



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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WE'RE STARTING (again) with a planning update. Some of this is boring; unfortunately, it's also important! There's an old joke about the money which companies spend on advertising - they know half of it is wasted, but they don't know *which* half. Likewise, we know that a lot of the time we spend in trying to get to grips with consultations on major planning proposals is wasted (since many of them come to nothing) - but if we don't get involved, we can be sure that we'll miss something important.

So we have been going to meetings and reading documents and trying to get our heads around the draft Area Green Space Plans (AGSP) and the Site Allocations proposals for our neck of the woods. The draft AGSP has been in the news, since part of the proposals for improving our parks involves selling off some of them for housing in order to raise some of the necessary money. That has provoked objections, petitions and demonstrations in many parts of Bristol. In BS13, the most flagrant example is the suggestion that a part of Kings Head Lane Park should be given over to new houses. This didn't arise at all in the earlier consultation, and a lot of people are bemused and offended in equal measure. We have looked at what seems to be the rationale behind it and we strongly oppose the idea as well.

Another proposal for development is on part of the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley. This is in the Site Allocations document and not the AGSP, because it isn't officially considered to be part of the green space. This nonsense is one of the reasons we can't take the AGSP seriously - but we still have to respond, or else things will happen by default. We will certainly be registering our strong objection to both these proposals.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

WE HOPE that a lot of our readers have enjoyed a walk through Manor Woods Valley this summer. If not, autumn is always a good time (*and see the Programme on page 8 for a suitably autumnal stroll on 9 October*). There is evidence that some visitors have been picking blackberries and we hear that sloes are already ripe. The River Path (from the dam to the interceptor) has been widened in the past year and is particularly pleasant at this time of the year. Remember also that the Woodland Path created a few years ago makes this part of Manor Woods Valley very accessible these days. You can start from behind the library or from the interceptor. Green sign posts are in place at each end.

After a busy spring working on the meadow interpretation board our group invited people who had helped in various ways to come to the 'unveiling' on 2 June. It was a fun event, ending with a stroll through the meadow.



The official unveiling of the Meadow Interpretation Board by our guest of honour, Ron Steven of Yansec (and his dog)



*It wasn't just the meadow that was flowery for the occasion
(both photos by our Official Photographer, Beryl)*

Work has continued in a more relaxed way since. We have liaised with our Community Park Officer, Julian Cox, so that some small jobs which may have gone unnoticed get done. For instance, people walking through the wood this winter should not have to trample through mud when at the interceptor end, as a layer of mulch has been laid there. We have reported fly-tipping, the occasional uncleared path, litter in some corners etc.

We recently met John Walters, the manager of Quadron Services, the contractors who are responsible for Manor Woods Valley. It was a very productive meeting which has contributed to a better understanding of their work. We will in future be liaising more directly with Quadron and complementing their work with our own voluntary efforts.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

NEWS FROM THE TRIFFID HUNTERS

PEOPLE walking along the main path in Manor Woods Valley on 28 July and 9 August may have wondered what was happening on the island in the pond. For the third year in a row, a large group of employees from the Environment Agency on their environmental leave and a few M.V.C.G. members were tackling the Himalayan Balsam.

As reported before it is a non-native weed which spreads out of control to the detriment of native plants. For the first time, thanks to the number of people attending and the good weather, we managed to pull out all the plants we could see apart from a few near the dam; there, we were attacked by a swarm of wasps and had to retreat! This operation has been happening in a number of sites all over the city.

Thanks to everyone who took part, not least two French friends who were visiting and who got roped in (it's not the first time they or other visiting French people have helped out in La Vallée du Bois du Manoir).



Thanks to Vicky Freke of the Environment Agency for the photo

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

PICKING UP LITTER, planting daffodils and creating gardens, checking planning applications, cleaning up streams ... the list could go on. This (and more) is what M.V.C.G. is about. But we're not alone! Here are two examples of other groups of people working hard to make things better.

HEADLEY PARK CHURCH is a corporate member of M.V.C.G. We asked them to write about what they are doing in their grounds, especially alongside the entrance to Manor Woods Valley ...

'We have been refurbishing our site gradually over the last three years beginning with the church hall and now very obviously with the main church building which is being updated and redesigned as a community building. This work should be completed by early November this year.

'We as a church would like to have a site which can be enjoyed by the whole of the community and in the last few months have commenced work on improving the outside area around the church hall. We have had volunteers from the church ranging in age from their twenties to one of the main contributors who is nearly eighty. They have been involved in litter picking, digging, weeding, planting and watering. All the plants in our new flower bed at the entrance to the Manor Woods Valley, have been kindly donated by members of the church or the community, including a couple to commemorate loved ones or a special anniversary.

'We have been really encouraged by the people who have stopped to talk to us as we have worked on the garden and the positive comments that have been made.

'We are planning to replant the lawn around the church hall in the autumn and provide a seating area and come the spring there should be a nice display of spring bulbs. Our next job involves planting these bulbs, which are a mixture of very early daffodils, red tulips, snow drops and anemones which should provide colour from January through to April.'

VALLEY HEIGHTS FLATS, Bishopsworth Road, is also near an entrance to Manor Woods Valley. The setting is much enhanced by the flowers and shrubs in the planting boxes in the wall along the street. This is done voluntarily by some of the residents, some of whom are also M.V.C.G. members. It looks good!

TROLLEY TREK

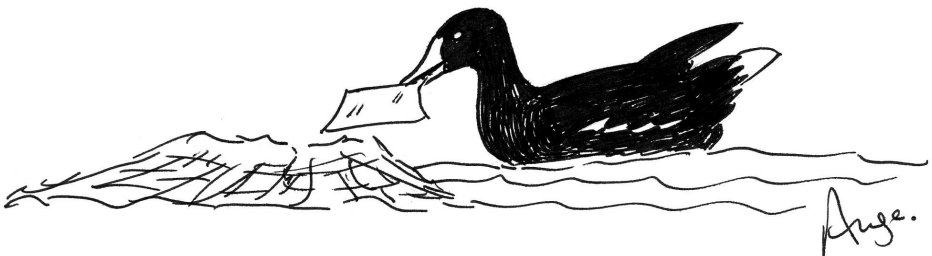
FOR A FEW YEARS NOW we have been helping with the annual TROLLEY SURVEY to check how many shopping trolleys get dumped in our streams and rivers. Bristol Living Rivers asked us and other groups concerned with their local streams - like the Kingfisher Group in Windmill Hill - to walk along as much of the stream bank as they could on any day they chose in July, noting where trolleys were abandoned.

Beryl and Danny walked the length of Manor Woods Valley, including the stretches of the Malago before and after the L.N.R. itself, and I had a wander along the Pigeonhouse from Crox Bottom up to the bottom of Dundry Slopes, and the 'missing' bit of the Malago south of Witherwood Park. There wasn't a huge number of trolleys, but we recorded what there were on the maps. But we also recorded other dumping in the streams, since we don't see why just trolleys and the supermarkets are singled out. Our thanks to Living Rivers who passed on our reports and asked for all the dumping to be dealt with.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

NEWS ABOUT CANS

GOOD NEWS! The price of aluminium cans has gone back to 40 pence a kilo after falling to 25 pence last year. Just to remind you that M.V.C.G. is still collecting them to raise funds. So if you have some cans, spend a few minutes sorting them out: take a magnet, put steel cans into your black box and bring the aluminium ones to 14 Queens Road. So far this year we have sold about 80kg (a lot of cans!).



A Malago Moorhen was sighted in the spring picking bits of plastic from the river bank and pushing them into her nest. Even our moorhens recycle!

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

THE SUN IS SHINING as this edition is being prepared, but it's time to think of autumn and winter. But there are still a couple of outings for you. *Please try to support the programme, and/or let us know what you would like.*

Saturday 2 October: *A Visit to the Lake Shore Development* - the former Office of the Wills Tobacco Factory at Hartcliffe being transformed by Urban Splash into apartments and commercial space. Meet at 11.00am outside Boots at Imperial Park.

Saturday 9 October: *A Fungi Foray* in Manor Woods Valley with JUSTIN SMITH, from 2.00 to 4.00pm. You may remember that Justin took us on a mushroom meander in Manor Woods in October 2007. Justin is now employed by Bristol Parks as the Woodland and Wildlife Officer and we have already worked closely with him on scrub clearance in Manor Woods Valley. He is combining the walk with a 'professional' recce of the area, so we have to limit numbers to 15. If you would like to book, please ring Marie Jo on 964 3106 or e-mail info@mvcg.org.uk. We'll let you know where to meet when you book. The walk was very popular last time, so book soon!

Tuesday 19 October: The winter season of meetings at St Peter's Rooms restarts, with BRIAN LOMAS from the *Light Rail Transit Association*. The L.R.T.A. advocates and encourages research into the retention and development of light rail and tramway systems. Although national and international in their interests, they are very involved in Bristol with campaigns for better transport in the city. The meeting starts at 7.30pm in the hall by St Peter's Church, Church Road, Bishopsworth.

Tuesday 16 November: Our usual meeting night will instead be the occasion of the traditional *Bishopsworth Quiz*. We expect to enter a team or two, so if you'd like to take part, or just come along to support, please let André know on 964 3106 or info@mvcg.org.uk.

Tuesday 14 December: M.V.C.G.'s daft and delightful *Christmas Party* will be under slightly new management this year. What will they come up with ... ? To allow some setting up time, the party will start at **7.45pm**. As usual, we'll have an American Supper, so, if you can, please bring a small contribution for the buffet.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY?

WHILE we were enjoying the refreshments after the unveiling of the flower meadow interpretation board (*see page 2*), I was approached by three youngsters - it was half-term week. Was I anything to do with the running of the park asked their spokesperson, a small girl of about 8 or 9. Not really I replied although I took a great interest in the area.

‘Yesterday when we were here we saw a big black furry animal playing in the woods. Do you know what it is?’ she asked. Opening her eyes wide, she added ‘I think it was a bear’!

I was rather nonplussed at this because although we pride ourselves on the wide variety of creatures to be found in the valley at no time have bears featured in even our wildest imaginings. Fortunately Kate came to my rescue. ‘There is someone who exercises a Newfoundland dog down here. They are black and furry. I expect it was that you saw’, she said.

I think our questioner was disappointed at this response. She obviously preferred her explanation. A bear is much more exciting than a dog isn’t it? But I was rather relieved. I live next door to Manor Woods Valley, and I really don’t fancy a bear roaming round my back garden.

MARY SYKES

Malago Valley Conservation Group

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Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Mary Sykes, Valerie Gay, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Derek Pickup, Kevin Quartley (*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.