

# Valley Conservation Society



*doing nothing is not an option*

Members' newsletter No 187

We are a non-political organisation

April 2024

## Report on our AGM



Our thanks to the 40 or so members who attended our **annual general meeting** at the King George V Pavilion, in Loose, on Saturday, 6 April.

Members heard reports on the past year's activities, which had been dominated by the battle to have an allocation of 250 homes excluded from Maidstone's Local Plan Review (unsuccessfully) and by the consequences of the failure of a weir owned by Maidstone Borough Council on the Loose Stream adjacent to the Woodbridge Drive Play Area, which had resulted in the draining of Reeds Pond.

However, the Society still found time to put on the successful summer barbecue, for which we sold 115 tickets, and to sell our VCS calendar and hold an Autumn Walk.

During the year, our new membership secretary, Jonathan Leeson, also introduced a new General Data Protection Policy for the Society to ensure member's details were kept more securely.

Our audited accounts showed the Society ended the year with £6,625 in its current account, and just over £20,000 in our land purchase account.

The Society is keen to safeguard as much of the Valley as possible, and the only completely safe way of doing that is to purchase the land ourselves. If anyone becomes aware of any land becoming available, please advise the secretary, Alan Smith, on 07860 909903.

Tony Day, our former membership secretary and former treasurer, stood down from the committee this year. Thank you Tony, for your past service.

All the other executive committee members were re-elected by the membership, with the addition of Eileen Lewis as Tony's replacement.

Your executive comprises: Bryn Cornwell (chairman), Jane Holman (vice chairman), Alan Smith (secretary), Terry Moore (treasurer), and Fred Cornwell, Jill Lee, Jonathan Lesson, Eileen Lewis, John Robertson, Kevin Shanahan, Bryan Stovell and Dennis Usmar.



*Chefs Dennis Usmar, Tony Day, Terry Moore and Bryn Cornwell*

# Our summer barbecue

Tickets are now on sale for this year's barbecue which will be held in the grounds of The Manor at Hayle Place on

**Saturday, July 20**

Gates open at 3pm, with food served from 4pm. Music will be provided by DJ Palvo.

Guests should bring their own drinks and glasses, tables and chairs – and gazebos if required.

You can set up your gazebo the night before, from 6.30pm. The gazebo will need to be removed by Sunday morning.

For the first time, we are also suggesting that members might want to bring their own plates and cutlery.

Paper plates and plastic cutlery will be available, but we are conscious of the need to try to cut down on one-off use in order to save the planet's resources.

Tickets are £12.50 for members and £15 for guests.

Since membership is only £2, you will quickly appreciate it will be cheaper to sign up your guests as members!

Sausages, burgers and chicken pieces will be on the menu. Vegan options are also available but only if ordered in advance by July 11. Call 07860 909903 or email [a128smith@btinternet.com](mailto:a128smith@btinternet.com)





## Work Party

Our work party volunteers continue to brave the elements every Tuesday. Above are David Hill and John Smith adding the final touches to the refreshed Conservation Area “gateway” sign in Cave Hill, which had fallen into disrepair. More volunteers are always welcome. Meet at The Conservation Cabin in Cave Hill at 10am. Stay for an hour or stay all day. It’s up to you.

## Calendars

A reminder that we are still looking for photographs of the Loose Valley to use in our 2025 calendar.

There is no stated theme this year, so you can use your full artistic licence.

We’re just looking for interesting shots that tell the story of the Valley. Send you entries to [a128smith@btinternet.com](mailto:a128smith@btinternet.com)

Please say when and where the photo was taken. By submitting your entries, you will be granting copyright permission for their use in our calendar. There is no limit on how many photos you submit.

# New Line Learning visit ponds

*By Brandon White, teacher at NLL*

Over Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March and Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March, 60 students at New Line Learning Academy visited Crisbrook Meadow to complete the compulsory physical fieldwork element of the GCSE Geography course.

As part of their investigation, students had to complete a series of water quality tests, field sketches and an invertebrate survey through pond dipping at three sites around the ponds to assess how healthy they are.

The results concluded that Crisbrook Meadow is a perfectly healthy ecosystem with a variety of invertebrates found - including water shrimp, caseless caddisfly larvae, water beetles, water stick insects and even a few small fish!

The students had a wonderful time, with a few commenting that they couldn't believe how such a lovely, natural environment lies so close to the school, their homes and Maidstone town centre.

This is the second time we have had the pleasure of using Crisbrook Meadow and I would like to thank the Valley Conservation Society for hosting our students for an important part of their GCSE Geography journey.

All the best, Brandon.

## And another visitor to the valley...



Less welcome than the NLL students, was this huge articulated lorry that tried to drive down Cripple Street and got stuck at the top of Teasaucer Hill.

The Spanish driver then diverted into Hayle Place (a private driveway) in a bid to find somewhere to turn round. He was unsuccessful.

Mick Gould Commercial had to be called to recover the vehicle, which had to reverse all the way along Hayle Place and Cripple Street, with the recovery truck having to use its crane to lift the back of the trailer around each bend in the road. The entire operation took six hours.

# Just when we thought it was safe to go back in the water...

*In our last newsletter, we were trumpeting our hope that Smith's Field, near Hayle Place, which already has planning permission for 62 homes dating back to 2019 was safe, as the developers had appeared to pull out.*

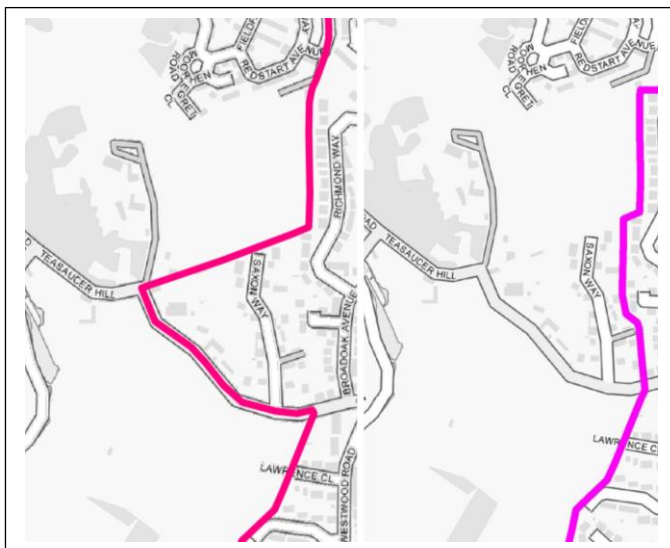
*A few days later, the field, which is popular with dog-walkers, was sealed off, largely with Heras fencing, and a sign saying "Construction Site – Keep Out."*

*However, no developer's name has appeared, and part of the fencing was constructed rather unprofessionally with what looked like the sides of a gazebo.*

*If anyone knows what is going on please let us know!*



## And a strange one



*Recent boundary reviews for both the borough council and parish councils have left some residents wondering where they live.*

*Homes in Saxon Way and in the lower end of Cripple Street down to (but not including) Hayle Place) have been moved to Loose Parish from Tovi Parish.*

*However, for the borough election, they are in the Tovi Ward, not the new Loose and Linton Ward.*

*So these 140 residents have the privilege of being in both Loose and Tovi simultaneously.*

*Left, the parish boundary. Right, the ward boundary*