 Ha (307 Acres) of four registered commons extending from Marley Common, across Lynchmere Common, to Stanley Common. All are designated as Local Nature Reserves and Access Land.
- 22 Ha (50 Acres) of five fields of traditional wildflower hay meadows and grazing pastures together with a field leased from Cowdray.

What is Lynchmere Society For?

The purpose of the Society to maintain the good stewardship of the natural environment with the primary focus to protect, preserve and maintain the sustainable environmental conservation of its land. Rare habitats and important local reserves of biodiversity can be found in the Society’s Lowland Heath, Woodland and Wood Pastures, species rich traditional Wildflower Meadows and Pastures, Traditional Orchard, Hedgerows, Boundary Banks and Historical features on the site such as barns.

Who is Lynchmere Society For?

Within the constraints of its environmental objectives, for which it receives government grants, the Society makes the commons accessible to everyone to:

- Promote training, education and understanding of conservation management, the history of the site and the habitats it contains.
- Encourage local participation in the conservation and management of the site.
- Contribute to the improvement of the local community's general wellbeing and mental health

What I hope we will have achieved within my first three-year term

Within my first three-year term I hope we will have achieved the following:

Governance

The Society's governance arrangements are 20 years old. We need to bring them up to date to comply with the latest Charity Commission Guidance. The Charity Commission also encourages charities to use names that reflect their purpose, location, and charitable status. An example, for us might be Lynchmere Conservation Trust.

Financial Budgeting and Controls and Asset Management

Financially sustainability is key. We must forward plan to meet both our Natural England grant obligations and invest in new activities to deliver our wider charitable objects and public benefits such as improve public knowledge of the habitat, how to protect and enhance them and the encouragement of education, training, learning and participation. We must make financial provision for the lifecycle maintenance of the buildings and machinery as well as new capital projects such as the proposed Pole Barn at Roundabouts Field.

Land Management and Winter Work Plans

We have established a Land Management Committee led by the Deputy Chair. The Committee will take stock of what we have achieved over the past 27 years, benchmark the current condition of the commons and meadows, and lead an annual rolling 5-year management plan in line with our grant obligations to Natural England. We will also create a Woodland Management Plan in partnership with the Forestry Commission. This will be complemented by a comprehensive benchmark report setting out the historic and current biodiversity created by our habitat with a plan to update it every 10 years from 2024.

We will continue to have a sustainable grazing partnership with the Cow Club.

Membership, Marketing and Digital

The growth and development of the membership will be of key strategic significance to our future. We will update our website which will be accessed directly and through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, to engage a younger generation interested in the environment.

We will develop a more systematic approach to website information that is exciting and informative and linked to a clear strategy to retain interest of existing members and attract new ones. There will be a new visual identity and imagery to express the ambition, physically at entrances to the commons and on digital platforms.

Volunteer Days

Volunteer days will continue to be fun and popular but with a stronger educational remit. This will strengthen our community support and be the foundation upon which we will be able to lobby for continued public funding.

Partnerships

We will strengthen our partnerships with the South Downs National Park, National Trust, Natural England, and Forestry Commission.

We would also like to search out new partners who share our values and who could help us deliver our charitable objects. This will include those experienced in running rural apprentice training schemes, environmental educational site workshops and wellbeing programmes to improve mental health.

Questions For Members to Consider:

- 1. **Is this vision heading in the right direction?**
- 2. **Are we making the most of the opportunities?**
- 3. **How could we improve our communication with members?**
- 4. **What skills do you have that could help deliver this vision?**
- 5. **How often do you walk the Commons, where do you walk, and could you be our eyes and ears for anything that needs attention?**

Dates for the Diary

Marley Heath volunteer dates		Members and Non Members welcome
10am to 12pm with refreshment provided		
2023	2024	
Sunday 29 October	Sunday 28 January	
Sunday 26 November	Sunday 25 February	

Lynchmere Common volunteer dates		Members welcome
10am to 4pm with refreshment provided		
2023		Lead by the South Downs National Park
Tuesday 14 November		

Volunteer dates for winter work parties for Lynchmere and Stanley Commons will be published on the website shortly, and also for “log day”

The Hay

Edwin Brookes



At long last we were able to start our hay harvest in late August. To promote flower growth in the hay meadows we don't start cutting hay until mid-July. This gives the flowers a chance to set their seed but runs the risk of missing the good weather.

Luckily, the recent burst of sunshine has enabled us to make some great hay. Roundabout field has a very thick crop this year and we gathered 500 bales on Thursday 7th September. We will have made over 1000 bales this year most of which will be sold locally, retaining some to feed the belted Galloway cattle when they come off the common in the winter.

Cow Club

Gareth Hopkins

It was a very sad start to the year for Cow Club with the loss of our wonderful cow looker Cherry who passed away and is greatly missed, her husband Rod has continued as a valuable member of our 'looker team' along with the fantastic Jo and Gary.

The management of the herd this year has been shared by a 'steering group' meeting regularly to ensure the cattle have the best care and the herd and land they live on are managed as carefully as possible with three professional stockmen checking the cows alongside the amazing volunteers.

The cows have been fantastic on the commons and really making up for lost time by grazing the new birch growth, the bramble and the gorse. Only one mishap occurred as one of our favourite cows accidentally managed to injure her leg on the common and sadly had to be put down. Her injury had been very quickly spotted by a member of the public who rang and so she was brought in within hours of the injury where she was seen very quickly by the vet. The vet suggested she may have slipped or caught her leg in a hole. This is a rare occurrence that is not preventable and simply goes along with the free ranging life the cows enjoy. Over in the Lynchmere Society fields by mare barn, helping to manage a lovely mix of flowers and insect life walkers will have seen our three young steers and, everyone's favourite, our calf 'Daenarys' with her 'dam' and a couple of companions. The steers will soon be ready to mix with the rest of the herd and will be eventually joining the heath grazing cows to help out on the commons in the future.



For more information, please visit lynchmeregrazing.com and sign up as a member as the team are currently working on a newsletter with much more information and detail and some dates for the diary.

Bracken clearing



Volunteers from London

Lynchmere resident David Bateman, Chief Investment Officer of REIT Primary Health Properties PLC volunteered some of his team's muscle power to help clear bracken on the Commons as part of his Company's commitment to their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda.

The Lynchmere Society owns and manages the fifth largest area of heathland in West Sussex across Stanley, Lynchmere and Marley commons. Heathland needs constant management so it can continue to exist while providing an important natural wildlife habitat. Preventing the invasion of indigenous plant species is crucial to protect the rare environment.

The group of ten were given an introductory talk by local conservation expert Mark Allery on the history of the area and the Commons and why native species such as bracken, gorse and birch, which are no longer 'cropped', need volunteers – and cattle – to support the biodiversity.

Very many thanks to all – we hope they will come again!

(Following their successful day PHP said that they would like to make a financial contribution to the work of the Society, and it was agreed that their donation would go towards the new Pole Barn.)

South Downs National Park volunteers

We have again had two days from the SDNP – a team of 10 on 4 July, and the Wednesday team on 12 July. Some members have been coming for several years and are always welcome.

A team of 20 will be coming for a day on 20 September. This is late in the year for bracken management so will include scrub clearance of birch and gorse etc. A group this size will be a seriously helpful start to the Winter Work programme!

Our grateful thanks go to all of the above. Your help is so much appreciated.

Lynchmere Society Volunteer Memorial Tree Service

Mike McCart



Lynchmere Society volunteers, family, and neighbours gathered on Marley Common at 11am on Sunday 16 October to plant a tree in memory of Sarah Bailey who died last year aged 54.

Sarah was a very keen volunteer and provided all the refreshments for those working on Marley. Putting a chocoholic in charge of refreshments was an inspirational idea and may have been one of the reasons why the number of Marley volunteers had increased over recent years.

Sarah also got huge enjoyment from walking on all the Society's commons at the weekend's and during the week when she wasn't consumed by her high-powered job with Apple.

In conjunction with the Society (Mark Allery), the family selected a Field Maple (*Acer Campestre*). It is the British Isles' only native maple tree - producing stunning maple colours in the autumn.

Everyone was invited to drop a dried rose petal from Sarah funeral service into the tree hole prior to planting. Then the Rev Nicholas Haigh, who was with Sarah at the end, led a short service to bless the tree.



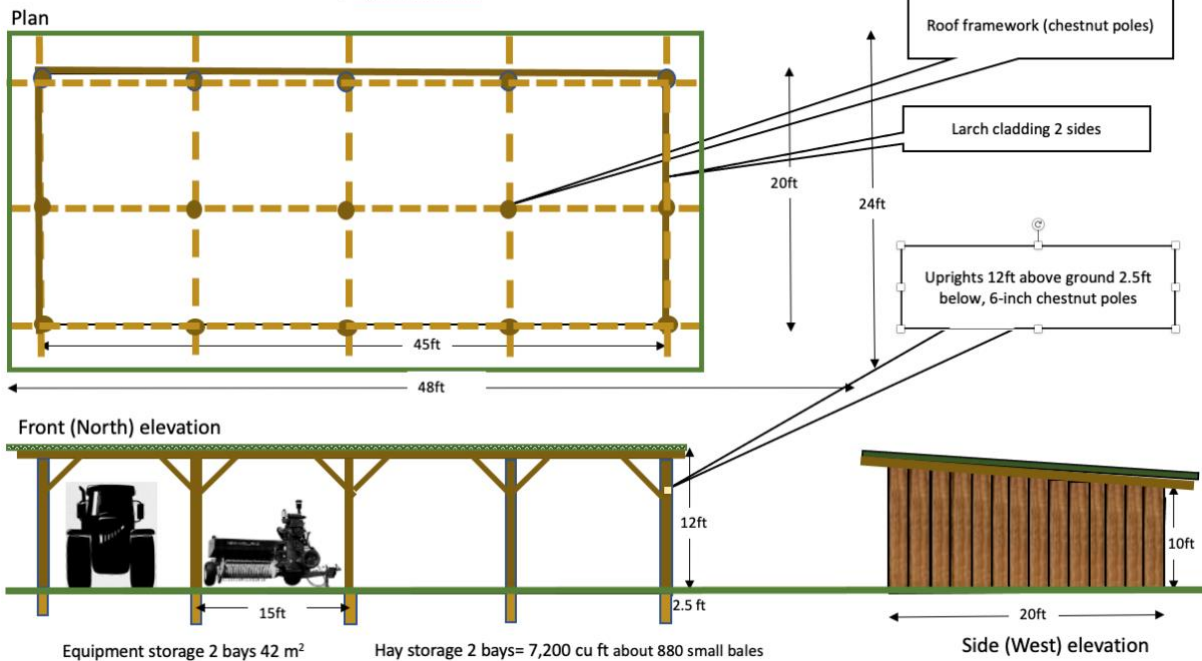
Plans for a pole shed

Christopher Tibbs

Each year the society makes up to 1000 bale of hay mostly in Roundabouts but also in our other fields on the Ridge in rotation. Although a fair amount of the hay we make is sold off the field we like to store apportion of it as winter feed for our cattle. Until now we have made a stack in Roundabouts and stored the rest in Mare barn. We also have a fair amount of hay making and other equipment and our tractor. The old cow shed by the barn is not ideal for large modern equipment and many items are left outside, including the tractor, for much of the year.

The proposal is that we should build a “pole barn” in Roundabouts to accommodate both hay and equipment. The name refers to the construction being of un-sawn timber, often telegraph poles or similar. It is an ancient construction technique with the feet of the poles dug into the ground to anchor the structure. We hope that our barn will be constructed of local timber, chestnut poles and larch cladding from the fallen and leaning trees in the rews between our fields. These were originally planted in 1908 so many of the trees are at or post maturity.

Pole barn: Roundabouts field, Lynchmere V2



We are very grateful to Primary Heath Properties for their donation towards the cost of the Pole Barn.



Oak Decline

Mark Allery



Oak tree in the Danley valley

Recently it seems we've been deluged with diseases. Tree diseases no exception. Ash die-back, spread by the *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* fungus, which originated in Asia is probably the most noticeable and tragic. Luckily the poor acidic soil on the commons means that we have few ash trees to lose. Not so oak trees, there are quite a few oak trees on the commons. Some remarkable ones, often on the boundary banks and a lot in the woodland pasture around the edges. Unfortunately, in recent years a number of oak trees on the commons have shown signs of sudden decline, where the crown dies back and typically the bark cracks around the base of the tree. More often than not the tree falls over before it is fully dead.

Forest Research (part of what was the Forestry Commission) have named the disease Acute Oak Decline. It's still not

entirely clear what is causing the oak to decline, it's thought to be bacterial, and probably doesn't cause the tree to die on its own. But where the trees are already stressed, and because of the poor soil on the commons they often are stressed by drought, flood, cold and heat then the trees becomes weakened and may allow other diseases, typically common species of fungus, to further stress the tree eventually causing it to fall or die.

Sudden Oak Death and Phytophthora

Acute Oak Decline is not to be confused with Sudden Oak Death, a disease caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*, a kind of fungus like mould, which attacks a number of tree species in the UK. There are plenty of Phytophthora to go around, with several species that attack plants and trees in the UK. Ramorum disease typically attacks larch and increasingly sweet chestnut in the South of England, unlike in USA where it widely attacks oak trees. it's thought that the main oak species in the UK (pendunculate and sessile oaks) are less susceptible to Sudden Oak Death.

Oak Processionary Moth

You may have seen the Oak Processionary Moth in the news in the last few months. Primarily because the caterpillars can be a hazard to the health of the trees, people and animals. The tiny hairs on the caterpillars which detach and are blown in the wind are toxic irritants, causing rashes and irritation. So best avoided. Luckily they have not been reported close to Lynchmere. But if you do see any caterpillars or nests on or around oak trees then do stay away from them. The main risk season is from June to early August when the caterpillars move in a characteristic nose to tail procession along the ground and on the trunks of oak trees. In case of sighting more advice can be found on the Surrey County Council Website.

We rarely fell oak trees and then not unless we have to. If you see any oak that have been felled it will be because they have become dangerous due to disease. The good news is that there are still lots of majestic oaks on the commons, and particularly gnarly old oaks on the boundary banks that have been around for a few hundred years - and hopefully will remain so for a long while yet. Do look out for them when you are out walking.