

Valley Conservation Society



doing nothing is not an option

Members' newsletter No 174

We are a non-political organisation

August 2021

Come and see Tree Fellas at the reserve



This Sunday (August 8), the trustees of the Hayle Park Nature Reserve are hosting an environmentally themed children's entertainment. The walkabout theatre show presented by Tree Fellas is suitable for all ages and is **FREE**.

As the forests get smaller and smaller, one tree family decide to go and live with the humans – with hilarious results! In addition there will be a dance performance by members of the Tenderden Studio Dance Company. Beef burgers and hot dogs will be available for purchase, including vegetarian options.

The fun starts at 12noon. Please walk to the venue off Fieldfare Drive if you can. The event will be held outside – bring an umbrella if need be!



Hayle Park Nature Reserve

The Hayle Park Nature Reserve – which now additionally includes Walnut Tree Meadows (the former tip site) off Dean Street – is run by nine trustees, with three each nominated by Maidstone council, Tovil Parish Council and Valley Conservation Limited.

Trustees serve for four years and one from each group comes up for re-selection each year. (There is one fallow year to fit in with the system of Maidstone council elections).

This year, our chairman Bryn Cornwell, who has been a trustee since the trust's formation in 2014, decided to step down from the post. Executive committee member Brian Shingleton of Cripple Street was appointed in his place. Another VCS executive committee member, Bryan Stovell, was re-appointed as the Tovil Parish Council representative, and Cllr Brian Clark was re-appointed as the MBC delegate.

Our other two VCS trustees are Jane Holman and Dennis Usmar.

Annual General Meeting

We usually hold our annual general meeting in February each year. That wasn't possible this year because of the Covid lockdown.

With the lifting of restrictions it would now be possible in theory to hold the AGM, but the executive committee has taken the view that it would be best for the safety of members to postpone the meeting until next February when hopefully this dreadful pandemic will be behind us.

The committee is mindful that there is little chance for social distancing within the rather small confines of our regular venue at Eling Court and with many of our members being elderly and therefore more at risk than the general population, it was thought this was the safest decision. We hope members will agree.

Twins

Members may recall from our last newsletter that we recently found by a group with a kindred spirit to our own in the shape of the Fowey Valley Conservation Group – based in Cornwall. The chairman Martin Surgery offered to give VCS members a tour of his domain if they ever found themselves near St Austell Bay.

Now we have been invited to become twins with another group, who by chance had a member visit the Loose Valley recently and who came across our volunteers on a strimmer training course and remarked: "You are like a mirror image of our own group!" So we now conjoined with the Acklington Parish Footpaths Group from Northumberland!

The wall at Crisbrook Meadow

The Tuesday work party is now back in full swing and the volunteers have made good progress on their major task of rebuilding the ragstone wall below Mount Ararat that collapsed in October of last year, crushing one of our seating benches.

This time the work party has rebuilt on proper foundations (the first wall rested on large stones) and added buttresses and drainage channels. You may also notice that the wall is slightly sloping inwards, this is deliberate to give it extra strength.

They are currently only one course of stones away from full height and expect to complete the task in one more Tuesday, given good weather.



Hard at work, above, and, right, as well as replacing the bench damaged by the wall collapse, we have also replaced an old wooden bench below Mount Ararat with a new one made from recycled tyres, bringing our total number of new benches to five.



Brush cutting



It's best that our volunteers should know what they are doing. Recently four members of the work party joined a brush-cutting course run by East Malling Research and arranged by our funding secretary Dennis Usmar, who used grant money given us by Maidstone council's Going Green, Going Wild fund to pay for it.

As the cost per person was reduced if you had the maximum number of six trainees, Dennis also arranged for our VCS volunteers Sam Hipwell, Derek Warne, Kevin Shanahan and Robert Williams to be joined by Steve Songhurst and Fiona George from the Vinters Park Nature Reserve.

All six passed and will shortly be receiving a NPTC (City & Guilds) Brush Cutter certificate.

Barbecue

Sadly, the lifting of lockdown regulations came too late for our annual barbecue this year. It was a harsh blow to the work party volunteers, who had already missed out on their annual Christmas drinks treat from our Chairman, due to Covid. One of their number, Kevin Shanahan, took pity on his colleagues and threw a barbecue in his garden for work party members and their partners, which was much appreciated.

