



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

No. 77  
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2008

**A** S USUAL, at this time of year, most of the *Newsletter* is the report of our A.G.M. which was held in February, together with the annual accounts. So as not to squeeze out other items, we've increased the number of pages for this edition to twelve.

At the A.G.M., most of the existing Committee were re-elected, with one member standing down because of other commitments. I've been saying for a couple of years that we needed a change of Chairman, and, to emphasise the point, I didn't stand for the post of Vice-Chairman this time. I'm pleased to report that Mavis Palmer volunteered to be Vice-Chairman, on the strict understanding that she wasn't seeking further promotion! So we still need a Chairman. By arrangement with Lis Pibworth, I stood for the post of Hon. Secretary, since a lot of what I do is this sort of general contact with other organisations, but Lis will stay on the Committee and continue her sterling work of minute-taking. A big THANK YOU to all the Committee members - and, of course, to all the other members who get involved. But we would appreciate some new blood and new ideas, so please consider coming on to the Committee - initially as a trial, if you like.

The big news - reported at the A.G.M. and updated inside - is the designation of Manor Woods Valley as a Local Nature Reserve, and the celebration to declare it officially open. Our thanks to Royston Griffey, who, as both Lord Mayor and Lord of the Manor of Bishopsworth, rose to the occasion and did the honours for us - and joined in the mini-guided tour of the new L.N.R. afterwards. See over the page for the report and photos of a happy event which marked the achievement of a long-held goal and the start of a new chapter.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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# **NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

**W**HAT A PLEASURE to be able to add this title to our favourite open space! The news came out in January. Manor Woods Valley is now one of the seven Local Nature Reserves in Bristol. If you have visited it in the past few weeks you will have seen the new green Council signs at each of the four entrances. They were long overdue.

We thought it was an opportunity to celebrate several years of hard work to raise the profile of Manor Woods Valley. So, on Friday 29 February, the Lord Mayor, Cllr Royston Griffey, - who also happens to be the Lord of the Manor of Bishopsworth - was invited to come and unveil the sign at the main entrance behind Bishopsworth Library, after processing from the Manor House accompanied by his faithful retainers!



Jointly with Sally Oldfield, our Local Nature Reserves Officer, we invited representatives from other Local Nature Reserves, together with people from the Parks Department, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and Bristol Living Rivers. We drank a toast to celebrate this achievement and look towards the future. We also took this opportunity to award Sally the Order of the M.V.C.G. (Manor Woods Valley Cross - Gold!) for her constant help and enthusiasm.

In a few weeks time, two interpretation boards will appear, one at the start of the woodland path, behind the Library, and a second one at the pond. Bristol Living



Rivers and Sally have worked with us to plan and produce them. Part of the funding comes from a new project which has just got under way; South Bristol Riverscapes is a two-year scheme to improve the streams and waterways throughout south Bristol, working with existing groups - like M.V.C.G. - and helping to form new ones. We mentioned this at the A.G.M. (see page 9), and, since then, a part-time Project Officer has been appointed. Her name is Helen Adshead, and we've met her and started to work with her. You'll be hearing more about Helen and the Riverscapes Project in coming months!

At the Valley Heights flats it has been a rather frustrating few months since the last *Newsletter* in December, with regular correspondence with the Planning Department to point out that the planning application concerning the landscaping needed to be enforced. However, it seems that finally things are starting to move.

We reported at the A.G.M. (see page 7) about the planning application by Wrings to extend their yard into the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley. There is no new news since then, and we are continuing to fight the plan.

Finally, we have a rich programme of events ahead. Do not forget to pin the green sheet on your notice board! We need some volunteers for The Magical Malago Adventure Day on 29 May to work with the children in activities such as bug hunting or arts and crafts. No experience needed. If you can spare a few hours please contact Marie Jo on 964 3106.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE  
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

## **FOOD FOR ALL CO-OP STILL GOING STRONG**

**F**OOD FOR ALL, based in Unit 4 at The Gatehouse Centre, Hareclive Road, is open Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.30pm, selling healthy whole foods, snacks and locally grown vegetables (from Molesworth Drive allotments - you can't get fresher than that!). Pop in for all your lovely wholesome foods, fair-trade products, snacks and treats - including local honey and eggs. Phone or call in to use our personal ordering system for all your meat and dairy products, direct from Alvis Brothers.



### **Community Market Stalls - fancy volunteering?**

We still take our produce out on stalls to a variety of local venues such as Spinney Croft, The Children's Centre and the new Library in Symes Avenue. We get lots of requests for stalls and sometimes can't cover them due to a lack of volunteers. If you'd like to help us out we'd be very grateful. Volunteers work in pairs, no experience is needed and any expenses are paid. Stalls usually last for one to one and a half hours. We always have plenty to do in the shop too, so if you'd like to help out for a couple of hours a week we'd love to have you. Please phone or pop in to the shop if you think you might be interested.

### **Sandwiches and Salads**

We are now making our own sandwiches and salads, using local produce wherever possible. We can make sandwiches while you wait or you can pre-order or pop in to see what we have on offer each day. Large orders can also be delivered.

### **Hampers are for life - not just for Christmas!**

We now make individually created hampers. Come and select what you want to put in it and we'll make it up for you. You can theme your hamper however you'd like to - maybe for someone's birthday, Mothering Sunday or Easter or perhaps you'd like to give someone a diet-aiding hamper. You choose exactly what you want. No hamper too big or small. We have baskets available but we'll also happily make them up in your own container.

### **Membership of the Food Co-op**

Anyone can shop at Food For All and those with a BS13 postcode can become members. Membership continues to be £2 a year and entitles you to 10% off everything you buy. Tel. 964 7228. E-mail [foodforallcoop@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:foodforallcoop@yahoo.co.uk).

SUSAN LAWRENCE

# ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2007

**H**ERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS which Beryl Heaton presented to the A.G.M. on 19 February. She pointed out that we have an excess of income over expenditure of £160.55 so the financial position is healthy. However, a large slice of this, £142.90, was generated by bank interest. We have made use of our large lump sum by investing in an interest-bearing account. Our money-raising events have also helped to keep us solvent and we are grateful to those who organised and supported these. As we have fewer garbage raids now our income from ‘finds’ is a miserly 1p!

<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>
Membership . . . . .	470.00	Postage & Stationery . . . . .	50.08
Functions . . . . .	157.43	Refreshments at AGM . . . . .	20.90
Other Income . . . . .	318.78	Hall Hire . . . . .	147.00
		Printing . . . . .	195.00
		Speakers fees/donations/Expenses	100.85
		Christmas Meeting . . . . .	21.43
		Donation to Video Diaries . . .	250.00
		Bin bags . . . . .	0.40
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>946.21</b>	<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>785.66</b>

	<b>£</b>
<b>Excess of income over expenditure . . . . .</b>	<b>160.55</b>
Brought forward from 2006 . . . . .	5830.11
<b>Balance carried forward to 2008 . . . . .</b>	<b>5990.66</b>

Made up of: Cash in hand . . . . .	6.75
HSBC Money Manager A/C . . . . .	5195.04
HSBC Current A/C . . . . .	788.87

<b>Detail of Other Income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>Detail of Function Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Donations . . . . .	48.25	Garden Party . . . . .	82.50
Sale of Aluminium cans . . . . .	58.00	Christmas Party . . . . .	25.00
Book Sales . . . . .	69.62	Refreshments . . . . .	7.63
Finds . . . . .	0.01	Minibeast Magic . . . . .	14.70
Bank Interest . . . . .	<u>142.90</u>	Sale of Goods . . . . .	<u>27.60</u>
	<u>318.78</u>		<u>157.43</u>

BERYL HEATON  
*Hon. Treasurer*

## REPORT FROM THE A.G.M.

**A**NDRÉ COUTANCHE welcomed everyone to the meeting. The evening followed the usual format, with reports on our various activities during 2007 given by the appropriate person, followed by our special guest speaker, Tanya Darch, telling us about Living Rivers, including the new South Bristol Riverscapes Project, and the interpretation boards planned for Manor Woods Valley.

**Programme Report:** Lola Hardingham said that the winter programme continued in March with Jonathan Holt talking about the work of Avon Gardens Trust. This was followed in April by Adrian Roper of Sustrans. During the summer, as well as several events held in Manor Woods Valley, we arranged two outdoor activities. In May we held a garden party which was hosted by Christine and Paul Mizen. Those who came along very much enjoyed it, especially the cream teas! The second event was a trip to Phillipa and John Paget's farm at Burnett. This was extremely interesting and proved to be very popular and we were blessed with a glorious evening. Farm visits seem to attract quite a lot of members so we will bear that in mind for summer 2008. The autumn programme of talks started with Alan Aburrow who told us about Badocks Wood in Henleaze, another hidden nature reserve in the city. In November the Bishopsworth Quiz took place and one of the M.V.C.G. teams won! The downside is that they have to organise next year's quiz! December brought the traditional Christmas Party with fun, games and Lesley Hurford showing us how to make attractive decorations using natural materials. In January Martin Ford of 'Britain in Bloom' was unable to attend so Beryl and Danny Heaton nobly stepped in to give a fascinating talk on Iceland, illustrated by some of their wonderful photographs. Lola thanked all the helpers behind the scenes, particularly in the catering department, the Christmas Party organisers and the members for supporting M.V.C.G. so loyally.

**Planning Issues:** André Coutanche started by reporting that Highridge Playing Fields is still going nowhere. Not only has nothing happened during the year, but the existing planning permission will expire later this year and we'll be back to square one.

When 'Valley Heights' - the former Esso petrol station on Bishopsworth Road - was finished, there were two outstanding issues, one relating to the wall facing onto Bishopsworth Road and one about the landscaping at the back, in Manor Woods Valley. The Manor Woods Valley Working Group have been following up the landscaping, and Marie Jo reported about that. On the wall, we got a good result, because when we pointed out to the planners that it hadn't been built according to the approved plans, they chased up the developers and the planned railing panels were inserted - and it looks much better for it.

The major schemes in BS13 all made progress during the year. Symes Avenue is pretty well finished, and the opening of Morrison's has made a huge difference to this area. The tremendously exciting Urban Splash development of the former Wills Office at Crox

Bottom is well under way. The Hartcliffe Community Campus is also under construction, and rather lack-lustre plans have appeared for Hengrove Park.

We spent a lot of 2007 following the planning application by Wrings for a stone-crushing plant next to their yard off Vale Lane. As reported last year, the land concerned is part of the 'quarries' area of Manor Woods Valley, but it is administered not by Parks but by the City Council's Property people, since it has a planning designation for industrial use. However, it *also* has the same designation as the rest of Manor Woods Valley as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, so there is a paradox here! We opposed that application because of its effect on the soon-to-be Local Nature Reserve and its disturbance of both wildlife and people. The application was due to be considered by the City Council's South & East Planning Committee in December, but it was withdrawn on the morning of the meeting; the applicants had accepted that the noise would be an insurmountable problem. That was very good news, but the bad news is that Wrings have put in a new application for the same area, but for general storage and without the stone-crusher. We still oppose it, for all the same reasons, and we are currently very worried that the planners may see it as posing no problem, since it doesn't present a noise nuisance. We think they've underestimated the other deleterious effects, and we are currently fighting hard to get them to take it more seriously.

A couple of years ago, the toilet block near the Elm Tree pub was demolished by the Neighbourhood & Housing Services Department of the City Council without planning permission, because they didn't know that the Conservation Area existed! This department has also been a concern in 2007 as well, because they wanted to put up railings around the grass area alongside Fouracres, in Withywood, where the Malago runs before it is culverted under Withywood Park. We weren't entirely convinced of their reasons, but we had no major objection in principle. The problem was their idea of consultation. Firstly they consulted just their own tenants in the immediate area. Then, under pressure, they widened the area a little, but were reluctant to listen to comments from non-tenants. Finally, after further pressure from Cllr Kevin Quartley - whom we had got at! - they were persuaded to make a proper planning application, with the proper general consultation that goes with it. We're grateful to Kevin for his help - and worried about the attitudes within N.H.S.

Much better planning news last year was the approval of a Very Sheltered Housing scheme by Brunel Housing on what's called the 'Redhouse site' - alongside the route of the Ring Road, running back from Queens Road to the former Redhouse School. This will be a major development which will improve this area and be an appreciated local asset.

And on the subject of the Ring Road, there were a couple of public meetings on our patch about this road - now apparently come back to haunt us. Paul Mizen has been keeping in touch with these, but the new local group of the Alliance against the South Bristol Ring Road hasn't been very active.

Yet again, we were occupied by the subject of the 'Matties Block' - opposite St Peter's Church, in the heart of the conservation area. After *a lot* of hard, persistent work by Marie Jo,

we finally got a result here. The antisocial, incompetent, stupid former owner was finally taken to court by the City Council's Planning Enforcement people for his failure to comply with planning decisions and was fined £5000. Since the end of 2007 there has been a new owner, and we are hopeful of a proper development and landscaping on this key site.

Finally, M.V.C.G. has been a member of a new group called the Neighbourhood Planning Network. This is made up of local groups like ours, along with Bristol Civic Society, and helps keep us in touch with the broader planning issues and the development of the new planning framework which Bristol, like all local authorities, is currently working on.

**Projects:** Marie Jo Coutanche, Convenor of the Manor Woods Valley working group, reported on that, along with our other project work. Since our last AGM, the Manor Woods Valley Group has held meetings every few weeks. Sally Oldfield, our Local Nature Reserves Officer has attended them regularly. It has been a very busy year when several long term projects have finally been completed.

We started the year with several meetings and walks on site, to prepare the work due to happen in the wood. Our application to Yansec, the landfill company, was successful and we were granted £12,650. This money has now been spent to create a path through the wood. A small part was also allocated to do some pruning along the stream, before the pond and to buy two green signposts which have been erected at each end of the path. A large number of people have now the pleasure to walk through the wood which was virtually inaccessible before.

A number of events happened in Manor Woods Valley this year. In May, a group went for a walk led by Tony Titchen to discover trees. Later in the month, we had an afternoon of Minibeast Magic, a family event which was well attended in spite of showers. In August we had a bat walk and in October we went looking for fungi. Finally, in November we ventured through the wood in the dark in search of owls. Thank you to Sally Oldfield, our Local Nature Reserves Officer, for organising these events which are free and open to everybody. They are always listed in the *Newsletter*, on the programme page. We also helped with a walk in Manor Woods Valley organised by the 'Magpies' - the support group for Bristol Museum.

In the summer we took part in a Living Rivers project on non-native invasive weeds. We surveyed Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam along the stream. In September several M.V.C.G. members went to a conference on the subject. We have also helped with surveying supermarket shopping trollies in our streams - and we're about to do so again soon.

In September and October a group of our members helped with 'Booted Up Bristol', this project which brings local primary school children to Manor Woods Valley to help them discover their environment. Thank you again to Living Rivers for organising this most valuable project!

We had several 'impromptu' garbage raids. One was scheduled in our last *Newsletter* and was attended by four new members whom we were delighted to welcome. We continue to address the problem of litter on the ground and by liaising with the Parks Department.

We continue to keep an eye on the entrance to Manor Woods Valley behind Bishopsworth Library and to tidy up the bank there. We've weeded and removed brambles so that the few native flowers we planted in previous years can survive.

This year we have been involved in two planning matters related to Manor Woods Valley. The first one is Valley Heights, on Bishopsworth Road. We have been aware that no progress was happening on the landscaping at the back of the flats. In October we submitted our ideas and comments to the Planning Department. Since then, we have e-mailed them regularly to alert them to the fact that nothing was happening on the ground. A month ago we demanded action and it seems that things are starting to move but it is likely be too late to do most of the work this season. The second planning application is from Wrings, in the quarry area, which André reported on and which we will continue to oppose.

The Manor Woods Valley Group is permanently on the alert as there is always something to do: picking up litter, tidying up entrances or paths, putting up posters before events, liaising with Julian, our Community Parks Manager in cases of fly-tipping, overflowing bins, paths getting overgrown, branches across paths, dog mess, vandalised picnic table or bins, offensive graffiti etc. Also, some of us are very good at talking to people and always carry a membership form in their pocket. We believe publicity is important.

Finally, the best news of the year! Three years ago Manor Woods Valley was proposed for designation as a Local Nature Reserve and since then we had been waiting for the negotiations between several Council services to come to a conclusion. Finally, a month ago the designation became official. We also heard that the official Council signs boards we had been campaigning for were ready to be put in place at each of the four entrances. This happened yesterday! We were all really delighted and it calls for celebration.

Another project is going to help us raise the profile of Manor Woods Valley. A few months ago, we were approached by Living Rivers about a new project called South Bristol Riverscapes which can provide organisations such as M.V.C.G. with some money to enhance enjoyment of our streams. With help from Kathy and Tanya from Living Rivers and Sally, our LNR officer, Manor Woods Valley is going to have three interpretation boards, two this year, one behind the library, a second one at the pond and later on, one at the meadow on the slopes. *My Manor Woods Book* has been very useful to help Sally and the group write the text and choose the pictures which will appear on these boards. *My Manor Woods Book* was written and illustrated by a group of M.V.C.G. members a few years ago is available at Bishopsworth Library at a price of £2.00.

We'd like to thank Sally, Kathy and Tanya from Living Rivers and André for helping the group.

### Other Projects

Manor Woods Valley is a major part of our interest in Bristol Parks Forum, where we continued to attend most of the regular meetings in 2007. This year saw the development of the Bristol Parks & Green Spaces Strategy, which has been in the news recently. We're

not convinced it has the answers for Bristol's parks, but we'll go on working with the Parks Department.

As already mentioned, we've had some garbage raids in 2007 in Manor Woods Valley. And, of course, our annual Amphibious Garbage Raid continues, to remove some of the larger junk from the Malago in Manor Woods Valley.

As in previous years, we again helped to organise the Malago Trek. This is a joint effort with Living Rivers and the Southville Centre and is much appreciated by the people who come exploring.

Our annual planting of daffodil bulbs carried on this year, and thanks are due to Costains who donated the bulbs, since they had disturbed the ones we planted a couple of years ago near Highridge Common when their big water-pipe was put in. Thanks also to Paul Mizen, who had the cheek to go and ask them to donate!

Can recycling continued in 2007 - though since we had this year's bulbs donated, we can't really claim that we turned the cans into daffodils by buying the daffs with the can money! Continued thanks to all who help by giving us their cans. We recycled an estimated 10,500 aluminium cans.

The quarterly *Newsletter* continued, with its usual wide range of reports, and excellent photos from our staff photographers! Please let us know any ideas for stories, especially your observations for our 'Wild BS13' slot.

In 2006, a small group started to consider how our membership leaflet could be revamped to make it more attractive for potential members. This came to fruition last year, and the new membership leaflet has been well received. Marie Jo arranged for some to be distributed in our area with the Wildlife Trust magazine, and Paul Mizen has been pounding the streets - and pounding on doors - to talk to people about joining M.V.C.G. Both initiatives have generated new members.

MEMBERSHIP of Malago Valley Conservation Group runs on a calendar year basis, so you will have found in the last edition a form to renew your subscription. (Unless you joined in the last few months of 2007, in which case your membership runs through to the end of 2008, or you are receiving a complimentary copy of the *Newsletter*).

Most members have renewed, and we're very grateful for your continued support. If there's a renewal form with this *Newsletter*, it's because we don't seem to have heard from you, so please fill it in while you remember and get it and your sub. off to Beryl at 3 Kings Walk, BS13 8BB or André at 14 Queens Road, BS13 8LB - **THANK YOU**.

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**A**S USUAL, the **M** symbol shows our own events. **[NitC]** means that this event has been organised by Sally Oldfield as part of the NATURE IN THE CITY programme. These events are free but booking is essential. Contact Sally on 922 4429 or e-mail [sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk).

**M Tuesday 18 March:** HELEN HOLLAND, Leader of Bristol City Council and Bristol's representative on the South West Regional Assembly and the West of England Partnership, will explain to us how these bodies work and how they affect us.

**M Tuesday 15 April:** MARTIN FORD, a *Britain in Bloom* judge, will tell us about the competition which encourages environmental improvement. (This talk was originally scheduled for January but the speaker was indisposed).

**[NitC] Saturday 26 April:** *Early Bird Walk* in Manor Woods Valley. 7.00 to 9.00am. Learn all about the sights and sounds of our local birds with the help of birds expert Ed Drewit. Meet behind Bishopsworth library on St Peter's Rise.

**[NitC] Thursday 1 May:** *History around us in Manor Woods Valley*. Walk led by Anton Bantock. Meet at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library at 10.00am.

**M Saturday 10 May:** *Garbage Raid* in Manor Woods Valley, from 10.00 to 11.00am. We will pick up litter along the various paths. Meet at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Bags and gloves provided. Followed by coffee at 14 Queens Road.

**[NitC] Thursday 29 May:** *Magical Malago Adventure Day* 10.30am to 3.30pm. Half-term fun for children aged 5 to 10 years. Children under 8 years need to be accompanied by an adult. Meet at Headley Park Church, at the bottom of St Peter's Rise. Children will explore the wildlife of the Malago and create some environmental art. WE ARE LOOKING FOR ADULT HELPERS.

**[NitC] Thursday 12 June:** *Wildflower Walk* in Manor Woods Valley. 6.30 to 8.00pm. An evening stroll through this beautiful valley to enjoy one of the best meadows in Bristol. Rupert Higgins will be our guide to the secret world of wild flowers and insects.

**Saturday 14 June:** *Hartcliffe Millennium Green Fun Day*. There will be lots of stalls plus bouncy castle, sumo wrestlers, Bristol zoo, henna tattoos, arts and crafts. Food will be available at the River of Life church, so a good day can be had by all!



*The New Year Garbage Raid in Manor Woods Valley attracted several new members - but these aren't them! (This and other photos in this edition by Beryl Heaton)*

## **Malago Valley Conservation Group**

<b>Chairman</b>	VACANCY	
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	Mavis Palmer	964 2344
<b>Hon. Secretary</b>	André Coutanche	964 3106
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

### **Committee Members**

Anton Bantock, Don Bartlett, Lola Hardingham, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

### **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).*

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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.