



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 108
Winter
2015

CHRISTMAS IS COMING! So far as M.V.C.G. is concerned, that means our traditional Christmas Party, and notice of our Annual General Meeting next February – details in the ‘Dates for your Diary’ on page 7 and on the back page.

If you’ve ever thought about getting involved on the M.V.C.G. Committee, please make it your New Year resolution to do it this time. You’ll see on the back page that we currently have only two elected Committee members who aren’t officers. Fortunately we also have some active co-opted members from other local groups who help considerably, but we could really do with more input from our ‘ordinary’ members. In any case, please do come to the A.G.M. – it’s informative, it’s friendly, and there’s a glass of something to follow!

You may know that there will be significant changes to the ward boundaries throughout the city, with effect from the elections next May. Most people don’t know which ward they are in, which is perfectly understandable – people live in a district or a neighbourhood which means something to them, while council wards are defined primarily as a way of getting similar numbers of electors for each councillor. Wards are supposed to respect ‘natural’ boundaries as well, but the arithmetical imperative makes that easier said than done. And after defining lines on a map, the authorities then frequently give the wards meaningless or positively misleading names. So people who know perfectly well that they live in Bishopsworth are told they are in Hartcliffe for electoral purposes, or Withywood people are put into a ward called Bishopsworth.

The new wards improve on this by grouping more natural neighbourhoods together and by varying ward sizes and, with that, the number of councillors per ward. The names make more sense, too! We’ll have more details in the next *Newsletter*.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

NO DOUBT some of you have visited Manor Woods Valley in the summer and we hope that the rather depressing report in our last *Newsletter* did not put you off. We are lucky to have such an attractive area in the middle of our neighbourhood which we can visit without falling into traffic jams.

This Winter *Newsletter* contains a few glimmers of hope for 2016. We know that only basic maintenance has happened this year – cutting the grass and emptying bins. Most paths have not been maintained and could hardly be used in the summer, like the River Path. A tree had fallen across it, near the interceptor. We reported it and eventually two of our members tackled it as it seemed to be the only solution.

We have regularly mentioned the uncleared interceptor. Because of the debris blocking the grid, the stream has overflowed and made the River Path difficult of access. After several e-mails about it we learned that a new maintenance system was going to be out in place, and, as we go to press, Tom Penn of Bristol Parks has just let us know that it has been cleared. He added that, as he cycled through on the Malago Greenway, he saw a distinctive flash of blue flying up the river. Kingfishers seem less apparent than before, but they're still there!

The woodland, as you know, is also an area of concern as we explained in the Autumn *Newsletter*. However, ParkWork, led by Joe McKenna, has been repairing the path, replacing the wooden edging which had rotted or been vandalised over the years. We are very pleased about this as it is used by a lot of people.

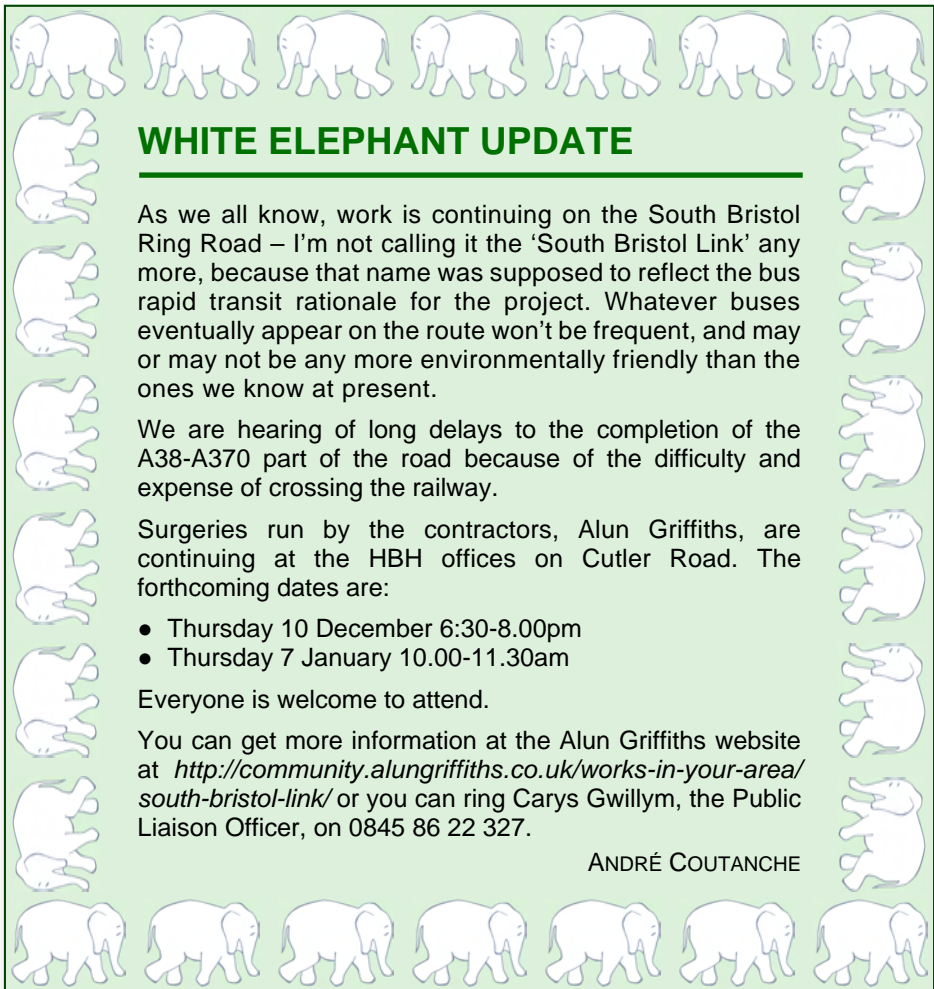
This year we have highlighted the poor state of the woodland habitat which has not been managed for decades. We have tried to raise its profile with various people. It looks at the moment that some coppicing could be done this winter but we cannot say more now.

During the long period while the Parks Department was being re-organised our main problem was to know who to talk to and find out who was in charge. It was a very frustrating time as it felt that our Park Group had become redundant. We have now made some contacts which have been very helpful. Several of us regularly attend the Bristol Parks Forum every three months on a Saturday morning. It is an opportunity to obtain information, listen to other Park Groups and also meet Parks Department employees who regularly attend. We approached them this time and our conversation was very useful.

We reported in the autumn that our flower meadow interpretation board had been destroyed by vandals. We have decided not to have it replaced, at least not yet.

Manor Woods Valley is a fantastic place for a winter walk. Just following the main path you will see wildlife. Sitting on the wall near the interceptor with a friend a few weeks ago we observed some jays across the meadow. Take your binoculars with you! No noise of cars, no parking fee to pay. Do let us know what you think.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE
Manor Woods Valley Working Group



WHITE ELEPHANT UPDATE

As we all know, work is continuing on the South Bristol Ring Road – I'm not calling it the 'South Bristol Link' any more, because that name was supposed to reflect the bus rapid transit rationale for the project. Whatever buses eventually appear on the route won't be frequent, and may or may not be any more environmentally friendly than the ones we know at present.

We are hearing of long delays to the completion of the A38-A370 part of the road because of the difficulty and expense of crossing the railway.

Surgeries run by the contractors, Alun Griffiths, are continuing at the HBH offices on Cutler Road. The forthcoming dates are:

- Thursday 10 December 6:30-8.00pm
- Thursday 7 January 10.00-11.30am

Everyone is welcome to attend.

You can get more information at the Alun Griffiths website at <http://community.alungriffiths.co.uk/works-in-your-area/south-bristol-link/> or you can ring Carys Gwilym, the Public Liaison Officer, on 0845 86 22 327.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

WE'RE NEARLY THERE! This is the plan for improvements to Elm Tree Corner which Bristol City Council Highways consulted on in October/November.

Long-standing members of M.V.C.G. may get a sense of *déjà vu* – it bears an uncanny resemblance to the plans which we drew up 18 years ago!

We understand that comments on the consultation have been few, so there is every chance that what you see here is what we will get.

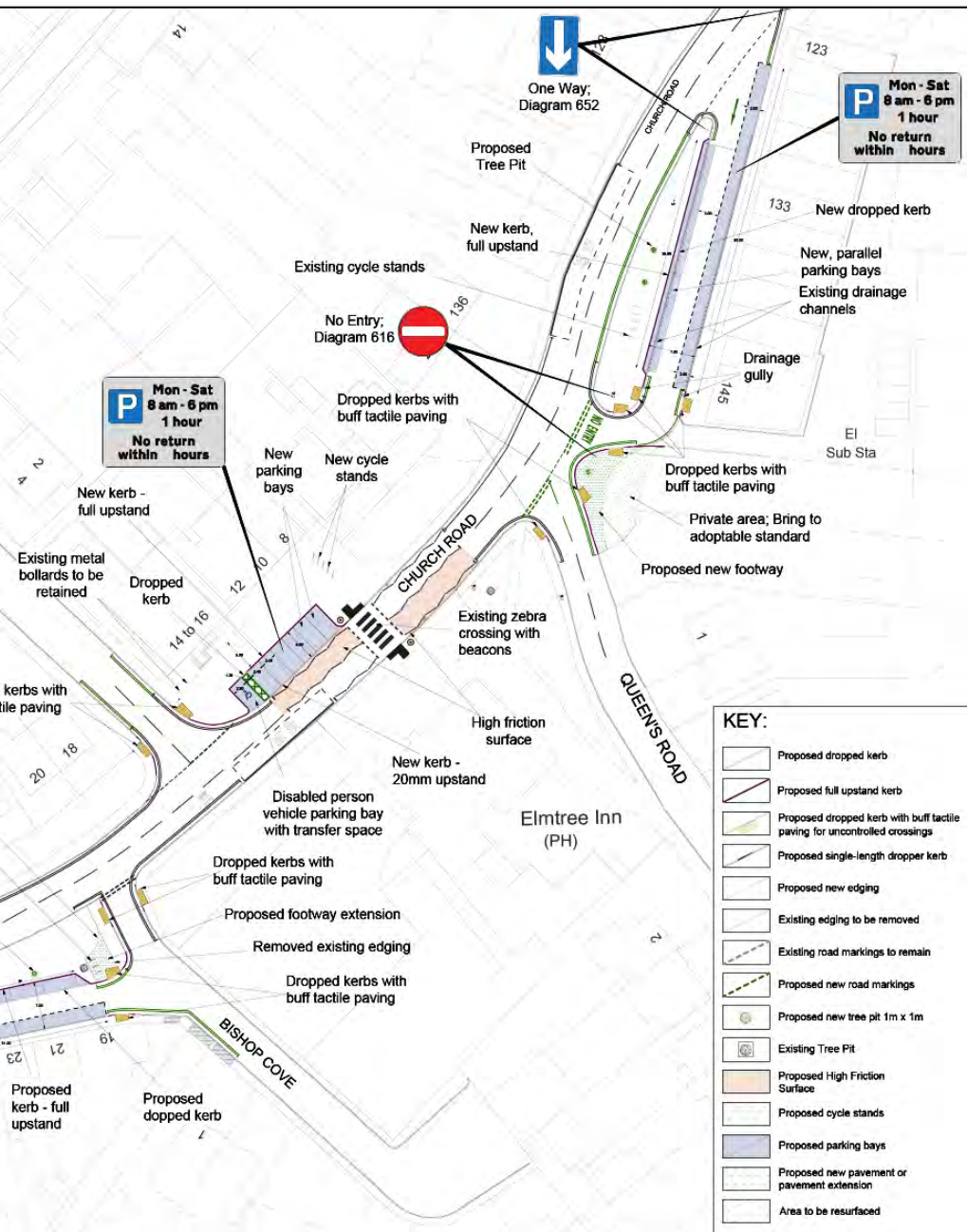
We're very grateful to Bristol City Council Highways for working closely with us to implement our ideas – subject, of course, to their own engineering expertise.

We've also been supported over the years by councillors in Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe wards, and our colleagues in Highridge Forum have always been behind the plan. What got the scheme actually under way was Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership agreeing to implement it as one of their devolved transport schemes after the Neighbourhood Partnership Transport Group – which we attend – agreed to recommend it for funding.

I know about counting chickens etc., but this is about as certain as anything can be in the wonderful world of Bristol City Council. By this time next year, we should have a safer, easier to use and better-looking Elm Tree Corner.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE





C.P.R.E. A.G.M.

ON 17 NOVEMBER Danny and I attended the A.G.M. of the Avonside branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. M.V.C.G. is a member of C.P.R.E. – we decided to join after Georgie Bigg, the Chair of the Branch, came to give us a talk. We realised that their aims overlap with ours.



Once the formal business had been completed, the meeting was introduced to the speaker, Alastair Sawday who, incidentally had cycled to the venue (a brave man considering the appalling weather conditions). Alastair is a publisher and environmentalist who has been vice-Chair of the Soil Association and helped found Avon Friends of the Earth. He is a keen advocate of organic farming.

His talk explained how concerned he is about the harm we are doing to the environment. He showed us photos of his office in Long Ashton where every attempt has been made to be 'green'. There was a rain-water collection system for flushing and showers and a wood-burning boiler for heating. Allotments surrounded the building to produce organic vegetables and all the wooden furniture was locally made. We felt that he was really striving to stick to his principles. During the talk he showed us photos of a farm in America with huge tracts of land covered in dozens of tractors ploughing their way up and down. He said that so much water had been taken from the aquifers that they were now depleted and in danger of drying up completely. He wondered how they would grow crops then. Another concern for him was the deforestation in Sumatra. He showed us charts to illustrate how forests have reduced in size in the past 30 years. It was alarming to see that there was very little forest left.

Finally, questions were invited from the audience, some of which Alastair answered skilfully, others he admitted he knew little about. Better to be honest, I thought, rather than sidestepping the issue. One of the topics that came up involved young people. He said it was a misconception that young people couldn't be bothered. He had come across those who had worked tirelessly on a topic close to their heart and once they had succeeded, stood back and got on with their lives.

Danny and I agreed that we were glad we had gone to the meeting. It was interesting and informative and so good to meet someone who was so enthusiastic about his subject.

BERYL HEATON

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



OUR FRIENDS in ‘Volunteering Matters’ (previously CSV Environment) are doing a lot of good work on Dundry Slopes. We’re including some of their dates below ...

Wednesday 9 December and Thursday 10 December: WORK DAYS to help manage Dundry Slopes meadows to bring back the wild flowers. Meet at the Slopes entrance by the Scout Hut on Bishport Avenue at 10.00am.

Monday 14 December: FESTIVE WALK on Dundry Slopes, 2.00 - 5.00pm, collecting evergreens, followed by mince-pies and wreath-making. PLEASE BOOK with Nick Ward on 935 9710 or nick.ward@volunteeringmatters.org.uk.

Tuesday 15 December: M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY at St Peter’s Rooms (side of St Peter’s Church, Church Road, Bishopsworth). Meet at 7.45pm for the usual mixture of fun and games, followed by an American Supper. If you can, please bring a little contribution to the feast (but don’t worry if you can’t). There will be the traditional raffle to help our funds, so have some cash with you.

Wednesday 16 December: OWL PROWL with Chris Sperring, 7.00 - 9.30pm, finishing with hot chocolate! PLEASE BOOK with Nick Ward on 935 9710 or nick.ward@volunteeringmatters.org.uk.

Tuesday 16 February: M.V.C.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 7.30pm at St Peter’s Rooms. Please see the ‘official’ announcement on the back page.

MEMBERSHIP OF M.V.C.G. runs on a calendar year basis, so it’s time to renew your subscription.

There’s no need to fill in the form unless your details have changed – just give us a note of your name with your cheque or cash. **Do please let us know if you have a new or changed e-mail address.**

The subscription – just £4 per household, as it has been for 21 years! – covers the costs of running M.V.C.G. and also enables us to make direct improvements to our local environment when an opportunity arises.

Please bring your sub. to the Christmas Party, or the A.G.M., or send it to either Beryl Heaton (3 Kings Walk, BS13 8BB) or André Coutanche (14 Queens Road, BS13 8LB). *THANK YOU!*

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on 16 February 2016 at St Peter's Rooms, Church Road, Bishopsworth, starting at 7.30pm. The Officers and Committee members retire each year but are eligible for re-election. The names of the current Officers and Committee members appear below.

Nominations for Officers or Committee members are very welcome. Nominations can be made to the Hon. Secretary, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone number and e-mail address below). Please feel free to contact me or any Committee member for an informal chat if you'd like more information about joining the Committee.



The formal A.G.M. business will include a report-back to members on the year's events and will be followed by a short talk on a topic 'in the news'. As usual, we will finish with wine/orange juice and cheese/other nibbles to celebrate our birthday. All members and friends of M.V.C.G. are invited to come to our birthday party.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE
Hon. Secretary

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	939 0256
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Richard Bevan, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, Volunteering Matters, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Kevin Quartley, Naomi Rylatt
(All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members).

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; tel. 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.org.uk; website www.mvcg.org.uk.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.