



OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

SUMMER
2021

Newsletter

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Reg. Charity

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This issue's cover was photographed and produced by Mo Sandford

From the Editor

How lovely to be able to produce a magazine that lists forthcoming events with some degree of certainty that they will actually take place. However, as mentioned in the Acting Chairman's note below, nothing that the OVA does happens without the input of volunteers. Over the past 15 months many of us have come to realise how important our local countryside is to our health and mental wellbeing. If you are one of those people then maybe you could consider giving a little of your time to supporting the activities of this Association which does so much to preserve, conserve and protect our beautiful valley.

Jacqui Baldwin

Your Association Needs YOU!



I have spoken of this before and make no apology for repeating the call. **Your Association is in danger of folding in the very near future.** The number of members who sit on the Executive Committee is declining. Without committee members we cannot continue. Perhaps you may ask, what function the OVA has in this modern world? Maybe you wonder whether the OVA has any relevance in the 21st century. The answer is a resounding YES, we are a civic group which was founded 43 years ago for the benefit of our wonderful area. We are a pressure group who express views about our wider environment such as planning issues and take part in more general activities, local projects and surveys, wildflower and tree planting, and many other things which are detailed overleaf. We care about our little place in paradise.

Out there we have a membership, well in excess of 800 people. There must be some of you who care enough and are willing to devote a little of your time to keeping our Association in existence. Who don't belong just because it may be the right thing to do, but because you care. **The current apparent apathy will inevitably result in our end.**

Bob Wiltshire, Acting Chairman

The Acting Chairman's Musings

The publication of the normal Newsletter involves costs in excess of £700 plus postage. If there is insufficient material to warrant such publication, I have been writing an E-Newsletter which, I hope, has kept members informed of our activities.

This year 49 members registered to attend our virtual AGM - a record for recent years, perhaps future meetings will witness similar numbers. As you will recall we have Executive Officers and an Executive Committee, jointly I shall call them the Ex. Comm. which usually meets ten times a year and this is where decisions are normally made. There is also a Planning Committee and a Natural Environment Committee, both of which report to the Exec. Comm. as do Village Representatives and Walks Organisers. Contact information for all these positions may be found in the Newsletter. All these people are unpaid volunteers who give their time, efforts and expertise to further the objectives of the OVA. Members of the Ex. Comm. are elected annually at the AGM by the membership at large and are also Trustees of the Association, with responsibilities under the Charities Acts.

We are represented at meetings of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We have been very active in the formulation of the East Devon and Budleigh Salterton Local Plans. We have organised sessions for the training required to prepare Local Asset listings. We organise, with the help of Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) the annual litter pick which has been running for many years and well before such activities achieved the same degree of publicity now enjoyed. We sit on the Traffic Committee of Budleigh Salterton (*see page 21*). Our input is sought on a variety of subjects by NGOs. We are reputed to be the largest group of members of the Civic Society. We normally publish a quarterly Newsletter which over the years has improved its format in terms of content, pictorial entries and even paper quality. It is admired by other similar organisations. We finance the publication of some books which are sold and many free leaflets. We conduct regular walks and talks which, when allowed, have many devotees. We do operate with a small group of volunteers who make the Association the success that it is. We do need new blood though.

Meanwhile it seems like an opportunity to enlarge on the 'Objectives' of the Association, which can be found at the beginning of our Constitution.

'To promote high standards of design and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit.'

The Planning Committee, when operating, scans all applications published weekly by the Planning Dept. of the EDDC. If an application is contrary to the local plans for the area, a draft 'objection' is drawn up and subject to the agreement of the Ex. Comm. is sent to the EDDC on behalf of the OVA. There is of course no reason why any 'objection' cannot be made in a personal capacity. It should be noted that letters of 'support', are also sent by the Ex.Comm.

'To educate the public in the Geography, History, Natural History and Architecture in the area of benefit.'

On our website is an Ovapedia, where much local history may be found. Its aim is to encourage, help and disseminate historical research of interest in the locality. It has undertaken a number of collective projects over the years, some of which have been published and can be found at the back of the Newsletter. Numerous natural history themed leaflets are available at Tourist Information Centres and other outlets. A series of talks take place during the winter months and are usually of local interest. These talks are well attended.

'To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit.'

The Association has been instrumental in assisting with the drawing up of Local Plans and, with the assistance of a grant from the AONB, organised courses to compile Local Asset lists details of which have been publicised in previous issues of the newsletter.

'The conservation, protection and restoration for the public benefit of the natural resources, natural beauty, animal and plant life, and lands and buildings, of historical interest or of ecological or scientific importance in the Association's area of benefit or in adjacent parishes.'

The Association currently has a very enthusiastic Natural Environment team. With the help of a grant from the AONB, they have planted Scots Pines as anticipated replacement of existing trees which have a natural lifespan. These may be found in Otterton Park. They have taken part in a dragonfly survey on the river. They continue to organise the annual litter pick, in conjunction with CDE, at the mouth of the estuary where no other litter gatherers tread. They monitor the wildlife section of Jubilee Field in Budleigh, working with the Streetscene Dept. of EDDC. With CDE they continue the Himalayan Balsam eradication campaign, in some areas with very encouraging successes. The Association has helped to fund roof repairs to local churches. We have financed the sowing of seeds and planting of

saplings in the public areas of some parishes. We have a scheme operating where we fund the transport costs of schools outings to the Pebblebed Heathlands and local farms where the children are taught by members of the CDE team. We are happy to listen to any reasonable ideas which our members may suggest which will benefit our local communities.

All in all, we are a thriving organisation but, sadly, as active members step down, there is often nobody prepared to take their place. There are many organisations experiencing similar difficulties. We have a large number of members, many of whom have already done their stint. There must be some members who feel able to devote a little of their time to keep us as active as we have been for the last 42 years.

Of recent interest on the seashore, a colony of five seals has been seen in the vicinity. I am assured that they have not been confused with the devotees found on the naturist section of the beach. A basking shark was recently seen swimming close to the shoreline. We haven't heard anything recently about the Great White Shark which was being tracked as it followed the Gulf Stream across the Atlantic, possibly to a beach 'near you'. Judging by the number of fishermen lining the beach, the mackerel have returned. Several pods of porpoises/dolphins were recently seen travelling both east then west. Unfortunately, they were harassed by the occupants of a speedboat. Two black swans took up residence in the area for a few days, nobody seems sure where they came from. Where the beaver rescued in the Exe estuary came from also remains a mystery. Several black heads were seen off the beach, which routinely went below the surface. These have fairly certainly been identified as being Greater Spotted Rubber Suited Divers. Becoming increasingly common at this time of year.

Bob Wiltshire, Acting Chairman

Gift Aid: A Reminder

If you are a UK taxpayer and have not yet completed your Gift Aid declaration please go to the website www.ova.org.uk/news/ova-gift-aid. By completing the online form you enable us to claim 25p for every £1 you pay in membership.

Thank you!

Somewhere different to visit locally in the Otter Valley

Are you looking for somewhere to go that is well managed and provides a peaceful haven for both people and wildlife? Come and try the Churchyards of All Saints' Church in East Budleigh.



Since 1995, the old burial grounds have been managed as a “Living Churchyard” i.e. letting everything grow for the year and cutting it all down in September when the flowers have seeded. In 1996, a survey identified over 130 different tree, wild flower, fern, grass and sedge species in the Churchyards; however, over the years, as the arisings from the cutting were not removed, the soil became more fertile and coarse grasses and hogweed took over from the flowers ... whilst interesting structurally, it was becoming a monoculture.

Since 2017, we have proactively managed the Churchyards and the cutting regime to bring back the biodiversity.

In 2020, we identified and recorded:

- Over 120 flowers ranging from snowdrops and wild daffodils in the Spring, through spotted and black medicks, green alkanet, red campion, crow garlic, thistles and teasels through to Lady's bedstraw, plantains, poppies, sowthistles and verbascum
- Woodrush or Good Friday Grass - a sedge
- Four different ferns including black spleenwort and maidenhair spleenwort
- 12 grasses including sweet vernal, hairy brome, meadow fescue and Yorkshire fog
- Around 30 different bryophytes, i.e. mosses and liverworts
- Around 40 birds including green and greater spotted woodpeckers, goldfinch, fieldfare, jay, meadow pipit, nuthatch, pheasant, redwing, sparrow hawk and wren
- five of the 16 bat species in Devon: Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Serotine, Noctule and a Myotis
- Regular sightings of slowworms and a toad
- Moles, squirrels and rabbits.
- Scarlet, Slimy and Snowy Waxcaps, and Brown Mottlegill - all fungi.

We are still working on identifying the worms, insects and arachnids but have recorded sightings of the Common Blue, Wall Brown, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood butterflies; Jersey Tiger Moth; the Violet Oil Beetle, the hairy or sloe shieldbug and the Common Dung Beetle; and the Meadow grasshopper. Lichens are proving a challenge to identify (not being experts!).

We have uploaded our information to the records centre of the National Biodiversity Network.

We have entered the Campaign to Protect Rural England Devon's Best Churchyard for the last three years and are the only Churchyard to have won an award in all three years: 2018 - Runner Up; 2019 - Winner; and 2020 - "Highly Commended". These awards reflect the dedication and commitment of our volunteers and paid contractors who turn out every month to maintain and improve the Churchyards for wildlife and people.

If you are on a walk or a bike ride, the Churchyard can be a wonderful place to rest and relax with your refreshment - we have 12 benches with views over the rolling countryside and down the High Street where every building in sight on the street is Grade II listed.



There are memorials to many notable people including James Lackington, William Edward Torriano, Marion Gibbons and Vice-Admiral William George Preedy - details about these people can be found on OVApedia and the Church website: www.raleighmissioncommunity.org.uk. The different rock used for memorials, the memorial shapes, structures and inscriptions can be very interesting and reflect the community and culture at that time.

The Church also has some interesting features ... Sir Walter Raleigh's portrait, the Raleigh family pew and arms, the Conant family pew and arms, the 63 medieval carved pew ends, the 15th Century font, the 13th Century piscine, Admiral Preedy's window (pictured left), Johanne Raleigh's tomb with reversed lettering, the carved ceiling bosses

At different times you will see that some sections of grounds have been mown but we do sections in rotation so there are always flowers around for you (and the pollinators!) to enjoy.

***Penny and Paul Kurowski, Co-Leaders of the Churchyard Working Party
All Saints' Church, East Budleigh***

And talking of wild spaces.....

Budleigh Salterton Community Gardens wildflower meadow

Allotments date back to Anglo Saxon times, when land was made available to the poor for the cultivation of vegetables and fruit for consumption by the allotment holders and their families. In 1908, the Smallholders and Allotments Act placed a duty on local authorities to supply sufficient allotments on demand. Later legislation increases the requirement for the availability of such land to be made available. However as demand has increased the standard size of an allotment has decreased. The current size is 5 rods, for those of you who are not too hot on rods and poles, this is an area of 151.25 sq. yards or in newspeak 126.5 sq. metres.

In 2011 it was decided that part of the allotments in Budleigh Salterton should be taken over for a housing development and the remaining area should be supplemented with land from an adjoining meadow. This has now been renamed as Community Gardens. Why you may ask are they no longer called allotments? The reason being that they are smaller than the standard allotment.

When the plots were designed, two of them turned out to be too narrow for the BS Community Gardens standard width. They do vary a lot in length as the area is not geometrically even. So the garden designer decreed that these particular areas should remain uncultivated with just a line of fruit trees. Soon the area was becoming a dump. Fortunately we hadn't quite reached the stage of washing machines and broken televisions. So we decided to turn the area into a wild flower meadow.



Various bodies such as the Norman Trust and the funding available from our local councils enabled us to remove the accumulated rubbish and rubble and sow wild flower seeds. Since then it has been a constant battle to keep on top of the undesirable weeds. By adding randomly collected seeds from the autumn the garden has become well established. The interesting part of the progressing of the meadow is the number of varieties which have become present which were not sown. Presumably arriving by bird power or wind-blown. Notably Corn Cockle

which is quite rare and has now become over populated. Ragged Robin, Wild Chicory, and Vipers Bugloss. 2020 was not a remarkable year because it was so hot and dry, but in 2019 I recorded 37 different varieties of plants. This year we have been given several Deptford Pink plants which are nearing extinction, they seem to have become established. Many of the plants may not always be regarded as being wild, however as long as they attract the insects we are happy to see them.



Bob Wiltshire

With thanks to Mo Sandford for the stunning images

Dartford Warblers on the Pebblebed Heaths

The Pebblebed Heaths in East Devon are one of the strongholds of the Dartford warbler in the UK, although one suspects that most visitors to the heaths are totally unaware that they are there. They are small and rather dark-looking birds and all one usually sees is a small dark shape with a long tail flitting between gorse bushes. However, seen up close in good light, they are extremely handsome birds, particularly the male in full breeding plumage sitting on top of a gorse bush, with

its dark grey upperparts, rather red-wine-coloured underparts and bright red eye. They have a slightly cheeky appearance, with their tail usually slightly cocked.



Dartford Warbler photographed by Peter Adey

At the start of the breeding season (late March to early May) they can be quite showy, with the males in full song – a short, high-speed burst of rattles and whistles - sitting on top of a high point in their territory. At other times, they are a rather skulking species and are mainly found in the denser areas of gorse.

Dartford Warblers are residents, although there is some dispersal after the breeding season and, in the UK, they are restricted to suitable areas, mainly heathlands, in southern England. They are almost entirely insectivorous, mainly feeding on the spiders and insects found in gorse and heather. Even in winter, the heathlands (particularly gorse) have quite a rich invertebrate fauna and this is what the warblers rely on. However, Dartford Warblers are extremely vulnerable to bad winters (when their invertebrate food becomes largely unavailable) and only those in the most ideal territories survive through long periods of very cold weather. Thus, in the extremely cold winter of 1962-63, the whole UK population was reduced to just 11 pairs! Here in Devon, during the very cold winters of 2009 and 2010, the numbers on the Pebblebed Heaths dropped dramatically from an

estimated figure of 250 to 28 singing males. Similarly, after the “beast from the East” in the winter of 2017/18, the numbers again dropped from about 100 to 25. However, with the much warmer winters since then, the numbers on the heaths has increased dramatically and there are now (2021) more than 160 males holding territories. Indeed, the East Devon Commons are the stronghold of this species in Devon and hold more that 36% of the Devon population (DBR, 2019).

Dartford Warblers have a rather restricted World distribution, with a stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula and western France, plus a few other areas of the western Mediterranean. In the UK, it is a species of “Conservation Concern” due to the rather small populations breeding here. Thus, the owners of the Pebblebed heathlands, Clinton Devon Estates, partially manage the heaths (through the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust) with the aim of sustaining a suitable habitat for these warblers. However, another near-threatened species – the butterfly, the Silver-studded Blue – is also present on most of the heaths. Silver-studded Blues are also mainly restricted to heathland in south of the UK but need areas of heathlands with areas of *Erica* and *Calluna* heathers with very little gorse – almost the opposite to the requirements of Dartford Warblers. Management of the heaths where these two species are present, therefore, calls for maintaining a mosaic of habitats so that the environmental requirements of both species are satisfied.

So, when you are next out walking on the heaths, look out for a little dark bird with a long tail flitting between gorse bushes – the chances are that it is a Dartford Warbler – one of the very important species of Conservation importance found in the Otter Valley area.

Chris Hodgson, NEC Chair

Pebblebed Heaths become a National Nature Reserve

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths has received international acclaim after being presented with the much coveted declaration of National Nature Reserve.

The 1,160 hectare site makes up the largest expanse of lowland heath in Devon and joins a host of other National Nature Reserves (NNRs) across the UK. There are currently 223 NNRs in England with a total area of over 96,000 hectares – approximately 0.7% of the country’s land surface. Around one third of all species recorded in the UK can be found on NNRs.

Natural England manages about two thirds of England's NNRs. The remaining reserves are managed by a wide variety of organisations approved by Natural England, including the RSPB, National Trust, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts and local authorities. Many NNRs are jointly managed through local partnerships. NNRs were established to protect some of our most important habitats, species and geology, and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research. NNRs offer great opportunities to the public, schools and specialist interest groups to experience wildlife first hand and to learn more about nature conservation.

The heaths have been dedicated for public access by Clinton Devon Estates since 1930 and largely come under its ownership. Since 2006 the site has been managed by the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust which was set up by the Estate to promote, for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the heaths and the Otter Estuary.

Tony Juniper CBE, Chair of Natural England, said: "National Nature Reserves are the very jewels in nature's crown. In addition to being among our most wonderful natural areas, they are also at the very heart of our ambition to create a Nature Recovery Network, to restore the beauty, diversity and health of nature across the country.

"The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths reserve offers wonderful opportunities for people to connect with nature, and to experience some wonderful wildlife, including 70 species of breeding birds and many unusual plants, insects and reptiles. It is also an important archaeological site, set in a unique and evocative landscape. Natural England is very proud to confirm the designation of East Devon Pebblebed Heaths and hope many more people will enjoy its wonderful natural riches."

A biodiversity audit in 2016 documented more than 3,000 species across the range of habitats on the heaths – and more than 10% of these have been shown to have high conservation value. Among the key species which benefit from the habitats the heaths provide are Dartford warblers, nightjars and the southern damselfly.

Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of Wildlife and Conservation for Clinton Devon Estates, said: "The heaths have been loved by generations of people and attract around 400,000 visits a year. As well as providing space for some of our rarest species, they play an important role in supporting mental and physical health and

wellbeing, providing contact with nature and a place to exercise, socialise and enjoy. Being granted National Nature Reserve status by Natural England is a recognition of the hard work not just of the staff of the three partner management organisations but the many volunteers who give so much of their time through groups such as the Friends of the Commons, all of which are invaluable.”

“This declaration also helps ensure the future of the heaths and their wildlife because National Nature Reserves benefit from the highest level of conservation protection available under UK legislation.”

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, a virtual launch and celebration of the new NNR declaration was held on Thursday 13th May.



Lord Clinton proudly holds the NNR declaration certificate at the launch L-R Dr Sam Bridgewater & John Varley (Clinton Devon Estates) Edrick Hopkinson (Devon Wildlife Trust) Kevin Cox (RSPB Chair) and Marian Spain and Tony Juniper CBE (Natural England)

The above article has been extracted from a Press Release issued by Clinton Devon Estates on 13th May - Editor

'A year of ups and downs on the 'Hill' - Spring 2021 Newsletter

It was pointed out to me that in the above article I did not remind readers that they must keep to footpaths.

Geoff Porter, Natural Environment Committee

Annual Estuary Litter Pick

Further information will be available nearer the time but we are pleased to confirm that there will be a litter pick in the Autumn. This will take place on **Saturday, 18th September** from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

As a result of the LORP development work taking place and any Covid regulations in place at the time there may be some adjustments from our usual routine, for example all parking will have to be at Lime Kiln car park and we may have to ask volunteers to register.

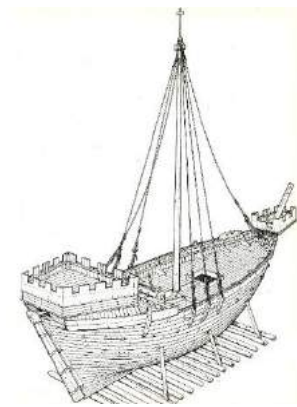
Please look out for further information which will be published locally, on our website and in the next issue of this newsletter.



Industrial River to SSSI – a short history of the Otter

Today the river Otter flows through a peaceful rural landscape, but it wasn't always like this. Until the roads were "Turnpiked" around 1850 wheeled transport in and out of Devon was difficult; narrow lanes with steep inclines and deep mud in the winter. Waterborne transport dominated the transport of many goods, and the river Otter played its part.

In mediaeval times Otterton appeared, from the records, to be the main port, most likely because the deep water flowed along the eastern bank. Lower Budleigh did have its own port "Budley Haven" somewhere on the opposite bank, though little is known about it.



It always seems a bit mind-blowing to think of the Otter as a navigable river, but that is what it was just 500 years ago when the last account of a shipment of 50 tons of wine to Otterton was recorded. This wine would have been carried in a round bottomed wooden boat with a single mast, drawing maybe as little as 6ft. A vessel such as this could have been allowed to rest on its keel at low tide.

Image: Typical medieval Cog

Around 1540 a major survey was conducted looking for possible new harbours and havens for both the naval and fishing fleets in the exposed channel coast of the South West, particularly in Lyme Bay. One proposal put forward was to use "Ottermouth Haven", a name given to the pool of water lying behind the pebble bar, later known as the "Salmon Pool". An accompanying text indicated that the depth of water in this pool then measured two and a half fathoms at low tide (13 to 14 ft).

The proposal was promoted along the lines: *"This haven will be very good for the safeguard of ships in this bay in foul weather, which bay is very dangerous as it is well known. Between Powderham and Torbay no place is so good as this will be, for Exmouth Harbour is barred with sand and Teignmouth is utterly decayed and grown to a flat."*

However, it never happened. Possibly because of the difficulty of sailing into the narrow mouth of the estuary in adverse weather conditions. Or the expense and feasibility of constructing wooden jetties at the river mouth, proposed as part of the scheme.

It is interesting to note that three hundred years later Captain Washington, R.N. in a report of 1851 prepared for a public meeting to discuss the loss of maritime usage in the estuary stated that before the Rolle embankments were built (construction started in 1810): *“The Otter afforded a fair harbour. Vessels drawing 7 feet of water could lie afloat in the Salmon Pool [the then local name] at the entrance to the Estuary. The whole Estuary covered 220 acres at high tide, entirely covered with water. The entrance being 200 feet wide, formed a small harbour for coasters and yachts”*. (Note the width of the entrance, compared to today).

The silting of rivers is a continuous process. Sand and stones are washed downstream and finely suspended particles are “salted out”, or precipitated, as the fresh water mixes with salty water in the tidal reaches to create that slippery mud. From the early fourteenth century customs accounts stated that “Ottermouth” suffered a lack of deep water and in the mid sixteenth century each parish sold a church bell to help pay for dredging. Today there is little water behind the pebble bar at low tide, and we know from the surveys conducted for the LORP that the river bed now runs a metre higher than the enclosed cricket field. This is the result of 200 years of silting.

As the river silted, so a series of docks, quays and wharves were created downstream of the mediaeval settlements of Budley (now East Budleigh) and Otterton in a process of managed retreat. Ladram was also used to land heavy cargo over the beach for the short haul to Otterton. We know the names of these, but do not know the exact location of all of them. On the west bank there were: Bankley Warf (by Pullhayes Farm and still in use in early nineteenth century to land stone for the construction of the embankments), Kerbrook Quay and Granary Dock; and a conjectured site for the seventeenth century Bayley shipyard (Bayley of Otterton) on the east bank (adjacent to South Farm). Best evidence of location comes from a survey conducted by Captain Washington RN, also part of his 1851 report.

Climate change experts are predicting sea level rise in the future, but to date there has been little change since the mediaeval period. So a good way of visualising how the Otter might have looked like then is to look at the Environment Agency flood map which shows the estuary “in full flood”.



Flood map of the Lower Otter Valley showing approximate positions of docks etc.

Surprising as it may seem, the history of Granary Dock (about half way between Kersbrook and the cricket club) is, to date, unknown. It must have been significant, partly because of its name, and partly because “Granary” appears more prominently on maps and charts of the eighteenth century than the emerging hamlet of Budleigh Salterton. Agriculturally, the valley is not suited to large scale grain production so it seems likely that the “Granary” refers to imports. Was it linked to a period of local population growth? Clearly it was no longer in use by the beginning of the nineteenth century when Lord Rolle built the embankments enclosing it.

From Captain Washington’s chart we know there was also a lime kiln at Granary Dock which would have used lighters or barges to land raw materials. The lime kilns by the carpark (there were at least two), which date from the 1760’s, had the option of having coal and lime either discharged from lighters in the Salmon Pool or over the beach, from larger ships at sea. Indeed, there is a photograph of coal lighters moored in the pool by the nearby gas works. Gas supply in 1868 predated the arrival of the railway.

The significant change in the last 200 years is the construction of Lord Rolle’s embankments, started in 1810. This had two aims: to enclose and increase agricultural land in the flood plain and to improve navigability of the Otter by straitening and “canalising” it with what was called “the new cut”. However, the most harmful use of the Otter has to be the twentieth century use for tipping and landfill: in the Lime Kiln car park; along South Farm Road and in the Kersbrook

inlet. Hopefully, society is in the process of “moving on” from this sort of lack of awareness.

We have also seen significant change in living memory. Local residents, especially the fishing families can recall boats mooring in the estuary itself, on the landward side of the pebble bar up to the 1960s. With a capstan winch at the top of Donkey’s turn to pull the heavier fishing boats out of the mud. Something that is hard to envisage today, just sixty years later.



Boats in the Otter c 1950

So, will the archaeology being conducted as part of LORP reveal any of this? Unfortunately, wood tends to rot and leave little trace. Or, maybe, the investigations will reveal something even deeper about the history of the estuary?

David Daniel, OVA History Advisor

If the above is of interest then don't miss our Talk – ‘Mapping the Otter Valley’ which will take place in October

Historical maps can provide wonderful insights into the ways in which land has been used and settlements have developed over many centuries. In a talk illustrated with images of the maps, Brian Carpenter, Archivist and Community Learning Officer for the Devon Archives and Local Studies Service, will talk about the range of maps and plans which the Devon Heritage Centre holds and describe the ways in which the Otter Valley has been mapped over the last 300 years.

Budleigh Salterton Traffic Group

The Budleigh Salterton Traffic Group was formed by the Town Council in 2006, with the object of investigating traffic movement and pedestrian safety in the Town. A wide ranging brief indeed.

The Group's members were drawn from elected members of the Town Council, EDDC, DCC, the OVA and Chamber of Commerce. The local Community Police rep was also invited to meetings, together with an officer from DCC's Highway Dept., whose advice on what is practical or acceptable has proved to be extremely helpful. Following staffing changes some months ago a Community rep has not attended the meetings, which is a pity, because a good contribution was always forthcoming from someone whose duty it was to work closely with the population of the town.

Although D.C.C. Highways make every effort to carry out improvements to the road system, anything other than relatively minor works are difficult to achieve because any expenditure is strictly subject to budgetary controls, which results in a re-active, rather than a pro-active approach to problems. "It's an accident waiting to happen" cuts no ice with County. Furthermore, due to the financial controls, locally approved suggested improvements have to jump through many hoops in County Hall before they are implemented. We now learn that this protracted process is being extended to three or four years, although it is rumoured that there is considerable disquiet among councillors at that probability.

Traffic and shoppers do not happily co-exist. The High St. and Fore St. congestion problem continues in Budleigh. Although many towns have a similar problem, Budleigh is unusual as the most of its shops are situated on the main street, which is also the conduit for many beach users.

Fortunately there have been few accidents or incidents arising from this situation but the problem can only worsen as time goes on. At quiet times the main street is an attractive place to be, and to shop, but it would be difficult to argue against the suggestion that the present traffic conditions do have an adverse effect on the desire to shop in Budleigh.

Other towns in the county have overcome the problem by creating pedestrian areas or one way street systems, and in the past much time and effort has gone

into exploring similar options here, but no great support for change has resulted. At its last meeting the Traffic Group resolved to discuss the problem further in early 2022.

DCC Highways are now proposing to create passing places in the High St., which will reduce the number of parking spaces, but may well help to somewhat alleviate the real problem.

Hopefully the Group will soon return to the Public Hall for its meetings, which will allow a full discussion on existing concerns and new ones which inevitably crop up. As an example, at the last meeting the Group considered a request from a local resident to provide guidance to motorists using Salting Hill, and a recommendation was made to erect signs indicating the priority of use.

So, if readers have concerns, or positive opinions on any matters, relating generally to pedestrian safety, yellow lines, bollards, traffic movement etc., please contact the Town Clerk or a Councillor, to help the Traffic Group contribute to keep Budleigh Salterton safe.

George Maddaford, OVA Representative

East Budleigh – Wildflower Planting & Nature Trail

Improving the natural world has become a major talking point over the last few years. Many of the ideas publicised through the wider media are for large scale projects but these programmes are not always possible within a village setting. We need to encourage local participation by the community with projects such as tree planting, wildflower areas etc. and local concerns have to be considered:

- many prefer “billiard table” lawns and not the rough, rather haphazard growth that wild planting needs
- we may like footpaths that have neat verges and are easily passable rather than overgrown and unkempt
- many traditional tree species we love have been devastated by disease and are not suitable for planting for the future

We have to overcome these constraints and East Budleigh/Bicton Parish Council - with invaluable support from OVA - has begun to develop policies to promote environmental work. We have established a nature trail along one of the parish's green lanes and, working with CDE, have planted some oaks as well as placing a seat and rubbing posts along the lane to encourage use by as many as possible.



This path, being next to Drakes School, is being used by the children, hopefully enhancing their environmental awareness. They are putting up bird boxes and using the information packs that have been produced. Hopefully their involvement will be continued with future projects - bug houses, appropriate wildflower planting, etc.

Around the village we have made a start - planting several rowans (lovely for flowers and berries), and wildflowers (plug plants, seeds and bulbs). Native snowdrops have been planted and we hope to continue this planting with bluebells, daffodils, etc, at an appropriate time.

We hope to develop wildflower verges through Yettington and the village but these are not quick fixes. A long term programme of grass cutting is necessary and we are currently trying to establish who cuts grass within the parish so as to enable a more sustainable programme for the future, ensuring that strimming and cutting are done in such a way as to allow wild areas to establish.

Fiona Ward

WALKING



The Walk Team is pleased to offer a selection of walks over the next three months. As restrictions are eased, we will now walk as one group and the number of places available has increased. Please email walks@ova.org.uk to request a place on a walk. You will receive a reply to confirm if there is availability. We will continue to monitor and adhere to Government guidelines.

Many thanks for your support
The Walks Team

Walks Programme – July to September 2021

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

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

Wednesday 7 July - 'Sid Valley Ring Part 2 - Linear walk' - about 7 miles

Meet: Sidmouth triangle for 9.49am bus or 10.15am at St Giles Church Sidbury (OS115, SY139 917)

From Sidbury we take country lanes before a steep ascent to cross the A3052. We then head to the coast with sea views before turning inland to Salcombe Regis. We will ascend back to the coast path and descend through the Eastern side of Sidmouth.

Bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leader: Viven Insull 01404 811267

Thursday 15 July - ‘Coleridge Link Trail’ - 9 miles

Meet: 10.00am Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899)

We will visit Tipton St John, Ottery St Mary, Knightstone, White Cross, Harpford Wood and Harpford with stops for coffee and lunch

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott 01395 277644

Wednesday 21 July - ‘The Path less Travelled’ - 5 miles

Meet: 10.00am Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899)

A shortish walk along shady paths to Venn Ottery Church, possibly the oldest building in the Lower Otter Valley still in regular use. The views open up on the steady climb up to Venn Ottery Common and Benchams before returning along the East Devon Way.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull 01395 567339

Monday 26 July - ‘High above Lyme Bay’ - 7.2 miles

Meet: 10.00am Stonebarrow N Trust CP, parking fee payable, free to NT members (OS SY 384 933)

From Stonebarrow Lane, we descend to the coast path and follow this undulating path through farmland and past dramatic landslips to the foot of the mighty Golden Cap, the highest point on the South Coast of England. We will either stop for coffee halfway up the ascent, if in need of a breather, or at the top where we can enjoy (weather permitting) views over the whole of Lyme Bay. Descending to Seatown, we will stop at the beach for lunch and then back to Stonebarrow Lane via lanes and tracks past the ancient Saxon settlement of Stanton St Gabriel.

Please bring a picnic.

Walk Leaders: David and Rose Conner 01395 443757 / 07831 406959

Tuesday 3 August – ‘Otter and Orchards’ - 5 miles

Meet: 10.00am Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899)

A walk northwards from Newton Poppleford taking in hamlets west of the Otter as far as Fluxton, as well as the river bank. A moderate walk with a coffee stop part way round (so bring a flask)

Walk Leader: Ross Hussey 01395 227991 (or contact on the day 07902 255915)

Tuesday 10 August - ‘The Romans at Beer’ - 8.5 miles

Meet: 10.30am Seaton Water Tower picnic area (OS 116, SY 233913)

An energetic walk with hills to Beer, then coast path to Branscombe Mouth where we will either eat our picnic on the beach or use the Sea Shanty café. We then

return to Beer via Branscombe and an inland route and onto the coast path to Seaton Hole. Our return route from here will be through Couchill Woods.

Walk Leader: Ted Swan 01395 567450

Wednesday 18 August – ‘Jaunt around Otterton’ - 6 miles

Meet: 10.00am East Budleigh Public CP (OS 115, SY 065 848)

Following footpaths and small lanes in a circular route in the Otter Valley around Otterton.

Walk Leader: Steve Hagger. 01395 442631

Monday 23 August - ‘West of the Otter on ancient tracks and lanes’ - 7.4 miles

Meet: 10.00am Newton Poppleford Rec CP (OS 115, SY 088 899)

From Newton Poppleford we follow footpaths, lanes and tracks to Venn Ottery, where we stop for coffee, and then on to Metcombe, Fluxton and on to Venn Ottery Common, where we will break for lunch with splendid views over the Otter Valley. We follow more tracks and lanes to pick up the East Devon Way and thence back to Newton Poppleford. Please bring a picnic.

Walk Leaders: David and Rose Conner 01395 443757 / 07831 406959

Wednesday 1 September - ‘Branscombe seashore to Blackbury Camp’ - 9 miles

Meet: 10.00am Branscombe Village Hall CP, (OS115, SY 1976 8873)

A classic hike northward through the valleys of Branscombe and up onto the plateau as far as Blackbury Camp and then back towards the sea with some coast path views included. Bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07788 7936280

Monday 13 September – ‘The Great Circle’ - 9 miles

Meet: 10.00am Colaton Raleigh Church, (OS115, SY 081 872)

A strenuous but rewarding walk combining riverside, green lanes, moorland, coast path and some of the finest scenery in the Lower Otter Valley. The route follows the River Otter to Dotton and Harpford, before climbing to Keble’s Seat and Mutters Moor. After descending Seven Stones Lane to the coast path, it cuts inland past Anchoring Hill, and finishes with a final stretch up the River Otter. Bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull. 01395 567339

Wednesday 29 September - 'Avon Dam and Redlake Tramway – a Dartmoor walk' - 8 miles

Meet: 9.45am Shipley Bridge CP (OS SX 680 629)

We start from the car park at Shipley Bridge near South Brent, a few miles north of the A38. This is a smallish car park, hence the early start to make sure we get a space! Travelling time from East Budleigh is about 45 minutes.

The walk winds up beside the River Avon to the Avon Dam reservoir, then crosses more open moorland with interesting archaeological features and joins the Two Moors Way for a short distance before descending a track following the Redlake Tramway to arrive back at Shipley Bridge. Bring a picnic lunch.

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

The following walks took place in accordance with the guidelines and restrictions in place at the time. All Walk Reports appear on the website - many thanks to contributors.

The Mystery Walk – 13th April

The weather was great, the two teams of six were raring to go and the first OVA walk since the release of lockdown started with much enthusiasm. During the lockdown Dee and I had decided we needed to vary our walks whilst still setting off from Otterton. We scrutinised the OS maps and were surprised with the number of paths we were unfamiliar with. The challenge was to find as many new paths as possible whilst completing a circular walk.

We started from The Green going up river to Bridge End, crossing the main road and walking through the middle of the Four Elms Orchards, past the deliciously intoxicating smells of apple juice from the reject pile. Crossing back over the main road we circumnavigated Bulverton Hill with great and far reaching views of Fire Beacon Hill, Core Hill and a birds eye view of Sidmouth and its outliers.

Crossing down into the upper reaches of the Bickwell valley brought us to the only serious climb of the day - up Greystone Hill for lunch overlooking the Golf Course Clubhouse and Sidmouth sea front. The convenient pile of lunch seats – large logs – was vacated by the first group just in time for the following team to enjoy the same location. Peak Hill Wood was then followed by a twisty route

around Otterton's lesser known lanes, avoiding the busier coastal path as much as possible. In fact we hardly passed anyone else during the whole day.



Otterton Parish Council have replaced many of the waymarkers and finger posts with memorials to the soldiers lost in World War 1 (16 in number) and have started on remembering those lost in World War 2. Two out of seven so far being funded. Our route passed nine of these new posts.

This 10 mile walk was enthusiastically completed with a keen team which included 4 walkers new to the OVA.

Iain and Dee

The Kilmington Walk – 26th April

There was a full take up so expectations of this walk were high. The weather was non-stop sunshine but the cool wind made it ideal for a saunter a little way from our normal walking area. The village of Kilmington revealed itself to be a hidden jewel in Devon's crown - once clear of the A35.

Starting at the Kilmington Boulder, a relic of 100,000,000 years ago, we proceeded through the village to see the scarecrow remnants of the last weekend's open gardens. A steady climb took us to the top of Shute Hill and the Shute Beacon where glimpses of the surrounding countryside showed themselves. The hill is wooded and has many paths.

As we descended on the far side of the hill the views opened up. Coffee was taken outside Shute Barton with its Elizabethan gatehouse. This medieval manor house has a fireplace remarkable for its ability to barbeque two oxen side by side. Enough for an OVA luncheon!

A circular tour of the property through the nearby farm brought us to New Shute House - built in the Late Palladian style. We passed the magnificent Turkey Oak tree which has the largest unsupported crown of 54 metres - mind-blowingly beautiful.

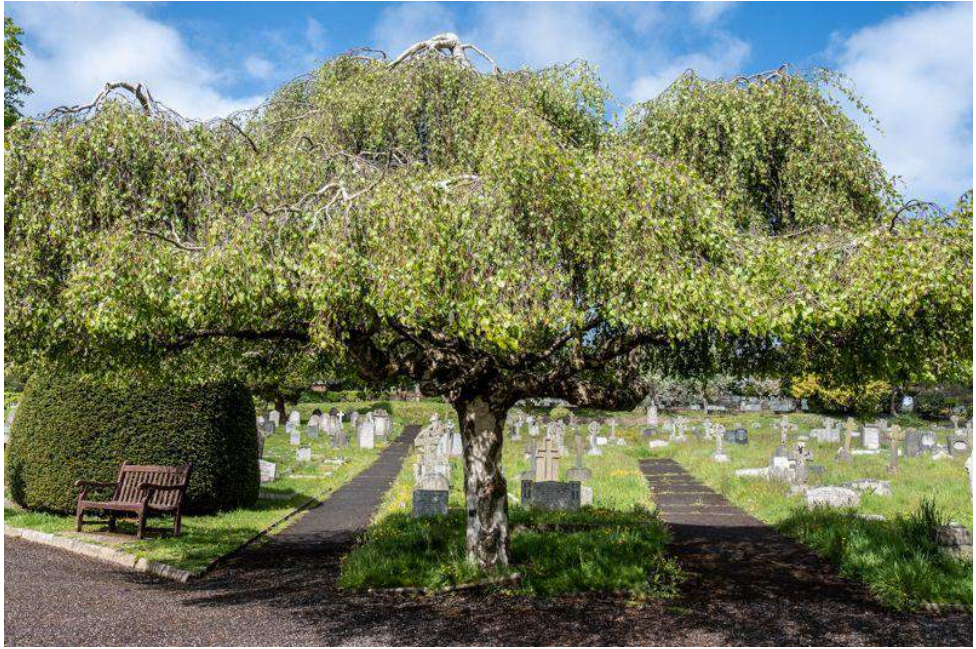
A meander down the lanes gave 180+ degree open views of the countryside for miles around. Lunch was taken on the Green, a sloping grass area with a bubbling brook and benches in an idyllic setting. The afternoon walk was in total contrast - almost flat on the Yarty and Axe flood plains. The walk was a reminder of school where we were taught about meandering rivers with ox bow lakes. The twists and turns were everywhere and the tight switchbacks made the route confusing at times. This area has many remnants of the Axe valley and Taunton stop line - concrete blocks and structures designed to prevent a potential German invasion in WWII.

The walk concluded through the fields of the farm shop, with its freshly cut rhubarb purchased by at least one of the team. The walk was a little longer than advertised in order to take full advantage of the weather and open views.

Iain and Dee

Sidmouth tree trail & Salcombe Regis walking trail – 10th May

On a dry, but chill and blustery, morning twelve of us set out from the Sidmouth triangle. Following the Western Town brook and through various alleyways, we arrived at the Sidmouth arboretum, where we inspected the fascinating collection of trees, including a tulip tree, ginkgo and ancient Monterey pines. From there we made our way, via the Knapp woodland and its line of limes to the cemetery, where again there were a number of fine specimen trees. Next to the Byes, where we stopped for coffee and then had the privilege of viewing the foxglove tree, in full flower, in the grounds of the Hunter's Moon hotel. In the Byes behind the hotel, we saw some fine holm oaks and were lucky to spot a treecreeper on one of the oaks.



Having spent much of the morning on the flat, time for a change as we mounted the long ascent of Soldier's Hill, emerging at the top to walk through a stand of stunted oaks before making our way down to Salcombe Regis, where we stopped for lunch in the churchyard with great views down Salcombe Mouth to the sea. There were a number of fine trees in the pretty churchyard, including Irish and English yews and a wonderfully shaped cherry tree, as well as a number of very welcome benches.

After lunch, we made our way up the side of the combe to Salcombe Hill, where we inspected the frogstone and admired the splendid view from its location. Following the coast path, we descended to Sidmouth and passed by the last remaining wall of the old Sidmouth jail to reach Sidmouth parish church. We caught the scent of the unusual scented Myrtle in the churchyard and then on to the Sidmouth Triangle to conclude an excellent, interesting and varied walk. Many thanks to Ian and Dee for leading such a good walk.

David Conner

The Otter Valley Association

Executive Officers (01395)

Chairman	Bob Wiltshire	444395
Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	Roger Saunders	443248
Hon Treasurer	Martin Smith	442333

Executive Committee Members

Natural Environment Chair	Chris Hodgson	01404 815604
Planning Chair	<i>vacancy</i>	
Membership Secretary	Clive Bowman	446892
	membership@ova.org.uk	
	George Maddaford	446077
	Jon Roseway	488739
Talks Organiser	Peter Baldwin	567599
Events Organiser	<i>vacancy</i>	
Minutes Secretary	Rosemary Jerrard	442050
Newsletter Editor	Jacqui Baldwin	567599
	jacquibaldwin@btinternet.com	
Natural Environment	Geoff Porter	567055

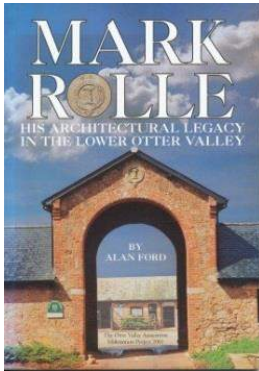
Parish Representatives (to whom concerns should be addressed initially)

Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	as above
East Budleigh	Jon Roseway	as above
Otterton	Pat & Geoff Porter	as above
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	as above
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacancy</i>	

Other Contacts

Webmaster	Martin Smith	as above
History Advisor	David Daniel	445960
Walks Organisers	Jane Connick	233614
	Jon Roseway	as above
Publications	Jon Roseway	as above
Newsletter Distributors	Peter & Wendy Youngworth	07718582535

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

£4.95 from Budleigh Salterton Tourist Information Centre

Or visit www.ova.org.uk



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 Budleigh Salterton Tourist Information Centre

Or visit www.ova.org.uk

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.