

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION



WINTER Newsletter

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www.oval.org.uk

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This issue's cover *'A winter glow, after the blow, with sun setting in the snow'* was photographed and produced by **Mo Bowman**

Happy New Year from the Editor

Blue Planet II has been a remarkable series highlighting what extraordinary creatures and plants live in our oceans. Sadly, the programme has also shown what damage mankind is doing to his environment. There are many projects and groups attempting to do their bit to remedy this – the Great Nurdle Hunt in Scotland (nurdlehunt.co.uk) the worldwide Litter Project (litterproject.com) and the Anglo-French initiative encouraging us all to pick up one piece of rubbish each per day (1pieceofrubbish.com). Why not? If we all did so when we are out on our walks what a difference that could make.

Here in East Devon there are regular beach cleans and our annual Otter Estuary Litter Pick. Every Spring the numerous bags of rubbish collected in just 2 hours from this small area show how careless and/or ignorant we are about our environment. So, if you would like to help keep the oceans clean for the next generation dig out your wellies and join us on 31st March.

Jacqui Baldwin

Annual Spring Litter-Pick: Saturday, 31st March 2018 at 10am

As always, we run this event in co-operation with East Devon District Council and Clinton Devon Estates and the aim is to clear all litter from the Otter estuary below White Bridge by 12 noon. We assemble at the Lime Kiln Car Park in Budleigh Salterton at 10am for a briefing and free parking tickets will be distributed along with plastic bags and tongs. At noon we bring our loaded bags back to the car park where prizes will be awarded for the most 'unusual' finds.

Wellington boots and gloves are essential; waterproofs may be necessary but we hope for the usual good luck with the weather.

See overleaf for full details. All volunteers are most welcome!

Patrick Hamilton, Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee



SPRING LITTER PICK

Where?
Umie Kilns car park

When?
11th March 2018 1000-1230

What?
Explore the Lower Otter Estuary at low tide and take part in this annual litter pick to improve this important wildlife site.

Volunteers of all ages are most welcome, but Wellington boots and gloves are essential!



Join the Otter Valley Association with EDDC and Clinton Devon Estates to clear litter from the Otter Estuary SSSI below White Bridge.

Meet at 1000 where free parking tickets will be distributed along with plastic bags and litter pickers. At noon bring your loaded bags back to the car park where prizes will be awarded for the most unusual finds!

No booking required but for more information please contact: 01395 446918

lets.working@clintondevon.com

For regular updates on our work follow us:



Pebblebed heaths conservation trust



Pebblebed Heaths
CONSERVATION TRUST



Acting Chairman's Report

As we start a new year, I think it is worth taking a look back at some OVA highlights from 2017, and to consider the future.

The Natural Environment Committee had a successful year with the Himalayan Balsam clearance program, the areas cleared in previous years had much less balsam than in prior years. Just as importantly, we had a very good turnout of volunteers, with 25 people participating at some point during the season. If you are interested in helping this year, please get in touch with Patrick Hamilton (details on the inside back cover of this newsletter). The spring litter pick along the Otter Estuary was also well attended. This year's litter pick is on Saturday, 31st March – full details in other parts of this newsletter.

On the planning front, the most important news was the approval of the Budleigh Salterton and East Budleigh Neighbourhood Plans. They are now both firmly integrated into the East Devon planning process. We will be monitoring their impact on planning applications this year.

Another initiative that the OVA has been heavily involved with is the Heritage Asset List. This list is intended to identify local assets that are valued by the community, but not significant enough for a national listing. These assets are not limited to buildings, but can also include for example, the drinking trough on Fountain Hill, postboxes, remains of the local railway, significant trees and green space (the Green in Otterton). Once the list is approved planners are supposed to take it into consideration when looking at planning applications. You may have participated by nominating something as an asset, or remember getting a letter if you are fortunate enough to own something on the list, or attending one of the public consultations that the OVA organized. Many volunteer hours were spent on this project which was completed well over 18 months ago, when the list was submitted to East Devon District Council. Unfortunately, since then, nothing has happened. East Devon still has the proposed list, but so far has not done anything with it. We have been trying to persuade the council to move forward, but according to the Chief Executive Officer they do not have the headcount to look at the list. In the meantime, our local assets do not have as much protection as they should.

The walks programme continues to thrive under the new(ish) leadership team, with the usual mix of walk lengths and destinations. The winter talks programme

is well underway, with topics already covered including bee keeping and Conservation Areas (both reported on in later pages). Coming up next is “Beavers in Devon” by the Devon Wildlife Trust. Last time we had a beaver talk there were so many attendees that we had to turn people away – so if you are intending to go, I would advise arriving on time.

For the first time in several years we held a Christmas Party event at Woodbury Park. I can’t comment on its success (at the time of writing it hasn’t happened yet), but over 75 people are expected to attend, which is a good sign of support.

What about the future for the OVA? I expect we will continue to run all our existing programmes and publish a quarterly newsletter as long as we have the support to do so. As always that will depend on members such as you volunteering to help.

It is also a goal to increase our membership base a bit; we have been holding relatively steady at close to 800 members but would like to get up to the 1,000 mark. This might be a target for the new Chairman, as I will definitely be standing down at the AGM in May.

Finally, I would like to thank Pam and Tony Harber, who have been responsible for organising the distribution of this newsletter for a number of years. We are very grateful for their hard work getting out this crucial communication you. I am pleased to welcome Peter and Wendy Youngworth as our new distributors.

Roger Saunders, Acting Chairman

**Advance Notice
OVA Annual General Meeting**

**Tuesday 8th May 2018
7.30 pm - Otterton Village Hall**

Natural Environment Committee Report

The 2017 Himalayan Balsam Campaign

A good year which would have been excellent but for the impact of two major unwanted “hotspots”. The first, which persists, burst upon the scene in 2016 and was located at Kingston Farm in the upper catchment; the second, above the Adventure Playground below the Otter Inn, was only encountered this July. Both cause frustration but hopefully both will be eliminated in 2018.

These apart, long stretches of the brook above Colaton Raleigh are completely clear as also is the headwater area around and above Stowford. The notorious “Swamp”, below Stowford Woods, though still problematic, is hugely improved and it is possible to imagine its conquest!

An outstandingly good feature of the year has been the number and enthusiasm of the volunteers. Our pleas at the beginning of the year were rewarded with a jump in numbers from 11 to 25.

David Hatch is in communication with CABI with regard to a DEFRA funded project to identify and test the efficacy of a Rust fungus that is specific to Himalayan Balsam and which should greatly impair its vigour but with no untoward consequences for the environment.

The Annual Report for 2017 will shortly appear on the OVA website.

Patrick Hamilton

Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee

The ~~Four~~ Three Pines – saving an iconic view

“Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky.” — Kahlil Gibran

We can all agree that the Otter Valley is one of the most beautiful in Devon if not the UK. It is of course heavily influenced by man and in particular the efforts of previous generations. Each generation adding to the efforts of the last – at least up until now.

We take for granted the landscape - the far distant and near distant views. If asked to identify what are the local characteristics we might say; the river, rolling hills, pine trees etc. But whilst the river might change its path it will survive us. However, the trees which are an essential feature are ageing; disappearing at first slowly but now quickly as they reach beyond old age.

One such iconic group of pine trees can be seen driving to the coast just past East Budleigh on the east side of the river valley. When this group was nominated for our Local Heritage Asset List there were four, now sadly there are only three left. This winter the OVA, in partnership with the landowner, CDE, and the tenant farmers, the Pyne family, will plant successors in an attempt to ensure future generations have the pleasure of this view.



The trees are in a small neglected enclosure so we will be clearing the extensive undergrowth of brambles, replacing the cattle proof fencing and planting five new pot grown Scots Pines (to be purchased by the OVA). There is no public access to the enclosure which hopefully will keep the vandals away. In any case, the trees are best viewed from afar.

My vision is that the OVA identify other endangered, living landscape features and that every year we adopt at least one iconic project to ensure the future is at least as good as the present.

Iain Ure, Natural Environment Committee

Fungus Foray led by Dr Mark Ramsdale

This was a follow up to the presentation about fungi given by University of Exeter's Dr Mark Ramsdale on 22nd February. About 15 of us joined Mark in the Mutter's Moor car park for a scheduled 1.5 hours foraging then 30 minutes of questions/answers afterwards. We enjoyed ourselves so much, found so many specimens and asked so many questions that we spent well over 2 hours walking around.

Mark is a mycologist dealing with human fungal problems. He is passionate about fungi but highlighted that many of the names have changed in the last 5 years due to advances in DNA testing etc. He grew up in Sidmouth so he knew the area well as he used to walk his dog on Mutter's Moor. He had also brought a Field Guide book to help as there are around 3,000 mushrooms and he only knows about 500 ... he also said that he would take no responsibility if we ate anything!

He highlighted that there are fungi around us all year round, e.g. mirror fungus on leaves, but we only really notice the mushrooms and toadstools which they produce as part of their sexual/reproduction cycle.

Below are photographs and brief notes about some of the fungi we saw – there is more information on the website.



Earth balls "*gastromycena*" (*above*) produce sacs that can be tough like a rubber ball with the spores inside.



Candlesnuff or candlewick fungi (*above*) are spore shooters. Used most for penicillin. This is very important in wood decay and breaks down the lignin and can be bioluminescent – Mark said that in World War II some forests were bombed as the wood glowed and looked like towns! There are about 70 bioluminescent species and Exeter University students are assessing them using different light sources, eg, fluorescent, phosphorescent, ultra-violet and infrared.



Bracket fungi (*Ganoderma*) (*right*) have annular structures and release spores – I think Mark said 18 million per hour daily for 6 months every year.

Dead Men's Fingers grow on logs and the wood floor and look much like their name.



We saw 'turkey tails' - another variety of bracket fungus

This was a morning in the company of an enthusiast and expert, which made it an excellent and interesting walk.

Paul Kurowski

The Legacy of Mark Rolle in the Lower Otter Valley

Many members will be familiar with the excellent book written by Alan Ford and entitled 'Mark Rolle - His architectural legacy in the Lower Otter Valley' produced for the OVA's Millennium Project 2001. But for those of you who are not, this is a short introduction to the man and the wealth of beautiful buildings that he created in the area.

Mark Trefusis was born in 1835 and died in 1907, and inherited the Rolle Estates, some fifty thousand acres, in 1842. He was the nephew of Louisa Trefusis, who was the second wife of John 2nd Lord Rolle. It was a condition of his will that Mark took the name Rolle.

The Built Legacy

The building improvement project got underway during the mid-1860s. At this time agriculture was thriving, but by 1875, the 'Golden Age' was over, and a prolonged depression set. Cheap imports and very bad harvests, due to poor weather, forced down income and rents from land. Nonetheless, during this time the Estate rebuilt and improved around a hundred farm buildings and cottages in the area. This scale of building work was astonishing given the capital outlay required. It was truly a philanthropic endeavour, amongst many other good works, such as the provision of piped water, taps and wells to the villages, as part of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations in 1887, and the building of churches and chapels. Even more surprising is the fact that Mark Rolle did not spend very much of his time living in the valley, partly due to his ill health. Mark Rolle was very much aided in this work by his hard working Stewards, particularly Robert Hartley Lipscomb (1865 – 1892), and his builder, Robert Kingdom. The works were so extensive that a brick and tile works were established in Otterton. Coal and materials were brought in by boat to Ladram Bay. The works closed in 1903, and all that now reminds us of this former industry is a house named 'Claypitts' in Ladram Road.

If you walk around the villages and footpaths in the valley, you will have noticed many of these fine traditional buildings. They range in size from impressive farm complexes, such as South Farm, Dotton, Hayes Barton, Tidwell and Hill Farm in East Budleigh, to more modest estate workers cottages and small piggeries. The main feature that many of the buildings have is a prominent date stone incorporating the initials MR set high up. The best way to identify these buildings is by the large moulded brick corbels projecting from the gables. This is a most unusual and distinctive feature on nearly all of them.



The vernacular architecture of these buildings is very interesting. Local materials were used to great effect, not just bricks and tiles, but also stone, flint, cobbles and of course the traditional cob and render. No two buildings are alike, unless they form a terrace or are semi-detached. Decorative brickwork is very noticeable, and the resulting quality of the buildings says much about the fine craftsmen carrying out these

works. Even the garden walls and outhouses were built to a high standard. The cottages tended to be of a standard plan, with a front parlour, rear kitchen and scullery with stairs up to three bedrooms above. They all had back yards with a privy, washhouse, piggery and coal store.



Very few of these fine Victorian buildings have been listed nationally, so as part of the OVA's local heritage asset listing project, undertaken a few years ago, the best examples have been proposed for the 'Local Heritage Asset List'. Sadly, this matter now rests with East Devon District Council, which has not had the resources to take this local listing project forward to its conclusion, and adopt a local list. The OVA is currently pressing them on this matter (referred to in the Acting Chairman's report).

If this has whetted your appetite to find out more about Mark Rolle then I would urge you to get hold of a copy of Alan Ford's wonderfully informative and well-illustrated book (see back cover of this newsletter for further details).

Dee Woods

‘To Bee or not to be’

This talk was held on 30th November at the Otterton village hall and was given by John Eustace. We learned that bees belong to the mellifera family. ‘Melli’ meaning honey and ‘fera’ meaning bearing.

Most of the bees which are kept are European Honey Bees. People often confuse them with wasps, hornets, bumble bees and hover flies. The new kid on the block is the Asian Hornet which is gradually making its presence felt and can decimate a hive by waiting outside and picking off the residents as they arrive back after a hard day’s work gathering nectar.

Einstein is credited with making the statement: ‘without bees, the human race would be dead in 4 years’. Although it may not be strictly correct it is certainly an indication of the importance of this little creature, particularly with regard to pollination. Their presence can double the production of a rape crop. They are also hugely beneficial to the production of fruit. Bees also produce: Honey; Wax - used for polish and also production of church candles; Propolis - a glue like product which bees use to seal the hive, it is also used as a hand cream; Royal Jelly – a highly valued substance with many medicinal uses; Pollen - humans sometimes consume this product; Venom - used medicinally for the treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis.

The bee colony acts as one complete organism. It is made up of the queen who is basically an egg laying machine who can lay over a thousand eggs a day. Although she has a sting, non-barbed, she would only use it on a rival queen. She is tended by the workers - the bees that we see. They are all female and have a multitude of tasks. They clean the hive, look after the queen, the young and the drones. They forage for food and return with the nectar. They produce the wax and the honey. Now we get to the drones. These chaps have only one purpose in life and that is reproduction. But wait, they get their cum-uppance. The queen lives for 3-5 years. During the summer the hive will hold approx. 50,000 workers who live for 6 weeks, after which they are worked out. There are no retirement homes for bees. There are also about 250 drones slaving away on ‘manly’ duties and living for about 2-3 months. In the winter there are about 5,000 workers living for 3-5 months. Wait for it. The drone population is zero. The workers evict them all out into the cold, where they perish. Ha.

We were then treated to a year in the life of an apiarist although, funnily enough, John never used this word once. We had a month by month calendar of the activities. No advent calendar for these creatures. They are tucked up in bed. If they venture out on a warm day, it is likely that they will run out of energy, unlike the Duracell battery, and never make it back to the hive. The greatest menace is the Varroa Mite. This is an external parasitic mite which lives on the blood of the bees, weakening them and reducing their lifespan. Research is being carried out to eradicate this creature.

A good year will result in the production of 60-80lbs of honey which the beekeeper graciously shares with his little winged friends.

Bob Wiltshire

First Aid course for Walk Leaders (and other volunteers)



This half-day course was offered to all OVA Walk Leaders so that at least one person on each walk now has a reasonable knowledge and some practical training as emergency first response. This is not to say that we're expecting a rash of accidents in the near future, and judging by the record of the last few years the worst injury is likely to be a minor cut, bruise or nettle sting. Nonetheless, despite the Walk Leaders' best efforts to avoid hazards or warn people about them in

advance, not all occurrences can be anticipated, particularly illness, so it pays to be prepared for the worst.

The instructor, Val Ranger, first asked us to say when we'd last had training and it turned out to be a mixed bag of those who'd not had formal instruction for decades and those who had more recently had work-place courses. Either way the update was useful because, as well as taking us through the basics, Val emphasised points where changes in procedure have recently been instituted.

The principal aims of First Aid are still the three P's - Preserve life; Prevent the situation worsening; and Promote recovery. However, the current view is that treatment by First Aiders should be kept to the absolute minimum in order that the professionals (paramedics, nurses, doctors, etc.) don't have to guess what's already been done and/or undo what's been done before they can start treatment themselves. For example, no ointment should be applied to cuts, grazes and burns nor should any objects embedded in the wound be removed. The wound should simply be cleaned with drinking water or antiseptic wipes and covered to prevent infection. Similarly, medicines should not be administered and the well-known advice that an object be placed in the mouth of somebody suffering a fit is also out of fashion. Val also stressed the importance of identifying and treating shock in the aftermath of even relatively minor accidents.

The practical elements were very useful and great fun as well. The photo shows five muppets with bandages applied to pretend head wounds. Val made me promise to point out that only three are correct as the chinstrap style could make it difficult for the victim to speak, drink or even breathe through the mouth properly. Resuscitation (CPR) exercises were performed on dummies (no, I don't mean the participants, these dummies were plastic) and made everyone realise that it takes considerable pressure on the victim's chest to achieve the desired deflation of their lungs. The current procedure for CPR is 30 quick compressions and two rescue breaths which, if there is no response from the victim, should be continued until you are too exhausted to carry on or help arrives. Clearing airways and putting the subject in the recovery position are very important. Using a defibrillator turned out to be child's play as there are recorded audio instructions for the whole procedure built into the device. We were enjoying it all so much that we ran over time with everyone feeling much more confident as First Aiders - as long as we have the manual handy.....!

Jon Roseway

Conservation Areas and their local importance

A **conservation area** is an **area** of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and **Conservation Areas**) Act).

On 30th October at Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton, 81 members and guests were treated to a very informative talk about Conservation Areas. The size of the audience was indicative of the interest in this subject, particularly with the introduction of Local Neighbourhood Plans and the formulation of Local Heritage Asset Lists. The event also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the first Conservation Area in Lincolnshire. The talk was given by Nicola Daniel who, as chair of the OVA's planning committee, is well-versed in the regulations surrounding these areas – what planning restrictions are involved, where they affect the lower Otter Valley and, lastly, do we need them?

There are three Conservation Areas in the valley. Firstly, Otterton. This village is everyone's idea of the perfect Conservation Area in a beautiful setting, brook running down the main street, buildings constructed of cob and thatch with some outside chimney stacks, some houses in terraces to give group value, some individual farmhouses, 55 Listed buildings and history galore. Perhaps one could say that Otterton does not need Conservation Area status as the Listed buildings give heritage protection to the village but the Otterton Village Design Statement sums it up beautifully:

“Otterton is much more than a collection of individual buildings. It is the sum of all the buildings, spaces, streets and trees; it is the material heart of the community.”



Next is East Budleigh, a much smaller area but with 29 Listed buildings. Again, East Budleigh was an important village in mediaeval times and has terraces of cob and thatch, some fine individual buildings and the church dominating the scene with many trees. But lower Budleigh in the other half of the village is not in a Conservation Area even though it has some fine buildings and even a brook with Listed railings. It is acknowledged that, had this part of the village been in a Conservation Area, there would not have been such a “loss of original detail that it would have been desirable to retain”. So, East Budleigh demonstrates the importance of Conservation Areas and the need for extension in some cases.

Then we have Budleigh Salterton – only a fishing hamlet at the time that the other two villages were so important. Some construction took place in the 1800’s and these make up the few Listed buildings in the town. The main growth took place in the early part of the last century and the buildings are considered far too ‘young’ to be Listed so do not have that protection. Therefore, the town’s Conservation Area is of the utmost importance in preservation terms – it starts at the eastern end of Marine Parade (right) and continues through to the western end of West Hill Lane.



It includes many different styles from the town’s historic past as stated in the Conservation Area Appraisal (adopted Nov 2007). This document states: “A range of additional planning controls exist to ensure that the special qualities and fabric of the designated area are not undermined by the loss or damage of important features or damaged by inappropriate, insensitive developments. We are particularly anxious to ensure that any new development through siting, scale, design and use of materials is complementary to the character and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of such areas”.

During the talk, mention was also made of the Local Heritage Asset List - this is a list of local landmarks nominated by the community in the hope that their inclusion would add another layer of protection within the planning process. The OVA is now actively seeking to progress this issue with the Council.

Bob Wiltshire

A Walk for Everyone - Autumn Programme 2017

It's time to get out your walking boots and your New Year's diary to choose from the routes your walk leaders have provided. We have some old favourites as well as new walks and three new walk leaders.

This year we have an assortment of local walks including those along the Otter Valley, Otterton, Colaton Raleigh and Venn Ottery. Alternatively, you could choose to visit the Hill Forts of either Blackbury Camp or Woodbury Castle. How about joining the second and final stage of the Exeter Green Circle, you could always complete the first stage later independently.

There are several walks on the local commons including Woodbury, East Budleigh and Lymptone Common. You could join the search for snowdrops around Venn Ottery.

For those wanting to walk further afield, there are several walks on Dartmoor including one starting at Bridford Wood, another at Widecombe in the Moor or one later in April from Newbridge. We also have a walk in Farway and some coastal walking in Branscombe and our local patch.

Can we tempt you with a walk along the River Exe and River Creedy ending up with lunch at the famous Beer Engine? How about a journey into the past along ancient tracks with stunning views around Kennford?

So, spend some time looking at the detailed descriptions of the walks, enter them into your diary, polish your walking boots and come along on some or all of these walks. Do remember that it is our aim to enjoy our walks and we are happy to stop and take in the views, visit anything of historical interest on the route and adjust our pace to suit the group. If any of you have walks you would like to lead then please get in contact with Heather or any of the walk team.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year and Happy Walking Days.

Stella French



Events Programme – January to March 2018

Please consult the OVA Website for late alterations or additional information.

All OS references are to Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Explorer maps

Saturday, 6th January - 10.00am - WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford CP off Station Road (OS 115 SY, 085 895) 4-5 miles, 2 hours

“Walk in the New Year”

A walk along the river and paths of the Otter Valley to Tipton St John and return.

Walk Leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

Wednesday, 10th January - 10.00am - WALK

Meet: at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.15am to share cars, or meet at the start point. Start: Blackbury Camp Hill Fort (OS 115, SY 188 924) at 10.00am 7½ miles, 4 hours + lunch.

“Hills above Branscombe”

An energetic hilly walk (1,400 feet of ascent) in the area to the north of Branscombe. This is an attractive area but there are no facilities en route so please bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Ted Swan, 01395 567450.

Tuesday, 16th January - 10.00am- WALK

Start: Crook Plantation (OS 115, SY 057 866) at 10.00am – 5 miles, 2½ hours

“Woodbury Castle and Colaton Raleigh Common”

An invigorating walk up to Woodbury Castle, then along the East Devon Way to Hawkerland Cross before skirting the Common back to the start.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Wednesday, 24th January - 10.35am - WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) 8 miles, 4½ hours.

Bus Option: 157 from Budleigh Salterton Public Hall (10.00) to Back Lane (10.27) for 10.35am start.

“Pop goes the Weasel”

This walk circumnavigates Newton Poppleford on river banks, footpaths, green lanes and quiet roads. We start out on the East Devon Way by Harpford footbridge and climb gradually to Joney’s Cross before descending to Stoneyford and along Naps Lane with rapidly increasing anticipation of lunch at the Otter Inn. Anybody who wants to shorten the walk by 2½ miles can take the bus back to the start or

into Budleigh Salterton. For the final section, we meander northwards along the river Otter to the start point.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway, 01395 488739/07887 936280

Wednesday 24th January - 7.30pm – TALK – Beavers in Devon

East Budleigh Village Hall.

Presented by Mark Elliot, Beaver Project Lead, Devon Wildlife Trust

Mark is responsible for managing the two beaver projects that Devon Wildlife Trust leads. In 2015, the Trust carried out the first licensed release of beavers into the wild in England, as part of a five year trial to study their impacts and interactions on the River Otter catchment in East Devon. Alongside this, DWT have been studying the impacts of a family of beavers living in a 3ha enclosure in West Devon, and this talk will include some of the findings of research into the hydrology and ecology that is being undertaken with the University of Exeter. Mark has worked as a wetland ecologist for 20 years, and for the Devon Wildlife Trust since 2010 when he started as the manager of the Working Wetlands Project.

Monday, 29th January - 10:50am - WALK

Start underneath Iron Bridge (OS SX 915 928) 6½ miles, 4 hours (inc lunch stop).

“Exeter Green Circle – Part Two”

Following on from Part One, this walk takes us from Exeter city centre out around Redhills and then skirts the western part of the city before crossing the canal and river to arrive back at Topsham Road. We can then travel back to Exmouth by the 57 bus, with connections to onward journeys. Please bring a picnic lunch – if the weather is awful we will find a pub/cafe instead.

The start point of the walk can be reached by taking the 9.40am number 58 bus from Budleigh Salterton Public Hall (arrives Exeter city centre 10.31am), the 9.41am number 57 bus from Exmouth (arrives Exeter city centre 10.23am) or the 9.49am number 9 bus from Newton Poppleford (arrives Exeter city centre 10.24am), and then walking to Lower North Street, which is under the Iron Bridge.

Nearer the time, please check the OVA website (or contact the walk leaders) for the latest bus times.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742942 pandp@kurowski.me.uk

Wednesday, 7th February - 10:00am - WALK

Start: Dalditch Farm (OS 115, SY 047 835) 4 miles, 2 hours

“Squabmoor and Dalditch Camp”

A shortish walk beginning with a gentle climb past Squabmoor reservoir onto East Budleigh Common, discovering WW2 remains at Dalditch Camp, and returning via Hayes Wood.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Wednesday, 14th February - 10:00am - WALK

Start at Four Firs CP (OS 115, SY 032 864) 6 miles, 3 hours

“Woods and Commons”

A walk along paths, lanes and tracks, heading out to Uphams Plantation and Hayes Wood before returning via East Budleigh and Lymphstone Commons.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445872

Thursday, 22nd February - 10:00am - WALK

Start at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899), 5-6 miles 3 hrs

A walk over the hill to Venn Ottery to admire the snowdrops (hopefully in full bloom) and back via Tipton St John and the riverside.

Walk Leader: Haylor Lass, 01395 568786

Thursday, 22nd February – 7.30pm – TALK

Masonic Hall, Budleigh Salterton

Marcus Adams, Resources Strategist, South West Water will present a talk on;

‘The significance of the Otter Valley in the water supply of East Devon’

Saturday, 24th February – 10:15am - WALK

Start at Stoke Cannon (OS 114, SX 938 979), 6 miles, 3 hours.

Meet at Exeter Bus Station at 09:45am. Outward via bus 155, depart Exeter Bus Station 10:00am, arriving Stoke Cannon 10:11am.

“Two Rivers Way”

Walking north from the village along the Exe Valley Way to Burrow Farm from where we head west along the banks of the River Exe to Bramford Speke where, weather permitting, we will stop for coffee. We then head further west along the Devonshire Heartland Way, crossing several tributaries of the River Exe, to Upton Pyne. From this point we head downhill to the River Creedy whose banks we follow all the way to Newton St Cyres and lunch at the famous Beer Engine Pub. After lunch a short walk takes us to the A377 where buses run to Exeter every 20 minutes.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446550

Tuesday, 6th March - 10:30am - WALK

Start at the Bridford Wood CP, North Dartmoor (OL28, SX 803 883), 7.5 miles, 3.5 hours + lunch.

“Steps Bridge & Mardon Down”

Meet at Newton Poppleford recreation ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.30am to share cars or meet at the start point.

Fine walk along woodland and meadows ablaze with daffodils, we climb through Bridford Wood onto open downland with great views towards the high moors.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure, 01395 568822

Saturday, 10th March - 10:00am - WALK

Start: East Budleigh free CP (OS 115, SY 065 849) 6 miles, about 2.5 hours

“The Otterton Ring”

An easy circular walk on the footpaths circulating around the village of Otterton.

Walk Leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

Wednesday, 14th March, 10.00am - WALK

Start at Kennford, (OS 110, SX 914 859), 6.5 miles with an optional add on 2 miles.

“Do ya ken Kenn? – a journey into the past through rolling landscapes and woods and along ancient tracks with stunning views”

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground to leave at 9.30am to share cars to the outskirts of Kennford to start the walk at 10.00am. Parking in Kennford: travelling along the A38, just before the A38/A380 split there is a turn off to Kenn and Kennford. Having turned off, turn immediately left towards Kennford and then turn left before the sign for Kennford and the phone box to park in the road. We leave the noise of the traffic behind as we follow country lanes and paths and pass through Kenn. Following the River Kenn and then a tributary, we ascend gradually to find a tree-flanked lane climbing gracefully on an embankment with magnificent views on either side to Exmouth, the estuary and Exeter. We follow a secret path to join St. Andrew’s Lane that dates back to the Iron Age and leads us back to Kenn. We will break for lunch at The Ley Arms. After which we propose a visit to the interesting St Andrew's Church.

From here there is an easy 15 minute walk back to the cars. For those wanting the “add on” we will continue up the churchyard to get stunning views of Haldon and the Exe estuary beyond Lears Copse before joining the Old Dawlish Road through the old village of Kennford and back to the cars.

It would help, although not essential, if you could let us know if you are interested in this walk so that we can advise The Ley Arms on potential numbers for lunch.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742942 pandp@kurowski.me.uk

Wednesday 21st March - 10:00am - WALK

Start: Branscombe Village Hall (OS Explorer 115, SY 1975 8872). 8 miles, 4½ hours

“Through the Hole and over the Edge!”

Car parking at the Village Hall (donation requested). Anyone who can offer others a lift or needs one should contact the walk leader.

We walk out of the village past Hole House and climb gradually up to Edge Farm. There, we turn towards Weston village and eventually reach the coast path via Weston Combe. Following the coast path eastwards to Branscombe Mouth should give us extensive views of Lyme Bay before returning to our starting point. Please bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739/ 07887936280

Wednesday, 21st March – 7.30pm – TALK

Peter Hall, St Peter’s Church, Budleigh Salterton.

An insight into the management and processes of recycling and waste disposal in East Devon.

EDDC, Recycling and Waste team member will present a talk on what happens to our waste once collected from our homes, businesses and waste sites.

Wednesday, 28th March - 10:30am – WALK

Start: CP at Widecombe in the Moor (OL28, SX 720 768). 8 miles, 4 hours + lunch.

“Walking with the ancients”

Meet at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.30am to share cars or meet at the start point. A moderate circular walk with spectacular views and much evidence of ancient dwellings and final resting places. We walk up from Widecombe to Bonehill and pass beneath Chinkwell and Honeybag Tors to Natsworthy. Via Heathercombe we proceed to the abandoned settlement of Grimspound then follow the Two Moors Way to Hameldown Tor (529m) and along the ridge of Hamel Down passing a number of barrows to regain Widecombe and enjoy a welcome cup of tea. Quiet lanes and moorland tracks. Bring a picnic.

Walk leaders: David and Rosie Conner, 07831 406959

Wednesday, 4th April - 10:00:am - WALK

Start: Colaton Raleigh Church (OS 115, SY 082 872) 6 miles, 3 hours

“Keble’s Seat”

Riverside, Northmostown, steady climb to Keble’s Seat (fine views), Mutters Moor, returning down Passaford Lane. Along the way, we will find out about John Keble after whom both Keble’s Seat and Keble College, Oxford are named.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Friday, 13th April - 10:00am - WALK

Start at East Budleigh CP (OS 115, SY 066 849) on bus route 157, 6 miles, 4 hours

"A Ramble with temptations"

Through East Budleigh village, then fields and tracks on a hilly back route to Budleigh Salterton and a stroll along the beach. Returning alongside the Otter, looking out for interesting wildlife before a break for lunch at Otterton Mill. Finishing along back roads to East Budleigh.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742 942 / 07792 619 748

Wednesday, 18th April - 10:30am - WALK

Start: OVA Jubilee Shelter on Budleigh seafront (OS 115, SY 067 818). 8 miles, 4 hours + lunch.

"Some country, some coast"

This walk takes us via Lime Kiln car park, White Bridge, Colliver Cross, Stantyway to Ladram Bay where we have our picnic lunch. We then return back along the coast path via Brandy Head and White Bridge, then along the well-trodden path past the bird hide and return to our start point.

Walk Leader: Jacqui Ruhlig, 01395 443763

Saturday 21st April - 10:00am - WALK

Start: Knapp Copse Reserve CP (OS 115, SY 155 957) 8 miles, 5 hours.

"Over the hills and Far(a)way"

This walk gives us the opportunity to enjoy springtime in the unspoilt farmland and woods around Farway. There are a few hills to climb (maximum ascent of 100m) but the views of the Holcombe and Coly valleys make it worth the effort. Bringing a packed lunch is recommended, although refreshments are available afterwards at the Hare and Hounds.

Anyone who can offer others a lift or needs one should contact the walk leader.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway, 01395 488739/ 07887 936280

Thursday, 26th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start: New Bridge CP OL28, SX 711 708 (Sat Nav TQ13 7NT) 7 miles, 4.5/5 hours.

"New Bridge"

Meet at Newton Poppleford recreation ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.00am to share cars or meet at the start point.

A circular walk offering wonderful views of the Dart Gorge (in clear weather!) - a combination of upland moor, woodland, fields and riverbank.

Full details in next issue.

Walk Reports

All walk reports and accompanying photographs can be found on the OVA website. Below is just an abridged selection. Many thanks to all contributors.

Walks with the visually impaired

During 2017, OVA members Penny Kurowski, Dee Woods and Geoff Porter joined 3 walks accompanying groups of visually impaired holiday-makers based at Cliffden Hotel in Teignmouth. Cliffden is owned by 'Guide Dogs for the Blind'. The hotel provides a varied programme of themed holidays specifically for the visually impaired that include 'Walking Week'. The walking week encompasses visits to Haldon Forest, Exmouth Sea Front, Killerton House, Totiford and Trenchford Reservoir and the walks that we were involved with starting from Otterton Mill.

The groups have usually comprised 9 walkers each accompanied by a volunteer linked to Cliffden and most with their own guide dog. Walkers of varying ages and ability came from across the UK, all out to enjoy the experience regardless of inclement weather, nettles and brambles, slips and scrapes. For those with no vision, a lot of trust is placed in the trained volunteers especially when walking on uneven tracks strewn with slippery puddles, steps and slopes.

The groups are planned and led by Brian Hall and his wife Jayne oversees recruitment and training of the guiding volunteers. Brian is a retired Royal Navy Nuclear Engineer and he is very experienced in leading groups. As OVA members, we were in a support role attempting to provide information about the surroundings, local history, interpreting birdsong, farming, possible hazards etc. As walkers in a support role we had to trust in Brian's judgement regarding the capabilities of the group; we tended to be more cautious and protective underestimating group members ability and wish to be challenged.

Having set off from Otterton Mill, the group crossed The Green to the footpath above the river. Fortunately, there were no stock in the fields so the guide dogs could be let off the lead. All the dogs were labradors of various ages trained by Guide Dogs for the Blind and used to being responsible for their owners. It was a joy to see them frolicking in the grass though difficult at times to keep them within the accepted bounds of behaviour with the unfamiliar scents causing them to be very excitable. Once the dogs had let off steam, we turned up Rydon Lane, crossing the Sidmouth Road, following Checkenhole Lane to Sea View Farm.

Brian had planned that the group would next climb High Peak via Bar's Lane but prior to the June walk, heavy wind and rain had resulted in large puddles, slippery conditions and fallen trees on High Peak making that route too risky. On the two occasions when High Peak was accessible climbing up was straightforward but descending proved to be quite a challenge. In this situation, the dogs were not really helpful so walkers had to rely on their volunteer to guide them down the irregular steps to Ladram Bay.

Unsurprisingly the walkers delighted in the experience of the cliff-tops feeling the wind and listening to the waves below. Difficult though to try and explain the height from sea to cliff-top. The group also enjoyed a rest at Brandy Head Observation Hut; a guide read aloud from the site information board to explain its position overlooking the sea providing a picture of 2nd World War Devon. As walkers could use their guides along much of the coast-path the main risk was to the dogs should they venture too close to the cliff-edge.



The final section of the walks followed the Otter bank from White Bridge back to Otter Mill. Again descriptions of the varying pace of the river, the bird and plant-life from both guides and volunteers helped walkers better appreciate their surroundings.

Feedback from Brian has said that Otterton is a favourite with the walkers because it is so varied, with many changes of environment and stimulation of the senses. As an OVA volunteer it was a privilege to be a part of these walks and witness the enjoyment gained by all involved.

Sadly, Guide Dogs for the Blind has the Cliffden Hotel up for sale. It is leased by the RNIB. It is a unique resource and it will be sad for its guests if the opportunity to enjoy the broad range of holidays it provides no longer exists.

Geoff Porter

More Exmoor – 14th October 2017

Six of us set off, led by our intrepid leader, Vivien Insull, on a warm but cloudy morning. The car park was full of youngsters setting off on their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award, all geared up to spend a night on the Moor. We, thankfully, were merely geared up for a picnic on the Moor.

Having passed a delightful field full of a varied collection of very free range hens, we headed down a combe, crossed a ford by the aptly named Ford Farm and started our ascent to open Moor through a suckling herd with a very large bull contentedly chewing the cud a few yards off the path. We entered the open Moor and joined the Coleridge Way down to Hanny Combe. As we walked on the path above Spangate Grove, we spied below us a magnificent red deer stag keeping a beady eye on us as we passed above him.



We crossed the stream at Hanny Combe and began the long, but relatively gentle, ascent to Dunkery Beacon (1,705 feet above sea level). The views from the Beacon were superb we could clearly see the Welsh coast, and down the coast to Hinckley Point, the islands in the Bristol Channel and, the other way, the brooding bulk of Dartmoor.

Having feasted our eyes from the Beacon, we descended towards Dunkery Gate. We moved on down into the valley of the River Avil along a beautiful path on the edge of the valley by a long, magnificent row of ancient beeches. The colours in the valley were glorious, but would have been better with some sunshine! A final, if somewhat muddy pull from the river up to Wheddon Cross completed an excellent day's walking and the opportunity for those in need of refreshment to visit the "Rest and be Thankful" – in the circumstances, a highly appropriate name for a pub!

David & Rosie Conner

Bootiful Branscombe – 25th October

As there are comprehensive descriptions of this walk in the archives from two previous occasions, I don't intend to dwell on detail. This article is more of an ode to the joy of walking on a sunny autumn day in beautiful scenery. The pleasure was made even more piquant by the complete absence of sun in the forecast, so it was an unanticipated luxury to be greeted by clear blue skies at the start.

We looped around behind the main settlements of the village, going up and down the sides of the valleys that converge at Branscombe. We passed through the westernmost hamlet called Street, a picture-perfect collection of thatched cottages and The Fountain Head, one of the most 'original' i.e. least mucked about with pubs in the county. Heading up onto the coast path at Berry Camp, an Iron-Age hill fort, we stood on the grassy downs and marvelled at the stunning views to the east and west.



To a geologist (as I am) this area is a classic example of the endless cyclicity of the earth's geological processes. Here, rocks deposited under Jurassic seas were lifted up and eroded away exposing red Triassic strata. Then the land sank again below the sea and was covered in orange sandstones and white chalk of Cretaceous age, only to be pushed up above the sea's surface again, and is now in the process of being ground down once more. The effects of marine erosion at Branscombe are manifest in a spectacular cliff collapse, certainly one of the largest to be found in the UK, which occurred in 1790. An enormous section of the chalk cliff slid seaward but remained as a relatively intact block (left). The path climbs up through the gash behind the

landslide and allows an unusually close inspection of the Greensand and chalk exposed in the cliff on the landward side. After climbing up to the cliff-top path, the rest of the walk consisted of a loop along the cliff path and eventual descent back into Branscombe with more of those superb views along the way.

Jon Roseway

Castles, hills and autumnal colour along the River Teign – 3rd November

On this calm still and misty morning 17 walkers and 2 dogs set off from Castle Drogo heading out along the Hunters Path. Earlier we had wondered if we would get our anticipated views but the mist quickly dissipated as we looked down into the Teign Valley gorge resplendent with autumnal colours.

There were no detours into the attractive riverside inn at Fingle Bridge as we crossed over for a coffee stop on the opposite bank. Then it was a stroll along the river before heading up into Hore Wood. We managed to find the correct path that led us across into Charles Wood eventually arriving at Cranbrook Down and Cranbrook Castle an old Iron Age Fort. Here we admired the far reaching panoramic views of Dartmoor, the Teign Valley and had our lunch as the sun started to peek through the clouds.



Suitably refreshed we headed down the steep direct path to Fingle Bridge with its magnificent views. Next was a colourful walk along the river banks of the Teign where dippers and grey wagtails were spotted by those at the front. We passed the hydroelectric plant serving Castle Drogo, crossed over the lower wall of Deer Park wall to the suspension bridge back over the river.



Here we paused to admire the colourful scenery. Then it was back up to Castle Drogo skirting the edge of the gorge again with wonderful views. By the time we reached the castle we had earned our cup of tea and cake in the tearoom.

Stella French

A guided bird watching walk – 10th November

About a dozen people came on a day of a chilly Northerly wind, although mostly sunny. We started from the Lime Kiln car park and saw a good selection of the birds one might see at this time of year. In total about 27 + different species were identified, including 3 each of different waders, ducks and gulls, as well as a number of smaller birds like Reed Bunting and Stonechat.

The highlight for most was a Kingfisher by White Bridge, which gave excellent views from several different perches, flying swiftly between each, but for the more experienced birders a Glossy Ibis flying overhead was the real star. This is a bird that breeds in Spain, and is only occasionally seen here. It goes to prove what I said at the start: “you never know what you’re going to see when you go out!”.

Colin Randall

Otterton Parish Boundary Walk – 11th November

Despite a rather dismal forecast, twelve trusty souls started the eleven mile Otterton Annual Parish Boundary Walk. The weather was in fact a lot better than expected and we got slightly damp but never wet.

This is an unusual walk because it also a social event with people joining and leaving all the time. As walk leader I felt like a misfiring Pied Piper, losing one then gaining two, and so it went on. In total we had 15 participants. Tony Bennett did a sterling job meeting us at various places with supplies of fresh apples and ferrying some people around.



Sue and Terry were the last to join and met us at the lunch spot. For the last few years they have walked the first half but the second half had defeated them. This strategy gave them the pleasure of completing the walk, albeit it took a year!

I think most people are familiar with the beauty of the coastal path but fewer have had the pleasure of walking down Passaford Lane. An outstanding example of a sunken Devon Green Lane.

With all the coming and goings Dee had her work cut out as backmarker. An elite gang of two had to get back for another appointment and so stormed ahead. Needless to say the warren of footpaths on Mutter's Moor saw them visit the Bowd rather than the Otter Valley. They should have been on the map reading course!!!!

Iain Ure

Hawkerland before lunch – 15th November

We set off under a cloudy sky but it was dry and unseasonably mild, with the occasional hint of a watery sun trying to establish itself. We'd not long left the village of Colaton Raleigh before we were distracted by what appeared to be the 'murmuring' behaviour of a flock of birds, but these were not starlings, and determining their identity occupied a number of the group for several minutes. "Linnets"? "Finches"? Even Stella's exquisite image of one of the flock silhouetted against the cloudy sky, was inconclusive.

Approaching Dotton we enjoyed our first view of High Peak, proud in the distance, while the Otter meandered its way north towards Newton Poppleford from the valley beneath. Onwards, past the Environment Agency's river monitoring site and the frustratingly inaccessible zip-wire left tantalisingly suspended across the river. Surely, a 'visitor attraction' in waiting? A nod to the site of the alleged mill at Dotton, before a short diversion to admire a lovely example of a Mark Rolle Farmstead.

Monkey Lane produced a memorable image as we were surprised (in mid-November!) and delighted, to see a field prolific with red poppies. What's more, just four days after Remembrance Sunday, these poppies were not paper, plastic or part of an art installation, but the real thing.



Lanes and tracks through Buzzard country, one of whom duly glided by, to the tiny hamlet of Goosemore; so remote, yet only a short hop to the noisy A3502.

Now the only real 'climb' of the day; a short sprint onto Hawkerland Common, with magnificent views of the coastline and a break for sustenance and recuperation and an opportunity for Professor David to explain the existence of the "scrapes" that were apparent on this south facing heath land; small areas of approximately 10 yards square, on which the top soil had been 'scraped' away, in an attempt by the Devon Wildlife Trust to replicate the conditions that will encourage the Silver Studded Blue Butterfly to breed.

We dallied to admire and engage with one of the men erecting a new building alongside the very well presented, "Morrish Cotley". Here was a new build in total sympathy with its surroundings: oak beams, a curved cob wall whose curvature was mirrored by its slate roof. A wooded path, full of colour, floating leaves and plenty to kick under foot, took us around the boundary of Colaton Raleigh Common, with views across adjoining fields to the coast and, yes of course, High Peak again.

The last mile was over the Kingston cross-roads, down to the ford and a boot washing exercise, before reapplying the mud once more on our last climb to Back Lane and a gentle descent to the Otter Inn and lunch.



Chris Buckland

The Otter Valley Association

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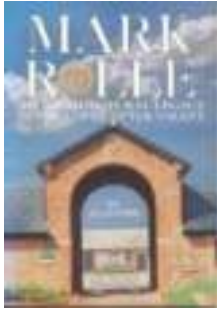
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Mark Rolle

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 overview of how a large landed estate was managed in the last 40 years of the 19th century.

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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 20th century.

£3.50 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)

Leaflets

The OVA also publish a number of leaflets about the history, flora & fauna and walking in the lower Otter Valley. They can usually be found in the Tourist Information Centres and in other outlets around the valley.