



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 93
Spring
2012

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was on Monday 20 February and most people seemed to enjoy both the presentations and the refreshments afterwards. As usual in the *Spring Newsletter*, we're reporting the A.G.M. in detail for those who weren't able to be there. In quite a few cases, there are updates on other pages!

We were very sorry to lose Mavis Palmer from the Committee because of health problems. She has done an enormous amount for M.V.C.G. in her quiet way over the years, happy to be a 'back-room girl', but always there with practical help and considerate comments. We'll miss her. Mary Sykes has stepped up to take on the Vice-Chairman's role from Mavis. We can always use more people to help, whether on the Committee or not. Please think about getting involved, and don't hesitate to get in touch to find out more.

After the formal A.G.M. business, our topical speaker was our very own Pete Crispin who updated us on the South Bristol Link (SBL, aka the Ring Road) and the associated Bus Rapid Transport schemes, for which the Council were granted *some* of the necessary money by the Government. M.V.C.G. remains opposed to the South Bristol Link, because its costs - financial and environmental - are self-evidently high, and its claimed benefits are unclear or implausible. We're not the only ones, and a very well informed consortium of protesters will soon be taking on the Council's claims at a Public Inquiry. This will be into what is called BRT2 - the Bus Rapid Transport line from Long Ashton into the city centre. We're supporting the protesters, because, even on the Council's figures, the South Bristol Link isn't justified without BRT2. Consultation locally on the SBL will be starting soon.

Finally, we're sorry to report the death of Edwin Turnbull at the grand age of 96. He designed our logo when we started back in 1994. No more room here, so visit www.mvcg.org.uk/logo.htm to read about what it means!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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MAKING A START AT CROX BOTTOM

SOME GOOD NEWS to report on Crox Bottom, the attractive, under-utilised green area, unobtrusively wedged between the new flat development 'Lakeshore' (former Imperial Tobacco Office Block), Hengrove Way, Durville/Broadleas at Headley Park and Hartcliffe Way, with main entrances off Hengrove Way and Hartcliffe Way.

Bristol City Council secured £24,500 in Section 106 money from Urban Splash, the developers of 'Lakeshore', for the improvement of Crox Bottom, and the Council are now working with the 'Pride of Place' group of the Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership to determine how the money should best be spent.

Woodland and Wildlife: So far a £5000 spend is being completed by Justin Smith, Council Woodland and Wildlife Officer, and his team on the following:

- Meadow management in the north part of Crox Bottom, comprising strimming overgrown grass and tall herbs in areas of semi-improved and unimproved grassland that had previously been grazed by horses.
- Bramble and scrub being pushed back to field margins to increase the area for potential future grazing. This will enhance the floral and faunal value of the site in the future by maintaining its current high biodiversity.
- Tree works have been undertaken in the valley close to Pigeonhouse Stream, which involved the removal of a diseased alder, removal of a fallen chestnut and lowering the height of two dead monolith willows, all for health and safety reasons. All logs and other coarse debris were left on site for habitat for birds, invertebrates and fungi. The dead section from one willow has also been secured in another living willow with ratchet straps to create bat and woodpecker habitat.

Developing a Management Plan: A further £5000 has been allocated to Vicki Abel, Council Project Officer, Parks and Estates, to produce a long-term Crox Bottom Management Plan, which will enable both current and future work to fall into a well defined and realistic programme. It will also be a valuable document as a basis for future funding applications. We're looking forward with keen interest to receiving the First Draft Plan from Vicki.

Further Planned Work: So this leaves the remaining £14,500 of the available money still to be spent by the end of May 2012. The working group and Council officers have walked through Crox Bottom on two occasions and a shopping list of possible additional work was drawn up. Anton Bantock has

drawn an attractive wood pagoda style entrance with signage, which is under consideration. £14,500 seems a lot, but it is surprising how quickly this amount is whittled down with the cost of items. Preferred ideas being costed by the City Council for the Partnership include: attractive entrance signage at Hengrove Way (and possibly Hartcliffe Way if money allows at this time); notice boards at the same locations; presentational board; painting of fencing/gateing at Hengrove Way by Community Payback Scheme; metal benches at two locations; litter bins.

The aim is to encourage the community to come and enjoy Crox Bottom and we hope that the Plan will act as a springboard for further community involvement and improvements in the future.

Possible Friends of Crox Bottom Group: Finally, if this first stage goes well, we are also considering a FRIENDS OF CROX BOTTOM Group. If this interests you, please get in touch with me as a first stage. With occupiers of 'Lakeshore' shortly taking up residence, the historic area of Crox Bottom could well take on new life locally.

MIKE KNIGHT
M.V.C.G. member and Partnership Business Rep.
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DAFFODILS - PAST AND PRESENT

I TOOK A VISITING friend through the Manor Woods Valley woodland path recently, continuing our walk past Bishopsworth Library and on to Highridge Road. She was much impressed by the work of M.V.C.G. in transforming many of our green patches of grass into oases of colour, and she commented that she wished her own area could be transformed in the same way.

MAVIS EDDY



Planting below Bishopsworth Police Station in October - and already the daffs are blooming lovely!

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 2011 given by the appropriate person, followed by our special guest speaker, on this occasion our very own Chairman, who updated us on the South Bristol Link and the associated transport schemes.

Programme Report: Paul Mizen reported that we started the year with a talk by Rachel Clarke who told us about the workings of the Knowle West Media Centre and the opportunities they provided for the local community. This was followed in April by Mark Coombes, the City Council Dog Warden. Mark walked in with his 'dog' underneath his arm - not a real dog but a toy Border Collie. He then explained the trials and tribulations of his job. In June we ventured outdoors, with a visit to the Urban Splash development, 'Lakeshore', to see the transformation of the old Wills building. It was most interesting, and we had a great turn-out. Sadly, a much smaller number came to our visit to the Knowle West Media Centre, which was a shame because we were warmly received and it was a really interesting visit. October saw us back inside for a talk by Richard Bevan, who told us about the Council's cemeteries and crematoriums. Despite the subject, we enjoyed every minute, and, as usual, Richard gave a great talk. November was the Bishopsword Quiz, where our two teams acquitted themselves honourably. Our Xmas Party in December was the usual team effort, and this year we had a theme where everyone had to wear something on their heads. The prize went to Mavis Palmer who looked really good wearing her Xmas cake on her head. We had our usual good food, finished with carols, and a great time was had by all! January brought a change of venue and a change of time, a Monday afternoon at the Zion Community Centre. Our speaker was Peter Weeks who told us all about Ashton Court Mansion. The turn-out was excellent and we will continue at the same place and time until April, when we will gauge opinion. Thanks to all our speakers, all those who helped with arrangements, and everyone who came along to support.

Planning Issues: André Coutanche reported that, as usual, he had been monitoring the weekly lists of planning applications. A few of the ones in our three wards are looked at more closely, and a minority of those are brought to the Committee for debate. In most cases, the Committee is content to let the planners decide without making a comment. It's been a generally quiet year for what we might call 'normal planning applications', and we haven't found it necessary to e-mail the planners with our views this year.

We have also been keeping tabs on some major planning *issues* on and near our patch during 2011. As well as the South Bristol Link, we've also monitored the application from Bristol City F.C. for a new stadium and the resulting Town Green saga. The Stadium and Town Green are outside our patch, so we haven't taken an official view or got involved, but the issues raised - development on the Green Belt and town greens - are of direct relevance to us.

If there has been a theme in the planning applications this year, it has been pubs - the replacement of closed ones with housing. We reported last year about the replacement of the 'Golden Cockerel' at Highridge with housing - we had no problem with what was proposed, and, though the developer subsequently sold the site on, the permission he had obtained then had to be adhered to by the new owner. The same developer applied for planning permission for housing on the site of the 'Red Hart' on Bishport Avenue, and now he is consulting locally about the 'Rising Sun' on Queens Road, Withywood. Here, there may be some business use as well as housing, but there is no actual application yet.

The 'Lake Shore' development by Urban Splash at the Wills office site is nearing completion, and, as Paul reported, we visited it during the year. We hope that the people who move in will appreciate the interest and significance of the setting of the development and will be a source of members for a 'Friends of Crox Bottom' group.

Two of our 'hardy perennials' have gone quiet this 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. Whether new planning applications will arise when the economy improves, time will tell.

There was one major application in our area during 2011 - for the remaining part of the Imperial Park site, between the existing shops and Hengrove Way. This was divided into four sites and four separate applications, covering housing, including an elderly persons' home, a hotel, a car showroom and workshops, and a pub. This went to committee in January 2012 and was approved. As this stage, it's an outline permission, so we can expect a further, detailed, planning application in due course.

A planning issue which will be engaging us in 2012 will be what should happen on the site of Bishopsworth Swimming Pool. This will be closing soon, when the new Hengrove pool opens, and the Council will be asking for ideas of what to do with the site. Anton has come up with a great idea - and a great drawing - for a public open space with different areas for different age groups. Since this wouldn't generate any money for the Council, it's not very likely that we'll get exactly this, but it's just the sort of imaginative public use which we need to bring forward. (*No room in this edition for the drawing - next time!*)

The other planning issue - not application - which we've been monitoring is the Site Allocations process. This was tied in with the Area Green Space Planning Process, but it now carries on separately, with a major consultation phase due to start in March. Our principal concern here is the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley, which is simultaneously a Site of Nature Conservation Interest *and* designated for industrial/warehousing development. We have made the Avon Wildlife Trust aware of the issues here, and they are fighting to protect this and all the SNCI sites in the city which are threatened by the Site Allocations process. We can expect activity here in the coming months.

Progress with Manor Woods Valley: Marie Jo Coutanche, Convenor of the Manor Woods Valley working group, reported that the Manor Woods Valley Group has held meetings every six weeks or so. After a busy 2010 when we completed the Meadow Board and

worked in Bishopsworth Library back garden, 2011 has included various projects, some looking toward the future of Manor Woods Valley.

- **Management of woodland and scrub habitats.** Areas of scrub which used to be very thick had grown upwards and thinned. Did it mean less protection for wildlife? For years there has been very little management in the woodland and it was full of young ash saplings. So we invited Justin Smith, our Woodland and Wildlife Officer, to come for a walk with us. It was very enjoyable and informative and had excellent results:
 - 1) Our group organised two working parties in the wood where we removed self-seeded ash and chestnut saplings along the main path.
 - 2) In the autumn Justin and his team removed the bigger saplings in more areas of the woodland. They also did some hazelnut coppicing and created several clearings to encourage a better variety of plants.
 - 3) Old 'Quarries' area. This area is now more accessible as Justin and his team cleared a lot of the scrub in early autumn. Twenty-three apple trees and one big pear tree emerged, all bearing fruit of different colours and varieties. As André reported, MVCG remains concerned about the future of the old 'Quarries' area which is not included in the Local Nature Reserve and belongs to Council Property Services, the same as the area where Wrings extended their yard. Also it is not included in the Area Green Space Plans and its future is uncertain.



- **Invasive weeds.** Himalayan Balsam was cleared again from the island on the pond and along the stream. The Avon Invasive Weed Forum is pleased with the results and so are we. The Japanese Knotweed was sprayed again, at least partly. To us the eradication looks erratic and we will be contacting the official in charge of it to ask what is happening this year.
- **New bins.** We had been asking for one extra bin along the main path for a long time. Last summer two bins were added along the main path and our group was consulted on their location. Also, the one behind the library was replaced. We have also asked for one at the Valley Road entrance.

- **Area outside Vale Lane entrance on right hand side.** For years M.V.C.G. had been reporting this small area full of rubbish and nothing ever happened. The problem was to know who in the Council departments was responsible for clearing this spot. One member of our group got very angry one day and spoke to another member. The next day they went, armed with bags and pickers. They filled many bags of rubbish and then advised the Parks Department for them to come and collect the rubbish. It created ripples but all the rubbish was eventually taken away. Now we know who to contact if rubbish is dropped there again.

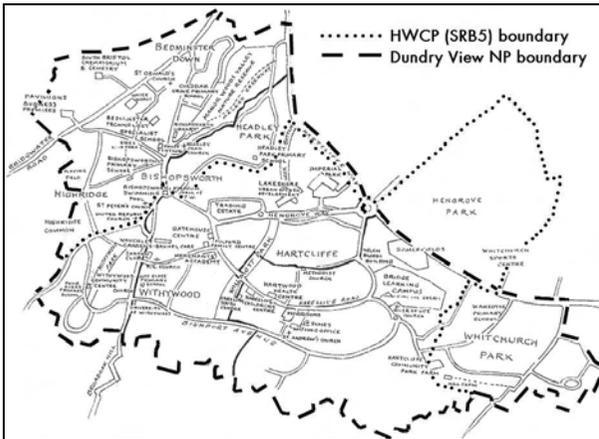


- **Dog notices.** Thank you to Angela and Tony James for replacing some of the ‘Abi the Airedale’ dog notices produced a few years ago to encourage people to clean after their dog.
- **Wrings.** We kept an eye until early 2011 when the bund around the extension in the quarry was finally planted with trees as per planning application. A long and difficult chapter is now closed.
- **New trees planted after construction of Valley Heights Flats in Bishopsworth Road quite a few years ago.** In early 2010 trees were finally planted below Valley Heights as required by the planning permission. There was some vandalism. So in early 2011 we reported it and several trees and shrubs were replaced. The bank on the side of the flats along the path up to Bishopsworth Road was also tidied up.

Progress with Other Projects: André Coutanche reported that, as in 2010, the main ‘project’ we were involved with was the Area Green Space Planning process. We regard the process as fatally flawed, since it doesn’t cover all our publicly accessible green spaces - such as the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley - and it imposes artificial constraints by working within Neighbourhood Partnership boundaries. The Neighbourhood Partnership system became increasingly important during 2011, and the number of meetings we *could* have attended is ridiculous. Even the number we actually went to isn’t sustainable as a demand on the time of public-spirited volunteers.

Our topical speaker at the last A.G.M. was Melanie Monaghan, the Chief Executive of the Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership. She told us about the Neighbourhood Partnership system, how it was supposed to work, and why we should get involved. Well, we *have* been involved, even though we think there’s a lot wrong with the system. Melanie left during the year, and she has been replaced by two people, with complementary but

distinct roles. Everywhere else in the city, Neighbourhood Partnerships are facilitated by officers of the City Council. Our area was unique, because it was facilitated by the Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership. H.W.C.P. dates back quite a few years when major grant money was awarded to Hartcliffe & Withywood under the SRB5 scheme. They have done a lot of very good work, and it was logical to build on that when the Neighbourhood Partnerships came along. However, there was also a ‘cultural’ difficulty, because the area covered by H.W.C.P. was primarily the council estates of Hartcliffe and Withywood, with some slightly strange boundary extensions to include some adjacent bits of the city. It was perhaps a bit over half of the area covered by the N.P. - the three wards of Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park. Some of the people running H.W.C.P. didn’t know the rest of the N.P. area, and one or two didn’t particularly want to. So it took a while for H.W.C.P. to get their collective head around their new role. The two new appointments to replace Melanie help to clarify things, because the N.P. is now being facilitated by Gemma Dando, a Council officer who also works with other N.P.s, and the recently appointed Chief Executive for H.W.C.P. is Jean Erskine, who will be working part-time, just on H.W.C.P. projects. Gemma is very efficient and easy to work with, and we’re pleased to see Jean again, because we knew her as founder-Director of VOSCUR, the umbrella body for voluntary organisations in Bristol, which we were active in when it started but which has evolved to become less relevant to our sort of group.



So that background explains why what started as the ‘Pride of Place Theme Group’ of the Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership morphed during the year into the Environmental sub-group of the Neighbourhood Partnership. And it was the Pride of Place Group which dealt with allocating the priorities for spending under the Area Green Space Plans. This, too, involved a lot of

meetings, and it quickly became clear that the Council officer allocated to this N.P. for the A.G.S.P. had his own ideas of how things should be done and wasn’t very open to what the local residents and representatives of local organisations, like M.V.C.G., wanted to talk about. Partly for this reason, and partly because of the fatal flaws in the whole A.G.S.P. process, we formally withdrew from this activity. M.V.C.G. will continue to do what we have always done, which is to work with the relevant Council departments to maintain and improve our parks and green spaces, including sometimes contributing our own funds to small capital projects.

The A.G.S.P. and the working of N.P.s remained a topic at the Parks Forum in 2011. We continue to attend regularly, and we have also been trying to understand the explanations of how the continuing reorganisation of Bristol Parks is supposed to work. We still don't, and we go on working co-operatively with the same two individuals we have always worked with - Julian Cox in the Council and John Walters of Quadron, the contractors.

A happier and more straight-forward involvement with our green spaces was our traditional daffodil planting. In October we added to the daffs we planted a couple of years earlier below Bishopsworth Police Station (*see also page 3*).

To finish, two items where future prospects are hopeful. Some may remember the scheme we drew up *many* years ago for what we called 'Elm Tree Corner' - the area around the junction of Queens Road, Church Road and Highridge Road. We have succeeded over the years in getting trees planted (*see also page 12*), and we ourselves have planted daffodils to brighten up this busy area. The plan also includes engineering works to improve parking areas in front of the various blocks of shops and make things safer for pedestrians. We always knew these parts of the plan would take a while, since, even when we drew up the plan in 1997, the City Council had no money. Now there is some 'section 106' money available and we, along with Highridge Forum, have been working with the local councillors and the Traffic Officers in the Council to draw up and consult on a scheme with the intention of starting implementation next financial year - i.e. after April 2012.

Also in this area, obviously, is the Elm Tree pub itself. It's a handsome building and part of historic Bishopsworth, but the way pubs are managed has changed a lot since 1997 - as we have seen with the pub closures and their replacement by housing. There have been several problems associated with the Elm Tree in recent years, including water running over the pavement, neglect of the historic wall in front of the pub, and large amounts of litter and broken glass. Working with the councillors, and some very helpful Council officers, we are making progress here, and if the manager can't or won't do what we would see as his social duty, then the various ways available to the Council to enforce appropriate behaviour will steadily be brought to bear.

The other positive area to report on is Crox Bottom. Things have only really started to happen since the end of 2011, but it's a hopeful start to the year. Section 106 money is available and has to be spent by this May, so a working group has been formed by the Pride of Place group, and a management plan is being drafted in conjunction with Bristol Parks. Some of the money will be spent on specific small-scale improvement, like benches, seats or a notice board, while longer-term improvements will be in the context of the management plan, helped by what we hope will be a new 'Friends of Crox Bottom' group, perhaps including some of the new residents of Lake Shore (*see also page 2*).

As usual this year, we helped with the annual trolley survey to monitor what was being dumped in our local streams. More positively, we took a stall to the 'Harvest Festival' event at Hartcliffe Millennium Green. Our main publicity effort is through the regular *Newsletter*, which appears quarterly, and the newsletters and the programme are regularly updated on our website. We collect members' e-mail addresses for *very* occasional mail-outs and reminders. Please let me have your e-mail address if you'd like to be included.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2011

HERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS which Beryl Heaton presented to the A.G.M. on 20 February. Beryl reported that once again we have an excess of expenditure over income, but she drew our attention to three of the items of expenditure. The DONATION FOR TREES was made to Bristol City Council to allow us to fulfil a long-held ambition for a tree to be planted on the site of the old toilet block at the Elm Tree Corner (*see page 12!*). Then the DUNDRY WALK LEAFLETS. We were approached by people at Dundry who wanted to produce a leaflet for a circular walk around the village. André advised them about printing, and the Committee agreed to give financial assistance, bearing in mind the funds we 'inherited' from the now defunct Dundry Hill Group. These two items came to £475 so we feel our overspend of £423.16 has been justified. Your committee are happy that our funds have enabled useful projects to be carried out. The third item was the DAFFODIL EXPENDITURE. We normally purchase them from Riverside Garden Centre who let us have the bulbs at cost. Unfortunately their supplier let them down at the last minute. The planting date was in the programme so Marie Jo rushed to B&Q and bought bulbs at a greatly reduced price. The cost of the bulbs is almost covered by the sale of aluminium cans, another thing for which we are indebted to Marie Jo. She sorts and takes them to the scrap merchants for cash. We are also grateful for our members' continued support by their subscriptions and generous donations.

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Membership	332.00	Donation for trees	330.00
Donations	45.00	Dundry Walk leaflets	145.00
Christmas Party	23.10	Daffodil bulbs	64.80
Sale of aluminium cans etc.	60.40	Hall Hire	144.00
Book sales	34.00	Printing	59.60
Bank Interest	<u>3.25</u>	Speakers fees/donations	30.00
		Postage	15.18
		Christmas Meeting	49.39
		CPRE Subscription	34.00
		Refreshments at A.G.M.	28.71
		Sundries	<u>20.23</u>
Total	497.75	Total	920.91
			£
		Excess of expenditure over income	423.16
		Brought forward from 2010	<u>6010.05</u>
		Balance carried forward to 2012	5586.89
Made up of:		Cash in hand	4.51
		HSBC Money Manager A/C	4871.97
		HSBC Current A/C	710.41

BERYL HEATON
Hon. Treasurer

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

OUR MEETINGS are continuing on the third Monday of the month, at 2.00pm in the afternoon at Zion Bristol, on Bedminster Down. The **M** symbol means our own meetings, to which everyone is very welcome, M.V.C.G. member or not.

M Monday 19 March: TONY DYER will be speaking about *Bristol's Living Streets* at Zion at 2.00pm. *This was already announced in the Winter Newsletter.*

Monday 26 March: DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP, 7.00pm-9.00pm at Professional Development Centre, Teyfant Road, Bridge Learning Campus, BS13 0RF. For more information about the Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, call Heather Williams at Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership on (0117) 903 8044 or visit <http://bristolpartnership.org/neighbourhood-partnerships/dundry-view-neighbourhood-partnership>.

M Monday 16 April: *We hope* to be welcoming JOY CAREY, who wrote the *Who Feeds Bristol?* report for Bristol City Council. As we go to press, this hasn't been confirmed, but you can read her report at www.bristol.gov.uk/page/food-bristol. If she isn't available, we will try to get her to talk to us on another occasion and another speaker will be with us on 16 April.

Saturday 5 May: The traditional *Malago Trek*, now under new management. Unfortunately, as we go to press, we don't have any details.

Saturday 26 May: *Hengrove Mounds Community Wildlife Festival*. No further details at present, but keep an eye on www.bristol.gov.uk/wildcity.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

A MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM was included with the last *Newsletter*, since subs were due on 1 January. We're very grateful for the many prompt renewals and donations. However, 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

TREE PLANTING

At the A.G.M. on 20 February I reported that some of M.V.C.G. expenditure was to cover the cost of a tree to be planted on the site of the old toilet block by the 'Elm Tree'. I said that we had been chasing the Council as the tree had not yet arrived.

The very next morning Marie Jo popped a note through our door saying that they had just passed the 'Elm Tree' and two men were planting 'our' tree. Danny and I rushed to the scene as quickly as we could, and there was the tree standing proudly in all its glory. We were a little disappointed that we hadn't managed to photograph the actual planting but the men were in the process of installing a third tree outside the shops. We were able to chat to them and take photos of the event. Not quite 'our' tree, but very close!



BERYL HEATON

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	907 0623
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Diana Porter, Don Smith, 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.