



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 116
Winter
2017

NIGHTS ARE DRAWING IN – and Christmas is drawing near. That means M.V.C.G.'s always enjoyable Christmas Party – see page 8 – and then, in the New Year, our A.G.M. The official notice is on page 7, along with the reminder that the new calendar year is also a new subscriptions year for M.V.C.G.

We're always delighted when members renew promptly, often kindly rounding up their subs to £5, but we do recognise that this is a busy time of year, so sometimes renewals get slightly overlooked. We look forward to hearing from you when you can – and a gentle reminder will follow in the next *Newsletter* if you don't quite make it before then!

The main news in this issue is from our indefatigable Manor Woods Valley Group (this is getting to be a habit!), but with 'only' four pages this time, there's also an update on some of the important planning issues in BS13 (page 6).

Malago Valley Conservation Group has always been concerned with both the natural and the built environment in south west Bristol. The balance has shifted backwards and forwards over the years as specific issues have come and gone. For a while we were extremely busy in a wider Bristol context with the state and the future of our streams, the Malago and Pigeonhouse. Road schemes have also loomed large from time to time, and not just the SBL!

It remains the case that we could always do more, and in more areas, if we had the resources. I don't mean large sums of money – we're all volunteers and pretty experienced at knowing how to have an effect. A few more people on the committee, or being active on a specific topic, would work wonders. You don't need pre-existing expertise, just a willingness to have a go – becoming an expert will follow naturally and quickly! Please consider joining our committee (we meet every other month) or getting involved in any way.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

OVER THE AUTUMN, the Manor Woods Valley Group has continued to improve the Orchard area and clear litter from the river and paths. Following discussions with Becky Belfin, the Council's former Nature Conservation Officer, we began a programme of improvements to the Woodland Path; agreed a plan to support the slow worm project in the Rabbit Field and Orchard; and embarked on the winter coppicing activities. And whilst all this is going on, the shadow of Council cutbacks to Bristol parks and green spaces hangs over us.

Orchard: It has been a great year for apples and pears and there is still an abundance of fruit in the Orchard, freely available to the public and the wildlife – birds, small mammals and invertebrates. To help people get to the apples and pears more easily, M.V.C.G. members



and volunteers, supported by GoodGym runners, spent the morning of Saturday 23 September cutting back the brambles and nettles around the trees. We collected buckets of windfalls which were later distributed free at the Zion allotments harvest exchange evening.

Fruit for free!

Woodland Path: Our priority for the Woodland this winter is to tackle the vegetation (mostly bramble, blackthorn and hawthorn) that is encroaching on the Woodland Path and, in places, threatening access and the enjoyment of walkers. We made a good start on the morning of Saturday 28 October when, again with the help of the GoodGym runners, we cleared the path near the interceptor storm drain and opened up a new glade. Our next working party on the Woodland Path, again with GoodGym, will be on Saturday 2 December from 10.00am to 1.00pm: please join us and experience the joy of working outdoors with nature.



Path cleared for people; environment improved for wildlife

Coppicing: Our winter coppicing project has got off to a great start. On Thursday 9 November a small group of M.V.C.G. members and some new volunteers prepared a 'coupe' near the Valley Road entrance. A week later, on 16 November, 26 staff volunteers from the TSB will spend the day with us, learning coppicing and other woodland skills and opening up a new glade.



Angela engaged in creative destruction

Thanks to Anna from the Forest of Avon Trust for sharing the training and supervision of the volunteers. Check it out on your next visit to Manor Woods Valley.



Happy coppicers. Join them on 2 December!

As by-products of our coppicing work, we now have bean poles, pea sticks and tree stakes for sale (and free, within reason, to M.V.C.G. members and volunteers). Whilst we are reasonably well equipped with loppers and shears, we would really benefit from

donations of hard hats and pruning and small bow saws – so have a look in your garden shed!

Litter, Fly-tipping and Water Quality:

In our last *Newsletter* we bemoaned the practice of fly-tipping in the river which, as well as being an eyesore, pollutes the water and damages wildlife. Shortly afterwards, some M.V.C.G. members fished out the bicycles and arranged for the Council to collect them.

Bikes now binned

The Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) has long recognised the problem of fly-tipping and littering in south Bristol rivers and streams and they have recently applied to the Aviva Community Fund for support for a project to clean up the Malago and Pigeonhouse streams, and, crucially, to raise awareness in the local communities about the damage done to wildlife and amenity. You can help to support the project by voting for it on www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/voting/project/view/17-1875#plus.



Council Consultation on the future of Bristol Parks and Green Spaces:

The Council launched its 12 week consultation on 6 November with this statement:

By April 2019 the council will need to save at least £2.868million from its budget for day to day parks' services. This means services will need to be run in a very different way, working in partnership with communities to look at income generation opportunities, while also making savings and making services as efficient as possible.

The statement goes on to make some key commitments, including:

- *Continuing to ensure free access for all to the city's parks.*
- *Generating income from our parks that we will use directly to support their maintenance and improvement.*
- *Welcoming community management of local spaces, supporting volunteering and neighbourhood decision-making.*
- *Recognising that our parks are vital for our health and wellbeing and ensuring they are attractive and accessible for all our citizens.*
- *Ensuring that the planning process protects green space from development where green space is needed and where it helps protect the city from high temperatures and local flooding during heavy rainfall.*

And puts forward some ideas for generating income, including:

- *Increasing income from cafes and concessions, including ice cream vans.*
- *Introducing "appropriate" advertising in parks and green spaces.*
- *Introducing new, competitive fees and charges for any businesses operating from a park or green space.*
- *Introducing new fee-paying activities into parks – including inflatables, camping, adventure golf and car boot sales.*

We can all comment on the proposals, register our concerns and put forward our own ideas at www.bristol.gov.uk/parksconsultation.

We hope that there will be an opportunity to attend a local public meeting about the possible impact on Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve during the consultation period and we'll let you know when that is to happen.

MARTIN GRANT *on behalf of the*
Manor Woods Valley Working Group

PLANNING MATTERS

WE REPORTED last time on the long-running saga of 131 BRIDGWATER ROAD (aka the Kings Walk extension). Even before the Planning Committee refused the retrospective application for the incorrectly built 14 houses because no affordable housing was included, the developers put in a new outline application for nine houses on the site – i.e. one less than the minimum required for affordable housing provision.

The developers haven't (yet?) appealed against the refusal, and the new application for nine houses is pending. It's important to recognise that the outline application for nine houses is unrefusable in strict planning terms. The principle has been agreed for 14 houses on the site, so a lesser number cannot be refused unless there are other reasons – appearance, landscaping, layout, scale etc. This application does include access to be approved at this outline stage, and access was a disputed issue in the retrospective application, so one can speculate that discussions are going on between the planners and the developers about this.

It's not surprising that there have been many objections to the nine houses, since the developers have shown themselves to be unprofessional and untrustworthy – and not just on this site, as the 'Inside Out West' programme on BBC tv on 18 September made clear. A very understandable reaction has been simple confusion: if nine houses are given permission on a site which already has 14 houses on it, what will happen? Will the 14 new houses be demolished? Will the nine houses look a lot like the existing 14 with some internal walls removed? What, in fact, are the developers playing at? Lots of people would like to know – and lots of people are making sure that they follow the rules this time.

A near-by application is less contentious, though it has raised concerns about its effect on neighbouring homes. 93-95 BRIDGWATER ROAD is between the King's Head and Martha's Orchard and in 2015 permission was given for eight houses on the site. Building hasn't started, and now there is an application to replace two of the houses with a terrace of four.

93-95 Bridgwater Road is a fairly substantial development, but there are many other sites all over our patch where one or two new houses are being proposed on large corner gardens or where a pair of semis would become a terrace of three. Depending on the local details – not least access and parking – this sort of 'infill' in the existing urban area can only reduce pressure to build on green-field sites.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 20 February 2018 at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church), Church Road, Bishopsworth, starting at 7.30pm. The Officers and Committee members retire each year but are eligible for re-election. The names of the current Officers and Committee members appear on the back page.

Nominations for Officers or Committee members are very welcome. Nominations can be made to the Chairman, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone number and e-mail address overleaf).

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 and will be followed by a short talk on a topic 'in the news'. Since we regard our A.G.M. as M.V.C.G.'s birthday, we will finish with wine/orange juice and cheese/ other nibbles to celebrate. All members and friends of M.V.C.G. are invited to come to our birthday party.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE
Chairman

Membership of M.V.C.G. runs on a calendar year basis, so, unless you've joined within the last three months, it's time to renew your subscription.

There's no need to fill in the form unless your details have changed – just give us a note of your name with your cheque or cash. **Please let us know if you have got e-mail in the last year or have changed your e-mail address.**

The subscription – just £4 per household, as it has been ever since we started! – covers the costs of running M.V.C.G. and also enables us to make direct improvements to our local environment when an opportunity arises.

Please bring your sub. to the Christmas Party, or the A.G.M., or send it to either Beryl Heaton (3 Kings Walk, BS13 8BB) or André Coutanche (14 Queens Road, BS13 8LB). **THANK YOU!**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



AS USUAL, our Winter *Newsletter* has details of our Christmas Party, and, in the New Year, our A.G.M. And some exercise for you as well!

Saturday 2 December: Manor Woods Valley WORKING PARTY on the Woodland Path, helped by GoodGym, from 10.00am to 1.00pm. See also page 3. All welcome – wear ‘gardening’ clothes! For more information, contact Martin on 07896 805001.



Thursday 14 December: M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY at St Peter’s Rooms (by the side of St Peter’s Church, Bishopsworth), starting at 7.30pm. There will be the usual fun and games, including a raffle for our funds. We’ll finish with our traditional American Supper, so please bring a little something for the refreshment table if you can (but don’t worry if you can’t – there’s always lots!).

Tuesday 20 February: M.V.C.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 7.30pm at St Peter’s Rooms. Please see the ‘official’ announcement on page 7.

MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	Peter Crispin	939 0256
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Marie Jo Coutanche, Martin Grant, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Richard Bevan (Highridge Forum), Diana Porter (Bedminster Down & Uplands Society), Sue Walker (HHEAG), Ken Kennedy (Volunteering Matters), Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Paul Goggin, Helen Holland, Kevin Quartley
(All the City councillors for Bishopsworth ward and for Hartcliffe and Withywood ward 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.