



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THE SUMMER *NEWSLETTER* often follows local elections, and this one is no exception. M.V.C.G. believes in good links with all our councillors, so we congratulate Tim Kent and Kevin Quartley on their re-election, and we congratulate and welcome Naomi Rylatt, who has been newly elected in Hartcliffe ward.

As usual, we have invited Naomi to become a co-opted member of our committee (co-opted members don't have a vote, so we can show that we remain independent of party politics). I'm pleased to report that she has accepted, thereby keeping up the tradition that all councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are positively involved with M.V.C.G.

We have also had one of our 'ordinary' members come to a recent committee meeting as an observer. No pressure and no commitment! – but we would be delighted if she – or any other M.V.C.G. member – decided to get more involved with helping to run the Group.

That's enough internal business! The special news in this edition is the repair of the magical Malago Spring Artwork on Dundry Slopes – see pages 4 and 5. We are paying for this with a good chunk of the money we 'inherited' from the former Dundry Hill Group; this is a moral commitment we took on when the General Meeting which wound up D.H.G. decided to donate the remaining funds to M.V.C.G. We're grateful to CSV Environment for organising the work and providing volunteer labour to back up the professional expertise which made the repair possible.

Come and have a look for yourself! Our Summer Outing will be a walk and DIY picnic at this special, 'hidden' place. See the back page for details.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

BY NOW you may have explored the flower meadow in Manor Woods Valley. We circulated M.V.C.G. members who are on e-mail to encourage people to go along and enjoy our own 'Local Springwatch'. The pale blue flax was at its best, mixed with red clover, birdsfoot trefoil and many other colourful flowers. Remember – the 'M.V.C.G. bench' paid for by the Group last year is at the top of the meadow, so well situated for contemplation or simply to have a rest. The closest entrances to go and see the meadow are Valley Road or Vale Lane.



Clockwise from above:

- *the meadow and the Interpretation Board we supplied;*
- *a natural tapestry;*
- *a Common Blue butterfly enjoying the meadow*

A few weeks ago a large oak tree along the stream on the woodland side fell. It is always sad to lose an old tree like that. Hopefully it will be replaced by a young sapling.

The wall around the interceptor has been of concern to us for a while as loose slabs had been removed and taken away. The remaining slabs have now been concreted back and we are hoping that the missing ones will eventually be replaced.

Once again M.V.C.G. members and any members of the public will have the opportunity to take part in the Himalayan Balsam Big Pull. The Avon Invasive Weeds Forum Field Officer, Neil Green, has given us the details:

- Meet on Tuesday 24 June at 10.00am at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Tools and bags will be provided. So will tea, coffee and baked goods. If you're staying until the finish at about 2.30pm, bring a picnic lunch.

It is always most enjoyable and fun. Also, we know that the hard work put in by many people in the past few years has been very effective in reducing the number of invasive plants. Dress for 'gardening' – long-sleeved clothing advised.

Finally, we have reported in past *Newsletters* the work done by the Avon Wildlife Trust in the old quarries area – what we are now calling 'The Malago Orchard'. All the central area was cleared of vegetation in the winter to improve the access to the fruit trees. With the damp weather we have had recently the paths have nearly disappeared. We will shortly be meeting Joe McSorley, the Avon Wildlife Trust Reserves Officer, on site to discuss the future of the quarries. If you have any suggestions to make do let us know.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE
Manor Woods Valley Working Group

PLANNING MATTERS

THERE HAVE BEEN THREE SITES where development has been 'pending' for a long time; now there are two (perhaps one-and-a-half!). The derelict bungalow at 104 HIGHRIDGE GREEN has received planning permission for replacement with two houses and three bungalows in a simple, modern design. This has been an eyesore for far too long, and we hope that demolition and redevelopment will happen very soon.

There is progress on the former METHODIST CHURCH HALL on Bishopsworth Road. The 'pre-app.' consultation here has been excellent, and the developer will be amending his original design to meet the planning officer's concerns and will have access to all the flats through the original front door instead of from the side.

Still completely stalled is the former U.R.C. on Church Road, Bishopsworth. Rear access from Fernsteed Road is tricky, and it looks as the owner has given up trying to find a solution – the building is now again for sale.

Elsewhere, there is slow but steady progress at Bishopsworth Swimming Pool: a 'Friends' group has been set up to look at the area surrounding the building when it is converted for skate-boarding. Let me know if you would like to be involved.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

MALAGO SPRING ARTWORK REPAIRED

WE REPORTED in the last *Newsletter* that we were working with CSV Environment to get the Malago Spring Artwork repaired – the beautiful dry-stone wall had been badly damaged by too much water flowing off the hill. (See the box opposite for the history of this wonderful place).

Before:
most of the left-hand wall has gone – washed away when the stream left its channel through the hole and cascaded over the wall



JOE MCKENNA of CSV tells the story: We employed Phil Smith – a dry stone waller and hedge layer. His business is called *STICKS AND STONES CONSERVATION*. Phil worked on the Wraxall estate for many years until the National Trust took ownership. We also had a team of CSV volunteers who are unemployed but gaining work experience by coming out with us.

We had a large team (six plus Phil) on the first day, so we wheel-barrowed lots more stone to the site while Phil dismantled the wall with help from one or two of the lads. By end of day one we had dug out the footing, got all the stone there and started to lay the foundation stones.



During:
Phil (in the green top) and some of the volunteers prepare the ground – or mud!

The Malago Spring Artwork was the Dundry Hill Group's Millennium Project, situated at the Woodland Trust's Mannings Wood site.

Deborah Jones, an environmental artist, was commissioned by the Group and worked with local residents and children from both the rural and urban areas of the hill while creating the spring site.

This spring is a tufa depositing spring. The dissolved calcium in the water coats items in the stream such as twigs and moss. The moss near the outlet feels crispy! There are footprints carved in the stone bed of different animals that have roamed the hill since the last ice age and include prints from bears to a local walker's dog! There are also fragments of words and phrases evoking the atmosphere of the place.

The aim of the spring project was to retain the area's natural 'magic' by keeping it as a surprise to be stumbled on, enjoyed and explored. The project was made possible by the support of the Millennium Awards for All, Wessex Water, North Somerset Council and the Countryside Agency and opened in November 2001.

On day two we had a team of four plus Phil and we got most of the wall built and some very large stones lifted on to the top ready to be fixed with lime mortar the next day. We also back-filled the top with large stones to allow water to run through in case the spring should block up again.

We were rained off on Wednesday but returned on Thursday to fix the top stones with lime mortar to make them as secure as possible. We also decided to lay a small hedge along the top to try and deter people from climbing on top.



*After: the finished wall and hedge – strong, durable and beautiful
(thanks to Joe McKenna for the photos of the work)*

KINGS HEAD PARK

IT'S BEEN A POSITIVE START to the year in Kings Head Park. The Kings Head Park Group decided to plant some spring bulbs in areas around the park to brighten it up. It was decided to add to the existing daffodils putting some in 'Mavis' corner', some in the borders by the Greylands Road entrance and a group by the old children's play area/football pitch. We decided to put some crocus bulbs on the corner where the old flower beds were (by the changing rooms) and some bluebells in between the trees by Home Farm.

Greylands Road area



Julian Cox (Council) said he would find funding for half the cost if we could find the other half. We contacted local groups and had donations from Bedminster Down and Uplands Society, Highridge Forum and Highridge United Football Club, and help with planting from parents of St Peter's School and the Council provided some men. The bulbs were planted (with some tips from M.V.C.G. members) early in the spring and here are some of the results.



Daffodils by the lower football pitch

Unfortunately some of the bluebells were mown down by Quadron (twice) and as an apology they have agreed to sow a wildflower bank at the bottom of the children's play area – free of charge.



Crocus planted in a shield pattern

As the daffodils were in full bloom in March, work started on the new entrance gate at Greylands Road and a path from this entrance to the main path and entrance to the park from Kings Head Lane. The path is being well used by dog walkers, children going to school and local residents cutting through to the main road. Unfortunately there isn't enough space behind the goal post at the top end of the football pitch but this is being looked into by the Council for next season.

The new path (looking from the Kings Head Lane entrance towards Greylands Road)

The group also asked for some football posts to be left up out of season for people to play football. The posts are by the changing rooms and children's play area and are being utilised regularly. Over the next few weeks we are having two new benches installed by the play area for families to use. We are also having two new bins.



So overall the park is going from strength to strength. The bowling club have applied to extend their licence and they have installed a new fence around their car park. They are also hoping to re-surface the car park in the future and re-felt the roof.

LIS PIBWORTH

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



TWO DATES to note this time: one for work (and fun), and one for exercise (and even more fun!).

Tuesday 24 June: HIMALAYAN BALSAM BIG PULL in Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve. See also page 3. Meet at 10.00am at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Tools and bags will be provided. So will tea, coffee and baked goods. If you're staying until the finish at about 2.30pm, bring a picnic lunch. Dress for 'gardening' – long-sleeved clothing advised.

Monday 4 August: Our SUMMER OUTING. It's an early-evening walk to the wonderful MALAGO SPRING ARTWORK on Dundry Hill – see the article on pages 4 and 5. When we arrive, we'll have a 'bring-your-own' picnic, so pack some juice and crisps/Champagne and canapés.

Meet at 6.30pm in the car-park at Morrison's, Hartcliffe, in front of the @Symes building. From there, it's a gentle stroll through one of the 'green fingers' to the bottom of the slope. The walk up the slope is steep but quite do-able, with stops to admire the view! Parts of the path can be muddy if the weather has been wet, and there is a field to cross with potentially damp grass – nothing that you shouldn't expect to find on a country walk, and nothing to cause a problem for someone wearing suitable clothes and shoes.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	907 0623
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Diana Porter, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Kevin Quartley, Naomi Rylatt (*All the City councillors for 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; tel. 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.org.uk; website www.mvcg.org.uk.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.