

Valley Conservation Society



doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 182

We are a non-political organisation

April 2023

Invitation to the Society's Annual General Meeting



It is time once again for the Society to hold its annual general meeting.

This is the occasion for members to hear reports from the Society's officers on progress made during the past year, to raise any points of concern or to make suggestions, and to elect the Executive Committee for the coming year.

The meeting will be held on **Saturday, April 29**, starting at **10am** and finishing no later than 12.30pm

Please note that unlike last year, we are back to a morning start.

As last year, the meeting will be in the **King George V Pavillion**, off Walnut Tree Avenue, in Loose, **ME15 9RN**. Tea and coffee will be served.

In accordance with the constitution, all the existing executive committee members must step down and members will have the opportunity to re-elect them or to elect new members.

The AGM will include an open session for points raised from the floor, but members can also ask for items to be placed on the agenda by prior notice to the secretary Alan Smith on **07860 909903** or by email **a128smith@btinternet.com** (before April 15 please).

Of course, to vote you must be a paid-up member of the Society, and so it is time once again to ask you to renew your membership subscription for 2023 if you have not already done so.

A membership application is attached at the end of this newsletter. We are retaining the membership fee at the nominal sum of £2 per person, but of course we are always happy to receive additional donations. Your membership can also be renewed on the door at the AGM.

At the end of 2022, we had 425 paid-up members, but so far, three months into the year, only 323 have renewed. Are you one of those who has forgotten?

Calendars

Your committee was pleased with the sale of our VCS calendars this year.

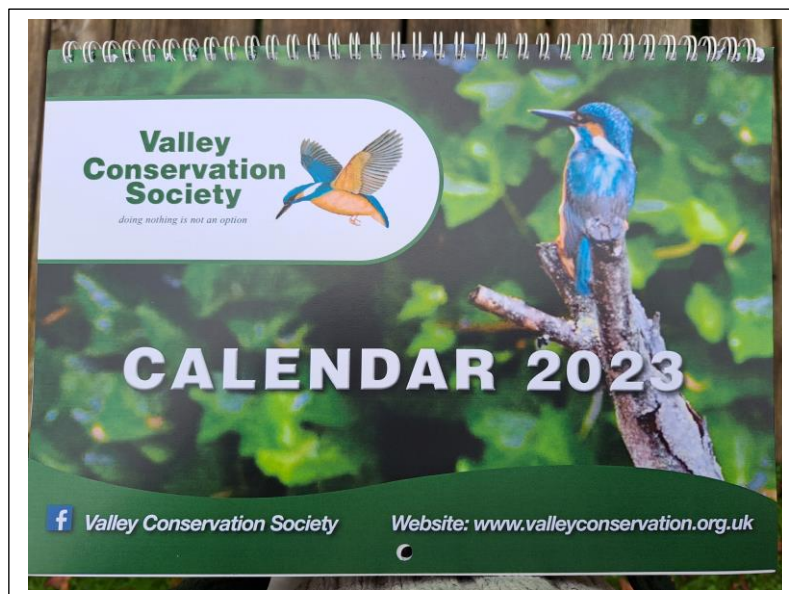
Some 174 calendars were sold, yielding a profit of £150 for the Society.

We are now thinking ahead to 2024 and would like to invite any budding photographers among you to take pictures for consideration in our next edition. The theme this time will be flora and fauna found in the Loose Valley. Obviously we are hoping you might catch something slightly unusual – we don't want 12 months of photos of mallards! A rare plant would be welcome, or insect, bird or animal.

Please send your submission in J-peg form to the secretary by email (details above). Including your name, and the date and place the shot was taken. A judging panel will decide in the autumn which photos to use.

By submitting your photograph you are deemed to have given copyright consent for its use.

Photos should be horizontal, not portrait, and with a minimum of 1mb resolution. Most modern mobiles take a photo far in excess of that.



There is no limit on how many submissions can be made, and don't forget we are looking for 12 pictures that reflect the 12 months of the year if possible.

Maidstone Local Plan

The public inquiry into the Maidstone Local Plan Review will resume in May.

As you know, the Society is very much opposed to one particular site allocation in the Review – that for 250 houses at Abbey Gate Farm, just beyond the Loose Valley Conservation Area and including the Walnut Tree Meadows Nature Reserve.

The Society has secured a speaking spot at the inquiry at the Town Hall where we will be represented by [Alan Smith](#). Valley Conservation member [Eileen Lewis](#) has also secured a spot to speak as a local

resident, and another VCS member, [John Talbot](#), who owns Abbey Gate Place and who will be most affected by the development, will be represented at the hearing by his solicitor.

Our session starts at 2pm in the Town Hall on Tuesday, May 16. Wish us luck!

The allocation would not only involve the loss of good farmland, but also the creation of a road across the Walnut Tree Meadows Nature Reserve.

Work party in action



The work party have continued to meet every Tuesday. One of the tasks they carried out was to lay woodchippings on the paths through Crisbrook Meadow so they did not become too muddy to walk on. They have also planted a number of bluebell and snow drop bulbs and new tree whips, as well as general maintenance. The next major task will be to rub down and re-paint the iron-railing fence alongside Cave Hill.

More volunteers for the work party are always welcome. Meet at 10am at the Conservation Cabin. You can finish whenever you have had enough. Phone Bryn Cornwell for details on 01622 746514.

School visit

We were delighted to welcome around 30 students from the New Line Learning Academy who came on two days in March to go pond-dipping at Crisbrook as part of their nature studies.



Don and Sheila in happier times

Don Esland

The Society is sorry to inform you of the death of Don Esland.

Don was one of the 12 original founders of Valley Conservation who put their name to the constitution setting up the Society back in the year 2000. Don was born at Bockingford Mill Cottages in the Valley and he had a great love for the area, as well as being a font of knowledge on its history.

A child during the Second World War, one of his duties as a pupil at Loose School was as enemy plane spotter, sitting in the school playground and ringing the school's hand bell to warn of approaching aircraft, enabling everyone to get to the shelters.

His National Service saw him put in charge of the stores at an Army barracks in Germany, an experience that served him well in his later business career. After being demobbed, he trained as a barber and was soon running his own barber's shop in Willington Street, Maidstone.

In the 1960s, he expanded to running a newsagent's and a barber's on The Broadway in Maidstone with his business partner the late Ted Palmer, whom many members will remember later worked at Ali Barbers hairdressers in Cripple Street.

In the 1970s, Don's town centre premises were demolished to make way for the new Maidstone Bridge so Don opened a greengrocer's shop on the new shopping parade in Senacre. Finally in 1977, he became the sub-postmaster at Tovil Post Office and newsagent's in Church Street, where he stayed until retirement in 1998.

The business was afterwards taken over by his daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and Mike Bull, who ran it until November 2005.

Don married Ruby Finch in 1957 and the couple became key figures in a group that campaigned to save St Stephen's Church in Tovil from demolition. They were unsuccessful, but the considerable sum of money they raised was later distributed to good causes around the village.

Ruby died from cancer in 1990 – she was only 55. At around the same time, Sheila Weeden, who worked in Mr Esland's newsagents also lost her husband, Maurice. Leaning on each other for support, the pair formed a close relationship that lasted the next 30 years until Don's death.

Don was a key figure in the Tovil community, serving on the parish council and becoming a governor at St Stephen's Infant School, which has since subsumed into the Archbishop Courtenay Primary.

Our chairman, Bryn Cornwell said: "Don played a vital role in helping found the society. "He served on our executive committee for many years and continued to be a loyal supporter long afterwards. He will be greatly missed."

Don died peacefully in Maidstone Hospital from aspiration pneumonia on December 19. He was 87.

Summer barbecue – Saturday, July 22

Tickets are now on sale for the annual barbecue, which will be held in the grounds of Hayle Place.

Despite inflation running at 11%, we are keeping the price the same as last year, that is £12.50p for members and £15 for guests. Since membership is only £2, you will quickly realise that you will save money by signing up your guests as members!

Numbers are again being **strictly** limited to 100, and we are again imposing a maximum of two guests per member. (Children under 14 remain free).

We received a lot of very positive feedback last year about the music from the the Soundwave Disco Roadshow, so we have booked the same crew again. Doors open at 3pm, with parking nearby.

Vegan options will be available for non-meat eaters as long as they are ordered in advance. For tickets, contact Alan Smith on a128smith@btinternet.com



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see us on Facebook and our website www.valleyconservation.org.uk

Membership Application 2023

Names:

Address:

..... Postcode.....

Email(s) **please print**

Phone Mobile

Membership is £2 per person per year (50p for 14 to 18-year-olds). **It would greatly assist us if you are able to pay by online bank transfer or standing order.** Please email VCSMembership@btinternet.com with your name and address if you choose this option.

I enclose a cheque/cash for £ (Donations welcome)

Cheques/cash can be delivered with your form to Tony Day, Membership Secretary, 57 Mayfair Avenue, Maidstone ME15 6BY. Cheques should be payable to Valley Conservation Society

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

(please allow at least 14 days to start date for bank processing)

To: **The Manager**, (add name and address of your bank/building society)

.....

Name(s) of Account Holders

Account Number: Sort Code:

Please pay:

Lloyds Bank plc, Week Street, Maidstone (309537) Branch, PO Box 1000, Box BX1 1LT

For the credit of: **Valley Conservation Society**

Account Number: **02166853** Sort Code: **30 95 37**

The sum of £ starting on2023
and thereafter on 1st day of January every year until further notice.

Signature(s) Date:

General Data Protection Regulations: *Our legal basis for holding and processing the data you provide is our legitimate interest as a membership organisation and we will use it to send you newsletters and other information we consider relevant and useful. We will not disclose it to any third party.*

Please tick the box if you consent to VCS retaining the details on this form