



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 11
July
1996

BUSY, BUSY. There seems to be a lot to squeeze in to this edition of the *Newsletter*, so I suppose we must be doing something. Most of the time I'm more aware of the things we would like to do which we haven't done - so if you are looking for something to occupy your time, M.V.C.G. could be the solution to your problems.

You'll probably have seen in the local papers that the City Council's Planning Committee has given the go-ahead to the detailed planning application for 312 Bishopsworth Road. Having lost the *principle* of having fifteen houses on this site, all we could do was to try to minimise the bad effects and try to get some compensatory improvements. The immediate neighbours are rightly concerned about the traffic problems, and we wrote to query the non-implementation of a traffic management scheme which was made a condition before permission would be granted. We also sought protection for the established hedge at the back of the site, and the planning permission has been made conditional on the hedge being protected for 5 years after building. One silver lining which had already been secured was the Tree Preservation Orders on many of the fine specimens in the gardens.

Speaking of Tree Preservation Orders, we have contacted the Planning Department to ask them to consider T.P.O.s for the trees in the grounds of Chestnut Court. This they are now doing, and we will report the results in due course. If you are aware of trees anywhere in BS13 which you think ought to be protected, please give me a ring.

Most trees in a Conservation Area are automatically protected to some degree, and we have written to the Planning Department to ask when our proposals for a 'Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area' are going to be considered. No reply has been received and we will go on prodding them.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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PLANTS, PRIZES AND POUNDS

AT THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST we shall, as promised, be looking at people's efforts to brighten up our neighbourhood with floral displays. There's no need to have a garden to take part - window boxes and containers take up very little space and are marvellous at cheering up a dull corner. So everyone has a chance of a prize - and don't forget that unusual plantings and original containers are always eye-catching. So why not have a go?

Our **Plant Sale** was held on 25/26 May and there was an excellent response to the appeal for plants and cakes etc. Unfortunately, the number of those who came along on the days was very disappointing but, as it was a Bank Holiday weekend and also the Festival of the Sea, perhaps we chose a bad time. Anyway, in spite of this we raised over £65 and our thanks to all who contributed and came along to help.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

And especial thanks to Lola, whose idea it was and who gave her time (and her garden) to the running of this event.

PHONE UP, DON'T PUT UP

HERE ARE three useful phone numbers to report environmental problems. The National Rivers Authority has been absorbed into the new Environment Agency; their 24 hour, free hotline number for reporting pollution is **0800 280 70 60**. This would be the number for reporting, for example, the recent sewage overflow into the Malago.



Pollution Control at Bristol City Council Health and Environmental Services is on **922 3355** (daytime) or **922 2050** (24 hours). They cover noise pollution, which is an increasing problem which is rightly receiving increasing attention.

WILDLIFE DIARY

ARE YOU DREAMING of traditional summer meadows? If so, you do not even need to get into your car. Just go to **Highridge Common** where, since the grass has been allowed to grow, a multitude of flowers, grasses and butterflies have appeared. Just to whet your appetite: *spotted orchids*, *quaking grass* (known locally as ‘wiggy-waggers’) and a lot of *meadow brown butterflies* have been seen there recently. But don’t wait too long - the ‘summer cut’ of the long grass is scheduled for the end of July.

At **Highridge Playing Fields**, hundreds of native trees and shrubs were planted last winter by volunteers along the fence bordering on Highridge Infant School playing field. We can report that they are growing well.

On the walk to **Maes Knoll**, with the University of Withywood, two of the highlights were the sunset from the top of the iron-age fort - and the pair of *buzzards* we saw flying over Whitchurch.

Have you investigated the old brickworks area in **Manor Woods** yet? If not, take the Vale Lane entrance, follow the hedge on the right hand side, turn right and just start exploring. A few weeks ago the *dog-rose* and *elder bushes* were in bloom. Among many wild flowers there, we were pleased to spot the *grass vetchling*, which apparently is quite rare. It resembles a violet teardrop on a slender stalk. On that sunny day we also saw *common blue* and *red admiral butterflies* and the black and red *cinnabar moth*. We have recently had further reports of a *kingfisher* along the Malago in Manor Woods, and, most excitingly, have heard of *glow-worms* on the slopes above the dam.

Several areas of grass in Manor Woods had been left to grow this spring and have recently been cut. We were disappointed that the areas where the famous corky-fruited water dropwort were growing had been cut before it had flowered. However, Helen Hall, Bristol’s Conservation Officer, tells us that she was concerned about the possible fire risk; the important thing is that we now know much better what plants are naturally present. Next year, all being well, the best areas will be left long for a longer time.

Finally, we are thrilled to report that a *green woodpecker* (there may be more than one) lives in **Crox Bottom**. Keep telling us what *you* have seen in and around our area.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE and LOLA HARDINGHAM

SOUTH BRISTOL REGENERATED?

PIEDA are a firm of consultants who were asked in October 1995 by Avon County Council (remember them?) to look at options which would help the economic regeneration of south Bristol. Their report was inherited by Bristol City Council who then asked VOSCUR to consult voluntary sector organisations. Two presentations were arranged, to which M.V.C.G., as a VOSCUR member, was invited. John Taylor and Chris Lillington went to the Gatehouse Centre on 14 May and I went on 15 May to the Southville Centre. We have now written with our comments which will be incorporated into a report to Bristol's Planning Committee.

Since Avon were the highway authority, the PIEDA report gives a lot of emphasis to transport issues. The general approach, which we like, is to identify the strategic routes which run through south Bristol and connect our area with the rest of the city and beyond, and to make sure these work properly. This would then allow the other roads, often in residential areas, to be managed so as to reduce the impact of traffic. Making the main routes work doesn't necessarily mean massive new road building or widening. One of the most radical proposals is to do away with the gyratory system at Parson Street; Winterstoke Road to Parson Street would be a continuous through road with West Street and Bedminster Down Road joining at T-junctions and Bedminster Road becoming a cul de sac.

The consultants said one thing which made some headlines in the local papers: they see no case for the completion of the Ring Road from Cater Road roundabout to Bridgwater Road on economic regeneration grounds. M.V.C.G. share the general suspicion of major new road construction in built-up areas, though something which reduced the amount of traffic through Bishopsworth 'village' would be welcome. However, it's not clear whether the Ring Road would actually achieve this, and, if so, at what environmental cost elsewhere. We have asked for the formal abandonment of the line from the A38 to the A370 and for public consultation on the A38 - Hartcliffe Roundabout section to resolve the issue. In the meantime, we would like the reserved line to be enhanced with substantial tree planting and we have offered to help with this.

The report also deals with education and training issues, infrastructure for business and social and recreation opportunities. We have emphasised the importance of wide *public* consultation as well as the feedback through VOSCUR. If any M.V.C.G. member would like to see the report, please contact me.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

WINDMILL HILL CITY FARM

ON 21 May, about twenty M.V.C.G. members had a marvellous guided tour around Windmill Hill City Farm in Bedminster with John Purkiss, the Farm's co-ordinator.

We soon learnt that the Farm was not a collection of cuddly animals cosseted by a bunch of eccentrics; it is in fact a community centre, a place for learning as well as recreation, and - very importantly - a strong link between the urban and rural ways of life.

The project was originally set up and operated by local residents for the benefit of local people in 1976, making it one of the earliest city farms in Britain. Although the Farm is situated within a small area of land (2 hectares - 5 acres), its local interest and support has remained intact and user visits have risen to 135,000 per year from all family generations and ages.

One of the first projects to be undertaken was a play scheme for the local children to involve them on the site at an early age. The increase in the number of children wishing to learn about animals and farming brought about the introduction of pigs, goats, sheep, rabbits, ducks, geese and chickens to the site and the provision of training courses in animal husbandry. Both children and adults learn about the facts of food production. The fact that the animals are slaughtered for human consumption tends to make a few of the trainees temporary vegetarians until they understand and accept the system.

The Farm has recently created a number of environmental trails around the site which has sections to do with recycling, nature and its habitats, air and water, farming, trees and hedges, and green buildings. The aim of the trails is to encourage people to understand more about their environment and improve their own surroundings.

The Farm now has clubs and activities catering for:

- children, parents and carers
- young people, such as the adventure playground
- women, such as creche-linked courses
- older people, like the 'Memories of Bedminster' Group
- disabled and mentally ill people.

Those members who attended this visit went away well rewarded, having learnt about a community project supported and run by local people and how an urban wilderness has been transformed into a rural oasis within the city.

JOHN TAYLOR

GATCOMBE COURT

ON 18 June, twenty-three M.V.C.G. were privileged to visit Gatcombe Court, a unique and fascinating venue. We were met by the owners, Mr and Mrs Clark, and given a very warm welcome before being ushered through the Grade II listed wrought-iron entrance gates. Standing on the tree-lined manicured lawn, fronting the house, Charles Clark unveiled the history of the property, listing its many points of interest together with its many oddities.

We were informed that the house was probably mainly sixteenth century, with numerous additions and alterations since that time, not all of them to the benefit or enhancement of the building. The early occupation of the site has been traced back through Roman occupation to the British tribes who lived there in wooded and thatch huts in the first century A.D.

The house has been constructed on the site of the old Roman baths on the lower tier of the three-tiered site. A Roman well has just been uncovered under the south-eastern corner of the kitchen which is adjacent to a large cistern under the kitchen floor which in turn is supplied by a spring and was the main supply of water to the property until mains water was laid on.

Charles and Stella Clark conducted separate parties around the property through the domestic areas containing the old ovens and fireplaces, into the master bedrooms where original mullioned windows have been uncovered, and into the attic with its complicated valley roof which acted as servants' quarters for many years. The group returned by the beautifully carved wooden staircase which contained oil paintings of local and family interest, into the main reception rooms where many artefacts could be seen, the Nailsea glass items being of special interest.

From the front door we were directed through the conifer hedge which opened up into another immaculate lawn edged with dozens of roses in full bloom. Through the climbing roses, stone steps led to a paved patio where we were treated to a wine and cheese supper, with the setting sun producing a rosy glow over the scene.

Before we left, Anton Bantock, in conjunction with Mr and Mrs Clark, gave us information about the Roman occupation of the site during the third and fourth centuries. Anton's detailed account can be found in *Malago Magazine* No. 13.

JOHN TAYLOR

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

ONE MORE outdoor event, together with the regular garbage raids, before we shut up shop for August. It may seem a bit early to be thinking about the autumn, but get the dates in your diary now and look out for more details in the next Newsletter in September.

Monday 22 July: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at the top of Crox Bottom at 4.00pm. When we had the University of Worthywood walk along Crox Bottom and the Pigeon House stream we noticed that it would be fertile ground for the garbage trolley. The meeting point is just past the Cater Road roundabout, at the top of the slip road which goes down to the main entrance of the Imperial Cigarette Factory site.

Saturday 27 July: *Nature Walk and American Supper* in Manor Woods. Meet at Bishopsworth Library by **5.00pm**. Our in-house enthusiasts will point out some of the interesting things to see in Manor Woods and we will finish with an informal American Supper. Please bring a contribution to the food/drink. You won't have to carry it on the walk; the refreshments will be transported by car to the eating place. We aim to finish by about 7.00pm.

Monday 19 August: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

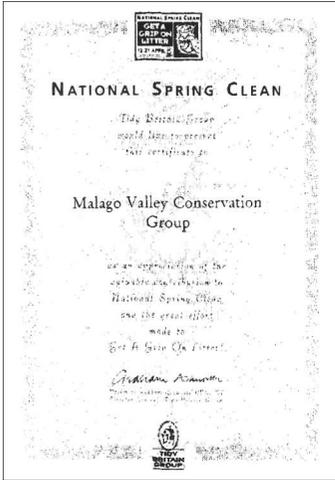
Tuesday 17 September: The programme of evening talks gets off to a flying start with JERRY HICKS of Bristol Civic Society. If you were at our A.G.M. you will have heard Jerry's sparkling and provocative style. The title of his talk isn't yet decided but the subject matter is guaranteed to be amusing and thought-provoking. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms.

Tuesday 15 October: A speaker from the NATIONAL TRUST. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms. More details in the next *Newsletter*.

Thursday 21 November: A speaker from ENGLISH HERITAGE. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms. Please note that this meeting will be on a Thursday instead of our normal Tuesday to avoid clashing with the Bishopsworth Quiz.

Tuesday 17 December: The CHRISTMAS MEETING. Too early to be thinking about Christmas? The Programme Group agree; nothing is decided yet. All ideas welcomed.

WE'VE BEEN CERTIFIED



THIS IS the certificate M.V.C.G. has received from the Tidy Britain Group for taking part in the *National Spring Clean* on 20 April. You may have seen the photo in the local paper of our garbage squad on that occasion - an impressive bunch.

Our anti-litter activities recently have also included removing the fridge from the Malago at the Vale Lane end of Manor Woods, and helping with the Dundry Hill Group's clean-up on 8 June. At that event, we were pleased to meet Cllr Paul Smith who said he always enjoyed reading our *Newsletter*.

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.*)

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