



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE is having a noticeable effect on planning applications in the city. There are fewer of them, and they're mostly 'householder' applications - extensions, conservatories etc.

Unfortunately, approved applications that we want to see happen are also going nowhere at present. That's the case with 'The Parade', Bishopsworth, opposite St Peter's Church. An exciting redesign, which incorporated an extension and good quality landscaping, isn't proceeding (yet?), and the day-to-day management of the site, we regret to say, is as bad as it was under the previous owner. We have written to the present owner.

Another development has seemed to be in some difficulty for a while now. The 'Valley Heights' block, on the site of the former Esso garage on Bishopsworth Road, eventually got its wall right (see last Winter's *Newsletter!*), but they also had landscaping obligations along the side, by the entrance into Manor Woods Valley, and further along in Manor Woods Valley itself. We have been chasing this for over a year, with the usual communications problems between City Council departments, during which time the company which owned the block has disappeared. We now have agreement in principle for some work to be done by Bristol Parks using the 'Section 106' money which the developer paid to the Council, but we're going to have to keep up the pressure.

One development has gone ahead with no delay: Wrings have started to extend their Vale Lane yard into the quarries area of Manor Woods Valley, as they were entitled to do under the planning permission they received on 17 September. Our job in due course will be to get the Local Nature Reserve extended up to their new boundary.

An important planning activity at present is the development of the 'Area Green Space Plan' for our part of Bristol. We'll bring you up to date with that next time!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

AS WE REPORTED last time, the autumn started with sad news as Sally Oldfield, the Council's Local Nature Reserves Officer, announced she was leaving Bristol to go and work for Islington Council in London. In three years she worked tirelessly and managed to create seven Local Nature Reserves in Bristol. Remember - we awarded her the Order of the M.V.C.G. (Manor Woods Valley Cross – Gold!) last February when Manor Woods Valley was finally declared a Local Nature Reserve (see photo!).



She organised educational fun-days for children, walks on a variety of subjects and she was a very efficient member of the Council Parks Department. She knew how to motivate people and we miss her professional skills, her support, her advice and above all her enthusiasm.

Up to now she has not been replaced, through lack of funds. But there may be a ray of hope. Before leaving, Sally prepared a grant application to fund two Local Nature Reserve Officers. At the time of writing, we have heard that the first stage of the application has been successful but the main hurdle is the second stage. So we can only hope ...

However, work carries on and it is stimulating to look back at what has been achieved in the past eighteen months: the path through the woodland, the fingerposts, the interpretation boards, the dog notices, the children's fun-days etc. It is also worth celebrating the work done by the people that one of us calls 'the Manor Woods Irregulars' - those members of the public who pick up rubbish when they go there for a stroll, report a problem to us or phone the Parks Department. Somebody described it as 'a community of people who care'.

We have plans for 2009 and will tell you more in the next *Newsletter*. We need more active members to come and join us. We often feel that so much more could be done if tasks were shared more widely. See whether you can spare a little time in 2009 ...

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

MUCKING OUT THE MALAGO

A GOOD CROWD had turned up for this annual event as we gathered near the entrance to Manor Woods Valley for the obligatory Health and Safety talk.

After a 'recce' during the week, Marie Jo thought there wasn't much rubbish in the stream so only two people were allotted to that task. Most of the others split into pairs and concentrated on various areas throughout the valley whilst two of us set to work pulling up Himalayan Balsam (*see also page 4*). We arranged to meet up at the picnic table at 11.15am to assess what still needed to be done.

When we got to our rendezvous there was a most welcome sight. Mavis Palmer had brought along tea, coffee and biscuits for our refreshment. This went down really well and prepared us for the next task which was to transport all the rubbish back to the entrance, whilst André and Danny continued along the stream. Obviously a lot of debris had been hidden from view, as there was the usual large pile of rubbish to dispose of.



We trundled the laden trolley along with extra bags to the gateway. Here we separated cans for recycling whilst the rest was crammed into André's car for the journey to the tip. We must think ourselves fortunate that he is prepared to do this. There were some jokes about him taking Marie Jo to the tip and we wondered if there was a container for 'Wives'. Joking aside, we felt that it was a successful operation, and the old adage 'Many hands make light work' was certainly true in this case.

BERYL HEATON
(*who also took the pics*)

<< *Just four hands - and rather heavy work!*

HALT THE INVASION!

THE REAL TRIFFIDS!' was the headline in one daily newspaper recently. By now it is likely that all of us have heard of 'non-native invasive weeds'. Most of these plants were introduced in Victorian times as ornamental garden plants and they have now spread out of control - to the detriment of native plants. Bluebells, for instance, can gradually become crowded out by Japanese Knotweed.

These weeds are causing ever-increasing problems throughout Bristol. The City Council Parks Department started spraying Japanese Knotweed a few years ago. Last year, the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum was formed to tackle the problem.

M.V.C.G. has been involved for a long time. About ten years ago we cleared a patch of Japanese Knotweed to re-open the Riverside Path in Manor Woods Valley, and we have helped with cutting the Knotweed before spraying. We have taken part in surveys for Bristol Living Rivers, and we attended the first Bristol Invasive Weed Forum in September 2007. This year we were part of a group which started clearing Himalayan Balsam in Manor Woods Valley. As we reported on page 3, some of our effort during the annual 'raid' to clear rubbish from the Malago went on tackling Himalayan Balsam - it's an annual plant and if it's pulled out before the seeds form, it can be prevented from spreading.

Ange 10 - Himalayan Balsam nil >>



For more information, see the website of the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum at www.aiwf.org.uk and the links from there.

THE TRIFFID HUNTERS

GREENBELT

SINCE OUR LAST *Newsletter* the fight to save the Greenbelt has moved forward. A local group, Dundry Residents Action Group (DRAG) has been established and incorporates a number of supporters from our area, and is part of an alliance of all greenbelt groups across the city.

Through local M.P. Steve Webb, a Parliamentary debate was arranged and a coach-load of local people were able to hand in our petition of several thousand names. Twenty M.P.s from all parties and from all over the South West spoke and were unanimously against the proposals to destroy the Greenbelt. The view of those who attended, however, was that the minister was rather dismissive of their arguments! But not to be deterred, we set about our next task of responding to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy's consultation document. Unfortunately we were rather late hearing about this because, like all consultations, they are not widely publicised.

With fantastic support from local people however, DRAG alone was able to hand in well over one thousand documents and the total for the region was a staggering 37,000. This is proof of how much people value our Greenbelt. The aim of protecting the principle of Greenbelt was further enhanced by a report from the all-party Environmental Audit Committee whose report, *Homes for the Future*, basically questioned the Government's assumption that three million new homes were required, and recommended that existing greenbelt should be given extra protection as a priority. 'Hear, hear' I say - and the fight goes on!

PAUL MIZEN

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH CANS?

OUR new members may not know that M.V.C.G. '*turns cans into daffodils*'. Many of the daffodils in green spaces in the area were planted by our group, with money raised mainly from the sale of cans. We sell the aluminium ones and put the steel ones into the black box. We can also sell scrap metal, copper wires or cables, provided the objects are not too big. Either deliver to 14 Queens Road or ring Marie Jo on 964 3106 if you need us to collect.

Thank you!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 17 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, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone number and e-mail address 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. This will be followed by an update from Mr Ron Morton on the fight to save our Greenbelt (see also Paul's article on page 5). Ron is Chair of the Shortwood Green Belt Campaign who have joined with D.R.A.G. (Dundry Residents Action Group) to oppose the plans for 'Yanley Town', a massive extension of Bristol out along the Bridgwater Road.





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.


ANDRÉ COUTANCHE
Hon. Secretary


PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS


AS USUAL, the  symbol shows our own events. We are always happy to publicise other events which will interest our members - just let us know! The regular 'third Tuesday' meetings are held at St Peter's Rooms, by the side of St Peter's Church, Church Road, Bishopsworth, normally starting at 7.30pm.


 **Tuesday 16 December:** *Christmas Party.* Have a go at a few light-hearted games and create a simple Christmas craft. Bring a contribution for the American Supper (but it's not obligatory!). Mulled wine and soft drinks will be served. New members who have joined in the past year are particularly welcome. It is always a very friendly occasion. Please note the later starting time of 7.45pm.

 **Saturday 10 January:** *Litter-picking* in Manor Woods Valley - just for an hour. Meeting point: near the interpretation board at the pond at 11.00. We will concentrate on the paths. Please wear sturdy shoes. Gloves and bags are provided.

 **Tuesday 20 January:** QUENTIN ALDER will tell us about the work of the *Conservation Advisory Panel*, a forum made up of members of voluntary groups like M.V.C.G. who advise the City Council on sensitive planning applications.

 **Sunday 1 February:** Time to come out of hibernation for an *Early Spring Walk* through Manor Woods Valley. It will be a gentle stroll, lasting about an hour. We'll meet at 2.30pm at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library, at the bottom of St Peter's Rise. Please invite friends and family to come along!

 **Tuesday 17 February:** Our *Annual General Meeting and Birthday Party.* See the formal notice, opposite. Our Guest Speaker is RON MORTON, Chair of the Shortwood Green Belt Campaign.

 **Tuesday 17 March:** Our usual meeting at 7.30pm in St Peter's Rooms - details will be announced in the Spring *Newsletter.*

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 2008, then your membership runs through to the end of 2009; otherwise you should find enclosed a membership renewal form (unless you are receiving a complimentary copy of the *Newsletter* or have already renewed).

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!*



The proud possessors of these holes on the slope below Bishopsworth Police Station are the M.V.C.G. daff-planting gang (the holes are now filled in and invisible!). As in previous years, we found an open space which will be brighter in the spring when the 'February Gold' daffodils come up. Here they will reinforce the effect of the bulbs we planted in previous years by Bishopsworth Library and Chestnut Court. We're always open to ideas for future planting sites. Our thanks to RIVERSIDE GARDEN CENTRE who provided the bulbs at cost.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	VACANCY	
Vice-Chairman	Mavis Palmer	964 2344
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Lola Hardingham, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

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.