

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

PO Box 70 Budleigh Salterton EX9 6WN
www.ova.org.uk



Autumn Newsletter

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The cover photo is the view from High Peak  
taken on the walk of Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

The next issue will be published in the New Year 2015:  
copy needs to be with the editor before **30<sup>th</sup> December 2014**, please.

# Editor's Jottings

**A**NOTHER NEWSLETTER packed with Activities – a long list of walks for you to get out and enjoy the countryside's autumn colours, complemented by the OVA's season of talks for the darker evenings, with a fascinating range of subjects to interest you. By the time you read this, the first talk of the season will have taken place, but there are good things to come.

The last Newsletter also contained a number of interesting reports of the walks. Despite the summer quarter having more walks than ever before in the OVA's history, by the editor's deadline I had not received a single report of any of the many walks. So come on folks – I know you enjoy being out there walking, but you must come home and sit by the fire sometimes, so how about putting pen to paper for other's enjoyment?

I am still only 'Interim Editor'. I took on the job as a rescue when otherwise the Newsletter would have died, but I'd love to pass the job on.

The importance of knowing what to do in an emergency was brought home to me this summer on holiday in Shetland. While walking the coast path in the furthest north corner of Britain, overlooking the delightfully-named Muckle Flugga lighthouse, a member of our group slipped and broke her ankle. It was soon obvious that more than first aid was needed, so a 999 call was made to the Coastguard. Because of strong winds and steep terrain they winched the lady off in the helicopter – and made a brilliant job of it: she was in hospital within the hour and has recovered well.

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## Newsletter Apologies

Due to difficulties with the labelling last time, some of you may not have received a Summer Newsletter in July, or it may have been severely delayed in reaching you. Our apologies for this – our band of volunteers will be trying hard to get it right this time. But they are hard pushed, so if you could give an hour once every three months to trot round your local patch and deliver a small bundle of newsletters, please get in touch.

Incidentally, if you are reading this over someone's shoulder and haven't had your own copy this year – it probably means you haven't paid your subscription: also please get in touch, with —.

Membership Secretary email: [Membership@ova.org.uk](mailto:Membership@ova.org.uk)

# Chairman's Report

**T**HE OVA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE spends a fair amount of time discussing planning applications in our area. As we are fortunate to live in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) we have a lot to protect.

## Planning

Planning regulations should help us preserve this special place. The national regulations (National Policy Planning Framework –NPPF) state “Planning permission should be refused for major developments in (AONBs) except in exceptional circumstances”. East Devon District Council policy guidelines (Policy EN1, East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011) say that “In an AONB the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty will be given priority over other considerations. Development will only be permitted.....where the proposal conserves and enhances the landscape character....or it can be demonstrated that the development is in the national interest and that there are no alternate sites elsewhere”.

A similar policy (Strategy 46) is contained in the draft East Devon Local Plan 2006 -2026.

Unfortunately too often these guidelines and policies are ignored.

Developments continue to be approved that do nothing to enhance the natural beauty of the area, but instead swell the populations of the towns and villages without regard to infrastructure and traffic, and expand the built boundaries into the surrounding countryside. Our area is not unique in this respect. A recent review into the workings of the NPPF by the Communities and Local Government Committee in Westminster, attended by Dr. Daniel of the OVA (*see her report on page 10*) heard that the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development is seen as a charter for developers, with little regard for the social and environmental consequences.

So what can be done?

If a significant development proposal is not sympathetic to the AONB guidelines, the OVA submits comments on the East Devon planning application web site. We did this recently on an application by Badger Homes to build 51 houses and a care home outside the boundary of Budleigh Salterton on land between Barn Lane and the B3178.

## Heritage Assets

Another approach is to identify places and things that are particularly worth protecting, but do not qualify for listed building protection. This is where the Heritage Asset program comes in. In the last newsletter Dee Woods wrote an article describing how the OVA is working with other organisations to list heritage assets in the lower Otter valley. Once compiled this list will be taken into consideration when planning applications are evaluated by East Devon District Council. The program is now up and running. Please participate by nominating assets that you think should be preserved in our area. Full details about how to do this can be found on the OVA website ([www.ova.org.uk/heritage-asset-list](http://www.ova.org.uk/heritage-asset-list)), leaflets are available from the Tourist Information Centre and Fairlynch Museum.

## Sparkling New Website

Talking about the OVA website, the new and improved version is up and running ([www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)). As well as stunning photographs of our local area and access to the OVApedia historical database, the site now offers an active news feed (follow link from home page). Look here for news and last minute changes to walks and talks and also general updates of interest to OVA members.



Particular thanks are due to Alan Huddart, who has handed over the reins of webmaster. Alan became involved with our web site c.2005 when we were paying an outside contractor £750pa to manage a site with the aim of providing us with a contents managed system. This never happened and Alan was the person who provided us with the options for breaking free, and of these we chose COSMIC. Alan was the key driver in setting the spec and getting the first COSMIC site off the ground (at the time the OVApedia requirement was pretty novel) and he and David Daniel have developed the new site. Alan has also been responsible for fielding all enquiries through the web, e-mailing members about key events and managing the photo gallery (of necessity an add-on to the web site).

## Beavers and Balsam

The wild beavers living on the Otter River have put the Otter Valley in the national press and on local TV. According to the Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) at least six, and perhaps as many as fifteen beavers live on the river in three separate family groups. They may have been here for up to 10 years; there is certainly strong evidence from 2007. The DWT is preparing to submit a license application and five-year management plan to Natural England to allow the beavers to remain on the river after being checked for parasites and verification that they are indeed European beavers and not illegal North American immigrants.

The beavers bring several positive benefits to the valley. As the only wild beaver population in England they are attracting tourists, and providing an economic benefit. They also have a positive impact on the natural environment. Biodiversity, including but not limited to amphibians, has been shown to greatly increase in the presence of beavers. Their water management activities appear to increase fish spawning areas, and improve water quality by filtering out silt and nutrients. They can help mitigate flood risk by slowing water flow from upstream areas. The OVA Executive Committee has therefore decided to support the DWT in their licence application to keep the beavers.

Sticking with the environmental theme a little longer, I would like to thank all the volunteers who have worked on Himalayan Balsam removal this year. Our strategy for the last few years has been to concentrate on clearing the tributaries to the Otter, which are less likely to be re-seeded by upstream Balsam. This means that there has been limited visual impact on the main river. However, after many clearance sessions the volunteers are having great success on the areas that have been targeted, with less regrowth this year than in previous years. Attacking the main river is our ultimate goal.

Finally, I would like to invite you to attend the OVA Christmas Dinner, to be held at the East Devon Golf Club on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December, starting at 7.00 pm. The cost of £25 per person includes a two course Christmas dinner, a glass of wine or soft drink and live music. As always, details are on the web site ([www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)) and also on the following page of this newsletter.

**Roger Saunders**

# Christmas Party

The OVA Christmas Party will take place at The East Devon Golf Club in Budleigh Salterton on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December. Drinks **7.00 pm**.

Sit Down for three-course meal 7.30 pm

Please put this date in your diaries now. It is shaping up to be both a fun and great value evening spiced up with a special-prize raffle for some lucky individuals!

The cost per person is £25. This will include a glass of wine or soft drink on arrival and a fabulous two course Christmas Dinner, with choice of menu to suit all tastes, and coffee and mints. There is a large wine list for you to select your favourite tippie.

We are honoured to have live jazz band 'soWhat' to serenade and entertain us.

Tickets will be available at all OVA Social events. Alternatively, you can fill in both sides of the application form below, enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope and a cheque payable to the OVA, and send this to Otter Valley Association, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN.

Please also indicate your choice of first and second course.



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## OVA Christmas Party Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2014 7.00pm

Please send me ..... tickets

Name(s) .....

Address .....

.....

and postcode .....

tel: ....., email .....

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... (£25.00 per person) payable to OVA

**Send to**

**OVA Xmas Dinner, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN  
and don't forget the **Stamped Addressed Envelope****

Please show your support for the OVA by coming to our Christmas Party. It is a great opportunity to meet up with old friends and to meet fresh faces!

**First Course:**

- a) Roast Turkey served with all the trimmings, *or*
- b) Fresh Fillet of Plaice served with a white wine and Exmouth crab sauce
- c) Wild Mushroom and Sunblushed Tomato Risotto served with homemade garlic bread

**Second Course:**

- a) Lemon Posset served in a Chocolate Cup with fresh Raspberries, *or*
- b) Christmas Pudding served with Brandy Sauce
- c) Strawberry Eton Mess

Coffee and Mints

If there is anyone with whom you would like to be seated, please indicate this and we will do our best to accommodate your wishes.

Margaret Arnold



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Ticket application for the **OVA Christmas Party**

**Menu Choices**

(names)

**First course:** a) Roast Turkey .....

b) Plaice .....

c) Risotto .....

**Second course:** a) Lemon Posset .....

b) Christmas Pudding .....

c) Eton Mess .....

I would like to be seated with .....

-----

and don't forget the **Stamped Addressed Envelope**



# New Web Site

**A**S SOME OF YOU will have discovered we now have a brand new, cutting edge, web site which brings us into the modern era of wide screens, tablets and smart phones. It has a very different look with scrolling images on the home page showcasing the wonderful scenery and OVA activities within our valley. So please take some time to familiarise yourself with the new layout.

All our mainstream sub-committee activities can be found under the “OVA Groups” tab and all our future events are listed under the “OVA Diary”. The home page also features the next two events about to take place and the latest news. You can catch up with all our news under “About Us” tab.

In the short time since our launch we have posted four important news items. Within days of doing so, the details of our Local Heritage Asset project had been picked up by Civic Voice and the Devon branch of the CPRE. Clear evidence that this web site is already raising the profile of the OVA. If you want to know what is happening, keep an eye on the site. [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) If you really can't find what you are looking for you will find the “search this site” window at the top of the home page much more helpful than before

There are also one or two features, such as a members only section and integrated diary, which we have incorporated and tested but have decided not yet to implement.

This is a major new development for us by Cosmic, the Honiton based social responsibility IT and consultancy business we have used before.

After nearly ten years as our web master and playing a key role in the development of this and the previous web site, Alan Huddart has stepped down.

We are delighted that Martin Smith will be joining me in running the web site but, with its greater potential to serve the membership with news and information, we would still welcome more volunteers.

Although much of the web site is new we did transfer all the old articles into it. Some of these go back to our very first web site and would benefit from being refreshed. If you find something that looks a bit out of date, please let us know.

**David Daniel**

# A House of Commons Ear

**O**N MONDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014 I attended the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's investigation into the workings of the Central Government's National Policy Planning Framework (the planning bible for the country) as a representative of the Otter Valley Association. This was a follow up to the submission the OVA made as to how we thought planning was evolving in our part of the world and what the OVA would like to be improved.

Eighty representatives from all over the country attended, representing parish councils, amenity associations and those who made individual submissions. We sat in tables of eight representatives with a MP from the committee sitting on each table for 20 minutes asking questions. The MPs then moved on. We had 2 conservative MPs, 1 labour MP and the academic advisor to the committee sitting with us so the questions they all asked were very varied.

The positive outcome of the day was that the MPs heard at close hand the range of planning problems experienced by communities in the country.

Representatives demonstrated that they were not just NIMBYS but the planning system was in chaos. Developers were building where ever they chose as Local Authorities had no power to say no, and even if they did so, the Planning Inspectorate would grant planning permission at an appeal. The result is:

large tracts of agricultural land being built on; villages doubling in size; brownfield sites in the centre of old industrial towns being left, yet the green fields around the margins of the town being built on instead as it was cheaper; the green belt eroded; AONB protection swept aside. All this is happening with no planned infrastructure to accompany the developments.

There was discussion on whether developers could ever deliver truly affordable housing.

There was a consensus that democracy was suffering as local consultations promised in The Localism Bill had been buried in the rush of developers to build.

This hearing was for the "small" voices. The "big" voices and national organisations had their evidence examined in formal committee sessions.



Portcullis House where the meeting took place is a beautiful, contemporary, building with purpose-built wood panelled meeting rooms. It is built around an atrium which is a meeting area for MPs and their constituents. Corridors are lined with contemporary portraits of MPs.

It was a wonderful opportunity to meet representatives from all parts of the country, all with different problems as a result of the NPPF. Some areas are suffering enormously and there are many dedicated people devoting a lot of energy to meeting the needs of housing in their area in a way the community can live with.

Do we think we were listened to? On balance – yes.

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## More groups champion local heritage

Leek and District Civic Society, Otter Valley Association and the Cockermouth Civic Trust are the latest groups to join the growing number of communities across England calling for the establishment of a local heritage list.

A local heritage list is extremely important as councils have to give consideration to any changes being proposed to a building on such a list. Generating a local heritage list helps highlight the local views of the community about what they value in the local area.

And it really can make a difference – just ask local people in Camden, where a pub was recently saved from demolition after the council identified it on a local heritage list.

Local Heritage Listing is a great way to use your voice to protect the buildings you care about.

**From Civic Voice, Issue 28 - August 2014**



# Local Heritage Assets Listing Project

The project was successfully launched on 14<sup>th</sup> September with a heritage walk around the village of Otterton. The group looked at the many fine historic listed buildings around the village, and Dee Woods led the walk and discussed the local heritage listing project.

The event was well supported and the group was lucky to have additional information from the Chairman of the Parish Council, Tony Bennett, who has lived all his life in Otterton.



The OVA is seeking volunteers to help with the local heritage project, and is hoping that OVA members and the local community will nominate well-loved heritage features all around the lower Otter valley. For further information see the OVA website : [www.oVA.org](http://www.oVA.org). or pick up a nomination leaflet from Budleigh Salterton Library, the TIC, Otterton Mill, East Budleigh Community shop, or Colaton Raleigh shop.

**Dee Woods**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at the White Bridge (OS Explorer 115, SY 075 830), 5 miles Coastal path to Crab Ledge, inland to Colliver Cross, then via Clamour Bridge to finish along river path back to the White Bridge.

Maybe muddy in places and windy on the coast path.

Walk Leader: John Jones 01395 443 651

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30pm – TALK**

Budleigh Salterton Peter Hall. Joint Fairlynch/OVA Talk

‘Budleigh Salterton in the War Years: a child’s view’

Meg Peacock is a sister of the composer Richard Rodney Bennett and was brought up in Budleigh Salterton in the 1940s.

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at East Budleigh car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 066 849), 8½ miles

Walk via Clamour Bridge, coastal path to Ladram Bay, High Peak (great climb, great views!), Bar’s Lane, Anchoring Hill, Otterton, Old Bickton Church, East Budleigh. Please bring a picnic!

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 10.00am – Guided WALK**

Start at White Bridge (OS Explorer 115, SY 076 830), 2½ miles, 2 hours

A leisurely walk along the River Otter watching and identifying the arriving winter birds with Doug Cullen, Voluntary Warden of the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust.

Please bring binoculars if you have them.

Walk Leader: Doug Cullen, 01395 567 574

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Colaton Raleigh Church (OS Explorer 115, SY 082 872), 7 miles Passaford Lane (the only steep uphill section), Mutters Moor, coastal path, green lanes, River Otter, and back to Colaton Raleigh Church.

“A wonderful walk, well worth the effort!”

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull 01395 567 339



**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Castle Neroche car park, (OS Explorer 128, ST 274 157), 8¾ miles, 5 hours. Castle Neroche, a 1 hour drive from Budleigh, is 3km north of the Eagle Tavern on the A303 just after the short dual carriageway road at Marsh. Alternatively, assemble at Newton Poppleford Playing Field (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), to share cars for a 09:00 departure. Easy walking, mostly good tracks, with a short length of country road. The walk is mainly in the forest, adjacent to agricultural farmland.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568 158

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Trinity Nature Reserve car park, (OS Explorer 116, SY 307 957), 5 miles. A circular walk starting through the plantation and then dropping down Hoyton Hill towards Yawl. Then to Yawl Cross Walk, via Mary's Lane, to Yawl Hill and then down Carswell Bottom, with good views towards Uplyme. Before heading back around Knoll Hill ending with a steep walk up Cathole Lane back to the Trinity Plantation.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insull 01404 811 267

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Newton Poppleford Playing Field (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), 7½ miles. Walk to Southerton, Venn Ottery & Common, Manor Farm, Tophayes Farm, Aylesbeare, Halfway Inn, Aylesbeare Common, Woolcombes, Harpford Common, Benchams, Back Lane to Newton Poppleford. Please bring a picnic!

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30pm – TALK****'From Beer to Brisbane and back', Otterton Village Hall**

Illustrated talk on the working life of a Master Stonemason, over a period of 60 years. Born in Beer, Peter has spent a lifetime working on conservation and preservation projects from Exeter Cathedral to St John's Cathedral in Brisbane Australia.

Speaker: Peter Dare

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Wheathill Plantation car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 041 847), 3 miles. A short and sociable walk on the commons to relieve those growing pre-Christmas pressures.

Walk Leader: David Daniel 01395 445 960

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 10.30am – WALK**

Start at the car park opposite the Norman Lockyer Observatory (OS Explorer 115, SY 139 881), 6 miles / 3 hours. Joining the SW Coast Path to Weston Mouth and the inevitable climb from the beach to Weston, the Donkey Sanctuary for lunch (or bring your own) and the charming village of Salcombe Regis.

Walk Leader: David Buss 01395 442 621 / 07920 114 573

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Colaton Raleigh Church (OS Explorer 115, SY 082 872), 5 miles. A gentle meander down green lanes and over the commons, visiting Dotton, Hawkerland and Naps lane. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull 01395 567 339

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December, 10.30am – WALK**

Start at Newton Poppleford Playing Field (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), 5-6 miles. A circular walk picking up the East Devon Way at Harpford going up to Fire Beacon Hill (This is a fairly steep climb, but well worth the effort). We will then walk around the hill and drop down to Coombe, through Hollowhead Cross and onto Tipton St John, then following the Otter back to Newton Poppleford.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insull 01404 811 267

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 7.00pm – OVA Christmas Party**

East Devon Golf Club – see details and application, pages 7-8

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Knowle Village Hall car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 7½ miles. A walk to West Down Beacon, coastal path, Sandy Bay, High Land of Orcombe, Maer Lane, Littleham Brook, Green Farm, disused railway track, Knowle Village.

Bring a picnic or eat early for Christmas at the Britannia Inn on our return.

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December, 10.30 am – WALK**

Start at East Budleigh car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 066 849), 4 miles. Gentle Boxing Day walk across the commons at this time of good cheer. Optional lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

**Please telephone** walk leader **by 6<sup>th</sup> December** to book lunch

Walk Leader: David Daniel 01395 445 960

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Knowle Village Hall car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 5½ miles, 2.5 hours. A circular undulating walk over the commons to Bystock Fishponds with varied topography including woodland and heathland. May be muddy. Optional lunch at the Britannia Inn.  
Walk leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442 631

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 7.30pm – TALK.****Knowle Village Hall. ‘Old Devonshire Milestones’**

Tim Jenkinson, County Representative for the Milestone Society (a registered charity) in Devon, will talk about the old milestones and mile plates that survive at the wayside of Devon's roads. He will also talk a little about the old toll-houses from the turnpike era with emphasis on the East Devon area (such as East Budleigh, Exmouth and Sidmouth) with associated photos.

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Trinity Hill car park (OS Explorer 116, SY 304 955), 7½ miles. Route via Woodhouse Hill, East Devon Way, Musbury (panoramic views of the Axe Valley from the castle), and Great Trill. Please bring a picnic.  
Walk leader: Ted Swann 01395 567 450.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Kersbrook (under railway bridge), (OS Explorer 115, SY 069 830), 6 miles, 3 hours. A devious figure of eight route along the alleyways and byeways of Budleigh and its boundaries, including part of the old railway track and some of the coast path between Budleigh and West Down Beacon.

Walk leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> January, 10.00am – WALK**

Details yet to be confirmed – see the New Year Newsletter and/or Posters  
Walk leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446 550

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 10.00am – Guided WALK**

Start at the White Bridge (OS Explorer 115, SY 076 830), 2½ miles, 2 hours. A leisurely walk along the River Otter watching and identifying the winter birds with Doug Cullen, Voluntary Warden of the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust. Please bring binoculars if you have them.  
Walk Leader: Doug Cullen, 01395 567 574



**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 10.00am-12.30pm – TALK****Peter Hall**, Budleigh Salterton. **Joint OVA/Fairlynch Talk.**

Subject and speakers to be confirmed

£2.00 members, £2.50 non-members to include coffee at interval.

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at the Four Firs car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 032 864), 5½ miles, 2½ hours. A circular walk visiting Woodbury Castle, west to Woodbury and back via the golf course. Includes tracks, paths and some woodland.

Walk leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445 872

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at Knowle Village Hall car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 5 miles, 2½ hours. The walk across the Commons encompasses Shortwood Common, Hayes Barton and Squabmoor.

Walk leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at the Otter Inn car park, Colaton Raleigh (OS Explorer 115, SY 078 874), 7.3 miles, 3 hours. A flat circular walk mostly on local tracks.

Crossing the commons to Canterbury Green and back via Stowford.

Walk leader: Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 7.30pm – TALK.** Speaker: John Lowe**Masonic Hall**, Budleigh Salterton. **‘The Boys.’**

An hour before midnight on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1941, a returning Royal Air Force Bomber crashes onto Dartmoor. And so begins the fascinating and often emotional story of ‘The Boys’. It attempts to bring into focus the events of that day and reflects on the young aircrew whose lives ended that night amidst the fire and destruction on the wind swept slopes of Hameldown. It also tells of the courage and fortitude of two mothers, thousands of miles apart, and hitherto unknown to each other, whose own lives would be simultaneously and irrevocably linked; but changed forever.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 10.00am – WALK**

Start at the Otter Inn car park, Colaton Raleigh (OS Explorer 115, SY 078 874), 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 on local lanes and banks of the Otter. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk leader: George Norman 01395 442 307

# What does OVA Walking mean to you?

**A**MERICAN management guru Tom Peters, once preached that “Perception is everything”. We are all familiar with the power of the brand. We associate longevity with reliability and quality, which has enabled some of our favourite corporations and institutions to continue to capture our hearts when perhaps our heads should be telling us that tradition does not guarantee fitness for purpose. It is a concept we are all familiar with, and dare I say, of perpetuating. So, the trains are always late, politicians will do anything to hold on to power, and school dinners are ‘yuk’. After all, we know it to be true; it was ever thus, and of course, “some things never change!”

Of course, there is often a grain, or even a great big handful, of truth in such slogans: trains were sometimes late but we are told that 98% are now punctual, school dinners now have to meet a range of nutritional standards, and ... you can decide about politicians! The point is that once we have an idea we are sometimes loathe to re-examine it unless we are presented with irrefutable evidence.

Whatever your perception of OVA Walking, we hope you will be interested to read this analysis of our first year’s programme, commencing on 1 July 2013, until 30 June 2014.

## Summary

Total number of walks: 56,                      Total number of walkers: 485  
Average attendance: 9                              Range of attendees: 1 to 28  
Total number of miles walked: 334  
Total number of miles walked by Members: 2,868

## Distances and Attendance

| <i>Distance (miles)</i> | <i>Number of Walks</i> | <i>Average Attendance</i> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0 - 3                   | 5                      | 6                         |
| 3 - 4                   | 6                      | 9.2                       |
| 4 - 5                   | 4                      | 15                        |
| 5 - 6                   | 16                     | 9.13                      |
| 6 - 7                   | 3                      | 8                         |
| 7 - 8                   | 8                      | 5.75                      |
| 8 - 9                   | 6                      | 8.2                       |
| 9 - 10                  | 2                      | 15                        |
| 10 - 13                 | 6                      | 7                         |

## Days of the week and Attendance

| <i>Day of the Week</i> | <i>Number of Walks</i> | <i>Average Attendance</i> |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Monday                 | 5                      | 6.8                       |
| Tuesday                | 6                      | 7.7                       |
| Wednesday              | 16                     | 7.4                       |
| Thursday               | 7                      | 12                        |
| Friday                 | 4                      | 6.8                       |
| Saturday               | 18                     | 10.2                      |
| Sunday                 | 0                      | 0                         |

## Locations

| <i>Location</i>                             | <i>Number of Walks</i> |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Otter Valley & Coast Path                   | 13                     |
| Woodbury Commons                            | 16                     |
| East Devon (not otherwise recorded)         | 21                     |
| Dartmoor                                    | 2                      |
| Outside East Devon (not otherwise recorded) | 4                      |

## Themed Walks

| <i>Theme</i>                             | <i>Number of Walks</i> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Fungi Identification                     | 2                      |
| Birds Identification(on the R. Otter)    | 2                      |
| An introduction to Walking for Beginners | 4                      |
| Bystock Fish Ponds                       | 1                      |
| The East Devon Way                       | 4                      |
| Exeter's Green Circle                    | 1                      |

Our Aim and Objectives for the Programme of led walks may be summarised as providing more walks, with a variety of distances, terrains, locations, days and times.(see the New Year Newsletter, January 2014). Achieving our objectives is only made possible by the enthusiasm, expertise and commitment of our Walk Leaders, some of whom are long serving, while others are more recent recruits. Thanks to you all.

We hope the programme is developing to meet the needs of more of our members, but what really matters, is what OVA walking means to you.

**Chris and Mike**

# OVA Walking continues to evolve

Readers of our Walk Programme in this Newsletter, on the web site or on posters displayed, will have noticed an increasing number of Walks information includes the option to use public transport to access the walk. We hope the outcome (apart from giving the Editor the problem of fitting the extra words into his limited space!), will be to encourage members who do not, or prefer not, to drive, the opportunity to access more walks. In addition, we may just be keeping a few cars off the road.

Our latest objective aims:

***“To encourage the use of public transport to access walks, in order to enable non-drivers to attend and reduce the number of cars used”***

The complete list of objectives can be seen on the OVA web-site.

CB & MP



## The Ova is Going Away.....

.....to Mevagissey, for a weekend's walking in Cornwall's glorious spring, and all our members are invited! The plan is to share cars for the journey on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2015, arriving in time for lunch and a short walk that afternoon, followed by a longer walk on the Saturday and a short walk before we return on Sunday afternoon, the 29<sup>th</sup> March.

We have made a provisional booking at a converted farm, which holds 8 people in a mix of double, twin, and single rooms, all en suite. After these are allocated on a first come, first served basis, members would need to make their own arrangements at any of the 30 B & B's and Hotels in Mevagissey. We would meet each day for walking and eating!

Our grateful thanks go to Rosemary Hatch, who has done so much to research this project.

If you would like to know more, or to make a firm commitment to reserve a place, on what I am sure will be a very enjoyable trip, please contact me as soon as possible.

Chris Buckland, 01395 444471



# Membership

The Summer Newsletter informed members of the intention to collect future membership fees by Direct Debit payment. However, further investigation into this method of payment has shown that it could only be achieved at financial cost to the OVA. Since membership fees are increased infrequently, it has therefore been decided to continue with Standing Order payments.

It is planned to send out a new Standing Order form in November, ready for the increase in fees from 2015. To this end, the Membership Secretary is working towards generating new Standing Orders from the membership database, the aim being that the new layout will be transferable to the website and welcome leaflet. The replacement Standing Order form will include membership details and OVA reference number, but not members' bank details. This information will need to be completed by members before returning the form to the Membership Secretary.

There are currently 646 membership units requiring a new Standing Order – enough to keep the Treasurer and Membership Secretary busy during the coming weeks. Members' cooperation in returning the new Standing Order forms promptly would be greatly appreciated.

Trevor Waddington, Hon Treasurer



# Otterton Weir Restoration

Regular walkers along the riverside at Otterton this year will probably have noticed that the area around the weir suffered from storm damage and that the stone commemorating the installation of the Fish Pass (which was partly financed by the OVA) looked decidedly drunken.

Over the last few weeks the Environment Agency have been busy clearing the River Otter of fallen trees and other debris north of Otterton Bridge. As part of these works the ground adjacent to the Otterton weir has been restored after the extensive erosion caused by flooding earlier this year, and the commemorative stone has been re sited in an upright posture.



# The Pebblebed Heaths

*I want to write a "special", alongside my regular newsletter, as judging by some recent comments, I think a few facts need to be clarified about the origins and continuance of the East Devon Pebblebed heaths. They are perhaps not as old or as permanent as some people seem to believe. Anyway, my background is in geology and I love any chance to talk about the deep, deep past.*

**Nicky Hewitt**

**T**HE UNDERLYING ROCKS set the scene for heathland: the Budleigh Salterton Pebblebeds consist of pebbles, set in a lot of sand, as revealed at Blackhill Quarry. The sands provide an acid soil and the pebbles give the resistance to erosion that has formed the wind and rain-swept ridge as it stands today.

But 240 million years ago, when the Pebblebeds were being created, this was a very different place: in the dry centre of a continent experiencing desert conditions, broken occasionally by storm-runoff floods from the nearby mountains, tearing fragments of rock from the mountains, then bashing and rolling them down into rounded pebbles and spreading them across a harsh, dry plain. Between storms, the wind dried out the river channels, rolled and eroded the pebbles a bit more and drifted the sand. Imagine the conditions around the edges of the mountains in the Sahara today and you will get the picture – hot, dry and windy, the sandy surface constantly moving, with very little vegetation and almost no animals.

But over the following 240 million years this little patch of the world underwent dramatic changes: moving from the middle of a continent to the edge, from dry desert to deep under the ocean and back to land, tilted and squashed by continents breaking up and colliding to form new mountains far away in southern Europe. And as the land rose up it had layer after layer stripped away by the weather over many millions of years, until all the rocks were exposed as we see them now, striped across the seacliffs like a huge geology textbook. That is the story of the Jurassic Coast and well worth exploring elsewhere. But my point is that the heaths were not here 240 million years ago. Indeed, they were not here until Man took a hand.

Very little of the landscape of Britain is unchanged by human activity: we've been here permanently since soon after the last ice sheets retreated about 11,500 years ago. But initially we would have been hunter-gatherers, living off the heavily wooded landscape. The farming lifestyle arrived in the Neolithic, probably starting with pastoralism before moving onto settled arable farming around 4-5,000 years ago. Fire would have been the first tool used to clear trees, and thin sandy soils would have been much easier to work with hand tools than heavy silts and clays. But the meagre nutrients would also be quickly exhausted and the high land abandoned to grazing animals, as agricultural tools and techniques improved and allowed the farmers to move onto richer, deeper soils in the valleys. But that constant grazing, by cattle, sheep, goats and even geese would have kept the trees and scrub at bay, allowing the heathland fauna and flora to develop and spread.

By the Bronze Age great swathes of the country had been cleared of trees and settled by farming communities. Almost no traces of Bronze Age peoples' day-to-day lives exist on the ridge tops, but their ritual sites and burial mounds are everywhere, looking down over the sheltered valleys where we live today, probably in much the same places as our ancient ancestors lived.

Then agricultural life continued pretty much the same up until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when mechanisation really started to take off. We are about to lose the generation who can still remember when commoners rights were regularly exercised, which was the last connection to a lost form of land-use. And probably a good thing too, because the heaths were born out of poverty and need. Down the centuries the heaths have always been pretty marginal agriculturally, and only exploited when better options failed. At a recent local history conference a retired farmer from Woodbury described the last time he exercised commoners rights: to cut bracken for animal bedding when the hay crop failed – a desperate stop-gap as the bracken would not compost down after use.

But go back two or three centuries and the heaths were the only free resource for the common people. There they could pasture animals, harvest gorse and peat for firing, cut heather for thatch, dig pebbles and sand for building – in fact provide themselves with the basic needs of life. Controlled burning was used to rejuvenate the vegetation and provide a short-lived pulse of nutrients to encourage the grass.

The few resources were generally heavily exploited, and when agriculture hit a depression and work was harder to come by, over-exploited. This had been going on for hundreds, if not thousands of years, but was worsened by the enclosure of more and more land into private ownership, driving the villagers to try to extract more from their last few acres of available land.



It is this continuous over-use that has impoverished the thin pebbly soils and allowed the specially adapted flora and fauna to flourish, without any competition from more vigorous species, giving us the unique habitat we see today.

Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century people's lives have simply improved, so that they no longer needed the meagre resources that the heaths supplied. And that can only be a good thing. But for the heathland habitat it is a disaster. Trees very quickly start to invade, bracken spreads un-controlled and grass starts to build up fertile and nutrient-enriched soil, quickly shading and out-competing the dwarf shrubs. Without continuous management the heaths would soon cease to exist. Powerful modern ploughs can even cope with the pebbly soils and, with constant chemical inputs, turn heathland into ordinary pasture and arable land.

Today pasturing animals solely fed on the sparse grasses and soft herbs of the heath can only be done at very low stocking rates, to avoid what we would now consider cruelty. Bracken can no longer be used for anything much as we now know about its carcinogenic properties. We still sell firewood derived from the scrub and small trees and gorse taken from the heath, but this would hardly cover our management costs.



The heaths cost time and effort to maintain: mowing, grazing and burning to mimic the old usages, but we also have new cares and considerations, such as no new areas for digging or soil removal in case we damage the archaeology.

So all those people out there who think the heaths are some kind of perpetual, natural system that was there before anyone managed them and will continue if we do nothing – you couldn't be more wrong. We constantly get told that the heaths shouldn't be grazed as it hasn't happened within living memory. But living memory is only for the last two or three generations, not the thousands of generations that have created these unique landscapes. And we now have to use fences to contain the stock as we cannot exploit the village children to herd and control the animals as our ancestors would (though I'm sure they would much prefer it to being in school on a nice sunny day).

The past is another country, and sometimes we struggle to understand how our ancestors lived, but this bit of the past can remain to remind us. So please help us to maintain these habitats into the future, so our children and grandchildren can experience the special birds, reptiles, insects, flowers and everything else that needs these special places to survive. Don't let a few more vulnerable species die out of this world through our inaction.



## Rambling Snapshots

A dozen of us got off the X53 bus at Beer on 27<sup>th</sup> August for the Mason's Trail. The 20 minutes late meant we missed our morning coffee, but we were on time to be joined by a couple of others for the tour of Beer Quarry Caves. School holidays, and a bit cool for the beach, so a busy, if chilly, 1½ hours underground.

So we didn't waste time walking over the hill in a light drizzle for lunch at the Mason's Arms in Branscombe. Refreshed, some caught the bus here, but most of us looked at the stone in the parish church, then struggled up the hill to the coast path.



Here the weather was kind to us and we got quite warm going all the way down to Weston Mouth beach and back up again. A couple took the short cut back for an earlier bus, but the remainder looked at the cliff outcrop of Salcombe stone, much used for the exterior of Exeter Cathedral, and admired the view along the coast. A quick dash back to the Donkey Sanctuary for a welcome cuppa, just as



the rain arrived, and the bus home. We're looking forward to the Talk on 25<sup>th</sup> November from Peter Dare, master mason.

**A different bus**, the 157 which traverses the spine of the OVA's 'area of interest', dropped us at Castle Lane on 9<sup>th</sup> September. We just crossed the road and paused at the gate into the woodland while David read us the brief description, which said the wood was noted for the fly agaric toadstool. Right on cue, within 10 yards there was one at the side of the path! A good long walk over the commons and lanes, which I finished with a chocolate bar from the East Budleigh Community shop, before getting the bus home, while some went on to Otterton.

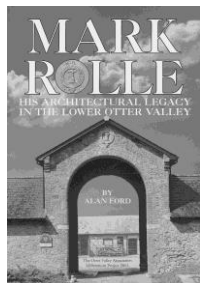


**A Joint Walk** with the South West Coast Path Association, led by our own Chris Buckland, took us along the river, watching grey mullet, kingfisher, buzzard and kestrel, and pausing for blackberries. Then from Otterton out



to the coast, with a picnic overlooking Ladram, before the SWCP back to Lime Kiln. It was good to share our local delights with two couples from Cornwall and one from the Somerset Levels to join the handful of locals.

# 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.

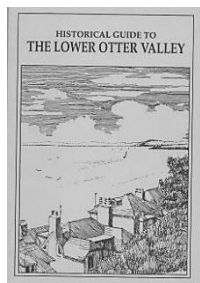
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



## **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.

£3.00 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)

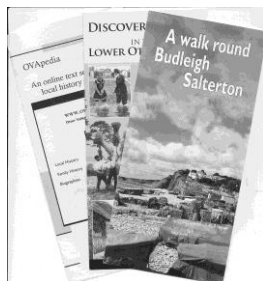


## **Historical Guide to the Lower Otter Valley**

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 £2.00 P&P)

See our website [ova.org.uk](http://ova.org.uk) or for book sales please contact Andrew Beresford by phone, 01395 446543 or email, [Andrew@beresfords.net](mailto:Andrew@beresfords.net).



## **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      | Roger Saunders    | 443248 |
| Vice-chairman | Haylor Lass       | 568786 |
| Hon Secretary | Iain Ure          | 568158 |
| Hon Treasurer | Trevor Waddington | 443978 |

### *Committee Chairmen*

|                     |                  |        |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| Natural Environment | Patrick Hamilton | 445351 |
| Planning            | Nicola Daniel    | 445960 |
| History             | David Daniel     | 445960 |
| Events              | <i>vacancy</i>   |        |

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

|                    |                  |        |
|--------------------|------------------|--------|
| Budleigh Salterton | George Maddaford | 446077 |
| East Budleigh      | Christine Hadley | 443607 |
| Otterton           | Joan Cullen      | 567574 |
| Colaton Raleigh    | <i>vacancy</i>   |        |
| Newton Poppleford  | Haylor Lass      | 568786 |

### *Other EC Members*

|                             |                       |        |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Assistant Minutes Secretary | Robert Wiltshire      | 444395 |
| Membership Secretary        | Clive Bowman          | 446892 |
|                             | membership@ova.org.uk |        |
| Publicity Secretary         | <i>vacancy</i>        |        |

### *Other contacts*

|                         |                                     |        |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Webmasters              | David Daniel, 445960 & Martin Smith | 442333 |
| Talks Organiser         | Graham Knapton                      | 445872 |
| Walks Organisers        | Chris Buckland                      | 444471 |
|                         | Mike Paddison                       | 446550 |
| Newsletter Distributors | Pam and Tony Harber                 | 445392 |

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