



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

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**A** **NOTHER** packed *Newsletter*, which means that I shall squeeze in some planning updates here. The latest news - and it's good news - is that Brunelcare have now formally received planning permission for the development of Very Sheltered Housing on Queens Road (the 'Redhouse' site).

The other planning updates are to do with enforcement rather than new applications. I've always said that without effective enforcement of planning permissions - seeing that what's built is what was actually agreed - then the whole development control system is an elaborate bluff. There are some good people in the Council's enforcement team, but they can't monitor every development in the city, and often the only way they know that something is amiss is when someone tells them. M.V.C.G. can take credit for two satisfactory results on this front.

At VALLEY HEIGHTS (the former Esso garage on Bishopsworth Road), we pointed out that the wall had been built without gaps for railing panels, which had been shown in the drawings. Fortunately, this didn't become an enforcement issue, because when the planners contacted the developers they responded correctly, and the much improved wall is now in place.

At THE PARADE, BISHOPSWORTH (Matties block), on the other hand, our report that the agreed landscaping hadn't been done was met by the owner with prevarication, obstruction and downright stupidity. When the Council's enforcement team took it up, it inevitably became a legal matter, and therefore took some time. I'm pleased to report that justice was eventually done and the owner (now the previous owner) has been fined £5000 plus costs for failing to comply with planning requirements. As we reported last time, there is now a new owner, and we look forward to progress here.

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

|                              |        |
|------------------------------|--------|
| News from the Valley . . .   | Page 2 |
| A Midnight Visitor . . . . . | Page 3 |
| Parks Forum Conference .     | Page 4 |
| A.G.M. and Birthday Party .  | Page 6 |
| The Programme . . . . .      | Page 7 |
| Bulbs in Square Holes . . .  | Page 8 |

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

## NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY

**A** GROUP of more than 40 people came from all over Bristol for the Fungi Foray on Sunday 21 October. Many of them remarked on how beautiful Manor Woods Valley was and said they would return. A shame there were not more M.V.C.G. members. We hope you were not turned down as these events have become very popular. Many thanks to Sally Oldfield for her excellent organisation and publicity!



*Was it an  
Amethyst  
Deceiver, a  
Turkeytail or  
King Alfred's  
cakes?*

Our expert Justin Smith was an excellent teacher, bringing sound knowledge and mixing it with humour on what is a rather difficult subject. He carried on a survey which he has now sent us. If anybody would like a copy we will be pleased to send it to you.

We have now obtained a copy of the landscaping plan for the rear of the 'Valley Heights' development of flats in Bishopsworth Road. After a meeting on site we sent our comments to Julian Cox, our Community Park Manager, who has passed them to the relevant person in the Planning Department. We will be able to monitor the work when it starts.

Our only picnic table was badly burnt a few weeks ago. We reported it immediately and it has now been refurbished by the Council's contractors - well done for the quick response!

One of our members noticed some offensive graffiti on two benches. She reported it to the appropriate service in the Council (telephone number: 0117 922 3838) and it was removed within a few days.

If you happen to live near Manor Woods Valley or walk through regularly do not hesitate to inform the Police if you see anything suspicious or notice vandalism. They may not do anything straight away but your report will make them more aware of problems and will become part of their data. The non-emergency telephone number is 0845 4567000.

To end with good news: the new sign posts at each end of the woodland path have now been put up. We think they look very smart.

If you have any comments, any ideas on how we can improve Manor Woods Valley do let us know.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE GROUP

P.S. And another successful event organised by Sally was the excellent **Owl Prowl** on 22 November. 70+ people - and Jaz, the tawny owl!

## A MIDNIGHT VISITOR

**O**NE NIGHT in early October I was awakened by the noise of a cat yowling. Thinking that our cat Topsy was objecting to another cat coming into the house through the back door flap (which lost its flap long since) I got up to investigate.

Switching on a light, I saw Topsy crouching in the passage, looking into the sitting room. I went to the door and there calmly standing on the arm of the sofa, gazing at me was - a beautiful healthy-looking, young fox! I quickly scooped up Topsy and shut her in the bedroom out of harm's way and opened the nearby front door in the hope that our visitor would make good his escape. However, by this time he had settled comfortably on the floor under the window.

I then roused my husband (with some difficulty as he is extremely deaf) and said 'There's a fox in the sitting room'. He was of course astonished but bravely approached the fox and said 'Hello there old son' at which the fox fled - back through the kitchen and out through the cat-flap.

I can recommend a fox as a house guest, although the strong musty odour he left behind had, thankfully, gone by the morning.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

## BRISTOL PARKS FORUM CONFERENCE

**T**HIS MEETING at the Gloucestershire Cricket Club on 15 September was attended by about 60 people from local volunteer groups, Friends of various parks and green spaces and officers from Bristol City Council. It was a very friendly gathering because nearly everyone was concerned about their own local green space and its future. Len Croney began the talks by saying how important parks were to any community and how much effort was required to keep them open. Through his long working connection with various leisure, amenity and council bodies he stressed it was important that information was shared and that basic plans were agreed upon.

The next speaker was Peter Wilkinson, Head of Bristol Parks, who has often visited the Malago Valley. He was given the tough task of explaining a 20 year plan for which funding of £87 million was sought. He explained that this would come from Bristol City Council, the Lottery and monies from developers who would be expected to contribute on completion of new housing. Although the fund seemed large, to me anyway it appears impossible to rely on such sources as a Lottery or the E.U. so far into the future. Peter carefully explained that houses built to look out on green space were more valuable than those which backed onto open ground, where security could be more problematical. This could encourage new developments to be built round greens created within them. He did say that some odd parcels of land, as yet to be designated, could be sold to provide a small proportion of this £87 million in future. As well as regular maintenance, the money would also expand and replace equipment and ensure best practice was followed in the management of all Bristol's parks. Peter explained that various sorts of outdoor facilities should be within a short time of walking rather than a specific distance of everyone. Young children, wild areas, sports fields and facilities, play equipment and natural materials, seats and so on were included in this strategy. He stated that what any area actually had depended on the nature of the park, its location near railways for example, or flatness. A lot of this material is shown in the 'Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy' discussion document, available from Bristol City Council. This looks very good on paper, but it is a long time to spread future developments over, in a world which is going through its own transformations, which may well affect the use of space!

Just before lunch a representative of Friends of South Purdown vividly expressed her fears for this area of Bristol's gateway from the M4 and M32 as a school wanted to take down an ancient lime tree and flatten the top of the

hill for a sports field. Although there was no planning permission for any such radical change, the Head of the school was determined to move forward. Perhaps letters or e-mails of support would strengthen their case for leaving this natural area alone.

During an excellent lunch we had time to mingle and exchange ideas about our local park. A slide show including pictures of Manor Woods Valley and its proposed Local Nature Reserve were repeated on a big screen.

Later, another presentation about the funding and nature of future planning in parks was introduced. There was some debate about the sale of land to developers and the amount they were expected to contribute to the overall strategy. Some of the detail of this is still very much in the air. Many people had things they wanted to discuss but time, as ever, was against them. A new Chair of the Forum was voted in and other existing officers have changed places. This election took only minutes!

The final very brief presentation concerned trees in the street. Most of the delegates wanted more, but there appeared to be a gap in the thinking of the Highways Department who took down damaged trees, or those thought to be dangerous, and who did little to replace these with new specimens. The Parks Department were encouraged to liaise with Highways and find places for new and cared for trees of relevant native species to be installed where ever possible.

I am sure there will be detailed minutes of this very interesting meeting available from the Forum. It was a worthwhile gathering to hear what sort of ideas were in the offing, and I encourage anyone who represents an open space to get along next year if they can.

MARIAN GREEN

We've had an e-mail from the People's Trust for Endangered Species, who are appealing to families and children of all ages to help with their new national survey on **moles**.

While this will provide much-needed information, it is also child friendly and easy to do. It would also give the children an opportunity to help British wildlife and perhaps develop an appreciation of nature conservation. More details at their website at [www.ptes.org](http://www.ptes.org).



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

**T**HE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 19 February at St Peter's Rooms, Church Road, Bishopsworth, starting at 7.30pm. The Officers and Committee members retire each year but are eligible for re-election. The names of the current Officers and Committee members appear on the back page.

According to the M.V.C.G. constitution, nominations for either Officers or Committee members should be made in writing at least 14 days before the A.G.M. They must be supported by a seconder and the consent of the nominee must first have been obtained. Nominations can be made to the Hon. Secretary, Lis Pibworth, at 31 Vicarage Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8ER or to the Vice-Chairman, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone numbers and e-mail addresses on the back page).

However, anyone thinking of volunteering to join the Committee should not be put off by these formal requirements. If you think you may be interested, please contact any existing Committee member for an informal chat. New members are always welcome! We are currently operating without a Chairman, so nominations are particularly required for this post.

The formal A.G.M. business will include a report-back to members on the year's events, and this will be followed by a guest speaker who will update us on a topic of current interest.

As usual, we will finish with wine/orange juice and cheese/other nibbles to celebrate our birthday. All members and friends of M.V.C.G. are invited to come to our birthday party.

LIS PIBWORTH  
*Hon. Secretary*

M.V.C.G. has in past years made ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS for any new development completed during the year which has enhanced the public face of BS13. This can be a new building, a restoration or a good new use of an old building, or a positive improvement in a public open space. If you can think of anything completed in 2007 which deserves recognition, please let André know (contact details on the back page).

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**C**HRISTMAS is coming, so don't forget our Party on 18 December. As usual, the **M** symbol shows our own events and we are always happy to list other events which will interest our members.

**M Tuesday 18 December:** Our predictably unpredictable *Christmas Party*, with the traditional American Supper, so please bring a little something if you can. PLEASE NOTE THE LATER STARTING TIME OF 7.45pm. LESLEY HURFORD will be with us, inspiring us to do something creative!

**M Saturday 12 January:** *Garbage Raid* in Manor Woods Valley, to get it (and you!) off to a healthy New Year. Just for an hour, from 10.00 to 11.00 am. We'll meet at the top of the path from Valley Road and finish at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Bags and gloves provided.

**M Tuesday 15 January:** MARTIN FORD, a *Britain in Bloom* judge, will tell us about the competition which encourages environmental improvement.

**M Tuesday 19 February:** Our *Annual General Meeting and Birthday Party*. See the formal notice, opposite.

**M Tuesday 18 March:** HELEN HOLLAND, Leader of Bristol City Council and Bristol's representative on the South West Regional Assembly and the West of England Partnership, will explain to us how these bodies work and how they affect us.

MEMBERSHIP of Malago Valley Conservation Group runs on a calendar year basis, so the approach of the New Year means that it's time to renew your subscription. If you joined in the last few months of 2007, then your membership runs through to the end of 2008; otherwise you should find enclosed a membership renewal form (unless you are receiving a complimentary copy of the *Newsletter*).

Please bring the completed form and your sub. to the Christmas Party, or to any other meeting, or send it to either Beryl Heaton (3 Kings Walk) or André Coutanche (14 Queens Road). *Thank you!*



## ROUND BULBS IN SQUARE HOLES

Our annual daff-planting went with its usual swing on 13 October. When the pipe-laying for Bristol Water disturbed the bulbs we had planted opposite Highridge Common, Paul Mizen approached the contractors, Costain, and they kindly provided replacements. Our thanks to them (and to Paul) - and also to Sharon for providing welcome tea and coffee!

When we see in the spring what remains of the first lot, we may reinforce them on a future dig.

### Malago Valley Conservation Group

|                       |                 |          |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|
| <b>Chairman</b>       | <i>VACANCY</i>  |          |
| <b>Vice-Chairman</b>  | André Coutanche | 964 3106 |
| <b>Hon. Secretary</b> | Lis Pibworth    | 939 0698 |
| <b>Hon. Treasurer</b> | 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, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, 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.