



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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IT'S GOOD TO SEE THE FIRST SIGNS of positive co-operation with the City Council in improving our part of Bristol. On 19 March, Helen Hall spoke to us about nature conservation in the city with special reference to Manor Woods and the Malago. Karen Stagg, the Council's area landscape manager, was also present. After the meeting, we arranged to meet for a walk through Manor Woods to discuss the implementation of Julia Bolzek's splendid report on the management of the area.

Helen, Karen and several M.V.C.G. committee members met on 11 April. We discussed grass cutting (which areas should be left to grow for wildlife and which should be kept short); we agreed to monitor this and let Helen know if the contractors were getting it wrong. We also undertook to keep an eye on the posters the Council put up to inform the public about grass cutting and to replace them if (when?) they were removed by vandals.

Helen earned lots of brownie points by spotting while we were still a hundred yards away that the pond was missing its familiar embellishments - oil drums, wheelie bin etc. We admitted our culpability (see page 3) and said we would keep it that way. The alternative would have been the council contractors going in with heavy plant and machinery at great cost, both financial and environmental. We also pressed Karen to look at options for non-inflammable litter bins to place at the main entrances.

We are keeping in touch with Helen, Karen and our indefatigable 'litter man', Steve Sparks - and we intend to spread our net to look closely at the other important green spaces on our patch, such as Crox Bottom. Join in the walks (see page 7) and enjoy our urban countryside.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

Dundry Slopes	Page 2
Mucking out the Malago	Page 3
Bedminster Down	Page 4
Walkies!	Page 5
Wildlife Diary	Page 6
The Programme	Page 7
Who's who	Page 8

DUNDRY SLOPES

TWO FURTHER MEETINGS of the Dundry Hill Group have been held since our last *Newsletter*, one at Newton Malreward and the other at Hartcliffe Community Farm, both of which were well attended.

As a result, a lot of proposals have been put forward for possible action, including the provision of an official amenity site (i.e. rubbish tip) in this area to discourage unauthorised tipping, taking parties of children on educational visits to local farms and exhibiting at city festivals. All of these suggestions are being actively pursued.

The Greater Bristol Foundation have confirmed that they are prepared to provide funds which will be used for a part-time worker, towards practical work, and to cover administration costs, and it is intended to apply in due course to other bodies for further financial help.

It was reported that East Dundry Lane is much improved since the litter cleaning took place and the next rubbish clearance will be on **Saturday 8 June** between **1.30 and 4.00pm** near the '*Red Hart*' pub. Anyone who can spare half an hour or so to lend a hand will be very welcome.

Following complaints from local residents, an independent meeting in Hartcliffe was called by Cllr Paul Smith which was attended by City Council officials. As a result, a member of the Leisure Services Department will visit the slopes weekly to assess the situation.

Let's hope that all this activity will soon begin to show results - watch this space for further news.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

PLANT SALE - 25th AND 26th MAY

AN INVITATION is enclosed to a Plant Sale at 84 King George's Road in aid of M.V.C.G. Any contributions of plants, raffle prizes, cakes, old gardening books or magazines will be most welcome. Please telephone 964 1116 with any offers any time.



Please come along and bring your friends - we look forward to seeing you. You don't need to bring the invitation - it's not a ticket - so feel free to pass it on to a friend or neighbour who might be interested.



MUCKING OUT THE MALAGO

AT THE MEETING on 19 March when Helen Hall talked to us about the future of Manor Woods, one of the points made in discussion was the importance of removing the rubbish which had accumulated in the 'bird sanctuary' - the pond which traps silt before the storm water interceptor.

The point was made by Anton Bantock (via a spokesman, since he wasn't able to be at the meeting). It was suggested in reply that the junk (an oil drum being among the most prominent objects) was firmly embedded in the mud and would need heavy equipment to remove. Some members volunteered to have a go, but the initiative was taken almost immediately by Anton himself.

The following Monday being a litter day, Anton decided that the garbage raid should be an amphibious operation. He recruited Norman Shaddick who brought ropes, lifejackets and a rubber dinghy. Launching the dinghy from the side of the pond and trailing a couple of ropes, your chairman, turned temporary helmsman, paddled gingerly over to the 'island' where the junk was.

The first discovery was that the depth of the pond was very restricted by accumulated silt and slowly rotting vegetation just below the surface. At one point, the dinghy was being poled like a punt rather than paddled. The second, vital, discovery was that the island was quite solid and safe to stand on. Moving around (carefully) in wellies was quite possible, so we set up the dinghy as a shuttle between the island and the bank, pulling it back and forth with the ropes and transporting one or two items of junk per trip. The rubbish was just sitting on top of the semi-solid island and wasn't difficult to remove.

Fortunately, one of the recovered items was a lidless wheelie bin (which has now joined the M.V.C.G. fleet), so we were just able to get everything back to the Library entrance. The small question then arose of what to do with it all, but the Manor House was not far away, and Denis and Lotte Bristow were most obliging. We left the junk in their grounds and phoned Steve Sparks at the Council the next day who sent a lorry to collect it.

Since then, inspired by our modest success, we have removed rubbish from the Malago itself, paddling along the stream bed in wellies. Once again, the combination of the Manor and Steve proved most effective. It would be good not to have so much rubbish to remove, but if necessary we'll do it again in a few months, next time in good weather and with some press coverage.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

BEDMINSTER DOWN COMMON

BEDMINSTER DOWN COMMON is situated on the A38 Bridgwater Road and is a beautiful green corridor with corresponding views forming the south-west gateway into the city.

The common starts at the roundabout at the junction of Kings Head Lane, with a break opposite the '*Cross Hands*' public house before continuing again on the right hand side of Bedminster Down Road, producing a lovely green backdrop to the houses in Ilchester Crescent.

Bristol has entered the *Britain in Bloom* competition again this year and the roundabout near the '*Kings Head*' has been planted out with tulips and wallflowers to complement the green of the shrubberies and lawns of the 'Pavilions' office block and car park.

The next feature of the common is the row of mature horse chestnut trees opposite Elm Farm. These trees give pleasure the whole year round, from the 'sticky buds' to the white, candle-shaped flowers, through to the schoolboys' delight, the conkers, which are collected around October and November.

Past the chestnut trees and opposite the South Bristol Crematorium is the Head Office of Bristol Water P.L.C. The water company over many years has promoted a green image which can be seen in the maintenance of their many properties. This year, 1996, is the 150th anniversary of the founding of Bristol Water, and to mark the celebration a water garden has been built in front of the office block containing items such as waterfalls, ponds, a waterwheel and a hand pump. The garden is *well* worth a visit.

From the Bristol Water HQ the common opens up each side of the Bridgwater Road to provide playing fields and recreation areas for children and adults. The concrete bases and brick squares at the junction of Langford Road and Brunel Road is the site of the old World War II air raid shelters. The ground is very undulating between Langford Road and Lulsgate Road due to the fact that it is reclaimed land which was refilled after the stone and lime extraction which were quarried here when local houses were being built at the end of the nineteenth century.

There was an active lime kiln on Bedminster Down, opposite the public toilets, around 1900, before it was relocated opposite Castle Farm just outside the city boundary. It was probably supplied with coal from the old South Liberty Lane Pit.

Next to the public toilets can be found three circles of shrubs and mature trees which it is believed was the site of the burial place of many of those who died of the plague which ravaged the whole country before improvements were made to the local sanitary and water supply systems.

Those who have travelled through Bedminster Down common this spring cannot have missed the beauty of thousands of daffodils that have sprouted throughout the whole length, giving a wonderful floral avenue with fine views of major parts of Bristol's historical treasures such as Ashton Court, the Clifton Suspension Bridge and Cabot Tower.

Use our open green spaces and enjoy them, whether it is to watch the annual Balloon Festival or to walk the dog or play football. Bedminster Down common has a lot to offer.

JOHN TAYLOR

WALKIES!

SPRING IS IN THE AIR. And if John's article makes you want to take a stroll to see for yourself, or if you want to observe some of the plants and wildlife mentioned in Marie Jo's piece on page 6, now is an excellent time to (re)discover our parks and open spaces.

Of course, environmentally conscious people like M.V.C.G. members wouldn't dream of leaving litter behind them in public places. Unfortunately, not everyone thinks that way, and one thing you are guaranteed to discover on your walk is other people's rubbish.

Why not take a bag with you and pick up as you go? There's no need to go mad and get dirty (come on the garbage raids for that - it's good fun). Just pick up the crisp packets, the sweet wrappers, the plastic bottles. And if you take *two* bags with you, you can keep the drink cans separate and let me have them for recycling into money for our funds.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

WILDLIFE DIARY

WELCOME to our new wildlife corner. All our readers are invited to contribute. Let's share our discoveries in the parks and open spaces in our area.

11 April Several members are walking through Manor Woods with Helen Hall, Bristol's Conservation Officer. With the help of the specialist, we discover the now famous, though rare, corky-fruited water dropwort, also spotted medick and common centaury. Along the main path, a patch of white violets in bloom. Closer to the stream, a grey squirrel - none of us had seen one in Manor Woods before. Two grey wagtails are living up to their name on stones in the stream.

28 April The blackthorn (sloe) bushes in Manor Woods are a mass of white blossom - so beautiful with the pink of 'lady's-smock' along the stream.

5 May A swallow over Highridge Common. Swallows prefer the countryside (going to Folly Farm we saw two on a wire); swifts are more common in cities.

In the next few weeks, look out for hawthorn in bloom. Tell us what flowers you have spotted in our 'meadows'. The Council is leaving some areas unmown to let native grasses and flowers grow.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

PLANTLIFE - 'TALKING FLOWERS'

THE PRESENTATION on Tuesday 16 April was both informative and beautiful and many different aspects of the charity's work was covered. For instance, wildflower meadows are almost a thing of the past as 97% have been destroyed since World War II.

A profusion of coloured slides were shown of flowers, grasses, trees, shrubs and lichens which grow in meadow, heath, woodland and hedgerow. We have all seen on television how ancient woodland and heath are desecrated to allow the building of more and more roads. Once these habitats are destroyed, they are gone for ever.

We can help preserve our natural heritage for our children and grandchildren so that they may be as fortunate as those of us who were able to learn about wildflowers, to pick them to make posies, or to play in the fields and woods. Practical work can be done by dedicated people - maybe you could help by joining Plantlife? We are enclosing leaflets with some of these *Newsletters* but there aren't enough for everyone. If you would like more information, please contact Brenda on 983 9901 for details.

BRENDA M. DOCHERTY

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

AS LAST SUMMER, we are pleased to join with the University of Withywood in publicising walks in and around our area in May and June. For these walks, there is a charge of £1 to support the University's sponsorship fund for Third World students.

Thursday 16 May: (Jointly with the University of Withywood) *Bishopsworth Village Trail walk*. Meet at St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth, at **7.00pm**. £1.

Monday 20 May: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at Withywood Post Office (Fouracres) at 4.00pm.

Tuesday 21 May: *Visit to Windmill Hill City Farm*. A chance for a guided tour around this fascinating and ever-changing south Bristol asset. Meet at the Farm in Philip Street, Bedminster, at 7.30pm. If you need or can offer a lift, please contact André or Brenda.

Thursday 23 May: (Jointly with the University of Withywood) *Strawberry Lane to Dundry and return*. Meet at Withywood Post Office at **7.00pm**. £1.

Saturday/Sunday 25/26 May: *Plant Sale* at 84 King Georges Road to raise money for M.V.C.G. funds. 2.00 - 5.30pm on Saturday 25 May; 11.00am - 12.30pm and 2.00 - 5.30pm on Sunday 26 May.

Thursday 30 May: (Jointly with the University of Withywood) *Crox Bottom Walk*. Meet at Pioneer (Leo's) car park at **7.00pm**. £1.

Thursday 6 June: (Jointly with the University of Withywood) *Climb Dundry Hill to Maes Knoll tump*. Meet at Hartcliffe Library at **7.00pm**. £1.

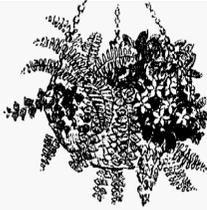
Saturday 8 June: *Rubbish Clearance* 1.30 - 4.00pm near the 'Red Hart' pub, Hartcliffe.

Thursday 13 June: (Jointly with the University of Withywood) *Malago Greenway to Victoria Park*. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at **7.00pm**. £1.

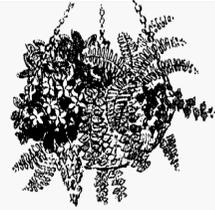
Tuesday 18 June: *Visit to Gatcombe Court*. A relaxing and special summer evening in a unique venue. Details were in the last *Newsletter*. If you need the information again, please contact André or Brenda. **Please book with André or Brenda by 10 June**. There will be a charge (including refreshments) of £4.25 per head.

Monday 24 June: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

- There are also longer University of Withywood walks on Sundays: details from Chris Lillington or Anton Bantock.



FLORAL DISPLAYS



THE AWARDS LAST YEAR for hanging baskets and troughs which helped to brighten up the neighbourhood were well received and we are planning to do the same again this year.

There will be more details in the next *Newsletter*, but start planning and planting now to win a prize in the summer!

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chair	Sue Walker	946 5285
Secretary	Brenda Docherty	983 9901
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913
Programme Co-ordinator	Brenda Docherty	983 9901

Other Members

Freddie Alliston, Anton Bantock, Denis Bristow, Richard Eddy, Peter Hall, Lola Hardingham, Beryl Heaton, Chris Lillington, Mary Sykes, Ted Thomas

Co-opted Members

Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Terry Cleverley, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Paul Walker (*All the City and County of Bristol councillors for Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards have been 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.