

Valley Conservation Society



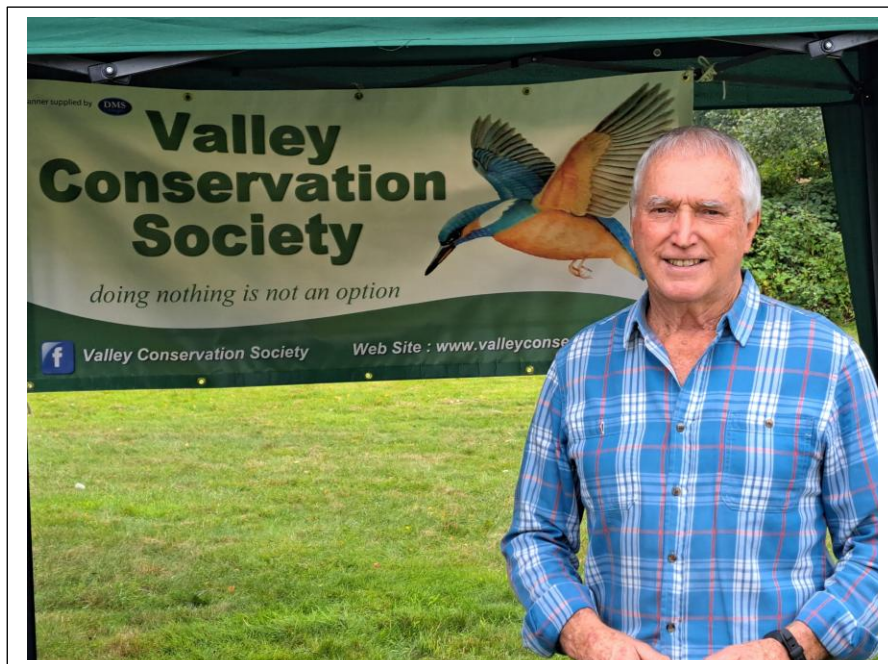
doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 191

We are a non-political organisation

February 2025

Bryn Cornwell



It is with a very heavy heart that we have to inform members of the death of our chairman, Bryn Cornwell.

Bryn passed away on February 11, at home, with his wife, Freda, and daughter, Sharon, by his side.

The Valley Conservation Society was founded on 28th July, 2000. It took us a few months to hammer out a constitution, which was formally adopted on 13th December, 2000, with Bryn as one of the 12 founding signatories.

Bryn became the group's chairman in 2002 and had been re-elected by the members each year since.

Even before VCS owned any land of its own, Bryn toiled - with John Smith, Dave Cole and others - to make our environment a better place, cutting, for example, a path along the river front in Tovil towards Bydews Wood, and regularly clearing debris from the culvert gratings on the Loose Stream.

After VCS was able to buy its own grounds, Bryn established and led the regular Tuesday work parties.

Bryn was not born a countryman – in fact before moving to Stockett Lane in 1981, he had spent most of his life in London. He was born in Hounslow, which was then in Middlesex, but from the age of seven he lived in Catford, in south London.

He served for 28 years as a fireman and later Station Commander, for the London Fire Brigade.

During that time, he received an award from the Royal Humane Society for saving the life of an unconscious woman whom he pulled from a burning building, and then revived with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, keeping her breathing for 30 minutes until the ambulance came.

After he arrived in Kent, Bryn became passionate about our countryside and took courses to qualify in chainsaw-handling and in ragstone walling, and as a pond-warden, so that he could lead the work party more effectively.

Members of the executive committee who served with him will tell you of his meticulousness – nothing could be done that wasn't strictly by the rulebook, and no minutes would be approved until not only the context was accurate, but also every little typo corrected.

Members will recall him as the genial figure with a beer can in one hand and a pair of tongs in the other, as he turned over the chicken pieces at the annual barbecue.

Those with longer memories will know that before VCS was formed, Bryn had also been a committee member for the Loose Amenities Association - a group that performs a similar role to VCS at the other end of the Loose Valley - where he worked closely with Roy Hood.

He was also one of the original nine trustees of the Hayle Park Nature Reserve.

A service will be held for Bryn at:

Vinters Park Crematorium, Bearsted Road, Maidstone, ME14 5LG

Thursday, March 13, at 2pm

His wife, Fred, is asking for family flowers only, but as an alternative, donations in Bryn's memory can be made to Hasag Asbestos Disease Support, via this link:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/bryn-cornwell-1>

Bryn, who was 80, died from mesothelioma, an industrial disease almost certainly contracted during his time as a firefighter all those any many years before.



Above, Bryn with members of his committee on his first appointment as chairman.

From left, Denver Hope, Ann King, Richard Neal, Bryn Cornwell, Jim Williams, Alan Smith, Ken Hamm, Dennis Usmar and Margaret Hope



Left, clockwise, Bryn repairing the VCS boat; Bryn addressing the crowds at the Day of Action over the Abbeygate Farmhouse planning application; and Bryn at the barbecue, with helpers Dennis Usmar, Tony Day and Terry Moore



In search of hedgehogs

You may have noticed two new road signs in the Valley, featuring a cheerful-looking hedgehog.

Some members have remarked that they haven't seen a hedgehog for years, and never one in the Valley.

However, the signs – erected by KCC – actually mean Beware of Small Mammals, and not hedgehogs specifically.

This gives us the chance to remind you that we are constantly on the hunt for photographs to use in our calendar at the end of the year – and an image of a small mammal would be most welcome!

So keep snapping (while remembering that ducks are not mammals). Landscape-shape only please. Send your entry to Alan Smith on a128smith@btinternet.com.

Changes

Following Bryn's sad death, our vice-chairman Jane Holman, has stepped into the chairman's role. She has also, from the start of this year, taken over as treasurer from Terry Moore. Terry will be stepping down at the AGM and it made sense to have Jane start as the new year began.

Dennis Usmar, who has been running the Tuesday work parties during Bryn's illness, has now been appointed Work Party Leader.

Earlier this year, Kevin Shanahan resigned from the executive committee (although he continues to be an active member of the work party.) At our last meeting, we welcomed back former committee member Brian Shingleton to fill Kevin's shoes

AGM

All the committee members are obliged to resign at the Society's AGM on Saturday, April 12, and to seek re-election by the members.

The AGM starts at 10am, at the same venue as last year, the **King George V Pavilion** off Walnut Tree Lane in Loose, ME15 9RG.

Remember you must be a paid-up member to vote, so please, renew your membership now, using the attached form.

Repair Café

This is a reminder that members of the newly formed Carbon Action Tovil group (CAT) will be holding their first Repair Café at the Tovil Scout Hall off Straw Mill Hill, Tovil, ME15 6FL, on **Saturday, 8th March**.

The group invites you to take along broken or damaged items for repair – **free of charge** – rather than wastefully throwing them away.

Thirteen volunteers are waiting to help you – with skills in electrics, IT, woodwork, sewing, clocks, tool sharpening and bicycle maintenance.

In addition, there will be a **children's area** with a “bees and bugs” theme and face-painting, with volunteers present to entertain your youngsters.

A café will provide sandwiches, cakes and beverages – also free of charge!

But bring some change, as donations will be welcomed.

The event will be opened by the Mayor Elect of Maidstone, Cllr Martin Round at 2pm, and will run until 4pm.

There will also be information stands for the Valley Conservation Society, Hayle Park Nature Reserve, Save Oaken Woods, and the Scenic Green Trail.

Even if you have nothing to be repaired, go along anyway and lend them your support!



Further information from Eileen Lewis on eileenmlewis@sky.com or call her on **07709 031365**.

Valley Conservation Society

Membership Application 2025

Names:

Address:

..... Postcode.....

Email(s) *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 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 on2025

and thereafter on 1st day of January every year until further notice.

Signature(s) Date:

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. We will not disclose it to any third party.

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