



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

No. 94
Summer
2012

THIS EDITION has a lot of reports about our local green spaces. That's fine, because we've got a lot of *excellent* green spaces, and we need to use them, appreciate them and celebrate them. We also need to improve them, which is what has been happening. M.V.C.G.'s traditional 'DIY' approach has tidied up and brightened up the entrance to Manor Woods Valley (page 2), and the community-led plan to improve Crox Bottom is now producing results on the ground (back page).

The draft Management Plan for Crox Bottom has just been received as we go to press, and that will be discussed in the Neighbourhood Partnership 'Pride of Place' group to set the priorities for future maintenance and improvement. Crox Bottom has a similar diverse range of habitats as Manor Woods Valley, and, like Manor Woods Valley, it deserves to be a Local Nature Reserve. The chances of that happening will be much improved if there is an active 'Friends' group to work with the City Council. M.V.C.G. will continue to be deeply involved, but we're too thinly stretched to take on this role - would *you* like to help? If you're interested in a 'Friends of Crox Bottom' group, please let me know.

Hengrove Mounds is another local green gem, even more under-appreciated than Crox Bottom, and we have a guided visit there on **Monday 18 June** (see page 4). Ideas for improvement here are also very welcome.

Unfortunately, another of our unique open spaces is under threat. Highridge Common would be seriously damaged if the South Bristol Link went ahead (it's not a done deal, despite what anyone says). M.V.C.G. has consistently opposed the road, and we will be responding again to the current consultation. Because SBL and the other schemes are interlinked, we've also given support to the opponents of 'BRT2' - the scheme from Long Ashton to the Centre.

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ANDRÉ COUTANCHE

NEWS FROM MANOR WOODS VALLEY L.N.R.

Bishopsworth Library entrance

Our group has done its annual tidying-up of the bank to remove brambles and encourage wild flowers.

Valley Road entrance

We have long been aware that this entrance needed improving. We have been working with Julian Cox, our Area Environment Officer, and John Walters from Quadron Services to keep it free from litter. We hope there will soon be a bin here, and we have reported the collapsed wall at the top. The wall is on a private garden and not part of the park, but Highways Services are pursuing this.



Old Quarries Area

In the spring we heard excellent news about its future. The revised 'Preferred Site Allocations and Designations' document was published for final consultation before becoming an official part of the City's suite of planning documents. The earlier consultation draft had the Quarries area allocated for Industry and Warehousing, and we wrote to oppose this, pointing out that it was also a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. This final draft has removed the industrial proposal, leaving the SNCI designation. We have written to support this, and we hope to see this finally confirmed. That will provide an opportunity to get the area moved to the Parks Department and formally incorporated into the Local Nature Reserve.

Invasive weeds

There will be a 'pulling out session' of Himalayan balsam end of July/ beginning of August. We don't have the date yet, but if you would like to take part, please phone me on 964 3106 or e-mail me on mariejo.coutanche@googlemail.com. We have reported patches of Japanese knotweed which have never been treated and are waiting to learn when the annual treatment programme is happening.

Wrings Yard

The noise of a stone-crushing machine in the extended Wrings yard came to our attention when walking around the quarry area. As this was not part of

planning permission for the use of the yard extension we have reported this unauthorised development to Planning Enforcement.

Finally, Justin Smith, our Woodland and Wildlife Officer has been very helpful once again. When we reported that a tree in Bishopsworth Library garden was leaning he immediately sent somebody who installed two stakes. Thank you, Justin.

MARIE JO COUTANCHE AND THE
MANOR WOODS VALLEY WORKING GROUP

A MARCH IN MANOR WOODS

WELL, more of a gentle stroll, actually, along the woodland path. But the *month* was March - spring was in the air, though the trees were still mostly bare. And the birds were active - very active. The combination of moving and calling birds and 'see-through' trees was a birder's delight:

- Wren - displaying furiously, tail bolt upright, wings out-stretched and quivering, and shouting his head off
- Robin (lots of)
- Blackbird - frequently two males, engaged in armed diplomacy
- Woodpigeon
- Collared Dove
- Jay
- Goldcrest
- Chiffchaff (heard but not seen)
- Blue Tit - in striking Technicolor breeding plumage
- Coal Tit (probably!)
- Magpie - with the low sun slanting through onto its tail as it balanced on a branch below. The flashes of iridescent blue and green would make a Kingfisher jealous.

Flying over the woodland were Crow and Gull (almost certainly Herring Gull, maybe also Lesser Black-backed). And on the pond, the resident Moorhen.

I may have been lucky to see Jay and Goldcrest, but on this occasion, I *didn't* see Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Wagtail, Goldfinch, Chaffinch etc., all of whom are there. Nor Woodpecker (Green or Great Spotted). And the pond 'ticks' on another day might include Mallard, Kingfisher or Heron.

The trees will be fully in leaf when you read this, but the birds are still there. Go for a gentle - and quiet - stroll, and keep your eyes and ears open.

ANDRÉ COUTANCHE



HENGROVE MOUNDS NATURE RESERVE

A HIDDEN OASIS for wildlife wedged between major roads and the Hengrove Park development is one of the best sites in Bristol for invertebrates and birds. It is one of Bristol City Council's newest nature sites with a fascinating history.

Over 30 years ago it didn't exist! The site was part of Whitchurch Airfield, which closed in 1957. Lying as undisturbed meadow for 25 years or more, this increasingly rare habitat in Bristol was destroyed to make way for landfill when nearby road-widening took place. Nature has amazing tenacity and after this short-term set-back, the meadow returned as dormant species enjoyed a renaissance. Local people have memories of the site being used as a dirt track by bikes in the '90s, but within 20 years nature made a remarkable comeback.

Situated at the west end of the Hengrove Park leisure complex, the site takes on an unusual bowl shaped area not unlike a large amphitheatre. This site contains species-rich grassland on the banks, with marshy areas and during winter a small pond in the base, whilst self-seeded trees screen the bowl from the road. In summer the site is a stunning array of wildflowers and meadow grasses, providing not just colourful displays but also the food source and shelter for an unexpectedly high number of animal species. 204 different invertebrate species have been recorded, 19 of which were nationally endangered. This urban fringe habitat also supports larger mammals and birds including nationally rare skylark, bullfinch or even an occasional cuckoo.

'Plan the Mounds'

The Mounds is one of Bristol City Councils Wild City sites. Wild City, a Heritage Lottery Funded project, aims to connect communities to the wild spaces on their doorstep. By engaging them in creative and meaningful ways it is hoped it will increase people's confidence and understanding of green spaces and nature reserves, leading to improved use and enjoyment of these sites in future. Already a major education project is under way to link many local schools with the site. Wild City has also embarked on a Public

Consultation Project - 'Plan the Mounds' - inviting the local community to help shape the future of the site and get involved in working up a community management plan which will benefit both people and wildlife.

Find out more on a special guided walk planned for M.V.C.G. on **Monday 18 June at 6.30pm**. Park at Hengrove Leisure Park between Cineworld and Macdonalds and meet on the edge of the car park where the site begins just to the right of the cinema. Wellingtons/stout footwear strongly advised if there has been heavy rain the previous day!

If you can't make the walk and would like to 'have your say', please ring or e-mail the project: Ruth Worsley, Plan the Mounds Coordinator - (01761) 232898 or rworsley@tiscali.co.uk.

RUTH WORSLEY

EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING

AS SOME of your readers may know, around Easter we experienced a three-day incursion by a band of travellers on Council-owned land to the north of the Bristol Water depot, on Bishopsworth Road, Bedminster Down. Fortunately, their stay was relatively short and my thanks go to local residents for their forbearance, Bishopsworth Police for their prompt action (which included arresting one man) and to officers in Bristol City Council for arranging the clearance of the site.

One positive outcome is that the Council has agreed to our request to explore creating gated entry to the lanes to the west of Ilchester Crescent. Not only would this increase the security of the land where the incursion occurred, but it would deter fly-tippers (who have been a menace for some time), anti-social elements and burglars who have gained access to the backs of properties along the west of Ilchester Crescent.

I have also been approached by a group of Bedminster Down parents who are keen to re-establish a children's play space on nearby land. We have already got approval from colleagues in Parks and Children's Play and are now exploring various funding streams.

Separately, over £42,000 has been made available (from Section 106 monies arising from the re-development of the former Enterprise Inn) to upgrade the condition of the lanes to the east of Ilchester Crescent. This work is due to start in the current (2012/13) financial year. Who says there's no such thing as a silver-lining to a storm cloud?

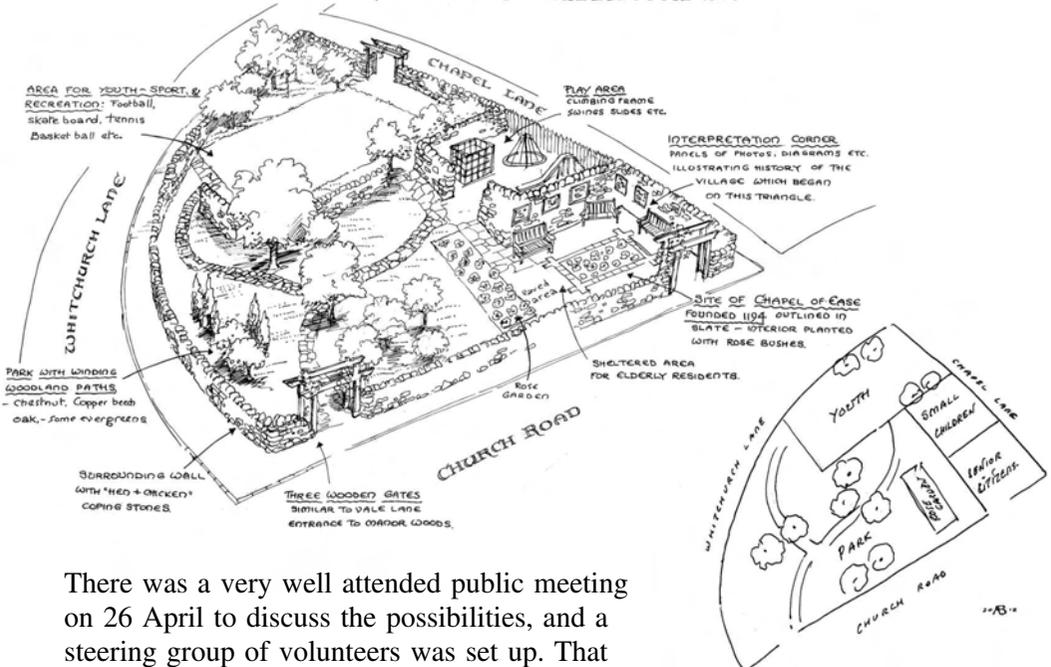
CLLR RICHARD EDDY

BISHOPSWORTH SWIMMING POOL SITE

IN THE LAST *Newsletter* - in the report of the AGM - we mentioned the drawing which Anton Bantock had done of his idea for the redevelopment of the site of Bishopsworth Swimming Pool - now closed. We didn't have room last time for the drawing, so here it is now ...

PUTTING THE HEART BACK INTO BISHOPSWORTH

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF SWIMMING POOL SITE



There was a very well attended public meeting on 26 April to discuss the possibilities, and a steering group of volunteers was set up. That group had its first meeting on 30 May, and the next meeting will be on Thursday 12 July at 7.00 (for no more than an hour). Any further volunteers would be welcome - contact Cllr Richard Eddy for more details on richard.eddy@bristol.gov.uk or 964 6455.

WOT - NO PROGRAMME SHEET?

In case you're wondering where the separate sheet is that has the Programme (opposite) on it, then the good news is that it hasn't fallen out - but the bad news is that there won't be one in future. It's more materials, more cost, and - not least - more work for volunteers who work pretty hard already. So we've dropped it.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

AFTER EXPERIMENTING with meeting at Zion on Bedminster Down on Monday afternoons, we're switching our 'winter' meetings back to St Peter's Rooms and back to 7.30pm in the evening of (normally) the third Tuesday of the month. We recognise that some people preferred the afternoon meetings, but others didn't, and there were other little problems with the venue. But that won't be until September, since we're now in 'summer' mode (hard to believe as I look out of the window while typing). The **Ⓜ** symbol means our own meetings, to which everyone is very welcome, M.V.C.G. member or not.

Wednesday 13 June: *Open Evening* at Knowle West Media Centre. M.V.C.G. members who have been on our visits to KWMC will know what a fascinating place it is. As part of Big Green Week, spend a midsummer eve with KWMC and experience a tour with a difference: visit their sustainable building and discover something to see, do and learn in each room. FREE event, no booking required, but to help with catering, they'd be grateful if you could let them know you're coming by calling (0117) 903 0444.

Ⓜ Monday 18 June: *Guided Visit* to Hengrove Mounds - a secret wildlife gem on our doorstep - meeting at **6.30pm**. See the article on page 4. Park at Hengrove Leisure Park between Cineworld and Macdonalds and meet on the edge of the car park where the site begins just to the right of the cinema. Wellingtons/stout footwear strongly advised if there has been heavy rain the previous day!

* **Wednesday 27 June:** DUNDRY VIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP, 7.00-9.00pm, at the @Symes Community Building, Peterson Avenue, Hartcliffe, Bristol, BS13 0BE.

Ⓜ Tuesday 18 September: '*A Year in the Making: recording nature's changes through the seasons*', a video presentation by BOB GILES, including scenes shot in Manor Woods Valley and Crox Bottom. THIS WILL BE OUR FIRST WINTER MEETING BACK AT ST PETER'S ROOMS, AND WILL START AT 7.30PM.

Saturday 22 September: *Dundry View Harvest Festival*, a fun and educational day for all the community, to be held at Headley Lane Park from 12 noon to 4.00pm.

* *For more information about Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, call Heather Williams at the Hartcliffe & Withywood Community Partnership on 903 8044 or Keith Houghton, the Area Co-ordinator, on 922 2135.*

CROX BOTTOM UPDATE

OUR LAST *Newsletter* had a report from Mike Knight about the positive prospects for Crox Bottom, with money being available from Section 106 contributions for the preparation of a management plan and some immediate improvements. Those improvements are well under way.



Above: entrance feature and noticeboard at Hengrove Way entrance. Top right: new bench and litter bin. Right: new picnic tables by the lower lake.

Malago Valley Conservation Group

Chairman	Peter Crispin	907 0623
Vice-Chairman	Mary Sykes	964 3712
Hon. Secretary	André Coutanche	964 3106
Hon. Treasurer	Beryl Heaton	964 5780

Committee Members

Anton Bantock, Heather Leeson, Paul Mizen, Lis Pibworth

Co-opted Committee Members

Diana Porter, Don Smith, 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.*)

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.