

Bringing the Voice to our Valley



By Bridget Stocker and Josephine Brien

Glenn Stewart is a busy man but he still finds time to deliver the Valley Voice. When we first went to interview Glenn, he was out sailing. We did, however, manage to catch up with him the following week and, along with carer Julie Degrave and Argo Trust manager Dayna Atkinson, we chatted to Glenn about delivering the Valley Voice and about how he found life in the Aro Valley.

At 42, Glenn is a long-standing member of the Aro Valley community, and a resident at Argo House on Aro Street. He has lived in the valley for over 18 years and is one of the many volunteers who, each month, hit the streets to deliver the Valley Voice. In fact, Glenn has been delivering the Valley Voice for so long that nobody

is exactly certain when he started, though he's definitely been doing the job for more than ten years. Glenn enjoys living in the valley and finds delivering the newsletter very rewarding as this provides him with an opportunity to give something back to the community. He also enjoys the character of the area – the green hills, quiet side streets, wonderful Aro Valley Park and easy wheelchair access – all of which make the job of delivering the Valley Voice particularly pleasurable. At the end of his run, though, Glenn can get a bit tired, and this is the moment to kick back and relax. Glenn thinks that civility is over-rated and, when surrounded by such wonderful women, whom he always seems to attract, Glenn thinks that it's a great joke to have the ladies push him up the hill to Argo House! Julie and Dayna say they only let Glenn get away with this because he is such a great guy. When the day's work is done, you may also find Glenn and some of his friends

Valley Voice deliverer Glenn Stewart (centre) with Argo Trust manager Dayna Atkinson (left) and carer Julie Degrave.

at the Southern Cross bar on a Friday evening, where they taste a different beer each week. It seems that in that respect, Glenn is also a typical New Zealand guy. When asked which beer he likes, Glenn has no preference and likes them all.

Does Wellington need to be a Super-City???

[Or is this another fait accompli ???]



AVCC General Meeting

Agenda: How should the Aro Valley respond?

- When: Sunday 28th April
- Where: Community Hall
- Time: 4 pm



AVCC's new accounts clerk

The AVCC would like to welcome Ian Yue in his new role as our accounts clerk.

Ian (pictured left) has an accounting degree from AUT and has spent several years in an accountancy firm before taking some time off to pursue further studies. Ian is keen to help the Aro Valley community and

we are lucky to have such a talented individual join our team. Ian will be at the community centre on Thursdays, so if you see him, please say hello. We would also like to take this opportunity to once again thank our exiting accounts clerk Fei (pictured right) who has spent 5 years with the AVCC and who has excelled in her job.

From the Community Council Co-Chairs



Bridget Stocker

Hi all,
The last few months have been a busy time for the AVCC committee and interest in the activities of our team has certainly increased. Some of this was aided by a flyer recently distributed by local resident Martin Wilson, which provided much 'misinformation' about the AVCC (no – the current AVCC did not lose tens of thousands of dollars etc.), but at least interest in our committee has now swelled and we might as well make the most of the increased 'exposure' and provide a few highlights of events that are actually taking place in the valley ...

Things on the table in April/May including getting the application to the Wellington City Council for the next three years of funding to run the community centre on their behalf. This is an important process for the AVCC and we are working closely with the WCC and our co-ordinator Linda Beaton to ensure that our practices and processes are strong. The decision for funding will be made during the tenure of the next AVCC committee so the current committee is making sure that things are in order and a smooth transition ensured. The development of sound AVCC policy is an important part of this process and by the time this newsletter reaches your letterbox, we hope to have final drafts ready for download from our website: www.arovalley.org.nz. We would like to thank local resident Roland Sapsford and Nicola Drayton-

Giesli from Wellington Community Law Centre for their valuable advice/input on these matters.
There have also been a number of new employees join the AVCC, including very recent employee Yi Qing (Pauline) Mao who will be keeping the hall and other facilities clean and tidy and Ian Yue, our new accounts clerk [see story and photo page 1]. At the time of writing, we are also interviewing staff for the School Holiday Programme, and in particular, we would like to thank Linda for staying late on several evenings to assist with this and other employment matters.

This year's Aro Valley Fair was a great day, so thanks to contractor Martin Wilson, stall holders and all the volunteers who ran stalls for the Preschool, Te Aro School and other not-for-profit groups. The fair was also a great opportunity to survey people about their views of life in Aro Valley and the AVCC in general and we are currently analysing this data and look forward to sharing the results and announcing the winner of the prize draw soon. Martin Wilson also decided to hold a '60 second soapbox' on the day of the Fair to call for the resignation of the AVCC officers (co-chairs, treasurer and secretary). Though a handful of people turned up, Martin's proposal was turned down: 5 votes to 4. Here, please note that if you want to 'officially' vote for your AVCC committee, then come to the AGM on 18 June. It should be an interesting event – maybe as entertaining as the real 'meet the candidates' elections. We can only hope that we reach those standards ...

On other matters, the AVCC is still working with the City Council to resolve a few outstanding planning issues that were the subject of an appeal to Plan Change 72 (i.e. in particular, whether Landcross Street is part of the Aro Valley).

We are hoping to see more of the Aro Valley Preschool with shared access to what is now loosely termed 'the room' in the old CAB building, now being more readily available to both organisations.



Madeleine Rashbrooke

The city council have completed a new retaining wall and fence (see story next page) along the path between the community centre and Abel Smith Street after a local resident took it upon himself to remove a tree and roots which, as has been pointed out earlier, not only costs money to fix but chopping down public trees is also illegal. But thanks to the WCC for fixing the gaping hole and removing the 'hazard' ... And remember, if you want to do some remodelling of Aro Valley Park – please contact the WCC first.

The committee is also aware of the 'constitutional' requirement of our general meetings (e.g. must be advertised two weeks in advance and advertised as a 'public meeting') and while the AVCC has held some great events in the past (e.g. sell-out film nights), we need to ensure that we meet our constitutional requirements. In view of this, we have a couple of other public meetings lined up, so keep an eye out.

And that's probably a good place to stop.

Enjoy the last days of 'autumn'. Very soon darkness will descend on the valley – especially for those truly living in 'the valley' – and we all know what that is about so keep happy and positive in the meantime ...

Bridget and Madeleine

We welcome your opinions

Please send us your letters, feedback, photos and stories from around the Aro Valley.
Email: aro.voice@gmail.com



Support for mural

Last month's Valley Voice carried the offer of a mural (pictured above) by artist Christie Wright, to be displayed in the Valley if residents support the idea. Below are two letters backing the idea. Further debate on the issue welcomed at aro.voice@gmail.com.

Hi,
I think Aro Valley should embrace the offer of a beautiful mural to liven up the shopping area.

Perhaps it could be placed on the side of the bike shop, so people/cars crossing the road could see it easily (I'm sure the bike owners would be interested). Otherwise ... outside Patel's? It would put a stop to graffiti, if only for a little while.

Yours sincerely, Sam

Hi there,
I have always loved this mural. As a resident, I would love to see it up again for people to see and enjoy it. I would be happy to offer my fence as a potential location for the mural. I live at 20 Aro Street – it would great on my dark blue fence. It would be enjoyed by all passers-by, and as the traffic tends to back up in the morning, it would also offer a point of interest and cheer to many commuters.

I am also happy to work with others to find other alternatives.

I would also be keen to look at a companion mural as I think the fence would look great with two murals. Maybe Christie would do another one? Kind regards, Rochelle

AVCC monthly meetings:
Tuesdays, 7.30pm, Aro Hall
• May 21
• June 18 (AGM)

Town Belt Committee supports Aro submissions

The Town Belt Management Plan Hearings Committee has released its summary of findings, following public consultation at the end of last year which sparked dozens of submissions from local residents. There was particular concern for land in the Devon Street gully, and other locations.

The Committee has shown broad support for the views and interests of many Aro Valley submitters in its recommended changes to the management plan available at: <http://wellington.govt.nz/your-council-meetings/committees/town-belt-management-plan-hearings/2013/04/meeting>.

City council gets busy in the back alleys

Wellington City Council workers have built a new retaining wall and installed street lighting on the path between Aro Park and Abel Smith Street.

The retaining wall was required after a sycamore tree was cut down without approval by a Valley local, leaving a gap that represented a health hazard and forcing the city council to cut down another sycamore that had been destabilised.

The lighting, meanwhile, has long been sought as a way to increase the safety of that path at night.

Concerns among council housing tenants in the nearby block of flats – about intrusive amounts of light – had made it difficult to improve



On the Devon Street gully land beneath Te Aro School, the Hearings Committee's summary recommends that the Council "... Agree with submitters regarding protection of open space values. This will require a review and discussions with the Ministry of Education over future plans. Amend description and remove reference to not being a high priority for addition to the Town Belt".

The recommendations also favour retaining the Boyd Wilson strip between the Terrace and the University, as part of the Town Belt "to ensure long term protection".

They also recommend including more Pollhill Gully land in the Town Belt.

Left: The new retaining wall. Below: Night lighting on the newly planted path between Aro Park and Abel Smith St



Kai o Te Aro

Kia ora koutou Aro gardeners,

We're trying something a little different with our Valley Voice contribution. We will now, along with our regular KotA updates, be using our column for some wider dialogue and reflections on food, the valley and gardening. To kick off this new approach Aro gardener Rose offers the musings below.

However, while I've got your attention I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know about a VERY exciting development in the Kai o Te Aro universe. We recently found out that we have been successful in a grant proposal to Keep New Zealand Beautiful for a partnership project with Te Aro School, in which we will be building not one but three recycled bottle green houses in the Valley over the next six months. Keep an eye on the Valley Voice for more information about the Te Aro Upcycle project.

Rose's garden perspectives

I have had many a garden shaped revelation. But it took me exactly 23 years to connect it to the bigger picture.

A few weeks ago I was caressing a furry mallow plant leaf in my own backyard when a familiar face popped over the fence line. In the mid-morning golden sunshine of Aro Valley she told me about one of the former tenants of this house (I now live in) having an epiphany in this very same garden, and then in the Aro community gardens.

He had come from Chile to study something obscure, and very un-garden related, in Wellington ... but, stone by stone, had turned this trashed piece of land into almost a Piet Oudolf vision. His garden curiosity took him to the Aro Community Gardens, which set him well on the path of ecology and community gardening.

A few years later, an email from him appeared out of the ether talking about how, now, he made a living out of his passion; he taught and encouraged Chilean kids in gardening and permaculture principles. I looked back down at this mallow leaf, dug my toes deeper into this almost sandy, starved soil of the summers, and overflowed with gratitude that such a story could be passed on; that such a story could empower.

This clipping of history resurfaced last night when I sat on the floor of the Sustainability Trust listening to short speeches by local growers, food creators and consumers. It was the launch of the Local Food Week (April 2-7), and the aim was to inspire local (meaning within an approximately 200km radius from Wellington) food production and consumption.

I felt so wholesome listening to all of this, and returned home to a moonlit garden loyally awaiting when I would next get it attention.

Happy Autumn! Happy Harvest!

Rose and Charles
Kai o Te Aro

Get involved

New gardeners and passionate Aro Valleyites are very welcome to join in on our monthly working bees. We meet at 2pm outside the Aro Valley Community Centre, 48 Aro St, on the first and third Sunday of the month.

On the second Monday of each month we hold a potluck planning meeting from 6.30-8pm at 128 Abel Smith St – all welcome.

To get on our contact list or find out more about this project, please email us at arogardener@gmail.com.

For tips on what grows well in Aotearoa, check out www.kai.org.nz.

If you are already on the main (update only) email list, but would like to be on the regular communication contact list, please email to let us know.

Aro Park gets gardens

A lot of work has been done to create gardens around Aro Park, as the before and after pictures (below) show.

Community co-ordinator Linda Beaton says the garden is the result of collaboration between herself, the Wellington City Council nursery (for the plants), the Department of Corrections (community service workers), the city council's parks and gardens team, and gardening company Capital Compost.

Meanwhile, community service workers are, under Beaton's supervision and guidance, working to extinguish "the forces of evil" – also known as tradescantia, blackberry and other invasive weeds – from under the trees above Aro Park. This area has been covered with shagpile 'weedmat' and overlaid with mulch.



Right: Aro Park plantings, before (above) and after (below)



The annual Aro Valley Fair, held on Saturday 23 March 2013, was enormously successful, with close to 10,000 people enjoying the entertainment, stalls and activities throughout the day.

Fair manager Martin Wilson said: "This brings to a close an excellent summer of events. The weather has been brilliant and people have really embraced the many wonderful events and activities available to them throughout summer."

"Aro Valley is an inner city, creative community, and this fair looks set to outgrow its small park and grounds. We'll have to make it walk or cycle only next year!"

Features were the pony rides, both on horseback and in a little cart, and the Bump It zorbs, with kids' upper bodies encased in an inflatable ball, and able to run around bumping into each other, and roll down the hill. Bands and musicians entertained throughout the day, with Brazilian act Camerata Caipera attracting a big audience and many Latin dancers. Local gypsy-style band Bella Cajon were performing for the last time before a break of undetermined length as their band leader Michael Kingston heads overseas.

Brennan Coulson and Marc van der Poest set a new record in the "Egg Throwing" competition, not surprisingly as they have both represented New Zealand in the Ultimate Frisbee World Championships. Inevitably the egg eventually succumbed to distance, as did Mr Poest's clothes.



Te Aro School and Aro Valley Preschool had many stalls at the event and were very pleased with the high level of sales from the many attendees. Vegetarian sausage sales on the BBQ were described as being an "all time high". The Aro Valley Community Council "Republic of Aro Valley" T-shirts were also selling like hotcakes.

An extra feature was a "Candle Concert" in the evening, although due to the complete fire ban, fairy lights were used instead of candles to light performers Saskia Scaddan and Verity Armitage. The concert was preceded by the first trial of a "60 Second Soapbox", where locals got their chance to vent themselves

Above: Simon Charman, 11, with two of his popular home-made games (Photo: Lisa Mrkusic)

about any issue. Uncollected recycling and rubbish was a common issue, along with various comments about local politics. Local resident Anna won the audience-awarded prize for her script-assisted video-clip-style rant about traffic, although probably no-one was left quite sure what it meant. In typical Aro Valley style, the community members present took the chance to discuss their local community council, with the committee narrowly surviving a no confidence vote by only one vote.

Martin Wilson

Service station 'access' behind car park affair

Events last year in which the parking spaces near the Garage Project were painted out – and then painted in again – were caused by a desire to improve access to the service station site, the Wellington City Council has said.

Last year the city council angered residents and the Aro Valley Community Council by painting out the parking spaces with no warning, even though they are regularly used by haul users and staff.

In response to an Official Information Act request, the city council said in a statement that "the car parking was making vehicle access to the microbrewery and [service station] site difficult. The cars were parked on what used to be part of the access to the forecourt of the old service station and is now the only vehicle access.

This was obviously causing problems." However, despite these apparent "problems", the city council then saw no problems in repainting the parking spaces, after protests from the community and city councillor Stephanie Cook. The city council rejected a claim by service station site owner Sarah Spencer that the council had wanted "to put up all sorts of physical structures and fences" to mark off the area. That was "not true", the council said.

The city council also denied that – as had been claimed – a member of the council's chief executive office had been involved in the matter. And it rejected suggestions that the head of the CityOps works unit, Mike Mendonca, was unaware of the action taken, saying: "Our understanding is that he was aware. The council refused to specify how much the whole affair had cost, saying only that it cost "some paint and staff time".

Wellington – not perfect, but positive

Ian McKinnon, deputy mayor and Lambton Ward councillor

Wellington: what a great city we live in – not perfect (name one that is!) but with many positives. On a recent Sunday Jenny and I were on the Waterfront: Dragon Boat racing with its colourful excitement and the Asian Food Festival with its tempting aromas, and hundreds simply enjoying themselves as many do most weekends.

This isn't always so at Council! In March we debated the Council's bud-

gets for 2013-14. The aim was a 2.5% rates rise but settled on 2.8% – now out for consultation, so please do respond. The Council did accept my request of an intern programme whereby young people from refugee, recent migrant, and disability communities can gain work experience at the Council. My intention now is to highlight this as an example to other organisations.

Also debated at length recently was the issue of amalgamation. While we would all like Wellington City to continue as it is, I don't believe that's possible if it's to maintain its social and economic vibrancy. There must be coordination across the region to avoid unnecessary duplication, while Wellington CBD must remain the crucial "driver" of the region. This important strategic issue is also out for consultation.

Doubtless the debate on the roading

proposals for the Basin Reserve will continue. The Council took a neutral position at its recent meeting (with still no vote after 3 hours, I had to leave to host the Governor-General at Victoria University's Student Centre opening). However, and after yet further analysis, the alternatives to NZTA's proposal were seen as not giving sufficient solution to the urgent need for more effective traffic flows, including for public transport, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Capital Times, the "voice" of Wellington's cultural strength, finishes publication, with its closure being a real loss. Many thanks go to the publishers, Ali and John Bristed, and their team, including the splendid Gay Matheson, for a wonderful contribution to our city.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at any time. Email: ian.mckinnon@wcc.govt.nz

Traffic safety under review

Iona Pannett, Lambton Ward councillor

I have had a local resident approach me with concerns about traffic safety around Aro Street. I will be discussing the issue with officers, but also welcome further feedback from the community as to whether you think the 30km speed limit and the newish pedestrian crossing is working.

It is also Annual Budget time, so for those of you wanting initiatives funded for the Valley, now is the time to submit. The submission period runs 16 April-16 May. More information can be found at www.wellington.govt.nz. Our budget is tight and we are attempting to keep cost increases at a sustainable level, so any ideas for savings would also be appreciated.

Supersize Wellington? Some councillors are hard at work advocating for council amalgamation. If you want to have your say on this issue, you have the opportunity now. The one concern I have is that the options are very narrow and seem to direct the community to support a super city, rather than looking at a full suite of options. More information can be found here: <http://wellington.govt.nz/WCC/Home/About-Wellington/Mayoral-Forum/Regional-Governance-Review>. Submissions close 3 May. • Contact Iona on 384-3382/021-227-8509

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| Day | Time | Activity & Cost | Contact |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| Monday | 7.15 - 8.15am | Tai Chi Class (Koha) | Yi Ching Mao 384 3588 |
| | 6.00 - 8.00pm | Capoeira (\$10 casual /\$40 - 8 classes) | bobby semau 027 674 1708 bobbysemau@gmail.com |
| Tuesday | 9.30 - 11.30am | English Language Class Beginner level \$3 | Teacher Wendy Vink Contact Linda 3848499 |
| | 12.00 - 1.00pm | SH and Be Fit (\$3 per class) | Kathy McConville Linda 384 8499 |
| | 5.30 - 6.30pm | Nia Classes | Alison Henderson 04 476 4610 021 881 849 alison@zenation.co.nz |
| | 7.30 - 9.00pm | Private booking | |
| Wednesday | 7.15 - 8.15am | Tai Chi Class (Koha) | Yi Ching Mao 384 3588 |
| | 9.30 - 11.30am | English Language Class Elementary Level \$3 | Teacher Wendy Vink Contact Linda 3848499 |
| | 5.00 - 6.30pm | Private booking | |
| | 6.30 - 8.00pm | Starjam (Term time only) | Saran Goldie Anderson Regional Programmes Coordinator 04 589 6386 • 021 782 866 www.starjam.org |
| Thursday | 9.30 - 11.30am | English Language Class Higher Level \$3 | Teacher Wendy Vink Contact Linda 3848499 |
| | 6.00 - 7.00pm | Samba Hillary Mitchell & Fabiola Stevenson | Hillary Reid@yuv.ac.nz 0212308732 fabiola.stevenson@gmail.com 0274726964 |
| | 7.30 - 9.00pm | Yoshukai Karate (\$10 a week - pay what you can afford. Includes 2 nd weekly class Northland Community Centre) | Collin Berry 027 2495342 04 4759985 |
| Friday | 7.15 - 8.15am | Tai Chi Class (Koha) | Yi Ching Mao 384 3588 |
| | 7.30 - 9.00pm | Salsa (with Rocio) | Rocio Pizarro Vargas 021 237 5214 |
| Saturday | 9.30 - 11.00am | Chalkie - various classes | http://www.chalkie.com |
| | 11.00 - 12.00pm | ZUMBA Fitness (\$15/\$10 with ID) | Rafael Ferrer 382-8232 www.cubansfusion.co.nz |
| | 1.00 - 3.00pm (last Saturday of the month) | Capoeira (27 April 2013) | Bobby Semau 027 674 1708 bobbysemau@gmail.com |
| | 3.00pm | Wellington bike polo - in the basketball court | wellingtonbikepolo.wordpress.com |
| Sunday | 9.30 - 2.30pm | Forward in Faith | Shadreck Mamute smamute@yahoo.com shadreck.mamute@kiwifair.co.nz 021 244 6045 |
| | 5.00 - 7.30pm | Chalkie - various classes | http://www.chalkie.com |



Left: Aro Fair fun (photo: Julia Booko-White)



VALLEY VOICE
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Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not of the Aro Valley Community Council (AVCC) unless adopted at a general meeting.

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Moving like a fish in water

Classes in an innovative new form of movement – said to make its devotees feel like a fish in water – are being brought to Wellington by one of the Valley's locals.

Aro Valley resident and yoga teacher Katya Mouris, together with her yoga partner Merel Rip, are offering the practice of calligraphy yoga for the first time in New Zealand.

Developed by Master Zhen Hua Yang over the last 20 years, calligraphy yoga draws from centuries-old traditions of Chinese and Indian health practices.

"After an intensive study with Master Yang, we were so impressed with the effects of this practice that we just couldn't keep it to ourselves," Katya says. "We have seen people with spinal problems, disk injuries, respiratory challenges and poor blood circulation getting a great benefit through this practice."

"We ourselves also feel positive changes happening in our bodies. Two of the most noticeable ones are greater spinal flexibility – who could have thought it can improve further after 10 years of yoga! – and higher energy levels."

The practice combines the principles of



Right: "Monkey stretching"

tai chi, qigong, various yoga influences and Chinese calligraphy to restore health, promote mental balance and improve circulation. It has been described by one practitioner as feeling "like writing with an invisible ink that flows from your energy centre through the brush-like body upon the parchment of the space around you".

Each movement practiced in Calligraphy Yoga is natural and intuitive, performed without tension or strain – "moving like a fish in water, with comfort and grace", Katya adds. This makes the practice accessible to all ages and fitness levels, and

helps people "regain" their bodies by driving the aging process backwards towards a more supple, agile and elastic body – a "baby body", as Master Yang calls it.

Classes are held at the Urban Yoga studio, Level 3, 160 Willis Street, in both mornings and evenings. To bring it even closer to home, an introductory calligraphy yoga class will be offered at the Aro Valley community centre on 11 May, 9.45–10.45am, koha entry, all ages welcome!

• To learn more about Calligraphy Yoga, visit <http://www.calligraphyyoga.co.nz>

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