



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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WE'VE BEEN PRETTY BUSY LATELY, and the *Newsletter* is a bit later than it should have been - sorry. Please note the November meeting which is on a Thursday instead of our regular Tuesday (see the Programme on page 7). This is because the Bishopsworth Quiz is on the Tuesday, and I'm pleased to say that M.V.C.G. will have two teams competing.

For those who haven't come across the Quiz before, it's an entertaining and sociable evening at Bishopsworth British Legion, with teams representing just about all the groups and organisation which are active in the 'village' - the W.I., Scouts, local shops, the Legion, the Library etc., and, not least, the Malago Society and M.V.C.G. For historical reasons (pun partly intended), your chairman will be playing for the Malago Society, but I think I'm still allowed to say 'Good luck' to the M.V.C.G. teams.

Another entertaining event was the Coffee Day held on 31 October. Many thanks are due to all concerned - Marie Jo, Lola and Chris for organising, the generous folk who contributed cakes, jam, plants and lucky dip prizes and those who helped staff the various stands. The Wildlife Trust were pleased with their sales, and M.V.C.G. made a total of £63.50 for our funds. An excellent effort!

Making its debut at the Coffee Day was our new exhibition. Its theme is Manor Woods and it has now taken up residence in Bishopsworth Library. Thanks to Beryl, Lola and Marie Jo for planning and designing it. And the Group's response to the Council's consultation on Manor Woods is covered on page 4.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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'WHY BRISTOL ISN'T BATH'

FOR OUR FIRST TALK OF THE WINTER, on 17 September, we were entertained by Jerry Hicks of Bristol Civic Society, who was accompanied by his wife, Anne.

We were introduced to the various types of architecture - classical Greek style which is a series of pillars with a flat roof, and the Roman style which included arches, towers and domes. Jerry also showed through a series of fascinating slides how painting evolved through different styles which parallel styles in architecture.

Bath is a city which has been developed on geometrical shapes with very formal three-storey classical Bath stone Georgian buildings. Bristol, on the other hand, has developed around the Docks, water, ships, shipbuilding and warehouses in a very organic way.

Buildings were designed to be functional and decoration came later. Builders and architects built with a conscious view of the neighbouring buildings so that the various styles blended into and complimented each other.

After the War, Bristol's waterways were partly covered to improve the roadways and the population was moved to the suburbs. The vacant land was then developed into multistorey office blocks which now dominate the city skyline, dwarfing much of our older architecture.

We were encouraged as residents of Bristol to take the initiative with future planning to ensure that the best of the old is maintained and that new developments blend in with the old. More mixed housing and shops are required in the inner city and this could be achieved partly by using some of the redundant office buildings.

The waterfront is the city's shop window and, although much has been done to enhance its character, a lot more can be achieved to make it attractive to visitors and residents alike.

When future town planning is proposed, make your views known about the parts that you like as well as the parts that you don't like.

A very interesting and thought-provoking talk.

JOHN TAYLOR

BISHOPSWORTH & MALAGO CONSERVATION AREA

IN DECEMBER 1993 an *ad hoc* group submitted its report to Bristol City Council setting out the case for a 'Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area', based on historic Bishopsworth village and its surrounding green spaces. That group rapidly evolved into Malago Valley Conservation Group, and we have been enquiring from time to time since then what was happening to the report.

We have been writing to officers in the Planning Department, and we have also been building up contacts with our local councillors in BS13. Following this dual lobbying, we were invited to a meeting with the planners at Brunel House. The planning officers were sympathetic to the principle - they even bought a copy of the Malago Society book of historic photographs, and we agreed to take them around the 'Bishopsworth Village Trail' in the spring. However, it was made clear that the large workload on reducing staff numbers made it very difficult to consider programming a new conservation area for consideration in the next financial year, 1997/98 - but if the Planning Committee thought it was important enough, then it would be done.

This is a clear message which we must respond to - and you can help. Please write to one or both of your local councillors asking for consideration of our conservation area to be included in the 1997/98 work programme. Although M.V.C.G. will certainly continue to keep up the pressure, few things are more effective than expressions of 'grass root' interest in an issue. The councillors for Bishopsworth Ward are Terry Cleverley and Dr Paul Walker; for Bedminster, Peter Crispin and Claire Warren; and for Hartcliffe, Bernard Chalmers and Mervyn Hulin. If you don't know their home addresses, you can address letters to the Council House, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR. It would also help to write to Cllr Andy May, the Chair of the Planning Committee.

This is the best opportunity we have had yet to advance the establishment of the first conservation area in south-west Bristol. It is vital that pressure is brought to bear *now* in order to get the work agreed and resources allocated for the next financial year. Please help.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

THE MALAGO GREENWAY

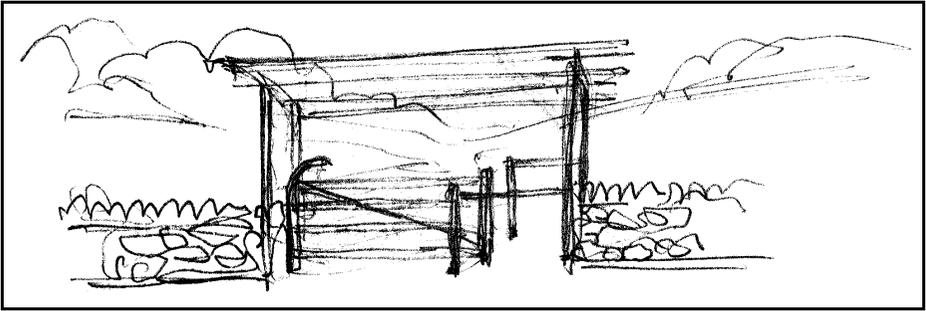
MOST MEMBERS will have seen the consultation leaflets which the City Council distributed at the Library and elsewhere asking for opinions on proposed improvements to the Malago Greenway through Manor Woods. You may even remember our very first public meeting in November 1994 when Jessica Leigh of the City Planning Department told us about the whole Greenway, the pedestrian and cycle path which runs out from Bedminster to Hartcliffe and Bishopsworth.

The City Planners had written to us just before the leaflets went out to let us know what was intended and subsequently sent us a couple of dozen leaflets for circulation. The M.V.C.G. Committee spent some time considering our response and we wrote on 14 October with detailed comments.

We began by setting the proposals in their wider context: the proposal for a 'Bishopsworth and Malago Conservation Area'; our discussions with Helen Hall (Bristol's Conservation Officer) and Karen Stagg (Parks) about the wildlife and amenity aspects of Manor Woods; our regular garbage raids; and Julia Bolzek's excellent report on Manor Woods which we will be using as a blueprint for future action.

We weren't sure about hard surfacing the path all the way through, since that would encourage cyclists to travel too fast past walkers in a confined width. We certainly didn't want the path widened; the present naturally varying width adds to the informal character of the area and, in any case, there are some valuable wildlife features immediately adjacent to some parts of the path. However, we have accepted that the path should be surfaced for the benefit of both pedestrians and cyclists, with notices asking cyclists to respect other users of the path and watch their speed. We are delighted that the grotty piece of the track behind Bishopsworth Library is to be hard surfaced; this area is particularly bad for litter which is very difficult to remove from the existing rough surface.

We were very much in favour of an 'entry feature' at the Vale Lane entrance - but totally opposed to the design on the consultation leaflet which we felt was more appropriate to a suburban, municipal park. It would also have needed a separate access nearby for maintenance vehicles. Anton Bantock had sketched an outline design which we included in our letter.



Anton's sketch of a possible Vale Lane entrance

We drew attention to the approach identified in Julia Bolzek's report:

'At the entrances, the visitor should be slowly guided into the "open room", to actually feel a change from being on the street. At the southern entrance, this situation is given naturally, but in the north, an alley of 6 to 8 trees, connected with the tree plantations close to the entrance, could have the desired effect. Ideally would be an alley of fruit trees, as an introduction to the orchard and countryside in the city idea.'

We urged the erection of an interpretation board to explain the history, wildlife and townscape value of the site. We offered to help if we could with both tree planting and the interpretation board. Finally, we suggested that the official name for this stretch of the Greenway should not be 'Malago Vale Open Space', as was being shown, but 'Manor Woods'.

A full reply was received from Mike Ginger, the officer in the Planning Department dealing with the consultation. Virtually all our points were picked up. The existing path width will be respected, with Helen Hall advising on sensitive sections. The Vale Lane entrance is being redesigned and will include a timber arch along the lines we suggested. The Council would like our ideas for what should go on an interpretation board; if you have any thoughts about this, please let me know on 964 3106. The name 'Manor Woods' will be adopted.

Although it's always nice to be taken notice of, we are very pleased not just with the result but also with the way this consultation has been carried out. It's a fine example of the sort of constructive partnership we hope to establish with all parts of the City Council. Our thanks to Mike Ginger - and we look forward to seeing the results on the ground before too long.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

NATURE CONSERVATION

THE TALK GIVEN BY ADRIAN WOODHALL of the National Trust on 15 October provided us with a fascinating insight into the work of the Trust in nature conservation in their Mendip region, which includes Brean Down and Crook Peak as well as the Mendip Hills.

Adrian emphasised the importance of maintaining a diversity of habitat to sustain a wide variety of wildlife. This can mean, as he pointed out, that trees are not always a good thing where they take over what may be a more desirable habitat.

It was surprising to learn that what appears to be wild, untamed grassland is, in fact, carefully managed. If it were not for the intervention of the Trust it would eventually revert to woodland and many species which need a more open habitat would be lost.

The talk was illustrated with delightful slides of the flora and fauna to be found, together with general views of Crook Peak, Brean Down and other property owned by the Trust. Some of the slides showed things which we were familiar with in our immediate area, while others were of flora which needed the special circumstances they find high on Mendip.

At the end of the talk we were given the opportunity to ask questions and there was much discussion about controlling bracken. Adrian pointed out that whilst bracken was undesirable in many ways, it did serve as good ground cover for birds and small mammals. We also talked about foxes and learned that, although our urban foxes have been decimated by the dreadful mange, their country cousins have been much less affected. Presumably it is only a matter of time before the city is recolonised.

It was very reassuring to discover that the National Trust is striving to maintain the fine balance needed to preserve important parts of our countryside for future generations.

BERYL HEATON

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

ALL the evening meetings are held at 7.30pm in St Peter's Rooms, which are by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. Please note that November's meeting is on Thursday rather than our normal Tuesday.

Thursday 21 November: *Looking after our Historic Buildings* by GARY STONE of English Heritage. An illustrated talk which will describe the organisation and philosophy of English Heritage and help us to look at historic buildings with more appreciation and understanding.

Monday 25 November: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at **3.30pm**. Please note the earlier time now that the dark evenings are here!

Saturday 30 November: In response to several requests, and with the kind agreement of Lotte Bristow, a GUIDED TOUR OF BISHOPSWORTH MANOR HOUSE. This will be in the late afternoon. Numbers are limited and *booking is essential*. Please ring Brenda on 983 9901 to book a place and to learn the time of the tour.

Sunday 8 December: CHRISTMAS COMMUNITY WALK (with refreshments), arranged by the Dundry Hill Environment Group. For more details, ring Sue Walker on 946 5285.

Tuesday 10 December: The M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY. There will be a demonstration showing how to make corn dollies and similar decorations for your home. We also have a few surprises in store which we think you will enjoy. Mulled wine proved popular last year and we will also have an 'American Supper', so please bring something seasonal to contribute to the table. (If you need to know more, phone Brenda on 983 9901). All welcome, so come along and bring a friend for an enjoyable evening in good company.

Monday 16 December: *Garbage Raid*. Get in trim for Christmas. Meet at the 'Elm Tree' at 3.30pm. (Sleigh bells on the trolley?).

Tuesday 21 January 1997: PHILIP GALLOP will give a slide presentation on the restoration of Dundry Church, especially the tower.

Tuesday 18 February 1997: Our Annual General Meeting. More details in the January *Newsletter*, but get the date in your diary now. Our special guest will be VIC LOVE, a well-known local architect and an entertaining speaker.

ELM TREE CORNER

FOR SOME TIME NOW we have been thinking about ways to improve what we have been calling 'Elm Tree Corner' - the junction of Queens Road, Church Road and Highridge Road. It's a busy place but not a particularly attractive one, with fast through traffic, buses stopping, cars parking and pedestrians trying to slip through the gaps. There's also a lot of tarmac and concrete which could do with softening and 'greening'.

An M.V.C.G. think tank has had some intensive sessions to consider all this, and their ideas have now been agreed by the Committee. We believe that improvements can be made which will make the area work better for everyone and we have put together a report and recommendations which we are sending initially to City Council officers for an informal reaction.

Things certainly won't happen overnight, but if you've got any ideas for this corner, please let us know.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chair	Sue Walker	946 5285
Secretary	Brenda Docherty	983 9901
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913
Programme Co-ordinator	Brenda Docherty	983 9901

Other Members

Freddie Alliston, Anton Bantock, Denis Bristow, Richard Eddy, Peter Hall, Lola Hardingham, Beryl Heaton, Chris Lillington, Mary Sykes.

Co-opted Members

Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Terry Cleverley, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Paul Walker (*All the City and County of Bristol 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.