



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 73
spring
2007

ELECTIONS, PAST AND FUTURE, are one theme for this edition. At our A.G.M. on 20 February, I stood down as Chairman of M.V.C.G. I am now Vice-Chairman, and Lola Hardingham, who previously held this post, has taken a well-deserved retirement - but not from the Committee, where she remains *de facto* Programme Secretary (and would welcome some help - hint, hint).

So now we will have an 'acting chairman', and who it will be will depend on the event and the circumstances. As Vice-Chairman, it will sometimes be me, but not automatically, and not always - and I will step down as Vice-Chairman next year. So we really do need someone to come forward. As I have said before, the Chairman's role is not particularly onerous, and there are many talented and hard-working people on the Committee to support whoever it will be. So please consider getting involved.

The report from the A.G.M. starts on page 5, and this edition has been extended to twelve pages in order to include it and the annual accounts.

The future elections will be the City Council ballot on 3 May. In each of the three wards in our area - Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park - one of the two councillors is retiring. Until nominations close on 4 April we won't know who is standing, but I think it is safe to say that all the sitting councillors will be seeking re-election.

I urge you to take an interest in these elections too. It *isn't* the case, as cynical and lazy thinking claims, that local councils don't matter. And please don't think in party political terms either. There are many vital local issues - the South Bristol Ring Road is just one - where opinion is divided within parties.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY

SPRING has arrived and some of us will look forward to pleasant walks in our favourite open space. In our December *Newsletter* we reported about the grant of £12,650 we received from Yansec. With some of this money, coppicing along the Malago from Bishopsworth Library to the pond is happening as we go to press, weather permitting. The main bulk of the grant is to be used to repair and upgrade the path through the woodland. Several M.V.C.G. members went for a walk through the wood in January with employees from the Parks Department and contractors to discuss the plan. Unfortunately, some difficulties have occurred between the contractors and the Parks Department. We hope they will be sorted out soon so that the work can go ahead without too much delay.

Our Local Nature Reserves Officer, Sally Oldfield, came to speak to us at the A.G.M. and told us that Manor Woods Valley would officially become a Local Nature Reserve very soon, together with other open spaces in Bristol. A big THANK YOU to Sally as we all know she has worked very hard to make things move forward.

The Manor Woods Valley working group met Julian Cox, our Community Parks Manager, in February to discuss improvements in Manor Woods Valley. We are optimistic about getting entrance signs this year and will keep our fingers crossed.

We continue to monitor litter. We have had several ‘impromptu’ garbage raids, particularly along the entrance paths. As we do not think that they are often cleaned by the contractors we regularly report this to Julian, and all members are encouraged to let him know about garbage black-spots in any of our parks. His telephone number is 922 2057 and his e-mail address is julian.cox@bristol.gov.uk.

Finally, a small group of us spent an hour a few weeks ago removing brambles on the bank at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. The primroses we planted are in bloom.

There is going to be a number of events in Manor Woods Valley this spring and summer, one particularly for children during the May half-term. See the programme on page 11. Come along, and tell your friends!

The Manor Woods Valley Group meets once every four or five weeks on a Wednesday at 2.00pm at 14 Queens Road. It would be lovely to have new people joining us as we could do so much more. So if you'd like to come

along, phone Marie Jo on 964 3106 and come to one of our meetings before making up your mind. If you have anything to report or suggest, do not hesitate to contact Marie Jo, Angela, Lis, Marian or Mavis.

MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

PLANNING MATTERS

THERE ARE two developments in the offing which many people locally have heard about - though neither of them is actually a planning application yet.

Brunelcare have been consulting widely about their plans for a VERY SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME at Queens Road, Withywood, on a site which runs from opposite the bottom of King Georges Road back to the grounds of the former Redhouse School. M.V.C.G. is in favour of the principle, and we like what we have seen so far of the proposed design. Many local people have also expressed support, some going as far as to put their names down for places! If the planning application comes in looking like the drawings we have seen, we shall be supporting it, our only suggestion being to take advantage of the public access to the front of the site to create a footpath off through the allotments to make a pedestrian route from Queens Road to Whitchurch Lane which avoids the noise and dirt of the main roads. The potential problem here is the proposed South Bristol Ring Road, whose 'reserved' line is adjacent to the site. Landscaping and noise insulation can prevent a road being a problem for the residents of the scheme, but the transport department seem not to know exactly what the requirements of the road will be. Many people will be very cross if this scheme is blighted by the uncertainty of the Ring Road.

Lidl seem to have put flyers through doors over a wide area to announce their plans to build a SUPERMARKET on the former Jewson's site on Hartcliffe Way. We will consider the plans when they arrive, but the main concerns will be the implications for traffic and for the Morrison's supermarket, now well under way at Symes Avenue.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

- Both Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe Libraries are currently in temporary premises while building work takes place. At Bishopsworth, at our suggestion, the redundant and ugly posts have been removed from outside. Our thanks to Cllr Kevin Quartley who helped to bring this about!

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2006

HERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS which Beryl Heaton presented to the A.G.M. on 20 February. She explained that the jump in income was because we had ‘inherited’ the funds of Dundry Hill Group when it was wound up. We also incurred some spending obligations from the DHG money, and, when these were removed, the accounts showed the usual modest surplus on our normal activities. We have now opened an interest-bearing account.

| Income | £ | Expenditure | £ |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Membership | 308.00 | Postage & Stationery | 16.00 |
| Functions | 71.65 | Refreshments at AGM | 26.17 |
| Other Income | 5551.71 | Hall Hire | 140.00 |
| | | Printing | 81.20 |
| | | Speakers fees/donations/Expenses | 94.64 |
| | | Christmas Meeting | 22.00 |
| | | Donation to Dundry Hall | 150.00 |
| | | Repairs to Malago Spring artwork | 494.68 |
| | | Fence Materials, Plants MWV . | 138.75 |
| | | Insurance | 132.00 |
| Total | 5931.36 | Total | 1295.44 |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| | £ |
| Excess of income over expenditure | 4635.92 |
| Brought forward from 2005 | 1194.19 |
| Balance carried forward to 2007 | 5830.11 |

Made up of:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Cash in hand | 23.75 |
| HSBC Money Manager A/C | 5052.14 |
| HSBC Current A/C | 754.22 |

| Detail of Other Income | £ | Detail of Function Income | £ |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Dundry Hill Group Funds | 5215.18 | Open Gardens | 15.50 |
| Donations | 14.76 | Christmas Party | 20.75 |
| Sale of Aluminium cans | 61.50 | Refreshments | 12.00 |
| Book Sales | 207.66 | Sale of plants | 19.00 |
| Finds | 0.22 | Sale of Goods | 4.40 |
| Bank Interest | 52.39 | | <u>71.65</u> |
| | <u>5551.71</u> | | |

BERYL HEATON
Hon. Treasurer

REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

A NDRÉ COUTANCHE welcomed everyone to the meeting. The evening followed the usual format, with reports on our various activities during 2006 given by the appropriate person, followed by our special guest speaker, Sally Oldfield giving us an update on Manor Woods Valley and the other local nature reserves in Bristol.

Programme Report: Lola Hardingham said that at the last A.G.M. Peter Milner talked about plans for Crox Bottom and in March Becky Heaton made a return visit to talk about Renewable Energy. April brought John Tully, the bird man, who gave a very informative demonstration of different bird songs in preparation for the Dawn Chorus walk later in the month - both events were well attended.

The Malago Trek took place in May, and once again the weather was wonderful! Sally organised a walk in June through Manor Woods Valley for M.V.C.G. members and other Nature Reserve groups - the various groups are co-operating well by attending each others events.

The Celebration event was held on 15 July and was well attended - good to see lots of family groups - and the weather was good! There were various stalls and a storyteller - a very pleasant afternoon.

In September there was a conducted tour of the old Brunel station at Temple Meads, which was fascinating. In October we resumed our talks when Verity Hyldon of the Energy in Action Team gave us lots of information and advice on how to conserve energy.

We fielded two teams at the Bishopsworth Quiz - we did honourably, but were glad not to win! There was no 'Christmas at Home' this year; we felt it was time for a change and are planning a Spring Event instead. There will be a plant stall, so please think ahead and think about any contributions and lucky dip prizes are always welcome.

A full programme of events is being organised by the Manor Woods Valley Group for the summer season, and these will be advertised in the Newsletters. Thank you to all those who have helped during the year and thanks for supporting our efforts.

Planning Issues: André Coutanche reported on some of the major applications which happened or were still outstanding during 2006, starting, as last year, with the Old Vicarage, Bishopsworth. The situation there is certainly not satisfactory, but we *may* be nearing the end game. The owners' appeal against refusal of their application to build a further two bungalows in the grounds was

dismissed, and the City Council are now taking action to get the long-overdue landscaping scheme implemented.

The second item from last year, still going nowhere, is Highridge Playing Fields. We requested the planners to investigate enforcement action against the shambles that is the Football Club premises, but the response was that some of it had planning permission and the rest had been there for long enough not to need permission.

The last development to report on in Bishopsworth 'village' is what is now called 'Valley Heights' - the former Esso petrol station on Bishopsworth Road, now almost finished. We have a couple of queries about some details, especially the landscaping as it relates to Manor Woods Valley, which we are taking up with the Planners.

The major schemes in BS13 all made progress during the year. The new Withywood Centre was almost finished by the end of 2006 and is now open, though problems are still being sorted out. Symes Avenue is well under way, and the exciting development of the former Wills Office at Crox Bottom has started. The new Bedminster Down school is there, and the other major school proposal, the Withywood Academy, received planning permission in 2006. Progress has been slower at the Hartcliffe Community Campus and at Hengrove Park.

A significant new planning application this year was by Wrings for a stone-crushing plant next to their yard off Vale Lane. The land concerned is part of the 'quarries' area of Manor Woods Valley, but it is administered not by Parks but by the City Council's Property people, since it has a planning designation for industrial use. However, it *also* has the same designation as the rest of Manor Woods Valley as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, so there is a bit of a paradox here! We opposed the application because of its effect on the soon-to-be Local Nature Reserve and its disturbance of both wildlife and people. It's still pending, but we understand that the problems it would cause because of noise pollution to the surrounding homes are insurmountable.

Last autumn, the toilet block next to the 'Elm Tree' on Highridge Road was demolished. We had no objection in principle, but we had considered this area as part of our proposals for 'Elm Tree Corner' and we had positive ideas for what could be done here. We had expected that demolition would be preceded by a planning application for consent to demolish in the Conservation Area, and we would then have responded to the application by putting forward our ideas. But there was no application, which was surprising, to put it mildly, because the owner and demolisher was the City Council - Neighbourhood and Housing Services Department. The story as we have it so far is that N.H.S.

didn't know their toilet block was in a conservation area - a conservation area which had been in place for eight years. The Christmas holidays and pressure of other work has meant that we haven't followed this up as we should have done, but we will try to establish contact and get something positive out of it.

The other issue is one which started over two years ago and is nowhere near concluded - 1-4 The Parade, Bishopsworth, a.k.a. the Matties Block, opposite St Peter's Church, in the heart of the Conservation Area. We've told the story in the *Newsletter* as it evolved; most recently, the City Council issued an Enforcement Notice instructing the owner to remove the fence and railings which he had erected without planning permission. His response was simultaneously to apply for retrospective planning permission and to appeal against enforcement. The planning application was refused, as we requested and as we expected, and the latest news - in a letter dated 15 February - is that the Planning Inspector has dismissed his appeal. This is, of course, what we asked for, so we are pleased. What will happen next, and whether this apparently stupid owner will ever behave rationally, remains to be seen. There is also a unsightly part of this area which is owned separately, the patch of brambles next to the fitness centre. Pressurised by us, the Council have been trying to contact the owner so that he can be persuaded to clear it up. We recently heard that they had found out who and where he was, so we are hopeful. Thanks are due to Marie Jo who has pursued this issue - and will continue to pursue it - with polite but dogged determination.

Projects: Marie Jo Coutanche, Convenor of the Manor Woods Valley working group, reported on that, along with our other project work.

Our fete on 15 July was mainly aimed at children. It was very successful with a variety of activities to entertain but also to encourage parents and children to use MWV again. Thank you to Sally Oldfield, our Local Nature Reserves Officer for her help in organising it!

In September and October 'Booted Up Bristol' took place again in Manor Woods Valley. It is this project which brings primary school children to several green spaces to help them discover various aspects of their environment. Six local schools took part this year and half a dozen of our members helped, some of them on several days. We always feel that this project is most valuable. Thank you to Living Rivers for organising it!

The main project this summer took place at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library to carry on improving the site. Thanks to Tony and Angela James, whose idea it was, we cleaned and painted the railings in a nice green. It could not have been done without the group of volunteers who turned up to help. In the autumn, we planted *Rosa rugosa*. It was hard work but great fun as well.

We hope that 2007 will be the year when Manor Woods Valley gets sign boards at the entrances. We have asked the Parks Department every year but their limited budget has not allowed it yet. It sounds more hopeful this year. However last year we managed to get one picnic table with benches.

We organised several 'impromptu' garbage raids, mainly targeting the paths from Valley Road and Bishopsworth Road. It does not seem they are cleaned regularly in spite of conversations about it with Julian, our Community Park Manager. Contractors are usually blamed.

As we do every year, we monitored grass cutting. It all went quite well this year. We were pleased with the few modifications in the mowing regime which were introduced following a meeting we had in the autumn 2005. The meadow on the slopes was beautiful with more orchids than ever. The 'MVCG' path from pond to interceptor was cleared regularly by the contractors and seems to be more used. Also most patches of Japanese knotweed were treated to eradicate them. It was particularly successful on areas where we did some bashing and clearing before the treatment.

Before Christmas we wrote to all the local schools who had taken part in Booted Up Bristol to promote *My Manor Woods* book. We particularly asked if we could have a stall at their Christmas Fair. This was a failure. Only one responded, Bishopsworth Junior, but we did not sell a single book.

Manor Woods Valley was approved for designation as a Local Nature Reserve two years ago but the official designation has not happened yet as some negotiations between different services in the Council were necessary before it could happen. We trust it should happen soon.

We have been more involved this year in the Bristol Parks Forum. Mary Sykes had been attending meetings when she could, but now there are usually three or so of us at the quarterly meetings. It's always useful for making contacts, and we are seen there as *the* support group for Manor Woods Valley - though, of course, we are concerned with all the open spaces in BS13.

In spring 2006 we applied for a grant to do some work in the wood. With help from Sally we applied to YANSEC, the landfill company. In the autumn we heard we had been granted £12,650. The large majority will be spent on creating a path through the wood or rather carry on with the one started a few years ago. The rest will be spent on pruning/removing branches along the stream and putting up signposts to the new path.

On our other projects, we changed our system of Garbage Raids during 2006. We ran our regular monthly litter clearances at various locations until the end

of August and then switched to *ad hoc* attacks on black spots. As already mentioned, many of these were in Manor Woods Valley. And the annual Amphibious Garbage Raid continues, providing an excuse to go paddling along the Malago in Manor Woods Valley.

A more respectable way of seeing the Malago - and the Pigeonhouse - is the Malago Trek, which we again helped to organise in 2006. This is a joint effort with Living Rivers and the Southville Centre and is much appreciated by the people who come exploring.

For many years we have planted daffodil bulbs in public spaces throughout BS13 - and the old-established ones like at the 'Elm Tree' and by Bishopsworth Library are showing nicely now. We didn't plant any bulbs in 2006, partly because of a mix-up over the ordering, and also because we thought we'd give it a rest for a year. If anyone has any ideas for where daffs could be planted please let us know.

Our long-term hopes for Elm Tree Corner took a good step forward in early 2006 with the establishment of a zebra crossing. Our remaining ideas involve more expense - remodelling of lay-bys etc. - and we will pursue these as opportunities come up.

One project which is always with us is can recycling. We raised over £60 from the sale of aluminium cans in 2006. This is only half the story - the steel cans are also recycled, though not for money. A big 'Thank You' to everyone who helps by bringing us their empty cans.

Another form of recycling which can help our funds is via the Book Barn on the Bath Road. If you have books which you no longer want, take them there for resale and quote our account number - 9845. When the books are sold, we will be credited with a portion of the sale value. Our account there currently stands at a modest but useful £18.92.

Finally, two items to do with publications. We changed the arrangements for our *Newsletter* towards the end of 2006. It is now quarterly rather than two-monthly, but it still contains a wide range of reports, and excellent photos from Beryl and Danny and from Angela. Please let us know any ideas for stories, especially your observations for our 'Wild BS13' slot. And a small group started to consider how our membership leaflet could be revamped to make it more attractive for potential members. If you would like to be involved, or have any ideas, please get in touch!

LIS PIBWORTH
Hon. Secretary



GARDEN PARTY

You may remember that our 2006 Autumn *Newsletter* told you that we would have an event in the spring to replace our traditional 'Christmas at Home' and give our members and friends an opportunity to meet while raising funds for M.V.C.G. One of our committee members, Paul Mizen, has very kindly offered his garden as venue. So, please write it in your diary straight away:

**Saturday 19 May from 2.00 to 5.00pm
at 73 Bridgwater Road**

Come and enjoy a cream tea, browse the stalls and chat to friends.

If you wish to contribute to the Plants Stall and the Bring and Buy (small things preferably!) it will be very welcome. Angela (4 Perrycroft Road; phone 935 9003) or Marie Jo (14 Queens Road; phone 964 3106) will be pleased to receive your contributions in the week leading to the event.

- **A LITTLE REMINDER:** Have you renewed your membership of M.V.C.G. for 2007? Most members have - thank you! But if there's a renewal form included with this *Newsletter*, it means we're waiting to hear from you ...

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

THE LAST *Newsletter* had 20 March as a date for your diary for our next regular meeting, but no details - now see below, especially the gardeners! We also have a splendid outdoor programme in Manor Woods Valley, thanks to Sally Oldfield. The **M** symbol shows our own events - all welcome!

M Tuesday 20 March: JONATHAN HOLT will give us an illustrated talk about the work of the *Avon Gardens Trust*. 7.30pm in St Peter's Rooms, at the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth.

Sunday 1 April: *New Cut Trek*, starting at 10.00am at Gaol Ferry Bridge (Coronation Road side). Finish approx. 12 noon at the CREATE Centre, where there will be extra activities.

Wednesday 11 April: A *gentle walk in Manor Woods Valley*, starting at 11.00am, led by KATE COOKE, Withywood Sports Centre. Please book with her on 964 0504 or kate.cooke@bristol.gov.uk.

M Tuesday 17 April: Our speaker at St Peter's Rooms at 7.30pm is ADRIAN ROPER of Sustrans. Sustrans is a national body based in Bristol who are perhaps best known for building the National Cycle Network, more than ten years old and over 10,000 miles long.

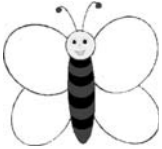
Tuesday 15 May: Join tree expert TONY TITCHEN as he introduces us to the trees of Manor Woods. Meet at 6.30pm at the Bishopsworth Library entrance.

M Saturday 19 May: *Garden Party* from 2.00-5.00pm at 73 Bridgwater Road. See opposite page!

Thursday 31 May: An afternoon of MINIBEAST MAGIC in Manor Woods Valley. A family fun event from 2.00 to 4.00pm, organised by Sally Oldfield in partnership with our good friends in CSV Environment. See the back page!

M Tuesday 12 June: A *visit to Elm Farm, Burnett*. Elm Farm is a working farm which is committed to conservation and is a member of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. We will hear about the history of the farm, and its birds. Meet at the Farm at 6.30pm. The Farm has its own website at www.elm-farm.com, which includes a map of how to find them. If you need a map, or if you would like or can offer a lift, please contact André on 964 3106.

- Future events in August will include the *Malago Trek* on 5 August and a *Bat Walk* in Manor Woods Valley on 21 August - more details next time!



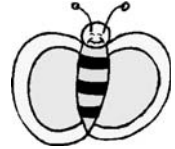
MINIBEAST MAGIC

A FAMILY FUN EVENT DURING HALF-TERM

* **Thursday 31 May, 2.00-4.00pm** *

Take part in minibeast hunting,
stream dipping, mask making
and more!

Organised by Bristol City Council Nature in the City
Project in partnership with CSV Environment,
part funded by the Liveability Fund



Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman

VACANCY

Vice-Chairman

André Coutanche

964 3106

Hon. Secretary

Lis Pibworth

939 0698

Hon. Treasurer

Beryl Heaton

964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Lola Hardingham, Paul Harvey-Worsley,
Paul Mizen, Mavis Palmer

Co-opted Committee Members

Valerie Gay, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, Kirsty Wilson, Cllrs Mark Brain,
Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Helen Holland, Tim Kent,
Kevin Quartley, 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.