



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 112
Winter
2016

THE LAST EDITION of the *Newsletter* was a bit of a ‘Manor Woods Valley Special’ and the same can be said of this one. Our Working Group has been very busy on both the practical side and the ‘political’ (very small ‘p’) side of making things happen.

One very pleasing development is that other organisations have been approaching us, wanting to work with us. Those with *really* long memories might remember that Manor Woods Valley became a Local Nature Reserve in the first place because Sally Oldfield, the City Council’s Local Nature Reserves Officer (now *there’s* a job title it would be good to see again!), selected it as a ‘candidate’ for L.N.R. status partly because of its good range of habitats and partly because there was an active local group to work with (us!).

We’ve been co-operating for a few years with the Avon Wildlife Trust, firstly with Joe McSorley and recently with Rosie Maple. They’ve brought working parties of volunteers to Manor Woods Valley to do scrub clearing and coppicing, and a few of our own members have joined in (see page 2). Now the Wildlife Trust have a new officer, Nicole Daw, whose remit is to involve local people with wildlife by organising events and activities. Manor Woods Valley L.N.R. is one of four sites in Bristol she will be working in. And despite another round of reorganisation and cost-cutting, our relations with Bristol Parks are positive, and stronger than they have been for a while.

However, we need to remain an active partner as well. Martin Grant has stepped forward and taken the lead on coppicing (see page 4) – thank you, Martin! But we still need more people to keep things going and to lighten the load on the ‘old lags’. PLEASE think about how you can help, including volunteering to join the committee at our forthcoming A.G.M. (it’s good fun and very educational!).

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

IT HAS BEEN A BEAUTIFUL AUTUMN with such vibrant colours. A light breeze seems to have replaced strong winds. At the time of writing this article in mid-November leaves are gently dropping one by one under the apple tree in our back garden – shall we rake them? The carpet is so beautiful ... Recently the woodland path in Manor Woods Valley was just visible. Several clumps of fungi emerged out of the layer of leaves.

We mentioned the Old Quarry in the Summer *Newsletter*. You may have visited it recently. The crop of apples is excellent. On 4 October twelve volunteers including three from our group and others from the Avon Wildlife Trust led by Rosie Maple were present. Armed with scythes we tackled the rough grass and tree saplings. This area which is on the edge of the flower meadow is neutral grassland rich in wildflowers which has not yet been invaded by scrub. We enjoyed our day as these events are always an opportunity to meet people.



Helping wild flowers bloom

We have heard excellent news: Manor Woods Valley is one of four sites chosen by Bristol City Council to receive special help from the Avon Wildlife Trust for practical work but also events and activities for local people. We recently had a meeting with Nicole Daw, the Wildlife Trust's 'People and Wildlife Officer',

and the prospects are exciting. We will know more in the weeks to come. We have enjoyed working with the Wildlife Trust in the past. We hope we will have involvement from our members and local people.

You will remember that the Flower Meadow interpretation board which M.V.C.G. financed a few years ago was smashed last year. Our group was so shocked that for a while we hesitated to have it replaced. But Tom Penn from the Parks Department reminded us they could replace it, so André has been liaising with him and we will look forward to enjoying again the board we designed.

A few weeks ago we noticed that several areas of tall grass had not been mown. Thank you to John Walters for sending the mower before winter sets in. It looks so much better.

We mentioned last time that we have been talking to Becky Belfin about Manor Woods Valley in general and the Quarries area in particular. Becky was the City Council's Nature Conservation Officer, but, following more reorganisation within Parks, she is now the Parks Development Officer. Fortunately, she's still able to work with us to improve the Local Nature Reserve, and we've just had a meeting on site with her to discuss the restoration of more of the grassland in the Quarries which had become overrun with scrub. Scrub is a valuable habitat, of course, but there's no shortage of it in Manor Woods Valley, so don't be alarmed if you see extensive cutting back at the Vale Lane end – it will help to restore the balance of habitats in the Local Nature Reserve.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE
Manor Woods Valley Working Group

The path through the woodland has been splendidly repaired by ParkWork, as we reported in the last *Newsletter*. We also reported that we had applied for matched funding from the Neighbourhood Partnership to employ ParkWork to extend the path at the Interceptor end so that we do not have the muddy area which develops there every winter.

We're pleased to report that the grant has been awarded – we will pay £425 from our funds, and the Neighbourhood Partnership will pay the other £425. Thank you to the Partnership for this help in improving Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve.

Supported by a Wellbeing Grant from



**Dundry View
Neighbourhood Partnership**

COPPING FOR CONSERVATION

'Thank you for providing that amazing opportunity to learn an old skill. I immensely enjoyed the day and am looking forward for the next.'

THAT'S THE E-MAIL MESSAGE Tatjana sent me after the coppicing training course in Manor Woods Valley on Saturday 19 November. It is a sentiment shared by all eight who volunteered to be trained in coppicing by the Forest of Avon Trust.



The happy band who did good work in Manor Woods Valley.

L to R: Libby, Martin, Mhairi, Tatjana, Leslie, John, Alastair and Will

Coppicing is a traditional way to manage woodlands and is great for wildlife as it allows light into the woods, causing woodland plants to thrive. It is also a fun skill to learn and gives you a great feeling of wellbeing.

Thanks to Anna from Forest of Avon Trust for being a brilliant tutor and to Becky from the Bristol Parks Team for supporting and funding the course.

The trained volunteers will take part in regular coppicing days over the winter and early spring. For anyone interested in joining the coppicing volunteers, there will be a second opportunity to be trained, free, on Saturday 7 January: just contact Martin on 07896 805001 or martinmgrant@hotmail.com.

MARTIN GRANT



The warm glow comes from the exercise and the good result for wildlife

Precision surgery. Not difficult, but there's a right way to do it



ELM TREE CORNER – FINISHING OFF

The road works are finished, but, as is usual with such schemes, there are a few 'snagging' issues to be sorted out. Some planting pits for trees are missing, some yellow lines haven't been finished etc. We discussed this at the recent meeting of the Dundry View Neighbourhood Partnership Transport Group, and I sent a list of the minor items which need correcting to our Highways man. We also agreed to monitor how people use the scheme and identify any issues which could be improved in future (some people seem blind to 'No Entry' signs unless they've been there for years!). The scheme includes good amounts of landscaping, and we will make sure this isn't overlooked as the planting season approaches!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

WHITE ELEPHANT UPDATE

The construction works are nearing completion. The contractors, Alun Griffiths, have done a good job in keeping people informed and we have got on well with them. Our quarrel was, and remains, with the City Council Highways and Planning people who think that the South Bristol Ring Road will serve any useful purpose and is worth its financial and environmental costs. But it will soon be Christmas, so let's have some better and lighter news to finish the year on ...

Many of you will know that the new section of the road between Queens Road and Hareclive Road will be called 'Anton Bantock Way'. Some people have queried whether it's appropriate for an anti-car environmentalist – not to mention a founder member of M.V.C.G. – to be commemorated in this way. Anton was nothing if not an independent thinker, and he did actually support the road. In our *Newsletter* no. 84 (Winter 2009 - on our website) he wrote a piece – accompanied by one of his splendid drawings – claiming that the Ring Road would make possible the pedestrianisation of part of Queens Road and the creation of a Witherwood 'village green'. I think he was wrong, but at least his name will live on in the heart of his old stamping ground.

And finally – a positive use for the Ring Road! On Sunday 18 December there will be be Santa Family Cycle Fun Ride, in an attempt to break the world record for cycling Santas – currently 'only' 300. Using the unopened but, by then, surfaced road from the Gatehouse Centre to the A370, the cycle ride will start at 11.00am and finish at Ashton Court for mince pies and mulled wine, accompanied by carols sung by a Welsh male-voice choir. More details at www.betterbybike.info/santacycleride.



ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY PARTY

THE TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Malago Valley Conservation Group will be held on Tuesday 21 February 2016 at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church), 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.

Nominations for Officers or Committee members are very welcome. Nominations can be made to the Chairman, André Coutanche, at 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, BS13 8LB (phone number and e-mail address overleaf). Please feel free to contact me or any Committee member for an informal chat if you'd like more information about joining the Committee.

The formal A.G.M. business will include a report-back to members on the year's events and will be followed by a short talk on a topic 'in the news'. 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.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE
Chairman



Membership of M.V.C.G. runs on a calendar year basis, so, unless you've joined within the last three months, it's time to renew your subscription.

There's no need to fill in the form unless your details have changed – just give us a note of your name with your cheque or cash. **Do please let us know if you have a new or changed e-mail address.**

The subscription – just £4 per household, as it has been ever since we started! – covers the costs of running M.V.C.G. and also enables us to make direct improvements to our local environment when an opportunity arises.

Please bring your sub. to the Christmas Party, or the A.G.M., or send it to either Beryl Heaton (3 Kings Walk, BS13 8BB) or André Coutanche (14 Queens Road, BS13 8LB). **THANK YOU!**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



YOU WILL KNOW about our Christmas Party from the last *Newsletter*. It's always fun, so do come along if you can.



Wednesday 14 December at 7.30pm: M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY, at St Peter's Rooms, by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. The only certainties about our Christmas Parties are that they are unpredictable – and that there will be an American Supper. Please bring a little something for the refreshment table if you can, and some cash if you'd like to support the raffle for our funds.

Saturday 7 January: COPPICING work and training in Manor Woods Valley, from 1030-1500. This follows on from the session on 19 November (see page 4). If you think you might be interested, contact Martin on 07896 805001 or martinmgrant@hotmail.com.

Tuesday 21 February: M.V.C.G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms. Please see the 'official' announcement on page 7.

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.