



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 89
Spring
2011

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING has come and gone for another year. It was great to see such a good audience (must be the wine and cheese), and if you weren't there, you can read the reports which were presented at the A.G.M., starting on page 4.

We were particularly pleased to have as our special guest speaker MELANIE MONAGHAN who is the Manager for the Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership (she's based at the Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership). I mentioned in the last *Newsletter* that I had personal criticisms of the principle of the Neighbourhood Partnership system, so it was brave of Melanie to accept our invitation! But I repeat here what I said at the A.G.M.: M.V.C.G. as an organisation takes a pragmatic view and will get involved with whatever systems allow us to influence the environment in our part of Bristol.

Melanie gave us a clear explanation of what the Neighbourhood Partnership was intended to do, and explained how it worked, with the Neighbourhood *Forums* operating in each individual ward and the *Partnership* covering the three wards of Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park. I know that for some people at the A.G.M. it was largely new, and their reactions were a bit mixed! Each type of body has quarterly meetings, and we've put the forthcoming dates in the Programme on page 11. A couple of M.V.C.G. Committee members will continue to attend, offering constructive personal criticism where we think it's necessary. But I would encourage more M.V.C.G. members to go along and let me have your impressions, so that we can in due course formulate an M.V.C.G. policy.

I mentioned last time the new 'Environment Sub-Group' of the Partnership. It seems that this group is already seen as being of limited value, since other forums exist which do much the same thing. This is all very much a work in progress!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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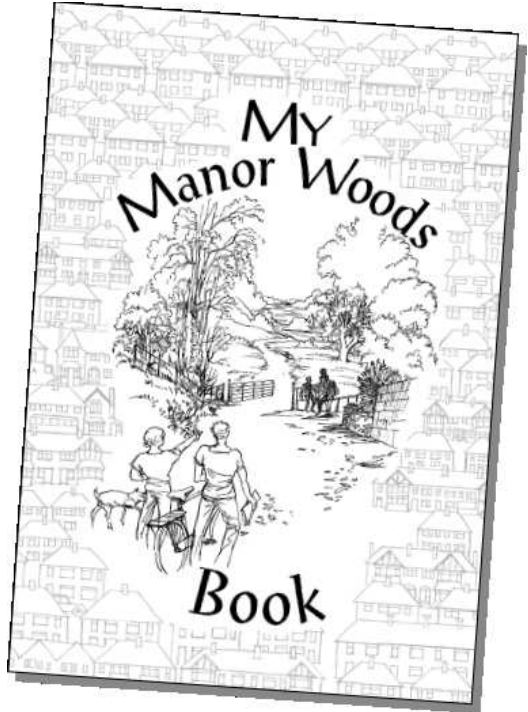
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ONE ... TWO ... THREE ... MY MANOR WOODS BOOKS

The M.V.C.G. members who created this book ten years ago and those who have read it should enjoy this story ...

A FEW YEARS AGO, FOOD FOR ALL agreed to sell our book in their shop at the Gatehouse Centre; M.V.C.G. give them 50p per book sold.

Last month an elderly lady came up to the FOOD FOR ALL stall at the Witherwood Church Centre and bought a copy. We chatted and she told me that she and her husband used to be governors in local schools. She felt Manor Woods Valley was well worth visiting and should be better known. She would give the book to one of the schools she knows. Half an hour later she was back. She would have a second copy. When I went to deliver it at her house she had thought that a third school in her neighbourhood needed a book as well.



This lovely lady has enormous difficulties walking so when I asked her if she was going to deliver them herself she said ‘No, when I meet some of my former fellow school governors they will help me deliver them.’

Enthusiasm and action - how wonderful and inspiring!

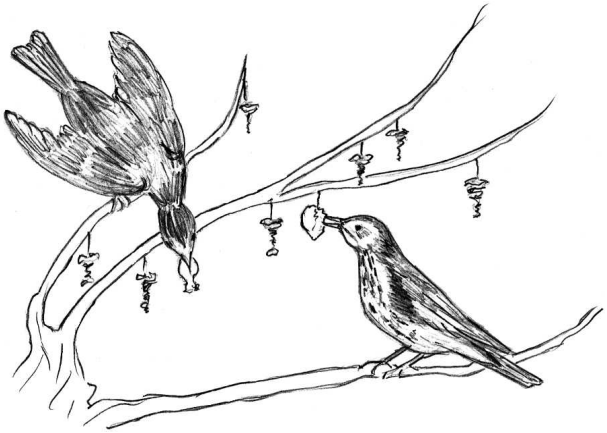
MARIE JO COUTANCHE

Note from the editor: Do you know anybody who would like a copy? There are still a few left ...

WILD BS13 - Part 1: Birds (domestic and foreign)

We had an amazing week or so with the snow before christmas when our garden was alive with birds - great tits, coal tits, long-tailed tits, blackcaps, goldfinches, starlings, robins, dunnocks, magpies ... so busy out there! We had some very skinny, timid blackbirds around for days, probably the migratory ones that *Autumwatch* told us about. A thrush came in every day looking beautiful against the snow - such a treat to see one. A few redwings on the apple tree next door became a flock day after day. They went, leaving the tree festooned with frozen hanging apple cores!

Our back garden is back to normal now, sadly - just Bob the robin, Doris the dunnock, Mr B. the bold local blackbird and an overpowering female blackbird who completely dominates the birdtable. Bill and Koo, the collared doves and Wally the woodpigeon sit in the pear tree (no partridges!). Never mind, at least the birds found us when they were in need. Perhaps they'll remember our 'cat-free' wild oasis and use the nest boxes and bird baths etc. throughout the year. We do hope so!



ANGELA JAMES



RECYCLING BOOKS

IF YOU HAVE ENJOYED reading a book and feel you would like somebody else to enjoy it why not offer it to your local library to add to their stock? Another way of sharing and helping your library at the same time.

REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

PETER CRISPIN welcomed everyone to the meeting. The evening followed the usual format, with reports on our various activities during 2010 given by the appropriate person, followed by our special guest speaker, Melanie Monaghan, who explained to us the purpose and the workings of the Neighbourhood Partnerships.

Programme Report: Paul Mizen began his report by paying tribute to Lola Hardingham who had run the Programme so well for so many years. He described the meetings which had happened since he took over the role.

In March we heard James Twine who is the Commercial Director of the Bristol-based Soil Association and an organic farmer in Somerset. He spoke with enthusiasm and made it a very informative evening. Stephen Wickham, the Vice-Chairman of Bristol Civic Society, came to speak to us in April. He traced the history of the society and explained to us the work it does in the city of Bristol, very similar to what M.V.C.G. does at a local level. In October our Fungi Foray in the meadow of Manor Woods Valley was very successful; it was led by Justin Smith, the City Council Wildlife and Woodland Officer. In October Brian Lomas from the Light Rail Transit Association came to speak to us and went into a lot of detail about this very relevant topic. Our Christmas Party in December was very well attended and well organised by Paul and his helpers. Coming into the new year, we welcomed Justin Smith again, this time in a fascinating talk on Bristol's wildlife.

Paul finished by encouraging everyone to continue to support the programme of meetings.

Planning Issues: André Coutanche gave a broadly similar report to that of last year. He has been monitoring the weekly lists of planning applications, looking more closely at a few of the ones in our three wards which seem significant, and bringing a few of those to the Committee. In many cases, the Committee is content to let the planners decide without making a comment. In a handful of cases each year, we e-mail the planners with our views.

Highridge Playing Fields remains a concern. Highridge United Football Club made a new planning application for changing rooms at the start of the year. There was nothing to object to *per se* in the application, which was granted, but we commented on the Club's dismal record on failed applications and their inability to comprehend planning requirements. We had no problem with an adjacent planning application - the replacement of the 'Golden Cockerel' with suitably designed housing - and there seemed to be some hope when Mr Vinh Nguyen, the developer of the houses, came to a meeting of the Highridge Forum and offered his help and advice to Football Club representatives. Although the Club have a new chairman from this time last year, they still don't seem able to engage with the local community. The application for houses was granted in the autumn.

The 'Lake Shore' development by Urban Splash at the Wills office site, which had been on hold, restarted during the year and is due for completion this year. We continue to see this development as massively important for the regeneration of this part of Hartcliffe and for Crox Bottom.

There are two hardy perennials which come up every year - what we call the 'Matties block' - 1-4 The Parade, Bishopsworth, opposite St Peter's Church - and what we call the 'Marpets block' in the Highridge Road row of shops. Planning applications for the Marpets block have come and gone over the years, and part of the ground floor was redeveloped this year as a new dental surgery. A very recent application for flats and parking for the rest of the block was withdrawn. There's still no sign of activity on the Matties block, where the planning permission which we supported will expire in June. The maintenance of the surrounding area, which has caused us concern in the past, seems to have improved this year.

We were pleased to support an application by the City Council to build a pavement from below Bishopsworth Library around the corner to the entrance to Manor Woods Valley - along the site of the former toilet block. This was completed during the year and greatly improves pedestrian access to our favourite Local Nature Reserve!

There was an application during the year to demolish and rebuild the Jehovah Witnesses hall on Whitchurch Road. We had no objection to the proposed new building, but Heather Leeson pointed out that the good trees along the pavement frontage would be removed. We objected to this, though the application was granted. Details of the landscaping will have to be agreed separately.

A recent application at the so-called SOM Centre at the junction of Grange Road and Church Road was for a take-away. We looked at it and couldn't see it being approved - and it wasn't.

There have also been planning applications on various sites up and down Bedminster Down Road - between the Cross Hands and the Parson Street one-way system. We have looked at them but have been happy to let the planners decide.

We also kept tabs on some major planning issues which weren't planning applications. Firstly, we have been following the saga of Bristol City Football Club's application for a new stadium at Ashton Gate. We deliberately haven't taken an 'official' view, since it's outside our area, though several committee members have strong personal interest and involvement and keep us informed.

It was impossible at the start of the year to talk about the stadium without talking about the proposed urban extension between Ashton Gate and Nailsea. Then came a change of government, which caused a massive change in the planning landscape. The Regional Spatial Strategy was abolished almost overnight, and with it the hope/threat of the urban extension.

The other part of the stadium/urban extension debate at the start of the year was the Ring Road. That hasn't completely gone away, but it definitely looks a lot less like a done

deal than it did a year ago. M.V.C.G.'s view is clear - we oppose it. The Bus Rapid Transit proposals are also in the 'under a cloud' category, and we await developments without taking them particularly seriously.

Progress with Manor Woods Valley: Marie Jo Coutanche, as Convenor of the Manor Woods Valley working group, reported that the Manor Woods Valley Group has held meetings every six weeks or so. We were pleased to welcome Beryl Heaton to our working group. Quite a lot of work has been involved to bring several projects to fruition.

The first half of the year was very busy for the group as we worked with designer Clare Chalice on the interpretation board for the Flower Meadow. It was a team work which included getting opinion from members of the public and advice from professionals, doing some historical research and of course deciding what we wanted to communicate to members of the public. It culminated in the unveiling of the 'Mid-Summer Meadow' board on a beautiful day in early June. This board was financed from a grant from Yansec for £2000 and £339.46 from M.V.C.G. funds. This was the third of a set of three boards illustrating several habitats in Manor Woods Valley: the stream, the woodland and the summer meadow.

In early 2010 we completed the work started in the autumn of 2009 in Bishopsworth Library Garden. We planted some wild flowers around the edges and perennial flowers and herbs on the street side. It is supposed to be low maintenance planting. Unfortunately we had a dry spring and early summer. We hope that some of our plants will grow again this spring. We also installed logs for children to sit on when they have library activities. These logs were donated by Lee Pibworth. M.V.C.G. received a letter of thanks from the Head of the Library Service.

With help from Valley Heights residents, we have kept an eye on the new planting below Valley Height flats. It suffered a little from the drought in the summer and minor vandalism but with some maintenance in the spring it should grow well this year.

In the summer our group met John Walters, the manager of Quadron Services, the contractors responsible for Manor Woods Valley. It was very helpful as we can now report problems simultaneously to him and Julian Cox, our Community Park Officer. We have their work schedule for litter collections which makes monitoring easier for us. Members of the public and of M.V.C.G. still pick up rubbish there regularly when they go for walks. A lot of us will remember our annual 'Amphibious Garbage Raid'. It was nice to hear that is now part of Quadron services jobs to clear the stream once a year in the winter.

As in the two previous years we tackled invasive weeds in Manor Woods Valley. There were two sessions organised by the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum. A large group of Environment Agency employees, a few M.V.C.G. members, a few members of the public and two French visitors tackled the Himalayan Balsam on the island in the pond. We hope that the wild native flowers which grow there as well will have more space this year. However we know eradicating this plant takes many years. We also monitored the annual

treatment performed on the Japanese Knotweed. After some confusion on the part of the authorities and several reminders from us we think that most of the relevant patches were treated. It seems that the battle is gradually being won.

We must not forget that the island just mentioned should not be there as it is the result of silt which has accumulated for years. We regularly remind the Parks authorities about it and we will carry on doing it.

Because walks we organised in previous years were poorly attended we only had a Fungi Foray in October, led by Justin Smith, our Woodland and Wildlife Officer. It was attended by a dozen people and was most enjoyable. Suggestion for further outings are welcome.

For three years we have mentioned Wrings and the extension of their yard into Manor Woods Valley. We have sent a number of e-mails to the Planning Department last year to ask them if all the conditions had been discharged. A bund was finally constructed around the yard but we are still awaiting the planting on top of it, to screen the yard. We remain concerned about what is left of the quarry area, at the bottom of the slope. M.V.C.G. fought to have the whole area included in the Local Nature Reserve three years ago but we had to give up as it would have put the LNR designation of whole of Manor Woods Valley in danger at the time. Then Wrings were granted their planning permission which M.V.C.G. strongly opposed. Last year the area left, which contains all these fruit trees was cleared twice of brambles and scrub by Justin Smith our Wildlife and Woodland Officer to make it more accessible. We were pleased with the result. However the land has been designated as potential area to be developed. It has not been included in the Area Green Space Plans which gives the public the opportunity to give their views. It belongs to Council Property Services, the same as the area where Wrings extended their yard. We think we may have reasons to be worried about the future of this valuable part of Manor Woods Valley.

Progress with Other Projects: André Coutanche reported that the South Bristol Riverscapes Initiative came to an end during 2010, but it has left behind a very attractive website which is linked from our own. It also led to some useful contacts and links with other groups. The annual Malago Trek which we help to organise and guide, was again done in 2010 under the auspices of South Bristol Riverscapes, though fewer people came along this time. Another excellent legacy of this project was the Wildlife Survey of the Malago and Pigeonhouse streams which was commissioned from Phil Quinn.

Perhaps the main 'project' we were involved with in 2010 was the consultation on the Area Green Space Plans. Our misgivings about this process grew during the year, and we ended up regretting the amount of voluntary time we had put in to what we see as a flawed project. One silver lining was the success of the concerted effort by many local individuals and groups - including M.V.C.G. - to oppose the selling off of part of Kings Head Lane Park for houses. Other open spaces in our area weren't so lucky, and there

continues to be concern for our neighbours across Hartcliffe Way, the Northern Slopes Initiative, whose area was part of a separate planning and a dubious consultation process.

Not surprisingly, the A.G.S.P. was a major topic at the Parks Forum in 2010. We continue to attend regularly, and the networking is useful, but we are beginning to wonder exactly what giving up our Saturday mornings four times a year is achieving on the ground.


Marie Jo mentioned that we will no longer be organising an Amphibious Garbage Raid on the Malago in Manor Woods Valley, but we did have one last hurrah in May, which was also a bit of a swan song for the South Bristol Rivers Initiative. Working though Adrian Mantle, who's a fireman at the Hartcliffe Way Fire and Rescue Station, we had a wander along a less familiar stretch of our streams. We also had a less damp stroll along pretty well the entire length of the Malago and the Pigeonhouse in our patch to help with the annual trolley survey. Not too many trolleys, but still some bad dumping.

Our regular *Newsletter* appears quarterly, and they and the programme are regularly updated on our website. We've also started to collect members' e-mail addresses for very occasional mail-outs and reminders. Members were invited to let André have their e-mail addresses if they'd like to be included.

Wildlife Survey of
PIGEONHOUSE STREAM
AND THE MALAGO

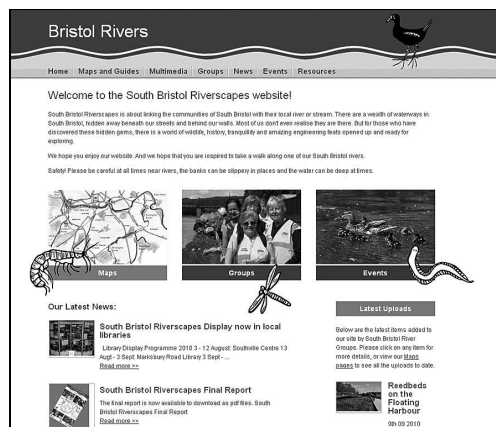
(interim report)
May 2010

For South Bristol Riverscapes Partnership



Phil Quinn (Ecology and land use) MIEEM
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email: philquinn@bol.com

Left: Phil Quinn's excellent (and sometimes amusing!) report, which is available from André in either electronic (PDF) or hardcopy form



Bristol Rivers

Home | Maps and Guides | Multimedia | Groups | News | Events | Resources

Welcome to the South Bristol Riverscapes website!

South Bristol Riverscapes is about linking the communities of South Bristol with their local river or stream. There are a wealth of wilderness in South Bristol, hidden away beneath our streets and behind our walls. Most of us don't even realise they are there. But for those who have discovered these hidden gems, there is a world of wildlife, history, tranquillity and amazing engineering built around us, and ready for exploring.

We hope you enjoy our website. And we hope that you are inspired to take a walk along one of our South Bristol rivers.

Safe! Please be careful at all times near rivers, the banks can be slippery in places and the water can be deep at times.

Maps | Groups | Events

Our Latest News:

- South Bristol Riverscapes Display now in local libraries**
Library Display Programme 2010 3 - 12 August: Southville Centre 13 Aug - 3 Dept Mansbury Road Library 3 Dept - ...
[Read more...](#)
- South Bristol Riverscapes Final Report**
The final report is now available to download as pdf files. South Bristol Riverscapes Final Report.
[Read more...](#)

Latest Uploads

- Below are the latest items added to our site by South Bristol River Groups. Please click on any item for more details, or view our [BLOG](#) posted to see all the updates to date.
- Reedbeds on the Floating Hart-Out**
09/09/2010

Above right: The South Bristol Riverscapes website is well worth a browse. It's at www.bristolrivers.com or linked from our site at www.mvcg.org.uk

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2010

HERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS which Beryl Heaton presented to the A.G.M. on 15 February. Beryl reported that once again we have an excess of expenditure over income and it is twice that of last year. However this does not give rise to concern as we have achieved a long desired ambition to install an interpretation board for the meadow in Manor Woods Valley. The actual cost of this was £2339.46 but we successfully applied for a grant of £2000 from Yansec, the net cost to the group being £339.46. It puts our 'deficit' of £162.60 in a favourable light. Once again Marie Jo has been busy recycling cans brought to her and selling books which resulted in £80.60 additional income as the cost of the books had previously been met. Thanks must go to André and Marie Jo for their diligence in pursuing the grant application, as earlier attempts with different providers had been unsuccessful. We are also grateful to our members' continued support by their subscriptions and generous donations.

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Membership	308.00	Interpretation Board	2339.46
Functions	44.56	Postage & Stationery	29.01
Other Income	<u>2159.63</u>	Refreshments at A.G.M.	27.53
		Hall Hire	120.00
		Printing	72.80
		Speakers fees/donations/expenses	45.00
		Christmas Meeting	8.99
		CPRE Subscription	<u>32.00</u>
Total	2512.19	Total	2674.79

	£
Excess of expenditure over income	162.60
Brought forward from 2009	<u>6172.65</u>
Balance carried forward to 2011	6010.05

Made up of: Cash in hand	5.82
HSBC Money Manager A/C	4868.72
HSBC Current A/C	1135.51

Detail of Other Income	£	Detail of Function Income	£
Grant from Yansec	2000.00	Christmas Party	34.56
Donations	73.00	Refreshments	<u>10.00</u>
Sale of Aluminium Cans etc.	39.60		44.56
Book Sales	41.00		
Bank Interest	2.98		
Find	1.10		
Postage	<u>1.95</u>		
	2159.63		

BERYL HEATON
Hon. Treasurer

WILD BS13 - Part 2: Birds (home and away)

When we visit our family in Macclesfield we are amazed at the number of goldfinches who come to feed in their garden. We knew that the secret of attracting them was niger seeds and we resolved in the new year to buy the seed and the special feeder required.

We set it up early in January and within two weeks we saw three goldfinches at one time. Two were eating the niger seeds whilst one was on the other feeder. Now their visits are a daily occurrence. They are a delight to watch as they are such pretty birds. I wonder where they came from and how they spotted the niger seeds.

We have had large numbers of chaffinches and green finches all through the cold weather but have regularly topped up the feeders to try and ensure the birds' survival in the harsh conditions. We have an apple tree at a convenient viewing distance from the kitchen window and with the help of binoculars I have counted a dozen or so species in the last couple of months. On one occasion I even saw a heron perch on a nearby telephone pole. No doubt he was looking out for a garden pond stocked with fish for a tasty meal!

BERYL HEATON

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

A MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM was included with the last *Newsletter*, since subs were due on 1 January. The vast majority of members have already paid, and it was very gratifying to receive so many prompt renewals. Perhaps we're doing something right!

If you didn't quite get round to sending off your sub. and renewal form, you'll find another one enclosed with this *Newsletter*. Please return it and your sub. either to Beryl at 3 Kings Walk, BS13 8BB, or to André at 14 Queens Road, BS13 8LB. Or bring it to a meeting.

We hope to hear from you, but, if we don't, we'll reluctantly assume that you no longer want to be an M.V.C.G. member and we'll stop delivering the *Newsletter*.

THANK YOU

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

THE PROGRAMME continues, with meetings on the third Tuesday of the month, starting at 7.30pm. We meet at St Peter's Rooms, by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. The **M** symbol means our own meetings, to which everyone is very welcome, M.V.C.G. member or not. Following the presentation at the A.G.M. about the Neighbourhood Partnership, we're including the dates for their meetings, though we recognise that the first ones may well be over by the time you are reading this. See also page 1.

Wednesday 9 March: HARTCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Wilmott Park Bowling Club, Fulford Road.

Thursday 10 March: BISHOPSWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Withywood Church Centre, Queens Road.

Monday 14 March: DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP, 7.00-9.00pm, Personal Development Centre, Bridge Learning Campus, Teyfant Road.

M Tuesday 15 March: Our usual meeting at 7.30pm in St Peter's Rooms. RACHEL CLARKE will give us *an insight into the workings of the Knowle West Media Centre*. If you went on the M.V.C.G. visit to the Media Centre in September 2009 you'll know what an interesting place it is. And if you didn't go, you've probably driven or walked past their handsome building in Leinster Avenue and wondered what goes on there. Come and learn all about it!

M Tuesday 19 April: MARK COOMBES will talk to us about the work of the *City Council Dog Warden Service*. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms.

Thursday 2 June: WHITCHURCH PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Hartcliffe Methodist Church, Mowcroft Road.

Tuesday 14 June: HARTCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Gatehouse Centre, Hareclive Road.

Wednesday 15 June: BISHOPSWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM, 7.00-9.00pm, Ex-servicemen's Club.

- *For more information about the Neighbourhood Forum or Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, call Melanie Monaghan or Heather Williams at Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership on (0117) 903 8044.*



WILD BS13 - Part 3: Birds (lady)



SOME readers will know that I had an unfortunate accident at Christmas, which had the result that my house was left unoccupied while I was recuperating with family members. The ladybirds (page 4 of the last *Newsletter*) therefore had seven weeks totally undisturbed. Since I have returned home there has been activity. To my surprise they did not all wake up and fly away within a day or two of each other, but most mornings one or occasionally two have crawled away from the pack, dropped onto the window blind, and, I assume, flown out of the window which I have left open for them.

The remaining ones are not entirely comatose because they rearrange themselves into a new huddle. There are only about four left at the time of writing but they seem very slow to rouse. I think the current cold snap must be putting them off but I have not noticed the weather having any pronounced effect on their behaviour.



MARY SYKES

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	907 0623
Vice-Chairman	Mavis Palmer	964 2344
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth, Mary Sykes

Co-opted Committee Members

Valerie Gay, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Derek Pickup, Kevin Quartley (*All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members*).

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; telephone 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.org.uk; website www.mvcg.org.uk.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.