



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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THE ELECTIONS on 6 May had a small immediate effect locally - Royston Griffey stood down as a councillor in Hartcliffe Ward and Derek Pickup was elected in his place. The other councillors in Bishopsworth and Whitchurch Park wards were re-elected. I'm pleased to report that Derek has accepted co-option to our Committee, thereby joining all the other councillors in our three wards who receive our Committee papers and keep in touch with the issues we're working on.

It seems more than likely that there will be larger local effects from the elections, but they will take longer to become apparent because they will be part of the changes in national government policy and budgets. The draft Regional Spatial Strategy which set the scene for building on the Green Belt will be scrapped, so that immediate threat should disappear. The status of the South Bristol Link (Ring Road) must also be in doubt, for budgetary reasons at least - we shall see. The position of the proposed Bristol City F.C. stadium isn't directly affected by political changes - they have their two planning permissions, from Bristol and North Somerset - but there remains doubt over the Town Green application by the Ashton Vale Heritage Group - which would scupper the plans - and the planning application by Sainsbury's to build a large supermarket on the current Ashton Gate ground - without which, the financial basis for the new stadium is undermined. Definitely a game of two halves ...

A welcome development is the completion of the pavement near the Bishopsworth Library entrance to Manor Woods Valley. We pushed for this, to improve pedestrian access to the Local Nature Reserve, and we're pleased to see it finished.

We're very sad to be losing Lola Hardingham from the Committee - she's had to resign because of other commitments. She's done a huge amount of work for M.V.C.G. for many years - thank you very much indeed, Lola.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

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'A MID-SUMMER MEADOW'

BY THE TIME you receive this *Newsletter*, the wild flower meadow in Manor Woods Valley will be at its best. The interpretation board was installed at the end of April. It bears the title quoted above and can be seen on the edge of the main path, not far from the interceptor, just below the meadow. It was financed mostly from a grant we obtained from Yansec, the organisation associated with the land-fill site at Yanley Lane which makes local grants to improve the environment in parts of North Somerset and Bristol. In addition, just over £300 came out of M.V.C.G.'s own funds.

The Manor Woods Valley Group wishes to thank all the people who have supported and helped them. It has been team work. A very special thank you goes to Clare Chalice, our designer from Dandi Creative Design for her advice, patience and encouragement, and to Abi Stubbs who drew our pretty burnet moth and other insects and flowers and birds (we particularly like our woodpecker!). We are very grateful to Steve Joyce who is a local sculptor. He designed and made the elegant frame and installed it, with André helping dig the holes. They did such a tidy job. Finally we wish to thank Ron Steven from Yansec.



There we were, diggin' these 'oles ...



The finished job!

A big THANK YOU!





In case you haven't seen the board yet, here are some extracts to give you a flavour ...

- *From landfill to landscape*

Most flowery meadows have been around for centuries - this one is different. The slope was once quarried for clay. In the early 1960s it became a landfill, and was then covered with soil and grassed over ... In the mid-1990s the grass was allowed to grow. No one knows where the large number of flowers came from.

- *A blaze of colour*

Look out for the white flowers of ox-eye daisy and corky-fruited water dropwort, yellow buttercups and bird's-foot trefoil, sky-blue pale flax, pink bee orchids and purple knapweed.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

WILD BS13

HEDERA HELIX is causing mayhem in my garden! Not because it is choking all my plants (all you clever people knew it was ivy), but because it is full of lovely ripe berries which the local BLACKBIRDS cannot resist. Why a problem? Because next to the ivy is a nest belonging to a resident, and very territorial, blackbird who has a nest full of chicks and won't allow any other bird into the garden. So whilst he is chasing off one outsider, another sneaks in from the other direction and so it goes on. Blackbirds zooming around in all directions from dawn to dusk, and I suspect some of his feeding duties are being missed. There is however hope on the horizon. The berries are also a favourite of WOODPIGEONS and ours are hoovering them up at a great rate. Another couple of days and they will all be gone and we can return to a peaceful time again. Not such good news for the worms, I suspect.

PAUL MIZEN

- We asked last time whether anyone had seen the KINGFISHERS which were regularly sighted on the Malago not so long ago. We're delighted to say that a new member who joined after the planting at the Library Garden confirmed that she had seen them recently. And, still on birds, while one swallow may not make a summer, the wonderful SWIFTS entertaining us now mean that, whatever the weather is doing, summer is here!

FIRE AND WATER

WE HAD a semi-impromptu wander along a little-visited stretch of the Malago on Sunday 16 May. It arose out of a conversation at a steering group meeting of the South Bristol Riverscapes Project (now coming to a close, but have a look at the website at www.southbristolriverscapes.org.uk to keep in touch with what's been achieved and what's planned for the future).

Adrian Mantle, the rep. from FrANC - the Friends of the Avon New Cut - is a fireman, based at Hartcliffe Way, and he suggested he could get his colleagues to clean up the grounds of the Fire Station and the part of the Malago which runs through it. I rashly said that M.V.C.G. could join in, so we arranged to do the section from the Vale Lane entrance to Manor Woods Valley down to the Fire Station. The details weren't finalised in time to get it into the last *Newsletter*, but we put it on our website (www.mvcg.org.uk, of course!), and circulated the information by e-mail to those members who have given us their addresses. If you're on e-mail and would like to receive infrequent updates from us, please let me have your address at andrec@mvcg.org.uk. (Sometimes it will be a better offer than paddling along the Malago!).

Here (*right*) are the explorers at the confluence of the Malago and Pigeonhouse Stream. It may not be quite as important as the junction of the Blue and White Niles, but not many people have been here!



Unfortunately enough people *had* been elsewhere on the stream - the sort of people who dump rubbish anyway. Our haul of litter was left (by arrangement) at the Fire Station, where Bristol Clean and Green collected it the next day. After a

welcome cup of coffee, Adrian kindly gave us a very interesting tour of the Fire Station. Thanks to Helen Adshead who was also with us and who took the photos.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

BISHOPSWORTH LIBRARY WILDLIFE GARDEN

THE LAST scheduled planting session happened on Saturday 15 May. Here are some of the gang creating an informal border along the fence facing onto St Peter's Rise. We also put into place the logs which will be seats for children's activities in the garden - they've already been user-tested! Thanks to Lee Pibworth for supplying these.



THE ST ANDREW'S TRAIL

THE INAUGURAL 'St Andrew's Trail' Walk was featured in the last *Newsletter*. More formally known as FP306, this Public Right of Way runs from Bishport Avenue in Hartcliffe up over Dundry and on to Chew Magna. To mark the clearance of obstructive brambles on the lower slopes - and to encourage future use of the path - a walk took place on Saturday 8 May.

Here are the intrepid band who set off. Yes, they're wearing wet-weather clothes, and yes, it was drizzling! But they enjoyed super views over Bristol in one direction and the Chew Valley in the other.

A working group on Dundry Slopes is continuing to meet under the auspices of the 'Pride of Place' Task Group of the Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership.

Ideas are being worked up for way-marking and an interpretation board, and for leaflets and posters to make people aware of the 'gateway' they have to the countryside. Look out, too, for future walks!



M.V.C.G. GOES PUBLIC

I HAVE been interested in photography for as long as I can remember. I was therefore pleased to take my camera along to M.V.C.G. activities to record the occasion, whether it be litter picking, tree planting, or rather grander events like the opening of Manor Woods Valley as a Local Nature Reserve. As a result of this I have been able to build up an archive of material over the years. The earlier photographs are prints and we were fortunate to acquire a large number from John Taylor (my predecessor as Treasurer). The whole collection is filed in boxes and is available for members to borrow provided they return them in the correct order! They are all numbered. I eventually bought a compact digital camera when the prices came down to a reasonable level and I carried on recording events in this way. I have now built up a considerable archive of digital files.



Beryl's award-winning photo - taken at our daff. planting at the top of King George's Road on 16 October 2004

Last November it came to my notice that Defra were running a photographic competition as part of their 'Muckin4life' campaign. They were asking for images of people doing environmental projects. This seemed the ideal opportunity to e-mail some of my M.V.C.G. photos. I eventually heard that I was one of two finalists from the south of England, there being two finalists from the north. Later it transpired that the other entrant from the south was the overall winner, with mine being runner-up.

The presentation took place at Kew Gardens on 8 May. As it was run in conjunction with 'The International Garden Photographer of the Year' there were rather more than the four Defra photographs. They were all reproduced in a large format on an outdoor display which will stay at Kew until September. After that it goes to other venues around the country. I was presented with a lovely inscribed book of all the photos in the exhibition. We thoroughly enjoyed our day out at Kew and felt it was good for the Group to have recognition in this way.

BERYL HEATON

... and good for our official photographer to be recognised, too! (Ed.)

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

SUMMER'S HERE and there are lots of outdoor activities, many of them organised by the groups which make up the South Bristol Riverscapes Initiative.

Saturday 19 June: *Hartcliffe Millennium Green Fun Day*, from 12 noon until 4.00pm at the Green, Bishport Avenue (opposite 'The Groves' tower blocks). Always lots of attractions and activities!

Sunday 20 June: The annual *Malago Trek*. Start at the car park at ASDA, Bedminster, near the store entrance, at 10.30am. This is a little later than in previous years, because we will make a fuller day of it, with our lunch stop in Manor Woods Valley, to admire the meadow and the new Meadow Interpretation board (see pages 2 and 3). We'll then continue, refreshed, up Dundry Slopes. Plenty of buses back to the start. Join in for all or part or the walk.

Sunday 25 July: *Colliter's Brook Trek*. Start at 10.00am at the CREATE Centre car park. The brook winds its way through Ashton Vale and its wildlife-rich wetlands, then onwards and gently upwards into Hanging Hill Wood - our final destination. The return journey can be done on foot, or you can pick up the regular bus in Ashton Vale. Local group members of the Friends of Avon New Cut (FrANC) and the Ashton Vale Heritage Group will give short, interesting talks along the way. Bring water and a picnic to enjoy in Hanging Hill Wood. Walk or catch a bus back after lunch.

Wednesday 28 July: *Himalayan Balsam Clearance* in Manor Woods Valley - for the third year (see *Newsletter* 83, Autumn 2009 or www.aiwf.org.uk). Meet at the Bishopsworth Library entrance to Manor Woods Valley at 10.00am, and please wear long sleeves and trousers, Wellington boots or other sturdy footwear. Gloves will be provided. Please bring your own packed lunch and plenty of water or other soft drink. We'll finish at 1.00pm.

Thursday 12 August: A guided *Herb Walk* will take place along the Avon New Cut. Meet at Vauxhall bridge at 7.00pm.

Tuesday 19 October: Our Winter season of meetings at St Peter's Rooms restarts, with a speaker from the *Light Rail Transit Association*. More details in the autumn *Newsletter*.

MALAGO VALLEY AUDIO TRAIL

RECENTLY Helen Adshead of South Bristol Riverscapes was invited by a group from the Royal National Institute for the Blind to produce an audio guide for some walks suitable for blind or partially sighted people. It was decided that the Manor Woods Valley Local Nature Reserve would provide an ideal location for a pilot guide.

Helen and I explored the paved route, listening for sounds, touching nearby trees, noting hazards and changes in slope or direction. Helen then cast this into a script which was to be recorded digitally by several voices. Phill Giles, Helen and I read this initial descriptive guide and the recording has been well received by the group who asked us to do it. Later the recording will have some sound effects of the river, local bird song and so on to enhance the final audio guide. This will be available as a podcast on the web to be downloaded to MP3 players.

In June a group from the R.N.I.B. and their sighted friends are going to try the walk with a guide from M.V.C.G. If all goes well, guides to other parks, nature reserves and open areas may be produced in the same way by their conservation groups or Friends of the Park people.

MARIAN GREEN

Malago Valley Conservation Group

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Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Mary Sykes, Valerie Gay, Diana Porter, Sue Walker, CSV Environment, Cllrs Mark Brain, Richard Eddy, Helen Holland, Tim Kent, Derek Pickup, Kevin Quartley (*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.