



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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A S THIS *Newsletter* goes to press, the sun is shining and it's a good time to be thinking about walks. There are lots on offer on page 7 (some of them accompanied by a little gentle litter picking).

Some people seem to think that the first thing to do when going for a walk is to get into the car and head miles out into the countryside, but M.V.C.G. members know better. We have a wide variety of green places on our doorsteps, both inside the city boundary and adjacent to it - not forgetting the interest to be had in taking a fresh look at our urban environment - on the Bishopsworth Village Trail, for instance.

The Dundry Hill Group are making excellent progress in improving our 'next-door' countryside, and they have reached the exciting stage of advertising for a Project Officer 'to develop an innovative community based environmental project aimed at helping the rural and urban communities of Dundry Hill and South Bristol to work together to help conserve the Dundry Hill area and tackle environmental problems'. If you or anyone you know are interested, please write for details and an application form to Steve Smith, Manager, CSV Environment, 17 Midland Road, Bristol, BS2 0JT (the closing date for applications is 29 May).

When Bristol became a unitary authority again, it inherited from Avon four possible road schemes in south Bristol. The Council engaged consultants to advise on what should be done and their report is now available in Bishopsworth Library. The Council want our views, so please go and have a look and let us know your opinion.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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SOUTH BRISTOL RIVERS INITIATIVE

THIS PROJECT is really getting under way. A Working Party including local community groups with M.V.C.G. prominently represented met on 14 April. At that meeting it was agreed that a small Steering Group should oversee the project and the work of Caroline Smart, the recently appointed Project Officer.

The Steering Group consists of representatives from the Western Partnership for Sustainable Development, the Forest of Avon, the Wildlife Trust, Allied Domecq, Bristol City Council (as site owners) and M.V.C.G. to represent the community.

The first meeting of the Steering Group was held on 28 April. Caroline outlined a programme of work including construction of a path through the woodland to be followed by tree planting and regeneration work in that area and improvements to the existing pond, including silt removal. Investigations into the feasibility of a second lake for fishing will continue.

Caroline is also helping to arrange some events to involve the community and increase interest in the beauty spot on our doorstep. However it was felt that her main efforts should be directed to the environmental projects - but look out for details of events as they arise.

We will continue to report progress of this exciting project in the Newsletter. Hopefully we will see for ourselves progress along the Malago itself.

MARY SYKES



This is a sketch of Manor Woods pond which has appeared in the Wildlife Trust's magazine showing a boardwalk around the edge of the pond.

*What do **you** think? Is this a good way to improve access? Let us have your ideas.*

GREEN OUTLOOK FOR DUNDRY

THE COMING OF SPRING seems to renew our interest in the natural landscapes within which we live. The sap begins to rise in the trees and shrubs, and leaves in all their shapes and shades of green fill out the spaces and gaps we had come to take for granted during the dreary winter months.

This green wallpaper naturally covers the eyesores we've created in our wasteful ways. For a brief while the litter problem has been swept under the carpet of spring growth. The Dundry Hill Group believe that we can all benefit from a cleaner, healthier landscape and aim to reduce the damage created by fly-tippers and those who sometimes go to great efforts to dump their rubbish all over the Hill.

A programme of clean-ups has been set up and is in operation. Volunteers come together to pick up the litter from a selected site. The benefits of such actions are not to be counted in pounds and pence. The rewards are intangible, ranging from the experience of a landscape once more beautiful to the eye, to the companionship created by enthusiastic teamwork. Such litter clean-ups are often quite productive, providing the local authority waste management services with sizeable pick-ups. And now the Dundry Hill Group is taking a serious look at the cause of the litter affecting both Pigeonhouse and Malago streams. With funds received from the Greater Bristol Foundation, Burges Salmon Solicitors and the Countryside Commission, this radical initiative will develop a foundation for changing attitudes in local schools, all the while increasing people's sense of belonging to the community.



Almost a quarter of the school and a selection of parents/teachers joined in, to clean-up the immediate area around Dundry Primary School. The message from this successful event is changing from the simple 'Don't drop litter' to the proactive 'Pick up litter'. As this grows amongst us all, then the greening of Dundry Hill will surely bloom as the trees and shrubs are doing now.

CHRIS MCFARLING

APRIL FOOLS?

IT WAS THIRD TIME LUCKY on 18 April when the amphibious garbage raid got under way in the Malago in Manor Woods - on both occasions previously we had been thoroughly rained on.



There was a good turn-out. Many thanks for their efforts and enthusiasm to John Taylor; Lola Hardingham; Mavis Palmer; Bill Gibson, Siobhan and Sadie; Jackie Price, Elaine and Matthew (it was the first time all four junior wombles had been together on a garbage raid).

A very special thank you to Norman Shaddick, without whose inflatable dinghy and other equipment the event wouldn't have been possible; and to Royston Griffey for allowing us to use the grounds of the Manor House as a temporary dump until Steve Sparks' merry men collected the haul on the following Monday.



Operations in progress. There was noticeably more silt in the pond than last year



The final haul, including the statutory cable drum and car tyre, plus this year's special - several gas cylinders

DUSK IN MANOR WOODS

CLOSE YOUR EYES! A smell of wild garlic, hawthorn and fresh-mown grass pervades the air. Now, stop and listen. The singers in the choir have burst into songs of many melodies.

It is early May in Manor Woods and dusk is falling. The backcloth is the silhouette of trees above the stream against the darkening sky. All the musicians - blackbirds, thrushes, robins and many others - are giving enthusiastic performances.

The quack of ducks and scuttling noises of moorhens add a somewhat discordant note. The heron ('our' heron!) flies off from the large tree trunk in the pond and lands among the bushes, only the elegant line of its neck visible against the dark background.

Suddenly, as darkness falls, it all goes quiet as if the conductor had laid down his baton. We wondered whether we might hear owls - our enthusiasm fired by Chris Sperring's talk a few weeks ago - but we didn't. No bats were visible, but it is still early in the spring and rather cold. The Woods were not deserted; a few walkers - not all with dogs - were still strolling along the path.

If the thought of getting up for the dawn chorus doesn't appeal, try the dusk chorus in Manor Woods.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

PROGRAMME NOTES

WE HAVE HAD two very interesting meetings since our A.G.M. In March, Chris Sperring gave us a fascinating talk on British owls: the different species, their diets and habitats and prospects for survival and, as an added bonus, he brought along his beautiful barn owl, 'Cotleigh', for our admiration.

Last month, Mary James, who is chair of the National Public Affairs Committee of the N.F.U., visited us and it was interesting to hear the farmers' viewpoint on environmental matters including hedgerows, animal feeds and some aspects of the E.U. Common Agricultural Policy. Mrs James has very kindly invited us to visit Castle Farm (on the A38) on Bank Holiday Monday, 25 May, so if you would like to come, please be at the Farm at 3.00pm.

We are looking forward to hearing Bob Williams on local archaeology on 19 May, and on this subject H.H.E.A.G. has organised a walk to Stanton Drew on 21 June which we are welcome to join (for details see opposite).

There will be an evening visit to Clevedon on Tuesday, 23 June, to view the restored Victorian pier, followed by a short conducted walk (about 40 minutes) and a visit to the Clevedon Story Heritage Centre where tea and coffee will be available. There will be a charge of £1.50 per head. If you would like to come, please ring Lola (964 1116) and let her know if you can offer or require transport. We shall be meeting at Clevedon Pier Toll-house at 7.15pm.

Forthcoming attractions include Tony Targett, the BBC weather-man, in September, and, in October, Beryl Heaton's daughter Becky will be telling us about 'Wonderful Willow' which she is at present studying. We are hoping to arrange visits to the Astronomical Society's Failand Observatory and Bristol Water's trout hatcheries in the autumn, and Chris Sperring has promised to visit Manor Woods with us later in the year to find out if we have any owl residents and, if not, how to encourage them.

So, plenty is planned for the future which we hope you will support and enjoy. Don't forget that we would welcome any suggestions you may have and it is particularly helpful to know what kind of topics and events you would be interested in. Please come along - you can be sure of a friendly welcome and it would be particularly nice to see some new faces.

THE PROGRAMME GROUP

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

THE LIST BELOW includes the events and activities of the other groups we co-operate with. (HHEAG) is the Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group, (DHG) is the Dundry Hill Group and (UW) is the University of Worthywood. The **M** symbol means an M.V.C.G. event.

Saturday 16 May: *Hill House Farm Open Day* from 10.00am to 4.00pm (HHEAG). Take yourself to the Farm, or meet at 12.30pm at the bottom of Strawberry Lane to walk to the Farm. There are free guided walks at 11.00am, 1.00pm and 3.00pm.

M Tuesday 19 May: BOB WILLIAMS will talk to us about *Local Archaeological Sites*. St Peter's Rooms; 7.30pm.

Saturday 23 May: *Walk* from Bishopsworth Library to Marksbury Road Library to Bedminster Library via the Malago Greenway (UW). Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 1.45pm.

M Monday 25 May (Bank Holiday): Invitation to *visit Castle Farm*, Bridgwater Road (see opposite page). Meet at the farm at 3.00pm.

Wednesday 27 May: *Litter Raid* on Newdown Lane, Dundry (DHG). Meet at 4.00pm at the top of Aldwick Avenue, Hartcliffe.

M Monday 1 June: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

Saturday 6 June: *Walk* from Bishopsworth Library to Long Ashton Library across the fields of Ashton Vale (UW). Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 1.45pm.

Tuesday 9 June: The *Bishopsworth Village Trail walk* (UW/HHEAG). Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 7.00pm.

Thursday 11 June: An illustrated presentation on *Dry-Stone Walling* at 7.30pm at Dundry Village Hall (DHG).

Thursday 18 June: The *Natural History of Dundry* by HAROLD HURFORD from pictures taken during the last 30 years, followed by a presentation on the *Footpath Survey* of Dundry done by the Blenheim Scout Troop (DHG).

Sunday 21 June: *Walk to Stanton Drew* (HHEAG). Leave Hartcliffe Park Community Farm at 10.30am.

M Tuesday 23 June: *Visit to Clevedon* (see opposite page). **Please let Lola know (964 1116) if you are intending to come.**

M Monday 29 June: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at the 'Elm Tree' at 4.00pm.

As a participant in the National Spring Clean, M.V.C.G. was invited to a launch at the CREATE Centre. Not only was the Lord Mayor there, but we were also honoured by the presence of the doyen of garbage raiders.



Here is the memento of the event we received from the Council showing Great Uncle Bulgaria (*left*) and Cllr Jack Fisk, the Lord Mayor (*right*).

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913

Other Members

Anton Bantock, Brenda Docherty, Royston Griffey, Beryl Heaton, Mary Sykes.

Co-opted Members

Geoff Clarke, Tessa Coombes, Tania Ford, Peter Hall, Chris McFarling, Vanessa Van Eecke (*Minutes Secretary*), Sue Walker, Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Terry Cleverley, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Paul Walker, Cllr Claire Warren (*All the City councillors for Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members*).

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; telephone 964 3106. **Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.** The opinions expressed in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of Malago Valley Conservation Group.