



# MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

# **NEWSLETTER**

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**M**OST OF THIS EDITION has been prepared before the meeting of the Planning Committee which considered the application by Wrings to extend their yard into the Quarries area of Manor Woods Valley. In the best traditions of ‘Hold the front page!’, this is what happened ...

M.V.C.G. has been vigorously opposing this application, and we suggested last time that it would be decided at the meeting on 2 July. That didn’t happen because the Committee decided that they wanted to view the site before taking a decision. That visit happened yesterday, 17 September, with the Committee meeting later in the afternoon. Of the nine councillors who make up the Committee, two didn’t visit the site so were excluded from debate and voting. The remaining seven voted 4-2 in favour of the application, with one abstention.

Everyone agreed that it was a difficult and finely balanced decision, and more than one councillor remarked that they hadn’t visited Manor Woods Valley before and were impressed at how delightful it was. The Committee also took our point that the Property Services department of the Council had failed to look after the area responsibly, and they agreed that the land unaffected by the application ought to be handed over to Bristol Parks for proper management.

So what happens now? Formal permission doesn’t come into effect until a Planning Agreement has been signed. When that’s done, Wrings can only do the initial clearance of the area in the months of October or November, to avoid disturbing badgers or nesting birds. If that doesn’t happen in 2008, then another badger survey will be required before work can start. So it’s ‘wait and see’ ...

On the other planning issue we reported last time, the ‘Matties block’ - The Parade, opposite St Peter’s Church, Bishopsworth - received planning permission. No work has started, and we are in touch with the architects about the continuing untidiness.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

## IN THIS ISSUE

Manor Woods Valley L.N.R.	Page 2
Help a Hedgehog . . . . .	Page 3
Plus ça change ... . . . . .	Page 4
Thank you, Sally! . . . . .	Page 5
Visit to Hill House Farm . .	Page 6
The Programme . . . . .	Page 7

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

**W**E HOPE that our readers and a lot of others have enjoyed Manor Woods Valley in spite of the poor summer we all deplore. Thanks to Sally, our Local Nature Reserves Officer, and to members of our group and their excellent advertising, we get people from further afield who come to enjoy Manor Woods Valley on organised outings or on their own. However, we regularly discover that some local residents do not know about this green oasis we have on our doorstep. We're planning a leaflet about our Local Nature Reserve (see below), and we'd welcome any other ideas on how we could improve our publicity.

This summer our group has carried on liaising with the Parks Department when we discover rubbish, fly-tipping, uncleared paths or unmown grass etc. Our dog notices (see the last *Newsletter*) have survived the summer - we only had to replace a few. We do hope they have helped. What do our readers think?

At the time of writing this article, a group of pupils from Headley Park Primary School is spending a day in Manor Woods Valley with Sally, Helen Adshead from South Bristol Riverscapes and various volunteers. It's a sort of 'son of Booted Up Bristol', and we're pleased that local schools are increasingly appreciative of what Manor Woods Valley has to offer.

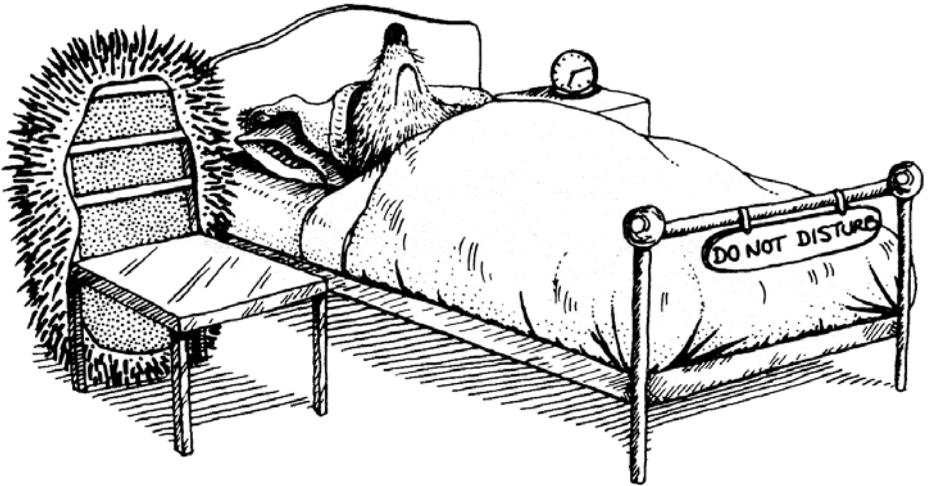
In our Summer *Newsletter* we mentioned the interpretation board on the meadow which we need to raise money for. The M.V.C.G. committee have agreed to use our own funds for half the cost, and we are working with Sally to apply for a grant for the remainder and for leaflets to let people know how wonderful Manor Woods Valley is! If some of our members would like to be involved in design, artwork, drafting words etc., please do contact us.

Finally, it is our annual AMPHIBIOUS GARBAGE RAID on Saturday 4 October (see the Programme on page 7). For members reading this Autumn *Newsletter* for the first time, this event is an opportunity to clear light rubbish from the stream. These days we have to do a risk assessment which is then approved by the Community Park Manager, so it is all safe! People who do not want to go into the stream can help with picking rubbish on the paths and talking to passers-by. So, come along - it is always fun!

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE  
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

## HELP A HEDGEHOG TO HIBERNATE

**L**AST NOVEMBER I found a hedgehog roaming about in the garden. It was only the size of a grapefruit, probably from a late litter, and I knew it should have been tucked away hibernating. I rang Secret World (01278 783250) who said that if a hedgehog is under a pound in weight (450 grams) at this time of year then it will not survive the winter outdoors. They gave me the telephone number of local volunteer rescuers and a lovely couple came over from Knowle the next day. They took 'Henry Hedgehog' along with others down to Secret World at Highbridge - a regular journey. I had been instructed how to look after it for a night - a box lined with newspaper in a warm room (away from my inquisitive terrier!) with a towel-wrapped hot-water bottle. Appropriate food is mashed cat or dog food with cereal, and, of course, water. After this awful summer I feel that any animal that eats the revolting slugs and snails we've had to cope with must be looked after and helped to survive and multiply!



So please, in the next couple of months, keep a look out for small hedgehogs who might need your help.

ANGELA JAMES

- Secret World's website is at [www.secretworld.org](http://www.secretworld.org). The illustration is from a leaflet called *Know your Hedgehog* published by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk).

## PLUS ÇA CHANGE ...

**I**N THE LAST *Newsletter*, I 'introduced' you to Ron Cleeve, an environmentalist before his time. He was a teacher, a local historian, and an enthusiast for the Malago stream along its whole length, from Hartcliffe to Bedminster. We have recently acquired some of Ron's archives, and they give food for thought - sweet and sour food, at that!

A special supplement on Bedminster in the *Evening Post* of 6 March 1968 had a piece about Ron, with a photo of him holding a sign which warned against fishing or bathing in the Malago. The point, of course, was that what seemed then like a huge joke was actually a vision of how things could - and should - be again. (Ron looks more dour in the photo than the cheerful character I remember!).



The paper also had a photo of children from Parson Street School helping to clear 71 tons (yes, 71 tons!) of rubbish from the Malago - and this was in the 1950s. This was Ron's 'Friends of the Valley' club, who were issued with green badges (5p each). Although not mentioned in the *Evening Post*, or appearing in Ron's archives, Ron also compiled 'My Malago Book'. This was a 'home-made' booklet with typed text and hand-drawn illustrations which was cyclostyled (I wonder if my spell-checker knows *that* word?), bound with Treasury tags and given to each school-child who got involved with the 'Friends'. When we produced *My Manor Woods Book*, its title and loose-leaf style were a deliberate tribute to our pioneering predecessor.

Here are some extracts from a letter which Ron wrote to the City Engineer on 16 April 1951:

'Local streams provide excellent material for a project in Schools - their upper reaches providing much Nature Study, and their lower reaches providing studies in industries and history. One evening in January the "Friends of the Valley" had an exhibition about the Malago, and enough material to fill seven tables was exhibited.'

'Most of our local streams terminate in congested built up areas, but ultimately lead back through beautiful valleys into the open countryside. It would be excellent if people living in these built up areas could follow the streams out to their beautiful upper reaches. As it is seldom the practice to build right to the water's edge, there is almost always a narrow strip of land running beside the water. On this a path could be made, and the odd bits of ground cleaned and planted ...'

'With the Malago, for instance, few people ... realise that it is possible to follow the Pigeon House Stream to Crox Bottom, and the Malago to Headley and beyond. Even fewer have made either journey.'

Ron went on to describe in great detail the obstructions and difficulties he had experienced in following the Malago. He concluded:

'... it could be possible eventually to have an all-weather foot-path, leading from St. John's Lane up the valley to Crox Bottom, and Hartcliffe, and a branch crossing Vale Lane to lead to Headley ... Similar action would allow passage from Ashton Drive up the Colliter's Brook to Yanley Lane, and provide passage beside the Ashton Brook to Yanley Lane ...'

That letter was written almost 60 years ago. We can take some satisfaction in the Malago Trek and other riverside walks organised by Bristol Living Rivers - but don't forget that still today we have to make detours around impassable or closed-off stretches. Ron's vision of accessible footpaths along the streams themselves is still in the future. Perhaps another 60 years might do it?

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

## **THANK YOU, SALLY**

THE GOOD NEWS is that Sally Oldfield, our ever-cheerful and helpful Local Nature Reserves Officer, has got a new, exciting job. The bad news is that it's with the London Borough of Islington. Sally's post in Bristol has been externally funded on short-term contract, so it's understandable that she wants somewhere permanent, for both professional and personal reasons. We'll miss her terribly - and we wish her all the very best.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE

## A VISIT TO HILL HOUSE FARM

**T**HE COMMITTEE have found that farm tours are always popular, and Lola, our Programme Secretary, came up trumps once again by organising a visit to Hill House Farm on Dundry on Saturday 19 July. With around 20 members attending we appeared once again to have got it right.

We assembled in the barn as David Hurford explained how they began organic farming in the '90s, having previously used conventional methods. They now have a herd of 30 dairy cows and their own bull. There is always a demand for organic milk so they have no difficulty finding outlets for it. If you buy a tub of Yeo Valley yoghurt, you may well be drinking their milk!



We set out to walk around the fields, first stopping at a field of cows contentedly munching the grass. There were several different breeds, some of which were so pretty it gave rise to some 'Aahs!'. André was pleased to see some Guernseys but incredulous that their milk didn't command a premium!

As we walked it was obvious that David was very proud of the abundance of clover. This fixes the nitrogen in the soil without the need for fertilisers. We passed through what was once a quarry, the stone having been used to build several churches including St Mary Redcliffe. We saw a small cave, home to many bats, and walked through a copse, which David told us is carpeted with bluebells in spring. On our return to the barn we stopped to admire the calves as they chewed on the 'haylage' - a new word to most of us. Haylage is grass, cut just like hay but, instead of being allowed to dry out completely, it is baled when the moisture content is still relatively high.

Lola and her team had laid on a delicious cream tea. This made a very good ending to a delightful afternoon. Once again we thank David and Lesley and their son, Paul, for their hospitality and their desire to promote farming which respects the environment.

BERYL HEATON

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

**A**S USUAL, the **M** symbol shows our own events. We always happy to publicise other events which will interest our members - just let us know! The regular 'third Tuesday' meetings (21 October and 16 December) are held at St Peter's Rooms, by the side of St Peter's Church, Church Road, Bishopsworth, normally starting at 7.30pm.

**M Saturday 4 October:** Our annual *Amphibious Garbage Raid* in the Malago in Manor Woods Valley (later than in previous years, to tie in with the 'Wild Waters' celebrations - see [www.wildwaters.org.uk](http://www.wildwaters.org.uk)). Meet at 10.00am at the entrance behind Bishopsworth Library. Wear old clothes - and wellies if you fancy paddling along the stream bed. Jobs available for all degrees of fitness and agility!

**Sunday 5 October:** *Avon Valley Walk*, 10.00am-4.00pm. Friends of Troopers Hill and Nature in the City will again join with Bristol Living Rivers for an annual exploration of some of the wonderful sites in this part of the Avon Valley. The guided walk goes through Conham, Dundridge Park, Troopers Hill, St Anne's Woods, Nightingale Valley and Eastwood Farm, finishing at Beeses' Bar and Tea Gardens to catch the ferry back to Conham. For more information, download the poster at [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events/AVW2008.pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events/AVW2008.pdf).

**M Tuesday 21 October:** For the first meeting of the new season, HELEN ADSHEAD will tell about the *South Bristol Riverscapes Project*. We've been working with Helen since the Project started early this year, and you've 'met' her in the pages of the *Newsletter* - now come and meet her personally!

**M Saturday 1 November:** Our annual *Daffodil Bulb Planting*, starting at 10.00am. Meet just below Bishopsworth Police Station on Kings Head Lane and please bring a spade or fork if you can - but don't worry if you can't!

**Tuesday 18 November:** The annual *Bishopsworth Quiz*, where we normally enter a couple of teams - but not this year, because one of our clever teams won it last year and have to set the questions this time! It's held at the Bishopsworth branch of the Royal British Legion in Manor Road, and it's great fun. If you would like to attend, please let André have your names for forwarding to the Legion.

**Tuesday 16 December:** Our daft and delightful *Christmas Party*, with the usual American Supper - please bring a contribution for the table if you can (but it's not obligatory!). Please note the later starting time of 7.45pm.

## GREENBELT - WHAT GREENBELT?

AS YOU MIGHT HAVE SEEN, North Somerset Council, in partnership with Bristol City Council, are planning to build a new town the size of Clevedon on the land between Dundry and Long Ashton. It will have over 10,000 homes plus schools, supermarkets etc., and will reach into the city as far as Bedminster Down. It will greatly affect the people of South Bristol and will devastate the wildlife found in abundance on this pristine piece of countryside. However, the most controversial part to these plans are that they will destroy the South Bristol Greenbelt and with it the whole concept of greenbelt protection!

We as a group support the retention of all greenbelt land and a stop to urban 'sprawl'. If you agree then please lobby your local M.P. or you can sign an online petition against this development at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/YANLEIGHHOUSES>.

PAUL MIZEN

## 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.