



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THIS EDITION has turned into a ‘Manor Woods special’ - and it really is a pleasure to see how things are moving forward and reinforcing each other. Working with the City Council, other organisations in the voluntary sector, and - hopefully - with private companies, we can push things forward whenever a financial, political or practical opportunity arises, using Julia Bolzek’s report as a guide and inspiration.

You can read on pages 2 and 3 some of the developments we are looking forward to. There is also the wonderful idea (and brilliant drawing) on page 4. In addition, a working group has been looking at building on the little yellow leaflet we produced two years ago as a basic guide to Manor Woods for the general public. We want to create something which will encourage active enjoyment of the area, and we are currently thinking of a ‘Manor Woods Family Scrap-Book’.

This is partially influenced by the splendid work-book for school-children on Strawberry Lane which was recently launched by H.H.E.A.G. We want something which anyone can use, young or old, probably in loose-leaf format to allow the insertion of the user’s own drawings or photos or notes on the Woods through the seasons. If anyone has any ideas on what should be included, please let us know.

We intend applying for a grant to cover most of the cost of producing the Scrap-Book and then to sell it at modest cost through local outlets. Additional volunteers would be very welcome to share some of the load with the existing activists, so if you would like to help with the production or marketing, please get in touch.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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MANOR WOODS



ON 20 May around fifteen people assembled to witness the official opening of the Manor Woods section of the Malago Greenway cycle path. It was a dull morning but it stayed dry for the ceremony. We gathered around the impressive new entrance at Vale Lane. Its attractive natural stone walls and wooden canopy owe much to Anton's design.

Among the assembly were cyclists and walkers. There was a photographer present who took pains to arrange for the cyclists to be photographed from various angles as they made their way through the gateway. Mike Ginger of Bristol City Council had laid on coffee and biscuits for us all. Whilst the picnic atmosphere prevailed there was an opportunity for people to talk to one another and hear the views of the various groups represented.

Finally, after another photo session, the ribbon (appropriately green) was cut by Chris Orlick, a Windmill Hill councillor, and the gateway was officially open.

BERYL HEATON

MORE MANOR WOODS

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY, we talked to Mike Ginger about the idea which had been floated of M.V.C.G. putting together an Interpretation Board at the new entrance to Manor Woods (and possibly at the other entrances as well). As a result, a meeting took place recently between some of the M.V.C.G. committee members, Mike Ginger and Jim Hill of the graphics design team at the City Council. We looked at interpretation boards which have been produced for other sites and discussed weather and vandal resistance.

We have undertaken to come up with a design which we will agree with the Council and which they will pay to have produced. If anyone has any thoughts about what should be included or what the board should look like, please give me a ring. It may that the best way to display it will be to mount it on *very* substantial wooden posts. Have we any members who are fond of a little rough carpentry?

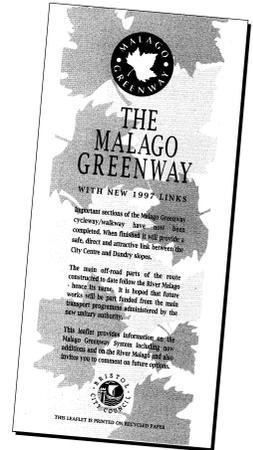
ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

EVEN MORE MANOR WOODS

THERE IS A NEW LEAFLET just published on the Malago Greenway following the opening of our new section through Manor Woods and a new link at Windmill Hill. It contains up-to-the-minute photos of the Vale Lane entrance feature and a reference and contact point for M.V.C.G.

There is also much background material about the Malago itself. The downside of dumping and pollution is mentioned, but the leaflet rightly points out that the stream is alive and has the capacity for regeneration.

‘The Malago Greenway has opened up many parts of the stream to public attention ... It is hoped that this process of education will secure a brighter future for this important feature of South Bristol life’. And so say all of us.



WHAT, *MORE* MANOR WOODS?

WE HAVE MENTIONED in the past that there was the possibility of substantial improvement work in our area funded by Allied-Domecq under their scheme to give grants for environmental projects with a theme of ‘water’.

It is in the nature of these things that they take time to evolve - and this report is by no means the last, definitive word. So don't hold your breath, but ...

The Harriers Angling Club, who are based in the Hartcliffe area, have pointed out that there is nowhere in south Bristol where people can do coarse fishing. This is an enormously popular hobby, not least with young people. They had suggested developing the pond on the Malago in Manor Woods. We were concerned about the possible implications, but we raised instead the idea of opening up part of the culverted section of the Malago near Vale Lane to create a new lake in a currently featureless area. This is supported by the anglers and wider consultation will be held, with a meeting at Bishopsword Library at 7.00pm on Monday 21 July.

If you have any views or suggestions, do go along and/or let us know beforehand.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

PYRAMIDS FOR PROGRESS

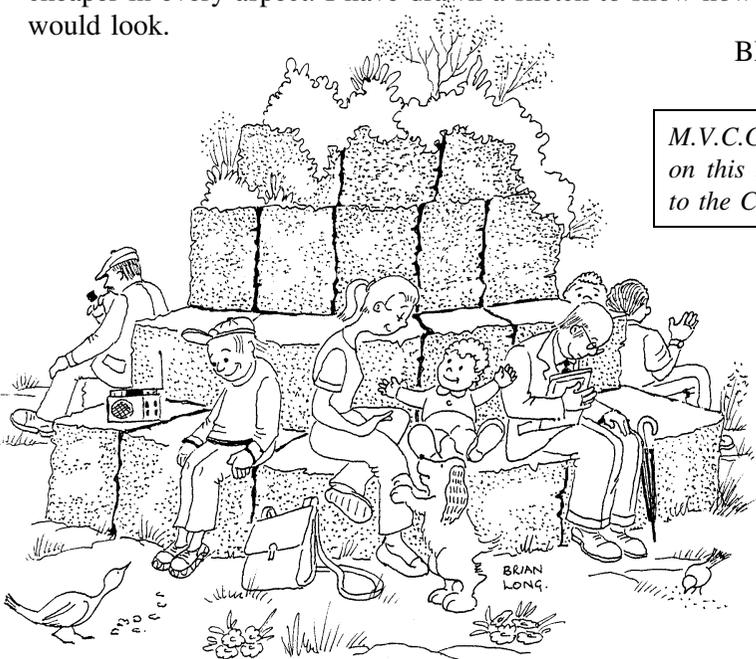
BEING A PENSIONER, I like nothing more than to regularly walk through beautiful Manor Woods. I find it an appalling sight to see those picnic tables fired and reduced to a blackened mass of cinder. Cinder was what I thought, but on closer inspection I discovered that these picnic tables are actually made of plastic.

However I would like to suggest a way of alleviating the vandalising of these plastic picnic tables. Here are my suggestions:

- Do away with the pretty but inferior picnic tables etc. It is only a matter of time before all of them are destroyed by vandals.
- Replace them with large rocks or boulders. Erect them to form pyramids approximately seven feet high. Design or arrange them so there is ample room for visitors to sit, picnic and lounge there. In fact make them monuments for socialising and relaxing.
- All of these natural materials would be permanent structures because of their weight, strength, toughness and durability and in the long term cheaper in every aspect. I have drawn a sketch to show how the pyramids would look.

BRIAN LONG

*M.V.C.G. is passing
on this brilliant idea
to the City Council*



SURPRISING STOCKWOOD

NEARLY ALL the M.V.C.G. members who went on the trip to Stockwood Open Space on 17 June were visiting it for the first time - and many had not previously known it existed. The two dozen or so intrepid explorers were in the very capable hands of Jeff Holmes of the Wildlife Trust who is one of wardens for this rich and fascinating site. His wide knowledge of the flora and fauna was communicated with enthusiasm.

During a delightful and very sociable evening we saw a kestrel hunting over the area; a badger sett (but it was too early in the evening for the badgers to be emerging); the meadows of wild flowers of all colours and shapes, including some orchids and the rare Bath Asparagus; and - a special treat which few of us would have spotted without Jeff's help - a little owl perched on top of a rugby post and scanning the fields for its supper.

The Sunday evening before this *Newsletter* is being produced, I took André to see what he had missed on 17 June (he had had to go to another meeting). Not only was the little owl on its post again, but we were able to watch it through binoculars dropping down to the field and then flapping up to the near-by oak tree. And then we realised to our delight that on a branch of the oak tree were two owlets which the parent was feeding!

It makes me wonder why many people seem to think it is necessary to get into their cars and drive far out into the countryside in order to see 'real' wildlife. We are lucky to have the countryside on our doorstep, with Manor Woods, Dundry Slopes and Stockwood Open Space all easily accessible. And the more you begin to learn and understand about plants, animals and birds from friendly experts like Jeff Holmes, the easier it is to discover and enjoy what we have in our own backyards.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE



If you were unable to go to Stockwood Open Space and would like to visit it, the main entrance is at the end of Stockwood Road (beyond Stockwood Library) at its junction with The Coots. The Wildlife Trust and the City Council publish an attractive leaflet which includes a map of the site.

FOREST OF AVON INAUGURAL WALK

ON A BRIGHT but windy afternoon on Sunday 1st June there was an unusual amount of activity around Dundry car park as over 100 walkers of all ages - plus a dog or three - assembled to walk to Ashton Court. The route is part of a 44 mile circular tour of Bristol established as part of the Forest of Avon project. This was the second of two inaugural walks around the southern area to mark the completion of the circuit.

After a ceremonial ribbon cutting we set off accompanied by Jim O'Shaughnessy as leader and with a troubadour and story-teller in attendance, our very own Anton as historical interpreter, and a number of green tee-shirted whippers-in. The pace was leisurely, with stops for erudition and entertainment. Rounding a corner we came upon two stilt-walkers masquerading as futuristic scarecrows which caused much amusement. Unfortunately, the combination of large numbers and high winds meant that only the strategically placed few were able to hear the speakers, so the visual effects were more successful.

The path was well marked and the views spectacular. Both Severn Bridges and the Clifton Suspension Bridge were visible together at the start; as we proceeded there was a wonderful view of Grove House across a field of rippling barley, and soon we could see Barrow Tanks spread out below us.

The party gradually became strung out until the long column must have been a spectacle in itself to any motorist raising his eyes from the A38. After crossing the A38 ourselves, the whippers-in doing sterling work at this point, we made our way to Hancock's Wood where the stilt-walkers made another appearance, in more traditional costume this time. There was a break for delicious and welcome refreshments, including a tree hung with chocolate bars for the children - I went more for the home-made cakes.

After the picnic, the party continued along the valley, under the railway, emerging in Long Ashton by the church, finally crossing into Ashton Court where cups of tea and transport back to Dundry were provided.

Forest of Avon staff must be congratulated, not only for organising this successful and enjoyable event, but also for their enterprise and hard work in establishing the path. They are planning to produce leaflets giving details of the route later in the year.

MARY SYKES

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

SUMMER WEATHER for the summer programme (at least as we go to press). We've a couple of outdoor events (plus garbage raids, of course), and advance notice of the first meetings of the autumn programme.

Tuesday 15 July: Visit to *Timsbury Bottom*, including a tour of an organic farm. Lola is co-ordinating transport (on 964 1116) and she also has copies of a map to show the meeting point. (It's at ST661584 if you're into Grid References). There will be a charge of £1 each.

Monday 4 August: *Garbage Raid*. The usual 'last Monday of the month' routine is being changed to accommodate holidays. Meet at Bishopsworth Library at 4.00pm.

Sunday 10 August: *Family Treasure Hunt and American Picnic* in Manor Woods. Meet at **3.30pm** at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library; bring your friends and family. There will be a fun treasure hunt organised in teams, followed by an informal American Picnic. Please bring a contribution to the food/drink. You won't have to carry it on the treasure hunt; the refreshments will be transported by car to the eating place.

Monday 1 September: *Garbage Raid*. New territory for the trolley (now with its smart new notice board - thank you, Bill): meet at 4.00pm at Symes House (the Area Office) at the top of Symes Avenue.

Tuesday 16 September: Our first evening meeting of the autumn season, in St Peter's Rooms (side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth), starting at 7.30pm. GRACE DAVIS of the Sustainable City Team at Bristol City Council will talk about the *Local Food Links Network* - locally-produced and home-produced food. If you have local products to swap or bring and buy, please bring them along.

Tuesday 21 October: *Up the Garden Path - a place for insects* with MARGARET HAYMAN. Come and learn about the myriad forms of insect life which share our gardens with us. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms.

FEED THE FROG!

IF YOU SEE the *South Bristol Observer*, you may have noticed the report and photo of the Frog litter bin which M.V.C.G. have helped Highridge Infant School to buy. We are very keen to reinforce the excellent training which the School gives on the importance of putting litter in the bin. There was a delightful ceremony on 5 June at which we unveiled Mr Frog the litter bin to an excited School Assembly. The School has been a supporter of M.V.C.G. since we started and we were pleased to do something in return.



This is the 'Thank you' card which we have received from the school, along with a kind letter from Jill Hughes, the Head Teacher. The card was drawn by Matthew who, with sister, Elaine, and Mum, Jackie, has been a regular supporter of the Garbage Raids.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

Malago Valley Conservation Group Committee Members

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Acting Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Treasurer	John Taylor	964 2913

Other Members

Anton Bantock, Brenda Docherty, Richard Eddy, Beryl Heaton, Chris Lillington (*Committee Secretary*), Mary Sykes.

Co-opted Members

Peter Hall, Sue Walker, Cllr Bernard Chalmers, Cllr Terry Cleverley, Cllr Peter Crispin, Cllr Paul Walker (*All the City and County of Bristol councillors for Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards have been invited to become co-opted Committee members.*)

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; telephone 964 3106. **Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.** The opinions expressed in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of Malago Valley Conservation Group.