



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 33
May
2000

WHEN I start to put together an M.V.C.G. *Newsletter*, I have a look at the previous one to make sure we report on any outstanding issues. I also look at the corresponding *Newsletter* from a year ago, since some of our activities follow an annual cycle.

The May 1999 *Newsletter* reported on the City Council elections. There were no elections in Bristol this year, but that doesn't mean that all is quiet on the municipal front. You may have read in the *Evening Post* about the changes in the City Council's administration. Not only is there a major reorganisation in the Council departments (again), but, more radically, the way decisions will be taken from now on is very different.

Instead of the committee system, there will be eight 'executive members' - senior councillors with responsibility for each of the major new departments. These councillors will take the decisions on the day-to-day running of their departments, in conjunction with their chief officers. The eight executive members will also come together in a 'cabinet'. There are two respects in which the old system continues: decisions on planning applications (but not planning policy) will be made by 'traditional' committees; and the final decision making body will be meetings of the full Council.

As ever, we need to keep a balance here. M.V.C.G. has positive relations with many councillors and officers, and we take a close interest in *how* decisions are made, because that can influence *what* decisions are made. But we are, of course, an independent body and much of our work isn't affected by Bristol City Council. Nevertheless, we need to understand the new system (and we have some worries about how it will work in practice). Lola Hardingham and I have been to meetings arranged by VOSCUR to keep voluntary groups informed about the changes. We'll keep you informed, too.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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ON THE TILES

THOSE who came to the last meeting in St Peter's Rooms, on 18 April, will know that there was a change of plan from the advertised programme. Our Community Constable, P.C. Mike Lippiatt, was ill, and Bishopsworth Police Station were unable to provide anyone else to speak to us.

At short notice therefore, we invited the members present to take part in a sort of 'open committee meeting'. We used the standard agenda that we have for committee meetings to go through some of the issues which M.V.C.G. keeps tabs on without necessarily going public or reporting in the *Newsletter*.

The show-stopper was when Lola produced a sample of coated steel roof-tile which was proposed for the re-roofing of the Spinney Croft Elderly Persons' Home. Many of the planning applications which we look at are not a problem in principle, but so much depends on the details and the materials. In this case, Lola had spoken to the case officer at the Planning Department, and also to the Warden at Spinney Croft, who lent her the tile sample - we thought it was O.K. and the application has since been approved.

Other planning applications which we have reported in past *Newsletters* which have got the go-ahead recently include the 'Matties Block' (see *Newsletter 31*) where there is now permission for all the shops to be converted to flats; and Symes Avenue, where the outline application for a large supermarket to replace all the run-down shops was welcomed by most local people and the Council Planning Committee (Mary Sykes pointed out to the Committee that the only building which would survive if redevelopment went ahead would be Symes House, which M.V.C.G. garbage raiders know primarily as a wicked litter trap!). However, this is only an outline approval and nothing will be built until Panther Securities, who have the site on a long lease from the Council, do a deal with a supermarket operator and get a full planning permission for a detailed design. As and when an application is made, we will inspect it in detail and with great interest.

Finally, as most of our readers will know, work has at last started at Chestnut Court to convert the house into six flats and to build four new houses on the car park site. We were very concerned at the delay in starting after planning permission was granted in February, and the condition of the roof means that we are not counting any chickens just yet. But we hope that before the end of the year, this major blot on the Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area will be a fading memory.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

OUR PARK RANGERS

TO MOST PEOPLE, the mention of the word ‘Park Ranger’ conjures up the idea of a rather military-looking man in uniform reprimanding little boys caught walking on flower beds or climbing trees.

Nothing could be further from the truth nowadays. Listening to Phil Rendle speaking on *The Work of the Park Rangers* at the March meeting gave us quite a different picture.

The City of Bristol employs 12 park rangers, including two who look after Ashton Court Park full-time. This is a small number considering the number of open spaces and parks we have in Bristol. Phil explained that the role of the park ranger has gone through a lot of changes in the past few years. Phil sees his job as ‘bringing the parks to the people’, especially young people, hence his educational work. Phil visits schools and works with the children. He has helped the children at Fair Furlong School in Withywood create a wildlife garden. The Children of St Mary Redcliffe School took part in the renovation of an old pond in Ashton Court. And the interpretation boards on the Malago Greenway in Bedminster were created with the help of young people.



Phil profoundly believes that working with children, showing them the richness of our open spaces and their potential, be it in a school playground or in a park, will create a generation of people proud of their environment and not alienated from it.

The Park Ranger Service also organises lots of activities and leisure pursuits, such as concerts, workshops and walks, and Phil has agreed to give us a conducted walk around Eastwood Farm - you can find the details on page 8. Leaflets are available giving the complete programme of parks activities, so why not pick one up from the library and enjoy some of the treats on offer this summer?

LOLA HARDINGHAM
and MARIE JO COUTANCHE

ELM TREE CORNER

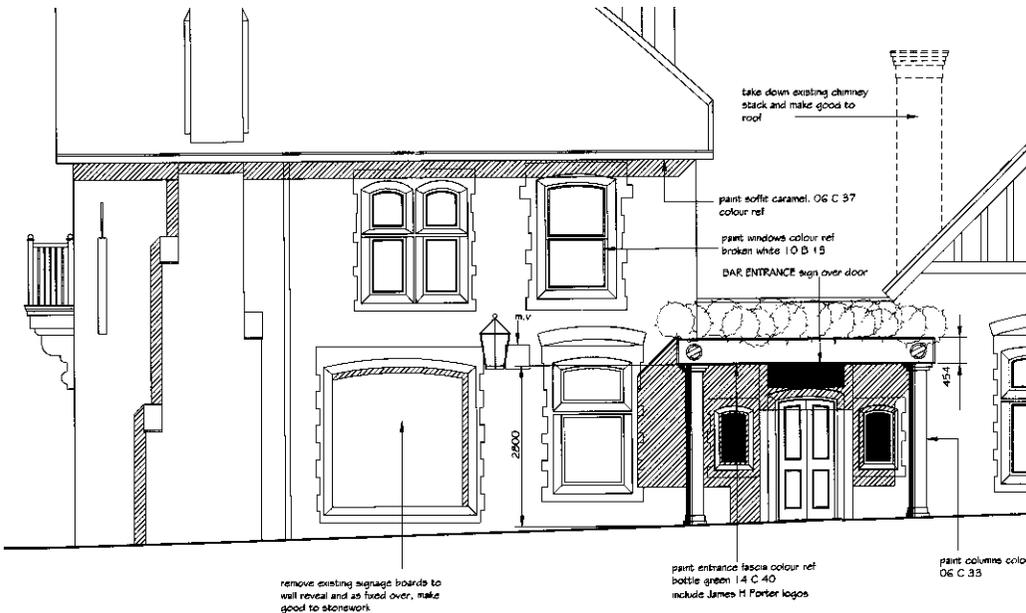
THINGS ARE STILL HAPPENING at Elm Tree Corner - this time at the 'Elm Tree' itself. People who shop in the area will have seen the sign on the pub advertising the franchise. At the same time, a planning application has been made for alterations both to the interior of the pub and to the side facing on to Highridge Road.

The drawing shows the proposed elevation to Highridge Road. The principle changes are:

- demolition of the chimney to the right of the entrance
- a new porch
- a new colour scheme with bottle-green paintwork and 'James H Porter' logos
- two new brass lanterns on the wall.

There would also be some minor changes where the skittle alley fronts on to the car park.

As well as these changes to the building itself, the expanse of concrete on the Highridge Road side of the pub would be replaced with a defined car parking area immediately behind the pavement line laid out with paviours. This would go half-way in to the building and be separated from a new sitting-out area by a low planted border.

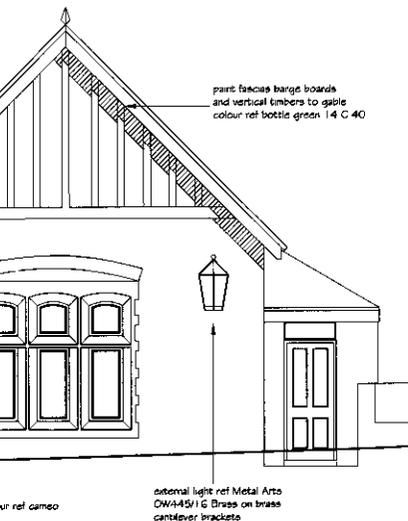


The M.V.C.G. committee hasn't yet had a chance to look at this application, and we'd like to hear your views. If you'd like to have a closer look at the plans, I have a copy which Cllr Richard Eddy has kindly obtained for us. Please give me a ring on 964 3106 with your thoughts.

Following the tree planting on Highridge Road which we reported last time, Katrina Slack of *Britain in Bloom* was able to join us on 5 May for a little ceremony to mark their grant to us (we had already received the cheque!). The *Evening Post* had been keen to print a photograph of the occasion, but in the event, they didn't turn up and, despite Lis's best efforts, managed to get the names wrong on the photo which Lis took and sent to them. Never mind, here's another picture with the names spelled correctly ...

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

From left to right: Lola Hardingham, Don Bartlett, Katrina Slack, André Coutanche, Lis Pibworth, Mary Sykes

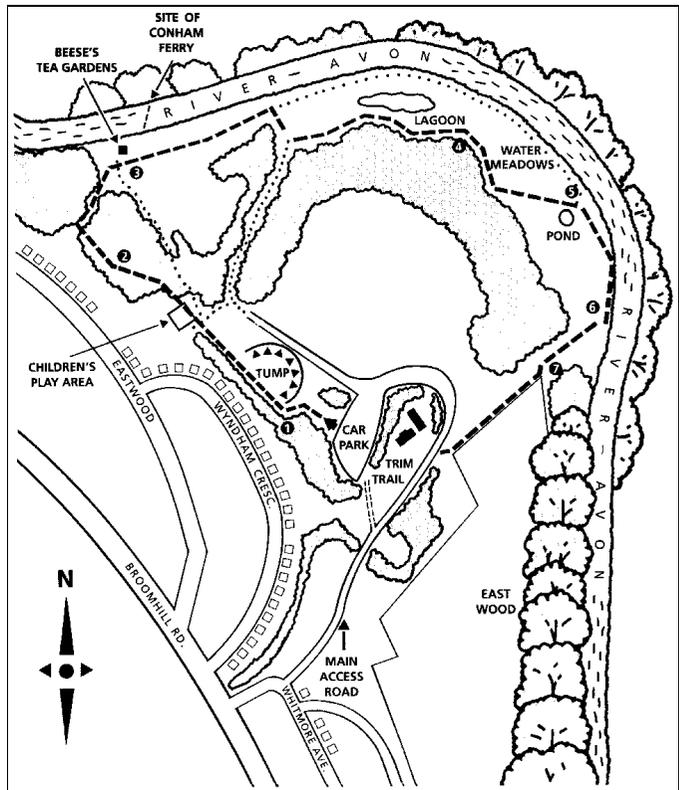


WELCOME x 3!

THE LAST *Newsletter* bade farewell to Barbra Wharton of the Dundry Hill Group (temporarily) and Chris McFarling of CSV Environment. We can now say a warm welcome to their replacements. **Eleanor Davis** is the D.H.G. Project Officer while Barbra is on maternity leave and several M.V.C.G. members have already met her on the D.H.G. walks.

The most recent walk (to Bithams Wood) also gave an opportunity to meet **Paul Stephens**, 'the new Chris McFarling' as he described himself, though it's already clear that he brings his own experience and talents to the job.

But the biggest welcome is for the smallest new arrival. Barbra's son **Josh** was born in late April, weighing in at over 7lbs. Malago Valley Conservation Group sends them our very best wishes. We look forward to seeing Barbra and Josh out and about soon.



Map showing how to find Eastwood Farm and where to park (see 18 July in the programme on page 8)

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

SUMMER is icummin in - and with it the end of our series of talks at St Peter's Rooms. The last one is this Tuesday, and then we start our outdoor visits and events. As usual, the **M** symbol means an event organised by M.V.C.G. The other dates we have shamelessly appropriated from other groups' diaries - mostly the Dundry Hill Group (DHG), who welcome everyone to their events. For the first time, we need more than one page for the programme!

M Tuesday 16 May: JUDE ANDREWS will talk to us about the work of the *Recycling Consortium*. We will also have a PLANT SALE BRING AND BUY - please bring what you can.

Saturday 20 May: *Wildlife Watch Fayre* at 2.00pm at Dundry Village Hall.

M Monday 29 May: *Garbage Raid*. This is deliberately on the Bank Holiday Monday, because it's a special one to tackle the rubbish along the bed of the Malago in Manor Woods and attack the vegetation encroaching on the path from the interceptor to the dam. Bring secateurs if possible and wear wellies if you want to walk along the stream. As usual, we will supply gloves. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 2.00pm.

Sunday 4 June: WALK FROM STRAWBERRY LANE with views across the city from Hartwood Acres. Meet at Strawberry Lane (off Sherrin Way, Witherwood) at 10.00am for a 12.00 noon return (DHG).

Wednesday 14 June: Talk on the FOSSILS AND GEOLOGY OF DUNDRY HILL by *Simon Carpenter*. Did you know that Dundry Hill is nationally important for its fossils? 7.30pm at Norton Malward Village Hall (DHG).

M Tuesday 20 June: VISIT TO SHERBORNE GARDENS, Litton. Meet at 7.00pm at the Gardens (on the B3134 from Harptree to Litton). There is a charge of £2.50 payable on the evening for admission and refreshments. We will try to co-ordinate transport, so if you need or can offer a lift, please ring Lola on 964 1116.

Sunday 25 June: WALK AROUND CHEW VALLEY LAKE, organised by the Chew Valley Recreational Association, including parts not normally accessible. There is a charge, and we are suggesting that the M.V.C.G. participants organise it as a sponsored walk to raise funds for further tree planting at Elm Tree Corner. Contact Lola on 964 1116 for information.

M Monday 26 June: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at Symes Avenue.

more over the page >>

🕒 **Tuesday 27 June:** A guided walk on the BISHOPSWORTH VILLAGE TRAIL. We have invited the Bedminster Down and Uplands Society to join us. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 7.00pm.

Saturday 1 July: FUN DAY to publicise the SRB5 work in Hartcliffe and Withywood. 2.00-5.00pm at Hartcliffe Park Community Farm (end of Lampton Avenue, Hartcliffe). M.V.C.G. will have a stand - would you like to help?

Sunday 2 July: WALK AROUND STANTON DREW AND THE STANDING STONES. Meet at the Druids Arms pub at 10.00am for a 12.00 noon return (DHG).

Monday 10 July: ORGANIC FARM OPEN DAY with stalls, exhibitions (including M.V.C.G.'s), refreshments, quizzes, pond dipping and much more, plus W.I. MARKET at Dundry Village Hall. 10.00am-3.00pm at Hill House Farm, Castle Farm Lane, Dundry, and Dundry Village Hall. Entry to the farm is free, and there is a £1 charge which covers both the events in the barn and the W.I. Market. There will be transport between the Hall and the Farm.

🕒 **Tuesday 18 July:** Visit to EASTWOOD FARM OPEN SPACE with *Phil Rendle* who spoke to us about the work of the Park Rangers. Meet at 7.00pm at the car park (off Whitmore Avenue - see map on page 6). We will try to co-ordinate transport, so if you need or can offer a lift, please ring Lola on 964 1116.

🕒 **Monday 31 July:** *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at the 'Elm Tree'.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Hon. Secretary	Lis Pibworth	987 0825
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Brenda Docherty, Royston Griffey, John Taylor

Co-opted Committee Members

Don Bartlett, Eleanor Davis, Tania Ford, Peter Hall, Anne King, Audrey Milton, Paul Stephens, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker, Cllrs Bernard Chalmers, Tessa Coombes, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Ron Hodges, Dave Johnson, Mary Sykes (*All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whichchurch 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; e-mail andrec@flashmail.com; web address www.mvcg.tsx.org. **Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.** The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.