



## The Lynchmere Society

### Richard Naylor (1944 - 2021). Trees, Landrovers and working with Richard

Mark Allery



*Richard (with Colin) demonstrating pale-making at the Weald and Downland Museum*

Richard Naylor was a hard-working member of our team of volunteers for many years. If there was work to be done, cutting scrub on the commons, trimming hedges, clearing trees, mending fences or making hay on the fields, come rain or shine Richard would be there. And if there was machinery to fix, so much the better. He liked nothing more than a mechanical puzzle. Richard started out working in the woods and coppicing chestnut around Marley, Blackdown, Lynchmere, Stanley and Hollycombe. often with rudimentary equipment which would breakdown frequently in the middle of the woods and there was no choice but to fix it. Richard's vast knowledge of machinery was entirely self-taught, learnt on the job. He had a gift for mending machines that others had broken, and could often be seen with his head deep in the innards of tractor, baler or stripping down a chainsaw. He could fix just about any car, the older the better, though he specialised in 4x4's and kept many a local tree

surgeon and woodsman's truck on the road. But old Landrovers were his passion. Colin Hampton, who learnt much of his coppice skill whilst working for Richard, told me that they would cut chestnut all morning then at lunchtime he'd have to help Richard fix a Landrover gearbox before returning to cutting chestnut for the rest of the day.

I don't remember when I first met Richard, it was probably around 20 years ago, but I do remember where. At the time Richard was running his own one-man mechanic's garage from an old Nissen hut out at North Lodge Farm off the Hollycombe road. I'd just taken on the repair of an old 1960's Landrover which had been lying neglected for many years and Richard agreed to fix the mechanics and MOT it, provided that I fixed the 'lectrics. Richard was never so fond of the electricals. Richard was always very busy with work, he didn't like not being busy. I don't think he was very impressed with my efforts as I struggled to clear out years of birds nests from the old wiring. Despite our different approaches we became firm friends. We didn't always agree and Richard did not suffer fools gladly to say the least, but we got on surprisingly well and Richard became my Landrover guru. When he decided to retire and close down the mechanics business, I suggested that he come and help us on the commons and fields knowing that we needed his skills with both trees and machines. I think Richard liked being back in the woods again, and took to working with the volunteers and our winter work gang - some of whom he'd known through fixing their vehicles over many years. Richard enjoyed teaching John Craven to cut young birch for besom-broom making with a bill-hook, or hand-bill as he called it, on the day that Countryfile spent with us on Lynchmere Common. As well as working hard on volunteer days, Richard would always come out to help fix machinery whenever needed. I well remember one snowy winters day on Stanley common whilst working with Robin Barnes and his mini-digger the tractor refused to start. Richard was with us within 15 minutes trundling up the farm track over the snow in his Landrover. His tools were always in the back, just in case. After a few minutes, head inside the engine bay, with an adjustable spanner and then a light tap with a hammer the tractor started up as if nothing had ever been wrong.



*Stacking Hay Bales in Roundabout Field*

In the last couple of years, Richard underwent a lot of treatment and then surgery for cancer on multiple occasions. It hardly seemed to slow him down, and he worked tirelessly with me on my Landrovers, with Richard Appleby on the fencing and with Colin Hampton where Richard's old skills making chestnut laths and pales were put to good use. Indeed it seemed he was still working with us only weeks before he died, and so it was a shock for all of us when he went. I do miss his advice and company every day, but I also treasure the knowledge and experience I gained from working with him. It was a privilege. Thank you Richard.



It's been a busy year for the cows. After a successful reintroduction to the Little Common, they returned to the Lynchmere Society fields where they did a bit of grazing to help bring the hay crop on. This was followed by a visit from "Kinsman" the bull who stayed with them for over two months. With luck we will have calves in the spring. The new handling system, bought with grant money from the Heathlands Reunited Project, has made handling much easier and safer.

The AGM was a great success. It was held at Mare Barn. We had a barbecue of meat kindly donated by Gareth and Dave from their own animals and salads from 'Ed's Veg'. Our members had a chance to meet the cows and check out our new equipment. Many thanks to those who attended and gave such valuable input into the discussion.

A steer donated by Gareth was sent to slaughter on 21 September. Beef boxes will be available in early October. Members can register their interest by emailing Cow Club on [info@lynchmeregrazing.com](mailto:info@lynchmeregrazing.com). Visiting the website [www.lynchmeregrazing.com](http://www.lynchmeregrazing.com) is the best way to find out more about becoming a member.



*Dave, Gareth and Vet Sarah with the cows in the new handling system*

Bracken has a well-deserved reputation as a persistent and invasive plant. In many continental countries it is largely restricted to woodlands as the colder winters damage the rhizome and prevent it from colonising open ground. It will grow almost anywhere but thrives in the mild and moist climate of the British Isles and on the poor acidic soils of the low-land heaths where it tends to take over. Unfortunately, a milder and moister climate - where we appear to be heading - will only encourage it further and the last few years have certainly all been good for prolific bracken growth.

For centuries bracken was a valuable crop and the right to cut areas of bracken were awarded by commons stewards. Local place names such as Fernhurst, Farnham and Farncombe record the prevalence of the Fern. Initially burnt to produce an ash rich in potassium, it was used in the glass industry, then to produce lye and soaps, as a thatching material and always as animal bedding and afterwards as a valuable compost thanks to its potassium content and the added nitrogen.

Over many years we've tried many methods of managing the growth and spread of bracken. We've tractor mowed and flailed, rolled, cut, scythed, trampled, whacked and pulled by hand. While we want to prevent bracken from dominating it is also a valuable habitat. We have tried to minimise the use of sprays because of the effects of the chemicals on other plants, on the animal, insect and birdlife that exists around and within the bracken and also the metabolite residue that is left in the ground. Our conclusion is that there is no single best way to manage bracken, at least not on our site, and due to the varied terrain, ground conditions, weather, and the limited resources we have we need to use all the options open to us.

Although it's very labour intensive we have found that pulling bracken by hand is one of the most successful options in the long term. We first started pulling bracken by hand over 20 years ago as one of the first tasks we undertook on the commons. Bracken is a persistent plant, but it can be beaten and all you need is to be more persistent than the plant. On the small common (the triangular area bounded by the B2131, the Lynchmere and Hammer Hill roads) there are areas where bracken has been consistently managed pulled by a small group of volunteers with occasional paid summer workers. The progress has been gradual and hard to judge from season to season but after many years the effect is quite clear, and the area managed and free of bracken has expanded significantly over many acres. The results are quite exceptional and have contributed hugely to the improvement of the habitat and biodiversity.



*Photo 1*



*Photo 2*



*Photo 3*

Photos showing bracken managed by pulling on the small common. In the first photo the bracken has been pushed back in the woodland fringe allowing heather growth up to the edge of the woodland. In the second photo the open area shows an excellent varied habitat including good heather growth, and third photo shows an area where the birch has been thinned out and bracken managed by pulling, allowing acid grassland to return and grazing will continue to benefit this habitat.

It would be great to extend this work to the area of the large common adjacent to the main entrance and the access path out to the viewpoint and bench. Pulling bracken as you walk is not difficult or hard and it can be left in small piles for later collection. It's good exercise and a great way to contribute just a little bit to the conservation of the commons and improve the habitat and biodiversity. You don't need to ask to pull bracken. You are welcome to start whenever you can and if you would like a 'whacker' - a simple club with a metal tip which enables you to bruise or cut the stems as they grow - just ask and we can provide them.

## **Heathlands Reunited**

**Emma Stanbury**

In 2016, eleven organisations led by the South Downs National Park Authority joined forces to form the Heathlands Reunited Partnership. With a generous grant from the National Lottery Fund, the project aimed to recreate, reconnect and restore the existing 1% of heathland remaining in the South Downs National Park.

As the project comes to an end, we are reflecting on its achievements. As well as inspiring people to visit their local heathlands and learn more about them, the Partners have been encouraged to manage their land to sustain rare wildlife species and create corridors linking up pockets of heathland to increase bio-diversity. Capital works - such as introducing grazing cattle and removing invasive non-native species - have been funded. Heathland is a habitat which requires active management – as we well know!

*(Our Society has benefited from the Partnership – as has the “Cow Club” – not only from some generous funding, but from meeting others and exchanging news and views and problems! We are pleased that Colin Carre and Emma Stanbury are staying on with the National Park and will continue to work on the HeRe Legacy as well as other activities. Kate Dziubinska (Ranger) is also a great help, and hopefully – Covid permitting – she will be able to bring the SDNP Volunteers to work on the Commons some days this winter).*

## **Barbecue at Shulbrede Priory**

By kind invitation on the Russell family around 40 members and guests enjoyed an early-evening barbecue in the Priory garden on 4 September. The sausages were cooked to perfection by Richard Appleby and Cyril Ellis and it was good to see so many friendly faces after so many months in isolation - including Michael Tibbs our dear Life-President and Founder in sparkling form in the run-up to his centenary. Many thanks indeed to Kate and Ian.



## **Annual General Meeting – (Covid Permitting)**

Friday 22 October, Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall, 7.30 for 8.00 pm. Followed by a talk by Mike Edwards (**also depending on Covid**) – “Decline of Bees – fact or fiction”.

The Trustees who were/are due to retire by rotation are **Richard Appleby, Chris Pooley, Louise Searight** and **Chris Summers** in 2020, and **Ian Russell** this year. All of them are happy to serve another three year term. In addition, **David Knapp** has kindly agreed become a Trustee.

**WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF MEMBERS PLANNING TO ATTEND WOULD NOTIFY THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY IN ADVANCE, AS – DEPENDING ON NUMBERS AND ON COVID - WE MIGHT HAVE TO ARRANGE THE HALL TO COMPLY WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING.**

**Volunteers’ Working Parties** – A list of dates, sites and Leaders will be available shortly. The next **LOG DAY** will be Sunday 3 October – contact Richard Appleby on 01428 643086.

### Management Committee

Life President: Michael Tibbs

Trustees: Richard Appleby, Chris Pooley, Judy Rous, Ian Russell, Louis Searight, Peter Searight, Chris Summers

Chairman: Judy Rous (01428 723251)

Treasurer: Peter Searight (01428 723251)

Company Secretary: Ian Russell (01428 653049)

Membership: Louise Searight (01428 723715)

Barn: Richard Appleby (01428 643086)

Winter Work Programme: Lowell Wolfe (07732 255102)

Database: Rodney Sutton (01428 652731)

Birds: Chris Summers (01428 724435)

Trees: Mark Allery (01428 641708)

Cattle: Dave Neal (07761 961973)

Fields and Machinery: Gareth Hopkins (01428 643137)

Wardens: Marley Common and Fields: Chris Pooley (01428 653034)

Lynchmere and Stanley Commons: Judy Rous and Louise Searight, with help from Leigh Bithell (658549), Cyril Ellis (725099) and Nick Moore (724804)

Land Management Consultant: R.A. Windle from R.H. & R.W. Clutton

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

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