



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# NEWSLETTER

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**T**HERE HAS BEEN a shuffling of councillors in our area, following the election on the revised ward boundaries which we reported in the last *Newsletter*. We now have five councillors in Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership, one of whom is new.

We welcome Paul Goggin, one of the three councillors for the new Hartcliffe & Withywood ward (he replaces Naomi Rylatt). The other two councillors for that ward are Helen Holland and Mark Brain, and the two councillors in the redrawn Bishopsworth Ward are Richard Eddy and Kevin Quartley. These last four, as you'll know, we have been working with for years, and I'm pleased to say that Paul Goggin has accepted our invitation to become a co-opted member of the M.V.C.G. committee, so we can maintain the valuable tradition of working with all our councillors, irrespective of political party.

And, of course, we have a new Mayor for Bristol. The Mayor seldom has a direct influence on an area, but Marvin Rees has announced that the Council will be 'working towards building a new recycling centre on Hartcliffe Way.' What 'working towards' means we shall see – but it's good news in principle. One of our local councillors – Helen Holland – is in the Mayor's cabinet, as is Paul Smith, a local boy who used to be a councillor some years ago in Bedminster and is now representing Central ward. We shouldn't expect privileged treatment but at least we won't be overlooked!

There's news on our scheme to improve 'Elm Tree Corner' – the junction of Church Road, Highridge Road and Queens Road around the Elm Tree pub. You may be forgiven for thinking that it had stalled, but Bristol Highways tell us that all the preparatory work has been done, and construction should be starting very soon – perhaps even by the time you're reading this!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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

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**S**PRING IS ALWAYS a very enjoyable season in Manor Woods Valley and this year has not been an exception in spite of the rather chilly wind at times. We hope you have enjoyed the bird song in the woodland, the sunlight through the bare branches and the wildflowers. As summer approaches we have looked forward to exploring the wildflower meadow which is rather late, probably because of the cold spring. By the time you receive this *Newsletter* it should be in full bloom. You can reach it by the Vale Lane entrance - you will see the meadow on the slope ahead of you. If you use the Valley Road entrance, go down the path less than a hundred metres and turn left through the small area of woodland. If you enter behind Bishopsworth Library at the bottom of St Peters Rise, follow the Malago Greenway nearly all the way through Manor Woods Valley. The meadow will appear on the slope on your left. If after your exploration you feel like sitting down, remember that M.V.C.G. financed a bench at the top of the meadow a few years ago. Just sit, relax and enjoy the view.

Our plans to improve the woodland path have been progressing rather slowly. ParkWork, a joint initiative by the Parks Forum and Bristol Parks, which uses some volunteer labour and provides training opportunities, should finish the repair of the path edgings very soon. M.V.C.G. offered to help finance more repair work on this path quite a while ago and we are hoping to have a response soon. We also dream of the time when the woodland is managed and we see some regeneration, not just more and more dead trees.

The part of Manor Woods Valley which is causing us more and more concern at the moment is the stream and the pond. What used to be the pond is now an island where willows have been growing for a number of years out of accumulating silt and where we walk through to remove Himalayan Balsam. Herons and other water birds have stopped visiting as the habitat is not suitable any more. As for the stream itself, we recently counted half a dozen dams made of branches between the entrance behind the Library to the interceptor. They are branches coming from the woodland and the edge of the stream where no management of trees has happened for a large number of years. If the stream was going through a built-up area one would worry about flooding. These days the River Path is not really usable in the winter because the stream near the interceptor overflows as there are two willow trees growing out of the silt in the middle of the stream. We have been reporting this for over a year and nothing happens. If you would like to add your voice to try to get this tackled, visit the Council website at [www.bristol.gov.uk/parks](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parks) and follow the links 'Parks

Maintenance’ – ‘Report overgrown grass ...’ or send an e-mail to *bristolparks@bristol.gov.uk*.

*Beavers in the Malago?  
Unfortunately not –  
just garbage*



For several years we have been working with Neil Green from Avon Invasive Weeds Forum. In early summer Neil organises the ‘Himalayan Balsam Big Pull’ in Manor Woods Valley. On 24 May our group went with him to survey the growth of this invasive plant. Through regular pulling before the plant seeds it gradually disappears. Join us on 30 June for some enjoyable licenced destruction! Meet at 10.30am at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. *See the Programme on the back page for more essential information.*

We can now report that Avon Wildlife Trust did some work in the Old Quarry area in the winter and will carry on this year. We hope that the collaboration between AWT and Bristol Parks will carry on, involving M.V.C.G. However we are still campaigning for the Quarries area to be included in the Local Nature Reserve soon and hopefully become more accessible to the public.

Occasionally members of the public send complaints to the Parks Department and to M.V.C.G., about rubbish for example. Though this can be upsetting it sometimes brings action and is beneficial. The litter round the picnic table and the larger items in the stream nearby were removed very swiftly a few weeks ago.

We have reported in the past couple of years how our work as a Park Group has become more difficult because of severe financial cuts. One example of neglect is the interpretation boards which are not included in the basic maintenance schedule any more and are not being cleaned. We have offered to do it ourselves and the Parks Department has now provided us with the products and equipment we need. It will make a difference, and we do try to work with the Council wherever we can.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE  
*Manor Woods Valley Working Group*



## WHITE ELEPHANT UPDATE

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Neither M.V.C.G. nor Highridge Forum support the South Bristol Ring Road, and we're not the only ones against it. Bristol Civic Society's *Better Bristol* magazine in Autumn 2015 had an article entitled 'Bristol's dearth of transport planning' by a former Council transport officer. He referred to '... the unpopular Bus Rapid Transport (now Metrobus) fiasco, which will see city residents subsidising out-of-town commuters.' He also observed that 'Bristol's "planning" is effectively random. It operates on the "let's apply for a one-off grant if one's going" principle' and that 'there is a touching belief in private transport consultants.'

We've seen at first hand the validity of these criticisms in the process which has led to the current construction work. But now that it's happening, the sooner it's finished the better. As you'll have seen, the contractors, Alun Griffiths, are making good progress. Griffiths' Public Liaison Officer is now Jim Aitken (replacing Carys Gwilym); Jim has been to the Neighbourhood Partnership Transport Group to keep us updated. Griffiths' Community Programme is supplying benches on Highridge Common and soil for Kings Head Park, amongst other improvements – thanks to them for that.

The surgeries run with Highridge Forum at the HBH offices on Cutler Road are now monthly. The next dates are:

- Thursday 7 July 10.00-11.30am
- Thursday 4 August 6:30-8.00pm
- Thursday 1 September 10.00-11.30am

There's more information at the Alun Griffiths website at <http://community.alungriffiths.co.uk/works-in-your-area/south-bristol-link/> or you can e-mail [metrobus@alungriffiths.co.uk](mailto:metrobus@alungriffiths.co.uk) or phone 0845 862 2327 (2p per minute + network charge).

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE



## WILD BS13

**W**E HAVE a bold, friendly BLACKBIRD back. This time it's a male (Berty). Throughout the wet winter he chose to shelter, for hours, under the mahonia just outside the kitchen door. I threw him dried mealworms and currants and had a chat every day. He was usually up before me so would zoom down from the trees as soon as I pulled back the curtain on the door, or even the bedroom curtains! The arrangement was that I fed him on condition he sang for us in our pear tree. And, guess what, he does. Loud and beautifully! He has brought his wife (Babs) in and they have been frantically filling their beaks for their youngsters nesting a few gardens away.

Our garden is a very important oasis to us, and to have all the birds in and out constantly, so happy and relaxed, bathing and feeding, is a bonus. The FOXES, visiting nightly, burying bread and meaty scraps and pattering across the extension roof driving our dog, Nell, bonkers however are not so welcome. The neighbourhood does seem to be full of them doesn't it?

ANGELA JAMES

Other things with wings which are often overlooked are MOTHS. There are far more species of moth than of butterfly and many of them are as spectacular as the most colourful butterflies. They also have wonderful names! Perhaps they get overlooked because most of them are active when most of us are in bed.

But not all. We had a moth resting inside our house the day before a committee meeting at which some knowledgeable people were present. Our friend, Tim Jones, was intrigued and took



this photo (*right*). He subsequently e-mailed to say that as far as he could make out, it was a PEARLY

UNDERWING, which is a migrant moth from southern Europe, doubtless arriving on the warm and humid airflow that prevailed until the previous weekend. And just the other day, visiting our neighbours, we spotted a GARDEN TIGER MOTH (*left*) minding its own business in their front garden. A striking name for a striking creature!



ANDRÉ COUTANCHE



## PLANNING MATTERS

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**W**E'VE GOT THREE IMPORTANT SITES to tell you about, though only one of them is an actual planning application. The other two are 'pre-apps.' – informal consultation by developers to gauge the likely response before they go to the expense of a formal planning application. Information on pre-app. enquiries comes to us through the Neighbourhood Planning Network, a volunteer-run organisation which liaises with the Council planners in the same sort of way that the Parks Forum does with Bristol Parks.

The 'live' planning application also started as a pre-app., and we've been reporting it for a while, most recently at the A.G.M. in February (see the last *Newsletter*). It's for the former UNITED REFORMED CHURCH on Church Road, Bishopsworth. The principle of conversion into flats and the replacement of the hall behind with new houses is accepted as a suitable re-use, but the devil, as usual, is in the detail – in this case vehicular access from Fernsted Road at the rear.



The previous owners gave up when the deal they thought they had to acquire the rear of the adjacent garden to improve the access fell through. The current owners submitted an application which uses the existing lane but there were objections from Highways on access grounds and from the Planners over some aspects of the design. That application was withdrawn and there is now a new one. The church building would still be converted to flats – five in the existing building and one in an extension at the rear. The number of new houses has been reduced from the previous seven to five, in a different layout.

Although the new planning application has been submitted, and the developer has kindly sent us a copy, the application at the time of writing hasn't been formally processed and appeared on the official list of applications, so we haven't yet commented. M.V.C.G. wants to see a good re-use of this important and attractive building and we're hopeful that this will be achieved.

Not far away from the former U.R.C. is another potential development site with possible access problems. CHURCHES YARD is off Whitchurch Road opposite the bottom of Derham Road. Many of us probably haven't had any reason to go there, unless it's been to visit the MOT testing station which is conspicuously advertised at the entrance. The pre-app. shows the site being cleared and redeveloped for nine houses. Although there would be a small loss of jobs on the site, we're generally in favour of 'in-fill' housing developments which marginally reduce pressure on the Green Belt.

The draft 'Design and Access Statement' recognises that the site includes '... the Malago stream and bankside which is currently neglected at this point.' It adds: 'It is proposed to enhance this area by means of a riverside green zone with appropriate planting to form a natural wildlife zone.' That sounds good, but we have also suggested that a designated through-route for pedestrians from Whitchurch Road to Headley Road should be part of any redevelopment. Since the site is within the Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area, we think extra effort should be made (which needn't necessarily involve extra cost) to enhance the Conservation Area and encourage walking. As with the U.R.C., access is problematic – cars would have to use the existing narrow lane from Whitchurch Road, and pedestrian access from Headley Road is not currently a right of way. We await a detailed planning application.

Another potential new housing development – this time on a much bigger scale – is at the BRISTOL WATER DEPOT on Bishopsworth Road near the 'Cross Hands'.



The artist's impression shows three-storey blocks of flats facing onto Bishopsworth Road, with mostly two-storey buildings elsewhere on the site. As with Churches Yard, we're happy in principle with good housing developments on brown-field sites. We've said that the design principles seem reasonable and the heights and massing seem to fit the topography of the site. Nothing is fixed and we won't know any details of the design and layout until a planning application is made.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



**I**T'S SUMMER – so it's picnic time. Our SUMMER OUTING will be a 'Bring Your Own' Picnic at HHHEAG's wonderful Round House at Bouchier Gardens allotments. The views over Bristol are terrific and will improve the taste of your Champagne and canapés – or pop and crisps, whichever you prefer.

- **Thursday 30 June:** HIMALAYAN BALSAM BIG PULL in Manor Woods Valley (see also page 3). Meet at 10.30am at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Tools and bags will be provided. If you're staying until the finish at about 2.00pm, bring a picnic lunch. Wear long sleeves, full-length trousers and sturdy footwear. Sun hat and sun cream will also hopefully be needed!



- **Tuesday 12 July:** SUMMER OUTING at the Round House. Bring your own picnic. Meet at **7.00pm** at the Round House in the Bouchier Gardens allotments – enter up the track next to 119 Crosscombe Drive, Hartcliffe.

- **Monday 21 November:** BISHOPSWORTH QUIZ.
- **Wednesday 14 December:** M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY.

For both of these, we'll have more details in the September *Newsletter*.

### Malago Valley Conservation Group

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

#### Committee Members

Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

#### Co-opted Committee Members

Richard Bevan, Marie Jo Coutanche, Diana Porter, Sue Walker,  
Volunteering Matters, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Paul Goggin,  
Helen Holland, Kevin Quartley

*(All the City councillors for Bishopsworth ward and for Withywood and Hartcliffe 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.