



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THERE WAS AN ELECTION on May the 1st. You noticed? I don't mean the General Election; from M.V.C.G.'s point of view, Bristol City Council and its policies are just as important as Westminster and Whitehall, and the results of the Council elections tended to get lost amongst the national brouhaha.

In fact there was no change in our local wards - Cllrs Paul Walker (Bishopsworth), Mervin Hulin (Hartcliffe) and Paul Smith (Whitchurch Park) were all re-elected (there was no election in Bedminster Ward). And Dawn Primarolo was re-elected as M.P. for our area. All the councillors and the M.P. receive our *Newsletter*, and most of them take a sympathetic interest in what we are trying to do.

M.V.C.G. is, of course, a political body - but emphatically not *party*-political. We are political because we try to influence events, and we do so in a political way - by argument, lobbying, publicity - and sometimes, as on the garbage raids, by direct action. As for our party political position, if the local election results had been different, we could have had active committee members who were city councillors for each of the three main parties! In fact, it is our established tradition that councillors who serve on the M.V.C.G. committee become co-opted members without a vote, so that the Group's policies are seen to be independent of party politics.

Following the Council elections, there has been a change in some of the committee chairs; Cllr Helen Holland has taken over from Cllr Andy May as chair of the Planning, Transport and Development Committee. Helen is a good friend of M.V.C.G., and we congratulate her and wish her well in her demanding post.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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MALAGO GREENWAY

THE MALAGO GREENWAY has now officially reached Bishopsworth, with the completion of the surfacing of the path through Manor Woods from Vale Lane off Hartcliffe Way to St Peter's Rise at the rear of Bishopsworth Library.

The access gateway at Vale Lane has been improved with a natural stone wall and wooden entrance and has incorporated an ingenious metal gateway which allows access to wheelchairs and prams but prevents access to motor vehicles. This 'entrance feature' is based on a design by Anton Bantock which M.V.C.G. suggested as part of the City Council's consultation on the improvements.

The gate and railings at the Bishopsworth end have also been upgraded, and the short track from the bottom of St Peter's Rise to the open space has also been tarmacked - a welcome improvement, as this was a nasty stretch, both to walk over in bad weather and to clear of litter at any time.

It is sad to report that more of the excellent picnic furniture provided by the City Council has been damaged by the mindless minority, but, on a more cheerful note, the heron is now a regular visitor to the pond and the stream, and the ducks and the moorhen appear to have settled in again. (And they don't seem to have been upset by the removal of some of their artificial habitat: see page 4 - *Ed.*)

Our regular cycling correspondent also reports that the new light-controlled crossing on Hartcliffe Way has greatly improved the link between Manor Woods and the main Malago Greenway into the city.

JOHN TAYLOR

***** STOP PRESS *****

There will be an official OPENING CEREMONY of the new stretch of the Greenway at the new Vale Lane entrance on **Tuesday 20 May at 10.30am**. Bring a bike if you have one!

Everyone is welcome.

THE GATEHOUSE CENTRE

YOU ARE PROBABLY AWARE of the large modern building which was erected on the grass opposite Leo's (as it was then) in 1995, but do you know what an interesting place it is?

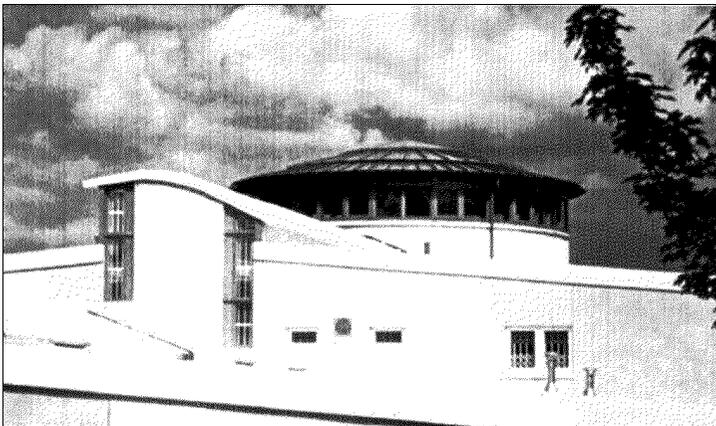
The Centre is owned by Hartcliffe and Withywood Ventures (H.W.V.), a company set up in 1985 by local people and workers to address the problem of unemployment in this area.

As well as meeting, conference and training space, the building houses an active crèche; an excellent café which is open to the public between 9.00am and 4.00pm, with reasonably priced meals from breakfast onwards; courses run by H.W.V. in business admin., computer skills, NVQ etc.; and Office Furniture Links, which sell secondhand office furniture to community and voluntary groups.

Also within the Centre there is a Job Shop, a solicitor, a flower shop, a hairdresser, a carpet shop, a builder and an animal grooming parlour. You can buy very reasonably priced bird tables, rabbit hutches, dog kennels and play houses; blinds; vinyl boat covers; all sorts of signs: have your furniture refinished and upholstered and recycle your computer ribbons - and all in one building within our area!

Of course, the Gatehouse Centre also contains the office of our friends Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group (H.H.E.A.G.), who co-operate with us so much in our various activities. So why not go round and have a look - it's well worth it!

CHRIS LILLINGTON



TALKING RUBBISH

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN was upon us in April, and - as advertised in the last *Newsletter* - we mounted two special garbage raids in two of our special green spaces.



On 19 April, a dozen people turned out for a stroll down Crox Bottom. We were delighted to welcome some new faces, including Jonathan Wilding of the H.H.E.A.G. Saturday Club. The weather was reasonable and our haul filled the skip which was waiting for us at the bottom, near Hartcliffe Way. We are pleased to record our grateful thanks to H.H.E.A.G. for arranging the skip. The Audi bootlid which one of our adventurous explorers found in the undergrowth wasn't put on the skip; although the trolley could have used the hazard flashers, we thought it might be worth something to the car-breakers (alas, it turned out to be unwanted and has gone to the tip).

As usual with garbage raids, the event was not without incidents, all pleasant. A couple out walking their dog were full of praise and encouragement for our efforts and made a generous donation of £5 for our funds. They also told us that two woodpeckers were nesting nearby, and that they had seen five squirrels recently. And those who stayed right to the bitter end, when Anton insisted on having a go at the rubbish trapped by the dam on the stream, were rewarded by the sight of the heron doing a low fly-pass, chased by a couple of crows.

The following Saturday saw a rather depleted workforce at Manor Woods. As happened the last time we put the inflatable boat on the pond, it rained. It rained a lot. Still, it didn't put us off - nor did it seem to deter the robin which took a very close interest in the boat as it approached the normally secluded far side of the pond.

The haul from the pond was impressive. We removed two shopping trolleys (one of which was then used to carry the other junk away); a cable drum; four tyres; two traffic cones; two paint tins; and assorted bits of flotsam and jetsam, including the ghost of a deckchair.

The *Evening Post* photographer, whom we had given up for lost, turned up just as we were preparing to leave, having been told that we would

be working there all day (all day?!). So back we trudged to the pond to pose. The picture eventually appeared in the *Observer*.

A big thank you to Norman Shaddick for the loan of his excellent inflatable dinghy and associated equipment. And a special mention, too, for Bill Gibson and grand-daughter Siobhan who turned out on both garbage raids and worked as hard and as well as two people their average age!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

THERE HAVE BEEN some recent planning applications which M.V.C.G. has commented on to the City Planners. Firstly, there was an application to demolish most of one side of Symes Avenue, Hartcliffe, and rebuild the shops in four larger units. We were in favour of upgrading this area but doubted the need for the pub which was shown as part of the application.

The British Legion, Bishopsworth, has bought a strip of the adjacent school playing field and wants to extend its carpark. This has security implications for the neighbouring properties, as well as representing a loss of open space. We have written asking that permission should only be granted if a good fence is erected and the whole area heavily planted with native trees and shrubs.

The March 1996 *Newsletter* reported that a planning application had been made for 'Pondarosa', on Vicarage Road, Bishopsworth, to demolish the building and build a nursing home on the site. This was an outline application and was granted; a detailed application has now been submitted. The Committee do not have any major worries about this; please let us know if you think otherwise.

Lastly, there is an outline application to build eight houses behind 65 Church Road, Bishopsworth (next to Bishop's Yard). The main point here is the traffic access on a dangerous junction. It is proposed to remodel the junction, but this would be incompatible with our suggestions for improvements around 'Elm Tree Corner'. We are writing with our views.

Do please let us know if you have any thoughts on these or on any other planning applications in the BS13 area.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

DUNDRY HILL WALK

ON 31 MARCH, Dundry Hill Group organised a footpath walk around Dundry Village led by Chris McFarling. This was a taster for part of the route of the Forest of Avon path - see below.

It was a beautiful sunny day as the group of 38 people gathered outside Dundry Village Hall. Chris gave us an introduction to the type of things we might see before starting promptly at 10 o'clock.

We were shown some new hedge-laying. This provides stock-proof fencing for the farmer while at the same time improving the hedge for wildlife by encouraging new growth.

There was evidence of blocked footpaths where farmers try to protect their property against vandalism and rubbish dumping. Careful negotiations are necessary to re-open these paths to the public while providing some protection for landowners in the form of new or rebuilt boundary walls or fences with suitable but durable stiles.

Many interesting items were pointed out during the walk, including a spring which was the source of the Malago and the steps and footpath below Dundry Church which lead to Highridge. The walk then proceeded to the old quarry from where we could see magnificent views of Bristol, including the Clifton Suspension Bridge and, in the distance, the old and new Severn Bridges.

The timing of the end of the walk, back at the Village Hall, coincided with the opening of the Dundry Inn, but the majority of the walkers had lunch on their minds and dispersed quickly after thanking Chris for a very interesting morning.

JOHN TAYLOR



*Celebrate the launch of the Community Forest Path with two animated guided walks. The 70 kilometre circular route around Bristol will be opened on 25 May and 1 June. On **1 June**, a walk of 5 miles from Dundry Down (Grid ref: 556 668) to Ashton Court will take about 4 hours, starting at **2.00pm**. The path in this direction offers spectacular views of Bristol and North Somerset. Performance artists and local people will recite poems and tell stories contrasting the rural and urban landscapes and the historic parkland of Ashton Court Estate.*

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

IT'S SUMMER! At least, it is for programme purposes. As well as our own events, M.V.C.G. members are welcome on the walks arranged by the University of Withywood for which there is a £1 charge for University sponsorships.

Sunday 18 May: University of Withywood walk through Crox Bottom. Meet at the Gatehouse Centre at 2.00pm.

Tuesday 20 May: A conducted tour of *Bristol Water's Gardens* on Bridgwater Road. We also hope to see inside the Operations Room. *Please note the meeting time for this event - 7.00pm - at the Company's Headquarters.* (And don't forget the Malago Greenway opening ceremony at Vale Lane at 10.30am - see page 2).

Sunday 25 May: University of Withywood walk along Winford Lane. Meet at Dundry Church at 2.00pm.

Sunday 1 June: Forest of Avon inaugural walk from Dundry to Ashton Court - see opposite page.

Monday 2 June: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at 4.00pm at Bishopsworth Library. (Note that this replaces the usual last Monday in May, since that is the Bank Holiday).

Sunday 8 June: University of Withywood walk over the Peart and field paths to Highridge Common. Meet at the University (131 Queens Road) at 2.00pm.

Sunday 15 June: University of Withywood walk through the Manor Woods nature trail. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 2.00pm.

Tuesday 17 June: Guided tour of the Wildlife Trust's reserve at *Stockwood Open Space.* Meet at 7.00pm at The Coots (end of Stockwood Road). There will be a charge of £1 per head payable on the night as a donation to the Trust. If you can offer a lift, or if you need a lift, please ring Lola Hardingham on 964 1116 after 4 June.

Monday 30 June: *Garbage Raid.* Meet at 4.00pm at 'The Elm Tree'.

Tuesday 15 July: Visit to *Timsbury Bottom*, including a tour of an organic farm. If you would like to go on this visit, please ring Lola (964 1116) and say whether you can provide or need transport.



FLORAL DISPLAYS

WE'RE AT IT AGAIN. We are planning to run again this year our award scheme for hanging baskets and troughs which help to brighten up the neighbourhood.

Start planning and planting now - you could win a prize! And please keep your eyes open as summer comes on and be prepared to let us have nominations for award-winners.

LOLA HARDINGHAM

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Acting Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913

Other Members

Anton Bantock, Brenda Docherty, Richard Eddy, Beryl Heaton, Chris Lillington (*Committee Secretary*), Mary Sykes.

Co-opted Members

Peter Hall, Sue Walker, 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.