



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

No. 1  
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**W**ELCOME to the first edition of the Malago Valley Conservation Group *Newsletter*. We hope to publish a *Newsletter* every couple of months to let you know what is going on in south-west Bristol from a conservation and amenity point of view. And we want to hear from you - please let us know what you think of what the Group is doing and the meetings we are organising, and give us *your* ideas for improving our part of Bristol. Contact names and numbers are on the back page.

If you are a newly-joined member of the Malago Valley Conservation Group, you will find enclosed your membership card and a copy for reference of the Constitution which was adopted at the Public Meeting on 28 September which launched the Group officially. If you have received this *Newsletter* for general information, please think about joining the Group. We need as many people as we can to show support for our aims and to strengthen our voice when talking to the City or County Councils. A membership application form is enclosed.

Malago Valley Conservation Group aims to cover the Bristol 13 area - Bishopsworth, Bedminster Down, Highridge, Headley Park, Hartcliffe, Witherwood. We will do as much as we can to improve our environment, both by lobbying the proper authorities and by organising working parties to undertake our own projects. If you have ideas for improvements, please let us know.

*Better still, join us and use the Group's organisation and contacts to put your ideas into practice.*

## **STOP PRESS!**

The first public meeting of Malago Valley Conservation Group is on **Thursday 24 November**. See page 7 for details - *come along and bring some friends.*

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## THE STORY SO FAR

**M**ALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP started to take shape in early summer 1993, with a campaign to get Bristol City Council to declare a Bishopsworth Conservation Area. A public meeting in June 1993 resulted in a group being formed to do the research and prepare a document to go to the City Planning Department setting out the case for a conservation area based on the historic village of Bishopsworth.

When the group came to consider the possible boundaries of the conservation area, they realised that the defining feature for the area was the line of the Malago valley; it also brought together most of the open spaces needing protection and improvement. So the document which went to the City Council in December 1993 called for a *Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area*, stretching from the Vale Lane entrance to Manor Woods to the southern end of Witherwood Park, widening in the middle to take in the historic core of Bishopsworth and Highridge Common. The City Council were complimentary about the quality of the report, but they still haven't taken a decision. M.V.C.G. will be chasing them up.

While preparing the case for a conservation area, some members of the group felt that there were adjacent parts of south-west Bristol which needed conservation and improvement, even if they were too modern or too remote from the historic core to warrant being part of the conservation area itself. It's important to realise that a conservation area doesn't mean that an area must not change or develop. It *does* mean that there are additional controls on what is acceptable and it makes it more difficult to remove old buildings without good reason.

It seemed a good opportunity to use the momentum and interest generated by the Conservation Area campaign to start a steering group which would lead to the formation of an amenity group for the wider south-west Bristol area. Many parts of Bristol have them, for example the Brislington Conservation and Amenity Society, and they complement the work done by voluntary bodies such as Bristol Civic Society which look at Bristol as a whole. The steering group started meeting in spring 1994 and decided to start work in some areas and call a public meeting in the autumn to get formally constituted and elect a committee.

The Public Meeting was on 28 September. It was well attended and M.V.C.G. was officially launched on that date. Although the original conservation area campaign was the initiative of a local City Councillor, M.V.C.G. is strictly **non-party** political. We value links with our councillors and have invited all the City and County councillors for Bishopsworth, Bedminster and Hartcliffe to attend the committee as co-opted (non-voting) members.

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS that the Steering Group decided to do was to monitor the list of planning applications to the City Council. A small sub-group of committee members looks at the list which is published every week by the City Council Planning Department (a copy of which is kindly provided by one of our local councillors, thereby saving us the time and trouble of getting to Brunel House in St George's Road).

Most of the local planning applications are, as you would expect, for things like extensions, 'granny flats' and dormer windows. The vast majority of these do not require any comment. However, since we started to look at the applications list in the summer, there have been two items which have aroused considerable controversy.

The first of these is for a development of 17 houses on the site of 312 Bishopsworth Road (just below the crown of Gifford's Hill, on the left going up from the Library). The immediate neighbours were understandably upset about traffic implications, noise, intrusion and loss of privacy and they organised a petition against the scheme. We in the Group sympathised, particularly with the point about traffic on an already busy and dangerous road, and also wrote to object, concentrating more on the planning policies in the Draft Bristol Local Plan which we believed were contravened by the proposal.

Astonishingly, the report to the Planning Committee from the planning officers recommended the scheme for approval. Both the neighbours and we requested the right to make a statement to the Committee, which we did on 5 October. It was clear that the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Cllr Andy May, was aware of the strength of feeling, because he opened debate by saying that he thought the Committee ought to postpone a decision until it had viewed the site. This happened on 26 October, and the Committee decided to ask for further reports on various implications of the plan. This is not resolved at the time of writing.

The other planning application, which also resulted in the Planning Committee visiting the site, was for re-use of the electrical generating plant at the former Wills factory as a stand-alone power station. M.V.C.G. did not make formal representations, because it seemed at first as though the main considerations of noise and emissions had been addressed. We did suggest to the local City Councillor some semi-technical questions to raise. In the end, the questions raised by the neighbours in Headley Park were not satisfactorily answered by the applicants, the Hanson organisation, and they withdrew the scheme.

## ELM TREE CORNER

**B**ISHOPSWORTH doesn't have a single centre corresponding to an original village green. Historically, it always straggled up along Queens Road towards Dundry and, although the Chapel triangle might have been near the geographical centre, it lost its significance when the Swimming Pool was built.

In terms of shops, arguably the major centre is at the junction of Church Road, Queens Road and Highridge Road, near the '*Elm Tree*'. It's a very busy area with lots of potential conflicts of interests - through traffic, people getting on or off buses, shoppers who arrive by car and want to park, shoppers who come on foot and other pedestrians who don't want to be parked on or driven over ...

It's also, when you look at it, a pretty tatty sort of area. There are large expanses of tarmac which are not quite pavements and not supposed to be parking areas. There are bits of 'left-over' grass which are boring when dry and muddy and unpleasant when wet. There's a public toilet which is as attractive as the air-raid shelter it started life as.

A sub-group of M.V.C.G. has started to look at the area and to try to think of ways to meet the differing needs of all the users - for example, by defining proper parking areas for cars which keep them separate from pedestrians; by providing bus stop lay-bys; perhaps introducing traffic-calming measures for the through traffic. At the same time, we would like to make the whole area a more attractive place, perhaps with trees and shrubs. It won't be a quick or easy project - shortage of money will make sure of that - but we'd like to get an overall approach agreed by the land owners so that bits of a general scheme could be implemented as and when money is available.

We've made some inquiries about land ownership. It's quite complicated, as some is owned by the individual premises (shops etc), some is Council-owned and some is common land. In any case, it will be necessary to tackle each part of the area separately - the tarmac area in front of Lloyds Bank, the lay-by in front of the Church Road shops, and the grass areas around the '*Elm Tree*'.

We're having an initial meeting with Lloyds Bank shortly to discuss their plans for a ramp access to the bank. We hope to make contact with the other shops in the area to enlist their support for a general improvement which should be good for business as well as for amenity and the environment.

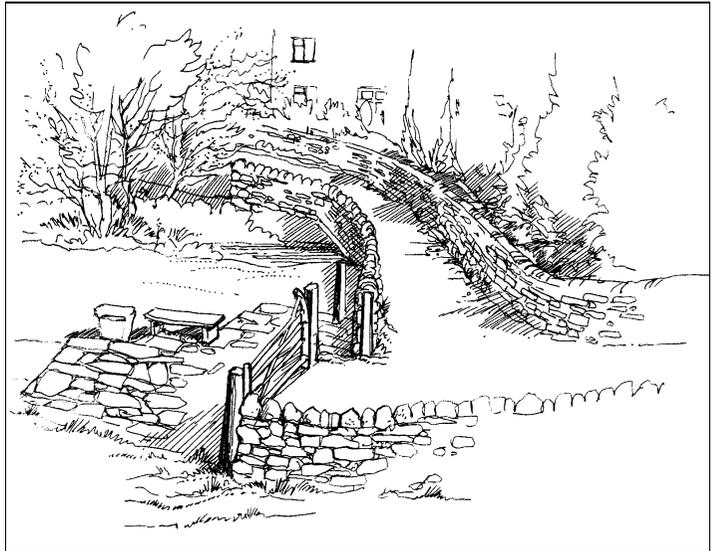
*What do you think? How should this area be improved? Please write or phone (address and phone number on back page).*

## WOODN'T IT BE LOVELY

**A**NOTHER IDEA for an improvement initiative concerns one of the most important green spaces in south-west Bristol - Manor Wood. The path through the area, from St Peter's Rise (behind Bishopsworth Library) to Vale Lane is part of the **Malago Greenway**; the first of M.V.C.G.'s meetings on 24 November will include a speaker on this topic.

Although already a great asset, with a good variety of landscape and features, Manor Wood could still be enhanced and improved - not least by cleaning up the Malago itself. We have this in mind and would welcome any suggestions or offers of assistance. However, Anton Bantock, who uses the path through the area regularly, has drawn up his ideas for improving the entrances to the path to make them more attractive and welcoming.

This is the southern (Library) entrance, as it could be, with good quality stone walls instead of the present breeze blocks, a strong five-bar gate and a simple but well-designed picnic area with bench and litter bin.



Obviously, Council money for this sort of enhancement is not easy to come by, but there are many sources of grants for local environmental improvements. It may be that M.V.C.G. could agree the design with the Council and undertake the work ourselves, with a mix of grants and special fund-raising, and possibly using some of our own labour where appropriate.

*To hear more about the City Council's plans for the Malago Greenway and Manor Wood, come to the meeting on 24 November.*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**T**HE NAME that the Steering Group eventually came up with for the new conservation society - Malago Valley Conservation Group - was not arrived at very quickly. Although the Group had started by concentrating on a Conservation Area based on the historic village and open spaces of Bishopsworth, we particularly wanted to show that we were concerned with a wider area - roughly, the Bristol 13 postal district.

We dreamt up all sorts of names, but it wasn't easy to come up with something which didn't look as though it was excluding or underestimating one or more parts of our area. One runner for a little while was *BADGER* - one of those contrived acronyms which might have stood for 'Bishopsworth And District Group for Environmental Renewal' (but we really meant we intended to badger the City Council, the County Council and anyone else involved into taking some notice of our neglected bit of Bristol).

We tried to work in the 13 of the postal district - but with no luck. In the end, we worked on the same basis as the Malago Society, the local history society for South-West Bristol. Their name was inspired by the thought that they were interested in the area in which any rain falling would end up in the Malago stream. Although we don't aim to cover Bedminster, Ashton and Southville, as the Malago Society does, we thought the name of the stream was neutral so far as neighbourhood rivalries went, and it also symbolised our concern for the countryside as well as for buildings old and new. In fact, many of the Steering Group members were also involved with the Malago Society, and the choice of name is also meant as a compliment to our 'big brother'.

Once we had decided on a name, we wanted a logo. The logo for the Group was designed by Edwin Turnbull, who is well known in the district for his skilled calligraphy. In fact, with his agreement, we modified the actual lettering to make it easier to produce on a computer and printer. The symbols in the two halves of the circle represent the arcade of chimneys on top of Bishopsworth Manor House, and the waters of the Malago itself, thereby cleverly combining the natural and the built environment. We're very grateful to Mr Turnbull for his design - and we hope it's a logo and name which will become well known both in south-west Bristol and in the 'corridors of power' at the Council House.

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**W**E ARE TRYING TO ORGANISE a mixed programme of events for members which will where possible tie in with the projects and interests the Group is pursuing. The meetings below will all be held in **St Peter's Room** - the new hall by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. (We may experiment with venues in other parts of the Bristol 13 area later - please let us know of any ideas for halls). The evening meetings will start at **7.30pm**. Non-members of Malago Valley Conservation Group are welcome and will be asked to pay a 50p visitor's fee (or, of course, they can join at the meeting).

**Thursday 24 November:** Two speakers from Bristol City Council - MANDY LONG from the Environmental Health Department (Pollution Control) will talk about *noise* and *smoke control* and *stream-cleaning* at local watercourses; and JESSICA LEIGH of the Area Planning Team will tell us the latest developments on the *Malago Greenway*.

**Sunday 4 December:** in conjunction with Hartcliffe Health and Environmental Action Group - *a seasonal walk along the Malago* led by ANTON BANTOCK. Beginning at Bishopsworth Library at 10.30am, walking along Manor Wood and the Malago Greenway to trace the mouth of the Malago at the New Cut. Aiming to arrive at ASDA for 12.30 for a snack, and transport will be laid on for those wishing to return - others can continue the walk back taking in St Paul's Church, Dean Lane, Hebron Churchyard, North Street.

**Thursday 19 January 1995:** REBECCA NEWMAN, Assistant Community Forest Officer will talk about the *Community Forest*, especially as it affects us around Withywood and Hartcliffe.

**Sunday 19 February:** in conjunction with Hartcliffe Health and Environmental Action Group - *Dundry from west to east* led by ANTON BANTOCK. Walk beginning at Withywood Post Office at 1.30pm, proceeding via Strawberry Lane, Dundry village, East Dundry Lane and down to Hartcliffe Community Farm for tea and tree-planting.

**Tuesday 21 March:** Litter and what can be done to improve our environment. STEVE SPARKS (our local 'litter man'), followed by PETER MILNER, landscape designer and artist, who has worked on improving many areas including shops in Bedminster Parade and the water maze in Victoria Park. He will talk on how streets and paths etc can be transformed with a little artistic flair and hard work. \*\*\* *See also the next page* \*\*\*

## CLEANING UP FOR CHRISTMAS

**M**ALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP is organising a regular series of litter collection working parties. We will concentrate initially on our public open spaces. The first two garbage raids, to be led by Anton Bantock, will be on **Friday 25 November** and **Friday 16 December**.

Please come along to help this first direct effort to make our environment better. Wear suitable clothes and shoes and *bring gloves*. Meet on both dates at Bishopsworth Library at **2.30pm**.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Well, no actually - there aren't any (this is the *first* edition, after all). But there will be next time - provided you write in with what you think about what the Group is doing and what you think ought to be done. Address below.

### Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

<b>Chairman</b>	André Coutanche	643106
<b>Secretary</b>	Chris Lillington	647578
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Taylor	642913
<b>Programme Co-ordinator</b>	Brenda Docherty	839901

#### Other Members

Freddie Alliston, Anton Bantock, Denis Bristow, Peter Hall, Lola Hardingham, Martin Powell, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker

#### Co-opted Members

Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Richard Eddy, Cllr Claire Warren (*All City and County Councillors for Bishopsworth, Bedminster and Hartcliffe wards have been invited to become co-opted Committee members*).

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