



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 119
Autumn
2018

THIS IS ONE OF THOSE *NEWSLETTERS* where we have sad news to report as well as the more usual mixture of good and less good. John Taylor died on 6 August. He helped to lay the foundations which made Malago Valley Conservation Group what it is today and we pay tribute to him on page 5.

Elsewhere in this edition we have on pages 2-4 the usual rich mixture of hard work, progress and occasional disappointments which is Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve; we report on our enjoyable Summer Outing to FEED BRISTOL on page 6; and page 7 has the latest instalment of our recurring feature, ‘Wild BS13’ – with some new characters and some surprises!

That doesn’t leave any room for planning news, so, not for the first time, I’ll squeeze an update in here.

At **131 Bridgwater Road** we reported last time that the developers’ appeal against refusal of retrospective permission for what they illegally built was about to be heard. It’s extremely disappointing to report that the appeal was allowed by the Planning Inspector, but perhaps not so surprising, since the Council’s refusal was on the unnecessarily narrow grounds that no affordable homes were being provided. We continue to believe that the Planning Department have handled this badly and have allowed themselves to be over-influenced by the Legal Department. We hope lessons have been learned – but don’t have any specific indication that they have been.

The application to double the size of **Waverly Gardens Sheltered Housing** has been granted, and the housing applications on the former sites of the **Bishopsworth Police Station** and the **Bristol Water depot near the Cross Hands** are still being considered.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

Manor Woods Valley News ...	Page 2
John Taylor	Page 5
Summer Outing to Feed Bristol .	Page 6
Wild BS13	Page 7
Dates for your Diary	Page 8

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

THE GLORIOUS AND LONG HOT SUMMER brought many happy days of picnicking, events and hard work in Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve.

Manor Woods Orchard: Work in Manor Woods Orchard continues apace. This summer we have completed second and third Bramble clearances in most of the previously worked-on areas. Grasses and smaller herbs are starting to appear in the centre part of the cleared area, as we hoped. Several Elders have been removed, especially those affecting the shape of fruit trees in the south and northeast corners of the orchard. We have had the valued support of local volunteers and of staff and volunteers from Avon Wildlife Trust, the Environment agency, the TSB bank and Bristol GoodGym. Work to clear more Elders in the north of the orchard will carry on into the winter, with the aim of exposing a number of seriously overgrown fruit trees.



The wonderful GoodGym on yet another visit to help us (other volunteers are available!)

Bristol City Council has kindly supplied us with ‘tree tags’ (numbered metal discs to attach to trees so as to individually identify them). We have applied these to 31 apple and 6 pear trees in the orchard. The trees were mapped and measured at the same time.

We recently commissioned Liz Copas, a renowned authority on fruit tree varieties, to visit Manor Woods Orchard in order to identify the trees. We are still awaiting Liz’s report, but her first reaction was that all of the apples were ‘seedlings’ i.e. they have arisen from seeds originating from recognised varieties of apples – probably mostly Golden Delicious. Whilst this means that the resulting trees are hybrids and therefore not of recognised varieties, many are producing edible fruit and all should be good for cider making.

As a footnote, Liz inspected the large, Bramley-like apple tree in the New Wood (near the Valley Road entrance). This tree is not bearing any fruit this year. Liz's initial reaction was that this tree has arisen from a rootstock. This does not detract from its potential value as an eating and/or cooking apple, but again means that it is not of a recognised fruiting variety.

PETER HANCOCKS

Invasive Weeds: Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam are non-native weeds that continue to thrive in Manor Woods Valley to the detriment of native plants. They are almost impossible to eradicate but can be kept in check by annual treatment and removal. This year Bristol City Council have added the

two large stands of Japanese Knotweed near the Orchard to their herbicide treatment schedule. The Himalayan Balsam along the river banks and in the silted-up island has again been tackled this summer during our annual Big Pull volunteering days. Neil Green from the Avon Invasive Weeds Forum led local volunteers and



volunteer staff from Burges Salmon in pulling up the weeds by the roots. This year it was a race against time to remove all the weeds before the seed heads exploded, scattering thousands of seeds in all directions.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

Littering and anti-social behaviour: Litter presents a constant annoyance to users of Manor Woods Valley and a constant threat to wildlife. As well as regular informal litter-picking by M.V.C.G. members, a group of local volunteers and Environment Agency staff spent a day in August on a thorough clean-up of every nook and cranny and filling 15 bags of litter. We are forever disappointed by the continuing litter problem, particularly around the entrance from St Peter's Rise.

Another source of great disappointment was the vandalism done to the Wild Flower Meadow information board. Fortunately, the culprit was identified by the police and a Community Resolution process resulted in a new board being fitted. We are grateful for the prompt actions by the police and Council in resolving this issue.



*The litter
didn't
stand a
chance!*

Zion and M.V.C.G. Family Nature Event: A group of 30 parents and children, led by Martin and Peter, enjoyed being nature detectives on a family day out in Manor Woods Valley in early August. We all learnt something about identifying trees from the shape of leaves, finding mini-beasts under stones and in rotting wood, exploring hidden trails in the woods and making and floating model boats in the river. Lunch was provided by Zion where the children enjoyed making animal masks, and each family took home a goody bag full of ideas for nature activities and a copy of *My Manor Woods Book*. Thanks to Zion for organising the day and thanks to the Avon Wildlife Trust for the loan of magnifying glasses and bug boxes. Look out for a similar event next summer.

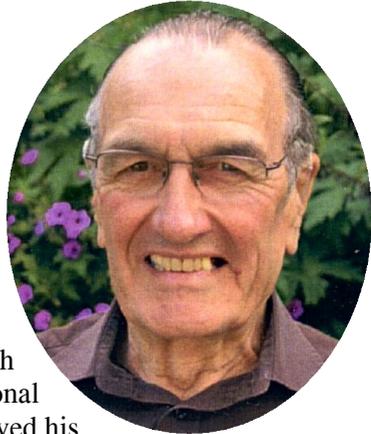
Forest of Avon Trust Wellbeing Courses: It's been a great pleasure to support the Forest of Avon Trust's course for venerable adults over the summer months. They helped with coppicing hazels in the New Wood and, in the process, established a 'classroom' area in the New Wood. Nicola from Forest of Avon Trust will run another eight-week course in the autumn, this time for young people and focusing on environmental art, woodcraft, wildlife learning, foraging and cooking.

The Manor Woods Valley Group: As part of Malago Valley Conservation Group, we (Angela, Beryl, Marie Jo, Marian, Martin and Peter) work with the Council and wildlife groups to help manage and look after Manor Woods Valley. If you love our local nature reserve and are interested in wildlife and volunteering, please get in touch for information about what we do and when we meet. I'm on 07896 805001 or martinmgrant@hotmail.com.

MARTIN GRANT
on behalf of the Manor Woods Valley Working Group

JOHN TAYLOR: 1936-2018

AS HIS SON, Ian, said in his tribute at John's funeral on 17 August, John probably wouldn't have described himself as an 'environmentalist'. But he was, and long before it became the everyday word and idea that it is now.



John cared about the natural world and enjoyed it in a very practical way – with walking boots on. He was also a traditional Bristolian in the best sense; he knew and loved his city and wanted to see it improve. He was a founder-member of Malago Valley Conservation Group when we started in 1994, and an active one. He was our first Hon. Treasurer and de facto membership secretary. Before e-mail was ubiquitous, our *Newsletters* were all printed on my old black-and-white laser printer and delivered by hand. By John's hand, mostly, and in double-quick time!

He contributed to the *Newsletter*, too, reporting on our activities and drawing readers' attention to all aspects of our local scene. Having helped get M.V.C.G. off to a very firm start, he retired as Treasurer and from the Committee after five years. He still came to our events when he could – dancing and bowling also had strong claims on his time! – and until his last illness made it impossible, he was a regular attender at our A.G.M.s and Christmas parties.

His support for M.V.C.G. showed itself most recently and dramatically when he knew he wouldn't be with us in person again. He rang me in the spring to say he wanted to make a substantial donation. After discussions with Martin, who explained to John projects we wanted to undertake in Manor Woods Orchard and their costs, John wrote us a cheque for a magnificent £900. These improvements to the Orchard and the Quarries area to which he has given such an impetus are already happening.

There can be no better way of commemorating John's interests and commitments than this improvement for wildlife and for people on his local patch.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

SUMMER OUTING TO 'FEED BRISTOL'

On Saturday 4 August, 15 M.V.C.G. members and friends met at FEED BRISTOL for a guided visit with Shaun of the Avon Wildlife Trust.



FEED BRISTOL promotes conservation and ecology by using different wildlife gardening techniques. The aim is to create a place where people and wildlife thrive in a productive setting.

FEED BRISTOL welcomes school parties and other groups. A lot of volunteers also take part. They're at 181 Frenchay Park Road, Stapleton, BS16 1HB. Their website is at www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/feedbristol.

FEED BRISTOL'S Roundhouse provides the perfect venue for meetings, family parties etc.



MARIE JO COUTANCHE

WILD BS13

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DELIGHT to enjoy wildlife when most of us live in an urban environment – birds nesting in our trees and shrubs, or flying over, like the ravens we hear and see regularly, or butterflies and other insects in the wildflower meadows some of us have created or on our native shrubs.

IVY BEES (*Colletes hederæ*) have been spotted in some of our gardens recently, attracted by the flowers in bloom at this time of the year. They could be mistaken for honey bees, but they have furry ginger thoraxes. They nest colonially in individual burrows, so you may see harmless ‘clouds’ of them low on a border or lawn. Thank you, Peter, for identifying them!



Wildlife can also bring surprises and conflicts. It seems that **BADGERS** enjoy sweetcorn when passing through our gardens at night ... every cob neatly stripped like a human would eat them! And this in a part of BS13 which is on heavy clay, where badgers are never seen. Had the drought driven this one to forage further afield?

In some of our gardens it has been an good year for **HEDGEHOGS**. It's a pleasure to watch them in late evening, but they need our help – bowls of water in dry weather and dog or cat food.

We hope you have all been to Manor Woods Valley Nature Reserve this summer. If not, take advantage of a nice autumn day. You may see a **KINGFISHER** in the stream or a **HERON**. Both have been spotted recently. Why go any further? Enjoy the autumn and let us know what you have seen!

MARIE JO COUTANCHE



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



AS USUAL, this Autumn edition of the *Newsletter* brings news of two seasonal events – the Bishopsworth Quiz and our Christmas Party.

Monday 26 November: The perennial BISHOPSWORTH QUIZ. M.V.C.G. traditionally enters two teams and they are currently being organised. But don't let that put you off getting in touch (details below) if you'd like to come along to support our teams – or even arrange a third team – at this fun and sociable evening held at the Royal British Legion, Manor Road, Bishopsworth.

Thursday 13 December: M.V.C.G. CHRISTMAS PARTY at St Peter's Rooms (by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth), starting at 7.30pm. We'll have a reminder and more details in the Winter *Newsletter*. There will be our usual American Supper – so please plan to bring a little something for the refreshment table if you can – and a raffle for our funds.

MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	[Vacancy]	
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Marie Jo Coutanche, Peter Crispin, Martin Grant, Peter Loy-Hancocks,
Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Richard Bevan (Highridge Forum), Catherine Withers (Bedminster Down & Uplands Society), Sue Walker (HHEAG), Ken Kennedy (Volunteering Matters), Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Paul Goggin, Helen Holland, Kevin Quartley
(All the City councillors for Bishopsworth ward and for Hartcliffe and Withywood 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.