

Valley Conservation Society



doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 188

We are a non-political organisation

June 2024

Barbecue time



It's that time of year when our thoughts start turning towards the VCS summer barbecue.

Ticket prices this year will be the same as last year, despite the inflation we have experienced in the meantime. They are **£12.50** for members and **£15** for guests, with members limited please to two guests each.

The venue as always is the delightful garden of The Manor at Hayle Place, where our hostess, Jane Holman, has already spent hours getting the flowerbeds looking nice.

On offer will be the usual range of chicken portions, sausages and burgers, plus accompanying salads, followed by fresh fruit as dessert.

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 on 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.

Email your ticket requirements to me, Alan Smith, on a128smith@btinternet.com or text to 07860 909903.

I will post or deliver the tickets to you.



Goslings

Anyone who has walked down the Valley recently will have noticed that we have a positive plethora of waterfowl on the ponds.

This is in part due to our Canada geese visitors.

This year there have been not one, but two breeding pairs on our ponds – a first in our experience, though we notice they do seem to keep to their own ponds – one family each in the Crisbrook and Reeds ponds.

But they are not the only ones. There are plenty of baby moorhens and coots too.

Abbeygate Farm



Once Maidstone council passed its Local Plan Review, just before the May 4 local elections, it was inevitable that there would begin to be some movement on the allocation for 250 homes on land between Stockett Lane and Dean Street, known as the Abbeygate Farm site. Sure enough, earlier this month, two teams of surveyors rocked up and began to drill into the soil to take samples – one team on the Walnut Tree Meadow Nature Reserve, where the council has approved an access road, and one on the field off Stockett Lane.

Again it was no surprise, although extremely disappointing, that the team surveying the farm field used the gated entrance off Stockett Lane, despite a firm promise from DHA, the agents for the project, that no contractors would use this entrance.

They made their camp on the open field opposite – which is supposed to become public open space under the terms of the site allocation.



Soil sampling on the Walnut Tree Meadow Nature

Small miracle

Miracles still sometimes happen.

Members will recall how in September last year, the weir on the Loose Stream, adjacent to the Woodbridge Drive Play Area, failed.

Water gushed underneath the weir and as a result our ponds emptied.

The lads of the work party installed a temporary fix by creating a wall of loose ragstone just beside the footpath bridge to Mount Ararat, which did the job of holding back the water and filling our ponds.



MBC indicated that it had no money to fix their weir. But on Tuesday of last week, the strangest thing happened. The hole in the weir seems to have become plugged and it is once again performing its job of holding back the water to flow over the top!

Duck Race



No doubt many members will have visited the Loose Amenities Association Duck Race on the late May Bank Holiday.

VCS was there too, with Jane Holman and Alan Smith manning an information and book stall.

It was appropriate weather for ducks as three times during the afternoon the sky clouded over and we all got soaked.

Thanks to all who supported the stall, but especially to the guy who donated a fiver to the cause as a thank-you for being allowed to shelter from the rain under our gazebo!

Calendars

Just a final 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 your entries to a128smith@btinternet.com

Please say where and when 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.