



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

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2009

**T**HERE'S LOTS TO SQUEEZE IN to this edition of the *Newsletter*, so let's start with an update on the Bristol City F.C. planning application. The Planning Committee accepted the planning officers' recommendation, so the *principle* of the stadium on the Green Belt was approved, but some of the housing wasn't. The Football Club now have to decide whether to appeal, or try to make the finances work without the housing. Either way, a final decision won't come until the Government Office of the South West have given their view. Read Paul Mizen's take on page 6.

Other major planning issues at the moment are the Ring Road - or South Bristol Link, to give it its current official name - the urban extension, aka Ashton Park, and possible routes for Bus Rapid Transit lines from Hengrove to the city centre. Sometimes it seems as though South Bristol is under siege! Of course, apart from the 9,500 houses which supposedly meet a national need, the other schemes are meant to be good for us as Bristolians - improved transport will relieve congestion, support urban regeneration, increase employment etc. The problem as M.V.C.G. sees it is that the *costs* - financial and environmental - are self-evidently large and the claimed *benefits* are unproven or implausible. That's why we remain opposed to the South Bristol Link, and we are looking at the routes for the B.R.T. - which are not directly on our patch, but which could have bad effects on our neighbours at the Northern Slopes potential Local Nature Reserve - with caution verging on scepticism.

Some happier updates are to report that the splendid people from 'NetRegs' did a super job on clearing rubbish from the Malago in Manor Woods Valley, and the South Bristol Riverscapes Project now has an attractive website, at [www.southbristolriverscapes.org.uk](http://www.southbristolriverscapes.org.uk).

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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## NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

**A**UTUMN COLOURS have been beautiful in Manor Woods Valley and it has been a good season for mushrooms. A member of our group has noticed a few puff balls and ink caps recently. Some of us picked sloes a few weeks ago and made sloe gin. There was also evidence of a lot of blackberry picking, particularly in the quarry where some brave people fought their way through the dense vegetation to reach the apples and pear trees there. Not to forget the elderflowers earlier in the season to make delicious elderflower cordial. Anything else our members collected this year?

The main news to announce is that we have been successful with our grant application to Yansec and we can now proceed with the Flower Meadow interpretation board which will stand at the bottom of the gentle slope below the meadow. The design will match the other two boards, on the Woodland and the Pond. We expect it to be in place for the next season. It will be impossible to include all the flowers which are in the meadow but if you have a favourite do let us know. For our recent new members it was Yansec which awarded M.V.C.G. a grant to build the path through the wood two years ago. We are very grateful to them.



We can also announce that the landscaping below the Valley Heights flats has now started. We have been waiting for it to happen for a while and we will monitor the work.

We are not putting any scheduled walks in our programme this time because the ones we arranged earlier this year were so poorly attended. However, members of our group regularly walk through Manor Woods Valley so if you want to join us, just give Marie Jo a ring on 964 3106 or e-mail [mariejo.coutanche@googlemail.com](mailto:mariejo.coutanche@googlemail.com) and we can organise an impromptu walk or take a group of people round as we did in the spring for a group of Wildlife Trust members.

### **BISHOPSWORTH LIBRARY WILDLIFE GARDEN**

It's not everyday that the Manor Woods Valley Group is asked to design a wildlife garden and we seized the opportunity. All of us have a certain experience in the field and we have also received help from other M.V.C.G. members. It has been a pleasure working with the library staff. Jennie Tippler, the Library Supervisor, has kindly described our first planting session where 14 volunteers turned up including the library staff ...

In May, Tanya Darch, the Environment Adviser from the City Council at the CREATE Centre, visited Bishopsworth Library and carried out an Energy/ Environmental Audit. Tanya felt that more could be done to make the library rear garden look attractive and improve its value for wildlife. We thought that this was a great idea so we spoke to M.V.C.G. and a meeting was set up. The meeting was very successful and Angela produced an excellent plan which we were happy to approve. The plans included a new tree, a bird bath, additional bird boxes and three bat boxes. Bluebells and daffodils were planted. Two enthusiastic young boys and their mum also built a heap for small beasties.

JENNIE TIPPLER



At our second session, on Saturday 21 November, we planted some native wild shrubs like holly, dog-wood, spindle tree, and also buddleia, winter jasmine etc. to bring colour and food at various times of the year. In spring we will plant a few wild flowers to create a small meadow. We hope it will all grow in the years to come. We discovered that the soil was thin in places, with rubble not far away, which made digging rather hard work!

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE  
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

## RING ROAD REVERIE

**I**F INDEED the Ring Road does arrive then it would make possible the pedestrianisation of Queen's Road between Gatehouse Avenue and Broadoak Road (save for limited vehicular access to the new blocks of flats - see *a* and *b*).

At present, the busiest part of Queen's Road in terms of shoppers, school children and elderly residents is used as a race-track for Chew Valley commuters, in addition to which motorists continue to park on double yellow lines and even pavements to do their shopping - with impunity. The construction of the new blocks of flats, *c* and *d*, and infilling gaps or renovation of derelict cottages at the lower end has also increased the volume of traffic.

Conversion of this section of Queen's Road into a 'village green' and a piazza - with covered pavements connecting schools, Church Centre, shops and pub - would give Withywood a focus - a 'green' centre in which pedestrians would feel completely safe.

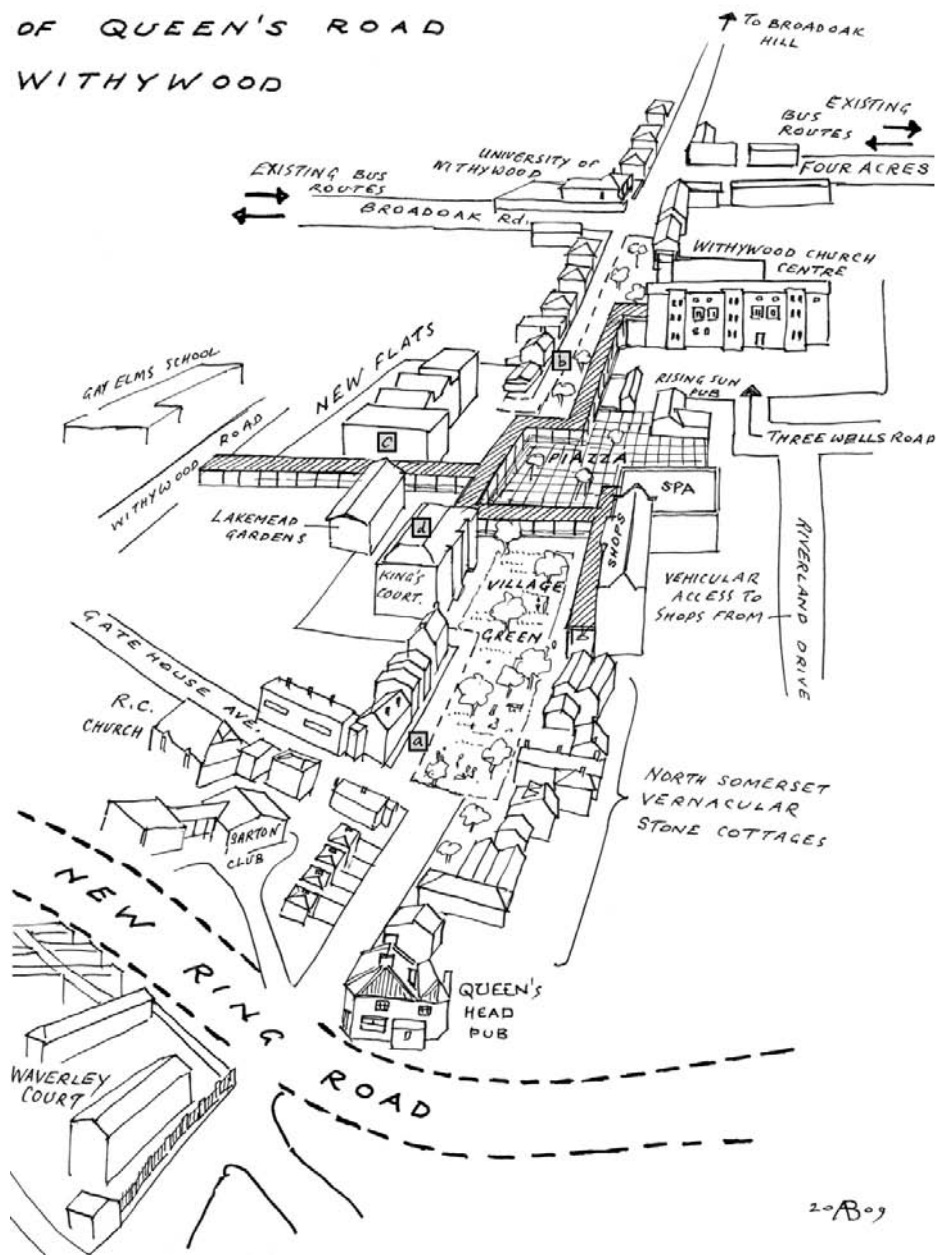
Vehicular access to shops could be made possible from Riverland Drive, and access to the Church Centre could still be made via Three Wells Road. It would also enhance the few surviving fragments of north Somerset vernacular architecture which have totally disappeared in the lower village (the Swimming Pool Triangle, Bishopsworth).

Attractive street furniture, street lamps, hanging baskets, imaginative use of local stone for walling and paving could give this corner of Bristol - which is already partly in a conservation area - real personality.

ANTON BANTOCK

**Editor's note:** *as reported on the front page, M.V.C.G. is against the proposed Ring Road. However, it's debateable whether it would make any difference to Anton's plan; the Ring Road would still 'require', in highway terms, connection to Broadoak Hill for those pesky commuters. So forget the Ring Road, which stands every chance of still being an imaginary line on the map when we're all dead and gone, and let's see Anton's vision built anyway!*

PROPOSED  
PEDESTRIANISATION  
OF QUEEN'S ROAD  
WITHYWOOD



2-0809

## GREEN BELT BLUES

**T**HOSE OF YOU, like myself, not 'au fait' with the planning process, may have been surprised that the new football stadium planning application was granted even though it is on the Bristol Green Belt. Apparently, it was deemed to be of such vital importance to the whole city, and no other alternative site was viable, that it was classed under Green Belt legislation as an 'exceptional circumstance' and this allowed the Planning Committee to vote in favour. The fact that the local MP and the leaders of all three political parties expressed support had nothing to do with the outcome!

Bristol is one of a small number of cities fortunate enough to have its own Green Belt. This has influenced the way both the natural and built environment has developed and makes Bristol almost unique in that open countryside is visible from most parts of the city. A recent survey found that we are in the top few cities in the country that tourists like to visit, and a proximity to open countryside was a prime reason. Putting a monetary value on our Green Belt is difficult but as tourism brings millions of pounds to the city each year, it must be substantial and should not be ignored.

This week I listened as the Council announced its Core Strategy for the future of our city. I was delighted as much was made of the declaration that all 100 acres of Green Belt within the city boundary would be protected till at least 2021. Good news indeed - until watching on TV that evening the deputy leader of the Council advocating building an arena, yes, you've guessed it, on the Green Belt!

PAUL MIZEN

## MEETINGS PAST AND FUTURE

**R**ICHARD BEVAN, the City Council's Pest Control Services Manager, launched our winter season of meetings with a most entertaining and informative talk about how the city deals with many different sorts of pests, from rats to cockroaches. He told us how seagull numbers are being kept under control by substituting imitation eggs in their nests. We learned that if humans had the jumping ability of fleas, we could leap over the Leaning Tower of Pisa! Who would have imagined that the lifestyle of the bed bug could be so fascinating?

The small audience very much enjoyed this talk and we were impressed by the obvious enthusiasm and dedication of Richard and his staff in doing a difficult job in sometimes very unpleasant conditions. We're sure that our next talk on *Urban Wildlife* will also be very enjoyable and hope that many of you will come along on 19 January.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**N**ORMAL meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at St Peter's Rooms (side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth), usually starting at 7.30pm. The **M** symbol means our own meetings - to which anyone is very welcome, member or not. We are always happy to include information about other meetings which may interest our members.

**M Tuesday 15 December:** Our evergreen *Xmas Party*. A convivial evening, and an excellent opportunity to meet other members. Time to enjoy Christmas activities and have a chat while enjoying an American Supper - so please bring a small food contribution if you can. Mulled wine provided! *Please note that the Party will start a little later than usual - at 7.45pm - to allow some setting up time.*

**M Tuesday 19 January:** An evening of photos with the theme *Urban Wildlife*. ANN MEAD is an accomplished photographer who will show images of the creatures in her garden and tell us something about them.

**M Tuesday 16 February:** Our *Annual General Meeting and Birthday Party*. See the formal notice on the back page. We shall also have a speaker on a topical subject.

**M Tuesday 16 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 2009, then your membership runs through to the end of 2010; 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!*

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

**T**HE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 16 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.

Nominations for either Officers or Committee members are very welcome and should 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). Please feel free to contact me or any Committee member for an informal chat if you'd like more information about joining the Committee.

The formal A.G.M. business will include a report-back to members on the year's events. This will be followed by a short talk on a topical subject. 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*

## Malago Valley Conservation Group

<b>Chairman</b>	VACANCY	
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	Mavis Palmer	964 2344
<b>Hon. Secretary</b>	André Coutanche	964 3106
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	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.