

Valley Conservation Society

doing nothing is not an option



Members' newsletter No 185

We are a non-political organisation

December 2023

Van driver goes a bridge too far

During the icy spell at the start of November, a van driver lost control of his Ford Transit Connect as he travelled down Hayle Mill Road by Upper Crisbrook Mill and collided first with a parked car belonging to one of the residents of Crisbrook Cottages and then with the parapet of the bridge over the Loose Stream.

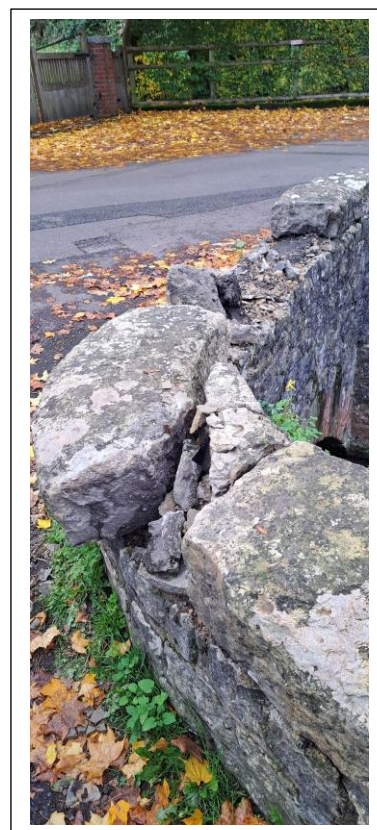
He did considerable damage, knocking several of the ragstone blocks into the water below.

Although the driver stopped and gave some personal details, he has since failed to respond to any inquiries, so the task of repair inevitably fell to the work party, who put their previous experience of re-building the ragstone wall in Crisbrook Meadow to good use.

Every block was heavy enough, but three capping stones, by then laying in the stream, were too heavy even for all the members working together to lift.

Steve Small, of The Cowshed came to the rescue and set up a makeshift winch system on an A-frame that enabled the team to lift the stones back into place.

The bridge is now fully repaired.



**The work party usually meets every Tuesday at the Conservation Cabin in Cave Hill. However, next Tuesday they are taking a well earned break for a Christmas drink. Anyone who would like information on joining the work party in the New Year should call our chairman, Bryn Cornwell, on 01622 746514.*



Left, the bridge is as good as new



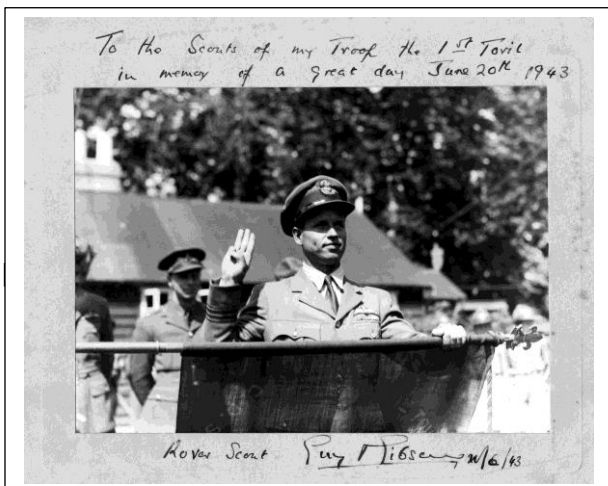
Autumn Walk

The autumn walk, which was held on Sunday, 22 October, attracted 21 members on the walk itself and slightly more when it was time to eat Jane's homemade cakes at the walk's conclusion at Hayle Place!

The refreshments were free, but members generously donated £61 in any case.

For the first time, the walk was extended to take in the Tovil Scouts cave and War Memorial in the bank below Mount Ararat, which was new to many people.

The Memorial lists the names of the six Tovil Scouts who lost their lives on active service during the Second World War, including, most famously, Squadron Leader Guy Gibson, VC, the leader of the Dambusters Raid.



Guy Gibson visited the Tovil Scout Group on 20th June 1943 and afterwards sent them this signed photo of himself giving the Scouts' salute to commemorate his visit, which now hangs in the Tovil Scout HQ off Straw Mill Hill.

Housing plans for the 'Cricket Field'

There are people still living in the area who remember the patch of land behind Hayle Cottage and opposite Hayle Place as a cricket field, but you will find scant evidence of it now.

The last over played there by the Arlott Cricket Club was in the 1990s, and the pitch is now overgrown scrubland, after being untended for more than 30 years.

Recently a planning application was submitted to build nine detached homes on the site.

The luxury houses would be a mix of two- and two-and-a-half storeys, with either four or five bedrooms, each with detached two-vehicle car ports.

It is intended they will be all-electric – no gas – with heating provided from air-source heat pumps, and there would be an EV charging point for each property.



The applicants' suggested layout

The plot measures 1.3 hectares and is classed as being in the countryside as it is outside the limits of the built development boundary of both Tovil and Loose parishes. It lies within Tovil.

It is also in the Loose Valley Conservation Area.

The applicants argue that because the site was last used as a cricket pitch, it counts as “previously developed” or brownfield land.



The Cricket Field today

The applicants propose to use the private drive off Teasaucer Hill that leads to Hayle Place to reach their development, but that has caused outrage among the existing residents at Hayle Place.

The driveway is specifically legally in the ownership of one of the residents and one other former neighbour. The resident has promised to contest any access to the new homes in the courts.



To be fair to the applicants, the plans show a substantial section of the land would be left as green space, and Cllr Paul Wilby, who is chairman of the Hayle Park Nature Reserve, says he understands the intention of the applicants is to sign the open space over to the Trust.

To build only nine homes on a plot measuring 1.3 hectares is also very low density.

Tovil Parish Council has opposed the plan, principally because of some glaring errors that appeared in the original application and because of the absence of some key information that would be expected.

The applicant's agent had clearly done a cut-and-paste job from another application, because at one stage the application suddenly switched to talking about three-bedroom bungalows instead for four bedroom detached homes, and also referred to the site's boundary with Warden View Gardens – which is a road in Leysdown on the Isle of Sheppey!

The applicants have currently withdrawn the application, presumably to revise it, but we imagine the scheme will re-surface again soon.

You can view the details of the original application on the MBC planning website.

Look for planning application number **23/504699**.

Traffic

As part of their preparation to oppose the housing plans, the Hayle Place residents have been carrying out a traffic survey of the vehicles passing the entrance to Hayle Place at the top of Teasaucer Hill.

Those who live in the area will already know that traffic has increased dramatically over the past six months or so, as rat-runners seek to avoid congestion on the Loose Road. But nevertheless, the survey revealed some disturbing statistics.

The tellers found that the so-called rush hour now extended from 6.45am to 9.30am, while the afternoon rush hour lasted from 2.30pm to 6.30pm.

On average, 3.27 cars passed every minute, with 801 vehicles passing in one 3.5 hour period. This is on a road with a succession of blind bends and which is barely wide enough to allow two vehicles to pass in some places.

Just time to order your 2024 calendar

We have a few of our 2024 VCS calendars still to sell. They contain 12 beautiful photographs of the flora and fauna of the Loose Valley. All the photos have been taken by members.

You can place your order now by emailing the secretary, Alan Smith, on a128smith@btinternet.com

The cost is £6. The ideal Christmas gift?



Trees

It is anathema to the Society to fell trees. However, sometimes it is necessary.

We recently had a tree survey carried out in Crisbrook Meadow by the arboriculturalist firm Tree Craft Ltd.

They identified several trees that were dead or diseased which needed to be felled.

Two – beside the footpath leading to Mount Ararat - were identified as dangerous - and we are grateful to Hoods tree surgeons for responded immediately to our request to take them down.

Another five trees will have to come down over the coming months.

We are grateful also to Tovil Parish Council for contributing to the cost of the tree survey.

Christmas visitor

With the season of goodwill fast approaching, it was fitting that this Christmas visitor was spotted in the fields off Cripple Street – a fallow deer.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our Members!

Valley Conservation Society

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

Membership Application 2024

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode

Email (*please print*)

Phone Mobile

Membership is £2 per person per year (50p for 14- to 18-year-olds).

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

Cheques (payable to Valley Conservation Society) or cash can be delivered with your form to:
Jonathan Leeson, Membership Secretary, Ridgeways, Cripple Street, Maidstone, ME15 6DN

Alternatively it would assist us if you can pay by setting up a standing order or bank transfer using the details below.

STANDING ORDER and BANK TRANSFER DETAILS

Utilise the following bank details for the Valley Conservation Society to make payment via your bank.

For the credit of: **Valley Conservation Society**
Bank: **Lloyds Bank plc**, Week Street, Maidstone (309537) Branch, PO Box 1000, Box BX1 1LT
Account Number: **02166853** Sort Code: **30 95 37**

The sum of £2 starting on the day you joined and thereafter on 1st day of January every year until further notice.

Please email - VCSMembership@btinternet.com with your name and address if you choose this option to confirm payment.

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 ☐