



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 97
Spring
2013

THIS *NEWSLETTER* is a collectors' piece! Following the debate at the A.G.M., and in the absence of any volunteers to help, future *Newsletters* will be produced in electronic format only, so this is the last paper edition. For at least half of our members, and virtually all the people who receive a complimentary copy, that won't be a problem – in fact it will be an improvement; they will now see the *Newsletter* in colour, since there won't be any constraint on printing costs.

But we do recognise that not everyone can be or wants to be on e-mail. There are at least two answers to this: firstly, the *Newsletter* is always uploaded to our website as soon as it is produced, and the website can be viewed at any public library – visit www.mvcg.org.uk and follow the link to Newsletters. The second idea is a 'buddy' system – if you have e-mail, please get together with a near-by M.V.C.G. member who doesn't and either invite them round for a cup of tea and a look at the *Newsletter* on your computer, or else print out a copy for them. We'll be doing this for some members near us.

To make this work, we need to know who won't be able to see the *Newsletter* in future. If this applies to you, please let me know – my contact details are on the back page. The other side of the coin is that if you *are* on e-mail and *haven't* given us your address yet, now's the time to do it! Members' e-mail addresses are kept strictly confidential and only used for M.V.C.G. business – an occasional message with breaking news or a new event, and, from now on, the *Newsletter* four times a year.

As is always the case with the Spring edition, this *Newsletter* contains the report of our A.G.M. A record of M.V.C.G.'s activities and achievements over a year is a very good thing to have in a collectors' piece!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

PETER CRISPIN welcomed everyone to the meeting. As usual, there were reports on our activities during 2012; then, instead of a guest speaker, we had a discussion about the future of the *Newsletter*. Drinks and nibbles rounded off the evening, to celebrate M.V.C.G.'s eighteenth birthday.

Programme Report: PAUL MIZEN reported, saying that looking over last year's events brought back sad memories. He awarded the prize for best hat at the 2011 Christmas Party to Mavis Palmer, saying at the time that she was wearing her Christmas cake on her head. She found it funny!

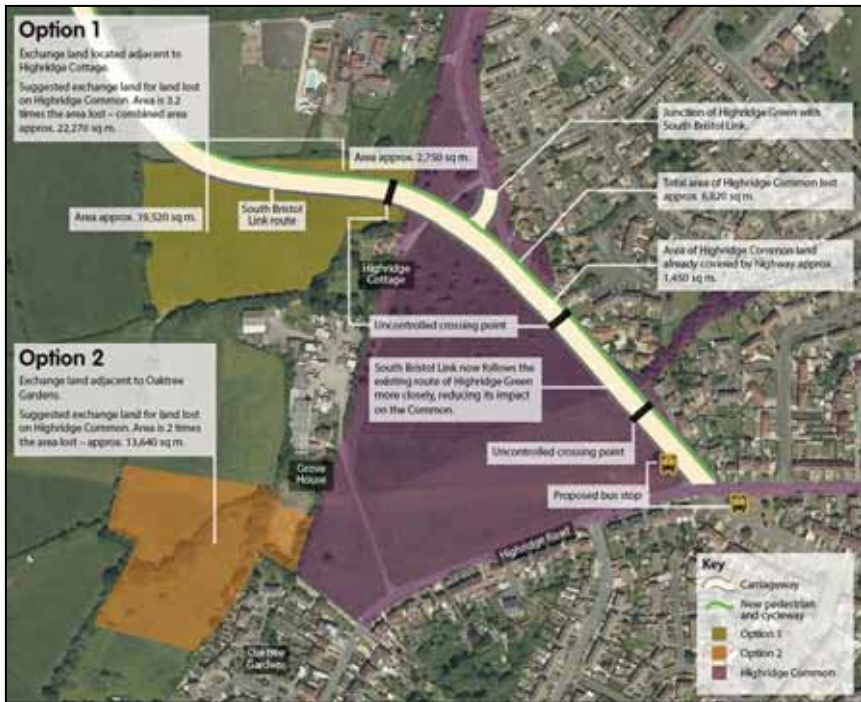
We had four talks: Tony Dyer spoke about Living Streets; Pip Sheard about local transport issues; Bob Giles showed pictures of South Bristol through the seasons; and Sammy and Hillary talked about Bees. All very diverse but equally interesting. There was also a summer visit to the Mounds at Hengrove, something of a hidden nature haven which I confess I did not know existed. Sadly, this was poorly attended and pointed to ever falling numbers leading the committee to suspend future events.

As usual, the one event that always draws the crowds is our Christmas Party. The picture quiz was its usual 'teaser' thanks to the Heaton's, and this year we turned everyone into gamblers with a game of Bingo. Paul's son did the 'calling' and was under strict instructions to recognise the company and keep it clean. Our American supper produced the usual quality goodies, and after Marie Jo's mulled wine, everyone went home happy! Thanks to all those who helped out. A mid-summer visit is planned, and the Christmas Party will continue, so we will still have a chance to get together.

Planning Issues: ANDRÉ COUTANCHE reported, remarking that he always started off this report the same way, by saying that he had been monitoring the weekly lists of planning applications. No apologies for saying the same thing again, because it's an important part of what M.V.C.G. does. For a few of the applications in our three wards which seem significant he looks up the details on the Council's website, and bring a few of those to our Committee. In many cases, the Committee doesn't want to make a comment, and in a handful of cases each year we write to oppose an application, usually on the grounds of over-intensive development, or access or parking. Very occasionally, we write to support a good planning application.

As well as normal planning applications, we have also been keeping tabs on the same major planning *issues* on and near our patch during 2012 as we did the previous year. One of them is the South Bristol Link, and we've also continued to monitor the Town Green saga which arose from the planning permission granted to Bristol City F.C. for a new stadium. 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 concern to us. The current situation on the Town Green is that nothing will happen until October, but, as you may have seen, the Football Club seem to be edging towards 'Plan B' – redevelopment of their existing site. We take no view on that, but we would welcome very much the Green Belt *not* being built on.

On the South Bristol Link, things got interesting with the election of the new Mayor. George Ferguson has initiated a rethink of the line of what's called BRT2 – the route from Long Ashton Park & Ride to the Centre. Since the South Bristol Link depends on BRT2, that raised doubts about its future. Preparatory work by the officers has continued, however, and we very recently had a consultation on where the part of



Map showing how Highridge Common would be partly built over by the South Bristol Link and the two options for replacing the lost land

Highridge Common which the road would obliterate should be replaced. M.V.C.G. is firmly against the South Bristol Link, because its costs – financial and environmental – are large and its claimed benefits are unclear or implausible.

The redevelopment of pubs with housing continued during 2012 with a planning application for the ‘Rising Sun’ on Queens Road. Permission was granted to replace the pub with eight houses.

Last year saw the start of a process to identify what should happen on the site of Bishopsworth Swimming Pool. This is a commendable attempt to involve local people, working jointly with relevant City council officers, to come up with imaginative ideas for a new use which will actually be useful! Cllr Richard Eddy has been leading on this and we have been monitoring progress.

We were contacted in April by Wessex Water who were planning to do some essential work at the junction of Bishops Cove and Highridge Road, where there have been problems in the past with sewers overflowing when heavy rainfall floods the combined pipes. Wessex Water are always excellent at pre-application consultation, and they were very co-operative when we met on site with relevant Council officers and discussed how to deal with the new trees which we had had planted as part of our long-term ‘Elm Tree Corner’ project. They also tried to co-operate with the manager of the ‘Elm Tree’ pub, by agreeing to put in a fence along the edge of the pub car-park. No problem there, but the current boundary



The current plans for Wessex Water’s engineering works at the junction of Highridge Road and Bishops Cove

is either a raggedy hedge or a line of scrub, depending on how you look at it, and Bristol Parks Department thought it would be a good idea as part of the work to uproot this and replace it with wildflowers, to save money on maintenance. We're perfectly happy for Wessex to do the pub a favour by installing a fence on the pub's boundary, but we are dead against removing a hedge on Council land which has been there for as long as anyone can remember and is both a wildlife and a visual asset – it reminds us of the history of Bishopsworth as a rural village. We think Bristol Parks have got this totally wrong, and we regret that Wessex, who have behaved perfectly, are 'piggy in the middle'. We've told them that, while, of course, we have no objection to the engineering work, and we appreciate their co-operation with removing or replacing the trees, we will oppose a planning application which includes removal of the hedge.

We reported last year about the Site Allocations process, which was then due to start a major consultation phase last March. We were particularly concerned about the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley, which was simultaneously a Site of Nature Conservation Interest and designated for industrial/warehousing development. You may remember that we lost part of this area to an extension to Wring's Yard. We – along with the Avon Wildlife Trust – had previously pressed for the industrial designation to be removed on the remaining land, and we were delighted when this actually happened and we wrote to welcome it. We will now be following the long process through to completion, when the Bristol

BSA1306

Site details

Site reference: BSA1306
 Site area (hectares): 0.8
 Site address/location: Land to the west of Vale Lane
 Neighbourhood Partnership Area: NP13: Dundry View

Site description

The site is a small parcel of land to the west of Vale Lane, situated to the rear of existing industrial and warehousing units. The surrounding area is a mix of industrial and warehousing, car sales and open space.

The screenshot also features a map of the local area with the site highlighted in pink, a photograph of the site showing a hedge and buildings, and a site plan with the site boundary outlined in orange and labeled BSA1306.

Local Plan will finally be adopted. Eventually, we would expect to see this land allocated to Parks and included in the Local Nature Reserve.

Progress with Manor Woods Valley: MARIE JO COUTANCHE reported that since last year's AGM, the Manor Woods Valley Group has held meetings every six weeks or so. After many busy years, sometimes with exciting but demanding projects, it seems that 2012 has been a quieter year. As a member of our group was saying recently it is always enjoyable and worthwhile looking back at what has been achieved in these seventeen years when we have been looking after and improving Manor Woods Valley. But we will not draw up a list now as it would take too long!

Entrance behind Bishopsworth Library

As we do every spring, our group turned up to tidy the bank behind the library.



Wild flowers planted by M.V.C.G. a few years ago have grown, and with the lovely garden created by Headley Park Church on the other side, we hope that this entrance looks more welcoming. However, we do welcome more suggestions. Litter can be a problem there but Beryl checks this entrance regularly and if we see an overflowing bin or litter around we advise the contractors, Quadron Services, or we pick up the litter ourselves. We were also delighted to see the damaged Perspex glass of the Council notice board replaced very quickly after we reported it.

Entrance from Valley Road

In the past few years we have been aware that this entrance is used more and more. People use it to go and walk along the top of the wild flower meadow. Our group has picked up litter at the entrance occasionally but Quadron now clean it regularly. However we were promised a refurbished bin but after many searches by Julian Cox, our Area Environment Officer, the bin could not be found. Also the small wall on the left hand side had collapsed. We reported it to Julian as well but as this is part of the adjacent private house, no solution was found there either.

Old 'Quarries' area

Our hopes for the future of the Quarries were mentioned in the Planning report. On the ground, Justin Smith, our Woodland and Wildlife Officer, and his team cleared paths again in the spring to make access easier. Our group had decided that in the autumn we would try to have the different varieties of apples and pears identified. We bought labels and worked out how to do the survey. Unfortunately, with the bad summer we had, very few fruit grew to maturity and we had to abandon our plans. However, several M.V.C.G. members and friends enjoyed the delicious pears, along with apples and blackberries.



Wrings

Twice in the year as we were in the 'Quarries' area we happened to hear noise of machinery coming from the Wrings yard extension. We reported it to the Planning Enforcement team who told us they had written to Wrings managers to remind them of the planning conditions.



Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed

Once again, the Avon Invasive Weed Forum organised a working party to pull out Himalayan Balsam with employees from the Environment Agency. It was very successful. As to Japanese Knotweed, the very wet summer made spraying rather difficult and through our Area Environment Officer we tried to find out what was happening, if anything. We did not really find out. However towards the end of summer we were contacted by the new Field Officer from the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum, Neil Green. He asked us to take him round Manor Woods Valley. This was a pleasant and productive outing and communication should be easier this year. We also put him in touch with James Drozd, a surveyor for the Parks Team who had also contacted us to tell us he was currently mapping Japanese Knotweed in Manor Woods Valley. We hope that this year there will be better coordination between various parties involved in invasive weeds eradication.

We are looking forward to a good summer in Manor Woods Valley.

Progress with Other Projects: ANDRÉ COUTANCHE reported that last year he had described the history and workings of the Hartcliffe & Witherwood Community Partnership and its role in the emerging Neighbourhood Partnership system. In 2012, this has evolved and matured well. The 'Pride of Place' working group, which operates as the Environmental sub-group in our Dundry View

Neighbourhood Partnership, has monthly meetings which Paul Mizen and André have been attending, and it is a very good forum both for learning about new developments and for getting things done.

A lot of the time of the 'Pride of Place' group has been given to progressing the spending priorities in our parks which were decided by the Area Green Space Planning Process. As we reported last year, we regarded the theory and the practice of that as fatally flawed, and withdrew from the process. However, we had no objection at all to the priorities which did emerge, and the 'Pride of Place' group has been implementing those as money has become available, usually through section 106 agreements arising from planning permissions. The Group has just started re-assessing priorities for the coming years, and this may provide an opportunity to put forward schemes which M.V.C.G. would like to see undertaken. In the mean time, M.V.C.G. will continue to do what it has 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.

Unfortunately, continued reorganisation and under-staffing in Parks has meant that we have found it increasingly frustrating maintaining the good working relationship we have built up over the years. This is one of the topics which comes up at the Parks Forum, which has quarterly meetings which we continue to attend and a very good e-mail circulation which keeps us informed. At one of the Parks Forum meetings in 2012

we were asked to do again the presentation of our 'Abi the Airedale' signs which Angela designed and which we put up throughout Manor Woods Valley. Whether because of the signs, or because of a greater awareness by dog-owners, there seems to be less of a problem with dog mess than there used to be.





One excellent development which came out of the 'Pride of Place' group during 2012 was the Crox Bottom Management Plan, and some improvements on the ground in the shape of new benches, picnic tables and notice boards. This was made possible by section 106 money, and it gave us the opportunity to kick-start some really good work in an area which had been overlooked and neglected for a very long time. Crox Bottom, like Manor Woods Valley, has a terrific range of habitats, and it's just as worthy as Manor Woods Valley of being designated as a Local Nature Reserve. This won't happen unless there's a 'Friends of Crox Bottom' group to work with the Council and take things forward. M.V.C.G. will support and advise such a group, and we've said that we would contribute from our own funds for an interpretation board, but we're too thinly stretched to take on Crox Bottom in the way our Manor Woods Valley working group looks after Manor Woods Valley. If any M.V.C.G. member would be interested in joining a 'Friends of Crox Bottom' group, please let us know.

During 2012, the Kings Head Park Group has made steady progress, working with Bristol Parks and with the Severn Vale Bowls Club. We're not directly involved, but since the leading lights of the Kings Head Park Group include Lis

Pibworth and Richard Eddy, both of whom are M.V.C.G. committee members, we have no difficulty keeping up with the news!

Now to 'Elm Tree Corner' – the area around the junction of Queens Road, Church Road and Highridge Road. We reported at the last A.G.M. that we had hopes of some of the traffic engineering works being started in 2012 with section 106 money. It hasn't happened as we hoped, but initial consultation work was done, and money was applied for from the Council's capital stimulus fund. The Elm Tree Corner scheme wasn't successful, but the plans haven't been forgotten, and we will hope to progress it through the Transport sub-group of the Neighbourhood Partnership.

However, another part of our comprehensive plan for this area was taken forward early in 2012 when three Hornbeam trees were planted on Highridge Road (*right*) to continue the row of Hornbeams which we had had planted a few years back.

The Elm Tree pub itself, unfortunately, remains the centre of some difficulties. Litter generated from the pub and spreading in all directions became slightly less of a difficulty when we involved the Council a



couple of years ago and a litter clearing notice was served. However, the problem hasn't gone away and we continue to monitor it.

Excellent progress was also made in another respect, while other problems seem to drag on and on. The problem of water running over the pavement and being unpleasant in summer and dangerous in winter when it froze has been successfully dealt with by a gully being built to intercept the water and carry it under the pavement to the drains. This came about through steady, polite

pressure from us, support from our councillors, and some very helpful Council officers – the classic M.V.C.G. *modus operandi*. One of those helpful Council officers lives locally and is a good friend of M.V.C.G. and helped even though it was nothing to do with his official job. Occasions like that – and people like that – provide very welcome relief from the banging of heads against brick walls which we often find ourselves doing.

The wall at the Elm Tree isn't brick, of course – it's stone, and it's a handsome part of historic Bishopsworth village. It's also badly overgrown and in danger of falling apart if nothing is done to remove the plants whose roots are forcing stones out of the wall. We've had fun here, firstly in tying down whose wall it was – the pub's or the Council's – secondly in trying to get the pub to give a damn about it – they don't – and thirdly in trying to persuade some department of the Council, somewhere, some how, to take some action for the general good. We're still working on that one ...

Finally, an activity which isn't a one-off project, but a continuing part of our work: our main publicity effort remains the regular *Newsletter*, which appears quarterly, and the newsletters and the programme are regularly updated on our website. We reported during the year that unless more help comes forward, we can't carry on printing and distributing the *Newsletter* as we have for the past eighteen years. We will be discussing how to proceed later in the meeting.

GOOD NEWS

The discussion on the *Newsletter* was very constructive and helpful. Most people recognised that we had to move to electronic circulation, since producing paper copies was too much work. It was pointed out that other organisations, such as the Bristol Ornithological Club, were moving to e-mail. The idea of a 'buddy' system (see the front page) had already been thought of by the Committee and was independently suggested from the floor. We certainly didn't want anyone excluded, and Pete Crispin emphasised that anyone should let us know if they had a problem seeing the *Newsletter*.

BAD NEWS

All the Committee members stood for re-election, but André pointed out that this was bad news as well as good news. Both he and Beryl didn't guarantee to stand again next year, and we really needed new people to join the Committee if M.V.C.G. was to have a secure future.

ACCOUNTS FOR 2012

Here are the accounts for 2012 which Beryl Heaton presented to the A.G.M.:

| Income | £ | Expenditure | £ |
|--|---------------|--|----------------|
| Membership | 240.00 | Donation to 'Stop BRT2' | 50.00 |
| Donations | 39.00 | Hall Hire | 150.00 |
| Christmas party raffle | 23.00 | Printing | 82.38 |
| Refreshments | 16.62 | Speakers fees | 50.00 |
| Sale of aluminium cans etc. | 44.50 | Postage | 15.60 |
| Book sales | 18.10 | Christmas Meeting | 18.49 |
| Sold laminating pouches | 3.00 | CPRE Subscription | 34.00 |
| Bank Interest | <u>3.42</u> | Refreshments at A.G.M. | 4.00 |
| | | Sundries | <u>3.48</u> |
| Total | 387.64 | Total | 407.95 |
| | | | £ |
| | | Excess of expenditure over income | 20.31 |
| | | Brought forward from 2011 | 5586.98 |
| | | Balance carried forward to 2013 | 5566.58 |
| | | Made up of: | |
| | | Cash in hand | 4.28 |
| | | HSBC Money Manager account | 4875.39 |
| | | HSBC Current account | 686.91 |
| <u>Note to the accounts:</u> The accounts for 2011 included a donation of £330.00 to Bristol City Council for 'TreeBristol' as a contribution towards the tree planting at Elm Tree Corner. That cheque has not been cashed despite several reminders from us to the City Council. If it continues to be uncashed we will write off that cheque during the coming year and show a corresponding increase in our funds. | | | |

Beryl said that the accounts were pretty self-explanatory and nothing dramatic has occurred. There is a small excess of expenditure over income but our funds remain fairly static. We have not had any major commitments over the last year. We decided there were few areas left to plant daffodil bulbs and Bristol City Council and other groups often do this anyway. Perhaps they got the idea from us!

We had hoped that we could help financially with a project to repair the Dundry spring but the work has been on hold, probably due to the exceptionally bad weather. Perhaps that is a project for the coming year. One thing to point out is the sizeable income from donations. This has come about with many members rounding up their subscriptions as in previous years. We also had a windfall of £20 from an unexpected source. André has a friend who works for W.H. Smith and he supplies us with a large quantity of empty aluminium cans. He knew of a

scheme in the company where they give sums of money to charitable causes and he put forward M.V.C.G.'s name, resulting in a cheque for £20 for group funds.

A cheque made out to Bristol City Council in November 2011 has still not been cashed despite several reminders from us. We had hoped that the bank might stop the cheque free of charge as we are a charity but as they were not prepared to do this the committee decided not to pay the £12 charge for this service. We felt that it would not come to light after this length of time. As you will see from the accounts we intend to write off the cheque at a later date and show the increase in our funds.

BERYL HEATON
Hon. Treasurer

MAVIS PALMER

AS YOU WILL KNOW if you were at the Christmas Party or the A.G.M., we lost an irreplaceable member and friend on 16 December. Mavis Palmer died after suffering – with her usual cheerfulness and quiet determination – a painful and debilitating throat cancer.

Mavis was an active member of M.V.C.G. for years. Until ill health intervened, she was a regular on the daffodil-planting team. The photo (*below right*) shows her accepting a well-earned cup of tea, but she was also a staunch *supplier* of



refreshments to working parties – especially in Manor Woods Valley, which was dear to her heart and where she was a member of the Manor Woods Valley working group.

Angela, Marie Jo and Mavis at the launch of the Meadow interpretation board in Manor Woods Valley in June 2010



Always ready to help, Mavis made the selling of raffle tickets at the Christmas Party another of her specialities (*left*). But she was prepared to take on new challenges as well, as when we needed a Vice Chairman. After assurances that there would be no further promotion(!), Mavis accepted the role and became both good at chairing committee meetings when necessary and quite keen to do it – sometimes when it wasn't!

Mavis was the sort of person that M.V.C.G. could do with a lot more of – and so could the world at large. We'll miss her a lot.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS AND EVENTS

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. 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 sending you the *Newsletter*.

AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED, we won't be arranging a regular programme of winter talks because very few people came. However, the Christmas Party and the A.G.M. will continue, and we will arrange an outing in the summer. What sort of visit would you like? Any ideas for a venue? Please let Paul Mizen know on 964 0825 or p.mizen@blueyonder.co.uk.

And we're always happy to publicise other group's events – please let us know what you're up to!

- The Northern Slopes Initiative have a walk called 'Bird Song & Mammal Tracks' on Saturday 16 March from 10.30am-12.30pm, starting at The Park, Daventry Road.

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*).

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.