

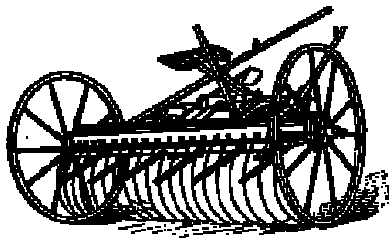
Downley Common Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of the Downley Common Preservation Society - Issue 11 March 2000
<http://www.downleycommon.org.uk>

Grasscutting and Raking

We have been looking at the options for cutting and removing grass from the Common. This has occurred naturally in the past as the Common has been grazed by animals. You will remember that the reason for this is to prevent the gradual buildup of nutrients in the soil caused by grass rotting back into the ground that chokes the growth of flowers adapted to poor soil and permits the growth of coarse grasses. With the recent demise of the last goat on the Common, such grazing no longer occurs and so we are looking at not only cutting the grass but removing it as well.

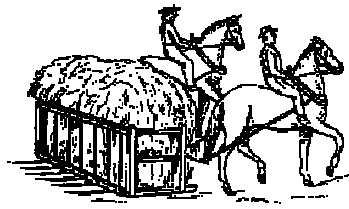
Tractor-towed rakes tend to be used to line up the grass for subsequent bailing; an activity not appropriate to the ant hill-strewn Common. The following types of horse-drawn rakes have been used in the past and these would be ideal if they could be found.



The first consists of a set of springteeth that can be raised by the rider to discharge

the hay while. the horizontal bar pushes the hay out. The haysweep pictured below is a coarse rake that requires two horses. 500lb of hay can be collected and towed to a rick.

If anyone knows where such a beast could be sourced, we would be very interested to hear. Of course, if you could supply the horse as well?



Chiltern Commons Network

The recent meeting of the Chiltern Commons Network took place at Naphill on 23 February where the subject was a presentation by Jeremy Biggs of Pond Action who are based at Oxford Brookes University. It was agreed that Mannings Pond would form the focus of a future Commons Network day in conjunction with Daisy Pond on Naphill Common. The following "myths" about ponds are taken from Pond Action's web site.

Myths about ponds

- :
1. *Drying-out is disastrous for pond communities.*
 2. *Ponds should be at least 2m deep.*
 3. *All pond zones, from deep open water to shallow margins, should be created and maintained.*
 4. *The bigger the pond, the better.*
 5. *Ponds should not be shaded by trees.*
 6. *Pond should be dredged to prevent them from becoming 'choked' by vegetation.*
 7. *Pond water-level fluctuations should be minimised.*
 8. *Livestock should be prevented from having access to ponds.*
 9. *Ponds are entirely self-contained systems, isolated 'islands' in a sea of dry land.*

Jack Chilton Memorial

There will be a tree planting at the north end of the Common to take place on Sunday 19 March 2000 at 11:00am to commemorate the life of Jack Chilton, late of Hillcott on Downley Common. Family and friends are invited to attend.

Diary

2 April 2000, 10.00am	Working party – Clear sledging slope	Sunnybank
6 April 2000, 8.00pm	Quarterly Meeting	Memorial Hall
7 May 2000, 10.00am	Working party – activity to be decided	Bus turning circle
28 May 2000, 2.00pm	Downley Walk	Village Hall
4 June 2000, 10:00am	Working party – activity to be decided	Bus turning circle
24 June 2000, 2:00pm	Downley Day	Commonside
25 June 2000	Millenium walk	Village Hall