

Valley Conservation Society

doing nothing is not an option



Members' newsletter No 199

We are a non-political organisation

February 2026

Time to renew membership

As we are now well into the new year of 2026, it is time for members to renew their subscriptions.

Our annual membership remains at just £2 a person, although we appreciate that many people top that up with a donation, for which we are truly grateful.

Apart from stationery and printing, the Society has no administration costs as all the work is done by volunteers. This means that all of your membership subscription will be used to maintain the land that we own in the Loose Valley.

A reminder for new members: we own Treacle Wood (an area of woodland on the eastern side of Hayle Mill Road), Crisbrook Bank (a small patch of land just north of Upper Crisbrook Mill), the Conservation Cabin (off Cave Hill), the Reeds and Lower Crisbrook Millponds, and Crisbrook Meadow (owned jointly with Tovil Parish Council).

Treacle Wood is not open to the public because there is no easy access to it (you need a step ladder), and because it is the nesting place of the kingfishers, which are such a beautiful feature of the valley and which we don't want to see disturbed.

The millponds and Crisbrook Meadow, however, are open to the public all year round and attract scores of visitors every day.

The Society also owns one-third of the adjacent Hayle Park Nature Reserve. The reserve is run separately by the Hayle Park Nature Reserve Trust and does its own fundraising, but the Society and the reserve help each other out, often sharing the use of equipment.

Many people pay their subscriptions by standing order, which helps cut down on the paperwork. Sadly, we can no longer accept cheques as the bank has begun charging us 50p each time to process them. Bank transfers are acceptable. See the application form at the back of this newsletter.

Bryn

It is now nearly a year since the Society sadly lost Bryn Cornwell, one of our 12 founding members and our chairman for 23 years, to mesothelioma.

In January, the Society invited his widow, Fred, and his family to plant a silver birch tree at Treacle Wood in Bryn's memory.



Afterwards, a plaque in his honour was unveiled on the side of the Conservation Cabin and Fred was presented with a book of photographs of Bryn compiled by the executive committee.

Bryn is still greatly missed both by members of the work party, which Bryn had led for over two decades, and by the executive committee, and indeed by all the VCS members who knew him.

Quiz night

Who is the current F1 World Champion?

Which three Fifties pop singers died in a plane crash on “the day that music died”?

When was Decimalisation Day in the UK?

Your newsletter author can answer all of these questions (the latter was on my birthday), but sadly, I fear they are not the questions that our Quizmaster John Robertson will be asking at our next Quiz Night on

Saturday, March 21

Like our quiz last October, the event will be held at the King George V Pavilion off Walnut Tree Lane in Loose (postcode ME15 9RG).

The evening will follow the familiar format with eight rounds of questions, plus a table round, and the opportunity to play a joker for double points.

We are looking for teams of either four, five or six people. We start at 7pm.

There will be bottles of wine for the winners.

We will also hold a Chinese Raffle (so bring some loose change) and do please feel free to bring your own snacks and drinks.

Tickets are £5 per person.

Numbers at the KGV are limited, so best secure your tickets ASAP by phoning the secretary, Alan Smith, on **07860 909903**, or emailing a128smith@btinternet.com

Please include your address in your email, so that we can drop off your tickets.

(Answers: Lando Norris; Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper; 15th February, 1971)

Traffic calming

The committee of volunteers who are looking into traffic-calming measures for the Loose Valley are currently engaged in preparing a questionnaire to present to the public to ask for their views on the various options.

The plan is that initially, the questionnaire will go out to those residents who live in the Loose Valley (about 100 households) to gather the views of those who would be most directly affected by any change.



Tom Bartlett

Based on these findings, the options would be refined before an extended survey is undertaken of households in the wider area, such as the Broadoak estate and the top end of Cripple Street.

In the meantime, Tom Bartlett, who is chairing the committee, would like to receive any evidence of traffic problems, such as HGVs stuck on a bend, damage to properties, or injured animals, that might be used to support our case.

There is a new email address, which is loosevalleytrafficcalming@gmail.com

There is also a Facebook page you can visit: Tovil and Loose Valley Traffic Calming

If you would like to join the committee, please contact Tom.

AGM - switch to afternoons

The Society's Annual General Meeting this year will once again be held at the King George V Pavilion, but in a switch to all previous AGMs, it will be held in the afternoon on

Saturday, April 18

This is due to the hall being fully booked in the morning.

We will start proceedings at 2pm. There will be reports on the past year's activities, the election of a new committee, and a question-and-answer session from the floor.

It is expected that the session will finish by 4pm.

Further details will follow in the next newsletter, but in the meantime, please make a note of the date in your diary.



Work Party

The work party continues to meet every Tuesday. Opposite are some photos of recent tasks.

The guys are always keen to take on more volunteers. They meet at 10am at the Conservation Cabin in Cave Hill. You can stay for an hour or all day. The choice is yours. For further details, call Dennis on [07484 706537](tel:07484706537). Or just turn up on Tuesday.

Repair Café

Our colleagues at **Carbon Action Tovil** (CAT) have set their dates for this year's Repair Cafés.

They will all take place at the YMCA Community Hall in Barfreston Close, Tovil, on the following Saturdays:

March 14
May 9
June 27
July 11
September 12
October 31

It's a chance to take along any broken item and have it fixed for free (though of course donations are welcome).

If you would like to help in any way, please call Eileen

Lewis on **07709 031365** or email her on eileenmlewis@sky.com. Even if you have no skills as a repairer, volunteers are needed to manage the café, man the check-in desk and put out tables.



Road Closure

Local members will know that the junction of Cave Hill and Straw Mill Hill has been closed to traffic for the past three weeks. While it means that some of us have had to change our shopping habits (Morrisons instead of Tesco), it has brought the advantage of a diminished volume of traffic flowing through the Valley, as it can no longer be used as a rat-run by traffic on the Loose Road.

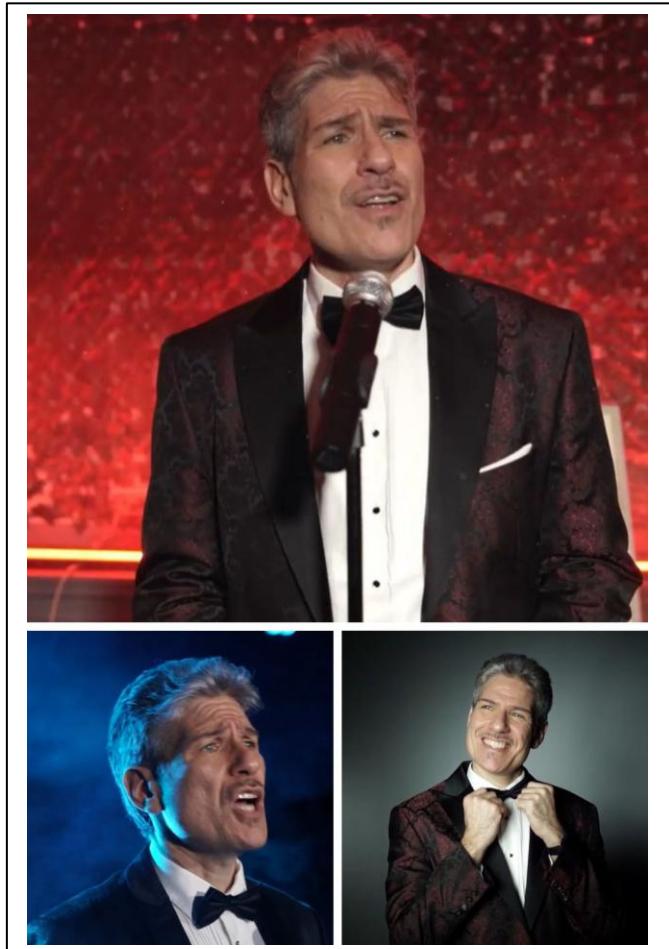
Now comes the news that immediately following the Cave Hill closure, Cripple Street is to be closed near the top of Teasaucer Hill for gas main repairs for another three weeks.

One of the options being explored by the traffic-calming group is closure of the route to through traffic, at approximately the same point where the gaswork closure will be.

So this is a good test. Please email Tom, as before, with your experiences, good or bad.

Now time for the encore ...

We are delighted to announce that after last year's very successful Opera Night, we have been able to book Italian tenor Yuri Sabatini for a return visit.



The evening will be held at the King George V Pavilion on

Sunday, June 14

Starting at 7pm.

There will be free Prosecco (or juice) and nibbles.

Tickets are on sale now at £15

Email Alan with your order: a128smith@btinternet.com

Valley Conservation Society

'doing nothing is not an option'

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

Membership Application 2026

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode

Email (***please print***)

Phone Mobile

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

I enclose cash for £ (Donations welcome)

Cash can be delivered with your form, and we will confirm receipt. Drop off at:
Jonathan Leeson, Membership Secretary, Ridgeways, Cripple Street, Maidstone, ME15 6DN

Unfortunately, we can no longer accept cheques (due to bank fees). However, you can set up your own direct debit or standing order using our bank details below.

BANK TRANSFER DETAILS

Utilise the following bank details for the Valley Conservation Society to make payment:

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

Bank: **Lloyds Bank plc, Week Street, Maidstone (309537) Branch, PO Box 1000, 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 (we do check the bank statement)

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