



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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SINCE THE LAST *Newsletter* we have had a public meeting - on the Community Forest - and an outdoor event. You can read about the meeting on page 6. The dreadful weather hampered but did not prevent the walk - and the same goes for the garbage raids. You will find the future programme on page 7, as usual, and also on an insert which you may find easier to use as a reminder of when the meetings are. If you don't need it, please pass it on to a friend or neighbour and encourage them to come to the meetings.

Bad weather doesn't affect the behind-the-scenes activities of the Group. We are continuing to build useful contacts with officers from both Bristol and Avon. We are also liaising with other environmental groups in south Bristol.

A new group called the Malago Action Group held a public meeting on 13 February to discuss the proposed sale of Avon's part of the Marksbury Road Playing Fields. I went along and was impressed by the commitment and enterprise of the Group in getting to the meeting councillors and officers from both councils. The Malago Action Group covers the area around Marksbury Road, so they are our immediate neighbours to the north in conservation and amenity terms. We have started to discuss with them matters of common interest, particularly the Malago Greenway and the proposed L.R.T. - the 'super-tram' system which you can read more about inside. I was able to give them an advance copy of the proposed L.R.T. route which had come my way.

Their next public meeting is on 13 March at 7.30pm in the Community Room in Hastings Road; some of the M.V.C.G. committee will attend. If you are reading this in time, come along as well.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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PLANNING APPLICATIONS

MANY OF YOU will have read in the newspapers that the planning application to build 15 houses at 312 Bishopsworth Road was passed by the City Planning Committee on 1 February. Whilst this was a disappointment to us (and to the neighbours who had also campaigned hard against the proposal), it wasn't entirely surprising. The City have to be sure before they refuse an application that it is unlikely to be allowed if the applicant appeals to the Department of the Environment. An appeal can be costly and take up scarce officer time.

However, in allowing the application, the City laid down conditions. The most important one is that suitable traffic calming measures for Bishopsworth Road will have to be agreed with Avon before any development takes place. If you have any thoughts on what should (or shouldn't) be done to improve road safety in this area, please let us know. The other important thing to remember is that the planning permission is an *outline* one; nothing can be built on the site until a detailed planning permission is granted. This means there will have to be a second planning application which sets out the exact layout of the houses, their size and appearance and their materials, before any building work can begin. We will be watching very carefully for this detailed planning application and will examine it very carefully indeed when it appears.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

RUBBISH! DON'T DUMP IT - HAVE IT COLLECTED

IT IS AMAZING what lengths a small minority of people will go to removing rubbish and unwanted items from their property to dump it in the beautiful countryside, with which we are well blessed near our area.

Items such as old carpets, cookers, fridges, even three-piece suites and mattresses, have been located in and around the Malago area even though our local authorities provide an excellent weekly house to house rubbish collection service and also operate a bulky items collection service.

The SOFA Project in Bristol (941 3322) will collect redundant bulky items such as fridges and cookers and either repair them for re-use by people on low incomes or recycle them through schemes that remove the obnoxious chemicals such as CFCs (chloro-fluoro-carbons) which are damaging the earth's atmosphere, and the metal components through scrap metal merchants.

The dumping of items in streams like the Malago has caused great concern to residents who live in areas where flooding has occurred and has also meant problems for the local authority workforce who have had to remove the debris after flooding has occurred because of blocked culverts. All that is required is a little thought and a telephone call to the local authority to remove unwanted domestic items from your property (Bristol City Council 922 3838).

Malago Valley Conservation Group is concerned about our environment and amenities and we hold regular meetings to ensure that local people are aware of local issues; we also have a good relationship with the representatives of the local authorities and can make your views known. Do write to us (address on the back page) or come along to any of our meetings - see the Programme of events and meetings on page 7.

JOHN TAYLOR

CLEANING UP (MOPPING UP?)

JANUARY 27TH WAS SCHEDULED for our blitz on the mess around the 'Elm Tree', the 'Queen's Head' and the lower end of Queen's Road - where a perfectly unacceptable amount of litter seems to accumulate. It was a vile day with high wind, torrents of rain - and one area to be cleared (the waste ground opposite the 'Queen's Head') actually inundated in flood water.

No volunteers were to be expected in such conditions (not even for tea and crumpets!) but, even so, three turned up - Jackie Price and her two children, Elaine (8) and Matthew (5) - in waterproofs and wellies and with dustbin liners adorned with slogans, '**MALAGO CONSERVATION**'.

So the operation went ahead in spite of the elements. All objectives were accomplished and the children (and their mum) actually enjoyed wading into flood water and dragging out yards of plastic sheeting, putrid carpets, rotting blankets and other nameless horrors - all of which were piled onto our shopping trolley (which was itself dragged from the bird sanctuary in Manor Wood with rope and grapple before Christmas). Even Queen Victoria looked pleased - for the very next day Ushers' new inn sign for the 'Queen's Head' was put up, with the young Queen looking far less disagreeable than before, no doubt enjoying her vastly improved environment.

A big **THANK YOU** to Jackie, Elaine, Matthew and Glyn for getting soaked through and truly filthy in order to remove a hideous eye-sore. Will all readers please be on the look-out for evidence of illegal dumping opposite the 'Queen's Head' and report it to us.

ANTON BANTOCK

SOUTH BRISTOL ON THE RIGHT LINES?

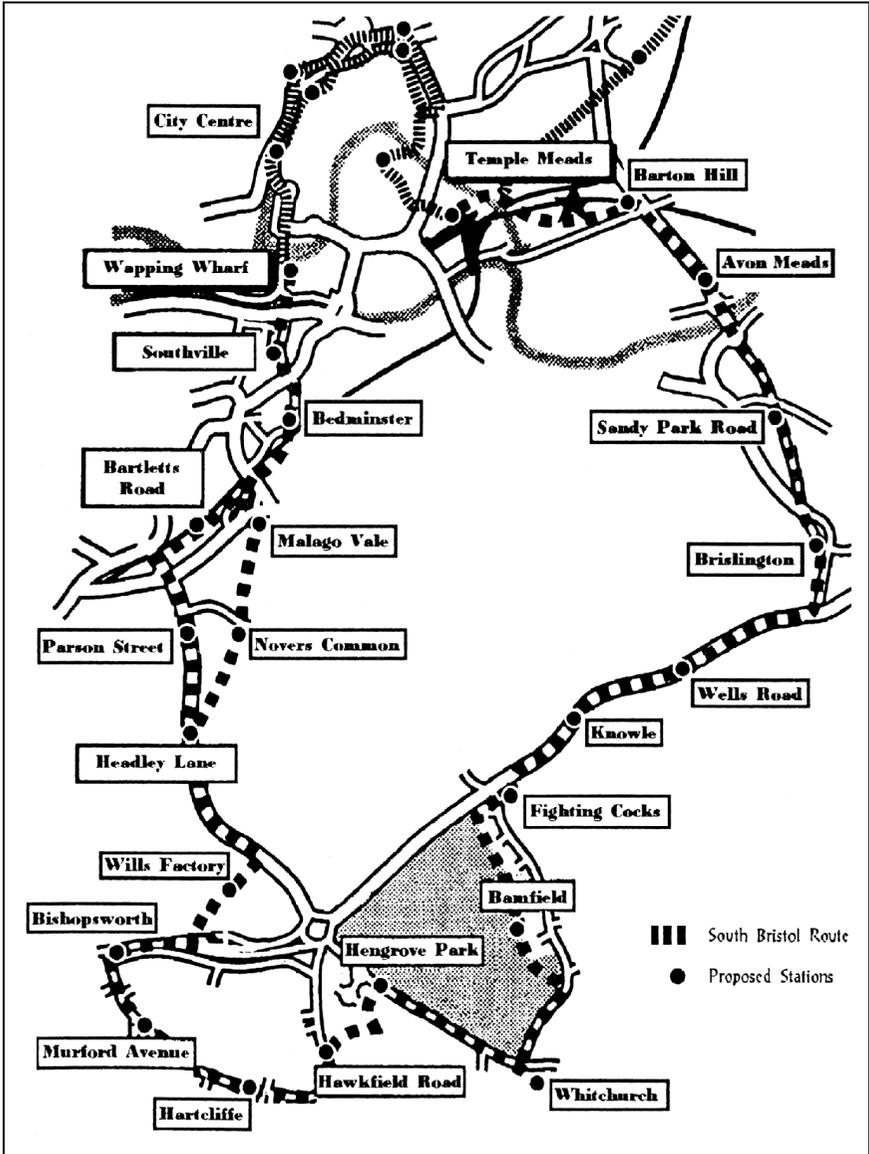
YOU MAY HAVE SEEN in the *Evening Post* that Avon County Council are publishing a proposed route for their Light Rail Transit system or 'super-tram'. This would be part of Phase I of what they are calling the 'Westway' and would run from Bradley Stoke in the north, through Temple Meads and the city centre, and in a loop through south Bristol. The hope is that the line might be operational by the year 2001. The map opposite shows the route as it would affect us.

M.V.C.G. Committee have considered this map at their last two meetings (an unofficial early copy came our way a couple of months ago). Our initial thoughts are that we are in favour in principle of a system which improves public transport in south Bristol and provides an alternative to taking a car into the city centre; however, we are concerned about two aspects which we need to consider further and get more information on.

The first misgiving is over car parking. Not everyone in our area will be within convenient walking distance of a tram stop - especially people with walking difficulties or who have to manage young children and/or shopping. We would like to see thorough integration with the bus service and feeder buses from Withywood, Highridge and Bedminster Down to the tram. However, many people - including commuters from the Chew Valley - will be tempted to drive to a tram stop and leave their cars while they take the quick way into town. This could cause serious problems for people in streets near stops. Will there be designated 'park and ride' car parks? Will there be parking restrictions around the stations?

The other concern is for the impact of the line on environmentally sensitive areas. The route passes down Crox Bottom and into the Wills factory site; this must involve a bridge and needs to be very well designed to minimise the intrusion. Bear in mind that the tram will be powered from overhead wires. The other sensitive area is north of our patch where the Malago Action Group are rightly concerned about the possible route along the Malago through Marksbury Road playing fields. This also has implications for the Malago Greenway which provides a marvellous pedestrian and cycle link to Bedminster and the city centre. This part of the suggested route has an alternative down Parson Street and alongside the railway, which itself would not be easy.

Please let us know what you think of the proposals - and look out for the exhibitions which should be appearing soon.



The proposed route for the L.R.T. in south Bristol. The split north of Headley Lane shows alternative route options.

THE COMMUNITY FOREST

ON THURSDAY 19TH JANUARY, Rebecca Newman, Assistant Community Forest Officer, gave us a talk and a detailed insight into the plans for the Community Forest around and within Bristol.

Rebecca, during a very interesting talk supported by slides of sites around the city, told us how the idea for the Community Forest came into being and what was planned locally to enhance our environment. The provision of spaces for leisure and recreation, construction of new paths and enhancement of wildlife habitats and improvement of existing woodland were also discussed in addition to the proposed programme of tree planting and hedge renewal.

One very interesting feature is the 45 mile long route of the Community Forest Path which is planned to run from Bath, through Keynsham, over Dundry Hill, through Long Ashton to Leigh Woods, across Durdham Downs, through Blaise Castle to the Cotswolds, returning to Bath via Frenchay. Access to this path would be available from the city centre through recreational routes such as the Malago Greenway, which is still taking shape as we saw during our walk on 4th December.

On this network of paths would be placed 'Gateways' which would include facilities such as toilets, refreshments and picnic areas, in addition to information about access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, not forgetting those of us who are less mobile.

The overall programme is expected to take about 50 years to reach fruition, but in the meantime it is necessary for conservation groups like our own, together with the local authorities, the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission, to convince local land owners that farmland, recreational facilities (such as golf) and parkland can be enhanced by the planting and maintenance of trees and hedgerows.

Within our local area it is planned to increase the present sparse tree population by eight times, to include orchards, trees and hedgerows on parts of Dundry slopes, particularly the valleys of streams which converge to create the Malago.

All the audience found it most informative although many questions still have to be answered, especially concerning funding. The overall management of the programme will be directed by the Community Forest staff who are based at White Friars, Lewins Mead, Bristol.

JOHN TAYLOR

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

HERE IS THE LATEST UPDATE to the Programme. Evening meetings will be held in **St Peter's Room** - by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. These meetings will start at **7.30pm**. Non-members of Malago Valley Conservation Group are welcome and will be asked to pay a 50p visitor's fee.

Tuesday 21 March: *Litter and what can be done to improve our environment.* STEVE SPARKS (our local 'litter man'), followed by PETER MILNER, community artist, who has worked on improving many areas including shops in Bedminster Parade and the water maze in Victoria Park. He will talk on how streets and paths etc. can be transformed with a little artistic flair and hard work.

Saturday 1 April: *Litter clearance* (as part of National Spring Clean Week). Groups will start from various 'blackspots' and progress to the new Gatehouse Centre in Hareclive Road where refreshments will be provided. The Groups will meet at 10.00am at specified points and will be provided with sacks, gloves and '*Get a Grip on Litter*' tabards. There will be a specified leader for each group, and if you feel you can help, please let us know at the next meeting (above) or contact one of the Committee. The event will be over by 1.00pm.

Thursday 6 April: *The Work of Wessex Water*, a slide and video presentation by PAUL THOMPSON of Wessex.

Sunday 21 May: in conjunction with Hartcliffe Health and Environmental Action Group - *Along the Wansdyke*. Walk beginning at Witherwood Post Office at 10.30pm, via Dundry Hill to Yanley Lane and Failand, finishing at the golf course car park in Ashton Court, where transport will be arranged to bring walkers back. (Please note the changed start point from the last *Newsletter*).

Saturday 27 May: *Fun Day* in Manor Wood, including stands with competitions, a tent with 'experts', litter clearing etc. Guided walks/talks at specified times during the day. (Please note the change from Sunday 28 May in the last *Newsletter*).

June (date to be finalised): Night-time *wildlife watch* at Chew Valley Lake - more details in the next *Newsletter*.

MANOR WOOD FUN DAY - SATURDAY 27 MAY

YOU WILL SEE FROM THE PROGRAMME that we are planning to have a **Fun Day** in Manor Wood (the part of the Malago Greenway between Cross ways Tabernacle and Vale Lane).

We would be glad of any offers of help on the day with loan of tents; organising stalls with information on environmental/nature topics; providing refreshments; first aid; litter clearance etc. If you can get involved in any way, or if you know of any 'experts', please let us know. Of course, we shall also be very happy to have the support of yourselves, family and friends on the day.

CHRIS LILLINGTON

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| Chairman | André Coutanche | 964 3106 |
| Secretary | Chris Lillington | 964 7578 |
| Treasurer | John Taylor | 964 2913 |
| Programme Co-ordinator | Brenda Docherty | 983 9901 |

Other Members

Freddie Alliston, Anton Bantock, Denis Bristow, Peter Hall, Lola Hardingham, Martin Powell, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker

Co-opted Members

Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Richard Eddy, Cllr Claire Warren (*All City and County Councillors for Bishopsworth, Bedminster and Hartcliffe 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.