



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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YOU'LL BE AWARE - especially if you read the *Evening Post* - of the campaign by Bristol City Football Club for a new stadium on the fields at Ashton Vale. Malago Valley Conservation Group has discussed this in committee, but we're not going to take a formal position on it, since it's outside our area and we've already got more than enough to keep us busy! However, the planning application is in a broader context which *does* affect us, and we are following the debate with interest and concern. What follows is a personal take on some of issues involved ...

Sometimes it seems all too complicated. There's the Green Belt, apparently under threat from national government policy; there's the Regional Spatial Strategy, which national government is apparently trying to force onto local authorities even though its legal status is unclear and is being challenged; there's the financial viability argument, which causes the Football Club to say that we can't have the stadium unless we also have several hundred houses on the Green Belt and a Tesco on the current City Ground as well. Paul Mizen gives his view on page 5.

But if we focus on just the current planning application for the new stadium and the houses, and if we consider it against established planning policies, it seems very clear to me. This application should be refused under delegated powers without even going to Committee (which it is scheduled to do on 4 November). A football stadium *could* possibly be built on the Green Belt if the case is strong enough - but houses can't be. And neither should be built on a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, which is what is proposed. Party leaders on the City Council have been quoted as being in favour of the stadium in principle but emphasising that local people need to be considered and planning policies respected. I can't help suspecting a 'middle-class cringe' here; a mistaken feeling that 'real' Bristolians are football supporters and want the stadium, so we mustn't offend them. But this application is unacceptable for *planning* reasons and must be refused.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

WE HOPE a lot of you took full advantage of the sunny fortnight in June to go and see the wildflower meadow. It was an array of colours. We enjoyed more bee orchids than ever, and the pale-blue flax had colonised most of the slopes this year. We organised a walk on 7 June, and Beryl has kindly written a report - see page 6. In early August, hay was made and we happened to arrive when the tractor was just leaving, loaded with huge bales which we understand go and feed the animals at Hartcliffe Community Farm and elsewhere.



Hay made while the sun shone ...

We reported in the last *Newsletter* that our grant application for a flower meadow interpretation board had been turned down. As we refuse to be beaten yet, we have now applied for a grant to Yansec, who financed the building of the woodland path we all enjoy, two years ago. We await news!

This summer there were two sessions organised by the Avon Invasive Weed Forum to pull out Himalayan Balsam. For various reasons M.V.C.G. participation was low, but twenty-four people turned up on 3 July, a very hot day. They were volunteers from the Environment Agency, Bristol City Council, Wessex Water and a local young people. Then, on 4 August, five volunteers turned up in beating rain. It felt quite heroic but was great fun. A big THANK YOU to all these people who came to improve 'our patch'. In some places it is the only plant growing as it gradually takes over. However, it is annual and can be controlled if it is pulled before the seeds mature.

*Volunteers
attacking
Himalayan
Balsam in
Manor
Woods
Valley.
(Photo by
Vicky Freke
from the
AIWF
newsletter)*



After our enthusiasm in spring when new contractors started, there was some disappointment later when, even before the rainy period, paths remained uncleared for too long. We hope it was only a passing difficulty. We also await to see how effective the Parks Department re-organisation is going to be on the ground.

Also because of this re-organisation, we waited patiently for the landscaping below Valley Heights flats to happen. Section 106 money was allocated nearly a year ago after the Planning Department failed to enforce the landscaping conditions in time. It is now high time work started and we have already begun pressing for it to happen soon.

Finally, our group has been working with enthusiasm on plans to improve the green space behind Bishopsworth Library as explained in our last *Newsletter*. Work will begin in October - this will involve mostly local children who use the library and their parents, but if you'd like to come along, please contact Marie Jo for further details - ring 964 3106 or e-mail mariejo.coutanche@googlemail.com. This will improve the area for wildlife and hopefully turn it into a resource for those who can use it, whether they are the library staff, children, visitors who look down on this green space from the library windows or the beasties themselves!

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

SO WHAT'S NEW IN KING HEAD LANE PARK?

AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS of hard work, the new play area in the park opened in June. The area is being used on a daily (and indeed nightly) basis by young and old alike.

There are mixed opinions about the play area: 'it won't last', 'they tried all this before', 'couldn't they think of anything else to spend their money on' from the older generation. Now that the play area is open and the weather has been, on the whole, favourable, the kids love it - in fact too much! There is a definite 'pecking order' and you have to queue for half an hour to go on the big swing but I think it's character building for the youngsters. The Play Rangers also visit every Monday.

As a regular user of the park, both dog walking and taking my son to play there, I have observed teenage behaviour/language and have also watched the older children help my son if he needs a push or to reach things - they're big softies really!



Part of the Kings Head Park play area (the balloons aren't always there!)

Yes, there's noise, but it's positive noise - FUN AND LAUGHTER mostly. And OK, Friday night is a 'no go zone' so far as we are concerned, but it has always been the teenagers' park on Friday nights and all the locals know this.

So the overall opinion is 'Great' from parents with young kids, 'Mint' from the teenagers and 'I told you so' from the long term residents ... I'll report back in six months to see who was right.

LIS PIBWORTH

COURTING DISASTER?

HAVE YOU WALKED on Bedminster Down lately? If so, you can't have failed to notice how wonderful Ashton Court Mansion looks, especially in the morning sunshine. I was against the felling of the giant Redwood trees, but I have to admit the new view of the mansion house is pretty impressive and a bonus for those visitors to our city who regularly stop to photograph the Clifton Suspension Bridge. What a shame therefore, that this view is under threat. The new football stadium, if approved, will stand almost 100 feet and be directly in front of the house. Take your pictures now before it's too late!

The stadium, supported by a relentless campaign in the press and tenuously linked to the 2018 World Cup, causes a dilemma in more ways than one. Our new Lib. Dem. council made saving the greenbelt a priority, but the stadium is on greenbelt land, as are the 253 houses the developers want to include in the scheme. Should they support the stadium or honour their policy? The Tories are in a similar situation. Only Dawn Primarolo has publicly stated she is backing the stadium bid, but as her government has 'given up' on the greenbelt that's not so surprising. Of course, backing the stadium also means backing Tesco so it could be 'swings and roundabouts' when it comes to votes!

The Government's Regional Spatial Strategy (R.S.S.) has been delayed by a legal challenge, but it has not prevented developers from preparing a planning application for the 10,000 houses at Ashton Vale. Now you may think this not only arrogant but premature, but the government has instructed local authorities to prepare for when the R.S.S. is passed. So much for the consultation many of you participated in! In fact it brings the whole consultation process into disrepute. If they ignore the largest of responses, why should any of us bother?

PAUL MIZEN

MEADOW MEANDERS

ON 17 June we had a nature walk in Manor Woods Valley. This event took place as the Summer *Newsletter* was 'rolling off the presses'. My article is now old hat but I think the walk deserves a mention as it was exciting in many ways. We were ably led by Marie Jo and Marian who pointed out lots of plants as we walked. Marian explained the medicinal uses of many of them. There were three new members in our small party and they seemed impressed by the diversity of the flora. They also had happy memories of the area in their childhood and subsequently taking their grandchildren there.



The meadow looked delightful with the grasses waving in the breeze, enhancing the landscape with their subtle colours. The ox-eye daisies were in abundance, together with birds-foot trefoil and speedwell. It was amusing to hear the different names which people called the flowers. Then we came across what to me is the most exciting plant in the meadow, the bee orchid. They are thriving well and we spotted a fair number. I couldn't resist a few more photographs, although I have taken many over the years. Marie Jo had done a recce in the morning and was delighted to find her favourite plant, quaking grass. Unfortunately, in spite of her best efforts she was unable to locate it again. Never mind, Marie Jo, I am sure you have found it by now.

When we reached the quarry we looked at it from the edge as the ground here is rutted and walking can be hazardous. Our leaders explained some of the history of the site and what is growing there. I find it particularly good for blackberries in the autumn. We made our way back along the woodland path. The trees and undergrowth were a delight. As we reached the end of our walk it started raining. How fortunate we were that it had held off for so long and we were able to enjoy Manor Woods Valley in comfort.

BERYL HEATON

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

NIGHTS ARE DRAWING IN ... The new 'winter' season is starting, though no-one expressed an interest when we asked in the last *Newsletter* for ideas and help, so thanks are due to the very small band of organisers. 'Normal' meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at St Peter's Rooms (side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth), starting at 7.30pm.

🕒 **Monday 7 September:** Our annual '*Amphibious Garbage Raid*' on the Malago in Manor Woods Valley. This year, we will be helped by a contingent of volunteers from the Environment Agency. If you'd like to help, meet at 9.30am at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library - suitably attired!

Monday 14 September: A special open meeting of the Neighbourhood Partnership to bring people up-to-date with the South Bristol Community Hospital and the Hengrove development. 7.00-9.00pm at the Witherwood Centre, Queens Road.

🕒 **Tuesday 15 September:** *A visit to Knowle West Media Centre.* Meet at the Media Centre - Leinster Avenue, Knowle West - at 6.30pm. If you need or can offer a lift, please contact Mavis Palmer on 964 2344.

Sunday 20 September: *Malago Trek.* Start at car park at ASDA, Bedminster, near the store entrance, at 10.00am. See also www.bristol.gov.uk/rivers. Bring a picnic for the end, and drink for along the way. The walk should finish about 1.00pm. Plenty of buses back to the start. Join us for all or part of the walk. Wear comfortable shoes and dress for the weather - waterproofs or sunhat and shades!

🕒 **Tuesday 20 October:** RICHARD BEVAN, the City Council's Pest Control Services Manager, will tell us about the work of his department.

Tuesday 17 November: The annual *Bishopsworth Quiz* at the Royal British Legion, Bishopsworth. We hope to put in a couple of four-person teams, as in previous years. If you'd like to come along - to participate or just to watch - please contact André.

🕒 **Tuesday 15 December:** Our evergreen *Xmas Party*.

🕒 **Tuesday 19 January:** An evening of *Wildlife Photos* - more details in the next *Newsletter*.

THIS 'N' THAT

SOME BITS AND PIECES which don't fit anywhere else ...

- You may have noticed that the Programme on page 7 doesn't include an item which usually appears at this time of year - daffodil planting. That's because, as Marie Jo explains on page 3, we're working hard with Bishopsworth Library to plan and plant a wildlife garden behind the Library. M.V.C.G. will be contributing both some money and a fair bit of volunteer effort, so this will replace the daff. planting this year.
- The Programme does include the autumnal '*Amphibious Garbage Raid*' - but at rather short notice. This is because we had a very fine offer of help from 'NetRegs' - an organisation associated with the Environment Agency - to bring a group of volunteers to help clean up the Malago. They'll be working on our amphibious effort, and also working elsewhere on the Malago, with the Kingfisher Group. Their timetable meant that we had to fix a date early in September. Many thanks to NetRegs!
- When M.V.C.G. started - fifteen years ago! - e-mailing was a rather exotic activity. Now that many of our members are on-line, we're going to start collecting members' e-mail addresses so that we can send out the occasional reminder or update. We promise to keep addresses confidential and only use them for M.V.C.G. business. If you'd like to receive infrequent e-mails from M.V.C.G., please let André have your address on andrec@mvcg.org.uk.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	VACANCY	
Vice-Chairman	Mavis Palmer	964 2344
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
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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.