



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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2009

T HIS FIRST *Newsletter* of the new year contains the report of our A.G.M. which was held in February, together with the annual accounts. We think it's important to provide a record of our annual activities, both for members who weren't at the meeting and for posterity(!). To accommodate the report without squeezing out other news, we've added extra pages to this edition.

At the A.G.M., most of the existing Committee were re-elected, with one member standing down because of ill health. We're really sorry to be losing Don Bartlett from the Committee, both because of the reason and because he was a jolly useful and amusing chap to have around! A very big THANK YOU to Don for his work. We still need a Chairman, and we would welcome new blood and new ideas, so please consider coming on to the Committee - initially as a trial, if you like.

We said in the last *Newsletter* that we'd report on the Area Green Space Planning Process which is underway at the moment. We mentioned it at the A.G.M. (see page 9) but there isn't room to go into more detail now. The process is continuing, so we'll have more to say in the next *Newsletter*.

We also heard at the A.G.M. about the proposals for the Urban Extension to Bristol on the Green Belt around Yanley, and the Ring Road - now called the South Bristol Link. There was a special open meeting of the Neighbourhood Partnership to discuss these issues on 25 February, and it was extremely well run and informative. M.V.C.G. has been against the Road/Link for some time, and though we haven't yet taken a formal view on the Urban Extension, it's safe to say that most Committee members are unhappy about it - as were the majority of people at the meeting. Visit www.westofengland.org/transport for more information and to give your opinion.

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ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

WE'VE MADE PROGRESS on some of our longer-term projects since the last *Newsletter* - progress in a feasibility, admin sense, anyway!

We've been pressing the Council for many years about the build-up of silt in the pond - which is no longer a pond, just a messy river channel. We know that Bristol Parks wanted to help, and we may now be at the start of a process which could eventually get results. The intention is to liaise with Urban Splash and their 'Lake Shore' development at the former Wills factory in Crox Bottom. When Urban Splash get the contractors in to clear their lake, Bristol Parks will get them to come to Manor Woods Valley, thereby saving some of the cost of employing them separately. We were recently contacted by consultants employed by the Council to look at options for doing the work, so a first step has been taken. Because of the huge cost of moving the silt off-site, a major part of the study will be identifying a suitable site or sites within the L.N.R. to dump the silt. We don't have a problem in principle with this, and it all depends on the detail of what's proposed. The wonderful photo on the back page gives us some inspiration!

Another long-term aspiration has been for a crossing for walkers below the dam which could link the River Path with the new Woodland Path - just a few metres away at that point. South Bristol Riverscapes is helping here, finding the right contacts within the City Council and the Environment Agency. As and when we can work up a scheme, we hope to apply to Yansec for a grant; they were very helpful with the Woodland Path grant, and this would complement it very well.



But the third bit of progress to report is much more 'hands-on' and concrete, and is in the M.V.C.G. tradition of 'just doing it'! We wanted to make the River Path - which M.V.C.G. had worked hard over the years to keep open - more visible and attractive to walkers. So we decided to investigate adding a finger to point the way to the path on the fingerpost at the Interceptor which marks one end of the Woodland Path. Angela and Tony James took on this project and got quotes, collected the new 'finger' and then installed it in late

January (we cheated and reported this to the A.G.M. even though it didn't happen in 2008!) A very big THANK YOU to Tony and Angela - the new 'finger' looks very smart!



*James & James (Contractors)
at work*

We've arranged some walks in Manor Woods Valley and some litter picks - see the Programme on page 11 and come along to any or all of them! Why not pin the enclosed programme sheet somewhere you'll see it so as not to forget?

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

WILD BS13

BEFORE the last committee meeting in February, some of us were chatting about the birds we see in our gardens and how we need to feed them in this harsh winter.

We were surprised to discover the diversity of species over a small area. Marie Jo's garden is home to lots of goldfinches, but just around the corner, at Lola's, she spotted many sparrows which she rarely sees in her own garden. Lis has a couple of resident robins whilst wrens prefer to make their home at Mavis's. I see many greenfinches, chaffinches and collared doves along with blue tits, and the occasional long-tailed tits. A fascinating variety. What birds visit your 'patch' regularly?

BERYL HEATON

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 2008 given by the appropriate person, followed by our special guest speaker, Ron Morton, telling us about the threats to the Green Belt from the proposed urban expansion around Bristol and the Ring Road.

Programme Report: Lola Hardingham said that we covered quite a wide range of topics in our programme of talks since last year's A.G.M., starting off in March with Helen Holland talking about the South West Regional Assembly. This was quite a lively meeting and a number of other matters was also discussed. In April Martin Ford, one of the judges from Britain in Bloom, explained to us how this competition is organised and this brought our winter programme to an end. Our next event was a visit to Hill House Farm in Dundry on Saturday 19 July. Farm visits are always popular with our members and this was no exception. The Hurford family was most welcoming and a conducted tour given by David was very informative. Although the weather was very unsettled everybody enjoyed the trip, especially the cream tea at the end, and we thank Lesley, David and Robert for all the trouble they took to make this outing so successful. We resumed our meetings in October when Helen Adshead talked about the South Bristol Riverscapes project, a very interesting and well attended evening. November was the month for the Bishopsworth Quiz once again. The questions were devised very ably by our winning team from last year and they must have pitched the level of difficulty about right as our competing team came about half way down! Our usual Christmas party took place in December and the spread provided



for the 'American supper' was particularly delicious this year - thanks to all those contributing and for their cheerful participation in our silly games.

Last month Quentin Alder, an architect and member of the Conservation Advisory Panel, showed us lots of the planning applications which the Panel have inspected and commented on, and this generated quite a lot of discussion. Lola concluded by thanking all the people who have helped with the arrangements and the catering and said that she was always pleased to receive suggestions and ideas for our future events.

Planning Issues: André Coutanche reported that, generally speaking, there haven't been quite as many planning applications that M.V.C.G. has concerned itself with during 2008. However, there are some hardy perennial planning *issues*, along with those applications where we made comments. We continue to monitor the weekly lists of planning applications, and there are usually a handful which go to the Committee each month, though we often decide that there's no need to make a formal comment.

As in previous years, we have been painfully aware of the mess at Highridge Playing Fields. Other people, including Council officers, also recognise the problem, and we will go on working with them, and with the Highridge Forum, to try to sort things out. The 'Lake Shore' development by Urban Splash at the Wills office site continued during the year, but is now, we understand, on hold because of the economic situation. The other major development in our area didn't stop - the BrunelCare Very Sheltered Housing scheme on Queens Road. We welcomed this project and we look forward to seeing it completed.

Another planning issue which we have reported on more than once in previous years is what we call the 'Matties block' - 1-4 The Parade, Bishopsworth, opposite St Peter's Church. M.V.C.G. has been involved with the state of this property since 1998. At the end of 2007 it changed ownership. We supported the planning application and hoped that, after many years of staring at an eyesore, we would have an attractive development and landscaping on this key site. As months went by in 2008 we were soon disappointed as rubbish and fly-tipping accumulated around the property, with grass uncut and bins overflowing constantly over the pavement at the back. In November 2008 we took photos and sent them with a letter to the owner, a property developer in Stoke Bishop. We never got an answer but a few weeks later the area was tidied up and we understand from several of our members who spoke to employees there that the owner blamed his agent for not informing him of the state of his property. What is more concerning in the long term is that the planning application may not be implemented due to the present recession.

However, the area of brambles and rubbish at the corner of the Fitness Centre is now regularly maintained after we put pressure on the Council in 2007. Our thanks are due to Marie Jo who has pursued this relentlessly for a long time!

Another old chestnut was still with us in 2008 - the Old Vicarage, Bishopsworth. A planning application for two bungalows on the small remaining piece of the garden was made, was refused by the Council, and the developer has put in an Appeal. The planners have asked us to support their refusal, which, of course, we do.

The main planning application which concerned us during 2008 was by Wrings, to extend their yard at Vale Lane onto the 'Quarries' area of Manor Woods Valley. An earlier application which included a stone crusher was withdrawn, because they recognised that the noise nuisance was far too great. A revised application just to extend the yard looked at first as though it would go through on the nod, and we had to fight hard to get the planners to recognise the conflicting policies on this site - identified for commercial development *and* a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. After strong lobbying by us, it went to the Planning Committee, who decided that they needed to visit the site. Despite recognising the attraction and nature conservation value of the site, the Committee decided on a majority vote to grant planning permission. We were disappointed by this, of course, and our future task will be to get the Local Nature Reserve boundary extended up to Wring's new fence.

Major planning issues which we got more involved with in 2008 were the Ring Road and the Urban Extension onto the Green Belt. Paul Mizen has taken the lead on this. These topics, and others, have also been the concern of the Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network, an informal grouping of voluntary organisations like M.V.C.G., with regular e-mail updates on the emerging planning process and city-wide planning issues. They provide very useful background information and contacts, and they're taken seriously by the City Planners, with whom we have regular meetings.

Progress with Manor Woods Valley: Marie Jo Coutanche, as Convenor of the Manor Woods Valley working group, reported that the Group has held meetings every five weeks or so. 2008 has been a busy and productive year with several projects coming to fruition.

In December 2007 we finally heard that Manor Woods Valley had officially become a Local Nature Reserve. Shortly afterwards, new green Council signs were put up at each of the four entrances. We had been asking for them since our group started in 2004, and the 'unveiling' of the sign at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library provided the excuse for a celebration on 29 February. The Lord Mayor - who is also the Lord of the Manor of Bishopsworth -

unveiled the sign at the entrance to 'his' woods. We also paid public tribute to Sally Oldfield, the Local Nature Reserves Officer, with whom we worked closely through much of the past year until she understandably decided to leave before her funding ran out. We still miss her.

In April two interpretation boards were put up; one about the woodland was erected behind the library; the second one, about the stream, near the pond. Thank you to Living Rivers who had approached us about a new project called South Bristol Riverscapes which provided us with a grant to pay for the 'Stream' board. We are grateful to Sally and to Kathy and Tanya at Living Rivers for their help. Since then some of us have kept a close eye on the boards and we have cleaned graffiti a few times.

The Group became acutely aware of the problem of dog-fouling. In early summer we designed notices with 'Abi the Airedale' dispensing humorous advice to all dog walkers. Thank you to Angela for designing Abi and to members of our Group for writing the poems. Since then Angela and Tony have regularly maintained the notices and we hope that our trail has made a difference.

Last year we organised litter-picks in January and in May. In October we had our 'amphibious garbage raid'. There were also a number of 'impromptu' sessions when we felt it was needed. We must mention at this point that we are in regular contact with our Community Park Manager about rubbish in various places and fly-tipping. We do hope that the recent arrival of the new contractors, Quadron, will bring improvement. What we also wish is that people who use the park could leave no rubbish behind. Suggestion and ideas on what we could do to raise awareness are welcome!

As in previous years we had a working session in early spring at the entrance behind the library doing some general tidying-up. Also, in the summer several M.V.C.G. members were part of a Bristol group which was working on clearing non-native invasive weeds. In Manor Woods Valley they cleared a lot of Himalayan Balsam.

A number of events were held in Manor Woods Valley: an 'Early Bird Walk' in April, and a 'Wild Flower Walk' in June, both organised by Sally, and the 'Magical Malago Adventure Day' on 29 May organised by Helen Adshead from Riverscapes and Sally. Ten parents, fourteen children and some volunteers took part. The annual 'Malago Trek' took place on 13 July on a beautiful sunny day. In September a group of children from Headley Park School spent a day in Manor Woods Valley with Sally and Helen and several volunteers. They subsequently put on an exhibition about their day-out in Bishopsworth Library (*photo on next page*).

We carry on being involved with planning matters. As already reported, the Wrings second application for the extension of their yard into the quarry was

finally accepted by the Planning Department. This was sad news for us. Thank you to André for his hard work and the time he devoted to this case.

The saga continued of the landscaping at the back of the Valley Heights flats on Bishopsworth Road. We reported a year ago that no progress was happening, long after completion of the flats in 2007. Things dragged on so long that when the Planning Department finally decided to take enforcement action they could not track down the owner/developer any more.



Through our continuous pressure on the Planning and the Parks Departments, we have now been told that the Parks Department will use the section 106 money to put some landscaping in place. Nothing has started yet and with the re-organisation in the Parks Department we do not know when it will happen.

We thought it would be a good idea to encourage people to use the River Path - between the dam and the interceptor - which we had worked hard in previous years to keep open. Because the grant for the Woodland Path which we reported on last year included fingerposts at each end, one of them by the interceptor, we decided to investigate adding a second finger to the fingerpost to point the way to the River Path. Angela and Tony took this on, getting quotes, collecting the finger and installing it in late January of this year. We're very grateful to them for bringing this to a successful conclusion.

We are already working on several projects for 2009, including a grant application for a third interpretation board, for the wildflower meadow, and for leaflets about Manor Woods Valley. A start has also been made on a project under the South Bristol Riverscapes initiative. However, as Sally, our L.N.R. officer, has left and no money was available to replace her, we are unlikely to be able to organise the same events as before. There is a chance that she may be replaced as before she left she organised a grant application for one or two officers to replace her. We are awaiting the outcome. In the mean time we will carry on as there is plenty to do. We'd love to involve more people in the group - so please contact Marie Jo if you're interested.

Progress with Other Projects: André Coutanche reported that the South Bristol Riverscapes Initiative started early last year, with Helen Adshead as the Project Officer. Helen came to one of our meetings to explain about it. Riverscapes brings together four existing groups which are concerned with rivers and streams in south Bristol, and is trying to set up new groups where there are none at the moment. It was capital funding from Riverscapes which paid for the interpretation board about the Malago in Manor Woods Valley. One of the projects which Riverscapes has picked up is our long-standing idea for a crossing of the Malago below the dam in Manor Woods Valley. We began working with them on this at the end of last year, and are hopeful for progress in the coming months. Another long-standing hope has been to get the pond in Manor Woods Valley cleared of the silt which has built up. This is something which M.V.C.G. has been hammering away at for a considerable time, and the arrival of Riverscapes - and the L.N.R. designation for Manor Woods Valley - has helped to build up the pressure. We were very recently contacted by consultants who have been employed by the City Council to look at options for doing this.

The L.N.R. designation brought us into contact with other L.N.R. groups in Bristol, and there is now an informal network of groups, where Rob and Susan Acton-Campbell of the Friends of Troopers Hill are very active both in this network and in the wider Bristol Parks Forum. We got more involved in the Parks Forum in 2008, and two, three or even four of us attend most of the meetings. They're useful both in terms of the formal presentations and the networking opportunities. One of the topics which the Parks Forum prepared us for was the Area Green Space Planning process, which began in our part of Bristol last autumn. This is to consider the good and bad points about the parks and green spaces in our area and how we would like things to be improved - always assuming that there will be any money! We have been to an enormous number of meetings and site visits, and it's not entirely clear that it will be worth it - but we live in hope. We continued in 2008 with our tradition of planting daffodil bulbs on a public patch of ground where there will help brighten up our corner of Bristol - last year, below Bishopsworth Police Station.

We also continued producing our *Newsletters*, illustrated with photos taken by our regular photographers - Beryl and Danny and Angela. A big 'thank you' to them.

Can recycling continued in 2008, though less were donated than in previous years. There was bad news recently when the price went down from 40p per kilo to 25p. However some members and friends have given us metal to sell, recycled copper wire, aluminium, lead etc.; this bring some money for our funds. The chief can-sorter and scrap manager remains Marie Jo, so our continued thanks to her.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2008

HERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS which Beryl Heaton presented to the A.G.M. on 17 February. She pointed out that we are in a healthy state financially. We have once again purchased and planted bulbs and we have also bought a laminator which enables us to produce our own weatherproof posters, in particular, doggie notices for Manor Woods Valley. We have an excess of income over expenditure of £263.78 but this includes £151.52 bank interest from our HSBC Money Manager account. With interest rates falling so rapidly this may not be repeated in the future. The price per kilo from the sale of aluminium cans has also dropped considerably. However we still have considerable funds at our disposal. We do have plans for major projects soon but the money will be spent only after careful consideration. The accounts do not include our grant from Yansec of £12,650 and its subsequent payment to Bristol City Council for the woodland path in Manor Woods Valley. It was agreed by the committee that this would be separated out, otherwise it would distort the figures.

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Membership	306.00	Postage & Stationery	10.00
Functions	87.91	Refreshments at A.G.M.	22.61
Other Income	<u>316.22</u>	Hall Hire	132.00
		Printing	75.75
		Speakers fees/donations/expenses .	18.00
		Christmas Meeting	19.50
		Sundries	34.60
		Purchase of Bulbs	105.00
		LNR Celebration	<u>28.89</u>
Total	710.13	Total	446.35

	£
Excess of income over expenditure	263.78
Brought forward from 2007	<u>5990.66</u>
Balance carried forward to 2009	6254.44

Made up of: Cash in hand	4.45
HSBC Money Manager A/C	5346.26
HSBC Current A/C	903.73

Detail of Other Income	£	Detail of Function Income	£
Donations	37.00	Cream Teas Profit	31.80
Sale of Aluminium Cans etc.	47.70	Christmas Party	26.00
Book Sales	80.00	Refreshments	6.30
Bank Interest	<u>151.52</u>	Sale of Goods	<u>23.81</u>
	316.22		87.91

BERYL HEATON
Hon. Treasurer

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

THE **M** symbol shows events which M.V.C.G. has organised, but 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, starting at 7.30pm unless otherwise shown.

M Tuesday 17 March: GEORGIE BIGG, Chairman of the C.P.R.E. North Somerset District, will tell us about the *Work of the Campaign to Protect Rural England*. The C.P.R.E. exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

M Saturday 21 March: *Litter picking* in Manor Woods Valley for an hour. Meeting point: **near the interpretation board at the pond at 10.30am**. Please wear sturdy shoes. Gloves and bags provided.

M Sunday 19 April: Put a Spring in your step with a *Walk through Manor Woods Valley!* We'll meet at 2.30pm at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Please invite friends and family to come along!

M Tuesday 21 April: YVONNE COX will tell us about *Hedgehog Rescue*, which was set up by Yvonne and her band of carers at her home in Yate. She visits schools and groups to educate the public about the environment and hedgehogs.

M Saturday 30 May: *Litter picking* in Manor Woods Valley for an hour. Meeting point: **near the interpretation board at the pond at 10.30am**. Please wear sturdy shoes. Gloves and bags provided.

M Sunday 7 June: A *Summer in the Meadow Walk* in Manor Woods Valley, especially to enjoy the wild flowers in the meadow. Meet at 2.30pm at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library and invite your friends and family to join you!

Saturday 13 June: *Hartcliffe Millennium Green Fun Day*, from 12 noon until 4.00pm at the Green, Bishport Avenue (opposite 'The Groves' tower blocks).

MANY MEMBERS have paid their subs for 2009 - thank you! If you haven't got around to it yet, you'll 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 any meeting, or send it to either Beryl Heaton (3 Kings Walk) or André Coutanche (14 Queens Road). *Thank you!*



Here's a pretty picture, to remind us of the recent snow. But where is it? It can't be around here - we don't have swans. But don't those railings look familiar ... ? It was taken by Angela James at Christmas time 1981 - and it's the pond in Manor Woods Valley (as it wasn't called at the time). Perhaps when the pond is de-silted, we'll be visited by swans again ...

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, 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 Whichchurch 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.