



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 75
Autumn
2007

THERE'S LOTS in this edition about Manor Woods Valley. That's partly because of the time of year - amphibious garbage raid, Booted Up Bristol - and also because of Sally Oldfield's events, both past and still to look forward to. No apology there, but we do concern ourselves with both the built and the natural environment in BS13, and there's a planning update as well.

Of course, autumn also means planting, and we've got our annual bulb-planting event scheduled for 13 October - see page 4. Both these themes tie in well with the PARKS AND GREEN SPACES STRATEGY which Bristol Parks recently published for consultation. The Bristol Parks Forum, which we're members of, held its annual conference recently, with the Strategy as the major topic on the agenda. Marian Green attended for M.V.C.G. and will write about it in the next edition of the *Newsletter*. The document contains high hopes for our parks and open spaces and few people would disagree with many of its policies. What's much less clear is where the money would come from to pay for both the capital investment which everyone agrees is needed and the increased revenue funding necessary for the park-keepers suggested for the major areas. About the only certain source which is proposed is sale of some 'low quality' green spaces for development. There's also no clear indication of *how* the higher standards would be achieved and maintained. Our day-to-day experience with the Council's contractors is not always happy, and the document doesn't have much to say about how the essential management would be achieved at the grass-roots (pun partly intended!).

Make up your own mind by visiting www.bristol.gov.uk/parks where you can download the document. Let us know what you think!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

IN THIS ISSUE

News from the Valley	Page 2
Bulb Planting	Page 4
Planning Matters	Page 4
Wild Manor Woods Valley . .	Page 6
The Programme	Page 7
Malago Trek	Page 8

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY

WE HOPE that by now all our readers and their friends have walked along the new path through the woodland. If not, the signposts will soon be erected at each end, so you'll have no excuse for not finding it! M.V.C.G. is grateful to Yansec for their grant and to the City Council Parks Department for managing the work.



Photo by Sally Oldfield



In spite of the very wet period we were able to enjoy the meadows. There was a record number of bee orchids this year, and another sighting of a pyramidal orchid, and the slope was a riot of colours. In September it is still full of interest as there is a wide variety of flowers which have re-grown after the hay-making.

The Manor Woods Valley working group has monitored litter and advised our Community Parks Manager, Julian Cox, if bins were not emptied or paths not cleared. The Riverside Walk from the pond to the interceptor which was opened and maintained for several years by M.V.C.G. members has not been

kept properly clear by the Council's contractors this summer. We keep up the pressure for improvement.

We held our traditional annual 'Amphibious Garbage Raid' on 1 September. Fortunately there was less junk in the stream than in some previous years and we took the main stuff straight to the tip at Days Road.



A small sample of the catch ...

Photo by Beryl Heaton

'Valley Heights', the development of flats on the site of the former Esso garage on Bishopsworth Road, has been the subject of correspondence with the planners since the scheme included landscaping conditions which relate to Manor Woods Valley. At the time of writing, we are waiting for a copy of the agreed landscaping plan so that we can help Bristol Parks monitor its implementation.

We would welcome new members to our working group. We meet for a couple of hours roughly every five weeks. Please contact me on 964 3106 or mariejo@andrec.plus.com.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

BULB PLANTING

AS our new members will have read on our new membership leaflet, Malago Valley Conservation Group ‘turns cans into daffodils’. Over the last ten years, we have planted thousands of daffodil bulbs to brighten up some of our public green spaces throughout BS13.

This year we have been given six bags of daffodil bulbs to plant at the junction of Highridge Road and King Georges Road. We planted there a couple of years ago but the bulbs were badly disturbed when work was done to install major new pipes for Bristol Water. Their contractors, Costain, have now kindly donated the bulbs to us, following an approach from one of our committee members, Paul Mizen.

So come along to plant them on Saturday 13 October, meeting at 10.00am. Our bulb-planting expertise is now so highly developed that six or eight of us can plant a thousand bulbs in 1½ hours or so. If you can, please bring a spade or trowel. Don’t worry if you can’t do any digging - there will be jobs for everybody! It’s good fun and an opportunity to meet people while improving our area.

THE DAFF-PLANTING TEAM

PLANNING MATTERS

WE’VE said before, M.V.C.G. can’t comment on anywhere near all the planning applications which are made in BS13 (about 15 per month), so it’s inevitable that the ones we *do* comment on are large and/or controversial and therefore take longer than average to resolve. So here are four stories-so-far ...

The application by BrunelCare to build a Very Sheltered Housing scheme at Queens Road (see the last *Newsletter*) was ‘approved’ by the South & East Development Control Committee on 11 July. The inverted commas around ‘approved’ are because they actually referred the scheme to the Government Office of the South-West, since the technical loss of the ex-school’s ex-playing field meant it was strictly in contravention of national policy. Like everyone else locally we supported the scheme and suggested that a public footpath along the side of the site and through the adjacent allotments would provide a health benefit which would help offset the ‘loss’. We await the final decision.

You may (or may not!) remember that Wring's applied some time back for permission to extend their yard at Vale Lane into the 'quarries' area of Manor Woods Valley and install a stone-crushing plant. The land has a dual planning designation, for industrial use *and* as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest! We opposed the scheme, of course, and it went into temporary limbo while the applicants considered the response of Pollution Control that the noise for the near-by houses would be excessive. (Our objections also included its effect on the S.N.C.I.). The word on the Council House corridor is that this will be going to the South & East Committee soon and that the noise problems haven't been overcome. More news next time!

We mentioned on page 3 the outstanding problem at the Valley Heights development concerned with the landscaping. There's another loose end there, which could have turned into an enforcement matter, but it looks, as we go to press, as though all may be well. We pointed out to the planners that the wall along Bishopsworth Road should have had railing panels in it but had been built solid (giving it a rather forbidding aspect seen from the street). As a result of our prodding, the developers were contacted and gaps have now been made. Watch those spaces!

And then there's the 'Matties block' - correctly known as The Parade, Bishopsworth (opposite St Peter's Church). No room for a 'new readers start here' synopsis of the saga, but the potentially excellent news is that the previous unco-operative and irresponsible owner has sold it (but is still being prosecuted for his illegal actions in the past). The new owner is Bristol-based and has appointed architects to plan a new façade and roof and build on the end of the block (permission already exists for this). The architect has contacted us and we will be talking to them before a planning application is made. Fingers crossed!

Finally, some planning changes which concern faces rather than places: Julie Seaton, who many members will remember came to speak to us about the Urban Splash development at Crox Bottom, has moved within the Council to another planning team (though we will still see her when one of her 'major schemes' affects our patch). Her replacement as South Area Co-ordinator is Emma McMillan. Best of luck to both of them! And Zoë Willcox, Julie/Emma's boss as South & East Area Team Manager, has just been promoted to become Head of Planning. Zoë hasn't figured much in the *Newsletter* and is probably an unfamiliar name to most of our members, but she has been very helpful to us and we send her our thanks and many congratulations.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

WILD MANOR WOODS VALLEY

REGULAR READERS may notice the slight change in title from our normal ‘Wild BS13’. That’s because all the reports this time have come from our soon-to-be Local Nature Reserve. But please let us know about any interesting sighting from anywhere in our area!

- There is evidence of many RABBITS in the bramble area at the bottom of the Valley Road path - confirmed by the sighting of a FOX with a bunny in his mouth earlier this year. [AJ]
- On a branch above the pond, a SQUIRREL runs along, grunting. Is he swearing at the MOORHENs below? [AJ]
- A WEASEL crossed the new path through the woodland in front of me. It stopped a few yards away and stood staring at me, went into a hole, came back and stared again ... a magical moment! Is the English language totally fair about ‘weasels’, I wonder? [MJC]
- When we had a bat walk in Manor Woods Valley a few years ago, we found 1½ species - PIPISTRELLE and a probable DAUBENTON. On the Bat Walk on 21 August, led brilliantly by Phil Quinn, we got 2½ - Pipistrelle, NOCTULE - and a probable Daubenton! Many thanks to Sally Oldfield for organising this super event, which attracted people from all over Bristol.
- We know from an Owl Prowl some years back that there are TAWNY OWLS in Manor Woods Valley. Sally has organised another Owl Prowl on 22 November - see the Programme on page 7, opposite.

OTHER WILD MAMMALS may be seen in Manor Woods Valley as we go to press, since it’s the time of year again for BOOTED UP BRISTOL! This excellent co-operative project between Living Rivers and other City Council departments and M.V.C.G. brings dozens of primary school children to our favourite green space over seven days to explore, discover and learn. Thank you to all who have helped!

- Less desirable sightings in Manor Woods Valley, especially along the Malago, are invasive non-native weeds, notably JAPANESE KNOTWEED and HIMALAYAN BALSAM. Living Rivers organised a city-wide survey, which we contributed to, and are leading a Forum on 27 September to discuss how best to tackle them. We will be there.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

THE NIGHTS DRAW IN, and the outdoor events organised by Sally Oldfield in Manor Woods Valley take on an autumnal flavour ... And our ‘winter’ season of talks in St Peter’s Rooms (side of St Peter’s Church, Church Road, Bishopsworth) gets under way on 16 October. As usual, the **¶** symbol shows our own events and we are always happy to list other events which will interest our members.

¶ Saturday 13 October: *Bulb Planting* at the top of King Georges Road (opposite Highridge Common), starting at 10.00am. See page 4 - please bring a spade or fork if you can, but don’t worry if you can’t!

¶ Tuesday 16 October: Our first evening meeting, at St Peter’s Rooms, as usual, starting at 7.30pm. ALAN ABURROW will tell us about *The Friends of Badock’s Wood* - a group very similar to ours, with similar successes and problems! Their website is at www.fobw.org.uk.

Sunday 21 October: *Fungi Foray* in Manor Woods Valley from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Join expert Justin Smith in a hunt for both deadly and delicious mushrooms and toadstools. Meeting point is St. Peter’s Rise, Bishopsworth, behind the Library. Free event but booking essential: contact Sally Oldfield on (0117) 922 4429 or e-mail sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk.

Tuesday 20 November: The *Bishopsworth Quiz*, at 7.30pm at Bishopsworth Royal British Legion, for which we expect to enter a couple of teams, as we have done in previous years. If you are interested in joining a team (it’s not too serious!) or just coming along to support and to enjoy a fun evening, please contact André on 964 3106 or andrec@andrec.plus.com.

Thursday 22 November: *Owl Prowl* in Manor Woods Valley. Meet at 7.00pm at the Library end - and bring a torch! It will probably last about 1½ hours. No need to book, but contact Sally Oldfield on (0117) 922 4429 or e-mail sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk if you need more information. (This replaces our ‘normal’ talk in St Peter’s Rooms).

¶ Tuesday 18 December: Our predictably unpredictable *Christmas Party*, with the traditional American Supper, so please bring a little something if you can.



The Malago Trek on 5 August went very well, with the walk being run 'backwards', from Dundry to Bedminster, and on a different route through Hartcliffe. The Trekkers enjoy some welcome shade as they hear about the Spacemakers project in Willmott Park.

Photo by Tanya Darch

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman

VACANCY

Vice-Chairman

André Coutanche

964 3106

Hon. Secretary

Lis Pibworth

939 0698

Hon. Treasurer

Beryl Heaton

964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Lola Hardingham, Paul Harvey-Worsley,
Paul Mizen, Mavis Palmer

Co-opted Committee Members

Valerie Gay, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Royston Griffey, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Kevin Quartley, 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.org.uk; website www.mvcg.org.uk.

Letters, articles and suggestions from readers are welcome.

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