



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

No. 7  
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**S**ORRY WE'RE A BIT LATE is getting this *Newsletter* out. There's a lot to report on - as you'll see inside - and material was arriving right up to the last moment before printing. That's not a complaint; contributions are welcome from anyone and everyone. Please use the *Newsletter* to put forward your ideas for improving our bit of Bristol.

Much of this edition is about our natural environment, so I'll use this space to update you quickly on various aspects of the built environment that M.V.C.G. is concerned with. On *Chestnut Court*, mentioned last time, Anton Bantock and I have had a meeting with officers from the City Planning Department. We impressed upon them the importance of this building to Bishopsworth and district and encouraged them to press on with ensuring a better future for it.

A planning application has been submitted to develop a *Bus Depot* on the site of the old brickworks, Vale Lane. This is on the scrubby ground at the north end of Manor Woods below the 'cliff' edge. We have written to oppose this since it would be a massive intrusion visually and cause noise and air pollution. The site is also important from a wildlife and nature conservation point of view and we have liaised with the Wildlife Trust who are also opposing the proposed development.

Finally, the latest on the *L.R.T. (Westway)* tram system is that the ring route through south Bristol which Avon consulted the public on is now seen as too expensive and consultants have been appointed to advise on a possible radial route out from the city centre. Whether such a route would go towards Brislington/Whitchurch or come our way remains to be seen. It looks as though it's back to square one with no decisions being taken before the revived City and County of Bristol takes over next April.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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## DUNDRY SLOPES

**T**HE DUNDRY AREA has been rather to the forefront with your Committee over the past few months. While not actually in our notional 'territory' of BS13, we all see these beautiful hills every day and they are an important visual asset for all of us. The Conservation Area submission to the City Council which started off M.V.C.G. identified preservation of the sublime views of Dundry as a vital reason for conservation area designation.

As many readers will know, the Dundry Slopes form part of the Community Forest ('Forest of Avon'), and the Woodland Trust has recently purchased 36 acres of land near East Dundry for development as woodland and open spaces.

At the invitation of Clare Robinson, a local representative of the Woodland Trust, several of our members joined a small group on a sunny Saturday morning towards the end of September for a conducted walk around these fields. Clare was keen to hear our views on the proposed plans for the site and pointed out those areas to be wooded and those to be left as meadowland, where paths would be constructed and the location of access points for the public. She also demonstrated that care will be taken not to obstruct the splendid views across the city. Our response was generally very favourable and a final plan will be produced taking into account the views that have been expressed by all those consulted.

Still on the Dundry theme, M.V.C.G., Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group (HHEAG) and other organisations have initiated a scheme to help counteract the vandalism which plagues these fields at present. Volunteers are being asked to report the times and locations of rubbish dumping, car burning etc., so that steps can be taken to clear these eyesores - which incidentally are highly dangerous to livestock - and to prevent their reoccurrence. This is part of a broader approach to the Dundry Slopes being co-ordinated by Avon Planning Department and involving Dundry Parish Council and other local bodies which may lead to a ranger or warden being appointed so that the whole area can be safeguarded for the enjoyment of responsible people. If you would like to be involved in the monitoring, please contact HHEAG on 946 5285 or Anton Bantock on 964 1667.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

*And Clare Robinson of the Woodland Trust is the speaker at our first meeting in 1996. Come along on **Tuesday 16 January** to hear the latest news.*

## CONSERVATION OF OUR GREEN AREAS

**I**T IS AMAZING that there are still people living in our area who have not walked through or enjoyed our many green open spaces. After such a wonderfully warm summer, which has only just come to an abrupt end with the first frost, it has been a real pleasure to stroll through our many well-maintained green areas during this autumn period. The hedgerows are full of colour, with sloes on the blackthorn, the rose-hips on the dog rose and the haws on the hawthorns. The deciduous trees have at last started to shed their leaves and the grey squirrels and magpies can be seen collecting acorns, hazelnuts and other seeds in preparation for the colder frosty days of the winter yet to come.

Walking from Hartcliffe's '*Red Hart*' public house, towards Whitchurch Lane, a green corridor has been created along the route of the culverted Pigeonhouse Stream by the City Council who have over the years planted a number of native trees and shrubs. The stream emerges at Whitchurch Lane to flow in an open channel under the dual carriageway and under the office block of the now defunct tobacco factory.

Behind the factory, the water collects in a man-made pool which is frequented by a variety of wildlife, surrounded by a thick screen of trees and bushes. The site of this pool is the location of the old Crox Bottom mill and farmhouse, long since demolished. Tarmac paths have been constructed from Whitchurch Lane behind the factory along the route of the stream to a point near Hartcliffe Way where it is culverted again.

Much thought and planning is put into the design of these urban greenways by Bristol City Council and they should be supported and encouraged by groups like ours to ensure that the system continues.

JOHN TAYLOR

### TREES, PLEASE

**YOU CAN MAKE** a direct contribution to improving a local green space during **Tree Week**. Mil Lusk is co-ordinating a project to plant 1,200 trees along the footpath around Highridge School. Help is needed (bring spade and wellies) on 25 and 26 November (2-4pm); 28 November (10-4); 29 November (10-2); and 2 and 3 December (2-4pm).



## A NEW MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MANOR WOODS

**B**RISTOL LEISURE SERVICES and, in particular, residents in the Malago catchment area have been fortunate in benefiting from the unpaid expertise of a competent conservationist, Julia Bolzek from Hanover. The thorough and highly professional report she has produced will not only assist her in obtaining the qualification she seeks in Germany, but should provide us with a working management plan complimenting that which the Parks Department already has for the area and making several excellent proposals. These have the advantage of being not too radical, and of being realistic, realisable goals for the non-expert.

These include:

- The planting of hedges at both main entrances to mask unsightly structures.
- The planting of an avenue of 6 to 8 trees (possibly fruit trees) at the Vale Lane entrance to enhance the approach to the rural open space beyond.
- The cutting of a new footpath in the former quarry area to give more cohesion to the existing network of paths.
- Consolidation and improvement of existing footpaths in the woodland east of the Malago.
- Planting and periodical thinning and coppicing of new hazel trees in woodland areas denuded by decay or vandalism, the thinning to be carried out in rotation.
- Extending the area allocated to long 'wildflower meadow' grassland to attract more wildlife (in conjunction with the Parks plan).
- Monitoring of water pollution of the Malago on a weekly basis to obtain evidence for legal action against the perpetrators.
- Clearing of nettles every two years in autumn and removal of material to encourage new and richer species.
- Reeds planted on a third of the 'bird sanctuary' and cut in rotation every 2-3 years; this would prevent silt collecting.
- Present shrub area thinned in rotation every five years to create small glades for new herb species and young shrubs.

All these and more are matters which could be within our competence to implement. We have the funds, volunteers and an organisation. All it needs is the will and enterprise to get things moving.

There are other projects, including the removal of accumulated silt in the pond; the de-culverting of the Malago at the north end; the provision of interpretation panels, litter bins and doggy bins; and control of 'back-yard extensions'. These require substantial funds and professional expertise. In these matters we should be actively petitioning the authorities.

Finally, we should follow up Julia's ideas for developing to the full the opportunities for community activity: Fun Days, nature walks, monitoring of wildlife, plants, birds and animals.

For those who find reading reports irksome, may I recommend you concentrate especially on pages 34-38 and decide which project you feel you could help with. Copies may be borrowed from André Coutanche at 14 Queens Road (tel. 964 3106).

ANTON BANTOCK

*If you were at the meeting on 14 September you will remember the scintillating presentation Julia gave of her report. As a token of our great appreciation, a small group of Committee members met Julia for a farewell drink before she went back to Germany and gave her a framed drawing of Manor Woods (done by Anton) with a suitable inscription in English and German.*

## **MONEY MATTERS**

**M**ANY THANKS to those of you who came along to the Coffee Day on 31 October. This was well supported and we were very pleased with the £52.05 raised for our Group from the sale of produce, coffee and raffle tickets.

We plan to hold another fund-raising event in the spring, to include a plant sale. We shall be glad of contributions towards this later on, so if you have any unwanted seedlings that have sown themselves in the garden or are dividing up established plants, don't throw them away. Anything of a horticultural nature will be gratefully received when the time comes, so please bear this in mind.

Just a reminder about saving your aluminium cans. We are raising modest but useful amounts of money from this source as well as keeping some litter off the streets and open spaces. If you find it difficult to bring the cans along to André Coutanche at 14 Queens Road, we will collect from you if you give me a ring on 964 1116.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I HAVE BEEN rather disappointed at the number of people attending the meetings of the Conservation Group, in spite of reminders in each *Newsletter* and the press and posters in the Library and elsewhere.

The Group has been in existence now for over a year and the Committee has met regularly to discuss how to influence local issues, as well as trying to provide an interesting series of talks and visits.

It is most disappointing when a speaker has made the effort to talk about his or her subject and may have travelled a fair distance, only to be greeted by around a dozen or fifteen members out of our total membership of at least 60 households (over 90 individuals). The hiring of the meeting room is also a drain on our modest financial resources.

We have often asked members if the programme is to their liking and if there is any topic they would like to hear about, so please get in touch and let us know.

If we don't get a better attendance over the next six months (see the Programme enclosed with this *Newsletter* to pass on to a friend), we will have to consider becoming just a lobbying group without a formal programme of talks and visits.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Lillington, Hon. Secretary, M.V.C.G.

*A reader's letter, at last! And raising an important point, too. Please, **please** let the Committee know what you think of the Programme. Would it matter if we didn't have one? What sort of topics would make you want to come along? And let's have some more letters, please, on this or any other issue.*

### FROM LETTERS TO LITTER ...

BECAUSE IT'S GETTING DARK earlier, we are bringing forward the times of the monthly **garbage raids** from 4.00pm to 3.30pm. We will meet on the last Monday of the month (except December!) - full details in the Programme, opposite.



## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**T**HE PROGRAMME GROUP have been busy planning and arranging a mixture of meetings and visits for the first half of 1996. Where possible, the events tie in with the subjects M.V.C.G. is working on.

**Monday 27 November:** *Garbage Raid* - meet at Bishopsworth Library at **3.30pm**. Gloves and black bags provided. If you have any aluminium cans for recycling into cash for our funds, please bring them along.

**Thursday 14 December:** *A Christmas Theme Evening* in St Peter's Rooms at 7.30pm. A 'hands-on' approach to floral/table decorations for members to take part in and show how artistic they are! Some carol singers will entertain us. Seasonal refreshments (but not too many for drivers!).



**Monday 8 January:** *Garbage Raid* - start the New Year with a Spring Clean! Meet at the 'Elm Tree' at **3.30pm**. (This date is a substitute for the last Monday of December).

**Tuesday 16 January:** *The Woodland Trust and its Work on Dundry* with CLARE ROBINSON, Assistant Woodland Officer. (See the article on page 2).

**Monday 29 January:** *Garbage Raid* at 3.30pm - meeting place to be announced in the January Newsletter.

**Tuesday 20 February:** *Annual General Meeting*. An historic occasion - our first A.G.M. Not just the routine election stuff - more details in the next Newsletter.

**Monday 26 February:** *Garbage Raid*. Details to be announced.

**Tuesday 19 March:** *Nature Conservation and the Malago Area* with HELEN HALL, Bristol's Conservation Officer. A chance to discuss how we build on the report by Julia Bolzek (see pages 4 and 5).

**Tuesday 16 April:** *Talking Flowers*, a talk by PLANTLIFE, Britain's only charity exclusively saving wild plants and their habitats.

**Thursday 18 April:** *Visit to Folly Farm* to see, amongst other things, the wild flowers which have never suffered from pesticides or artificial fertilisers.

## URBAN REGENERATION IN SOUTH BRISTOL

**T**HE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration has recently been set up. It is intended to involve interested voluntary groups in the programme of urban regeneration.

VOSCUR will notify voluntary groups (like us) of proposals for development submitted to the City Council by the private and public sectors and, through local meetings and written notices, promote a two-way communications system between the Council and the groups to achieve satisfactory urban regeneration.

Ben Barker, one of the south Bristol representatives on the VOSCUR committee, came to talk to us on 17 October and gave us an outline of the future operation of the organisation, encouraging comments and questions from the floor. A half-day conference for south Bristol groups is coming up soon and we will be represented. We'll keep you posted!

JOHN TAYLOR

### **Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members**

<b>Chairman</b>	André Coutanche	964 3106
<b>Secretary</b>	Chris Lillington	964 7578
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Taylor	964 2913
<b>Programme Co-ordinator</b>	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**

Richard Eddy, 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.*)

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**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.