



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 65
Autumn
2005

TWO DATES for your diary to get you out into the crisp autumn air. On Thursday 27 October, the 'Active Life' project have organised the BIG AUTUMN WALK through two of our favourite places - Manor Woods Valley and Crox Bottom. And on Saturday 29 October, we're doing our annual BULB PLANTING, this time in Willmott Park, Hartcliffe. See page 7 for details of both events.

And if autumn is here, Christmas can't be far behind. See the back page for details of our popular CHRISTMAS AT HOME event to raise money for our funds. We would welcome donations for the Lucky Dip, so if you have some spare items which would make suitable prizes, please deliver them to 14 Queens Road, or ring 964 3106 and we will collect - thanks!

Lots of pictures (thanks to our Staff Photographer) to illustrate lots of activities in this edition, so I'll squeeze in here a quick planning update. The outline application for a new city academy to replace Withywood School was approved at the South & East Development Control Committee meeting on 7 September. As an outline permission, there will now be a further planning application with the details of the building design and layout. And the Hartcliffe Community Campus, which has been postponed a couple of times, will be going to the 12 October meeting with a recommendation for approval. Again, it's an outline application, but the critical issues here are the number of houses on the site, and the Site of Nature Conservation Interest at Hawkfield Meadows.

Finally, M.V.C.G.'s website is changing its address from www.mvcg.cjb.net to www.mvcg.org.uk. The 'cjb' address will continue to work for a while, but it puts up adverts which aren't always appropriate, so we have now registered our own 'domain name' to replace it.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

Booted Up Bristol	Page 2
Amphibious Garbage Raid	Page 4
A Stylish Repair	Page 5
Wild BS13	Page 5
Troopers Hill Nature Reserve	Page 6
The Programme	Page 7

BOOTED UP BRISTOL

BOOTED UP BRISTOL has provided a chance for young pupils from south Bristol schools to explore Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve. First run in Manor Woods Valley this time last year (see *Newsletter 59*) the project this year was more ambitious than ever, with six schools taking part with their Year 6 pupils (10-year olds). Each day, during the three-week-long project, volunteers from Malago Valley Conservation Group joined in the fun.

The children and their teachers arrived and were divided into groups of about ten youngsters, a teacher and people from various Council departments - Parks, Living Rivers, City Learning Centre and the Museum. The children were set three different challenges, and each group did each project. The first one was in the Malago, to sample water, measure the underwater profile and collect aquatic creatures for identification.



In the stream. Left: charting the mighty Malago. Right: identifying Malago monsters

A second project, guided by Sally Oldfield, involved working in the woodland, collecting rubbish and then, using a kind of umbrella of white cloth, shaking a tree branch to see what sort of insects could be found. The details of both these projects were immediately entered on laptops for later analysis. Pretty leaves and twigs were also gathered to be looked at against the sunlight and these ephemeral ‘snap shots’ were handed round for all to admire.

The third challenge for each group was to follow compass bearings to clues hidden in the woods and open parkland, when identifying kinds of trees, collecting such things as acorns and leaves which were attached to a ‘map stick’ would help recall where the young adventurers had been. After advice on how to use a



On the trail. Left: children of all ages looking for life on dead wood. Right: finding clues and making a map-stick Photos: Heaton Holographics

compass, the group sought a variety of clues and collected their mementos to take home. There were much-needed tea breaks between the three events when the teams changed over in the church hall which was very kindly made available again. It was clear how much the children enjoyed the chance to paddle in the stream, scabble in the woods and discover just what a wealth of interesting trees, fruits, nuts, flowers and small wildlife was to be found in this bit of urban jungle.



In the woods. Left: data logging. Right: bug collecting

For many of them it was a first experience of activities which earlier generations would have taken for granted: picking up pretty autumn leaves, fishing for tiddlers in a stream, collecting fruits or conkers, or just playing outdoors. Many children asked sensible and interesting questions about what they were seeing or discovering and I am sure all of them will want to get their boots on for another adventure in Bristol's secret green spaces.

MARIAN GREEN

AMPHIBIOUS GARBAGE RAID

IT WAS 'the mixture as before' on Saturday 17 September for this year's Amphibious Garbage Raid in the Malago in Manor Woods Valley. Nine regulars turned out on what was otherwise a very nice day to have a paddle in the stream. We had a new smaller trolley in addition to our 'old faithful', but the story behind that will have to wait until the next edition. Suffice to say that it has now gone back to Sainsbury's!



Jamie lends a hand



Left: No, it's not an autogiro

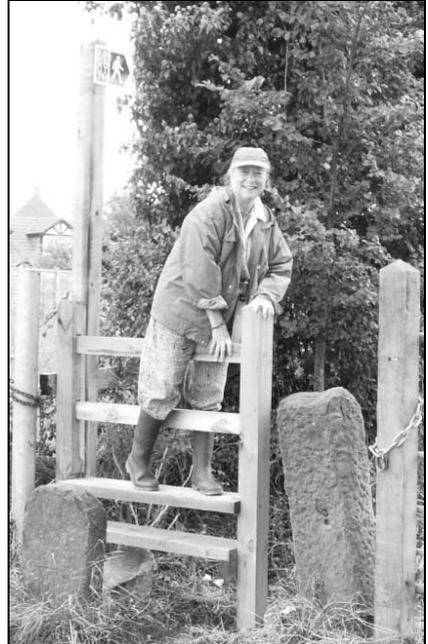
Bottom left: Come on in, the water's lovely

Bottom right: It was us wot dun it



A STYLISH REPAIR

THE STILE we use frequently to go over the fields from the A38 lay-by to Dundry had been in a dilapidated state for ages. But, as it is situated literally on the boundary of Bristol and North Somerset, we weren't sure who to contact. After a few phone calls, North Somerset acknowledged responsibility and said they would look into it. Four months later nothing had been done! So armed with my new digital camera I took a few photos of said stile plus photos of its exact location in case they couldn't find it! Within a fortnight we received a letter saying it would be done within a few weeks - and it has been! It's now been beautifully and substantially replaced, and has a footpath signpost.



Will you all please salute it when you go past - we do!

ANGELA JAMES

WILD BS13

- Are buzzards getting more common in towns? There was one circling over Ashton a month or so ago, as I drove down into Bristol.
- The starlings are coming back! An almost-forgotten chirruping sound attracted my attention as I walked back from the pillar-box on Grange Road; there were starlings congregating on the roof, chimney and aerials of a pair of semi-detached houses. I stopped counting as I passed 100!
- In Manor Woods Valley one Sunday: a kestrel not exactly mobbing a buzzard, but strongly hinting that he'd rather he left ... a kingfisher on the rail of the dam ... big red dragonflies on the pond ...

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

TROOPERS HILL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

INTRIGUED by the name, Troopers Hill, I joined the Guided Walk on Saturday 20 August arranged by Friends of Troopers Hill and Sally Oldfield.

The weather was perfect and we were joined by two members of Badocks Wood Nature Reserve Group. As is quite often the case, this nature reserve came about after quarrying for sandstone and mining for coal ceased. The chimney which is a striking thing about this hill was built to take fumes from works at the bottom of the hill as early as the 18th century. The acid soils resulting from the red and grey sandstone are unique in Bristol, and at the time of my visit two sorts of mauve heather were in flower. With the help of the Friends cutting down brambles, broom and gorse bushes flourish as they have been doing for many years. A moth survey had been undertaken with the help of local children staying up late and 80 varieties were logged. Part of the hill is quite dense woodland with a great variety of trees, home to many varieties of birds. Also there are quite a few damsons, the fruit of which were just ripening and looked luscious. We were shown some erosion on the hill where an endangered species, the mining bee, lives. They nest in small holes so this makes it one of the most important habitats of the site and reminds us of why local nature reserves are so important for the future of our planet.

It seems Manor Woods Valley is not unique in that Troopers Hill also experienced grass cutting at the wrong time and also suffer from knotweed which was sprayed at the correct time this year but this was negated by someone setting fire to a patch of wood so that the weed is flourishing again.

My day continued in the afternoon with a barbecue in Sue and Rob's terraced garden overlooking the hill. Many thanks to the Friends and Sally for a most enjoyable day.

SUE WEST

Following the work on the cyclepath through Crox Bottom, the City Council Cycling Team have appointed a consultant, Peter Milner, to develop an 'interpretation scheme' for this special place. This could include benches, entrance features, planting, information boards - and anything else which anyone suggests! We met Peter for a gentle and productive stroll through Crox Bottom, and if you have ideas to contribute, please get in touch - 964 3106 or andrec@mvcg.org.uk.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

AUTUMN is here, and our season of meetings at St Peter's Rooms gets under way. St Peter's Rooms are by the side of St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth (opposite the Swimming Pool), and our regular meeting time is 7.30pm. As usual, the 🕒 symbol shows our own events, and we are always happy to include other activities which will interest our members.

🕒 **Tuesday 18 October:** JON ATTWOOD, who works at Goblin Combe and specialises in what is called 'Earth Education' will talk to us about *Improving the Urban Environment*. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms.

🕒 **Monday 24 October:** *Garbage Raid*, meeting at Witherwood Post Office, Fouracres, at 3.45pm.

Thursday 27 October: *Big Autumn Walk*, through Crox Bottom and Manor Woods Valley. Meet at the Gatehouse Centre at 10.30am. The walk is all on paved paths and suitable for wheelchair users and pushchairs (though there are some slopes and motorbike barriers). No need to go fast - just stroll at your own pace (toilets available at start and finish only).

🕒 **Saturday 29 October:** *Bulb Planting* at Willmott Park, Hartcliffe. Meet at 10.00am at the junction of Moxham Drive and Kilmersdon Road (off Bishport Avenue) and - if you can - bring a trowel or spade.

Tuesday 15 November: The *Bishopsworth Quiz*. If you would like to attend, please let André know so that we can inform the British Legion. Meet at the Royal British Legion, Manor Road, Bishopsworth, by 7.30pm.

🕒 **THURSDAY 17 November** (note the change of day to avoid clashing with the Quiz): JULIE TRITTON, Co-ordinator for South Bristol in the City Council's Development Control team (planning applications) will talk about her work. 7.30pm at St Peter's Rooms.

🕒 **Friday 18 November:** *Christmas 'At Home'*. 2.00-5.00pm at 14 Queens Road.

🕒 **Saturday 19 November:** *Christmas 'At Home'*. 10.00am-12.30pm at 14 Queens Road. SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE DETAILS.

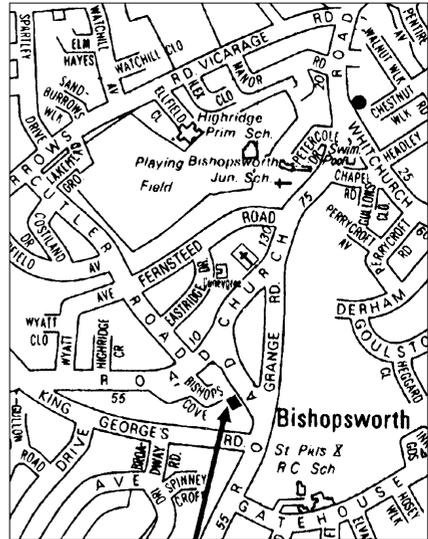
🕒 **Tuesday 6 December:** Our inimitable and unpredictable (especially for the organisers) *Christmas Party*. More details (maybe) next time.

CHRISTMAS 'AT HOME'

CHRISTMAS is coming - and so is our CHRISTMAS 'AT HOME'. The system of two half-days has proved popular, so we are continuing it this year, this time at 14 Queens Road.

The money raised will go to Malago Valley Conservation Group and the University of Withywood. The Wildlife Trust no longer run a sales stall, but there will still be nice things to buy for Christmas presents, and a new attraction will be yummy delectables from the 'Food for All' food co-op.

Come to 14 Queens Road on **Friday 18 November** between 2.00 and 5.00pm and/or **Saturday 19 November** between 10.00am and 12.30pm.



14 Queens Road

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	André Coutanche	964 3106
Vice-Chairman	Lola Hardingham	964 1116
Hon. Secretary	Lis Pibworth	939 0698
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Brenda Docherty, Mavis Palmer

Co-opted Committee Members

Tania Case, Valerie Gay, Paul Mizen, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Peter Crispin, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Ron Hodges, Helen Holland, Colin Smith, Mary Sykes (*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.