

TONY VICKERY, 1926-2013

Tony Vickery was my friend for more than 40 years, from the day I met him at Ashleigh Road Tennis Club in Barnstaple in May 1972 to the moment of his passing on 17 December 2013. In August 1973 he took a group of tennis club members, me amongst them, to Lundy, which he himself first visited in 1953, having joined the Lundy Field Society the previous year. That was my introduction to Lundy, a day that changed the course of my life. Tony's love of Lundy was infectious and I was very quickly hooked on it. I pestered him to take me back and from our first five days there in September 1974 to his last visit in 1996, as his health started to fail, we hardly missed a year, in company with close friends. *The Birds of Lundy*, the book published in 2007 and which he inspired, is dedicated to Tony.

Tony was more than a friend. He was my mentor. He instilled in me his love of birds and taught me the songs of calls of all the common species. Lundy was (it still is) a great place for a novice birdwatcher to learn. At weekends we would walk the North Devon coast path or the byways of Exmoor. He introduced me to the joys of bird survey work, taking part in the monthly counts of wetland birds on the Taw & Torridge Estuary, at Wistlandpound Reservoir and at Arlington Lake, an activity I still carry out today. Occasionally we would venture further afield, to South Devon, Somerset, Cornwall or the north Norfolk coast. Our adventures were many and, in Tony's company, always fun, but it was Lundy that we looked forward to most and to which we always returned.

For 15 years from 1958 Tony was a member of the LFS committee, serving variously as Maintenance Officer of the Old Light bird observatory, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. I once asked Hugh Boyd, the second of the Society's wardens (1948-49), what life was like in the Old Light in those days. After a reflective pause Hugh answered, memorably: "Damp!" It was a sentiment with which Tony readily agreed, having spent many a week there carrying our repairs to the fabric of the building inside and out. The cartoon by John Dyke in the LFS Annual Report for 1966 perfectly captures Tony (standing on a box) repairing the Quarter Wall Helligoland Trap.



Throughout his working life Tony was employed by the Devon county roads department and based across four decades at various offices in Torrington and Barnstaple. At home in Bishops Tawton, stamp collecting became a passion – his collection of bird stamps was immaculate and very impressive. In retirement he developed his garden, just above the Barnstaple to Exeter railway line, and his bird-feeding station gave him endless hours of pleasure.

That Tony is no longer with us I find difficult to grasp. That our great friend has gone is desperately sad, but he leaves behind a wealth of memories, smiles and happiness for all who knew him.

TIM DAVIS

Tony Vickery pictured outside Old House South, his favourite place to stay on Lundy, in 1986.