



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

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**A**S USUAL in the March *Newsletter*, we report in detail much of what was said at the Annual General Meeting in February. We believe that it's important to let members know what M.V.C.G. has been doing in their name and to put it on record for members and others to refer to. You can read the A.G.M. report starting on page 4.

That means that space for other news is more limited, so I'll squeeze in here two planning items which you may have read about in the newspapers. At THE OLD VICARAGE, Bishopsworth, considerable alarm has been caused by the amount of clearance of trees and shrubs done by the developer who received planning permission for conversion work on the house. At the time of writing the situation is still evolving, and M.V.C.G. is in touch with the neighbours who raised the alarm, and Cllr Richard Eddy (ward councillor) and planning officers. We want to be clear on the facts of the case, but we will press very hard indeed for proper action to be taken if a planning permission has not been adhered to.

Secondly, the saga of MOBILE PHONE MASTS continues, though we have had a useful success in one case, where an application on Vale Lane has been refused. We had opposed it because of its visual impact on the adjacent part of the Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area in Manor Woods. Cllr Peter Crispin, chairing the South & East Planning Committee, was sympathetic and proposed refusal because the applicant hadn't provided the information required. This was agreed by the Committee. There may, of course, be an appeal.

M.V.C.G. deliberately doesn't take a view on the argument that mobile phone masts pose a radiation danger. Whatever one's personal opinion, it is the case that this is not an admissible *planning* argument, so we adopt our normal policy of considered opposition where necessary on planning grounds.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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## CAN SPRING BE FAR BEHIND?

**D**URING the cold weather in January, a great variety of birds visited the garden in search of food. As well as the usual starlings, house sparrows, collared doves, blackbirds and magpies, there have been blue tits, great tits and, for the first time, coal tits. Also dunnocks, robins (a pair!), a wren and a wood pigeon, which looked enormous after all the small birds hopping around. Both male and female blackcaps enjoyed plucking the remaining berries from the Summer Jasmine and pecking at apples left on the bird table. A thrush visited many times - the first to be seen for several years. One afternoon, a handsome, colourful bird alighted on the lawn for a short while: a medium size, about twelve inches long, with a green back, red crown and yellow rump - what could it be? Out comes *Birds in Britain* reference book and, yes, it was a green woodpecker. Wonderful.

New growth has started on shrubs and trees; viburnum, winter-flowering cherry and honeysuckle are in bloom, as are bergenias, primroses and cyclamen. Snowdrops and daffodils have given us the first taste of spring.

We are now looking forward to lighter evenings and milder weather, with birds making nests, hopefully, in our gardens and bringing up the next generation to entrance us.

BRENDA DOCHERTY

*And descriptions in previous Newsletters of interesting wildlife sightings in our area have sparked a flurry of further reports ...*

- a SPARROWHAWK has also been seen in a Highridge garden. The same one as in Bishopsworth? Are they territorial?
- BUZZARDS have been seen circling above Hartcliffe Way (keep watching the skies!)
- On the D.H.G. walk on 3 March, Barbra's sharp eyes spotted a bright yellow BRIMSTONE BUTTERFLY - the first this year? - in Crox Bottom.
- Also on the D.H.G. walk, returning through Manor Woods, the noise of birds near the woodland path made André investigate. The woodpigeons and gulls were mobbing a TAWNY OWL which flew past twice, seemingly not too bothered by the harassment.

***Please tell us what you see!***



*Lola's drawings of a tawny owl which appear in My Manor Woods Book.*

## **MEANDERING BY THE MALAGO**

**T**HE WORK in Manor Woods continues, designed to reduce pollution of the Malago by preventing most overflows from the foul sewers, though the bottom of St Peter's Rise has now re-opened to traffic.

Pedestrian and cycle access through Manor Woods has been maintained by the construction of a tarmac path close to the stream (we used this path on the D.H.G. walk on 3 March). Several people said then, and similar thoughts had been expressed earlier, that it was more pleasant to walk on a narrower track near to the water. It has been suggested that this 'temporary' path should be retained when the work is finished, so allowing pedestrians a more interesting route separate from the cycleway.

What do you think? Should there be a permanent path by the Malago? Should it be tarmacked, as the temporary one is, or some other surface? Please let us know what you think - ring André on 964 3106.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS**

WHEN you read the A.G.M. Report (over the page), you may notice a difference from last year's - this year we made no Environmental Awards. That wasn't because everything new in 2001 was horrible, but we had no nominations from members, and the Committee couldn't think of anything particularly outstanding. We don't want to drop the Awards, though, so please bear them in mind as 2002 unfolds.

## REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

**A**S USUAL, we are giving a summary of the reports presented to the A.G.M. on 19 February for the benefit of members who weren't able to be there ...

**Treasurer's Report:** Beryl Heaton reported on the Accounts which had been published in the January *Newsletter*. She thanked Marie Jo for her work in sorting out the cans. Marie Jo expressed thanks to all those who collected cans and delivered them to us. Beryl also thanked everyone who supported and helped our annual Coffee Day.

**Programme Report:** Lola Hardingham reported that we started our programme last year with a talk by Wendy Harris of HHEAG who told us about the 'Food for All' Co-operative and brought goods along to sample. Chris McFarling completed our Winter talks by telling us about his honeymoon journey, walking down the west coast of America and finishing in New Zealand; he also talked about the ecological state of our planet. Our summer activities were restricted by the foot and mouth crisis and we had to postpone our trip to Alvis Brothers' farm until this year. However, we enjoyed two walks with HHEAG at Blaise and Castle Parks. In September, our visit to the CREATE Centre proved very popular and in October Phil Quinn of the Avon Wildlife Trust told us about some of the local endangered species. In November, we had Ian Lillington on permaculture and lifestyle in Australia. Also in November we held our annual Coffee Day which again was well supported. December saw our usual fun and frolics at the Christmas Meeting - thanks to all who came along and for being such good sports - of course the mulled wine and wassail bowl may have helped! Lola asked for any suggestions and requests for meetings/trips for the forthcoming programme and thanked people who have been working hard in the background.

**Planning Issues:** André Coutanche started by saying that a very welcome new development wasn't on the ground at all, but in cyberspace. The City Council now make available on their website the weekly 'Planning Register'. This means that it is easy to see what's coming up and not miss anything which we need to know about. If there is a planning application which we would like to look at in detail, we still have to go down to Brunel House, behind the Council House, to look it up, but perhaps the actual applications will become more easily available in future, either on the web or at local offices.

At the last A.G.M., we were expecting that a major involvement would be with the 'Gatehouse Open Space', the line of the abandoned Ring Road from Cater Road to Queens Road. In fact, this didn't develop at all, so we wait and see.

However, the ghost of the Ring Road did stir a bit further away, and consultants were appointed to consider whether a new road was needed between the A38 (Bridgwater Road) and the A370, near Long Ashton. We are awaiting the consultants' report with great interest, and fears have been aroused that a new road could bring pressure to reinstate the former line through Witherwood and up King Georges Road and across Highridge Common. We see no reason for this, and we will oppose any such pressure.

The major development sites in our BS13 patch continue to be the former Wills Factory and Symes Avenue. Fairly good things continue to happen at Wills, though the listed office block - which is separately owned from the main site - is still under a cloud. We are keeping tabs on that. At Symes, the planning inquiry which recommended planning permission for a major supermarket was very welcome, but nothing has happened on the ground and nothing will happen for a while yet. The other major development this last year was in Highridge, where we and everyone else welcomed the redevelopment at Sandburrows Road/Lakemead Grove which is nearing completion.

Within the Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area we had an exciting time this year with the Old Vicarage. The original planning application was for far too many new houses, and the opposition from us and the neighbours had a welcome and instant effect. Restoration and redevelopment work is now under way with *no* new houses! We asked the City Council Planning Committee for a strengthening of the planning condition relating to replacement tree planting, and they agreed [but see also page 1].

We succeeded this year in getting the Conservation Area extended to take in Brook Farm on Whitchurch Lane. This gives additional protection to an unlisted building which is one of the few farmhouses left which were part of Bishopsworth village. We hear noises in the undergrowth which suggest that a planning application could be coming up for Brook Farm in the not-too-distant future.

The year finished, and 2002 looks like continuing, with mobile phone masts being the flavour of the month. We successfully opposed a mast being built on Queens Road, and we suggested to the City Council in May that they really needed a city-wide policy to deal with the continuing flood of planning applications. The City is indeed now working on a policy, but individual applications keep on coming [see also page 1].

**Progress with Projects:** Lola said that we have continued planting trees and bulbs in our area, the main site this year being at Bishopsworth Library, where we planted a small rowan tree and a thousand or so daffodil bulbs. They are already coming through, as are the ones we planted in 2000 at the 'Elm Tree'. The trees

which the City Council planted as a result of our initiatives along Highridge Road have done well, with only one of them being a victim of vandalism.

As well as adding to the greenery, we sometimes have to remove some of it, as in Manor Woods where we cleared the path from the Dam to the Interceptor along the Malago. We had thought that the City Council had agreed to maintain this path, but it seems as though there is more work to be done here with the word processor and e-mail as well as with the secateurs and machete. Also in Manor Woods, we have continued discussions under the aegis of the South Bristol Rivers Initiative. We will see how that evolves in future, because one of the main participants was Jon Gething of the Wildlife Trust and he retires as the Trust's Director in March. However, we will also have the Management Plan which our speaker will be telling us about, so M.V.C.G. will continue to be involved in maintaining and developing Manor Woods.

Our customary Garbage Raids have continued, once a month. These are very sociable occasions as well as good for the appearance of BS13, and we have welcomed this last year a couple of new regulars. More volunteers are always welcome. One of the regular items collected on garbage raids is, of course, drinks cans, and we have heard how can recycling has helped our finances. A new scheme started this last year which will help even more, because Alupro, the trade body for aluminium recycling, are awarding points for every kilo of aluminium sold and these points will turn into vouchers for D-I-Y material and plants. The scheme was due to finish at the end of 2001 but has been extended, so we are still collecting points.

M.V.C.G. has continued to be involved with other organisations during the year. Two of the main ones are the Dundry Hill Group and the Hartcliffe and Witherwood Community Partnership, who run the SRB5 scheme. For SRB5, we are on two of the 'Theme Groups', one which deals with environmental issues, and one which developed the Complementary Therapies project. The Dundry Hill Group has not been quite so active publicly this last year, mostly because Foot & Mouth Disease prevented walks on the Hill, but the Group did publish the *Walks on Dundry Hill Book* which has been very well received and is selling well. D.H.G. is about to 're-launch' itself with a big public meeting this Thursday, with Tony Targett as special guest speaker.

Finally, on the publicity front, we have published our usual bimonthly newsletters, and our website has been kept up-to-date. We are grateful to Philip Elliot of the South Bristol Observer who regularly feeds in items from our Newsletter and helps to keep us in the public eye. We also have our exhibition which is currently at Marksbury Road Library. We could do more exhibitions if we had someone to organise venues.

LIS PIBWORTH

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**M**ALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP'S own events are shown by the **M** symbol. The regular evening meetings on the third Tuesday of each month are held at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church), Bishopsworth, starting at 7.30pm. The Dundry Hill Group programme has now restarted; these events are shown as (DHG). All welcome!

**M Monday 25 March:** *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at Symes Avenue.

**Saturday 30 March:** *Egg-rolling Races on Dundry Slopes* (above Aldwick Avenue). Meet at 12 noon outside Hartcliffe Library. Please bring a hard-boiled egg or two and wear old clothes and shoes. 12.30-1.00pm: colouring eggs. Races start at 1.00pm with the following classes: 0-5 year olds, 6-10 year olds, 10-15 year olds, Adult (DHG).

**Sunday 7 April:** *Guided Walk* to look at the spring wildlife on the Dundry Slopes. Meet at 10.00am at Strawberry Lane. Wear old clothes and wellies! Return for 12 noon (DHG).

**M Tuesday 16 April:** JIM O'SHAUNNESSY will talk to us about the latest news from *The Forest of Avon*.

**Saturday 27 April:** *Spring and Tree Dressing* at the Malago spring project. Please bring garden flowers that you can spare. Wear suitable clothing. Meet at 2.00pm outside Hartcliffe Library (DHG).

**M Monday 29 April:** *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at Worthywood Post Office. We will have a go at the grot on the banks of the Malago where it meets Four Acres, so wellies and really old clothes are advised!

**Sunday 5 May:** *Guided Wildflower Walk* starting from Hartcliffe Library at 10.00am. Wear old clothes and walking shoes. Return for 12 noon (DHG).

**M Tuesday 21 May:** Our postponed *Visit to Alvis Brothers' Cheese Farm*. Meet at **6.55pm** on the A38 outside the Farm Shop (there is a pull-in). The Farm is on the left at the bottom of Red Hill. If you would like a lift or can offer one, please ring Lola on 964 1116.

**M Monday 27 May:** *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at Bishopsworth Library.

**M Sunday 9 June:** *Guided Walk to hunt for Fossils on Dundry Hill* (jointly with DHG). Meet at 10.00am at Dundry Village car park. Wear old clothes and walking shoes. Return for 12 noon. *Please note: this is the second Sunday in the month to avoid clashing with Golden Jubilee celebrations.*

## RENEWALS AND REMINDERS

MOST MEMBERS have returned the membership renewal slips which went out with the January *Newsletter*, along with cheques or cash for their 2002 subscriptions. We're very grateful for your support.

There are, of course, a few people who haven't quite got round to renewing yet. If you're one of them, please let any committee member have your form and money as soon as possible.

If you're not sure which category you fall into, we're giving you a clue: if there's a membership card with this *Newsletter*, then you've renewed. If you haven't, then you'll find a handy renewal slip to replace the one you've mislaid ...

### Malago Valley Conservation Group

<b>Chairman</b>	André Coutanche	964 3106
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
<b>Hon. Secretary</b>	Lis Pibworth	987 0825
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

#### Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Brenda Docherty, Royston Griffey,  
Mavis Palmer, Jack Price

#### Co-opted Committee Members

Tania Case, Valerie Gay, Peter Hall, Audrey Milton, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Bernard Chalmers, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Ron Hodges, Dave Johnson, Mary Sykes (*All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members.*)

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**Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.**

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