

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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www.ova.org.uk



New Year Edition

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Chairman's Message



THE OVA is a charity firmly rooted in the community. For many years it has participated in the events of Budleigh Salterton Gala Week, organised by the BS Lions. Since the inception of the Music Festival, it has led a BS town walk and this year was asked by the Literary Festival committee to lead a walk focusing on notable writers, artists, scientists etc, who live or had lived in the town. This was done in collaboration with Fairlynch Museum.

The showing of the film, 'The Great White Silence' was a joint activity with the Film Society who supplied all the technical expertise, film equipment and loan of wine glasses and Fairlynch Museum who did all the publicity and helped wash up the glasses.

When the World Heritage Coast Team visited BS in the summer a member of the audience asked why the town had no interpretation features as in Sidmouth and the answer was that no-one had asked them. Now that the BS Town Council wish to improve the appearance of the Longboat Shelter as a Diamond Jubilee project the OVA have asked the WHCT and BSTC and have agreement to instigate an Interpretation Board Project in the shelter. Helen Tickle is project officer involved in collaboration with Clinton Devon Estate, the AONB, WHCT and Devon County Council.

The OVA, in consultation with the Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival committee, are sponsoring a venue for local writing talent around the time of the Festival in 2012. The proposed date will be Thursday 20th September, the day before the main festival starts, and the event will be called "Local Voices".

For some years we have been trying to finance some activities in the primary schools. We intend to pursue this more vigorously.

So as you can see the OVA is an exciting organisation, not solely a charity of walks, the environment and planning. We can only do this with the help of enthusiastic volunteers. So please, once again, will members come forward who feel they can help, in a small, or large, job-sharing capacity or any other way.

Nicola Daniel

Chinese Lanterns

NFU member makes potent point to public

An iconic farmland bird, a barn owl, has been killed by the carelessness of the consequences of launching Chinese lanterns.

South West conservation-minded farmer, Simon Pain, who has made a DVD of the wildlife on his farm, was shocked to discover the remains of a barn owl entangled in a Chinese lantern. He believes the bird had been hunting on a field margin when it became ensnared.

“For the last ten years, we’ve been trying to create the right environment for them,” he said.

Because he had the presence of mind to get a picture of the tragedy and to raise its demise publicly, the bird’s death lent a powerful pre-Hallowe’en/bonfire night awareness boost that people should avoid sending up these lanterns which also represent a very real threat to livestock and a potential fire risk.

So, a cautionary note to add to all the celebrations coming up in 2012.



Tuckers Hall

I wonder how many of you have walked down Fore Street in Exeter, passed the Victorian facade of Tuckers Hall and not realised what a treasure there is inside. We are inviting you to have coffee and biscuits at 10.30am on Monday 12th March in the original 1471 barrel-vaulted roof upper chamber with Reformation panelling.

Mike Walker, the Project Development Manager and a lively speaker, will give a fascinating talk on the history of the Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen Guild which regulated the woollen cloth trade in Exeter, and made the city a centre for international trade and our part of east Devon wealthy. The woollen cloth trade thrived from the 1430s until the end of the 18th century; at times making Exeter the third richest city in the country.

The price of £4.50 will include coffee and biscuits and a donation to the Hall which is in the process of digitising its extensive records and setting up an interpretation centre.



Monday 12th March - 10.30am
OVA visit to Tucker's Hall, Fore Street, Exeter

Please send me tickets

Name(s)

Address

& Postcode

Phone number

& email

I enclose cheque for £..... (£4.50 per person) made payable to 'OVA'
and **A Stamped Addressed Envelope**
(address for return overleaf)

OVA Forum/Message Board Closed

The Forum which was started about 3 years ago when the website was re-designed has now been closed. This decision was made by the Executive Committee after taking advice from the Forum administrator. The reason for closure was the lack of use by members.

Only about 35 members (out of about 1100!) had registered as Forum users and there were only 7 topics on the Board and no topic had more than 2 replies. The visit rate was 0.04 users per day which I think means one visit every 25 days.

The Forum did need a certain amount of administration and maintenance because there were a large number of applications to join from the public at large – usually more than 10 every day. These applications came from all over world and on investigation it was clear that they were very undesirable unless we all needed to buy Viagra or other sex aids.

So a failed experiment or perhaps we were too far ahead of the time for the Otter valley.



OVA visit to Tucker's Hall, Fore Street, Exeter

Gill Speare

Pine Rise

7A Bedlands Lane

Budleigh Salterton

EX9 6QH

and don't forget the **SAE**

Editor's Bits and Pieces

BUBBLY on Budleigh Beach and Beef on Boxing Day – this edition is packed with reports of a very active autumn for the OVA. I only wish there was more space (and colour) for the many superb pictures that have been offered for inclusion. Perhaps the few included will inspire you to get out and about and see our wonderful locality for yourself – and maybe carry a camera or paint-box and canvas.

There are also sketches in Jed's inimitable style, and reporting with a difference in Chris's write-up of the final leg of the River Otter source to sea walk. I hope that these will also encourage others to put pen or pencil to paper and add a contribution – this newsletter is only ever as good as its contributed material. All the (acting) editor does is shuffle things around to fit the pages!

Spring is coming! The centre pages contain the listing of the walks and talks (and sometimes eats) to encourage you to leave your cosy fireside as the winter turns into a glorious Devon countryside blaze of spring colours. Plans are also being made for further Adventures and 'trips with a bus pass' for the summer, but details will have to wait for the April edition of the Newsletter, when the summer timetables will, I hope, be available.

Advance notice that the OVA's AGM comes up in May, on Wednesday 2nd, and this is post-filling time! Don't be shy – there is always a place for willing volunteers; however little the time you could offer, every little helps. Have a chat with any committee member (back cover) to find out what's involved, fill an existing vacancy, or be nominated for election.

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## OVA seeks Talks Organizer

We are still looking for a Talks Organizer for the OVA. Sue is very happy to discuss this rewarding and enjoyable experience working within the Events Committee.

We have a provisional programme of Talks to the end of 2012, so plenty of time to learn the ropes. Booking halls is not difficult and finding speakers an interesting process. Lots of suggestions are available.

If you'd like to discuss this opportunity to contribute to the OVA and be involved with a great group, or have suggestions for interesting speakers:

Please contact Sue Chapman on 445620 or  
barry.suechapman@btinternet.com

# Annual Estuary Litter-pick, 2012

**W** RITING as Christmas and the winter solstice approach, it takes a mental leap of some magnitude to project forwards to the vernal equinox and the days when daylight triumphs once again. And yet we have to, because this is the last newsletter before our great spring ritual: the Annual Estuary Litter-pick! As ever, the date is determined by a combination of the state of the tides, probable warmth (not too early in March) and the estuary birds' nesting season (not too far into April). The date for your diaries and calendars emerges as **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012**. On that day, high tide is at 7.32am and low tide at 1.54pm so that, from **10 until noon**, the time of the sweep, the tide will be retreating ever further, which is perfect for our purpose.

Readers will be very well aware that litter, especially plastic, constitutes a serious hazard for wild life, especially birds. Throughout the summer and winter we have seen that debris is steadily accumulating and some of us are itching to get out there and remove it. It is essential that we do so.

The success of the clean-up depends entirely upon the efforts of volunteers so please come and join us on that Saturday morning. We will assemble for a briefing at 10.00am in the Lime Kiln Car Park, where litter pickers may park without charge for the 2-hour period. As last year, the OVA is offering a small prize for the most interesting piece of debris collected, so this gives an added interest. Also, Clinton Devon Estates and the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)/EDDC will again be combining to organize the removal of the collected rubbish and you will be provided with plastic bags and suggestions on where to operate. Both sides of the estuary will be scoured up to the White Bridge.

Given that the clean-up starts 2½ hours after high tide, it is obvious that there will be a lot of fresh mud around. Wellington boots are strongly advised and, since it is not difficult to get stuck in the mud, it is essential that children are accompanied by an adult. It is also a good idea to wear protective gloves. A health and safety briefing will be given at 10.00am and all should wait for this before setting off. Dogs are not permitted in the nature reserve.

Participants enjoy this event every year, so why not come along and establish your green credentials for 2012!

Patrick Hamilton



# Otterhead to Ottermouth Walk

## *Some Reflections on the OVA walk (Stage Four)*

### Bettina's Angst

**A**T 09.58 hours on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011 her envoy appeared in the car park at Tipton St John. “Bettina will be on the bridge, *when* you're ready” she summoned. Greetings were terminated, boots left untied, sandwiches grabbed as the OVA members assembled in an orderly fashion for the completion of Diane's original concept: to walk from the source of the River Otter to the sea.

The 8 mile stroll through the idyllic East Devon countryside was to provide a fertile environment for the revelation of a catalogue of human frailty. But first things first. Had those who had driven to Tipton arranged a lift back? “Yes...I think so...I hope so...not sure...I don't know...” replied the chorus. Bettina looked concerned, but enjoined us to “Make a new best friend.” There were handshakes, small talk and banter, and with that, fifteen of us were off. It was a pleasure to actually see and hear the river, and walk on its banks, after earlier stages had frequently taken us 'off piste.'



The train, that “rich man's play thing” (*Phillip Hammond*, 2011) was to figure prominently as at one time the railway had shared top billing with the river in the Otter valley. We scoured the site of the track to Sidmouth while listening to Haylor, our resident historian, bringing the scene to life.

After half an hour and three gates there was a hundred yards between the leader and back marker. Hardly surprising since the men seemed incapable of opening and closing gates secured with a chain. Fortunately, Bettina was on hand to deliver a master class. Harpford Church was passed, accessible by ford or rusty bridge. No one left. Now the first of numerous blackberry stops. Indeed, some were vying to be 'back marker' from where “I can eat as many blackberries as I like”, said one feisty woman, defiantly. It was no more reassuring, in such untamed terrain, to hear from a seasoned 'back marker' that “It's fine until something goes wrong, then you don't know what to do.” Where's Clive when you need him?

Time to reaffirm those travel arrangements, before alighting on the site of Newton Poppleford railway station and listening to more illuminating facts from Haylor, although some were clearly more intent on removing blackberry pips from receding gums. Local history continued to intervene. Next, Dotton Mill of TV Time Team fame before a more recent intervention provided by the river gauging station, which enables the Environment Agency to monitor the impact of extraction by the water company. But what's going on at the back? A hiatus. Only temporary, due to the presence of “An exceptionally fine example of *Araucaria Araucaria*”, explained a tall, dark, handsome chap whose task it was to control an outbreak of communal emotion, not seen since the royal wedding.

Today's coffee break was a stand up and breathe in affair on Dotton Bridge. “Look, swallows dipping!”, the cry went up. Others were too distracted by the bottle that had been slung from the bridge. A one man litter pick ensued at the risk of life and limb.

Throughout the series of walks our leader has paid particular attention to selecting a suitable tree providing all necessary facilities, but on this occasion, as we stood on Dotton Bridge (tempting, but no we didn't), we were invited to “Wander off into the bushes”; never to be seen again, or was that wishful thinking on Bettina's behalf? Poppies abounded. Travel arrangements checked once more. Kingfishers and Dippers were spotted, that were verified by Haylor and Ruth. Rickety Bridge came and went; the Fish Passage, Clamour Bridge and an unconfirmed sighting of a Buzzard. (Resident naturalist eating blackberries).

Lunch on the bank of the river in glorious sunshine. Not far to go now. A last opportunity to exchange Facebook and Twitter addresses and find out when your new friend can come out to play. For some, a chance to reflect and particularly moving was this comment from an earlier 'back marker', “I didn't crumble under the responsibility”, said a 37 year old blonde mother of four, proudly, “and was able to meet and greet some old friends.”

Meanwhile, I managed to obtain an exclusive interview with walk leader, Bettina. “It's been just one big love-in!” she enthused, before checking the return travel arrangements for the last time. But she had a final warning for her followers: “On this stretch you may meet ... *some other people.*”

We were ready with walking poles raised and indeed, we did come face to face with these frightening creatures, only to find that they were more afraid of us. They clearly found our shouts of “Hello”, “Good afternoon” and “Lovely day”, intimidating and stood aside for us.

The pace quickened as we approached the sea and some were panting. “I didn't ask her how many layers she had as she took another one off!”, said one flushed young man. There was great camaraderie too and a rush to help one walker heard to cry “Oh dear, my elastic's gone!” But enough of this titillation. Our focus must be maintained to the end. Bettina, striding out in deep conversation with her pink mobile. Who could it be? Was she calling the Coastguard? And then, at a time when nothing should have interfered with our homecoming, it happened. Every walk leader's nightmare. One of the group disappeared within sight of the finish. Who was the 'back marker'? Then, after some anxious moments when no one did anything, and after keeping the welcome party and the paparazzi waiting, like a Z list celebrity, our intrepid absentee reappeared. He had had to make an unscheduled visit. Relief all round.



Onwards at last, to paddle our fingers in the sea and collect our prize. Chairman, Nicola formally welcomed the group and enthused about our environmentally favourable logistics; Diane presented each of us with a splendid completion certificate; Secretary David poured the Champagne and Mo, who was in a hurry (three more weddings to go to), rounded us up and took some outstanding photographs of the occasion. Handshakes and hugs and we staggered off across the pebbles. If you're ever down at Otter mouth and see Bettina, wandering about, then please give her a lift to Tipton St John. Thanks Bettina and here's to the next one.

**Chris Buckland**

# Talks Reports

## Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October - Coastwatch

Graham Nye and Dee Scott, two members of the presentation team of Coastwatch, gave us an illustrated and anecdotal talk on this increasingly important, nationwide, voluntary body. Trained Watch Keepers keep a close, well magnified eye on beach and estuarine activities, ready at first sign of distress, or hopefully before, to notify either coastguard or RNLi. The Exmouth Coastwatch station, situated above the old bath house, in the water tower, operates a summer and winter service with the help of 84 volunteers.

Look at [www.nci.org.uk](http://www.nci.org.uk) for further information, weather reports and web cam views of Exmouth coastal activity.

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Thursday 17th November - Bees

Roger Lacey, President of Devon Beekeepers presented a well illustrated, geographically wide presentation on beekeeping. He also made a number of useful suggestions for ensuring these important little creatures remain in our gardens and provide us with honey.

- Use soapy water rather than insecticides to get rid of garden pests.
- Allow a wild patch of garden to thrive - an excuse to avoid weeding!
Encourage nettles!
- Boost plant diversity - see www.beehappyplants.co.uk for organic bee plants
- Avoid seeds coated in insecticides
- In hot weather, provide some rain water for the bees
- Think about providing a bee hotel for single bees - a box with straws in, in a sheltered corner provides an ideal basis

Support your local beekeeper. If you have spare land contact Beekeepers and they may position a hive in your garden. Buy local honey for its natural and healthy pollen content.

Did you know that honey labelled as a product from a non EU country is likely to be from China or Brazil and may contain pesticides?

Saturday 7th January - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) / Pub lunch
Budleigh Salterton Free CP, SY061821 6 miles, 3 hours. A New Year's Resolution walk to Littleham and return including lanes, woodland and coast path. Optional lunch at The Feathers with a chance to break your Resolution.

Walk leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

Saturday 21st January 2012 - 10.00am -12.30pm. "The Otter Estuary".
A series of 3 short talks and an informal exhibition at the **Peter Hall**, Budleigh Salterton.

Susan Tickle - discover history in the Lower Otter Valley with references to production of the OVA leaflet.

David Daniel - explains the gradual silting processes in the Otter and illustrates, with map and chart, the receding navigability as ports have moved downstream.

David Jannaway - steers us back to the present, illustrating the Otter as a wildlife sanctuary, especially for wintering birds.

OVA artists and photographers, bring your paintings and photographs, inspired by the Otter Estuary for an informal collective exhibition.

Please label with Name, Title and price (if you wish to sell). Deliver to Peter Hall at 9.30am and collect at end .

Refreshments available. Volunteers appreciated.

Wednesday 25th January - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)
Kersbrook (under railway bridge), SY069830. 5½ miles, 2½ hours. A pleasant walk at this time of year which will include part of the old railway track and some of the coast path between Budleigh and Exmouth.

Walk leader: Shane Badham, 01395 567531

Tuesday 7th February 2012 - 7.30pm TALK "The Inns of Devon"
East Budleigh Village Hall. An illustrated talk by Robert Hesketh.

Wednesday 8th February - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)
Four Firs CP, SY032864 5 Miles, 2½ hours. A circular walk visiting Woodbury Castle and Woodbury and returning via the golf course. Includes tracks, paths and some wooded areas.

Walk leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445872

Saturday 25th February - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)

White Bridge, SY076830. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Our ever popular local walk to Otterton via the Coast path and returning along Park Lane. Plenty of fresh air guaranteed.

Walk leader: John Jones, 01395 443651

Wednesday 29th February - 10.00am. WALK (Energetic)

Newton Popleford Recreation Ground CP, SY087900, 6 miles 3 hours Harpford Commons covering varied terrain on tracks and lanes via the East Devon Way, Joneys Cross, Goosemoor and Dotton

Walk leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Tuesday 6th March – 7.30pm TALK “Dartmoor Layers Of History”

Otterton village hall.

A beautifully illustrated look at how the landscape, and settlements from Prehistoric times, have been overlaid by human activities spanning the two and a half thousand years since. A photographic journey around the moor from prehistoric to modern times. Strange how such a wild place is so man-made !

Speaker: Mo Bowman, professional photographer and Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society.

Wednesday 14th March - 10.00am WALK (Easy)/Pub Lunch

Otter Inn CP, SY078874 Colaton Raleigh. 3 miles, 2 hours. If you don't walk much or want to start walking this gives you the perfect opportunity with a short mainly level walk along local lanes and banks of the Otter. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk leader: John Jones 01395 443651

Saturday 24th March – 10.00am Annual Litter Pick Lime Kiln carpark**Thursday March 29 - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) !!NOTE DATE!!**

East Hill Strips CP, SY118932. 6 miles 3½ - 4 hours to allow time to enjoy the flowers and blossom in 'White's Wood' if the Spring weather is kind to us. Down, up and along East Hill on footpaths, tracks, quiet lanes and across fields. 5 stiles, a couple of steep, shortish climbs and one longer one but with good views to encourage you to the top.

Walk leader: Celia Rustom 01395 263129

Saturday 14th April - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)

Upton Pyne Village Hall CP (at rear), SX910978. 2½ miles, 2 hours. An interesting literary walk following in the footsteps of Jane Austen who stayed with friends in the pretty village of Upton Pyne in the early 1800's. Margaret will identify and explore Jane's inspiration for Barton Valley, Barton Park and the local church where Eleanor and Edward were married in her first novel "Sense and Sensibility" published in 1811. Will not take place if it's raining (drizzle ok) please check with Margaret if in doubt.

Walk leader: Margaret Read 01392 759332

Tuesday 17th April – 7.30pm TALK "OWLS "R" US"

Masonic Hall, Budleigh Salterton (NB - this hall has acquired new chairs!) A talk on the rehabilitation and conservation of birds of prey, with flying guests.

Speakers: Nigel and Jo Palmer of OWLS "R" US.

Saturday 21st April - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)

Joney's Cross CP SY057898 off A3052. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Aylesbere and Hawkerland. Footpaths and tracks over Nature Reserve and through woodland, some gradients and rough ground.

Walk leader: Steve Hagger 01395 442631

Saturday 28th April - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)

Crookes Plantation, Stowford, SY 057866. 5 miles 2½ hours. This popular local walk over Woodbury and Bicton commons, via Yettington. May be muddy.

Walk leader: Shane Badham 01395 567531

Wednesday 2nd May – 7.30pm. OVA AGM

Ottertton Village Hall *Agenda etc with the April Newsletter*

Saturday 12th May - 10.00am. NATURE WALK (Easy)

Budleigh Salterton Free CP SY061821 3 miles, 2 hours. A local nature walk around woodland, field edges and arable land identifying different habitats. Marion will be looking for Spring flowers and plants, listening out for bird song and will welcome questions from walkers.

Walk leader: Marion Nalder 01395 442176

Saturday 19th May - 10.00am. WALK (Energetic)

Sidbury CP (behind Sidbury Social Club), SY139918. 8 miles, 4½ hours including a shortish lunch stop. Fairly challenging walk following part of the East Devon Way using footpaths, woodland trails and green lanes. Returning to Sidbury by rejoining the East Devon Way. Some steep climbs and a sharp down hill towards the end of the walk. Can be very muddy in places following rain. Please bring sufficient fluids and a packed lunch.
Walk leader: Jan Stuart 01395 568235

Wednesday 30th May - 9.12am. BUS WALK (Energetic)/Picnic

A day out in West Dorset. X53 bus from Newton Poppleford. Walk coast path from Burton Bradstock to Abbotsbury – level, but brisk. Return 15.57 bus from Abbotsbury or optional visit to Swannery for fluffy youngsters with return 18.12 bus (arrive N.Pop 20.08) Bring packed lunch and cash for bus & cafe tea. **This is public service bus** – limited capacity, first come/first served. Subject to revised summer timetable – see next news.
Walk leader: Haylor Lass 01395 519338

Wednesday 6th June - 10.00am. WALK (Energetic)/Lunch

The Donkey Sanctuary CP, SY161892. 4 miles, 2½ hours. Circular walk visiting Salcombe Regis and Weston Mouth includes some coastal paths with splendid views, there are some steep climbs. Lunch at the Donkey Sanctuary if desired.
Walk leader: John Jones 01395 443651

Tuesday 12th June – 10.30am. TOWN WALK (Easy)

Sidmouth Museum, Church Street. 1½ hours. A chance to explore Sidmouth town centre with local guide Mike Till. Please take particular note of day and time. *Walk leader:* Mike Till 01395 519338

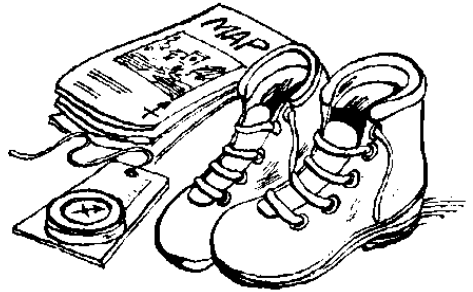
Wednesday 27th June - 10.00am. All Day WALK (Energetic)/Picnic

Knowle Village Hall CP, SY052827. 12 miles, 6 hours. Circular walk with a packed lunch stop including Squabmoor Reservoir, Woodbury Castle followed by a 3 mile loop to the north west before returning via Colaton Raleigh Common, Yettington and Shortwood Common. Mainly flat on paths and tracks with two short sections on metalled roads. Don't forget your packed lunch and drinks!
Walk leader: Mike Paddison 01395 446550

Compass & Map Reading Course

ON SATURDAY 10th September, 12 of us set out on a sunny day for a trip to Dartmoor to learn 'basic navigation' with maps and compasses. By the time we reached the foothills of Dartmoor, we realised we were going to need our new skills in earnest as the thickening mist swirled around us.

Tony Burgess welcomed us to the High Moorland Visitor Centre in Princetown and the morning was spent learning the elements of compass bearings, planning routes and making a route card for our afternoon 'walk' on the moor led by Tony.



After lunch, as we stepped off the road on to a sodden, reed-tufted mossy bog, ignoring footpaths and in virtually nil visibility and driving rain, we knew we were in for something a bit different. We set off in a diagonal line into the mist relying on very suspect compass bearings in some cases and trying desperately to see our dripping maps in the gloom as we waded and leapt and splashed and sometimes sat down altogether. Tony kept telling us how well we were doing! Amazingly, over some hours and miles, we actually came across the fixed points – small tors, mossy pools and burial mounds – that Tony had set as our destinations.

It was brilliant fun and, to round it all off, as we got back to Princetown, the mist suddenly completely cleared and Dartmoor turned from the Hound of the Baskervilles to a pleasant, warm and sunny autumn afternoon and beautiful views of where we had just walked.



Dartmoor Layers of History Adventure

A “season of mists” it certainly was as 30 of us set out from Budleigh Salterton for our day on Dartmoor on Friday 30th September. However, once we were past Moretonhampstead, the clouds disappeared and the sun shone down gloriously on us for the rest of the day.

We began our walk with a steady climb up Shapley Common and Tor, with several stops for our guide, Tony Burgess, to show us and explain the significance of many granite features from the Bronze Age period, such as hut circles, reeves and corn ditches. We also looked at the stone walls which were built in Medieval times and we were able to identify shiners and stretchers – the names given to certain of the key building stones in the walls. It was certainly a skilled and laborious task building walls which have withstood all winds and weathers for hundreds of years.



We then descended Hookney Tor to Grimspound, the impressive remains of a Bronze Age walled settlement which would have contained 24 huts – now only stones from the walls remain. After a short coffee break, we walked towards Headland Warren Farm where we could see clear evidence of tin mining activities and the pounds where the warreners kept the rabbits to feed the miners. It was fascinating to see the remains of what would have been a lodging house for the miners.

We then climbed up to a Bronze Age stone row where some of us experienced the mystery of ley lines, using Tony's metal rods. A further climb past wheel pits from the tin mine workings took us to Bennett's Cross, where the coach picked us up and took us to Postbridge for our picnic lunch.

After lunch, with no time for a quick snooze, we walked through Bellever Forest to see a fine example of a Bronze Age burial chamber, known as a cist. All around this area were the remains of many hut circles, which indicated that this was once an area of some importance. Then, crossing the Two Moors Way, we walked to Bellever Tor. From there, were magnificent views all around and a 'letterbox' was found – the third or fourth of the day – evidence of 20th and 21st century activity on the moor!



We then returned to the coach at Postbridge and were driven to Dartmeet where we enjoyed a cream tea at Badger's Holt. During the day, Tony related to us some of the Dartmoor legends, but I'm pleased to say that no one was stolen away by the 'witch' and the 'hairy hands' did not affect the coach's progress.

It was a truly fascinating day and I'm sure that now we will all look upon the chunks of granite and the scars on the landscape of Dartmoor with a little more understanding.

Many thanks to our excellent guide for his clear explanations and to Mo Bowman for organising such a fantastic day.

Wendy Winson

Exmouth Walk, Wednesday 5 October

WHO DIED TRAGICALLY on Christmas Day 1956? Whose bodies rested in “Cat’s Castle”? What fraction of a nautical mile is the length of a rope walk? The visit of which “Royal” gave the Royal Beacon Hotel its name? Why did General Gordon never live in the house he had built in 1840? Hopefully these questions can all be answered by the twenty one people who turned out for the “Exmouth Resort and Port” walk.

As we strolled along the sea front the sand dunes and magnificent sea views reminded us of why Exmouth became a resort. Designated stops to admire a building of interest or to listen to a story often resulted in informative comments from members of the group which added to the enjoyment of this part of the walk.

Ignoring the modern luxury flats we entered the dock area and looked for evidence of Exmouth as a port. A lone mooring bollard has been saved near to what remains of the rope walk and tar pit and the tide was out far enough for us to walk along the beach of Camperdown Gut which still evokes the old boat building days. The Trinity House Buoy Store, now a Grade Two listed building, still provides a service for today’s sailors.

Moving on swiftly we enjoyed a late but much needed coffee stop at “The Fountain Café”. Suitably refreshed we continued up Beacon Hill taking in the view and noting the eminent people who lived in the houses here. Here Lady Nelson commiserated with Lady Byron on the waywardness of husbands and Franz Liszt tinkled the ivories in what was then the Beacon Hotel.

More stories and more famous people kept us going along the high road and we completed our walk slightly later than planned but hopefully more knowledgeable. It was great to lead such a lively and informative group and my thanks go to all those who added their stories to mine.

Hazel Harland

(For those who were not on the walk the answers are;
Will Carder; Josiah Nesbit and his four children; one tenth;
the King of Saxony; he was killed at Khartoum)

Autumn Fossil Hunt

AT 11.00 hours precisely on 17th October, 29 old fossils from OVA met up at the Town Hall in Lyme Regis. Their mission – to find even older fossils! Location – the Cretaceous beds and Jurassic beds which over the years have been very productive in the discovery of fossils.

But wait, I must not rush on. To start our day, Chris Andrews, the Learning and Outreach Officer for East Devon gave us a lecture on ‘Fossils and the History of the Earth’ going back to 4,600 million years ago. As he modestly said: “give or take a fortnight”. Chris fell into the category of Patrick Moore and David Bellamy. If you weren’t a Fossilologist before, you were after listening to him. Such was his enthusiasm that he ran well into lunchtime. We forgave him. We heard about the legendary Mary Anning, the most famous Palaeontologist (this is the real name for people who study fossils) from Lyme Regis. She lived from 1799 – 1845 during which she made some amazing discoveries of prehistoric reptiles. We even learnt about and examined prehistoric fossil splats (droppings to you and me) which are of great value because they reveal the diet of the reptile.

After lunch we were joined by Paddy Howe the Museum Geologist and set off down the beach clutching hammers and eager to break open rocks and boulders to discover the leg of a passing dinosaur or other such creature. But alas, more instruction was to follow before we were released and finally, like shots from a sling we rushed to the area of the cliff face and began a painstaking search. We had been wound up with talk of the number of various fossils each day which were



found. We discovered iron pyrites, ammonites and belemnites. We even discovered vertebrae from a smaller monster. However the big discoveries eluded us on this occasion. We discovered the rear axle of a horseless carriage but on reflection decided it fell into a different category.

Nevertheless, I think it fair to say that the enthusiasm of our guide rubbed off onto us and made our day so enjoyable. Our thanks to Rosemary Jerrard and Caroline Allen for their organisation.

Bob Wiltshire

Axe Wetlands Safari,

26 BRAVE SOULS from OVA presented themselves at the Tesco car park in Seaton on 6th December 2011: their mission to take part in a walk on the wild side, otherwise known as a wetland wildlife safari. Despite the forecast of heavy showers we set off and experienced wonderful weather until we sat down for lunch at the Tram Stop restaurant in Colyton. Then once again on the way back by tram (front cover picture), it was good until we reached Seaton, when the heavens opened. God looks after his/her own.

Our guide through the wetlands was Jim Hunter who was most informative. Unfortunately he could not find anything sufficiently rare to stimulate the twitcher genes in us.



We heard about higher land stewardship, when the local farmers are paid various amounts of compensation for not carrying out their farming functions on the land. e.g. not cutting hedges. (I applied, but it is only for farmers, sorry chaps.) He took us through the intensive mosaic of habitats created specifically for wildlife watching. We went into numerous up-market hides with opening viewing flaps to keep out cold winds and rain. Eat your heart out River Otter.

We even discovered barn owl pellets in one hide. They were eagerly bagged up by Jim for examination after he had had his lunch. We saw the floating rafts, where the clay trays recorded the footprints of inquisitive small mammals. Stoats, mink and water voles cannot resist a good tunnel and hence leave a record of their passage.

Although water voles are becoming more prolific on the wetlands, we failed to see any. But then 27 people clumping along is probably pretty daunting to a small mammal. However, I am given to understand that two of our number did a recce some weeks before and swore that they saw a little figure rowing lazily down one of the dikes and in the stern another little velvet clad figure trailing a paw languidly through the water. And yes, in the bow was a wicker picnic basket. Now who would believe it?



Our walk took us past numerous flocks of birds, all identifiable at such close quarters. Alas we did not find the Jabberwock, or the Jub Jub bird or the frumious Bandersnatch. Perhaps they are migratory.

For the finale of the day we were treated to a 25 minute tram ride from Colyton to Seaton. Most of us got a bird's eye view from the top deck, (observation deck to you,) of all we had seen on our way up the river. However this was rather more leisurely. Some disappointment though when the driver warned us in the strongest terms, that the pole connecting cable to tram was not for pole dancing. Some nonsense about if the contact was lost with the cable, the tram stopped. Just as we were about to hold the auditions for the first artiste. Nevertheless it was a wonderful tram, a wonderful ride and a wonderful day out.

Our thanks as always to Caroline Allen for her precise organisation and astrological confidence in the weather.

Bob Wiltshire.

Footnote: To see local weather information go to: www.ottervalley.co.uk

Winter Walk Report

WINTER WALKS have their own special pleasures. It is something to do with making the most of short days, and enjoying the countryside when others are cooped up indoors.

Ten walkers, connoisseurs of such things, set out from Colaton Raleigh Church in sunshine on 7th December. Coincidentally another (non-OVA) group of walkers set off from the same place at the same time. They had planned a different walk but, as they were using the OVA's "Twelve Walks" book, we could hardly object and wished them well.

Pausing to admire the 800 year old yew in the churchyard, we passed above Place Court, probably the oldest inhabited house in the Lower Otter Valley, and continued along Back Lane climbing steadily but easily towards Colaton Raleigh Common. At Stowford, the road twice crosses the leat which was the original water supply for Bicton House, and still feeds Bicton Lake.



There was a fine view eastwards from the edge of the Common, approximately 100 m above sea level. Multiplying this height by the diameter of the earth, and then taking the square root, showed that the distance to the sea horizon was 36 kilometres. After such mental contortions, it was a relief to get moving again along a delightful path at the limit of the cultivated fields. Approaching Hawkerland, the top of the Bicton Belvedere (China Tower) was just visible among the trees. It was built about 1840 for Lady Rolle to take tea, and enjoy the view, and later used to store her magnificent collection of china.

Hawkerland was once a much larger settlement, but is still a delightful spot much appreciated by walkers for its excellent access to the Common. The route back to the start passed through Stoneyford and along Naps Lane. At one of the Dotton bore holes, Haylor Lass explained how the water supply for the Lower Otter Valley comes from aquifers 100m underground. The thought of liquid refreshment encouraged several walkers to head straight to the Otter Inn at the end of the walk for a well-earned pint of the eponymous ale and a convivial lunch.

Brian Turnbull

Literary Festival Town Walks

David Daniel and Michael Downs did a superb job of leading the OVA contributions to the Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival. I also hear that Nick Speare (former chair) did a great job. Jed Falby reports in his own inimitable pictorial style:



Late November Walk

28 WALKERS, including a number of people new to the area, assembled in the Four Firs car park for this circular 5 mile walk. We went up towards Woodbury Castle before turning right, following a gentle descent to Yettington. The path to Hayes Wood took us through fields of pigs – I have never seen so many – and pens of lively piglets, but the pheasants seem to have gone into hiding (or have been shot!).

An easy stretch across the commons brought us to Black Hill Quarry where the hollows are being graded and the whole area returned to its natural state following the cessation of quarrying activities. A short stiff climb followed by a relaxing tramp back down to the car park concluded a walk with friendly companions in mild, dry conditions – such a contrast to the severe weather this time last year.

Stuart Lovett

OVA Christmas Dinner

15th December 2011 was a very wet, dark and windy night. We all ran into East Devon Golf Club and immediately our spirits rose with the warmth and the beautifully decorated room. The evening went on getting better and better with the good festive food, the inscrutable quiz, the extravagant raffle prizes and our tuneful carol singing, led by Haylor and Ruth Lass. It was a pity we had fewer members attending than previous years and we concluded that there is a limit to the number of turkey meals a body can sustain! The Events Committee would, therefore, like to change our annual celebration to a Midsummer Buffet Party, again at East Devon Golf Club. This will take place on **6th July**, when we will be able to enjoy the view and we hope the weather will be glorious. Details next time.

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## Boxing Day Walk

About 30 people and half a dozen dogs assembled at East Budleigh Car Park on Boxing Day, pleased that the early drizzle had abated. Very welcome mulled wine and biscuits were consumed and then the company set off on their leisurely walk, led by David Daniel.

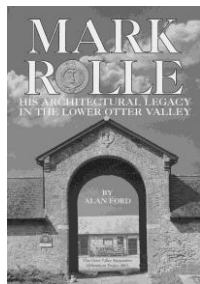
We started off in the churchyard, where David reminded us that there were several entries in Ovapedia about East Budleigh. We cautiously made our way down the churchyard steps which had become slippery due to fallen yew berries, turned right at Raleigh's statue and then left up through the Recreation Ground. A herd of cows came to welcome us and approaching the obelisk, we saw a flock of wagtails swooping over the fields.

Arriving at St Mary's Church, Bicton, Marion Nalder drew our attention to the avenue of sycamore trees which must have once served as an approach to Bicton House from the west. The party cautiously approached the main road and crossed safely to take the footpath to Otterton Bridge. This was a very pleasant section of the walk through woods and alongside the banks of the stream.

Leaving Otterton behind us, we walked south along the River Otter, passing many other walkers. Just after Clamour Bridge we left the river to join the footpath leading up to Frogmore Road, back across the B3178 into East Budleigh, passing a rather sad looking Frank's Patch and on to the Sir Walter Raleigh Inn. Here our pre-ordered meals were quickly served and the rest of the morning passed in convivial eating, drinking and talking.

Thanks to David and Nicky Daniel for a most enjoyable Boxing Day.

# OVA Publications

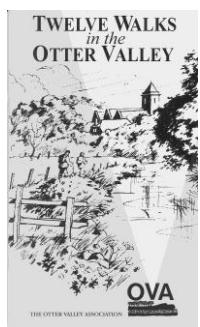


## **Mark Rolle**

### **His Architectural Legacy in the Lower Otter Valley**

Ever wondered about the many improved farm buildings and cottages in this area? This lavishly illustrated book gives a very readable picture of how a large landed estate was managed in the last 40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

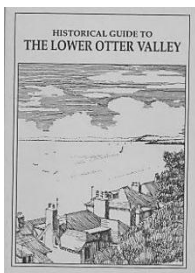
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £1.50 P&P)



## **Twelve Walks in the Otter Valley.**

The area of the Lower Otter Valley is covered by a network of footpaths, mostly waymarked and in good condition. OVA members have compiled these walks, each with clear directions and illustrated with a sketch map. They range from 4 mile easy walks to a more energetic 9½ miler. There are notes on places of interest to whet your appetite for further exploration.

£2.50 from your village rep (or plus £1.00 P&P)



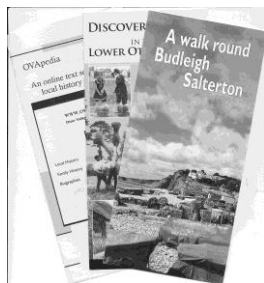
## **Historical Guide to the Lower Otter Valley**

Want to know more about the area you live in or are visiting? This book is packed with detailed information about the places, buildings, people and natural history of this beautiful area, from the very earliest times to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

£3.50 from your village rep (or plus £1.50 P&P)

See our website [ova.org.uk](http://ova.org.uk) or from

Booksales, OVA, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN



## **Leaflets**

The OVA also publish a number of (free) leaflets about the history, flora & fauna and walking the villages of our area of interest in the lower Otter Valley. They can usually be found in the Tourist Information Centre and in other outlets around the valley.

# The Otter Valley Association

## Executive Committee (01395)

|                        |                |        |
|------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Chairman (acting)      | Nicola Daniel  | 445960 |
| Vice-chairman (acting) | Haylor Lass    | 568786 |
| Hon Secretary (acting) | David Daniel   | 445960 |
| Treasurer              | Roger Saunders | 443248 |

### *Committee Chairmen*

|                     |                  |        |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| Natural Environment | Patrick Hamilton | 445351 |
| Events              | Nicola Daniel    | 445960 |
| History             | David Daniel     | 445960 |

### *Parish Representatives (to whom queries should be addressed initially)*

|                    |                  |        |
|--------------------|------------------|--------|
| Budleigh Salterton | John Jones       | 443651 |
|                    | George Maddaford | 446077 |
| East Budleigh      | Christine Hadley | 443607 |
| Otterton           | John Winson      | 568274 |
| Colaton Raleigh    | <i>Vacancy</i>   |        |
| Newton Popleford   | Haylor Lass      | 568786 |

### *Other EC Members*

|                             |                  |        |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------|
| Assistant Minutes Secretary | Robert Wiltshire | 444395 |
| Membership Secretary        | Clive Bowman     | 446892 |
| Publicity Secretary         | Lynne Wright     | 442703 |

### *Other contacts*

|                         |               |        |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Webmaster               | Alan Huddart  | 446761 |
| Speaker Secretary       | Susan Chapman | 445620 |
| Walks Organiser         | John Jones    | 443651 |
| Newsletter Distributors | Jenny Young   | 444090 |
|                         | Chris Hagger  | 442631 |

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