



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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Summer
2009

JUST AFTER THE LAST *Newsletter* was published, we heard the sad news that Don Bartlett had died. We miss him a lot, and we pay tribute to Don on page 6 of this *Newsletter*.

We've mentioned the Area Green Space Planning process in the last couple of *Newsletters* but haven't had space to say any more. Here's the story so far ... The A.G.S.P. process arose out of the Parks & Green Spaces Strategy which Bristol Parks developed last summer. This seeks to improve the quality of our parks with money from three sources: extra allocation by Bristol City Council; section 106 money which comes from new planning permissions; and selling off 'low value' green spaces for development. There are rather obvious problems with all three possibilities! But we recognise the value of having detailed 'aspirations' for our parks, and we have joined in thoroughly with the meetings and site visits.

We see two major problems with the process: firstly, it's based on 'Neighbourhood Partnership' areas - for us, that means the wards of Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park. Inevitably, with an artificial 'clumping' together of artificially drawn wards, there are problems at the edges; green spaces link together, both visually and as wildlife corridors, across Partnership boundaries. Secondly, the process is based on 'typology' maps drawn up in advance which identify the nature and the extent of the land in the process. We reckon that significant areas of important green space have been left out, notably on Dundry Slopes.

So we regard the process as flawed - whether it's fatally flawed remains to be seen. We can expect broader public consultation later in the year, so watch this (green) space!

The Committee was very pleased that a 'new' member volunteered after the A.G.M. Peter Crispin, who used to be a co-opted member when he was a City councillor, has been co-opted again in his own right. Welcome, Pete!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

‘**H**OW LOVELY Manor Woods Valley is!’ This is what we have heard so much recently, from a variety of people, from regular dog walkers to visitors some of us have taken round for the first time. The picture below was taken on our ‘spring’ walk; we were very pleased to welcome some new faces and explain all the delights of Manor Woods Valley. More recently, we did an informal guided tour for some members of the Cabot Group of the Avon Wildlife Trust (they were visiting all the L.N.R.s in Bristol), and they were very impressed by what we have here on our doorstep (photo opposite).

There is a number of reasons for this improvement but something significant happened early April: as part of the reorganisation of the Parks Department South Bristol now has new contractors - Quadron Services. We noticed immediately that the standard of rubbish collections, of mowing and the general attention to detail had improved. We have said cautiously that the litter-picks M.V.C.G. have been carrying on for over ten years are becoming redundant. This was proved true on our last one, on 30 May. We hardly found any rubbish. What an achievement!

At our Group’s suggestion the area around the big log near the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library has been cleared so that people can see the stream and sit on the log without being stung by nettles.

Our contractors are doing a good job but we still suffer from the anti-social behaviour of some individuals: graffiti on our boards, occasional dumping in the stream etc. So the work carries on. The landscaping on the side and below



Valley Heights flats has been delayed due to general reorganisation in the Parks Department but we understand that after the birds nesting season work will start.

As far as the removing of the silt and the creation of a crossing below the dam reported in the spring *Newsletter* work has

carried on behind the scenes, but there is nothing new to report.

By now most M.V.C.G. members will have seen our two interpretation boards, one on the woodland and the other on the pond. They were put up over a year ago and were funded



through grant money obtained via the City council and the South Bristol Riverscapes Project. The plan had always been for a third board explaining the flower meadow on the slopes but we had to find the funding ourselves. We had decided we could pay for half the cost of the board out of our own funds but would apply for a grant for the other half, and for leaflets on Manor Woods Valley. In the past six months several M.V.C.G. members have worked on a Lottery grant application to 'Awards for All' The application was sent away in March and we have just received the answer. We have been unsuccessful. The reason given is that 'on this occasion there have been more applications than money available.' The M.V.C.G. committee and the Manor Woods Valley Group are taking stock before deciding what to do next. If you haven't been to see the summer meadow on the slopes do not miss it! You will soon forget you are in the middle of a city. Such rich meadows are difficult to find in our British countryside these days.

We always try to make Manor Woods Valley better known. So we recently went to Marksbury Road Library and left a few *My Manor Woods Books* for them to sell. They asked us if we could mount a small exhibition for them. It will be there from 8 June for a month. If you can think of other venues, please let us know.

Finally, a few weeks ago we were approached by Jennie, the Head Librarian at Bishopsworth Library. She and her team asked if we could help them improve the green space behind the Library to make it more pleasant to look at and make it better for wildlife. We feel enthusiastic about the project and are already making plans. We have asked Mike Lillington, our gardening adviser in the past, for help and he has kindly agreed.

MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

WILD BS13

Spring on the Wing

I DEFY ANYONE not to smile in spring when they see the first butterfly flutter by - magic! On the spring walk in Manor Woods Valley in April, which seemed early after the extra-cold winter, we saw many butterflies. There were orange-tips, brimstones and a small blue at the entrance of the Valley, though none through the ramson-clad woods. However, the newly-signposted 'River Walk', thanks to the sun coming out, produced whites and more orange-tips, together with a peacock and a comma butterfly constantly harassing each other over the same plant. Spring had arrived!

ANGELA



Lola's drawings from 'My Manor Woods book'. Left to right: small tortoiseshell, comma, common blue

Water at last!

PLANTS AND BIRDS need water during dry spells. As I was holding my watering can in the middle of the front garden I saw a young starling running towards me at full speed. It jumped under the water, stood there for a few seconds, beak up and wide open. Then it flew away satisfied. Birds also need water to bathe and watching them can be such fun.

MARIE JO

NO MORE 'TURNING CANS INTO DAFFODILS'?

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT that the Credit Crunch would affect the long-standing M.V.C.G. can-processing plant? It had seemed so stable for fourteen years. We had collected, sorted and sold aluminium cans and bought bulbs to plant in our open spaces.

But over a year ago your can-sorter-in-chief noticed that all was not well; the income from cans was starting to dwindle. Possible causes were analysed but did not lead to firm conclusions. Were people starting to drink less? Had they

switched to plastic bottles? Were some of our streets and park suppliers 'taking their rubbish home?' Had they discovered the existence of bins? Maybe our Council cleaning services were more thorough? Or was it that our faithful M.V.C.G. collectors and friends had become tired? One hopes some had not ended up with a bad back after so much bending?

But back to the point - the slow decline of our can-sorting business and the feeling from some of us that it may be time to call it a day. Let's look at figures: one kilo of aluminium cans is about fifty cans. In 1995 it was worth 50 pence. A few years later it went down to 40 pence. The price of metals is decided at the world level. The next blow came in January 2009. By then our car full of cans knew the way to our friendly metal merchant in east Bristol. There, in this cold yard, we faced the shocking news: the price had gone down to 25 pence a kilo. Recently the M.V.C.G. can-processing business had tried to diversify by selling some scrap metal, but one would have to build an extension to the garage to house this new venture and employ more staff, not an easy prospect these days.

Your can-sorter-in-chief got quite depressed and thought hard. She consulted the M.V.C.G. committee who fully agreed. The enterprise was not viable; daffodils would have to be funded from another source. A lot of work had been done by a number of individuals not without some fun as well. So many amusing incidents happened. Was it the end? Some of us have grown so used to collecting cans. One example is a father who came regularly to bring us bags of cans with his two young children. Now they are teenagers and they come on their own.

So here is the decision: M.V.C.G. will carry on selling cans but will 'reduce labour costs' - no more collecting from various sources. Cans will have to be delivered to 14 Queens Road, sorted - only aluminium. No more standing in the garage, sorting. Enough of smelly and rusty cans! Also, cans which are crushed, if only by hand, take less space and more can be fitted in the car. Then we will review the situation in a year's time.

A big THANK YOU to all our members and friends who collect in their kitchen, but let us also pay tribute to our 'heroes' who collect in streets, parks, buses and trains, at parties, from neighbours etc. Well done to all of us!

MARIE JO COUTANCHE (C.S.-in-C.)

DON BARTLETT

‘**W**E’RE really sorry to be losing Don Bartlett from the Committee ... because he was a jolly useful and amusing chap to have around!’ That’s what we said in the last *Newsletter*, when the terrible health problems Don had suffered from obliged him to stand down. Just a few days later, we learned that we would no longer have him around at all.



It was typical of Don that he kept his good humour to the end - and just as typical that he kept on fighting. He believed in what he did, and not just for M.V.C.G. - he and Margaret were tireless workers at the Hartcliffe Millennium Green. The funeral and celebration of his life was packed with family and friends from all his activities. He’ll be remembered - and always with a smile.

AC

FIGHTING ON

THE CAMPAIGN to protect the Greenbelt reaches an important stage with the imminent release of the government’s Region Spatial Strategy. This will decide how many homes our local councils are required to build. At present, all four of our local councils believe the government targets are not only exaggerated, but wholly unachievable without building on the Greenbelt.

I am pleased to report that an alliance of all campaigning groups throughout the South West has been formed. This will cover all those fighting to save our countryside from exploitation, and will be a much stronger force to be dealt with. Hopefully this can be taken nationwide. Despite previous assurances, it appears this government is now out of step with the other main parties regarding protecting our Greenbelt, although with the RSS not yet published there is still time to make amends. The Conservatives, Lib Dems, Greens, and the Environmental Audit Committee all say protect the Greenbelt! And we say so too.

PAUL MIZEN

- The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) are asking the public to respond to a questionnaire on the Greenbelt. They hope this will show the government that they will have a fight on their hands to build on the Green Belt! You can access the survey at the CPRE’s website, www.cpre.org.uk. You can follow the links via ‘Campaigns’, then ‘Planning’, then ‘Green Belts’, then ‘Green Belts for a greener future: survey’. Or you can get there directly via <http://tinyurl.com/ow3yfh>. The deadline for responses is 31 July 2009.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

IT'S SUMMER! So there are no meetings planned for St Peter's Rooms until October - but we've had walks and litter picks to get you out of doors, and there's a visit (restricted numbers) in July.

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

Saturday 13 June: *A Survey of Mammals in Manor Woods Valley*, meeting at 6.45pm behind Bishopsworth Library. If you'd like to take part and spend a pleasant evening, ring Helen Adshead from South Bristol Riverscapes earlier in the afternoon to get final information. Weather permitting, there may be a picnic. Helen's number is 07827 306276.

🕒 Tuesday 21 July: *A Visit to Avonmouth Sewage Treatment Works*, starting at 11.00am. **Numbers are limited**, so please phone Lola on 964 1116 to book a place. Sensible footwear is required. Lola will also co-ordinate transport, so please let her know if you can offer or would like a lift.

Sunday 26 July: *New Cut Trek*. Start at the CREATE Centre at 10.30am. And the *Malago Trek* is on Sunday 20 September - details later. See also www.bristol.gov.uk/rivers.

*** NOW IT'S YOUR TURN! ***

Ever since M.V.C.G. started, we have had a full and varied programme, with topics covering all aspects of the environment. Some recent examples were the natural world, with Hedgehog Rescue; the built environment, with Quentin Alder from the Conservation Advisory Panel; and current affairs, with the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

All our meetings could be better attended. There are very rarely 'new faces'. The Programme has been organised by a small handful of hard-working people, and they need help and encouragement. What other subjects you would like us to present? Who would like to join the programme group with ideas and help? *IS IT TIME TO WIND DOWN THE PROGRAMME FOR LACK OF INTEREST?* Over to you ...

THERE ARE A FEW MEMBERS who haven't quite got around to paying their subs for 2009. If you're one of them, you'll find enclosed a membership renewal form. I'm sure you'll realise that we can't go on delivering the *Newsletter* if you don't make your contribution, so please return the form with your sub. to either André Coutanche or Beryl Heaton. If we don't hear from you, we'll reluctantly assume that you no longer want to be an M.V.C.G. member ...

Hedgehogrescue@yahoo.co.uk
www.hedgehogrescue.co.uk

HEDGEHOG RESCUE ADOPTION

THIS CERTIFICATE IS PRESENTED
TO

Malago Valley Conservation Group

FOR ADOPTING

Trio

Date of Rescue 3.10.08

I.D. No: 1133

Date of Adoption 21.4.09

Sex: Female

Age: 4 weeks old

Weight: 300g



At the talk on 21 April about Hedgehog Rescue, Yvonne Cox introduced us to 'Trio', the little hedgehog who had lost a foot. Before she left, we gave her a donation to Hedgehog Rescue, and she gave us an 'adoption certificate' for Trio!

Malago Valley Conservation Group

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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

Peter Crispin, 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.