



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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IN LATE OCTOBER, this arrived out of the blue in the M.V.C.G. e-mail in-box. It made our day, and it sums up perfectly one aspect of what M.V.C.G. is about - making things better on the ground ...

‘I came across your website quite by accident. I grew up in Downton Road in Knowle West and went to Connaught Road Secondary Modern School in the late ’50s and early ’60s. I spent many a weekend fishing for tadpoles at ‘The Malago’. As a kid I wondered how anything could survive in such a stinking mud hole, but frogs are resilient creatures aren’t they?’

‘As a kid I thought it was quite normal to have old mattresses, beds, washing machines, car bodies etc. fowling up our waterways. When you are growing up you are a product of your environment; what you see around you is accepted as being normal. The behaviour of adults is seen as being normal by kids who mimic their elders.

‘I have lived in Perth, Western Australia, for close to 40 years, having left Bristol when I was 17. I returned on several occasions over the years to visit family, the most recent visit being about 18 months ago. I couldn’t help but notice how much better and healthier the Malago looked compared with my memories. It has had ‘life’ breathed back into it and seemed to flow unobstructed by the debris I remember and thought was normal.

‘The world is a better place (even if it doesn’t always show it) for people like you who care enough to do something and not sit around complaining that ‘someone’ should fix this or fix that. I’m so happy there are people like you around trying to ‘break the cycle’ of the ‘litter mentality’. Your kids will notice what you do and hopefully will follow suit. It may take a generation or two but you’ll get there.

‘I wish you Good Luck.’

ALEX KNIGHT

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KINGS HEAD LANE PARK

IT'S MY PLEASURE to give an up-date on Kings Head Lane Park as it is looking wonderful at the moment with lovely hues from the fallen leaves. The park has been well maintained over the past few years, with regular mowing and hedge-trimming and line-painting on the football pitch. The changing rooms had a 'sprucing up' earlier this year, with works to the inside and outside.

The play area is still being well used and tidied up every Monday morning. There has been very little vandalism and damage and the children use the play area on a daily basis. The general feeling from families in the area is of parents allowing their children to go to the park after school and meet their friends as it is safe - which is a great step forward.

There were some lower branches damaged/torn off over the summer, and once this was reported to the Council they responded by sending a team of tree surgeons who tidied up the trees around the play area and Home Farm side of the park.

The recent addition of the two owl boxes has added the finishing touch to the park. The owl boxes were made by CSV Environment workers a few years ago. Lee was going to put them up in Manor Woods but I'm afraid it was one of those jobs that aren't a 'quick fix', more of a 'military manoeuvre'! The team of tree surgeons climbed up two large trees, one by Home Farm and the other by Greylands Road, to put the boxes up. I have heard owls over in the huge Vicarage trees this year, so fingers crossed they may find the boxes and move across to the park.



Bats have been seen in the park both in the Greylands Road area and behind the houses in Vicarage Road. Foxes and hedgehogs are also regular visitors, as are an abundance of birds; I have seen woodpeckers and thrushes on a regular basis which is so up-lifting even on the greyest, wettest days whilst dog walking.

My hope for the future is that the park will continue to be well used by all and I believe the play park was the catalyst for bringing new people to the park, grandparents with children, families having picnics, people bringing the whole family along to watch the football. Finally a big thanks to the Council for all their hard work and quick response times when we need them!

LIS PIBWORTH

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP is delighted to report two successes after excellent collaboration between our group and Justin Smith, the Council's Woodland and Wildlife Officer.

- **OLD 'QUARRIES' AREA**

In previous newsletters we have reported our concerns about its future as it is not included in the L.N.R. Now Justin and his team have made this area accessible by removing a lot of the scrub. Twenty-three apple trees and one big pear tree all bearing delicious fruit this year have emerged, all very nicely pruned. At last we can enjoy this very special habitat. Do any of our readers know who planted these fruit trees?

- **THE WOODLAND**

Until M.V.C.G. obtained a grant to have the path through the woodland built a few years ago, the area was inaccessible and had been neglected. Justin's team have now coppiced some of the hazelnut bushes to encourage new growth. They have also removed a lot of the self-seeded ash saplings which have invaded some areas. This work will create clearings and thus encourage a greater variety of plants.

Finally, two new bins have been installed along the main path after we suggested their location, and we have decided to replace some of the 'Abi the Airedale dog notices'. We created them a couple of years ago to encourage people to clean after their dog.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

A STROLL IN THE SUNSHINE

MEMBERS of the R.N.I.B. afternoon club, to whom I have spoken on a number of occasions, asked me if I would guide them on a stroll in Manor Woods Valley. Some of them had tried this walk last year when an audio trail had been made by Helen Adshead and others. The people said they liked to have a live guide as it was possible that birds or plants could be identified on the spot.

On this occasion, a very warm day for October, only three people, Brian, Mary and John, and one Guide Dog (called Colin) met up behind Bishopsworth Library. Because we were following the cycle path, those with limited sight could enjoy a smooth passage, and the open space allowed Colin to get out of his harness and run about on the grass.



The small group were able to enjoy the sunshine and appreciate the varied shadows, noises of the river, bird calls and for some of them, a perception of autumn colours or blocks of different greens. I gave them wild sloes and blackberries to taste, honeysuckle flowers to smell and tried to identify things they pointed out.

Towards the end of the walk they rested on the seat while I raided the 'unofficial orchard' for some apples and pears. They all said they enjoyed the experience and hope to come back in the spring, and I saw them safely on a bus back into Bristol.

MARIAN GREEN

ARE YOU SQUIRREL PROOF?

I OPENED THE DOOR to my next door neighbour a while ago. 'Mary,' she gasped, 'you'll never believe it. I've just seen five squirrels going into your flat roof.' I have an extension to my kitchen with a flat roof.

I rang Pest Control. 'We're sorry,' they said, 'but we don't have a squirrel service. The only advice we can give is they don't like the sound of metal on metal, so banging a couple of saucepans together may scare them off!'

A builder friend went next door and reported a piece of the fascia had come away. He blocked up the hole.

Next morning I was sitting on my bed, drying my hair, when a squirrel, obviously terrified, rushed into the bedroom. He rushed out again and ran back downstairs. I followed. The squirrel investigated the dining room. I opened both front and back doors. The squirrel disappeared through the front door thankfully never to return. He had got into the kitchen through a faulty light in the ceiling below the flat roof. It was a minute hole and having dropped on to the work surface it was impossible for him to get back.

The electrician who mended the lights said squirrels have two broods a year in March and September and can cause a lot of damage. I think mine were a family because although squirrels regularly visit the garden I have never seen five at once.

My advice is to inspect your property for any small holes and if you hear any rustling sounds investigate them.

MARY SYKES

- M.V.C.G. entered two teams, as usual, in the annual Bishopsworth Quiz which was held on 8 November at the Bishopsworth Branch of the Royal British Legion. They both succeeded in achieving respectable results without actually winning - and having to set the Quiz next year!

AN ACADEMIC CHANGE

Bedminster Down School is due to 'convert' to Academy status on 1 January. In the second of our 'guest author' pieces, Gary Schlick, Headteacher, outlines why ...



THERE ARE two types of Academies. The original Academies generally replaced schools that were deemed by government to be underperforming. Instead of being under Local Authority control, they had a sponsor. Sponsors included businesses, charities, universities, F.E. colleges and faith bodies. Sponsored Academies often aimed to make a break with the past and develop a new vision for the school, often in the form of a new name, logo, uniform etc.

The Coalition Government has since introduced a new type of Academy. These are 'converter' Academies - successful schools which can benefit from the same freedoms. The major difference is that they convert as is, they do not have a sponsor, or a new vision. The idea is that they use Academy freedoms to further improve their school. We are to become one of these 'converter' Academies.

I feel strongly that we know what we need to do to continue to improve our school. Our recent Inspector's visit and GCSE results (the best in the school's history) would indicate this to be the case. The Academy freedoms will allow us to continue our journey to becoming an outstanding school. There is also the benefit of increased funding that we would access as an Academy. This will enable us to spend more money on the things that we know make a difference to student achievement.

The amount of community support for our change in status has been very reassuring and with us keeping the same name, logo and uniform, will anyone notice the difference? The reality is, I doubt it. It is interesting, however, that looking at new Academy freedoms has been a catalyst to closer partnership working with our local primaries and led to discussions about areas such as Sixth Form provision.

The bottom line remains that we have a great responsibility to ensure that we provide the best education for young people in our locality. Whatever our status we will never lose sight of this priority.

GARY SCHLICK
Headteacher, Bedminster Down School

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

DON'T FORGET that in the New Year, we will meet on the third Monday of the month, at 2.00pm in the afternoon instead of in the evening, and at Zion Bristol, on Bedminster Down. Our Christmas Party, on Wednesday 7 December, is at the traditional venue of 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.

M Wednesday 7 December: M.V.C.G.'s *Christmas Party*, at St Peter's Rooms. Please note the switch from our normal Tuesday. It will be the traditional mix of fun and nonsense, including a prize for the best headwear! We will also have a raffle (bring some money!) and our usual American supper, so, if you can, please bring a small contribution for the feast.

* **Tuesday 20 December:** DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP, 7.00-9.00pm, at Blenheim Scouts Activity Centre.

M Monday 16 January: Our first afternoon meeting at Zion, starting at 2.00pm. PETER WEEKS will speak on *Ashton Court Mansion*. Since 2005 Peter has represented Bristol Civic Society on the City Council project for restoration and reopening of perhaps Bristol's greatest hidden treasure. Peter will tell us the fascinating story of the house and the restoration project.

M Monday 20 February: Our *Annual General Meeting* at Zion, at 2.00pm. See the formal notice on the back page. Please think about joining the committee - but come anyway to join in our Birthday Party!

M Monday 19 March: TONY DYER will be speaking about *Bristol's Living Streets* at Zion at 2.00pm.

* *For more information about Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, call Heather Williams at the Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership on 903 8044.*

MEMBERSHIP of M.V.C.G. runs on a calendar year basis, so it's that time again to renew your subscription (one member already has!). If you joined in the last few months of 2011, then your membership runs through to the end of 2012; otherwise you should 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 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

THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Monday 20 February at Zion Bristol, Bishopsworth Road, starting at 2.00pm. The Officers and Committee members retire each year but are eligible for re-election. The names of the current Officers and Committee members appear below.

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 below). 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

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*).

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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.