



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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1996

OUR FIRST A.G.M. AND BIRTHDAY PARTY has come and gone. If you were there on 20 February I hope you enjoyed it. I certainly did - but perhaps I'm biased. For those who were not able to join in the fun, much of this edition of the *Newsletter* contains extracts of some of the reports delivered by various Committee members. John Taylor has very kindly provided the summaries of those reports.

The M.V.C.G. Committee has had a few changes. Chris Lillington stood down as Hon. Secretary and our thanks go to her for helping to get the show on the road during the last fifteen months and more. She is still on the Committee. Brenda Docherty very gallantly volunteered to take over the Secretary's role, while still remaining Programme Co-ordinator. Martin Powell has left the Committee because of pressure of work, but I am delighted to welcome two new members, Beryl Heaton and Mary Sykes.

As well as the reports from the A.G.M., there's a lot of news to squeeze in this time. Things are developing very positively concerning Dundry slopes, as you can read in Lola Hardingham's article on page 2. Lola is M.V.C.G.'s 'official' representative on the Dundry Hill Group, but as that Group also includes Peter Hall (wearing his C.S.V. hat), Sue Walker (Hartcliffe Health & Environment Action Group) and Anton Bantock (University of Worthywood), there's no shortage of links back to the M.V.C.G. committee.

On the planning applications front, there's suddenly been a burst of activity; read about it on page 3.

Finally, if you haven't yet got around to renewing your membership, please contact John Taylor soon. And are there other people you know who might like to join? Membership forms are always available from John or me.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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DUNDRY SLOPES

THERE HAS BEEN quite a lot of activity in connection with Dundry Hill since we last wrote and several meetings have been held with all interested parties, including representatives from Avon County Council, Bristol City Council, the local parish councils, the Forest of Avon, the farming community and, of course, M.V.C.G.

All are agreed as to the need to protect and care for this most precious asset, and very comprehensive discussions took place as to how best to achieve this.

As a start, a clean-up session was organised at the end of February for which the local councils provided skips and lorries, and a small band of volunteers made inroads on clearing a large rubbish tip and the hedgerows in East Dundry Lane. Although only a small beginning, we are hoping that further working parties with more manpower will become a regular feature in the future. On the same day, the first tree planting on the Woodland Trust's land took place.

Also at the end of February, a meeting was held with the Greater Bristol Foundation to discuss the possibility of funds being provided by them. They were very interested in all aspects of this initiative and were impressed by the co-operation taking place between so many different interests and the efforts being made to bring together the town and country communities which in the past had been so divided. They agreed to consider funding the short-term employment of a part-time worker to liaise between the interested parties, arrange meetings and generally help to move things along. We will continue to keep you posted as to further progress.

LOLA HARDINGHAM



PLANNING MATTERS

ALMOST THE FIRST ISSUE that Malago Valley Conservation Group got involved with (in July 1994, before we were formally constituted) was the planning application to build 17 houses on the site of 312 Bishopsworth Road. We opposed the application, as did the neighbouring households, and both we and they spoke at the Bristol Planning Committee to support our case against the proposal.

Unfortunately, the application was granted, though with some slight watering down; the number of houses was reduced to 15 and several of the mature trees on the site were protected with Tree Preservation Orders. The planning application was an *outline* one - only the principle of development was in question - and no building could take place until a *detailed* planning application was granted.

That application has now been made. The M.V.C.G. Committee has considered it and we are writing to the planners with a number of comments. Once the principle of what we still regard as over-intensive development had been lost, we cannot usefully oppose it outright. But we remain concerned about the traffic and parking implications and protection of the valuable wildlife features of the site, such as the established hedge along the back boundary with Bedminster Down School playing fields.

A second, unexpected, application came up last month. This is also an outline one, and is for 16 two-bedroom elderly persons flats on the site of 'Ponderosa', Vicarage Road, Bishopsworth. We are concerned about the height of the development (though the drawing attached to the application can only be indicative for an outline application) and about the traffic implications. A few months ago there was a proposal by the City Council to sell an adjacent sliver of Kings Head Park as part of a redevelopment on the 'Ponderosa' site. We queried this at the time as premature and the drawings with the planning application do not include this piece of land. We will be taking this up with the Planning Department.

Lastly, you may have read in the local papers that the planning application to build on part of Highridge Playing Fields (which we covered in the last *Newsletter*) has been granted. What wasn't clear in the reports is that the applicants withdrew the self-build housing element and the permission (again, an outline one) is for the sports/community pavilion only. We are not sure about the principle of changing an application after it has been advertised, though in this particular case, the result is reasonable. We will now have to wait for a detailed scheme in due course.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

OUR FIRST BIRTHDAY PARTY

OUR FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held on Tuesday, 20th February at St Peter's Room, Bishopsworth and was attended by 28 members and invited guests. Everyone was welcomed with a glass of mulled wine or fruit juice which helped to set the friendly tone of the meeting. The Committee members wore badges to enable members to identify them. The seating was arranged in a semi-circle around the Chairman and Secretary's table to allow everyone to be 'close to the action'.

The meeting was opened by André Coutanche (Chairman) who introduced the guests and welcomed the members and thanked those present who had braved the cold on Pancake Day. He gave a brief résumé about how the Group was formed and the report that had been submitted to Bristol City Council to achieve Conservation Area status; a reply is awaited.

The Treasurer's Report followed and John Taylor (Treasurer) thanked the Chairman for producing a typed copy of the Statement of Accounts. The accounts to 31st December 1995 showed that we had cash in hand £0.47 and £133.97 in the Building Society. The fact that the Group had remained viable had been due to the generosity and inventiveness of the Committee by organising events, and giving their time. In addition to this, the Group membership has continued to grow as more local people become interested in our aims and ambitions.

Chris Lillington then gave a report of the many and varied meetings and functions that had been organised since the commencement of the Group and also gave an insight into some of the interesting meetings and functions to be organised this year.

Sue Walker gave an interesting account of the report on Manor Woods prepared by Julia Bolzek with support from Helen Hall, Bristol's Conservation Officer, and said that it was a most comprehensive and imaginative document and the Group looked forward to working with the Council and others to progress its recommendations. Manor Woods is a valuable resource consisting of unimproved and amenity grassland with a variety of natural flora and fauna.

André dealt with the planning items with which the Committee had become involved, such as: 312 Bishopsworth Road; Wills Factory site; L.R.T. Westway tram system; proposed bus depot at Vale Lane; Highridge Playing Fields; Chestnut Court. Co-operation and co-ordination with other groups

concerning planning matters has been achieved and is ongoing, especially with Brislington Conservation and Amenity Society and Bristol Civic Society.

The Commander-in-Chief of garbage clearance, Anton Bantock, was not on parade, so one of his able helpers, Lola Hardingham, reported for him. Each sortie, which concentrates on our local parkland, is attended by Anton's trolley, complete with plastic sacks, rubber gloves, tabards and, of course, Lola's cake-tongs. Names were suggested of those who may assist with the collection of litter, especially empty aluminium cans, from which £20.20 was raised last year towards the Group funds. Praise was given for one family who are always present on the raids - Jackie Price and her two children, Matthew and Elaine.

Peter Hall commented on the Dundry Hill report that had been produced a few years ago. Meetings had been held during the year to discuss opening up Dundry Hill to the public and at the same time the aim was to bring the urban and country communities together to reduce or prevent pollution by restricting vehicular access to certain areas.

The meeting then held a 'natural break' during which the catering staff provided cheese and wine together with savouries, nuts, biscuits and shortbread, a real feast. To those members who did not attend, sorry you missed it.

When André was able to resume the meeting, he introduced Councillor Peter Crispin (a member of the Bristol Planning Committee) who gave an interesting and concise view on how the Planning Committee operated at present and how it was proposed to continue when Avon County Council disappeared. The public are welcomed and encouraged to visit the offices at Brunel House in St Georges Road (behind the Council House).

The main speaker, Jerry Hicks from Bristol Civic Society, concluded our business with a most amusing and thought-provoking presentation. He said it was important that the ordinary people should obtain copies of the Bristol Local Plan and, after reading the small print, challenge any parts they did not agree with. It was suggested that people and commerce should be inter-mixed to reduce commuting and allow people to live near to their places of employment. Jerry emphasised the importance of effective public consultation and participation in working towards a better city.

The meeting closed at 10pm and the meeting dispersed after the usual ovation for our guest speakers.

JOHN TAYLOR

FINANCIAL FACTS

HERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS for Malago Valley Conservation Group presented by our Treasurer, John Taylor, to the A.G.M. They cover the period from 1st September 1994 to 31st December 1995.

Income	£	Expenditure	£
1994/95 Memberships	192.00	Postage	23.80
1996 Memberships	34.00	Printing	11.00
	<u>226.00</u>	Functions	56.80
Functions	132.42	Refreshments	13.23
Refreshments	17.65	Hall Hire	<u>157.50</u>
Other Income	<u>20.00</u>	Total	<u>262.33</u>
Total	<u>396.07</u>		

Excess of Income over Expenditure . 133.74

Made up of:

Cash in Hand 0.47

Building Society Account 133.27

Building Society Interest received . . . 0.70

Balance carried forward to 1996 . . 134.44

GET NETTED?

M.V.C.G. is a member of VOSCUR, a Bristol-wide grouping of voluntary organisations of all kinds. At a conference last autumn, one of the ideas which emerged was the possible use of electronic means of communication to swap information and to keep in touch. As a result, some introductory courses were arranged on computer skills and the use of the Internet, and a group is being formed to consider how things might be developed. I volunteered to be part of that group.

In spite of the hype, we're a long way off having every household - or even every voluntary group - having access to a computer which can plug into the Internet and exchange information across the city and around the world. But the possibilities are there, and it may be that such a system will be as common in five years time as, say, fax machines are now. If anyone has any thoughts on this, or would like to know more, please contact me.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

A MIXTURE OF 'WINTER' TALKS AND 'SUMMER' WALKS this time. The talks will be held at 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth). Please note that non-members are very welcome and will be asked to pay a visitor's fee of 50p. Details for some of the visits are too lengthy to fit in here *and can be found on the enclosed Programme Supplement.*

Tuesday 19 March: *Nature Conservation and the Malago Area* with HELEN HALL, Bristol's Conservation Officer. A chance to discuss how we build on Julia Bolzek's excellent report on Manor Woods - **don't miss it!**

Monday 25 March: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

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. There will be a small charge and bookings must be made in advance. **Please see the enclosed sheet for further details.**

Saturday 20 April: *Get a Grip on Litter for National Spring Clean Week* (see the back page). Help M.V.C.G. make our contribution to raising national awareness of the litter problem. Meet at the 'Elm Tree' at 10.30am and finish for refreshments at the University of Witherwood.

Monday 29 April: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

Monday 20 May: *Garbage Raid.* Details in the next *Newsletter*.

Tuesday 21 May: *Visit to Windmill Hill City Farm.* A chance for a guided tour around this fascinating and ever-changing south Bristol asset. **Please see the enclosed sheet for further details.**

Tuesday 18 June: *Visit to Gatcombe Court.* A relaxing and special summer evening in a unique venue. **Please see the enclosed sheet for further details.**



Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chair	Sue Walker	946 5285
Secretary	Brenda Docherty	983 9901
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913
Programme Co-ordinator	Brenda Docherty	983 9901

Other Members

Freddie Alliston, Anton Bantock, Denis Bristow, Richard Eddy, Peter Hall, Lola Hardingham, Beryl Heaton, Chris Lillington, Mary Sykes, Ted Thomas

Co-opted Members

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.*)

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.