



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, it's autumn. The schools are back, holidays are becoming a distant memory, and the grass is getting green again. For Malago Valley Conservation Group, autumn means at least two things: the programme of evening meetings (see page 7), and less temptation to put off the sub-committee meetings and letter-writing that seemed to slip when the sun was shining.

It's always been the case that there is no real limit to the worthwhile work the Group could undertake. The constraints are only time, ideas and money, pretty well in that order. In fact, the best answer to anyone who asks, 'What does the Conservation Group do?' is - 'What do you *want* us to do?'. Followed by: 'Join us and do it.'

In spite of the fact that the Committee and other active members are all busy people, we do manage to keep quite a number of things on the go. Some of the initiatives are practical - collecting litter, for example - and some are 'political'. Not party-political, of course, which we're not, but political with a small 'p'; putting pressure on Bristol or Avon Councils or other public authorities to do what we think is the right thing, or not to do the wrong thing.

One such topic is Chestnut Court. This is a listed building which, along with the Manor House, forms the distinguished architectural core of historic Bishopsworth village. It's not easy when the owner of a listed building can't or won't maintain it properly, but the City Council does have a positive responsibility to see that it is preserved. The Malago Society have written in the past, and we are continuing the campaign to press the City to safeguard our heritage.

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ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

BLOOMING MARVELLOUS!

FIRST OF ALL, we must thank you all for the interest which was shown in our flower plantings awards. My telephone was quite busy with calls throughout July and by the end of the month we had a list of over 60 displays to inspect.

There were so many beautiful baskets, troughs etc. that it was with difficulty that we eventually drew up a short list of six, and we decided to give highly commended certificates to a good number of other entries.

Mike Tobin, of Riverside Garden Centre, was kind enough to come and judge our finalists, and the results were:

	1st	43 Vicarage Road	<i>£10 Riverside Voucher</i>
	2nd	132 Bishopsworth Road	<i>£5 Riverside Voucher</i>
	3rd	58 Fernsteed Road	<i>£5 Riverside Voucher</i>
	Runners Up	30 Cutler Road	
		11 Petercole Drive	
	37 Keble Avenue		

All six received a year's free membership of our Group. There was a small separate commercial category, and the Maytree Inn, the Cross Hands and Shaw's, Newsagents, also received free membership for a year.

When the awards were distributed shortly after the judging, most of the recipients were both surprised and delighted - and you may have seen the story on the front page of the *Bristol Observer* on the reaction of the first prize winner.

The first prize (the £10 Voucher) was kindly donated by Riverside Garden Centre and we are most grateful for their generosity and help with our project, which we consider to have been a great success.

We hope to run a similar event next year, so bear this in mind when preparing your displays in the spring. Hopefully we shall have an even harder task in selecting our winners next time - don't forget that shape, colour and originality are important factors in prize winning. Good Luck!

LOLA HARDINGHAM



RIVERSIDE

Riverside Garden Centre's address is: Clifthouse Road, Southville, Bristol. They are behind the red-brick former tobacco bond on Clifthouse Road which is now a self-storage warehouse. Opening hours are 9.00am to 5.30pm on Monday to Friday; 9.00am to 6.00pm on Saturdays; and 11.00am to 5.00pm on Sundays.

LITTER COLLECTION

ONE MORE SIGN of autumn: the time of the monthly litter collection is moving back to the afternoon after being an evening activity during the summer. (The last *Newsletter* did show a 7.00pm start for the Garbage Raid on 2 October, but that's because the editor's brain was overheating in the sun and he forgot that it got dark at nights).

We will keep to Mondays, at least for now, and meet at **4.00pm**. This will allow our most enthusiastic supporters to come along after they finish school. The starting point for the next two collections is Bishopsworth Library.

Please do come and help if you can. It's not hard work; it is very satisfying and a pleasant social occasion; and we don't go on for more than an hour or so. Gloves and black bags are provided.

WHERE THERE'S MUCK ...

SPEAKING OF RUBBISH, we've been trying to keep recyclable materials separate on the garbage raids. Glass and drink cans go into different bags for subsequent disposal. The good bit is that we can **MAKE MONEY** from the aluminium drink cans. A recycling firm pays 50p/kilo for aluminium cans (that's 4/6d a pound for the unreconstructed). Even if you can't come to the garbage raids, please collect old drink cans and other aluminium such as milk bottle tops and let us have them at 14 Queens Road. The money will go into the Group's coffers. Thank you.



ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

GUIDED TOUR OF BLAGDON PUMPING STATION

In August we were most fortunate to be given a guided tour of Bristol Water's Blagdon Pumping Station, the new and expanding Visitors' Centre and the Nature Trail. Our guides for the evening, Ken Burrell assisted by John Lowe, provided a wonderful running commentary about everything we were shown, interspersed with amusing anecdotes.

The talk began with a short history of Bristol Waterworks Company and how Blagdon Reservoir and Pumping Station came to be constructed and integrated into the early water supply system. Over a century later, it is still performing its important function of providing Bristol and its surrounding area with Mendip water.

We were shown the trout in the 'stews' in front of the pumping station which were being reared in readiness for next year's fishing season, when 90,000 fish will be introduced to Barrow, Blagdon and Chew Valley Reservoirs.

The group was then directed up the steps of the Victorian red-brick pumping station into the one remaining pump hall which still houses two refurbished beam-engines. Although the steam boilers have long been dismantled, the machinery is now operated by an electric motor, giving a vivid illustration of how the gleaming painted and bare metal must have flashed as it rotated. The bearing oil still has to be administered by hand.

From the Pump Hall we proceeded to the Visitors' Centre which is a living museum of waterworks past and present. Items such as sections of the old conduit pipes are exhibited, with a section of an elm water main from where the present large diameter 'trunk' mains and 'branch' pipes get their names. Tools used by the mainlayers, blacksmiths and forest-workers were also shown against a colourful and often picturesque background. The modern waterworks was also included, with complicated flow diagrams indicating the many operations through which the raw water must pass before it reaches our taps.

It was well into our second hour that we were guided across the compensation channel and overflow channel to the recently-opened nature trail, the paths of which led us past areas where badgers and foxes can be seen if one is patient and quiet enough. The woodland through which we walked had been replanted with native deciduous trees.

Congratulations are due to the new Bristol Water plc for continuing to promote this type of conservation which acts as a learning base for young and old and hopefully encourages us to understand and live with our natural surroundings and learn how our modern systems have developed from modest beginnings.

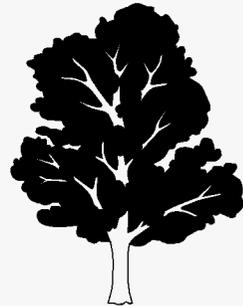
We returned to the Pumping Station via the Eel Trap and, after a vote of thanks to Ken and John, we adjourned to the New Inn to enjoy a pint of Butcombe Bitter, the local brew. A very enjoyable evening.

JOHN TAYLOR

And our thanks also to John who set up the visit and contributed to the anecdotes and good humour of the evening.

TREE WATCHING

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL would like to recruit a network of **voluntary tree wardens** throughout the city. The idea is to maintain links between local communities and the City Council officers responsible for managing the city's trees, woodlands and open spaces. Tree Wardens could:



- *collect information*, by doing surveys of trees in streets or parks
- *monitor* the condition of individual trees or work needs
- *identify* possible improvement projects
- *liaise* between local people and City Council officers.



The exact activities would depend on individual interests and time available. All wardens would be encouraged to do free training. If you are interested, please ring me for further details on 964 3106.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

MANOR WOODS AND THE MALAGO STREAM

WE REPORTED LAST TIME that Helen Hall, Bristol's Conservation Officer, had been in touch to suggest that Julia Bolzek, a student at U.W.E., should draw up a management plan for Manor Woods. (Incidentally, some copies of the last *Newsletter* referred to Helen *Holland* instead, who is a City Councillor; apologies for the confusion which was corrected in later copies). We had also been hoping to meet Karen Stagg, the City Council Area Landscape Manager, and put to her our ideas for improvements, such as Anton Bantock's drawings of how the entrances could be, shown below.

Things came together very well in late July when Sue Walker and I met Helen, Karen, Julia and Andy Baines of the National Rivers Authority and walked through Manor Woods. We discussed the plantlife (which includes some rare species); which



grass areas should be mown and which ones left to develop as wildflower meadows; possible hedge and tree planting; and we looked at what needed to be done to clean up the Malago and whether it might be possible to open up the culverted stretch.

You may have seen that the Council have now replaced the tatty and ineffective chain-link fencing at the Vale Lane entrance. Although the new low level bar isn't as attractive as Anton's stone walls, it's a distinct change for the better and leaves open the possibility of further longer-term improvements, whether walls, hedges or a combination of the two.

We are delighted that Helen Hall and Julia Bolzek have agreed to come and talk to our meeting on 14 September. Julia will be open to ideas to incorporate into her proposed management plan, and Helen will explain the nature conservation importance of areas like Manor Woods. *Don't miss this important discussion and the opportunity to put forward your thoughts and ideas.*

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

WELCOME to the start of the autumn programme. Don't forget that we welcome any ideas you have for talks or activities. Please tell us whether you like the things we try do or what you would like instead. Please contact Brenda Docherty on 983 9901 with any thoughts.

Thursday 14 September: St Peter's Room, Bishopsworth at 7.30pm. *Public Open Spaces as Nature Reserves* with HELEN HALL, Bristol's Conservation Officer and JULIA BOLZEK, a student who is working on a project for a management plan for Manor Woods. This meeting is the first major milestone on our long-term efforts to improve our open spaces. *Please come and make your contribution to the future of our local environment, especially Manor Woods.*

Monday 2 October: *Garbage Raid* - meet at Bishopsworth Library at **4.00pm**. PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN THE TIME FROM THAT SHOWN IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER AND THE *BRISTOL OBSERVER*.

Tuesday 17 October: St Peter's Hall, Bishopsworth at 7.30pm. *Urban Regeneration in South Bristol* with BEN BARKER. Malago Valley Conservation Group has joined VOSCUR, the Voluntary Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration, which is a new Bristol-wide body which brings together a broad range of voluntary groups. Ben Barker is one of the representatives for South Bristol and he will explain to us what VOSCUR is trying to do and how it will work. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS REPLACES THE VISIT TO FOLLY FARM, WHICH WILL NOW TAKE PLACE NEXT SPRING.

Monday 30 October: *Garbage Raid* - meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

Thursday 16 November: St Peter's Room, Bishopsworth at 7.30pm. A talk on *Conservation Gardening* by BILL BLYTH.

Thursday 14 December: A *Christmas Theme Evening* in St Peter's Rooms at 7.30pm. A 'hands-on' approach to floral/table decorations for members to take part in and show how artistic they are! Some carol singers will entertain us. Seasonal refreshments (but not too many for drivers!).

MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP NEEDS YOU!

IT WON'T BE LONG before we come to the end of our first official year of operation. The Annual General Meeting will be sometime in January or February of next year and that will include elections to the Committee.

Are you interested in getting involved in the Group's activities? There's virtually no limit to the number of initiatives we could undertake to help improve the environment in BS13 - if only we had the human resources. If you've got a particular interest or would like to start a scheme or project, do think about getting involved. Don't worry if you think you don't have any special expertise in the areas we cover - enthusiasm and commitment are what's needed, and the expertise - if it's required - develops naturally.

What's more, it's good fun. Give any Committee member a ring if you'd like to chat about it.

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Secretary	Chris Lillington	964 7578
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913
Programme Co-ordinator	Brenda Docherty	983 9901

Other Members

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

Co-opted Members

Richard Eddy, Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Terry Cleverley, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Paul Walker (*All the recently elected councillors for Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards have been invited to become co-opted Committee members.*)

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; telephone 964 3106. **Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.** The opinions expressed in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of Malago Valley Conservation Group.