



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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1997

ANOTHER ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING has come and gone and most people seemed to enjoy it. We don't produce a printed Annual Report of our activities, so pages 2 and 3 have a full account of the progress which was described to those who were there.

Although we could always do more - if we had the time and the volunteers - it's encouraging to see what has been achieved in a year. By a stroke of good luck, we were able to report to the A.G.M. significant progress on the topic which was the catalyst for the formation of M.V.C.G. in the first place - the proposal for a 'Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area'.

A paper went to the City Council Planning Committee on 5 February recommending that resources be allocated to considering one new conservation area in the city each year - with Bishopsworth and Malago the first in line. I attended the Committee meeting and circulated a statement from M.V.C.G. supporting the officers' paper.

Some kind things were said about our 1993 Report, both in the paper and by councillors at the meeting. Cllr Peter Crispin, who not only comes to most of our committee meetings and gives us tremendous support, but has actually paid his own money to join the Group(!) spoke powerfully for us, and Cllr Andy May, Chair of the Planning Committee, went out of his way to describe our report as a model of its kind. He particularly mentioned with approval the inclusion of the historic open spaces around Bishopsworth village.

The paper was approved, so our proposals will be looked at in the financial year starting this April. We're looking forward to working with the City Council on progressing the designation of the first conservation area in south west Bristol.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group was held on 18 February. As with the first A.G.M. in 1996, the intention was to combine full feedback to the members on the year's activities with a birthday party atmosphere.

A good-sized audience heard André Coutanche (Chairman) welcome everyone, especially our visitors who included representatives of SCALA, Bristol Civic Society and Cllr Helen Holland. Our friends from Brislington Conservation and Amenity Society had sent apologies, as had Steve Sparks, our 'litter man', whose constant help during the year was acknowledged with a vote of thanks.

John Taylor, our Treasurer, presented the accounts, which are reproduced on page 4. A vote of thanks was proposed to John for all his work, including the swift and efficient delivery of Newsletters to members and others.

Brenda Docherty had prepared an excellent review of the year which was read by Chris Lillington. Events included six talks on varied and interesting subjects; outside visits; and walks, including a winter walk to Winford with H.H.E.A.G. Our Christmas party was, as usual, a great success. During the year Lola Hardingham had organised another hanging basket and containers competition, again judged by Riverside Garden Centre, and a plant sale at her home. M.V.C.G. had a stall at the Wildlife Trust sale in October.

On planning issues, André said the most exciting news was the progress made on our proposed Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area. The City Council Planning Committee had approved a paper recommending that our report should be considered in the financial year beginning April 1997. He then covered the planning issues we had considered during the year including (a) 312 Bishopsworth Road, where we have been monitoring developments, especially to check that the Tree Preservation Orders are respected; (b) the proposed Light Rail Transit scheme which has faded away but may come back in another form; (c) the proposed bus depot at Vale Lane, now formally withdrawn; (d) developments at Highridge playing fields - no detailed application yet; (e) Chestnut Court (one of Bishopsworth's listed buildings) - we have discussed with various people during the year; (f) 'Elm Tree corner' - we have come up with some proposals but have yet to submit our ideas formally (g) PIEDA Report on economic regeneration in south Bristol - several meetings held including one with VOSCUR.

On Manor Woods, Mary Sykes reported that a working party has been set up to see what we can do to further the ideas in Julia Bolzek's report. The path

through the woods is currently being tarmacked and the City Council will be renewing the entrance gate at the Vale Lane end - much influenced by the ideas we submitted. There is another scheme in the pipeline in which Allied Domecq will be sponsoring improvements with a water theme, and they have approached the Forest of Avon, BEET and the Wildlife Trust in this area; we will be involved in developments.

Anton Bantock reported on Garbage Raids, and said that there are monthly forays with himself and three or four others, but urged more people to come and have a go. The point is not how much litter we can clear, but that we are seen doing it and thereby communicate our aims to the public.

Lola Hardingham reported great progress for the Dundry Hill Group over the year. The co-operation is excellent between the participants: the Forest of Avon, Woodland Trust, H.H.E.A.G., C.S.V., University of Witherwood, M.V.C.G., local farmers and Dundry Parish Council. The main aims are to improve pedestrian access and reduce vandalism and dumping and to improve relationships between all those using Dundry Hill. There has been a poster and logo competition for children and the visit to Hurfords farm was a great success in the summer. There have been several clean-up days, and drystone walling and hedgelaying are taught on a regular basis; motorbike barriers will be erected. £1,000 was received from the Community Action Fund towards improving hedges and school/farm visits; and £2,300 from the Greater Bristol Foundation and other money from the Forest of Avon is funding a part-time worker, Chris McFarling. Chris was introduced and said he was working one day a week to co-ordinate the work of the Group and was based at the H.H.E.A.G. office.

At election time, all the committee members were willing to be re-elected except Freddie Alliston and Denis Bristow who wished to retire. Thanks were expressed to them both. Brenda Docherty had to stand down as Secretary and Programme Co-ordinator and a vote of thanks was given to her for all she has done over the past year; she will be staying on the Committee. Chris Lillington would become Secretary, with the proviso that this is 'Minutes Secretary'. John Taylor would continue as Treasurer and André Coutanche as Chairman; Sue Walker wished to stand down as Vice-Chair and become a co-opted Committee member, as did Peter Hall. The other committee members were: Anton Bantock, Richard Eddy, Lola Hardingham, Beryl Heaton and Mary Sykes. The Committee was unanimously elected. Anyone interested in joining can be co-opted during the year.

Following the break for wine and cheese we were entertained with a talk and slide presentation from our local architect, Vic Love, who opened our eyes to what is all around but we often fail to see.

CHRIS LILLINGTON

MONEY MATTERS

HERE ARE THE 1996 ACCOUNTS which John presented to the A.G.M. We are operating within our means and building up some reserves, but at some stage we intend to use our money to improve our bit of Bristol.

Income	£	Expenditure	£
1996 Memberships	220.00	Postage	3.65
1997 Memberships	<u>28.00</u>	Newsletter	62.00
	248.00	Functions	90.22
Functions	148.62	Refreshments	2.00
Refreshments	18.95	Other Expenses	2.50
Other Income	<u>51.44</u>	Hall Hire	<u>87.50</u>
Total	467.01	Total	247.87
		Excess of Income over Expenditure	219.14
		Brought forward from 1994/95	<u>134.44</u>
			353.58
		Made up of:	
		Cash in Hand	6.11
		Building Society Account	<u>347.47</u>
			353.58
		Building Society Interest received	0.91
		Balance carried forward to 1997	354.49

I CAN CAN - CAN YOU CAN CAN?

YOU MAY REMEMBER that M.V.C.G. collects and recycles empty drink cans which are sorted by Marie Jo Coutanche into aluminium, (which we can sell for our funds) and steel (which we can't, but they are recycled anyway).

Twice a week I walk from Grange Road to The Gatehouse Centre near the Co-op Pioneer supermarket, and I always have a spare carrier bag about my person as inevitably there are cans to be collected on the way home.

What amazes me, though, is that most cans one picks up have drink left in them - some over half full - and it makes me wonder who are these people who can afford to buy cans and throw them on the ground without even drinking the contents?

Any sort of waste hurts those of us of the older generation and I was reminded of a poem I wrote some years ago which hits the right note:



ECONOMY

People around fifty
Are always rather thrifty,
Brought up in the war
By the unwritten law -
'Don't throw a thing away,
You'll find a use one day.'

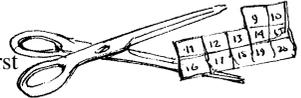
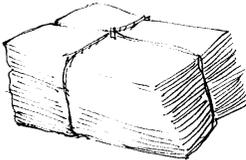
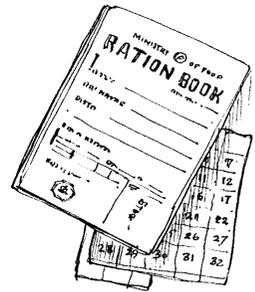
We saved up *everything*,
Waste paper, milk tops, string,
Even Dad's old vest!
(The pig bin got the rest.)

Now in these modern days
We cannot change our ways,
We still abhor all waste
And keep things - 'just in case.'

But who do people ask
When frustrated by some task -
'Have you got a bit of wire;
A fuse; sticks for the fire?'
If they want a cardboard box
Or keys to fit their locks,
Brown paper, blades for saws,
They rummage through *our* drawers!

The youngster of today
Throws everything away,
When father, gran or mother
Says, 'You can buy another.'

But if the worst comes to the worst
Who will be the first
To decorate their cave?
Those of us who save!



CHRIS LILLINGTON

P.S.1 Some verses left out because of space - *Ed.*

P.S.2 Please bring empty cans to M.V.C.G. meetings or to 14 Queens Road, Bishpworth, or phone 964 3106 for collection.

DUNDRY CHURCH AND ITS TOWER

IN JANUARY, 27 members and visitors enjoyed an illustrated talk by Philip Gallop, local photographer, Dundry Churchwarden and local historian, about Dundry Church, in particular the tower.

There has been a church on the site since circa 1200 A.D. It was built of Dundry stone from the quarries on the hill owned by the See of Bath and Wells. The ornate tower built in 1482 is said to have been constructed as a demonstration piece to show what masons could achieve with the Dundry stone. St Mary Redcliffe Church and Cardiff Castle are two of the many buildings that were constructed from the stone.

In 1861 the church was renovated and a third aisle was added and a new porch to the north (or 'Devil's') door. It is interesting to note that the important and more influential people were buried on the south side of the graveyard with the commoners being buried on the north side. Graves had to be excavated to six feet but this was difficult at Dundry because one foot under the surface is solid rock which had to be hewn out by hammer and chisel.

There have been many problems with the tower. In 1890 the pinnacles had to be repaired, but in 1986 the bells could no longer be rung due to severe movement of the tower and disintegration of the pinnacles. Repairs at this time cost £100,000 which was raised by pledges within six weeks. English Heritage has to be consulted at all stages of any work undertaken because the church is a listed building. Stones in the tower are jointed with iron rods which are inserted into the stone and sealed with molten lead. The iron had rusted and expanded and split the stone; where this had occurred each section had to be replaced. The stone is now provided from a quarry near Bath.

Due to the problem with the bells they had to be lowered nine feet to the next floor level and additional sound-proofing provided to protect the hearing of the bell-ringers. There are six bells, the heaviest being just under three quarters of a ton. In earlier churches only three bells were fitted, hence the children's rhyme, 'Ding, Dong, Bell; pussy's in the well'.

Philip added several of his folklore and comical stories throughout his presentation which amused us all without detracting from the commentary and the wonderful selection of slides.

JOHN TAYLOR

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

ALL the evening meetings are held at 7.30pm in St Peter's Rooms, which are by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. Non-members are very welcome and will be asked to pay 50p to help cover hall hire.

Tuesday 18 March: A double bill: *Permaculture* and *Community Composting*. MARK WARNER from Bristol Permaculture based at the CREATE Centre will talk to us about this method of establishing productive environments to provide food, energy, shelter and other needs. Permaculture can be practised by anyone, anywhere - from a window box to allotments, from city flats to farms. JOE MOORE, from the new national organisation, Community Composting Network, will give us an insight into this quickly-growing area of concern for governments and local neighbourhoods.

Monday 24 March: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at **4.00pm** at Bishopsworth Library. *Please note the later time now that spring is approaching.*

Monday 31 March (Easter Monday): A Gentle Walk (2-3 miles) along some of the fascinating footpaths along *Dundry Hill*, led by CHRIS MCFARLING of the Dundry Hill Group. Meet outside Dundry Village Hall at 10.00am. Wear suitable clothing.

Tuesday 15 April: *Conservation and Recreation at Bristol Water's Reservoirs*: a talk with slides by CHRIS KLEE of Bristol Water.

As M.V.C.G.'s contribution to the NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN organised by the Tidy Britain Group we are holding *two special Garbage Raids*. These will be on Saturdays and will replace the regular monthly Monday Raid for April. On **Saturday 19 April** we will tackle Crox Bottom (a delightful spot for a walk, with or without a trolley). Meet at **10.00am at the top of Crox Bottom** - between the roundabout where Cater Road joins Whitchurch Lane/Hengrove Way and the entrance to the former Wills Factory. The following Saturday, **26 April**, meet at **10.00 am at Bishopsworth Library**. We are planning a special go at Manor Woods, hopefully including an amphibious operation.

Tuesday 20 May: A Conducted Tour of *Bristol Water's Gardens* at Bridgwater Road. Further details in the next *Newsletter*.

WILDLIFE DIARY

SUNDAY 9TH MARCH - 1.30am: Queens Road is resounding with song. No, it's not a late disco but a bird singing from the top of a tree opposite King George's Road, near the Malago.

Could it be a nightingale? We didn't think so. Some instant detective work with bird books, binoculars and a record of bird songs confirmed it was a mistle thrush.

Was it confused by the street lights and thought it was greeting the dawn? It was so melodious that we stayed a while listening to it, mesmerised.

If you cannot sleep one night, open your window and have a listen - you may be lucky.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Acting Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913

Other Members

Anton Bantock, Brenda Docherty, Richard Eddy, Beryl Heaton, Chris Lillington (*Committee Secretary*), Mary Sykes.

Co-opted Members

Peter Hall, Sue Walker, 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.