



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 46
July
2002

IT WAS in July 1997 (*Newsletter 17*) that we had what amounted to a 'Manor Woods Special Edition'. Since then, Manor Woods has featured regularly in the *Newsletter*, sometimes with bad news, but far more often with good news as this most important open space in BS13 becomes more appreciated and we and the City Council try to encourage its appropriate use.

Nearly every article this time is about Manor Woods - and the area itself and our activities in it have attracted the attention of a research project being run by the Open University. HABITABLE CITIES is using Manor Woods and M.V.C.G. as one of six case studies nationally to investigate the importance of wildlife and green spaces in the urban environment. Dr Monica Degen of the O.U. came along to our Herbal Walk on 16 July and introduced herself and the project. She is looking for people to help by keeping diaries and taking photos (camera supplied), and an informal meeting has been arranged for anyone interested. More details on pages 4 and 5.

Other matters to report on include the A38-A370 Link Road, where North Somerset Council have decided on the 'Orange Route' as the way forward. This is the option we favoured, so we are pleased with this decision, though we are not counting any chickens just yet. At least this removes the prospect of a third roundabout on the A38 near the King's Head, since the proposed Park & Ride would involve a roundabout just south of the existing one at Kings Head Lane. We are still considering our response to the Park & Ride and we would welcome members' views. Also on the A38, there is a planning application for housing on the former petrol station site; we have no objection. And on the next door site, the planners have refused the proposed mobile phone mast but the applicants have appealed.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

Any Ideas?	Page 2
Path Finders (again)	Page 2
Herbal Walk	Page 3
Beating the Drum	Page 3
Habitable Cities	Page 4
Our Wild Life	Page 6
The Programme	Page 7

ANY IDEAS?

FOLLOWING a recent Committee meeting, it was decided to set up a new working group specifically to look at the entrances to Manor Woods.

The first entrance to be tackled is the St Peter's Rise end (back of Bishopsworth Library). A group of around six people, spear-headed by Anton Bantock and armed with forks, spades and secateurs, met for an hour one Saturday morning in June. We gathered litter, bottles and cans which went off to be recycled. On the Library side of the track we cut back the brambles and cleared the area back to the ivy. The area on the Tabernacle side was also littered with rubble underneath! We had a 'brain-storming' session as we worked as to what we might plant - and what might actually grow there!

We invite your comments, thoughts, advice and help! If you are interested, please get in touch with me on 987 0825.

LIS PIBWORTH

- As reported in the last *Newsletter*, the Vale Lane entrance has been partially demolished and we are keeping a close eye on the progress of plans to rebuild the pergola-style entrance. The latest news as we go to press is that the City Council have committed themselves to restore the feature and money has been allocated. We will keep you updated!

PATH FINDERS (AGAIN)

For about the third time, an M.V.C.G. team has maintained the path from the dam to the interceptor along the Malago in Manor Woods. This path should be the responsibility of the City Council and their contractors but it doesn't seem to work out like that. L. to R.: Jack, Lis, Angela, Marie Jo.



HERBAL WALK

WE HAVE ALL been longing for some nice summer evenings. Spending that of 16 July in Manor Woods was all the more delightful. Eighteen of us - including several very welcome non-members - gathered for a very leisurely walk which was led by herbalist JULIA GREEN. Her detailed knowledge of her subject, her enthusiasm, her skill at story-telling and, above all, her passion for plants made it an evening we will remember.

The plants she showed us were ones we see every day with no need to go to the countryside. They are in Manor Woods, along the road sometimes, in our gardens as herbs or vegetables. Most of them were used as remedies before the days of modern medicine and they still are by people who appreciate their virtues.

Julia told us that red clover is used to treat skin conditions, particularly eczema in children. Sloes are used in cough medicine, and meadowsweet for 'damp diseases' like rheumatic aches and pains. Plantain leaves were used by the Romans - they put them in their sandals to prevent blisters. Daisies were used to treat conjunctivitis - and there were many more.

Our ancestors who relied only on plants for their health held them in very high respect. The plants were part of their folklore, and still are in many cultures. Think of the elder which grows so well in our area ... It was said that a witch lived in it. When you cut the flowers, you were cutting the witch's hair, so an apology was necessary to avoid being cursed. At funerals, the coachmen had a branch of elder to whip the horses in order to keep the devil away.

In a gentle stroll of two hours from Bishopsworth Library, we only got as far as the Manor Woods pond, but to crown an unforgettable evening we were rewarded by the sighting of a kingfisher which was perched on a branch long enough for most people to see it before it flew away.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

BEATING THE DRUM

A small gang of the M.V.C.G. hard core spent an energetic couple of hours recently cutting back overgrown hedges which were restricting access through 'The Drum' - the former miners' path which runs from Manor Road to Vicarage Road behind Bishopsworth Manor House. This is a right of way and a part of 'village' history which needs to be kept up. The owner of the hedge was pleased that we could help and made a most generous donation to our funds.

HABITABLE CITIES

MANOR WOODS and the Malago Valley Conservation Group has become a case study for the project 'Habitable Cities', funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, and hosted in the Geography Department at the Open University.

The Background

Wildlife, conservation issues and nature-based activities are not only important in the countryside, they are also very much part of our cities. These activities and issues can too often be overlooked or fail to register in debates about what makes a good city. This research seeks, first, to highlight the importance of urban sites to people and to wildlife. Second, it aims to raise important issues facing urban nature groups and sites. Through interviews with national and local bodies, and through detailed case studies of a variety of urban nature schemes, the research will draw together insights and experiences from a wide body of people involved in making cities habitable.

The Research

The research is interested in what people find fascinating and enjoyable about urban nature, what successes they may have had in the past, and what issues lie ahead. Along with those interviewed at a national and city policy level, six groups are participating, three in Birmingham and three in Bristol. The groups represent a variety of activities and organisations, including gardeners, conservationists and people interested in restoring sites. In order to develop a good sense of the issues and of the work that goes into making cities habitable, the researchers will spend time from mid-2002 to mid-2003 participating in activities, getting to know specific places and listening to a variety of experiences and views.

The participants' role and the researchers' responsibility

This research depends upon the generosity of lots of people who are experts in their own field or local area. Any views, papers or experiences that people feel able to share with the researchers will be warmly received. We aim to represent all our participants fairly and without bias. It is perfectly reasonable for participants to indicate if they would rather that they were not quoted directly on an issue or point of information. Participants in the research will



be entitled to read papers and reports that are produced from the project and comment on their content. We also hope that participants will feel that the process is worthwhile for them and that they can use the materials that we produce (from photographs, to people's views, to video, to policy arguments etc.)

Outputs

The research will be published in a number of academic and policy journals. There will also be a book with a major academic publisher. There are plans for a policy forum to discuss the issues raised with national and local experts, and for a short film. Your ideas for other relevant outputs will be more than welcome.

Get Involved!

An important aspect of the project is finding out what people find fascinating and enjoyable about urban nature, what successes they might have had in the past, and what issues lie ahead. I'm therefore organising an informal discussion group on **Monday the 5th of August at 7.00pm at 14 Queens Road** to listen to the variety of views and experiences that you've had in Manor Woods.

Looking forward to meeting you,

DR. MONICA DEGEN

- If you would like to come to the meeting, please ring André on 964 3106. We would like to have an idea of numbers to make sure we are not too crowded (and we have enough coffee mugs!). If a large number of people are interested (which would be great), we will arrange further meetings.

OUR WILD LIFE

OUR SWIFTS are back again. Every summer for years I have watched swifts doing their Red Arrows display, screaming with delight through gap between our semis. As dusk approached they would get lower and lower until, suddenly, there was silence - they had vanished.

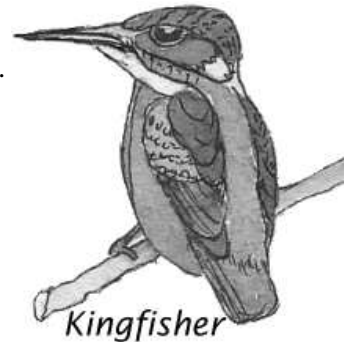
About five years ago we put up a small greenhouse at the top corner of the garden. My view from one side was a little cameo picture of Dundry Church Tower in the distance surrounded by trees. Another view was straight through the gap over the garage between the houses. Imagine my delight when about 9.00pm the swifts descended to roost and dived into our roof between the gutter and the tiles. There was no perching or looking around. They just zoomed in, folded up, a wing stuck out for a second and they were in. I realised that they had been doing that for at least five years before I witnessed it. They really had been 'our' swifts.

Swifts do everything - yes, everything! - on the wing, except of course laying their eggs (thank goodness!). Apparently if they land on the ground they have difficulty taking off into flight. They come to us for just a few months, May to July, leaving our shores well before all the other migrants. Everything is fast and furious with the aptly named swift. I just marvel that every year our swifts, and presumably sons and daughters of our swifts, travel thousands of miles back to the same house in Bishopsworth. I think they are wonderful birds.

ANGELA JAMES

Other wildlife reports include:

- Matthew Daniels, whose garden overlooks Manor Woods, can hear the tawny owls there.
- Lola Hardingham has seen a squirrel in her Bishopsworth garden (much less common here than in north Bristol - what can other readers report?).
- Marie Jo Coutanche counted eight ducklings on the Manor Woods pond in June - and saw the kingfisher three times during a walk.
- Beryl Heaton went to take photos of the Bee Orchids in Manor Woods and counted ten of them.



*Lola's drawing from
'My Manor Woods Book'*

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

WALKS AND VISITS for the Summer. Dundry Hill Group have arranged some Sunday walks - shown below as (DHG) M.V.C.G.'s own events are shown by the **M** symbol.

M Monday 29 July: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at 'The Elm Tree'.

Sunday 11 August: Meet at Hartcliffe Library at 10.00am for a *Mini-beast and Plant Hunt* on Dundry Slopes - bring a magnifying glass if you have one! (DHG)

M Tuesday 20 August: Our twice postponed *Visit to Alvis Brothers' Cheese Farm and Farm Walk*. Please wear suitable shoes/boots. Meet at **6.55pm** on the A38 outside the Farm Shop (there is a pull-in). The Shop is on the left at the bottom of Red Hill. If you would like a lift or can offer one, please ring Lola on 964 1116.

Saturday 24 August: Festival in Withywood Park - see below!

Sunday 1 September: Meet at the 'River of Life' Church on Bishport Avenue (junction with Teyfant road) at 10.00am for a *Walk to the flower meadow* sown this year and *Crox Bottom*. (DHG)

M Monday 2 September: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at Symes Avenue.

Saturday 7 September: *Open Day at Bishopsworth Manor House* to mark the start of the Malago Society's autumn season. Crafts, Bring & Buy, exhibitions (including M.V.C.G.'s stand), refreshments and the *Launch of 'Bees in me Bonnet'* the book of Bristol poems by DOREEN RAMSAY, the 'Bard of Be'minster'. Opens at **2.30pm**.

M Sunday 8 September: *A Geology Walk at Clevedon Beach* with CHARLES COPP, following the fascinating talk he gave us in March. Meet at Clevedon Pier at 2.30pm.

M Monday 30 September: *Garbage Raid*. Meet at 3.45pm at Withywood Post Office, Fouracres.

FESTIVAL IN WITHYWOOD PARK

Saturday 24 August

10.00am-4.00pm

Your chance to win a balloon flight, take part in family games, enjoy a cup of tea whilst watching Punch & Judy and the Majorettes!



NORMAN SHADDICK

It is with great sadness that we have to report the sudden death of Norman Shaddick. Norman was a member of Malago Valley Conservation Group from the start and got involved with many of our practical activities. His inflatable dinghy (which, as the years passed, became more of a semi-inflatable) made possible our outrageous and hugely enjoyable amphibious garbage raids on the pond in Manor Woods. When the silt became too high, he made a remotely operated grappling hook so that we could catch the junk from the dam.

Norman's natural inventiveness, good humour and readiness to help manifested itself in many ways, especially with 'CLADS' - the Chew Lake Association of Disabled Sailors - where he was a frequent and active volunteer.

Norman's funeral at the Crematorium on 18 July was packed with his friends from his many activities. Our sympathy and thoughts are with Mary and the family. We will miss him.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Hon. Secretary	Lis Pibworth	987 0825
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Brenda Docherty, Mavis Palmer, Jack Price

Co-opted Committee Members

Tania Case, Valerie Gay, Peter Hall, Audrey Milton, Ted Thomas, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Bernard Chalmers, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Ron Hodges, Colin Smith, Mary Sykes (*All the City councillors for Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park wards are invited to become co-opted Committee members*).

Newsletter edited by André Coutanche, 14 Queens Road, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 8LB; telephone 964 3106; e-mail andrec@mvcg.cjb.net; website www.mvcg.cjb.net.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The opinions in this *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent those of M.V.C.G.