



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THIS EDITION has become a bit of a ‘Manor Woods Valley Special’ – our working group has been very busy with planning, co-operating with City Council people and others, and doing work to make things better on the ground. Read all about it on pages 2-4.

The other major news is something we have been working on for even longer than Manor Woods Valley. Our improvement scheme for ‘Elm Tree Corner’ – the junction of Queens Road, Church Road and Highridge Road – was the first project we started when M.V.C.G. was formed. The file on my computer which has the report of our working group is dated March 1997! Even back then, we were realistic – the report contained these words: ‘Even when overall agreement by all concerned is reached on the principles, no-one will have any money to do anything. Malago Valley Conservation Group will act as a catalyst, bringing together as many sources as possible.’ And we continued to do that for nineteen years. We had some results – the zebra crossing; some excellent tree planting, much of it which we paid for; and the daffodil planting which we did, again using our own funds.

The breakthrough came when the Transport Group of the Neighbourhood Partnership adopted Elm Tree Corner as one of their recommended major schemes and this was endorsed by the Councillors. I said in the last *Newsletter* ‘construction should be starting very soon – perhaps even by the time you’re reading this!’ Well it didn’t (unless you’re a very slow reader), but it has now! On page 5 there are photos taken as this *Newsletter* was being prepared. Our aims to make parking easier and safer, to improve access and safety for pedestrians, and to improve the whole appearance of the area, are well on the way to achievement.

What shall we do for the next nineteen years?!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

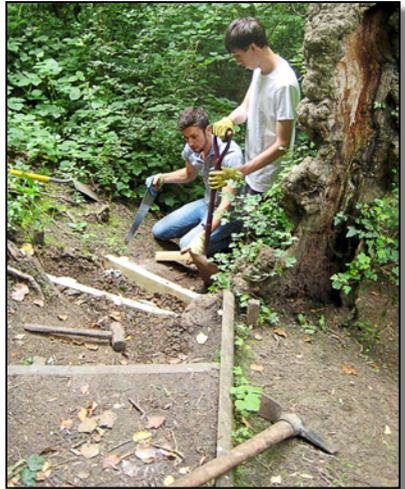
AT THE TIME OF WRITING this report we are enjoying very sunny weather – we hope you have had a good summer. You may have visited Manor Woods Valley. If you have, let us know your thoughts, what you saw, what has changed, what should change etc. If you haven't yet, why not take advantage of a nice autumn day to go for a stroll? Our Manor Woods Valley Working Group, together with other M.V.C.G. members, see it regularly. Some of us have known it for many years. Others have discovered it more recently and can look at it with new eyes.



In the Summer *Newsletter* we told you about ParkWork, a joint initiative by the Parks Forum and Bristol Parks. We are pleased to be able to report that the repair of the woodland path edgings, of the collapsed step riser and of the damaged areas of path surface have now been completed. Thank you to Joe McKenna and his team for their hard work.

Steps repaired ...

A few weeks ago we met Joe at the end of the woodland path, near the interceptor. We asked him to give us a quotation to extend the path so that we do not have the muddy area which develops there every winter. The M.V.C.G. committee discussed the £850.00 quotation and decided to apply for a Neighbourhood Partnership Wellbeing Grant for half of the cost with M.V.C.G. paying the other half. The final decision will be taken by the Neighbourhood Committee councillors after this *Newsletter* appears, but the omens are good!



In our Spring *Newsletter* we reported that a small group of Avon Wildlife Trust and M.V.C.G. volunteers did some coppicing in the woodland. It was a small beginning but it generated some hope that one day young trees would grow once older trees had been coppiced, letting the light in. So we were pleased when in early July, Anna Brunton, working for the Forest of Avon Trust, contacted us to say that they had received some funding to rejuvenate woodlands in the Bristol and North Somerset area. This would involve training volunteers in coppicing.

Two dates have now been chosen for this training – see the Programme on the back page.

The Old Quarry area is never far from our thoughts. On the morning of 8 July five group members cleared the path around the central area in order to make access possible to this part of Manor Woods Valley. On the afternoon of 8 July Marie Jo and André met Becky Belfin, the Council Nature Conservation Officer, on site to show her round the Old Quarry area and tell her about the recent history and M.V.C.G. and Avon Wildlife Trust involvement there in the past few years. Becky will write a management statement for Manor Woods Valley which will be necessary to have the Quarries formally incorporated into the Local Nature Reserve.



... and paths cleared

Becky has ideas on how the Quarries area could be improved. For instance, scrub could be removed in areas which used to be mainly unimproved grassland and were rich in wild flowers. A lot of people will remember the paths above the flat area which have now become completely overgrown. Becky's e-mail and the maps taken at different dates were sent to the members of the Manor Woods Valley Working Group for comments. Thank you to Becky for all her help concerning the Old Quarries area and also the work with the Forest of Avon Trust.

The other work we have been doing in Manor Woods Valley has been 'The Big Pull' – our regular attacking of Himalayan balsam. Here's Martin to tell us about it ...

MARIE JO COUTANCHE
Manor Woods Valley Working Group

DON'T BE FOOLED by its beautiful flower; the Himalayan balsam plant grows rapidly, spreads quickly and smothers all other vegetation as it goes – and it's right here in the middle of Manor Woods Valley.

Or at least it was until we stopped it in its tracks this summer. Over three days in July and August a small group of M.V.C.G. members, led by Marie Jo, worked with Neil Green and his volunteers from the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum to pull up every Himalayan balsam plant that could be found growing along the banks of the river and in the area known as 'the island'.

Neil told us all about the Himalayan balsam plant (botanical name, *Impatiens glandulifera*): how it grows to 1 to 2 metres high, how its pink helmet-shaped flowers are sweet smelling and full of nectar, and how, after flowering in late summer, its seed pods explode scattering hundreds of seeds to a distance of up to 7 metres. That's why it's important to try to deal with it before the seed pods form. And because it is an annual plant, preventing it from spreading its seeds can eventually lead to its complete eradication.



Pretty – but a pain

Himalayan balsam was first introduced to Europe in the 1830s at the same time as Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. At the time these plants were lauded for their 'splendid invasiveness' but today they are considered such a threat to our native biodiversity that they must be controlled wherever they are found.

It is probable that we missed a few plants in this year's 'Big Pull' events and so will be calling again for volunteers to join us in another 'Big Pull' next summer.



And with the help of the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum (www.aiwf.org.uk), we will eventually completely eradicate Himalayan balsam from Manor Woods Valley for good.

MARTIN GRANT

Bagging up not balsam, but bottles. The 'island' where we were working was full of plastic bottles, no doubt brought there by the stream after having been carelessly discarded. L. to R. Martin, Mo, Angela and Marian

ELM TREE CORNER – IT'S HERE!



The new parking area in front of Lloyd's Bank, keeping cars and pedestrians apart



Better parking, and better surfaces and access for pedestrians



Work starting in front of the main rank of shops



WHITE ELEPHANT UPDATE

You may have read reports that private bus operators are not exactly fighting each other for the privilege of running the Bus Rapid Transit on the MetroBus network. No surprise there for the South Bristol Link section; as former mayor George Ferguson said, the SBL isn't really MetroBus at all – it's just a road with a bus on it. That's why I continue to call it what it always was – the South Bristol Ring Road.

But as a Ring Road, it looks as though it could cause some problems. A recent meeting of the Transport Group of the Neighbourhood Partnership was given an update on the details of the traffic light junctions at Hareclive Road, Queens Road and the top of King George's Road. Many of these junctions will have 'no right turns' for particular movements, including for vehicles coming north along Queens Road from over Dundry and wanting to head east onto the new road – to Imperial Park, say. One of the very few environmental benefits of the Ring Road would have been to take this type of traffic out of Bishopsworth Village. Now they will either have to continue up Grange Road or use Gatehouse Avenue as a rat-run.

The latest contractors surgery run by the Highridge Forum invited the Traffic Signals Manager from Bristol City Council to discuss this. He made the general point that there is always a trade-off between free turning movements and keeping traffic flowing – fair enough – and also remarked that ideally the SBL would be a dual-carriageway with wide junctions but it couldn't be in a residential area. Quite so – as many of us have been saying, it's the wrong road, in the wrong place, being built for the wrong reasons.

There may or may not be a resolution for this. Alun Griffiths, the contractors (who are only building what the City Council have told them to) are saying 'Cars by Christmas'. Happy New Year?

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE



SUMMER OUTING

ON 22 JULY, on a fine if cool summer evening, we assembled, picnics at the ready, at HHEAG's striking Roundhouse, which is on the allotment site in Bouchier Gardens, behind Crosscombe Drive. Geoff and Steve were there to greet us and offer tea or coffee. Once we were all settled they told us some of the history behind the project. Sue Walker had come up with the idea as she had seen similar buildings and felt it would be ideal for the site.

Building began in August last year, mainly using local materials. Timber was sourced at Fountain Forestry and straw bales came from a farm at Tog Hill, these being the main constituents. Then even more locally, a great deal of mud from around the site was used to coat the walls. A grant from Knightstone Housing Association provided the funds to get things started and with a great deal of voluntary help, the building was in a usable condition within twelve months. Geoff told us that work was still going on and would probably continually evolve.

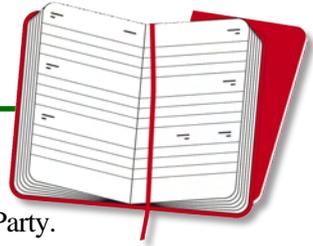
I was fascinated by some of the quirky details. Small milk cartons house the lights; rustic handles on the doors are made from branches with just the right bend in them. There was a wood-burning stove, and the roof had had several layers of insulation to keep it snug in winter.



It was a lovely venue for our picnic with super views from the terrace. A most convivial evening was enjoyed and our thanks must go to Marie Jo for making contact and to Geoff and Steve for opening up and making us so welcome.

BERYL HEATON

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



WE'VE BEEN MENTIONING the Bishopsworth Quiz since March, but now the time has really come! And, of course, notice of our Christmas Party.

Saturday 19 November: COPPICING work and training in Manor Woods Valley, from 1030-1500. Other details still to be confirmed, so if you think you might be interested, contact Marie Jo on 964 3106 or mariejo.coutanche@googlemail.com.

Monday 21 November: The annual BISHOPSWORTH QUIZ, a fun and sociable evening held at the Royal British Legion, Bishopsworth. M.V.C.G. traditionally enters two teams. If you'd like to take part, or to come along to support our teams, please let André have your name for forwarding to the Legion before the event (contact details below).

Wednesday 14 December: M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY. The only certainties about our Christmas Parties are that they are unpredictable – and that there will be an American Supper – so please bring a little something for the refreshment table if you can – and a raffle for our funds.

Saturday 7 January: Another COPPICING session. See 19 November.

MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	Peter Crispin	939 0256
Hon. Treasurer	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.