



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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2003

IT'S BEEN a busy couple of months - which is why, although this *Newsletter* is being written in March, you might not be reading it until April. Because many of the issues which have kept us busy in the first couple of months of 2003 actually started in 2002, we reported on them at the A.G.M. and they are covered in the Report of the A.G.M. which you can read about over the page.

The A.G.M. was the usual friendly occasion, and our special guest speaker was his usual energetic and enthusiastic self - which made it all the more shocking and sad when we heard of Geoff Cargill's sudden death just two days later. We pay tribute to Geoff on the back page.

Since the A.G.M., things have moved on in several areas. We have lodged a formal objection to the Bristol Local Plan because it includes the abandoned line of the Ring Road. The public meeting on the proposed Park & Ride on Bedminster Down was very well attended and we remain opposed to the planning application. We will be finalising our views on the planning application for Highridge Playing Fields which will be considered by the Council's South & East Development Control Committee on 16 April. We are continuing to seek ways of funding the improvements in Manor Woods which we have agreed with the City Council. More news next time.

Finally, thank you to all who have renewed your membership for 2003. You should find your membership card enclosed. If you don't, then either you are receiving a complimentary copy of the *Newsletter*, or we're still waiting to hear from you - and another renewal form is provided for your convenience.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Report from the A.G.M. | Page 2 |
| Be a Green Friend | Page 5 |
| A Spring Stroll | Page 5 |
| What Planet are we from? | Page 6 |
| The Programme | Page 7 |
| Geoff Cargill | Page 8 |

REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, we are giving a summary of the reports presented to the A.G.M. on 18 February for the benefit of members who weren't able to be there ...

Programme Report: Lola Hardingham reported that we started our programme off in March with a fascinating talk by Charles Copp on the geology and landscape of the Gordano Valley, followed by Jim O'Shaunnessy on the Forest of Avon which concluded our Winter talks. During the Summer a fossil walk was held in conjunction with Dundry Hill Group and medical herbalist Julia Green led an informative visit through Manor Woods revealing the medical properties of plants and trees. Charles Copp took us for a walk along Clevedon beach to study the rock formations. The long anticipated visit to Alvis Brothers Farm went ahead (it had been postponed previously due to foot and mouth) on a beautiful evening in August. We resumed indoor talks in October with Keith Hallett the architect of 'The Willows' and Symes House. We also had talks from the Soil Association and the voluntary wardens of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Our annual fund raiser 'Christmas at Home' was very successful, as was the Bishopsworth Quiz - we came third! Overall the events have been well attended. Lola thanked the workers behind the scene who have helped preparing food and drinks etc. Lola also invited any suggestions for future events.

Planning Matters André Coutanche said that, as usual, the past year has included planning applications which we expected and others which came as a surprise - often an unpleasant surprise. At the Old Vicarage, Bishopsworth, while the redevelopment of the building itself was quite welcome, the developers uprooted many trees and shrubs in the garden which they had no right to do. Reinstatement didn't happen because the developers 'logically' pointed out that, since they wanted to build new houses around the edge of the garden, there was no point in replanting hedges and trees which would be in the way. That application for new build came in and, following opposition both from the neighbours in Ilex Close and from us, it was refused. It is virtually certain that the developers will appeal against the refusal and/or come back with a revised application.

The other significant application in the Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area which affected a historic building was at Brook Farm - 55 Whitchurch Road. This is designated in the Bristol Local Plan for employment use but the application was for residential development. We didn't have a problem with this - our main concern was to conserve the building before the vandals finished it off. When the application went to the South & East Development Control Committee on 5 February, it was with a recommendation for approval, which we supported. This was opposed by the Cater Road Traders and the Hartcliffe

& Withywood Community Partnership because of the loss of employment land. The debate at the Committee was extremely good, and the vote was 8 to 1 in favour of planning permission. That meeting of the Committee also considered an application for some minor works at Bishopsworth Manor House. This was passed in principle but has to go to the Government for final approval.

The former Wills Factory continues to develop, though the listed office block - which is separately owned - is still under a cloud. At Symes Avenue, we had the excellent news that Morrisons intend to develop the site with a major supermarket. The overall approach looks good, and we are expecting a planning application soon. Mobile phone masts continued to be a problem, with applications being opposed by us, refused by the City Council, and then allowed on appeal. We don't automatically oppose phone masts on principle but only where we think there are good planning grounds for opposition. One such site was on Bedminster Down, where the former caravan site is also being developed for housing. We inspected the plans but thought they were acceptable and made no comment - this happens several times in a typical year.

However, also on Bedminster Down, we had the planning application for the Park & Ride. We and many other people opposed this. That application was withdrawn, but it has recently come back in a slightly reduced form, with a scheme for 750 car parking spaces instead of the previous 1500 spaces. Our arguments against it still stand and we will reiterate them to the planners. A planning application came in at the end of the year which is still being considered for the development of Highridge Playing Fields with an improved and floodlit football pitch, new 'multi-use games areas', a new pavilion/changing rooms and new car parking. We haven't made final comments yet.

During the year, North Somerset Council carried out extensive consultations on a proposed link road between the A38, Bridgwater Road, and the A370, Long Ashton by-pass. We were concerned that a new road on the line of the former Avon Ring Road could increase pressure to build the link from the Cater Road roundabout to the A38. We supported the 'Orange Route', which was effectively a Barrow Gurney by-pass, which is the route which North Somerset eventually chose. However, the Government have refused to support this and the situation at present remains unclear. Although the City Council declared in 1998 that it no longer wanted to build the Ring Road from Cater Road to the A38, other people in the area believed that it was necessary for various reasons and made representations to that effect when the Bristol Local Plan was being revised. Those revisions are now open for final consultation and we have to comment before the end of March. Although the Bristol Transport Plan and the revised Structure Plan, which have been produced since the decision in 1998, have duly omitted the road line, the Bristol Local Plan has not followed

suit and talks about further studies being necessary. We think this is wrong in principle, and leads to the Local Plan being in conflict with the Structure Plan, which is not allowed under Planning Law. We will be opposing the revised Local Plan on these grounds. Other aspects of the revised Local Plan are welcome, such as improved designations for many of our green spaces.

Progress with Projects André Coutanche reported that this year, we planted more bulbs than ever before, on one site in Witherwood and one in Hartcliffe. As reported in the Treasurer's Report, we turned our cans into daffodils in two ways: via the money we get for the aluminium cans we sell for recycling; and via the points gained under the Alupro scheme which turned into vouchers which turned into daffodil bulbs from B&Q. This year, we also had money from a grant from the Greenworks project, for which we are grateful. Another popular annual event is our Amphibious Garbage Raid on the Malago in Manor Woods. This year we again removed an impressive pile of junk which was taken away courtesy of our good friend Steve Sparks at Bristol City Council. Our monthly strolls with the trolley continued, including a new site at Fulford Road which was truly disgusting. We sent e-mails to the local councillors about this and got a response from them and from a Council official. Anton as Garbage (and Can) Collector-in-Chief recently produced a comprehensive list of grot spots throughout south-west Bristol which we have sent to the 'Bristol Clean and Green' Campaign at the *Evening Post*. We must say a big 'thank you' to everyone who collects cans for us, and to Marie Jo who does the sorting into steel and aluminium.

Much of our 'project' work is centred on Manor Woods. The Management Plan which was produced by Warren Doe was presented to us at a joint meeting with the Bedminster Down and Uplands Society by Richard Ennion of the City Council. There were only a couple of changes which we wanted in the plan, which Richard readily agreed, so we now have a good way forward. The money to make the plan possible is something still to be achieved, probably through grants applied for by us and by the City Council. We hope that we won't have to say next year that we again cleared the path along the Malago from the Dam to the Interceptor. Very positively, 2002 was the year when many of us actually saw the previously fabled kingfishers along the Malago.

M.V.C.G. has continued to be involved with other organisations. Two of the main ones are the Dundry Hill Group and the Hartcliffe and Witherwood Community Partnership, who run the SRB5 scheme. Following the ending of funding for the full-time Project Officer, the Dundry Hill Group is dormant, with the hope that a new application for a part-time Project Officer might be made in the future.

On the publicity front, we have published our usual bimonthly newsletters, and our website has been kept up-to-date.

LIS PIBWORTH

BE A GREEN FRIEND

THE NEW 'Friends' of the Hartcliffe Millennium Green Group have recently cleared the children's play area of brambles and brushwood, and removed graffiti to allow safer play in the area.

They have also laid four areas of mosaics which were made by local schoolchildren in the rockery area. The rockery garden has also been laid with tarmac to allow access by disabled and wheelchair users.

There is a Fun Day taking place on 10 May at 12.00am with all the usual attractions - all are welcome.

The 'Friends' are always looking for new helpers and/or donations of seeds and plants. Should you have any items, please contact Richard or Tania on 0117 377 6209.

DON AND MARGARET BARTLETT

A SPRING STROLL IN MANOR WOODS

IT IS always exciting to see the first wild flowers - a patch a white violets along the main path; blackthorn bushes turning white; the pink flower of the butterbur appearing before the giant rhubarb-like leaves start to grow.

On a nice sunny afternoon in mid-March we saw a pair of small ducks on the pond which were differently marked from the familiar mallard. After looking them up in our bird books we thought they were teal. Has anyone else seen them?

However, we also saw some serious pollution in the Malago - not only was the water grey, but there was white foam where it went over the weirs. This prompted a phone call to the Environment Agency's hotline on 0800 807060, where a real-live human rather than a voice-mail system answered and promised a call-back - which duly came. Whenever you see pollution, don't hesitate to use this free number.



Lola's drawing of butterbur from 'My Manor Woods Book'

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

WHAT PLANET ARE GARBAGE RAIDERS FROM?

TWO OF OUR MEMBERS decided to mount an impromptu garbage raid on the path from Ellfield Close to Highridge Playing Fields - a path which is in constant use by children and their parents going to and from Highridge Infant School and Bishopsworth Junior School.

A group of teenage girls from Bedminster Down School went past on their way home. We had the usual questions - 'What are you doing?' - 'Why?' - 'Are you paid for this?'. But there was an extra one this time - 'Are you from around here?'. Had we forgotten to hide the flying saucer? Were our antennae showing?

They all went away looking rather puzzled.

WELCOME BACK!

AS SOME of you know, Barbra Lakin (formerly Wharton) of CSV Environment will shortly be going on maternity leave. Many M.V.C.G. members have enjoyed Barbra's walks on Dundry in her previous role as Dundry Hill Group Project Officer. We wish her well and hope that Josh gets on with his new sibling.

CSV have appointed a temporary replacement for Barbra while she is away. We are delighted to welcome back ELEANOR DAVIS who took over from Barbra when she had Josh and then went on to run the very successful 'School Grounds' project before taking time off to work in Madagascar.

CONTRASTING STORIES

OUR COLLEAGUES in the Malago Society, the local history society for south-west Bristol, have recently published the final volume of Anton Bantock's magnum opus chronicling the history of the Smyth family of Ashton Court. *The Last Smyths of Ashton Court: Part 3 1900-1946* is available at £9.99 from Bishopsworth Library or directly from Marie Alliston (964 1629) or Marie Jo Coutanche (964 3106).

And 'Dundry Pioneers', the local history group in Hartcliffe and Withywood, have just published *At Home on the Slopes*, a history of Hartcliffe and Withywood. It is available at the Gatehouse Centre and at Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe libraries for £5.00.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP'S own events are shown by the **M** symbol. One more evening meeting (on the third Tuesday of each month) at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church), Bishopsworth, and then we will into the summer programme.

Tuesday 15 April: Hartwood Acres Steering Group, 2.30pm at the City of Bristol College. *Open meeting - all welcome.*

M Tuesday 15 April: *Packaging and the Environment* with JANE BICKERSTAFFE from 'INCPEN', the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment - see the box below.

M Monday 28 April: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at 3.45pm at the top of Crox Bottom, off the old slip road from Hengrove Way to the former Wills factory.

Saturday 10 May: *Fun Day* at Hartcliffe Millennium Green. Lots of attractions. Open from 12.00 noon.

M Monday 26 May: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at 3.45pm at Fulford Road.



INCPEN is a UK based non-profit organisation established in 1974 dedicated to:

- Analysing the environmental and social effects of packaging
- Creating a better understanding of the role of packaging. Minimising the environmental impact of packaging.

This will be an interesting evening, and, since Jane Bickerstaffe is coming from London especially to speak to us, we are very keen to provide her with a larger than usual audience. Please make a special effort to come along on 15 April. Invite your friends and neighbours and anyone you know who would be interested.

GEOFF CARGILL

The sudden death of Geoff Cargill has come as a great blow to all those who knew him and worked with him - and who therefore, such was the nature of the man, liked him.

Geoff died just two days after speaking at our A.G.M. It is good that our memory of him will be of his enthusiastic looking to the future, as he explained the ambitious plans for the development of the Queens Road site where the Boys Club now stands as a new centre for Withywood Church and for many other organisations and activities.

The service at Withywood Church on 28 February to celebrate Geoff's life was packed. Brian Pearce, former Vicar of Withywood, and Ann Sherratt between them gave the address, some of it, as Geoff would expect and wish, played for laughs. I couldn't suppress the thought that we could have networked for a fortnight after that service, such was the range of people there whose lives and work Geoff had touched. Geoff Cargill was a good friend to M.V.C.G., and to scores of other groups and individuals. He is literally irreplaceable - but what he worked for will go on.

APC

Malago Valley Conservation Group

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

Committee Members

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

Co-opted Committee Members

Tania Case, Valerie Gay, Paul Mizen, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Bernard Chalmers, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Ron Hodges, Colin Smith, Mary Sykes (*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; telephone 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.cjb.net; website www.mvcg.cjb.net.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

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