



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 55
January
2004

IT'S THE JANUARY *Newsletter*, so it's time to invite members to renew their subscriptions (see the back page) and to invite all readers of the *Newsletter* - whether M.V.C.G. members or not - to come to our A.G.M. and Birthday Party (see page 2).

Since the last *Newsletter* there has been quite a bit of action on planning applications. The scheme for a waste transfer station at Cater Road was granted, and the developers of the proposed block of flats at Pentire Avenue appealed against the Council's refusal of planning permission. We have just heard that their appeal has been dismissed.

The application for a block of flats at the former Esso Garage on Bishopsworth Road was refused because it would have meant building on part of the designated open space of Manor Woods, and because of its impact on views from Manor Woods (the land to have been built on is not owned by the Council, but land ownership is irrelevant in planning terms). The developers are appealing against refusal, and have simultaneously put in a duplicate planning application. We had been invited by the developers to meet them and discuss landscaping ideas, which we did. Our view is that there is probably a balance to be struck between the improved streetscape on Bishopsworth Road and the possible impact on Manor Woods. A very good planting scheme in Manor Woods might make it acceptable.

A planning application for the 'Marpets' shop on Highridge Road has caused a lot of controversy. It's a storey too high, and we understand that negotiations between the applicants and the developer are continuing.

The debate over Crox Bottom continues (see page 3 of the last *Newsletter*) and a local resident is organising a working party to clean up the area. See page 7 for details and come to the A.G.M. to learn more!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 17 February at St Peter's Rooms, 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.

According to the M.V.C.G. constitution, nominations for either Officers or Committee members should be made in writing at least 14 days before the A.G.M. They must be supported by a seconder and the consent of the nominee must first have been obtained. Nominations can be made to the Hon. Secretary, Lis Pibworth, at 9 Cowler Walk, Withywood, BS13 9AY or to the Chairman, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone numbers on back page).

However, anyone thinking of volunteering to join the Committee should not be put off by these formal requirements. If you think you may be interested, please contact any existing Committee member for an informal chat. New members are always welcome!

The formal A.G.M. business will include a report-back to members on the year's events, and this will be followed by our Guest Speaker, who this year is JULIAN COX. Julian is the (relatively) new Community Parks Manager for our part of Bristol, replacing Karen Stagg, who was Landscape Manager for south Bristol. Come and hear how the new system works, what Julian's role and responsibilities are, and how he and M.V.C.G. can work to improve our green spaces.



As usual, we will finish with wine/orange juice and cheese/other nibbles to celebrate our birthday. All members and friends of M.V.C.G. are invited to come to our birthday party.

LIS PIBWORTH
Hon. Secretary

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2003

HERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS which will be presented to the A.G.M. on 17 February. If you have any queries or comments on the accounts and cannot be at the A.G.M., please contact me on 964 5780 or e-mail *beryl.danny.heaton@talk21.com*.

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Membership	292.00	Postage & Stationery	21.00
Functions	160.21	Refreshments at A.G.M.	21.35
Other Income	275.44	Hall Hire	140.00
Bank Interest	<u>8.39</u>	Printing	84.00
		Speakers fees/donations/expenses	72.47
		Christmas Meeting	26.10
		Bulbs and Plants	200.59
		Photo Archives	1.76
		Insurance	75.00
		Garbage Bags	<u>3.63</u>
Total	736.04	Total	645.90

	£
Excess of income over expenditure	90.14
Brought forward from 2002	1074.00
Balance carried forward to 2004	1164.14

Made up of: Cash in hand	5.40
Bank account	1158.74

Detail of function income	£	Detail of Other Income	£
Christmas at Home	127.28	Donations	48.50
Christmas Party Raffle	22.00	Finds	0.04
Sales at Meetings	1.30	Sale of Scrap Metal	17.20
Refreshments	<u>9.63</u>	Sale of aluminium cans	106.20
	<u>160.21</u>	<i>My Manor Woods Book sales</i>	<u>103.50</u>
			<u>275.44</u>

BERYL HEATON
Hon. Treasurer

'HABITABLE CITIES' CONFERENCE

IN THE JULY 2002 *Newsletter*, Dr Monica Degen reported on the project 'Habitable Cities' funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and hosted by The Open University. Manor Woods had been chosen as one of the research sites and Monica would monitor our group. A few of us kept diaries about the changing seasons in the woods, the people we met and the wildlife we saw. The group also produced a video. The project culminated in a conference in Birmingham on 11 December 2003 which André and I attended.

It opened with a run down on the results from Professor Sarah Whatmore, the project co-ordinator. This was followed by a DVD of the activities at the six sites. Marie Jo was one of the 'stars' as she wrestled with a bike in the Malago! It was good to see what the other groups had been up to. Three of them were based in Birmingham and three in Bristol, some were allotment sites whilst others were mainly conservation.

After a short introduction we split into groups to discuss 'Skills, expertise, and enthusiasms'. Having thought at first that we didn't have skills, just plenty of enthusiasm, I realised I was wrong. We had quite a list, including publicity, publishing, photography, organising, and communication. At the reporting back most groups had come up with similar views.

After lunch the groups tackled 'Organising local enthusiasms, skills and expertise'. There was much discussion about the lack of resources from local councils. Councils would spend big money on showcase developments whilst the open spaces were left to suffer. That was the general consensus of opinion from all the groups, and it wasn't seriously disagreed with by some of the Council representatives present!

After a break for refreshments we had a summing up from the Advisory Panel members. It was then time to depart after what I deemed to be a useful conference. It was good meeting like-minded people and seeing Monica again after several months.

BERYL HEATON

- *If anyone would like to borrow the DVD, please contact André (964 3106). Lis has kindly copied it to tape, so if you don't have a DVD player and would like to see it, contact Lis (987 0825).*

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2003

ONCE AGAIN the Christmas party went with a swing. Around thirty people joined in the fun devised by Lola, ably assisted by Lis and Angela. We thought the first game was going to be a doddle. We only had to think of an animal and a bird beginning with 'H', or a fruit and flower beginning with 'O' and so on. There was a catch though - if two or more people chose the same name then that was deleted from their list. As we sipped our mulled wine we racked our brains to come up with something different. Most of the scores were quite low although Anton's Australian friend came up with a whole list of things no-one had heard of and a lot of which he made up. Happily he didn't try to claim a prize.



Chatting and thinking ...



Later we split into teams to tackle the pillow case challenge. We had to feel objects in a sealed bag and try to guess what they were. Most teams found 17 objects but the 18th eluded us. It transpired that it was a feather. Lola, you really fooled us there.

<< Chatting and feeling ...

As tradition decrees, the Wassail bowl was brought in as we all sang The Wassailing Song. It was then time to tuck into the eats and socialise after a fun evening. Thanks must go to Lola, Lis, and Angela for organising the games and to Marie Jo and Jo for their work in the kitchen, concocting the drinks and ensuring everything ran smoothly.

BERYL HEATON



Chatting and eating.

OUR PLANTS AND THEIR PROPERTIES

OUR FIRST MEETING of the year was well attended and it was a pleasure to welcome one of our members, Marian Green, as our speaker. (We mis-spelled her name as Marion in the November *Newsletter* - apologies!). Marian came to share with us her deep knowledge and passion for wild plants. Like some of us, she is a regular visitor to Manor Woods and many of the samples of leaves, twigs and flowers she showed us had been collected there that very day. Others had been gathered in the summer and pressed.

With our mild winters, catkins are already brightening up hedgerows. This used to be a very valuable shrub when self-sufficiency was a way of life. The wood was used in the building of wattle and daub houses. Regular coppicing provided rods to make hurdles, even dowsing rods. Hazel nuts yielded oil and people enjoyed eating them during long winters. Alder, which is a hard wood, was used for footing of bridges as it lasts a long time under water. People relied on plants to help cure ailments and a lot are still used in our modern medicines.

The countryside is an open book, full of resources at every page. Marian made the point effectively by comparing her loose-leaf folder of pressed plants and leaves with an Argos catalogue. This is supposed to contain every item we need in our modern life; so did the fields and hedgerows for our ancestors, not so many generations ago.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

TROLLEY WELL DONE!



The new year isn't a month old and already the intrepid garbage raiders have struck twice (though admittedly the raid on 5 January was notionally the December event).

A big *'Thank You'* to all who take part. It only takes an hour a month; it's (very nearly) fun, and new helpers are always welcome!

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

AS USUAL, we are happy to publicise non-M.V.C.G. events which will interest our members. The University of Withywood's spring lecture series on Thursday evenings is under way, and one talk in particular will be of interest - see 5 February. M.V.C.G.'s own events are marked with a **M**.

Thursday 5 February: ELEANOR DAVIS is repeating the excellent talk on her *Visit to Madagascar* which she gave to a small but appreciative M.V.C.G. audience last November. 7.30pm at the University (131 Queens Road, Withywood).

M Tuesday 17 February: *Our Annual General Meeting and Birthday Party.* Our Guest Speaker will be JULIAN COX, the new Community Parks Manager for our part of Bristol. See the official notice on page 2.

M Monday 23 February: *Garbage Raid* at 3.45pm. Meet at Withywood Post Office.

Tuesday 24/Wednesday 25/Thursday 26 February: *Working Party* to clean up the Pigeonhouse Stream in Crox Bottom. See page 1, and contact André (964 3106) for confirmation of dates and times.

M Tuesday 16 March: RHIAN EVANS from the HHEAG Food Co-op will tell us about her *Visit to Nicaragua and Fair Trade.*

M Monday 29 March: *Garbage Raid* at 3.45pm. Meet at Symes Avenue.

M Tuesday 20 April: DAVID GILLARD, a local bee-keeper, will tell us about *The Ways of Bees.*



THE CONFERENCE announced in the November *Newsletter* on THE LIVING RIVERS OF SOUTH BRISTOL was unfortunately cancelled because not enough people had signed up in advance. However, another date is being arranged: **Saturday 27 March 2004 from 9:30am to 1.00pm.** There will be more information in the next *Newsletter*, but if you are interested, then let André know and we will get the details to you as soon as they are available.

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

IT'S TIME to invite nearly all M.V.C.G. members to renew their subscription (a mere £4.00 per household). 'Nearly' all, because some people have already renewed (thank you!) and some joined after September 2003, so their membership is carried through to the end of 2004.

If the system has worked (and it usually does, thanks to our efficient *Newsletter* distributors), then you will find a membership renewal form enclosed unless you are already paid up, or you are one of the people or organisations to whom we are delighted to send a complimentary copy.

Please return the form and your sub. to either Beryl (3 Kings Walk, Highridge) or André (14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth). Thank you.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Hon. Secretary	Lis Pibworth	987 0825
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Brenda Docherty, Mavis Palmer

Co-opted Committee Members

Tania Case, Valerie Gay, Paul Mizen, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Ron Hodges, Colin Smith, Mary Sykes (*All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members*).

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; telephone 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.cjb.net; website www.mvcg.cjb.net.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.