

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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



Summer picnic on the banks of the Otter ~ now a fading memory?

Autumn Edition

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Chairman's Message



THANK YOU to those members who have responded to our plea for volunteers. However, Haylor Lass, as he said in the last newsletter, is keeping the editorship afloat. The OVA has over a 1000 members and the lifeblood of the Association is the Newsletter. I know that even those who spend hours staring at a computer screen like to physically handle and read each edition. It has informative articles eg in this edition John Wilding from Clinton Devon Estates explains the need for accelerated felling of some of the local woodlands and Courtney Richards explains Budleigh Salterton's plans if we have a repeat of last year's snow. It has summaries of events that you wish you had gone on and informs you of events to come. So please come forward to offer to take on this role and there is no need to sit on any committees. Sue Chapman has arranged the talks for a few years and now wishes to spend time with her family. We thank her for the very interesting talks she has organised. Further on in the newsletter she outlines the work involved so please contact her.

This summer there has been several planning applications which would have a significant impact on our corner of the AONB if passed. I have been contacted by members anxious to learn how the Executive Committee arrives at responses to planning applications and I think many of you will be interested in the reply.

“All important decisions made in the name of the OVA are taken by the Executive Committee, and that includes planning issues. Planning applications are brought to the attention of the EC members who decide what course of action to take. It should go without saying that members are required to declare any interests in any matters being discussed.

In the event of writing a letter, detailed arguments and planning points are collected from members and a draft is circulated. EC members approve the final letter before it is sent.

“As you are aware planning applications have time constraints and sometimes the above processes are carried out by e-mail and/or phone. All EC members have digital connection.

continued overleaf

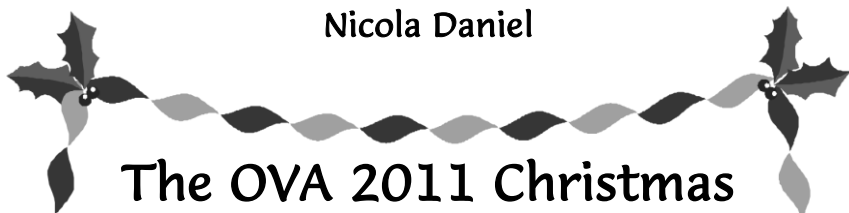
The constitutional aims of the OVA pertinent to planning matters include: the conservation and protection of the natural resources and natural beauty of the area and to promote high standards of planning.”

The Events Committee are interested in hearing from the membership their ideas of what talks and events they would wish the committee to organise. In addition to our visits to Dartmoor and Combe House the committee has arranged 2 more activities before Christmas. On 26th October Fairlynch Museum and the OVA will show a newly digitised archive film of Scott's original polar expedition "Great White Silence" It will be shown in the BS Public Hall, 7.00pm for 7.30pm with a glass of wine or soft drink, charge £5.00.

Carolyn Allen and Rosemary Jerrard have also arranged an exciting day on the Axe Wetlands with a walk with James Chubb, lunch and a tramride. Once again, if this proves popular they will arrange another next year.

Finally, please note the change of time and the format for the January talk. This is a new idea and we hope you will support Sue Chapman and her speakers.

Nicola Daniel



The OVA 2011 Christmas

THIS YEAR we are celebrating Christmas with a 3-course dinner at East Devon Golf Club. We assemble at 6.30pm for 7.00pm and our celebration will include a welcome glass of wine, a quiz devised by Bob Wiltshire, a raffle and finally carol singing with Ruth and Haylor Lass. Please indicate who you would like to sit with and we will try and accommodate you and don't worry if you don't know anybody as you soon will. We have managed to keep the cost to £26.00, the same as last year. Details of the menu and an application form for tickets are on pages 15 and 16 of this newsletter.

My husband, David, and myself will try again to take a Boxing Day Walk, followed by a lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh (snow stopped the walk last year but a few intrepid souls managed to get to the lunch!) Please contact us by 10th December as the publican needs to know food choices.

~ tel. 01395 445960.

Volunteers Needed

As a result of last winter's snowfall Budleigh Salterton Town Council has formed an Emergency Committee to coordinate help for elderly or disabled people who would be unable to get to the shops or even collect their medicines if such a heavy snowfall occurred again. The emphasis is on the word 'heavy.' The Emergency plan will only be put into action in the event of there being heavy snow that subsequently lies on the ground for a number of days, as it did last winter. One of the strengths of Budleigh Salterton is its community spirit and the Council is seeking to kick start the concept of a Budleigh Community by, as a first step, creating a list of people who may be willing to volunteer assistance.

This assistance can take many forms, from clearing snow from a person's front path to doing a bit of shopping for an elderly or disabled person or collecting their medicine. Volunteers are also needed to man the dedicated Emergency phone Helpline at the Public Hall which will be put into operation when an emergency strikes. Additionally the Council would like to hear from people who have four wheel drive vehicles who would be willing to assist people to get to hospital appointments.

At a meeting in the Budleigh Salterton Public Hall on 19th July several people put forward their names as being willing to assist in the event of a snow emergency and subsequently other residents have contacted the Council to volunteer their services.

However, more names are still needed so if you would be willing to help, please contact the clerk of the Council by either telephone (01395 442245) or via e-mail – office@budleighsaltertontowncouncil.gov.uk

OVA seeks new Talks Organizer

Due to worldwide family commitments, I am sadly relinquishing my role as Talks Organizer for the OVA. It has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience working within the Events Committee.

Booking halls is not difficult and finding speakers an interesting process. Lots of suggestions available.

We have a provisional programme of Talks to the end of 2012, so plenty of time to learn the ropes.

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

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

The OVA and Fairlynch Museum proudly present

'The Great White Silence'



*Herbert Ponting's amazing film record of Scott's
Antarctic expedition*

Herbert Ponting was a professional cinematographer who accompanied Robert Scott on his famous expedition to the South Pole. His pioneering film record of events is a tribute both to his skill as a photographer and the courage and bravery of Scott and his team. It has now been painstakingly restored by the British Film Institute National Archive and made available to a wider public. It will be shown on

Wednesday 26th October

in the Budleigh Salterton Public Hall

7.00 for 7.30pm

Tickets £5 including a glass of wine

Available from Orchard Wholefoods and
Richard's Menswear in the High Street
or on the door.

The Great White Silence

THE HISTORY of the Otter Valley is to a large extent the history of those who have lived there. Many of them helped to shape the Valley itself while others, such as Walter Raleigh, made their mark on the wider world. If, impossibly, a contemporary film record existed of Raleigh's expedition up the Orinoco River in search of El Dorado, what a fascinating historical document it would be!

Astonishingly, a full-length film of another historic expedition, the British Antarctic Expedition of 1910-13, **does** exist. "The Great White Silence" was made by Herbert Ponting, a brilliant pioneering photographer, on location a hundred years ago. Nothing like it had ever been done before. The result is an extraordinary contemporary record of the Expedition and its work.

It vividly portrays the preparation, teamwork and unsung heroes as well as the well-known, but ultimately tragic, story of Captain Scott's polar trek. Ponting's fascination with the beauty of the Antarctic, and its unfamiliar wildlife, is spectacularly on display.

George Murray Levick (1876–1956), who retired to Budleigh Salterton, took part in this Expedition. He was a doctor, and a member of the Northern Party which carried out important exploring and scientific work, surviving an Antarctic winter without adequate shelter or supplies. He worked closely with Ponting, particularly on the penguin sequences, and subsequently wrote a ground-breaking book on Antarctic Penguins. In later life, he founded the British Schools Exploring Society, and served in the Navy in both World Wars. His remarkable story was told in the recent exhibition at Fairlynch Museum. This historic film, in black and white with intertitles, has been just restored by the British Film Institute to coincide with the Expedition centenary.

In a joint initiative by the OVA and Fairlynch and with help from members of the film society, it will be shown at the Public Hall, Budleigh Salterton at 7.00pm for 7.30pm on Wednesday 26th October.



Not the OVA Christmas Dinner!

Life - and death - on the river; an update

AUTUMN is beckoning so it is a good moment to update members on what has been an active and interesting summer on the river. Bees love Himalayan Balsam. Some members do. They, like bees, are attracted by the pink, summer flowers. Others are not and water voles also dislike them. The plants are not a native part of our ecosystem and rapidly invade to form clear stands on the river banks. When these die in winter, they leave open areas where there is no cover for water voles who are then at the mercy of predators. The latter include another intrusive species, the mink. A starting point therefore is that, if we wish to restore our native habitat, we have to challenge these two intruders.

Himalayan Balsam

In the June newsletter David Lindsay-Halls presented his initial thoughts on volunteering and announced that the first event would be an assault on balsam on 6th and 16th June. In fact, the response was moderate on the first date, with a dozen or so turning up, and very poor on the second when only four turned up. Worse, only three have responded to David's request in that newsletter to contact him either by email or using the form provided. This was disappointing. Nonetheless a useful start was made on the balsam, especially on 6th June when a massive amount was cleared in a block north of the road to White Bridge. Operations were managed by EDDC Countryside staff: Diane Berry and Jim Hunter.



Following this, David and I joined a comparable exercise in the Tale Valley based on Escot House on 30th June. It was organised by Mish Kennaway, head of the Tale Valley Trust (<http://talevalley.com>). The Tale is a right-bank tributary above Ottery and the Trust and EDDC have successfully controlled the balsam and reintroduced water voles, as well as providing a favourable environment for otters. There is abundant evidence of both. This is because TVT have complete control over the whole catchment, unlike us, with the Otter extending way inland beyond Ottery and Honiton. Mish warned us not to waste time attempting to clear the banks of the main river in our patch. The Otter is a conveyor belt transporting balsam seeds relentlessly downstream. He was nonetheless enthusiastic about our tackling tributaries, as also is Jim Hunter.

Balsam is best pulled in May and June before seeding takes place. So the most sensible strategy would appear to be to focus initially on our tributary valleys next May. We are checking these over to see what is needed. Some have already been partly cleared thanks to the initiative of the Parish Council at Newton Poppleford who have attacked the Back Brook. Harpford's brook has also been worked over. Diane Gee has been focussing south of the White Bridge road. Our plan requires cooperation with both individual farmers and of course the landowners, Clinton Devon Estates. We are hoping that, in the long term, CDE will help directly with the clearing.

Mink and others

It has been a frustrating summer. Back in the spring, the nesting activities of the pair of mute swans at White Bridge had aroused a great deal of local interest; the cygnets even more so. They were hugely photogenic. Sadly by late June there was just one survivor. Talking to locals who frequent the river is always enjoyable and rewarding. In early July an OVA member, John Jones, reported a mink taking a duck at the bridge and making off with it into the reed island. I saw what must have been the same mink at the bridge, with John on 21st July. Meanwhile an angler confirmed that he had seen a mink take one of the cygnets in early June up near Clamour Bridge. Another angler reported water voles and mink (attacking a duck) at the Woodbury Park Golf and Country Club. Minks have territories elongated along waterways (including drainage ditches) that may be several miles long so it could even have been the same creature! Traps were set at Woodbury by the Club and we did the same on the Otter, alas without results as yet. Jim Hunter caught one on the Axe a few weeks ago so we live in hope.

Finally, readers may recall Bob Wiltshire's piece in the newsletter last April (Vol 31/2) about beavers on the Otter. The evidence then was a log of willow, distinctively gnawed. On 10th July this year, at 8.15pm, John Hayes of Otterton not only saw a beaver between Otterton and Clamour bridge but filmed it! Two photographs and a video clip are on the OVA web site so you can all see for yourselves. I have conveyed this information to James Chubb, the EDDC Ranger, but if any readers have other sightings of the beaver or mink, do please let us know either by phone or on the OVA website. Such records can be invaluable.

Patrick Hamilton

Wetland Wildlife Safari with James Chubb

9.20am, Tuesday 6th December 2011
Outside the Tram Terminus,
Seaton Public Car Park

Hurry and send in your booking form because I am expecting this to be a sell-out!

Our very own James Chubb (EDDC Wildlife Ranger for The Budleigh Journal) has agreed to lead a few of our members up and along the fabulous Axe Wetlands Nature Reserves. He will walk and talk us through a full morning's wildlife ramble along the creeks, ditches and bird hides of Seaton Marshes, Black Hole Marsh and Colyford Common. We finish up at the Colyton Tram Stop Restaurant, where after a two course lunch a private tram will transport us back through the Wetlands once more to Seaton.

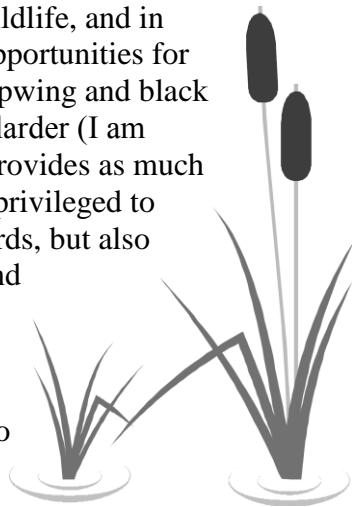
The Axe Estuary is a veritable cornucopia of wildlife, and in December the exposed mud provides feeding opportunities for hundreds of wading birds such as the curlew, lapwing and black tailed godwit, all tucking into Mother Nature's larder (I am reliably informed that one square foot of mud provides as much energy as three Mars bars!) We could even be privileged to see not only the hundreds of visiting migrant birds, but also possibly glimpse an otter or two playing hide and seek with the shy roe deer as they graze hungrily amongst the reed beds.

The cost is £18.50 per person. This includes the guided walk by James Chubb from Seaton to Colyton, a two course lunch, and single tram fare from Colyton back to Seaton.

Transport to Seaton will be via 'Car-Sharing' with 25 maximum. We will meet outside the Tram Terminus in Seaton main car park at 9.20am ready to set off on the walk at 9.30am on Tuesday 6th December and expect to reach the Tram Stop Restaurant before 1.30pm. The tram back to Seaton will return us to our cars for just after 3.00pm in the afternoon.

Please respond using the form on pages 13 and 14 of this newsletter.

Caroline Allen



Tuesday 4th October - 7.30pm TALK "Coastwatch."

Ottertton Village Hall. Not RNLI, not coastguards, what exactly are they doing in the water tower in Exmouth?

Speaker: Bill Nash, Ex Station Manager

Wednesday 5th October - 10.00am. WALK (Easy/Moderate)

Exmouth Maer CP (charges apply) SY012802. 4 miles, 2 hours. A chance to explore what remains of the port of Exmouth. Hazel will be sharing some interesting historical snippets during this route around Exmouth Port and Resort. We begin by walking along the seafront to explore the docks and then turn back into the town via "the Gut", our tour will end as we go up the Beacon and return on the higher road to our cars.

Walk leader: Hazel Harland, 01395 445665

Wednesday 12th October - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) Pub Lunch

East Budleigh CP, SY065849. 4 miles, 2½ hours. Very interesting town walk which includes a visit to the historic East Budleigh church. Stan will share his vast local knowledge of the people and places of bygone East Budleigh. Optional lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

Walk leader: Stan Herbert, 01395 445113

Monday 17th October – 11.00am Fossil Hunting ~ Fully booked**Wednesday 26th October - 10.30am. WALK****(Easy - please note later start time) Optional Pub Lunch**

Tally Ho Inn CP and local road parking, SX940904. 4 miles, 2½ hours. Providing an unusual and at times surprising perspective this walk around the pretty Ludwell Valley gives panoramic views over both Exeter and the Exe estuary with optional lunch at the Tally Ho Inn. Please note start time.

Walk leader: Trish Bisley, 01392 410423

Tuesday 1st November and Wednesday 9th November – 3.00pm

Combe House historic building visit and cream tea ~ *Fully booked*

Wednesday 9th November – 10.00am. WALK (Easy)

Newton Poppleford Sports Ground CP, SY087900. An easy walk looking for and identifying fungi including waxcaps. Marion is a member of the Devon Fungi Group and has an excellent knowledge of the subject.

Walk leader: Marion Nalder, 01395 442176

Saturday 12th November – 10.00am. WALK (Easy)

Exmouth Railway Station CP (charges apply). 3 miles, 2 hours. A one way easy walk to Exton on footpath and cycle path. Travel back to Exmouth via bus, train or even walk, it's up to you!

Walk leader: Peter Hills, 01395 568576

Thursday 17th November - 7.30pm TALK "Bees"

Colaton Raleigh Village Hall Why are honey bees so important to the environment and what can we do to help?

Speaker: Roger Lacey, President of Devon Beekeepers.

Saturday 26th November – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)

Four Firs CP, SY032864. 5 miles, 2½ hours. A varied walk across the commons visiting Woodbury Castle, Yettington, Hayes Wood and Blackhill Quarry. *Walk leader:* Stuart Lovett, 01395 443141

Saturday 3rd December – 10.00am. WALK (Easy) NB Change of Date

Wheathill Plantation SY041847. 3 miles, 2 hours. A short and sociable walk on the commons to relieve those pre-Christmas pressures.

Walk leader: David Daniel, 01395 445960

Tuesday 6th December – 9.20am Wetland Wildlife Safari with James

Chubb Outside the Tram Terminus, Seaton Public Car Park

Booking Essential – form on pages 13/14, please indicate choices and willingness to car share.

Wednesday 7th December – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) Pub lunch

Colaton Raleigh Church, SY082872. 5 miles, 2½ hours.

Green lanes, commons, Stowford, Hawkerland and Naps Lane.

Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Thursday 15th December - 6.30 for 7.00pm OVA Christmas Dinner

East Devon Golf Club Book now, **Booking Form** pages 15 & 16.

Monday 26th December – 10.30am. WALK (Easy)/Pub Lunch.

East Budleigh CP SY065849. Gentle Boxing Day walk across the common with optional pub lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh at this time of good cheer

Book with Walk Leader, David Daniel, 01395 445960 **by 5th December.**

Wetland Wildlife Safari

Numbers limited to 25 so please reply before 1st November 2011.
If oversubscribed then a second walk could possibly be arranged.

**Caroline Allen
Pebbles Edge
2 Marine Parade
Budleigh Salterton
EX9 6NS**

tel: 01395 446726

and don't forget the **SAE**

Wetland Wildlife Safari with James Chubb

Tuesday 6th December 2011

9.20 am Outside the Tram Terminus, Seaton Public Car Park

Please send me tickets

Name(s)

Address

.....

& Postcode

Phone number & email

I/we can offer seats in our car / I/we would like a lift with others.....

I am willing to allow my email address/telephone number to be disclosed to other OVA members for the purposes of car sharing.

LUNCH (please tick whichever is applicable)

1. Vegetable Soup of the Day *or* Prawn Cocktail

2. Cod, Chips and Peas *or* Sausage, Mash and Onion Gravy

or West Country Ham Ploughman's

or Wyke's Farm Cheddar Ploughman's

(both served with salad, crusty bread and pickle)

3. Choice of tea, coffee or squash is included, but a slice of chocolate cake is an optional extra to be ordered, but paid for individually on the day.

Chocolate Cake

I enclose cheque for £..... (£18.50 per person) made payable to
'OVA' and A Stamped Addressed Envelope
(address for return overleaf)



OVA Christmas Dinner

**Thursday 15th December - 6.30 for 7.00pm
East Devon Golf Club**

Please send me tickets

Name(s)

Address

& Postcode

Phone number

& email

Please indicate who you would like to sit with

Menu

Starter

Seafood platter A Meat pate B Vegetable soup C

Mains

Turkey D Salmon en Croute E Vegetarian option F

Desserts

Christmas Pudding JChocolate Yule Log K Sorbet and fruit L

I enclose cheque for £..... (£26.00 per person) made payable to
'OVA' and A Stamped Addressed Envelope
(address for return overleaf)

OVA Christmas Dinner
Thursday 15th December - 6.30 for 7.00pm
East Devon Golf Club

Gill Speare
Pine Rise
7A Bedlands Lane
Budleigh Salterton
EX9 6QH

and don't forget the **SAE**

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

Walk leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

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

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

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

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

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

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

Refreshments available. Volunteers appreciated.

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

Walk leader: Shane Badham, 01395 567531

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

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

Walk leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445872

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

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

Walk leader: John Jones, 01395 443651

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

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

Walk leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

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

Otterton village hall.

Speaker: Mo Bowman

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

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

Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk leader: John Jones 01395 443651

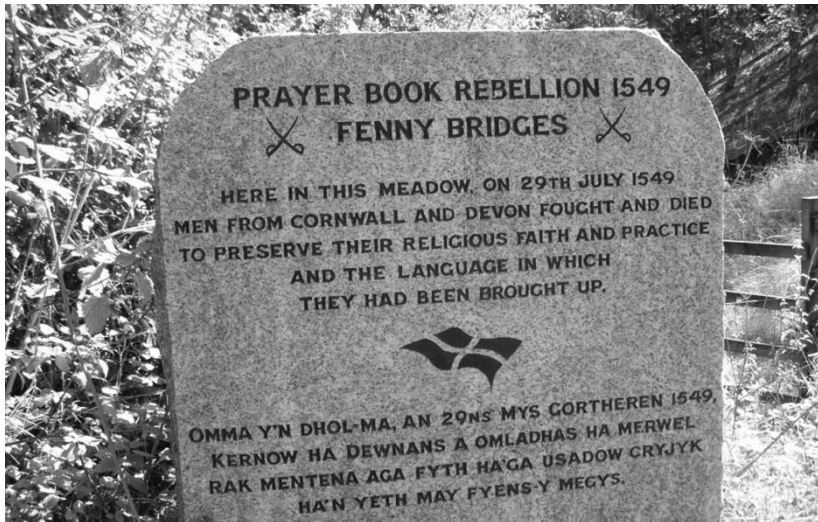
Wednesday 28th March - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)

A chance for a walk in the Ottery Saint Mary area including some picturesque landscaped areas. It will be a moderate walk of approximately 5 miles and full details will be in the next Newsletter.



Otterhead to Ottermouth Walk - Section 3

21 OF US set off on the 9.15 Dartline Bus to Honiton for our third session following the River Otter from source to estuary. We had to walk on roads to start with and although the quietest route was chosen we experienced quite a bit of traffic due to an unexpected diversion. We had several history lessons en route, the first being a sixteenth century battle site during the Prayer Book Rebellion where the local counties (Cornwall & Devon) objected to being pushed around by the powers in London.



We left the highway and more comfortably proceeded on public footpaths where we soon had a more up-to-date lesson with the infamous Dr Beeching (perhaps we should have had another uprising!). Betina with tongue in cheek ushered us (with the guidance of Haylor) over a high speed rail track (one which had escaped the cuts). We proceeded sandwiched between two high speed roads (the past and present A30's) thankfully on a grassed public footway. We again joined up with the Otter where we had a delightful luncheon stop on its grassy banks. (*Front cover picture*). Another interesting find of yesteryear was a weir where water was diverted along a leat which drove a water mill at the time of the Industrial Revolution for the making of woollen cloth. We were now on the edge of Ottery St Mary where we continued alongside the meandering river back to our cars parked at Tipton St John. Altogether a good walk on a lovely sunny day.

John Coulson

Otterhead to Ottermouth Walk - Section 2

ON A WARM, sunny morning, the walk began close to the River Otter in Upton but the route soon climbed up the west side of the valley where it followed a succession of quiet lanes, tracks and footpaths. In Rawridge we stopped to admire a collection of thatched cottages with quintessential county gardens bursting with colour. None of the residents we questioned were able to explain the 'solar powered green box' although it was suggested it was to test air pollution. The plaque at the fountain erected in memory of Lord Sidmouth assured us the water was pure but it was flowing into what appeared to be a lead trough so we relied on our own supplies to quench our thirst.

We passed several large houses, prosperous looking farms and inviting holiday complexes as we made our way to Mohun's Ottery. Only the gateway of the original house survived the Reformation and the present

one was built in the 19th century, set on the side of the valley in beautiful grounds commanding a magnificent view of the Otter Valley. Patricia Beers' book 'Moon's Ottery' is set in the house. Near Pound Farm a white peacock displayed his dazzling tail feathers to a very unimpressed female.



We were glad of the shade in the lane leading up to Dumpdon Hill where we sank thankfully onto the grass for our lunch. Dumpdon has been used since Neolithic times as a meeting and market place and occasionally as a place of refuge. We could see from the Wellington Monument to Honiton and past Gittisham Hill to Woodbury Common. Across the Luppitt valley was a patchwork of small, green fields separated by old hedges and stands of ancient trees. Beyond Combe Raleigh, St. Cyres' Hill was clothed in conifers while a strategically placed oak tree blocked the reflections from the roofs of Honiton Business park. Too soon it was time to leave and a very steep path led us into a coppiced hazel wood.

The little used, and thankfully, shaded lane led us past a collection of rather run down farm buildings where we were greeted by a pair of friendly miniature goats. An amazing burst of colour at Jackson's Nursery took us all by surprise – the glasshouse was a carpet of multi-coloured Bizzy Lizzys.

A short walk and we found ourselves by the River Wolf in the delightful village of Combe Raleigh. The gardens were immaculate in preparation for their annual open day. The Church has an unusually shaped tower with a fine weather vane at the top. The three bells are regularly rung and the campanologists would be very grateful for a donation of a fourth bell!



Across a field and we were back at the River Otter whose banks were pink with Himalayan Balsam but we were too hot and tired to organise a weeding party. A final steep climb up and a gentle descent brought us to the Otter Inn, Weston where a very welcome cup of tea was enjoyed in the garden by the banks of the Otter.

Our grateful thanks to Bettina for organizing a very enjoyable and informative day and we are looking forward to Section 3 in August.

Celia Rustom

Tailpiece: the second group walking later in the month also stopped to admire the peacock, but he wasn't showing off at the time. But we were thrilled when a group (flock? herd? ...) of friendly multi coloured alpacas came to say hello to us at the field gate.



New Tree Disease Threats to the Lower Otter Valley

GROWING SUSTAINABLE TIMBER is a long-term business, with most management decisions taken in the framework of twenty year woodland plans. There are times, however, when natural forces, for example the severe storms and forest damage of January 1990, intervene and force rapid and often widespread change on a landscape scale.

The Lower Otter Valley is currently in the midst of such an event with the forced felling of Japanese larch ahead of the advance of the new tree disease *Phytophthora ramorum* (*P.ramorum*). While not as dramatic as an overnight storm *P.ramorum* will have a very similar impact, resulting in the clear felling of all of the Estate's late rotation larch over the next two years.

P. ramorum is a fungus like organism imported into the United Kingdom on horticultural stock for the nursery trade 10 years or so ago. It was first found in 2002 killing rhododendron and azalea collections in gardens, largely but not exclusively in Cornwall. It is widespread in the United States of America, where it affects their native oaks and is known as Sudden Oak Death.

Between 2002 and 2009 Defra's Food and Environment Research Agency lead an eradication campaign focused on infected gardens and nursery premises across the country. In 2009 the game changed when Japanese larch, at several locations throughout the West Country, were found dying from an unknown cause. In the autumn of 2009 scientists from the Forestry Commissions research station at Alice Holt identified *P.ramorum* as the damaging agent. Tests quickly confirmed our worst fears that the pathogen behaves differently in larch, being many times more infectious and if left to develop rapidly builds to the point where whole forests are lost. The extent of tree death and clearance undertaken in the worst affected Forestry Commission West Country forests at Plym, Glyn, and Lydford and further afield in South Wales and Northern Ireland bear testament to this. There is little in the way of trees and shrubs that are resistant to the disease, though sporulating (breeding) host species are limited. This truly is a problem for the wider environment as it is not just confined to forestry and gardens. Large areas of Bodmin Moor are under threat as *Vaccinium* (Bilberry) succumbs.

North America experience shows that tight bio-security combined with rapid action on infected sites can slow the rate of spread disease though it is thought unlikely that we can ever be eradicated from the wider environment. It is known that water plays an important role in the movement of *P.ramorum* spores and the onward transmission of the disease. It is believed that favourable climatic conditions can see it become 'wind born.' It is no surprise then that the spread of the disease coincided with the run of three wet summers 2006-2009.

A chart of infected sites in the South West shows the disease spreading from hot spots associated with Dartmoor and Exmoor and a definite divide, roughly following the M5 motorway between the wetter west of the region and dryer east. East Devon is very much the front line being 'down wind' from infected sites in the South Hams. While the weather in 2010 and 2011 has been generally very helpful in stemming the spread of the disease, with dry springs and a short dry autumn last year, we view it as inevitable that we will succumb given a further run of wet summers. We have, therefore, reviewed our woodland felling plans with the Forestry Commission and brought forward larch that was planned to be felled in the next five to ten years. While this is being undertaken regular timber production from thinning work has been suspended.

This concentration of felling will have quite an impact on the Clinton Estate in East Devon as mature larch accounts for a significant proportion of our older growing stock, which includes prominent woodlands in the Lower Otter Valley landscape such as Otterton Hill Plantation and High Peak Plantation.

The first phase of this felling commenced in February and by June all mature larch had been cleared from Harpford Woods, Rexan's Plantation, Baker's Brake Plantation and Hayes Wood. These areas will be replanted this winter with a mixture of timber species that won't include larch! Longer-term control of this disease will not solely rely on removing larch. We have for many years been controlling rhododendron in our woodlands as it is an unwanted and aggressive weed. This control is set to become critical in the fight against *P.ramorum* as if left uncontrolled rhododendron gives the disease a host on which it can fester unseen, waiting to re-emerge into our woodlands given favourable climatic conditions.

John Wilding MBE

Head of Forestry and Environment
Clinton Devon Estates

Met Office Visit

30 OF US ENJOYED a visit to the Met Office in Exeter on a sunny Saturday on 23rd July. The visit was organised by Caroline Allen, – thanks to her.

We were all impressed by the very large, high, modern, very light building which has interesting sculptures dotted about, also ‘streams’ let into the slate floors, large informative banners hanging from the ceilings, laser displays, and large computer screens continually on view with ever-changing weather information from the entire world. Also on display is meteorological equipment past and present.

We had an introductory talk first in a lecture theatre, then were split into two groups to be shown around. The introductory talk touched on global warming. Global temperatures have increased by two thirds in the last fifty years and this must be down to human activity, ‘the greenhouse effect’. We were given background information on the history of the Met Office, which was started by a Captain Fitzroy in 1854. There are currently 1,400 staff working in the building, which was completed in 2004. The Met Office, as well as providing weather information for news broadcasts etc is the primary provider of weather information to shipping, global air traffic and the military.

After the talk we were split into two groups to tour the building and our guide was a very pleasant young woman, Abigail, very enthusiastic and keen to answer our intelligent questions! In the beautifully kept library we saw volumes of meteorological data and theses etc from all over the world and we could look up what the weather had been on our respective birthdays in the beautifully produced charts in books before the computer age. The library is in fact open to the public on weekdays.

We were a bit disappointed to learn that no actual TV weather broadcasts go out from Exeter – they go out from BBC recording studios around the UK, but there was a small room set up as if it was a recording studio for new employees to practise on. We had a chance to play at being ‘weather girls/boys’ in this room, which was great fun. It seemed a very difficult task to learn the information beforehand then point it out on a blank screen behind us while at the same time looking at a computer monitor at the side and in front of us!



We had a glimpse through the security doors at the huge computer which does trillions of calculations per second round the clock and which cost a fortune and will need to be updated in a few years time. Only a few select personnel are allowed in this room with the enormous computer. This supercomputer is apparently the equivalent of 10,000 ordinary PCs!

We peeped through security doors again to see the team of forecasters at work, including the chief forecaster who was working with four ever-changing computer screens in front of him. The forecasting staff work round the clock (nights too) in twelve hour shifts.

The morning ended with another interesting summing up talk where we were given the weather for our area for the coming week, shown how this is seen on the computer charts and were invited to ask any questions we still had.

A pleasant lunch in the large cafeteria and then a chance to browse in the library ended a most interesting visit.

Anne Grieve

West Dorset Coast Path Walk

ON WEDNESDAY 20th July 13 people defied a dire weather forecast – "spell of heavy rain", "possible thunderstorms" – to join this walk. Further we all arrived at Morcombelake by X53 bus. Not a car in sight. OVA should be proud of us!

We never saw any sun, but the precipitation was merely spasmodic drizzle. We walked via St Gabriel's to climb steeply up Golden Cap, the highest point on the South West Coast Path, and then argued as to whether it was 195 or 193 metres above sea level! We couldn't quite see as far as Portland but had a good view otherwise of the coast between Budleigh and Weymouth.

Then down to Seatown where 3 people enjoyed a pub lunch and drink at the Anchor Inn. Another climb up and then down to Eype Beach and then another 40 minutes to the end of our journey at West Bay in plenty of time to enjoy huge slices of Victoria sponge cake and cups of tea, refilled several times! We then caught the 1603 bus back to whence we came. To myself what really made the walk so enjoyable was the excellent camaraderie we enjoyed together.

Peter Hills

Editor's Bits and Pieces

Obituaries

We are sad to record the deaths of two long-standing members and officers of the OVA.

John Saul was a previous OVA Chairman. He died recently and the funeral was on Friday 26th August in Budleigh Salterton Parish Church.

Brian Ludlow died on Saturday 3rd September, and his funeral was on Monday 12th at Exeter Crematorium. He was a former treasurer for the OVA for a number of years (but some while back) and will have been known by a number of (older) members.

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## Re-introduced Wildlife

*After beavers in the Otter, will it be bears in Harpford Woods?*

An atheist was walking through the woods. "What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! 'What beautiful animals!'" He said to himself.

Suddenly, he heard a rustling in the bushes behind him.

He turned to look ... and saw a 7-foot grizzly bear charge towards him.

He ran as fast as he could along the path. He looked over his shoulder and saw that the bear was gaining on him ...

He looked over his shoulder again, and the bear was even closer ... and then ..... He tripped and fell.

Rolling over to pick himself up, he found the bear was right on top of him ... reaching towards him with its left paw ... and raising the right to strike ...

At that instant the Atheist cried out, 'Oh my God!'

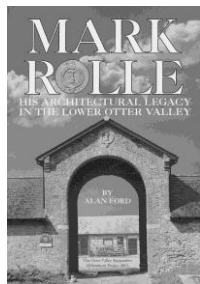
Time Stopped ... the bear froze ... the forest was silent ... A bright light shone upon the man, and a voice came out of the sky ... "You deny my existence for all these years, you teach others I don't exist and even credit creation to cosmic accident ... Do you expect me to help you out of this predicament?" "Am I to count you as a believer?"

The atheist looked directly into the light .....

"It would be hypocritical of me to suddenly ask you to treat me as a Christian now ...but perhaps you could make the BEAR a Christian?"  
... a pause ... "Very well," said the voice ... The light went out.

The sounds of the forest resumed ... And the bear dropped his right arm  
....brought both paws together .... bowed his head and spoke ...  
"Lord, bless this food, which I am about to receive."

# OVA Publications



**Mark Rolle**

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

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

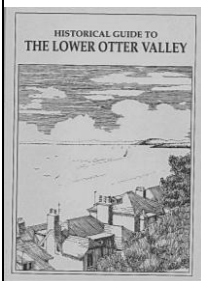
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £1.50 P&P)



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

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

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



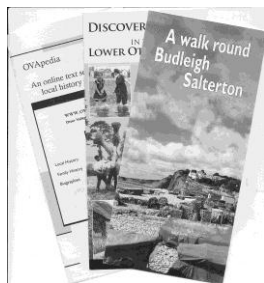
## **Historical Guide to the Lower Otter Valley**

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

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

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

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



## **Leaflets**

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

# The Otter Valley Association

## Executive Committee (01395)

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

### *Committee Chairmen*

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

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

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

### *Other EC Members*

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

### *Other contacts*

|                        |               |        |
|------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Webmaster              | Alan Huddart  | 446761 |
| Speaker Secretary      | Susan Chapman | 445620 |
| Walks Organiser        | John Jones    | 443651 |
| Newsletter Distributor | Gill Speare   | 443944 |

Interim Newsletter Editor

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