

## ENTRY PART A: ABOUT YOUR VILLAGE

**1. Village Name:** Loose Village

**2. County:** Kent

**3. Village website:** There are several websites

[www.loosepc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.loosepc.kentparishes.gov.uk)

<http://loosevillageinfo.wixsite.com/loose-area-info>

[www.facebook.com/LooseVillageInformation/](http://www.facebook.com/LooseVillageInformation/)

[www.loose-amenities.org.uk](http://www.loose-amenities.org.uk)

<http://www.valleyconservation.org.uk/>

[www.looseareahistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.looseareahistorysociety.org.uk)

**4. Please describe why you and other people, residents and visitors, love your village (approx. 250 words)**



2500 residents enjoy living here as there is something for everyone. Though close to Maidstone, the county town, it has a very rural feel and pretty environment. Residents feel passionately about the area and many give up their free time to preserve the environment, run clubs and participate in local activities. Loose Amenities Association is a land management group dedicated to preserving and encouraging the wide range of wildlife, flora and fauna in the Loose Valley. They work alongside the Valley Conservation Society organising regular working parties of volunteers who undertake practical conservation work in the Loose Valley and the surrounding footpath network. Both these groups promote a sense of community and “ownership” of the valley.

A free ‘good neighbour’ service is available to help disadvantaged people attend hospital appointments, visit the library, go shopping etc. and provides welcome help especially amongst the elderly. There is a thriving gardening club centred in the Loose allotments. The Loose History Society meets regularly to investigate local

history and put on a monthly presentation by an invited speaker. Within the Loose area, three women's groups meet regularly; two WI groups and Loose Valley Wives. Additionally there are Scouts, Brownies, Rainbows and playgroups for young people. The Loose "Swiss" Scouts own land in the Loose Valley which is regularly used for Scout camps. There are two inclusive churches and two popular pubs - The Chequers and the Walnut Tree (a community pub) providing additional community cohesion.

## 1. Appearance



Loose Village is, at its heart, an attractive and historic village in a conservation area. It is well known for its pretty stream and the unusual central causeway running through it. The church and tumble of old cottages provide a unique setting in an attractive natural valley. The picturesque stream running through the village, the ancient trees and a viaduct designed by Thomas Telford are all interesting features to visit.



Brooks Path is the causeway along the Loose Stream that joins the two ends of the village, dividing the mill pond which once fed the village mill. Much of the village is constructed from Kentish Ragstone which was quarried locally. Ragstone from the Loose area was used in the construction of the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey. Features include ancient trees such as an oak tree on the village green that was planted to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and a yew tree in the

churchyard circa 1500 years old. Many of the houses in the village are Tudor and were built from proceeds from the prosperous wool trade in the valley. Brooks Field has a panoramic view of the village, with its range of different houses nestling in the valley, many backing onto the stream, all clustered around the pretty parish church. The view is outstanding and a popular vantage point for photographers, artists and visitors alike.

In his book, *The Enchanted Road*, Donald Maxwell, the well known travel writer of the 1920s, describes what is known to be the Loose Valley as “The Valley of Dreams” and his poem “A Riddle of Kent” conjures it up. To quote the first verse:

*“I know of a valley enchanted  
A valley of crystalline streams  
A valley of Kent in a mountain  
- I call it a Valley of Dreams.”*

## 2. History and Heritage



Loose originated in Saxon times, but its main period of growth was during the Industrial Revolution, when it developed around the seven mills powered by the Loose Stream. Old Loose Hill descends into Loose village and the valley. The hill is so steep that in the 18th and 19th centuries, consecutive landlords of The Chequers public house kept horses that were hired out to help haul carts to the top. The road is still lined with “haul” stones”, where ropes were tied, to help relieve the horses of the weight of the carts.

To the east of the village is the Loose Viaduct, attributed to Thomas Telford, and built in 1830 to carry the Maidstone to Hastings road across the Loose Valley and negate the problems of using Old Loose Hill. The village is proud of several historic and attractive properties such as a large 14th-century building, Church House, Lime Tree House 1582, and Vale House dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. ‘Loose’ was probably derived from the old English word, ‘Hlose’, meaning ‘a place of pigs’.

### 3. Village events/ Any Diary Dates between June & July:



- Monday 29 May Loose Annual Duck Race – this is a key event of the year. Visitors and residents race ducks down the stream to win prizes. There are other attractions in Brooks Field such as the coconut shy and local produce stalls.
- Wednesday June 14 - Tour of Maidstone Museum
- Saturday 8 July - Frank and Dean show. Open air concert in the grounds of Vale House, Old Loose Hill
- Monday July 10 - Group Walking Tour of Historic Maidstone

All Saint's Church: Third Saturday of each month 'Messy Church' - Crafts, singing, games and interactive Bible stories. Tea and cake

Chequers Pub, Old Loose Hill:

- Saturday 24th June - Live music with On Edge
- Saturday 15th July - Live music with Masterclass
- Saturday 29th July- Live music with Chicory Tip

Walnut Tree Pub, Loose

- Quiz night: last Friday of every month
- Karaoke every 3rd week in the month,
- Jamming / open mic night: every second Friday of the month
- Every Sunday - acoustic guitar jamming: 7.30pm

### 4. Activities to do in this village



In addition to the events listed in section 3, families enjoy using the King George V Playing Field, with its ball park and playground equipment. The main area of grass is home to a local football club on Sundays, during the football season. The Loose Parish Council holds an annual village fete, with dog show and fun fair on the first Saturday in September. The Pavilion is home to many local community organisations and is hired out regularly to local residents for private functions.

Brooks Field, alongside the stream in the valley is a natural haven for wildlife, fauna and flora. It has an area which is in the process of being restored to a traditional English meadow. There is a new Community Wood, known as "Roy's Wood" – in memory of the late Loose Parish Councillor, Roy Wood, who was passionate about trees and the environment. The Kent Men of the Trees donated 14 different species of oaks and advised on the creation of this wood. Picnicking is also a very popular pastime in Brooks Field throughout the summer months. There is a popular bench called the "Pig Seat" at the top of Brooks Field carved from a large tree trunk in the shape of a pig where people stop and admire the wonderful view over the old village nestled around the stream and church.

The allotments offer a chance to grow fruit and vegetables and to enhance your gardening knowledge as well as cultivating friendships! They have been voted "Best in Kent" on occasions.

The Loose Valley area is a popular spot for photographic societies and artists to visit. The stream and pond were recently used in an international advertising shoot. Children can purchase fishing nets from the local Post Office and walk down the hill to the crystal clear waters of the pond which is a magnet for youngsters to paddle in and catch tiddlers. Brown Trout and Kingfishers can be spotted in and by the pond at quieter times.

Walking is a popular pastime and the village has numerous footpaths, which meander through the countryside. They pass through the disused ragstone quarries which bloom with wild garlic and bluebells. Many pass The Chequers Public House

where refreshments can be found. These idyllic and informative walks can be found on the history society website.

## **5. Visitor experience**

Visiting Loose is a hidden gem and a welcome surprise particularly as it is so close to urban Maidstone. The village is full of charm and a haven of calm secluded in a peaceful valley not far from the hustle and bustle of the County Town and the Hastings Road (A229). Visitors can experience many simple pleasures, padding in the stream, strolling along the footpaths, admiring the scenery and enjoying refreshments in the local hostleries.

**6. If your village is chosen to win Village of the Year what would your village do with the prize money of £10,000? How your village plans to spend the prize money may form part of the judging criteria and so we encourage you to think creatively!**

We would like to use the £10,000 to fund four potential projects: In order of priority:

1. To replace the historic but broken cast iron “charabanc” sign on Busbridge Road
2. To fund the installation of meadow plants in Brooks Field to encourage wild flowers, insects and butterflies
3. To set up and run a weekly support group for the elderly, lonely or vulnerable residents of Loose
4. Commission a new design for the village green – a small but valuable space at the top of old Loose Hill.



## **ENTRY PART 2: ABOUT YOU**

1. Your First Name: Susan
2. Your Last name: Luckhurst

3. Your Postcode: ME15 9RW

4. Your email:susanaluckhurst@hotmail.co.uk

5. Your Telephone Number: 07975653520

6. Please confirm that you are 18 or over: Confirmed

7. Please say how you found out about Village of the Year: Via an email to the parish council.

Ends