



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# NEWSLETTER

No. 107  
Autumn  
2015

**T**HIS EDITION of the *Newsletter* contains the usual mixture of good news, bad news, and – well – news. You can read about Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve on pages 2 and 3 (mostly bad news); the South Bristol Ring Road on page 4 (rather better news in a generally bad news context); the Campus Pool Skate Park in the former Bishopsworth Swimming Pool (wholly good news); and a range of planning matters on pages 6 and 7 (generally better than average news). What follows on this page may turn out to be good, bad or indifferent – time will tell ...

Firstly, I've given notice to the Committee that I won't continue as Hon. Secretary after the next A.G.M. in February. I've been doing it (or been Chairman) since we started twenty years ago and I'd like to have more time for other interests. I'll stay on the Committee – if you elect me – and I'll monitor planning applications and go to the meetings of the Pride of Place and the Transport Groups of the Neighbourhood Partnership. But I won't do the committee paperwork, and I won't act as the general contact for e-mails and phone calls to M.V.C.G. It's a sign of how well established and respected M.V.C.G. has become that those general contacts are now rather time-consuming. In due course, I'd also like to give up the *Newsletter* and the website. The Committee have been discussing how M.V.C.G. might evolve in the future, and we want your ideas on that. Should we cover a smaller area? Focus more – or exclusively – on Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve? Become an informal pressure group without paid membership and regular meetings? Please contact any Committee member with your thoughts (details on the back page).

Secondly, we're giving up collecting aluminium cans for sale for our funds. The price hasn't changed for years and doesn't bring in much, and the bulbs which were notionally paid for by the cans are now planted by other people.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

## IN THIS ISSUE

|                             |        |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Manor Woods Valley News.... | Page 2 |
| White Elephant Update.....  | Page 4 |
| Summer Fun.....             | Page 5 |
| Planning Matters.....       | Page 6 |
| Dates for your Diary.....   | Page 8 |

## NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

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**Y**OU MAY REMEMBER that in our Spring *Newsletter* we started expressing concern about the future of Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve as we were facing the re-organisation of the Parks Department and financial cuts. In our Summer *Newsletter* frustration was becoming more apparent as progress was slow and required more and more effort from our small team. This Autumn *Newsletter* will have very little positive news to report.

Several M.V.C.G. members and Manor Woods Valley Group members visit Manor Woods Valley very regularly. Others if they cannot go as often make a point of going round when they can and checking on what has happened or not happened. Our general impression at the moment, in the middle of September, is of neglect:

- Grass cutting and bin emptying are not always completed to a satisfactory standard.
- The area around the interceptor needs serious tidying up, with willows which grew out of the accumulating silt now in the middle of the stream. Long brambles are growing along the concreted area. Logs and other rubbish are piling up against the grid. It seems impossible to find out who should clear the interceptor now when it used to happen regularly before.
- The River Path has not been trimmed in the summer and is now blocked by a tree. This very pleasant path will not have been used by many walkers this summer.
- The three interpretation boards do not seem to have been cleaned since the spring.
- There is an armchair in the stream near the picnic table.

All these problems were reported by me by e-mail in the middle of July and again in the middle of August. A reminder has just been sent. Nothing has been acted upon at the time of writing. Thank you to people who let me know and help with checking.

It is important not to forget the woodland. The path which was going to be repaired has progressed very little since early this year; we understand that money has to be found to finish the work. A few of us never go to the woodland without tools to clear the path. We report trees and branches fallen across the path or the stream which we cannot tackle ourselves. We all know that gales are not always the cause! The area of woodland is in very urgent need of management. Look around next time you go there: a lot of fallen trees, hazelnut bushes on the ground because they have not been pollarded for years; little regeneration on the woodland floor because of lack of light; branches which have broken under the weight of ivy etc. All these fallen branches and trees are left on the ground and heaps are growing. We are tired of hearing 'It is good for

wildlife'. It is true, of course, but we want to see young trees and bushes, not just dead wood. We have noticed for a while that some birds do not visit Manor Woods Valley anymore because their habitat has disappeared.

Some sad news recently: the flower meadow interpretation board designed and paid for by M.V.C.G., and cleaned from graffiti by Parks employees and M.V.C.G. members earlier this year, has now been smashed. Does neglect attract vandalism like rubbish attracts more rubbish? We have reported it to Bristol Parks and asked them to report it to the police. On the 101 police number we were told that it was the owner of the park, Bristol City Council, who had to report the vandalism.



A little good news: the Manor Woods Valley working group and other M.V.C.G. members took part in the 'Himalayan Balsam Big Pull' in June, and we also cleared paths several times in the old quarry area.

We hope that our next report will be on a happier note. In the meantime if you have something to report to the Parks Department, use the telephone number (0117) 922 3719 which is displayed on the boards at each entrance.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE  
*Manor Woods Valley Working Group*

*Top: Good News – clearing paths in the quarry area*

*Left: Bad News – tree blocking the River Path*

*Below: Very Bad News – the smashed 'Meadow' interpretation board*





## WHITE ELEPHANT UPDATE

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The communications problems we reported last time between Alun Griffiths, the contractors who are building the South Bristol Link Road, and local residents seem to have improved after some hard work by our colleagues in the Highridge Forum, who are the official local liaison group.

They arranged a meeting involving North Somerset Council officers (North Somerset are the lead authority on the road, working with Bristol City Council). They seem to have a better understanding of what local people are saying and are certainly better at responding to their concerns. Even the absurd situation of the contractors having been working for weeks without final agreed plans has been addressed, and definitive drawings have been promised very soon.





There are now fortnightly surgeries at the HBH offices on Cutler Road. The next dates are:

- Thursday 24 September 10.00-11.30am
- Thursday 8 October 6:30-8.00pm
- Thursday 22 October 10.00-11.30am

There is also a drop-in session at the Gatehouse Centre on Wednesday 23 September between 10.00am-12.00 noon. Everyone is welcome to attend this or the Cutler Road surgeries.

You can get more information at the Alun Griffiths SBL website at <http://community.alungriffiths.co.uk/works-in-your-area/south-bristol-link/> or you can ring the Griffiths Community Liaison Officer on 0845 86 22 327.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE



## SUMMER FUN

THE IDEA of visiting The Campus Pool, the new skateboard park in Bishopsworth, for our Summer Outing immediately appealed to the committee – and the turn-out from members and friends confirmed that it was a good choice. Paul Mizen made the arrangements, and Transitions Skate kindly agreed to our request as they were on the verge of opening the facility to the public.



On 21 July a good crowd assembled at the entrance where we were met by André Seidel and his business partner, Tim Nokes. We were shown into the main area with André pointing out where the other projects would be housed. It was the intention to open as soon as possible to start revenue coming in to facilitate further works. Future plans include a retail space and a café.

The former pool is now a state-of-the-art skateboard area, with clever references to its former use, like 'lane markings' in the concrete, and 'No Diving' notices on the wall! You can see more at their website at [www.campusskateparks.co.uk](http://www.campusskateparks.co.uk).



André explained that they were a non-profit-making business, doing youth work 'by stealth'!

To finish, we were treated to a thrilling display of skate-boarders in action. There were many 'oohs' and 'aahs' as the lads performed marvellous feats.

As we left, we thanked André and Tim for letting us have a preview and we hope other young people will become as skilled as the ones we saw in action.

BERYL HEATON



## PLANNING MATTERS

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*We've said before that contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome from any of our readers, not least the councillors in our area. RICHARD EDDY, councillor for Bishopsworth ward, has provided this planning update ...*

In a suburban locality such as ours the majority of planning developments are small residential extensions and in-fill new houses. Unusually, this summer has been somewhat different for Bishopsworth and, in general, it's good news to report!

### **Campus Pool**

Elsewhere in this *Newsletter* is a report about M.V.C.G.'s visit to the successful conversion of the former Bishopsworth Swimming Pool into an innovative indoor skatepark. Therefore I shall not repeat the good news but just state my sincere thanks to business partners André Siedel and Tim Nokes of Campus Skateparks for their enthusiasm, vision and hard work in bringing their exciting project to fruition. We look forward to them developing this crucial site further in the months and years ahead and I am confident it will prove a real prize for Bishopsworth!

### **Winford Grove**

For over a decade the site of the much-loved former Bedminster Down Boys' Club in Winford Grove has looked like an eyesore and remained derelict. I am pleased to say a reasonable residential housing scheme for four new homes has now been proposed.

### **Land at 93 Bridgwater Road**

The piece of land which most local people recognise as the car-wash next to the King's Head pub received planning consent for eight family homes recently. This will be accessed from Bridgwater Road and not King's Walk, which was a fear of local people.

### **'Garland's Bungalow'**

I had hoped to report demolition of the old Highridge Common eyesore and the construction of five new dwellings in this article, as the builders told me they hoped to start in August. However, as I write, this has not happened but we hope to see progress soon!

### **'The Woods'**

Having been a fly-tipping magnet for ages, the site of the former Woods pub in Four Acres has seen a planning application for nine homes. This seems an appropriate and not overly-intensive development and, if it receives planning consent, it should permanently replace a litter hot-spot with family homes.

## **Bishopsworth Police Station**

Sadly, our Police Station in King's Head Lane closed in April 2014. Shortly thereafter my fellow Bishopsworth councillor Kevin Quartley and I had a constructive meeting about its future use with Police & Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens. Since Victim Support still had a lease to run there for over a year, there were no immediate plans to dispose of the building. However, I have written now to Sue Mountstevens to ascertain the latest plans and how the local community can best get involved in this process. Keep your eyes peeled for future news!

RICHARD EDDY

## **PLANNING POST-SCRIPT**

**S**INCE Richard wrote his piece, we've heard that the **United Reformed Church** on Church Road, Bishopsworth, may yet be converted to flats, with new-build housing behind on the site of the church hall (you may remember that there was a scheme put forward by a previous owner which fell through and he sold the church building on). It's early days and we don't know any details yet.

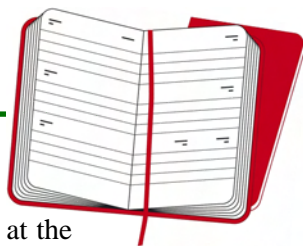
There's good news to report on our long-standing plans for **Elm Tree Corner**. As we reported at our last A.G.M. in February, the engineering works to improve pedestrian safety, parking and landscaping were adopted by the Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership at their meeting in July 2014 as one of the two main schemes they wanted to implement. The Highways officers have now designed a scheme which includes very nearly everything we proposed 18 years ago (!). We have queried with them a couple of points, and they will soon be consulting people in the vicinity on what will be built.

You may have noticed the **20mph signs** which have gone up on many roads throughout our area. Perhaps you thought, as I did, that the 20mph scheme had now been rolled out, and perhaps you wondered, as I did, why there had been no publicity about it – press announcements, leafleting etc. It turns out that the scheme *hasn't* started yet. The signs on lamp-posts are the 'repeater' signs and the large signs officially announcing changes in speed limits aren't up yet. Whatever your personal view on the 20mph scheme, to have signs which look legal but aren't is a very bad start, and we've said so at the Neighbourhood Partnership Transport Group.

Finally, you may have seen press reports that the site on **Hartcliffe Way** which had been reserved for a 'tip' may instead be used for a repair and re-use centre run by voluntary groups. However commendable that may be, it isn't the 'real' recycling centre we need in South Bristol to avoid having to drive to Days Road. An e-petition to press the City Council for the real thing is at [http://epetitions.bristol.gov.uk/epetition\\_core/view/SouthBristolrecyclingcentre](http://epetitions.bristol.gov.uk/epetition_core/view/SouthBristolrecyclingcentre) and I urge you to sign it if you can. Paper copies are also circulating.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



A SERIES OF AUTUMN WALKS has been arranged to celebrate Bristol's Local Nature Reserves – now including our good friends at the Northern Slopes – congratulations to them! You can download the whole programme as a PDF file (492kB) at <http://tinyurl.com/q3958vn>. The dates below include 'our' walk, and selected other South Bristol ones that we have room for.

**Sunday 27 September:** AUTUMN TREE WALK at Avon New Cut with Richard Bland, 10.00am-12.00 noon. Meet at Vauxhall Bridge, Coronation Road.

**Saturday 17 October:** ST MARY REDCLIFFE PIPE WALK starting at Northern Slopes, 10.00am-1.00pm. Meet outside St Barnabas Church, Daventry Road.

**Sunday 18 October:** EXPLORING THE MALAGO RIVER at Manor Woods with Harriet Alvis, 10.00am-12.00 noon. Meet at the St Peter's Rise entrance (behind Bishopsworth Library).

**Tuesday 15 December:** M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY at St Peter's Rooms (side of St Peter's Church, Church Road, Bishopsworth). Meet at 7.30pm for the usual mixture of fun and games, followed by an American Supper. If you can, please bring a little contribution to the feast (but don't worry if you can't).

### Malago Valley Conservation Group

|                       |                 |          |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|
| <b>Chairman</b>       | Peter Crispin   | 907 0623 |
| <b>Vice-Chairman</b>  | Mary Sykes      | 964 3712 |
| <b>Hon. Secretary</b> | André Coutanche | 964 3106 |
| <b>Hon. Treasurer</b> | Beryl Heaton    | 964 5780 |

#### Committee Members

Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

#### Co-opted Committee Members

Richard Bevan, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, Volunteering Matters, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Kevin Quartley, Naomi Rylatt  
*(All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards 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.