



## MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# NEWSLETTER

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**M**UCH OF THIS EDITION has news about all the good things happening in Manor Woods Valley, but there are important planning developments to update you on as well, so I'll squeeze them in here.

There's good news and there's - err - news. The good news is that there is currently a planning application in for a major revamp of what we traditionally have called 'the Matties block' - the range of 1970s flats and former shops opposite St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth. There would be an extension for more flats on the Chapel Road end, and a partial third-storey, set back. The style would be modern, which we're quite happy about, and the materials, we are assured, would be good quality. We're particularly pleased with the simple and effective approach to the landscaping, which caused so much grief with the former incompetent owner - there would be a raised grass area, with a few large native trees, retained by a low wall in blue lias stone to match the wall of the Church. The grotty yard at the back would also be tidied up, and we look forward to no more large wheelie bins on the pavement with rubbish all around! We have written to support the application.

The other news concerns the application by Wrings to extend their yard at Vale Lane back into the 'quarries' area of Manor Woods Valley. We have been fighting this, and we recently had support from a local author who would like to see the apple trees there - which would be felled if the application went ahead - being used as a Community Orchard. At the time of writing, it seems probable that the application will go to the meeting of the relevant Planning Committee on 2 July. Watch this space - and why not come to the meeting at the Council House at 2.00pm to see what happens?

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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## NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

**I**T'S GREAT to be appreciated! Here are two e-mails which were sent to the M.V.C.G. website in the last couple of months (the senders have said we can publish them).

- I want to put on record my appreciation of the work that has been done on the valley over the years, leading to the establishment of the reserve. I commute by bike through the valley most weekdays from Easter to October and have always loved the place. It now seems to be more popular than ever, and I hope its new status will help keep it for more people to enjoy. The interpretive signage is a good idea. Thanks!  
*Niall Hoskin*
- I live 10 minutes walk from the Vale Lane end of the common and just wanted to write and say I visited Manor Woods for the first time in years last weekend and thought how lovely it now is since the clean-up and improvements. Years ago when I wanted somewhere local to go to with my then young daughter I remember the stream being dirty with dumped rubbish, and I wouldn't have even ventured into the woods. But the signposted Woodland Walk encouraged me to explore further and it was lovely with all the wild garlic and views down to the stream.

Thank you for all you do to make this such a lovely spot for local people. I hope you continue your efforts.

*Harriet Stevens*

We're very grateful - and encouraged! - to receive these comments. However, our work is continuing. Members of M.V.C.G. and regular walkers carry on picking up rubbish. The group monitors fly tipping and unusual amount of litter and advises the Community Park Manager of any problems.

Our two interpretation boards arrived in April. We hope you have all admired them by now. The one behind the library is about the woodland and the other one at the pond describes what you could see if you stop there for a few minutes. We explained how they were funded in our last *Newsletter*. The preparation of these boards was the result of team work. A special 'thank you' to Tanya Darch and Kathy Derrick of Living Rivers and to Sally Oldfield, our Local Nature Reserves Officer. A third one is planned about the wild flower meadow, on the slopes. M.V.C.G. will have to raise money for it to happen. This is a project we will tackle soon.



*Mavis, Angela and Marian of the Manor Woods Valley Working Group admiring the new 'Woodland' interpretation board*

And speaking of the pond, we have been aware for a few years that it is time to remove silt. The problem has hugely increased in the past year and we have noticed that there are fewer birds on the pond as it is getting clogged. André had a word with Peter Wilkinson, the Head of Bristol Parks, at the recent event to celebrate Badock's Wood becoming an L.N.R., following this up with a detailed e-mail. Peter was most helpful and encouraging about it, so we are hoping that something may happen in due course.

Don't forget it is the best time of the year to go and see the wildflower meadow! If you're reading this in time, come along on the Wildflower Walk on Thursday 12 June, from 6.30 to 8.00pm (advertised in the last *Newsletter* and on page 7).

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE  
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

## **MAGICAL MALAGO ADVENTURE DAY**

**O**N a May morning, which was fortunately dry, 14 children, ten parents and four Malago Valley Conservation Group volunteers and Helen Adshead with Sally Oldfield to guide us set off to explore this special green space. The children were equipped with pouches containing all they would need to meet minibeasts, examine trees and leaves, listen quietly to the birdsong and draw aspects of what they discovered. As the safari set off into the woods some lost but intrepid explorers fought their way through the undergrowth to join the rest of the party.

The children were encouraged to use magnifying glasses to examine small creatures, and carefully look about them to discover what a wealth of strange animals could be seen. They peered under leaves, using CDs as mirrors, turned over branches and peered up trees. Helen explained what they could find and set them all sorts of tasks as they wandered along the twisting walkway through the woods. After a snack stop the explorers set off along the riverside path, some of the smaller children almost vanishing under the huge leaves of the butterbur plants. Everyone seemed to be learning a lot and having fun during all the different activities they were offered.

*Right: Colourful (really!) banners and happy faces*

*(Thanks to Sally Oldfield for the photos on pages 3 and 4)*

*Below: Rafts setting off into the unknown ...*



In the afternoon the children were shown how to paint images on cloth banners, using tape to mark out the picture. Later they discovered how to build miniature rafts of sticks and string to launch into the river at the end of their adventure. It was a fun- and activity-packed day and I am certain everyone will have gained insights into this really

magical area, its birds, minibeasts, trees and flowers. Hopefully these young people and their parents will have begun to realise what a wonderful place the wilderness can be, and that they will choose to return and explore further during the summer.

MARIAN GREEN

## ABI THE AIREDALE SAYS ...

**L**ITTER BINS can take dog waste as well as litter. We thought we should make dog-walkers aware of this and came up with a cunning plan! We designed, printed and laminated notices with a picture of Abi the Airedale (my long-gone pet), with 'Abi says ...' and a - err - poem(!) encouraging dog people to clean up after their animals. Every notice has a different verse and we had great fun composing them. (We facetiously said that we would apply for an Arts Council grant, since we were creating a poetry trail - but it's more of a pooh-etry trail ...). You may well see them in other parks in due course, as the Council Marketing Officer was most impressed with the idea! We hope the notices stay put and that dog-walkers ...

'Pick up their dog's mess from the green  
And keep this valley safe and clean'!

ANGELA JAMES



*Left: Abi on a litter bin. Right: Abi in the woodland. (Photos by Ange)*

- Angela modestly failed to mention that it is her superb painting of Abi the Airedale which appears on the notices.

## TALE OF THE FINGERPOST

**Y**OUR COMMITTEE have been concerned for some time about the deterioration in the state of the fingerpost, this important historical feature at the end of Grange Road in the heart of the Conservation Area. It was in such a poor condition we feared that if remedial action was not taken soon it may be past repairing.

We contacted Kevin Quartley, our local councillor, who immediately followed it up and contacted the department responsible for its maintenance. Nothing happened for some time but he was diligent in pursuing the matter (several times). We are now delighted to see that his patience paid off as the fingerpost has now been restored to its former glory. Our thanks must go to Kevin for a job well done.

BERYL HEATON



*The fingerpost restored  
to its former glory  
(photo by Beryl Heaton)*

## VISIT TO HILL HOUSE FARM

HILL HOUSE FARM is an organic dairy farm on the western slopes/top of Dundry Hill. It is a small family run business working in harmony with nature to preserve the land and wildlife habitats in which it is situated. This is made up of flower-rich meadow pasture land, which includes hedgerows, dry stone walls, a small coppice, disused stone quarry and earthworks.

Environmental Stewardship is a new agri-environment scheme which provides funding to farmers who deliver effective environmental management on their land. The scheme is intended to build on the success of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Its primary objectives are to conserve wildlife (biodiversity); maintain and enhance landscape quality and character; protect the historic environment and natural resources; promote public access and understanding of the countryside; and natural resource protection.

## 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.

**[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!

**Sunday 13 July:** *The 2008 Malago Trek*. Start at 10.00 from ASDA car park, Bedminster (near the store), and follow the course of the Malago and Pigeonhouse streams up to the Malago Spring artwork on Dundry Hill. Or join in anywhere along the route. Explanatory talks *en route*. Bring your own picnic for the end of the Trek, overlooking Bristol from Dundry slopes.

**M Saturday 19 July:** *Visit to Hill House Farm*, Castle Farm Lane, Dundry, the home and family business of our friends David and Lesley Hurford. Meet at the farm at 2.30pm. If you would like a lift, or can offer one, please contact Lola Hardingham on 964 1116. As well as a guided tour of this interesting and delightful farm (see the box opposite), we shall also have a *Cream Tea* to round off the afternoon (for which a small charge will be made).

**Sunday 27 July:** *Colliter's Brook Trek*. More details nearer the time at the Living Rivers website at [www.bristol.gov.uk/rivers](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/rivers) or phone (0117) 922 3400.

**M Saturday 4 October:** Our annual *Amphibious Garbage Raid* in the Malago in Manor Woods Valley. More details in the next *Newsletter*.

### HAVE YOU RENEWED?

THE VAST MAJORITY of members have renewed their subscriptions for 2008, and we're very grateful to them. However, there are still a few who haven't quite got around to it yet. We can't go on delivering *Newsletters* to people who haven't paid, so if there's a red slip with this *Newsletter*, please renew your membership or we will reluctantly say 'Goodbye'! Don't forget that your sub. helps to make possible all the activities and improvement work you can read about here ...

## A PIONEERING ENVIRONMENTALIST

**O**NE OR TWO members of a certain age may have fond memories of being taught by the late Ron Cleeve. I had the pleasure of meeting Ron later in his life, when he got involved with Bristol Civic Society.

Ron was an environmentalist before the word had been invented. His particular passion was the Malago stream, and he got his pupils researching all aspects of it - its geology, history, the industries along its course (more of them forty years ago than today!). He also organised what we now call garbage raids on the Malago, and he wrote regular letters to the Council to encourage them to do better. Does that sound familiar?!

Ron died some time ago, but his widow died only in the last couple of years. As a result, the family were clearing the house, and - very responsibly - wanted to find a good home for Ron's archives. They offered them to the Malago Society, who have now passed on to us those papers which relate to our interests. There's some great stuff there! We don't have space this time, but keep this introduction in mind, and look forward to some *plus ça change* ... moments in the next edition!

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

### 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.