

Visit to Loose Valley Conservation Area, TOVIL
Leader: Bryn Cornwall, Chairman of the Valley Conservation Society
Society started as a millennium project in 2000
Website: www.valleyconservation.org.uk

- Loose Stream (in part known as Loose River!) flows on to Boughton Monchelsea.
- Carisbrook House was the mill owner's house.
- There are now only the foundation stones of the original mill standing opposite, but Bryn showed a picture of the mill before its demise. Now there is a high iron weir controlling the flow of the stream, and a stone bridge crossing it. Only the walls of the bridge are owned by the conservation group, but access across it belongs to the owner of the now derelict land (3 ½ acres) at the other side. Beyond it are the sides of an old quarry, and above it a house known locally as "Mount Ararat", owned by one of the members.
- A few yards further up the hill stands a cottage known as The Cowshed (yes, it was once a cowshed!) owned by another member, "Steve".
- This stands opposite the pond which has built up behind the weir. When the pond was dredged, the detritus from it was heaped into small islands in the pond, now covered in vegetation including yellow irises, and some small trees. Ducks, moorhens and coots occupy the pond.
- At one time there were 13 mills by Loose Stream, one being a gunpowder mill.
- There is some woodland now named "Treacle Wood" - because at one time waste molasses from a mill oozed down, and a local joke was that the Treacle Mines of Tovil were up there. This woodland has been purchased by the group.
- We continued up Hayles Mill Rd, past another mill, now on the right where the stream passes under a bridge. This has been converted to a large house, and the waterwheel is in action there.
- Trout were seen in the stream.
- Woodland on the left beside the quarry wall was equipped with bat and bird boxes.
- Another large former mill further up the hill had been converted to a large building complex. There was a completely new complex of apartments, separate from the restored mill building, converted into houses with water-front occupation. This was an old papermill. Paper for the Magna Carta is said to have been produced here.
- A heron was sighted flying over this very large pond..
- Turning right, past an old mill/now house on left, with stream running through on R. lovely gardens with wooden bridges over stream.
- Tall white building – previously a pub.
- Opposite is newly installed finger post directing to "Great Ivy" (a mill).
- Retraced steps to Teasaucer Lane, up hill. This area was where Richard Hearne, "Mr Pastry" lived in Tovil.
- Turned left past "No entry" up drive to Manor house (apartments to left of main building).
- Turned R. along path, not real right of way, but in general use. Came out at caravan plus bungalow and cars. Edge of housing estate. Exit "The Lodge", Hayle Place, next to sign indicating No Horses, FP. (Didn't go down there!)
- Past estate on L. of large detached houses, along FP with intermittent metal bars across.
- At X-roads of FP turn L. into woods.
- On L. behind trees is where nature reserve is going to be.
- Bear L. into woods, then straight on (ignore small path to R.)
- Down hill past "Mount Ararat", with view of Cowshed.
- Down track, cross bridge to where we started.