



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

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**A**S USUAL, a good chunk of the March *Newsletter* is the report from our A.G.M., which you can read starting on page 2. This is included both for the benefit of those unable to be there, and as a matter of record.

At the A.G.M., reference was made to some major planning applications which were 'imminent' - for Symes Avenue, for Hartcliffe Community Campus and for Hengrove Park. Well, they have now all appeared! So we will have our work cut out responding to these important schemes which will substantially change outer south Bristol. Please have a look at these plans yourself, and let both us and the City Council know what you think. As usual, the plans are available at the City Council's office at Brunel House, St Georges Road, in town, but the Symes Avenue plans can also be seen at the Gatehouse Centre and at Symes House. There will also be a website soon at [www.symesavenue.com](http://www.symesavenue.com).

The application for Hengrove Park can also be seen on the web, at [www.hengrovepark.com](http://www.hengrovepark.com). All the documents are there and can be downloaded (in PDF format) - but they're as bulky in cyberspace as the are in reality, so a broadband connection is needed, or at least an unmetered dial-up connection.

As many of you will have seen, work which was on hold at the former Esso Garage on Bishopsworth Road has now restarted, and we will be working with the Council to ensure the agreed landscaping scheme is implemented.

Another update - in a negative sort of way - from the A.G.M. concerns Highridge Playing Fields, where very little progress has been made towards the formation of a community sports trust, so there will be no development there for the foreseeable future.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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## REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

**A** NDRÉ COUTANCHE welcomed everyone to the meeting. He mentioned that he had been Chairman for ten years now, and that it would be time for a change next year. He asked members to consider taking on the Chairman's post; he would still remain active in other roles. Lola would also like people to consider taking on the job of Vice-chairman.

**Programme Report:** Lola Hardingham reported on all the activities which had been organised for members. Rhian Evans from Hartcliffe Health and Environment Group told us about her visit to the coffee growers in Nicaragua and the difference Fair Trade makes to their lives. We heard David Gillard, a local beekeeper and honey producer. The Malago Trek took place in May, at which we helped with stewarding. Barbra from CSV took us for a walk around Highridge Common and shared her extensive knowledge of plants with us. In June we joined with HHEAG to enjoy a conducted tour of Arnos Vale Cemetery and in July our own Angela James took us around the wildlife area of The Mounds, Hengrove. Mark Rooney of Spacemakers impressed us with his account of how a number of teenagers were motivated to improve their environment by designing a landscape scheme in Wilmot Park, Hartcliffe. In November our planned speaker was unable to come so we had a discussion on various matters of interest and then André and Marie Jo entertained us with an illustrated talk on Lundy Island. Also in November we held our popular 'Christmas at Home'; we again raised a useful sum. December saw our usual Christmas party and last month we returned to the subject of Arnos Vale Cemetery with a very interesting talk by Izaak Hudson of the architects who are working on the restoration of the buildings. Lola thanked everyone for their support and said that any suggestions for the programme will be very welcome.

**Planning Issues:** André Coutanche summarised some of the major planning issues dealt with during 2004. We ended 2003 with the planning application for two bungalows in the grounds of the Old Vicarage, and this was approved by the City Council's South & East Development Control Committee. It was subject to agreement on a landscaping scheme, and final agreement was reached recently. Both we and the Committee made clear that no further development on this site would be acceptable.

Still pending is the Park & Ride scheme on Bedminster Down. It's difficult to see how this will be taken forward, but we will respond if it ever is. Another item in the 'pending' tray is the development of Highridge Playing Fields - it's not clear when or if anything will happen.

On roads in our area, there was some development during 2004 - but only in the abstract, consultant sense. The 'Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study' has been looking at various ideas for roads. This has meant that the Ring Road from Cater Road roundabout to the A38 has remained in limbo, as has the A38-A37 link road which North Somerset Council wanted. Now the talk is of a road around the south of Bristol to link the M4 and A4 to the Airport. So far as we can see, its only virtue is that it might mean that the line on the map of the pre-war Ring Road becomes removed again.

Only one major application appeared during 2004 - for the new Church Centre on Queens Road to replace Withywood Church. We opposed it, not because we were against the principle - far from it - but because we believed the quality of the design was third rate. It received planning permission, but work can only start when further money has been raised.

The site of the former Esso petrol station on Bishopsworth Road had an interesting planning application for a block of flats. Permission was granted, subject to agreement on landscaping, then everything went quiet. Then work started, even though we had heard nothing about the landscaping. It turned out that the site had changed hands and the new owners had begun work when they shouldn't have. Things are now on hold again, and we await further news.

There was an application for 25-27 Highridge Road (the Marpets building) which was withdrawn in 2003 and which came back again in another form at the end of 2004. A suitable development here could be a good thing, especially if it helped to take forward our ideas for this part of Elm Tree Corner, but this isn't a suitable development. It's much too intensive, and we are opposing it.

The block at Bishopsworth Parade which includes the Indian restaurant has been an eyesore for some time, and we tackled the planning enforcement issues during 2004. Various planning permissions have been partially implemented but no landscaping has been done. Progress has been made on some health and safety issues and we are pursuing the landscaping with the City Council.

Finally, we had contact during 2004 with the City Council's Cycling Team about their scheme to widen the path through Crox Bottom for cyclists. We are all in favour of encouraging cycling, but we take a broader view of the environment than they were doing. We opposed what we saw as insensitive engineering work in an area which has major landscape and wildlife value in south Bristol. We weren't the only people to be against it; many other local groups and local residents were concerned - and several other departments in

the City Council. A compromise was reached, with the widening limited to half of what was intended, and work started on site a couple of weeks ago. We don't seek confrontation with the City Council, or anyone else, but it was impossible to have a sensible dialogue with some of the individuals involved. There is a silver lining - the work will include a barrier to keep out vehicles, and there are proposals to develop an interpretation scheme for this neglected area.

**Progress with Projects:** Marie Jo Coutanche reported on the Manor Woods Working Group which was formed in March 2004. It meets once a month and its objective is to improve the environment there, by liaising with the Council concerning the management and the facilities provided, making the place better known and organising working parties.

In April, we asked Julian Cox, the new Community Parks Manager, to meet us and we took him around Manor Woods as an introduction to the place and to tell him about M.V.C.G. Practical actions which have led to results include: the repair of the entrance feature on Vale Lane after it was broken by the contractors; the clearance in the autumn by the Council contractors of the path from the pond to the interceptor which M.V.C.G. cleared a few years ago; mini-garbage raids several times when there was a particular bad spot somewhere; the planting of wild flowers at the library entrance in May; a poster campaign during the summer holidays to sell more *My Manor Woods Books* and at the same time make the place better known. We sold the book at Headley Park Primary School one day after school. Before Christmas, two dog bins were finally installed, and an ordinary bin was put behind the library.

We have many other projects which we would like to achieve: getting the wood better managed, finishing the path there, having proper benches and picnic tables, having interpretation boards at the entrances, removing the silt from the pond, better rubbish collections etc. All these subjects have been discussed with Julian Cox but it all takes time and money. In the meantime, we do what we can, we tackle projects we can realise with the means we have and at the same time put constant gentle pressure on the authorities so that they know we will keep on. All ideas and help are welcome.

André reported on other projects during 2004. Garbage Raids continued as before on the last Monday of the month at 3.45pm. Various venues were tackled round BS13, from Manor Woods and Witherwood Park to Highridge Playing Fields and Symes Avenue. In one hour we usually collect a trolley load of litter. The annual amphibious garbage raid when we tackle the Malago in Manor Woods also happened. Everyone is always welcome!

One of the things we do on garbage raids is separate and save aluminium cans. We also collect cans from other sources and have a number of diligent

collectors, including some new ones in 2004. A big 'thank-you' to them. These are sorted by Marie Jo and sold - so an even bigger 'thank-you' to her! The money we raise from cans is roughly what we spend on buying daffodil bulbs, hence our slogan that we are turning cans into daffodils. In 2004 we planted on the triangle of grass at the top of King Georges Road, opposite Highridge Common. In a similar way, we can claim to be turning books into trees, since we have registered an account with the 'Book Barn' on Bath Road and we get a proportion of the sale price of all books taken there which quote our number. A project run by the can-recycling trade organisation in 2004 resulted in our being given three small trees which we have recently planted, two in Manor Woods and one to replace a dead tree on Highridge Common.

We started a new project jointly with CSV Environment helping St Pius X Primary School to improve their grounds and plant a wildlife-friendly garden for the pupils. We planted a willow sculpture which has been much appreciated, but further work has fallen by the wayside because the person running the Schools Ground Project at CSV Environment has moved on to other things. We retain our close links with Highridge Infant School, and helped with their recent massive tree planting.

Our long-standing ideas to improve Elm Tree Corner made no concrete progress during 2004. However, we have re-established contact with the City Council's Traffic Management people, and our interest here overlaps with that of the Highridge Forum, so it may be that progress will be made in 2005.

We have continued our bi-monthly newsletters, even though they sometimes appear a little late! They circulate widely to our members and to other organisations we work with, not least Bristol City Council. Our website is kept up to date with our Programme, though pressure of work has resulted in the newsletters on the website falling behind. If anyone would like to help with the website - or even take it over - we would be pleased to hear from them!

LIS PIBWORTH

## **WILD BS13**

A HERON flew past our bedroom window last week - what a surprise! It then did a U-turn to a neighbour's fish-filled pond. After much heckling from two crows, it took off and flew straight towards us, giving us a lovely view of its spotted breast and wingspan before clearing our roof. Believe me - a heron flying ten feet from your window is a VERY BIG BIRD!

ANGELA JAMES

## LOOKING AND LISTENING

**M**OVING AROUND BISHOPSWORTH over the past few weeks, I have overheard many folk commenting on how bright and cheerful various areas look now that the daffodils have appeared.

I have been glad (and quick) to inform them that this lovely sight was brought about by the stalwart work of our own M.V.C.G. who, by collecting, washing and selling thrown-out cans, had bought and planted bulbs in the autumn and brought about this lovely transformation.

Thank you for caring and bringing some beauty into our area to gladden the eyes and hearts of many this springtime. Carry on the good work - it is much appreciated!

MAVIS EDDY



*Left: Outside Bishopsworth Library*



*Above: Outside Chestnut Court*

*Left: In front of the 'Elm Tree'*



*Photos by Heaton Holographics*

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**S**PRING is here, and there's one more evening meeting at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth), then the great outdoors beckons! The **M** symbol shows our own events.

**M Monday 4 April:** *Garbage Raid*. Meet at the lower entrance to Kings Head Park (Vicarage Road) at 3.45pm (rearranged from 28 March to avoid Easter Monday).

**M Thursday 7 April:** *Wild flower planting* at the Library entrance to Manor Woods. Meet at 2.30pm with suitable clothes and gardening tools. See back page.

**M Tuesday 19 April:** *Plot to Plate*. SUE WALKER of Hartcliffe Health & Environment Action Group will tell us about the innovative 'Plot to Plate' project which supports food growing and consuming locally.

**M Monday 25 April:** *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 'The Willows' on Fouracres, Withywood, at 3.45pm.

**Sunday 15 May:** *Malago Trek 2005*. As in previous years, meet at ASDA carpark, Bedminster, at 10.00am if you want to do the whole walk, or join in anywhere along the route. Bring your own picnic to eat on Dundry at the Malago Spring artwork. Leaflets with more details will be available soon, at our meetings and in public places (or see last years if you kept it!).

**M Tuesday 31 May:** *A Wildlife Walk in Arnos Vale Cemetery* led by MARY WOOD. Meet at 6.30pm at the upper entrance (Cemetery Road) not the Bath Road main entrance. There is a charge of £3.00 per head to support the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust. If you need a lift, or can offer one, please phone Lola on 964 1116.

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

A BIG 'THANK YOU' to everyone who has renewed their subscription for 2005 - the great majority of members. And special thanks to those who kindly added a little extra - it's much appreciated.

If there is a membership form enclosed with this *Newsletter*, it's because we haven't received your renewal, so please fill it in and return it, along with your subscription, to either Beryl Heaton at 3 Kings Walk or André Coutanche at 14 Queens Road. THANK YOU!

## PLANTING WILD FLOWERS

**Y**OU MAY REMEMBER that in May last year, we planted some wild flowers at the entrance of Manor Woods, on the bank behind the library. In spite of the long period of drought which followed, quite a few have survived. So, this year, we want to do better.

**Come and join us on Thursday 7 April from 2.30pm!** If you have wild flowers you can spare, please bring them, or if you can't come, deliver them to 14 Queens Road. We will start by clearing the few brambles and some of the ivy before planting the flowers. If you can, bring some tools (secateurs, trowels). We shall provide gloves.

We hope that once Manor Woods is a Local Nature Reserve, this entrance can be improved. We will carry on putting pressure on the Council authorities to make it happen. In the meantime, we hope our action will bring some pleasure to people.

MANOR WOODS GROUP

### 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, Mavis Palmer

#### Co-opted Committee Members

Tania Case, Valerie Gay, Paul Mizen, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Ron Hodges, Helen Holland, Colin Smith, 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.