

# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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[www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)



Summer  
Newsletter

Volume 36/3  
July 2015

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**Down on the Farm  
– OVA members  
visit to Clinton  
Devon Estates –  
report page 7.**

**Where is this, and what  
is the significance of the  
acorn? For the answer  
see page 8**



**OVA members and  
volunteers turn out  
for the annual litter  
pick on the Otter  
Estuary**

**Looks like one of  
the members got  
lost during East  
Budleigh's  
Scarecrow Festival!**



**Cover photo - *The exquisite dog rose, pure beauty to see and to scent* - courtesy of Mo Sandford**

## From the Editor – Jacqui Baldwin

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this, my first attempt, at editing the OVA newsletter. I am aware that Haylor's boots are difficult to fill. This issue is being distributed while Haylor is enjoying a well-earned holiday on a small Scottish island – and I hope he is not horrified on his return!

Apart from taking on the newsletter, this summer's other 'firsts' for me include the OVA Litter Pick (report page 5), a 'Nightjar Safari' on Aylesbeare Common with the RSPB Warden and an extremely interesting evening touring some of the 2,800 acres of Clinton Devon Farms in the lower Otter valley (report page 7).

As a 'new recruit' I would like to encourage others to consider giving their time and assisting with the vacant positions detailed below.

If you have items, articles or subjects you feel would be of interest to the OVA membership please let me know – contact details on page 31. I look forward to hearing from you!

### **Attention members, your Association needs you!**

The OVA needs:

**Honorary Secretary.** Prepare and circulate (by email) the agenda and minutes of our monthly Executive Committee (EC) meeting, as well as any reports prepared by members. You will also receive and circulate any incoming correspondence.

**Events Chair.** Organise OVA events and trips. You would be the leader, but lots of experienced help is available to guide you in planning.

**Natural Environment.** Get involved with our active environmental group with balsam clearance, school visits and more. Assist Acting Chair Patrick Hamilton with meetings and planning, with a view to taking over leadership. Contact Patrick for more information.

**Village Representatives for Otterton and Colaton Raleigh.** Reps are responsible for gathering information about their parishes which ought to be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee, and act as a point of contact for OVA members within the parish. You would attend the monthly EC meeting.

**These positions offer an opportunity to get involved with the management of the OVA and make a real contribution. No experience necessary, and we are happy to give help and support. If you are interested contact us through the web site ([www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)) or give the Chairman a call (01395 443248).**

# Chairman's Report

The OVA had its AGM in May, and somehow here I am, still Chairman. I would like to welcome two new volunteers. We have a new East Budleigh Village Representative – Jon Roseway. Contact Jon with questions or comments about OVA-related issues if you live in East Budleigh. We do still need village reps for Otterton and Colaton Raleigh if you have a little spare time. Many thanks to Haylor Lass, our excellent newsletter editor for the last few years (amongst other things), and welcome to Jacqui Baldwin who is taking over.

With summer rumoured to be on the way, thoughts turn to the outdoors. The OVA is proud to be able to continue to support our local schools through the Pebblebed Heath Visit programme. As in previous years we are collaborating with the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust. Visits to the heath are arranged as part of the science curriculum, with the Conservation Trust providing guides and the OVA giving grants to the schools to pay for coach transportation.

Summer also signals the start of the Himalayan Balsam clearance season. Early surveys show that our efforts from previous years are really having an impact, there is much less Balsam showing up in the areas that we have cleared in the last two years. This year we will continue to focus our efforts on the tributaries rather than the main river. If you would like to get involved please contact Patrick Hamilton ([pat@bishopdams.f2s.com](mailto:pat@bishopdams.f2s.com)).

One question I am sometimes asked is “How can you state an OVA position on a controversial issue without consulting the membership?” This is certainly a valid question. With almost 1,000 members I am sure that most topics would elicit a range of different opinions from our members. Communicating by post to so many people would be very expensive, and email only reaches a proportion of the membership. The Executive Committee takes representing its membership as best we can very seriously. We are guided first by the constitution, where the OVA objectives are clearly listed, including promoting high standards in planning and conservation, preservation and restoration of the local area for public benefit. We also talk to our members informally about topics of interest and solicit feedback through our website and village representatives, and finally the Executive Committee itself has lively discussions before reaching a consensus. Ultimately it is the purpose of the Executive Committee to make decisions on behalf of the membership, and based on feedback to date, I think we usually get it about right. Please let me know if you disagree.

We have been looking at ways to improve communication with our members, and will shortly be launching an OVA Facebook page to increase opportunities for all members to express their opinions.

Finally a new initiative: the OVA is planning to launch a photographic competition later this year. We hope to use the winning pictures in a calendar or organiser which will be offered for sale to the membership and the public. We have not worked out all the details yet, but we will be looking for pictures of the local area representing all four seasons – so dust off your cameras or phones and start shooting!

**Roger Saunders**

## **Otter Estuary Spring Litter Pick**

More than 70 volunteers turned out to help clear rubbish from the salt marshes on 4<sup>th</sup> April. This is a vital task to help protect wildlife which could be injured by discarded items – especially plastic. Volunteers benefited from free parking at the Lime Kiln car park and thanks are due to Clinton Devon Estates and EDDC's Streetscene team for their assistance.



Prizes were awarded for the best finds or most unusual pieces of rubbish and here we see one of the winners, Daniel Warrs, who found a car jack, collecting his prize from Councillor Tom Wright and OVA Chairman, Roger Saunders.

# Himalayan Balsam Campaign 2015

On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June the first reconnaissance of the year was held. Participating were Dr Sam Bridgewater, Kate Ponting and Tia Sweeting from Clinton Devon Estates, and Ted Swan and Patrick Hamilton from OVA. Both Kate and Tia will have responsibilities towards the project this year. It was assumed that the OVA had the Colaton Brook under control and it was decided that the opening day should focus on the very problematic Goosemoor Farm above Newton Poppleford. The team visited the farm and assessed the problem, thereafter proceeding to Dotton, the difficult mill swamp area at Yettington, East Budleigh Common, Dalditch Farm and Little Knowle. In several cases (the drier sites) spraying will be possible and Tia will play a lead role.

On the opening day, 19<sup>th</sup> June, a CDE Farm Team attacked the Dalditch Farm site. A combined CDE and OVA team tackled the swamp at Goosemoor Farm making good progress but not completely clearing the area. Weather was excellent and there was an interesting contrast between the wetter parts of the swamp near the stream, where plants were at least waist high and strong, and the drier zone away from the stream where plants were never more than 18" high and often just 1" seedlings.

Six volunteers started work on the Colaton Brook on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June and completed the sweep down through Stowford Woods. It is a measure of the extent that previous efforts have succeeded as it took a full month to achieve the same result in 2012 when the assault on this tributary commenced. There will be field visits every Thursday and Saturday from now on. Preliminary reconnaissance indicates that although long stretches are completely clear, the traditional "hot spots" in Stowford Woods and the Stowford swamp are still very much active. Thanks to David Gibson who will again keep the stretch south of the road to Place Court in Colaton Raleigh under control.

## **WE CAN DO EVEN BETTER IF WE HAVE MORE VOLUNTEERS!!!**

Even if members just manage one or two outings per summer it all helps and is hugely appreciated. For up to date information see village posters or just contact Patrick by email or telephone.

**Dr Patrick Hamilton**

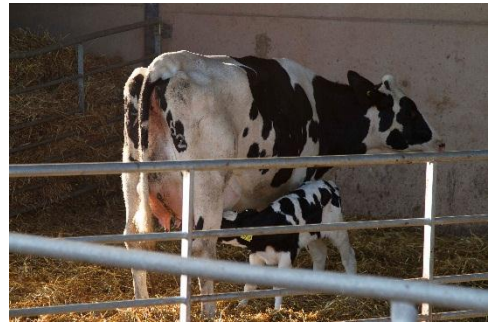
# Guided Farm Tour

Thirty five intrepid OVA members gathered at Pophams Farm on the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> June for a tour of Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) farming operations. CDE owns and manages over 17,000 acres of farmland in East and North Devon, so if you are looking at a field in the Lower Otter Valley, it is probably connected to the estate. The evening was hosted by George Perrott, CDE Farms manager.

As we stood in a barn flanked by massive combine and forage harvesters, George explained to us the challenges he faces managing a 2,500 acre farm that has been completely organic since 2007. Organic milk commands a price premium, but the price of feed is higher, and the yield per cow lower than can be obtained non-organically. The farm uses a 5-year crop rotation system, switching between grass and cereals (winter wheat is currently growing on the farm).

After our education on farming and economics, we clambered into trailers to see the practical side of things.

First stop was the Dairy Unit in Colaton Raleigh, which we reached via a brand new farm road from Dotton Lane. As well as the large new cowshed, we were able to see new Dutch additions to the Friesian/Holstein cross herd, currently in a cowshed



while they acclimatise to life in the UK. Two new-born calves stood next to their mothers in the maternity unit. George explained that he regularly transported cows between the Colaton Raleigh farm and Dalditch, so that all calving was carried out at Colaton Raleigh, but the cows remained comfortable in either herd.

From the dairy unit we travelled along the route of the old railway line, stopping to watch a young badger scuttle past on a private mission, to the famous slurry lagoon. It is a large, black plastic lined rectangular pit, securely fenced to prevent accidents. With a capacity of 24,000 cu meters, and 2.5 Km of piping this facility allows the farm to use the slurry at the best time of year to enrich 1,500 acres of arable land. I can report that from a distance of 20 feet there was absolutely no smell.

The next stops were to admire the winter wheat crops. On the way some of us managed to spot a Roe deer rushing off. Some fields were practically weed free and, to my untrained eye, exuberantly healthy. George was also brave enough to show us his “disaster” field, where the wheat was almost completely hidden by runch, also known as Charlock (*Raphanus raphanistrum*). This field can't be harvested by combine, but it will be cut and used for fodder, so it is not a complete loss.

Then it was back to the farm and the end of the tour. I think we all went home with a lot more knowledge of modern farming methods and an appreciation of the good stewardship of Clinton Devon Estates.

**Roger Saunders**

## The Significance of Acorns

These brick gateposts with stone acorns (which stand on Park Lane between White Bridge and Otterton) were built by the last heir of the Duke family who was the large landowner in the area. Their plan was to build a mansion in Otterton Park. An avenue of trees was planted curving up the crest of the hill, which is still visible from Park Lane. It is said that the foundations of the building were laid but the owner went bankrupt, work ceased and in the 1920s the bricks were used to build Monks Wall. The Duke family put the estate up for sale in 1780.



The significance of **acorns** derived from the ancient view that the oak held magical powers to ward off evil spirits. People carried acorns in their pockets for luck. At the entry point of houses, such as windows and gateposts, acorn carvings and statues were placed.

**Nicola Daniel**



# Planning Matters

This spring has seen a lot of activity on planning matters. The most important, which will influence the way East Devon looks in the future, is the publication of the East Devon District Council's draft Local Plan. The OVA has submitted a comment pointing out that two thirds of the district is covered by AONBs and therefore have designated protection, and there are also three European Sites of Environmental Significance with a 10km. sensitivity radius, which covers the western part of the District. Given the constraints this places on the land available for development, the OVA expressed its surprise that EDDC has chosen the HIGHEST growth figure from the SHMA Report unlike the neighbouring districts of Mid-Devon and Teignmouth. Both have AONB or National Park covering parts of their districts and have chosen the lower demographical number.

New Devon County Council Division Boundaries have been published and are now subject to consultation. Budleigh Salterton will, for the first time in its history, be separated from the villages of the Otter Valley. The boundary will be the B3178 into Exmouth. This means that Tidwell House, East Budleigh, Otterton and Newton Poppleford will be adjoined with Ottery St. Mary. Budleigh Salterton Coastal will include Budleigh Salterton up to the east side of the Otter (excluding the river) and west to Littleham; Maer Rocks to just beyond the Bowling Alley in Exmouth; the Exmouth Hospital and halfway down Rolle Street Exmouth. The rest of Exmouth will be in another ward which will include Woodbury. Several issues come to mind:

- Is it wise to divide the largest town outside the unitary authorities in Devon into two?
- Is it wise to separate the historic part of East Budleigh from the younger town of Budleigh Salterton and likewise Littleham from the younger Exmouth?
- Is it wise for East Budleigh and Budleigh Salterton to share three District Councilors and for the County Councilors to be from different constituencies?
- Is it wise to join such diverse towns as Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton?

The OVA has submitted comments along these lines.

Continued .....

The Planning Inspectorate have ruled on the Down Close, Newton Poppleford application. The Inspector refused the application and strongly endorsed the view that AONBs have the highest status of protection and that the site is unsustainable by virtue that it is too far from the village centre. This is a very welcome decision as the on-going application for a 60-bed dementia home plus 51 dwellings is sited outside the built up area boundary of Budleigh Salterton and is in a similar position in relation to the town and in the AONB. It is also alongside the busy B3178 and there is overprovision for nursing homes in this western side of the district. The OVA has written objecting to the plan.

**Nicola Daniel**

## **The Lower Otter Estuary**

The Otter Estuary has been in the news several times recently, and not just because of the beavers.

As previously reported, there is an ambitious project in the planning stage to allow the lower Otter River to return to its old flood plain, breaching the embankments to increase the areas of saltmarsh and mudflat in the estuary. The intention is to do this in a managed way, so that footpaths along the river can be maintained, and flood damage minimised. Benefits would include improvements to the wildlife habitat and improved access for visitors. Several obstacles must be tackled before the project can start. A new location has to be found for the Cricket Club (regardless of the estuary plan), South Farm Road must be raised or protected to prevent it from flooding with high tides, at a cost estimated up to £2,000,000, and the old waste site must be evaluated as safe. One part of this plan includes the development of a cycle path below Granary Lane to White Bridge. This aspect was featured in the local paper recently when some residents expressed safety concerns due to the possibility of landslip or trees falling. Plans are at an early phase, and risk modelling will take place before any decisions are made. Possibly the biggest obstacle is finding the money to undertake this project. While possible sources have been identified there is no guarantee that sufficient funding will be available. Without this project, it is likely that the river will eventually break through anyway as a result of rising sea levels and a greater number of storms due to climate change. For more information visit <http://www.pebblebedheaths.org.uk/river-otter/river-otter-restoration-project.ashx> The OVA is a member of the stakeholder group for this project.

## The Lower Otter Estuary – water quality

A few weeks ago an OVA member reported what seemed to be a significant pollution incident in the estuary, with brown mats of foul smelling material visible in the river. It is thought that the material was an algal bloom, rather than a direct spill of sewage or slurry, but the algae population would have exploded due to a nutrient-rich environment –such as that caused by a major spillage of polluting material. Unfortunately, by the time the Environment Agency (EA) was able to investigate the pollution had washed out of the river, so no direct cause was identified.

The water quality of the Otter is a cause for concern: if Budleigh Beach were to fail the new bathing water standards the impact on tourism and to the town economy would be negative. The Otter is one of a few rivers where the water quality has not improved significantly over the last few years. The reasons for this are not clear, and a lot of work has been done recently by the EA trying to identify sources of pollution. No obvious large scale sources of pollution have been identified. There are two types of pollution getting into the river, agricultural run-off and sewage. In an attempt to reduce damage from cows, parts of the meadows along the lower Otter are temporarily fenced off when cows are grazing, to keep them away from the river banks. The search for other sources of pollution continues.

**If you see significant pollution in the river please contact the EA. (tel. 0800 80 70 60) so they can investigate.**

**Roger Saunders & Haylor Lass**

### **Final Reminder!**

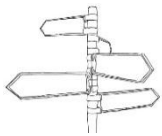
A few OVA members have not yet renewed their bank forms to reflect the OVA increase in fees (£5 individual, £9 family) and transfer of the OVA account to Lloyds Bank. If we do not get your renewal your membership will lapse, and this will be the last newsletter you will receive. We don't want to lose you - so please act now! Subscription forms are available on the website (under Join Us at the bottom of the home page).

# A Walk for Everyone - Summer Programme 2015

Recent overviews of the Programme of Walks have attempted to draw your attention to *all* the walks, but this has required a level of stamina normally expended on the walk itself! Therefore, we trust that members are familiar with the variety of length, terrain and location available, including old favourites in the Otter Valley, and instead, this preview highlights new walks or themes.

For example; the chance to enjoy the longer days of summer by joining an evening stroll from one of our local villages, starting on Monday 3 August.

At the time of writing we have four stages of the Exe Valley Way to complete. Join us for any of the later stages, as we head for Exmoor, where we will be returning on Saturday 5 September for a new walk. We are fortunate to be able to access two nationally renowned wild areas, so it is the turn of Dartmoor, and its highest tors, on Sunday 26 July with a train ride to get there!



If you like walking and ‘steaming’, then Samuel Taylor Coleridge is the inspiration behind a two day pilgrimage along part of the Coleridge Way, starting locally on Tuesday 25 August. The ‘steaming’ comes on the following day when we head off for a walk in the Quantocks.

The South West Coast Path Association are promoting this iconic long distance trail during October, with a challenge to walk as many miles as possible (see [www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk](http://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk)). We shall be playing our part with two visits to Dorset on Saturday 4 July and Friday 16 October, as well as five other walks here in East Devon.

There is an opportunity to learn more about the OVA’s Heritage Listing Project in Otterton on Sunday 13 September, and to see and learn more about local wildlife with the RSPB’s Warden at Aylesbeare Nature Reserve on Friday 10 July.

The OVA will be contributing to the Annual Pebblebed Heath Week Celebrations, with a walk on the Commons on Wednesday 29 July. But there is so much more!

Happy walking and we look forward to seeing you soon.

**Chris and Mike**

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 10.00am. - WALK**

Start at White Bridge, (OS Explorer 115, SY 076 830). 5 miles, 2½ hours.

**“With no contempt for familiarity”** A popular and much loved local route along the coast to Brandy Head, site of the WW II look out. Returning inland via Monks Wall, Otterton, and the Mill for refreshment and reflection, before setting off along Park Lane, overlooking the River Otter to White Bridge.

*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

**Tuesday 21st July, 10.30am – WALK**

Start at Bystock Nature Reserve, North Entrance CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 030 849). 6 miles, 3½ hours.

A walk based upon a Devon Wildlife Trust route starting at Bystock Nature Reserve, taking in Squabmoor Reservoir, East Budleigh and Hayes Barton. Please bring a picnic.

*Walk Leader:* Brian Gannon 01395 443 502

**Sunday 26th July, 12:00 noon - WALK**

Start: Okehampton Railway Station, OS Explorer OL28, SX 592 944, 10miles, 6 hours.

**“Aiming high!”** A romantic day out on the moor, travelling on the old Southern Railway from Exeter to Okehampton, now maintained by enthusiasts and only open on Summer Sundays. The *challenge* is to climb three increasingly higher tors, to reach the peak of High Willhayes (621m), Southern England’s highest point. Returning gently downhill through the East Okemount River valley.

Outward: Meet at Exmouth Railway station to catch the 10:21 to Exeter Central connecting with the 11:03 to Okehampton arriving at 11:49.

Return: Our walk aims to return to Okehampton Station in time for tea and the 17:59 to Exeter St Davids connecting with the 18:50 to Exmouth, arriving at 19:20.

If you want to use public transport throughout, the 357 bus dep 09:20 Granary Lane, dep 09:23 Budleigh Salterton Public Hall; arr 09:39 Exmouth. The return bus dep 20:01 Exmouth, arr 20:15 Public Hall Budleigh Salterton.

*Walk Leaders:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471/Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 10.00am. - WALK**

Start at Woodbury Castle, (OS Explorer 115, SY 0324 8732). 8½ miles, 4+ hours.

**‘The Magnificent Seven’**, an OVA contribution to Pebblebed Heath Week. A walk over varied terrain and scenery visiting all the seven Commons surrounding Woodbury Common.

Starting off at Woodbury Castle, the first kilometre or so will take us to the convergence of the boundaries of Woodbury, Colaton Raleigh, and Bicton Commons from which point we can see the wide expanse of the Pebblebed heathlands. From there we walk in a southerly direction through plantations, along little used paths, through WW2 ruins and the new cattle enclosures, along country lanes to Shortwood Common and then onto Dalditch Common, the most southerly point of the walk. Our journey back will take us along paths overlooking Squabmoor Reservoir and into the rarely visited Wythycombe Raleigh Common. From there it is a short walk to Bystock Fishponds and beyond to Wrights Lane and the start of the Blackhill quarries. Skirting the gravel distribution plant we commence the northerly walk, via Four Firs, back to Woodbury Castle.

The walk may be muddy in places if there has been significant rain before the walk. Sturdy shoes/boots will be essential and clothing should be appropriate for the anticipated weather conditions. Please bring a picnic lunch. No booking necessary.

*Walk Leaders:* Mike Paddison 01395 446 550/Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

### **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August, 11.15am – WALK**

#### **Exe Valley Way Stage 5, Bampton to Dulverton**

Meet at Exeter Bus Station by 9.50am to catch bus no. 155 at 10.00 arriving at Tiverton Bus Station at 10.37am, in time to continue on the 398 that leaves at 10.50am, arriving at Bampton at 11.13am, ready to start the walk (OS Explorer 114, SS 956 223) at 11.15am. 8 miles, 4 hours.

We lose sight of the Exe as we cross high agricultural land before briefly reacquainting ourselves as we cross the river at Exebridge, where it disappears north, not to be seen again until we reach our destination on Exmoor! Now it is the River Barle, a 'mere' tributary, whose steeply wooded valley we now follow, across the border into Somerset, the Exmoor National Park and our finish at Dulverton. Plenty of cafés if we have to wait for the 398 bus to Tiverton and the 55 or 155 connection to Exeter. Please bring a picnic.

*Walk Leaders:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471/Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

### **A Programme of Summer Evening Strolls in the Otter Valley**

By popular request we have organised a programme of four evening strolls. Each walk starts at 7pm, lasts 1½ - 2 hours and covers 3 – 4 miles, circumnavigating each of the four villages in the Otter Valley. The start and finish will be close to a local hostelry with a comfortable country walk in between.

Continued....

If you haven't walked before, or you are returning after a break, or simply cannot get enough of OVA walking (and who can blame you!), you will be very welcome. The strolls occur at about weekly intervals throughout August. The first one follows:

**Monday 3rd August: 7pm. A Summer Evening stroll with Chris Buckland**

Start at the Village Car Park, East Budleigh (OS Explorer 115, SY 065 849). 3-4 miles, 1½ -2 hours.

*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August, 10.00am. - WALK**

Start at Budleigh Salterton Public Hall free CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 061 821). 4½ miles 2½ hours.

A walk over varied terrain visiting the Golf Links, Knowle Hill Plantation, Dalditch Common and returning via Shortwood Lane. Some muddy areas in wet weather.

*Walk Leader:* John Jones, 01395 443 651

**Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 10.00am. WALK**

Start at East Budleigh CP (SY 065 849) 5 miles, 2½ hours.

**"A little local walk"**. Along Hayes Lane, through the woods and over the commons returning via Yettington with long-time local resident, Stan.

*Walk Leader:* Stan Herbert, 01395 445 113

**Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 10:30am. WALK**

Start: The Green, Otterton, (OS Explorer 115, SY 0803 8525) 5½ miles, 3 hours.

A mixture of riverside paths, green lanes and some tarmac road. Initially we head up the Otter, turn eastwards to Sea View Farm and then Bars Lane to the short, steep climb up High Peak. The walk then descends steeply from the summit, and onwards to Ladram Bay where we can pause for coffee and/or a snack. We return via Monks Wall, Culliver Cross to Clamour Bridge and return to Otterton via the River Otter. Food is available at the Mill or the nearby Kings Arms.

**Outward** travel by bus 157, dep Budleigh Public Hall at 10:00, or bus 157, dep Newton Poppleford at 10:01, arr Otterton at approx. 10:15. If coming by car, park in the High Street or by the Church. **Return** travel by bus 157.

*Walk Leader:* Brian Gannon, 01395 443 502

**Monday 13th August: 7pm. A Summer Evening stroll with Chris Buckland**

Start at the Kings Arms, Otterton (OS Explorer 115, SY 082 853). 3-4 miles, 1½ -2 hours.

*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

See "A programme of Summer Evening Strolls" above, for more information.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August, 11.30am – WALK**

**Exe Valley Way Stage 6, Dulverton to Withypool**

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9am to make car sharing arrangements, before driving to Withypool (OS Explorer OL 9, SS 844 354), [approx. 1 hour 30 mins], where we will leave some cars, and all return to Dulverton (OS Explorer OL 9, SS 913 278) to start the walk at 11.30 am. 9 miles, 4½ hours.

Now we are on the Two Moors Way that will take us to our destination. The first half is a very attractive, level, waterside walk through the beautiful wooded Barle Valley, before we emerge onto the high downland of Exmoor with extensive views, and descend to the unspoilt village of Withypool, where refreshments await in its café, before the drive back. Please bring a picnic.

*Walk Leaders:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471/Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August: 7pm. A Summer Evening stroll with Chris Buckland**

Start at the Otter Inn, Colaton Raleigh (OS Explorer 115, SY 078 875). 3-4 miles, 1½ -2 hours.

*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

See “A programme of Summer Evening Strolls” above, for more information.

**Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> August, 10:00am. WALK**

Start at Belstone CP, SX 6210 9377, 8miles, approx. 4hours.

**“Dartmoor High Tors and Antiquities at their best”**

From the CP, the walk follows the valley of the River Tor, climbing steadily to the White Hill stone circle by Little Hound Tor. Then on to Hound Tor, with a possible extension to Wild Tor if the group is keen and time permits. Both of these tors are good spots for lunch with fine views in good weather. The return walk continues to Metheral Hill and across the river. Finally up onto Higher Tor and Belstone Tor, descending via the nine stones cairn circle and back into Belstone. The walk is on an open and, at times, rough moorland with some places very exposed, and includes two significant steady climbs. We will also ford the river twice and cross some boggy ground, good boots and spare socks are required!

*Walk Leader:* George Norman, 01395 442 30

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 11.45am – WALK**

**Exe Valley Way Stage 7, Withypool to Exe Head**

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9am to make car sharing arrangements, before driving to Simonsbath (OS Explorer OL 9, SS 773 393), [approx. 1 hour 45 mins], where we leave some cars,



and all return to Withypool (OS Explorer OL 9, SS 844 354) to start the walk at 11.45am. 11 miles, 5½ hours.

A good opportunity to test our navigational skills on the open moor as we find our way down to the floor of the Barle, with only the sky above until, suddenly we are at Simonsbath. A respite for lunch off again for the final leg across the expansive and featureless moor, to discover the source the River Exe and wobble our toes in its murky water. Please bring a picnic.

*Walk Leaders:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471/Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

### **Tuesday 25th August, 10:00am - WALK**

Start at the Bowd Inn layby, (OS Explorer 115, SY 1044 8982). 8½ miles 4+ hours.

#### **“Following more of the footsteps of Samuel Taylor Coleridge” (Day 1)**

Beginning with a morning walk on some of the Coleridge Heritage Trail, mostly downhill and through leafy lanes/tracks to Ottery St Mary. Then bus back to the start, or pub lunch and afternoon walk back along the river and railway track to the Bowd layby. Bring liquids, poetry book optional. Bus back from Ottery at 12.15, 14.35 or 14.50 - you choose whether to walk, run for the bus or lunch!

*Walk Leader:* Haylor Lass, 01395 568 786

### **Wednesday 26th August, 10:00am - WALK**

Start 9.50am at Bishop’s Lydeard Station, (TA4 3RU; ST 1643 2895).

#### **“Following even more of the footsteps of Samuel Taylor Coleridge” (Day 2)**

##### **“A day in the Quantocks.”**

From the station, a short bus ride then walk up to and along the ridge of the Quantock Hills, including some of the Coleridge Way. Pub lunch at West Quantoxhead, then short afternoon walk to Williton Station for the 16.07 steam train on the West Somerset Railway back to the start for 16.45. Bring money for bus, train and lunch. Please advise Haylor beforehand if you intend to come to confirm numbers for transport and meal.

*Walk Leader:* Haylor Lass, 01395 568 786

### **Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 7:00pm. Summer Evening Stroll with Chris Buckland**

Start at the Village Car Park, Newton Poppleford (OS Explorer 115, SY 085 896). 3-4 miles, 1 ½ -2 hours.

*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

See “A programme of Summer Evening Strolls” above, for more information.

### **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 10.45am – WALK**

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground at 9:15am to share cars - journey time about 1¼ hours.

Start: Hamlet of Monksilver at 10:45, (OS OL9, ST 073 376), 11 miles, 5½ hours.

Peter will be leading the walk in the little walked countryside on the edge of Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Brendon Hills. Our route will take us via Sticklepath, the Roadwater valley, Nettlecombe and back to Monksilver along the Woodford valley. This is an 'off the beaten track' walk of about 11 miles on footpaths, bridleways and old tracks, a couple of steep climbs rewarded by some great views and rolling countryside. Bring a packed lunch (our lunch stop will be near a pub so a lunchtime drink will also be on offer). At the end of the walk we will stop for tea and cakes before heading home.

*Walk Leader:* Peter Paine 01404 815 214 / 07812 772 163

### **Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 10:45am. WALK**

Start: The 157 bus stop at the junction of Salterton Road and Castle Lane , (OS Explorer SY 115, SY 042 823), 8 miles.

A linear walk starting and ending on the 157 bus route! Using public and permissive paths, the walk includes Squabmoor Reservoir, East Budleigh Common, Hayes Wood and Bicton Church, finishing for lunch at the Mill or the Kings Arms and returning by the 157 bus. Walk includes woodland, open commons, waterside sections and some short sections on minor roads. Walkers may choose to finish the walk at East Budleigh, where the 157 bus also stops.

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

### **Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 10.00am. WALK**

East Budleigh CP, (SY 065849) 8 miles, 4 hours.

An interesting walk taking in 3 different stretches of water. The first is a walk by Squabmoor reservoir, now used for coarse & carp fishing. We then visit the lovely Bystock Nature reserve with its manmade ponds which are a host to an abundance of wildlife. We walk on towards the Blackhill Quarry works where we encounter more areas of water some very deep and quite eerie. We cross Bicton Common and make our way back to East Budleigh passing by Hayes Barton, Birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh. There will be a lunch stop en-route.

*Walk Leader:* Jan Stuart 01395 568 235.

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September, 11:00am.**

#### **A Local Heritage Walk around the Historic Village of Otterton**

Start: The Green, Otterton. (OS Explorer 115, SY 081 852), 2miles, 2 hours.

A gentle stroll around the historic village of Otterton, looking at the exterior of the wealth of old buildings and other historic features that make up this attractive village. This is part of the OVA's local heritage listing project, about which Dee will be able to update you during the walk.

*Walk Leader:* Dee Woods 01395 568 158

**Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> September, 10:30am. WALK**

Start at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground Car Park (CP)  
(OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), 8 miles.

Circular walk along the River Otter to Venn Ottery Common and the Nature Reserve ([www.devonwildlifetrust.org](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org)) using footpaths, fields and quiet lanes. On the return leg there is the opportunity to take lunch at the Golden Lion, Tipton St John, before walking back to Newton Poppleford to the CP or the 157 bus stop.

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

**Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 10.00am. WALK**

Four Firs CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 032 864) 5 miles, 2½ hours

A circular walk on the commons using local paths and tracks at this mellow (we hope!) time of year.

*Walk Leader:* John Jones, 01395 446 513

**Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> September, 10.00am. WALK**

Start at Tipton St John CP, (SY 091 918), 5½ miles.

An easy walk along River Otter towards Fluxton, Heathlands, Ottery Common, Venn Ottery, Bridge o'er the Otter, Tipton St John.

Please bring your own 'elevenses' or indulge in a late lunch at the Golden Lion.

*Walk Leader:* Mike Paddison, 01395 446 550

**Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 10.00am –WALK**

Start at East Budleigh Car Park (SY 066 849) 4 miles

Very interesting walk, including a visit to the historic parish church of All Saints', East Budleigh. 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 445 113

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

Start at the White Bridge (SY 075 830) 5 miles

A 'moderate' walk along the Coastal path to Crab Ledge, inland to Colliver Cross, then via Clamour Bridge to finish along the river path back to the White Bridge. Maybe muddy in places and windy on the coast path.

*Walk Leader:* John Jones 01395 443 651

**Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 10.45am WALK**

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP at 09.30, (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) to share cars.

Start: Charmouth Beach CP, (OS Explorer 116, SY 365 930 (safe all day parking for £2.00), 10 miles, 5-6 hours.

A panoramic walk following the Wessex Ridgeway with extensive views over the Dorset countryside, taking in the iron age forts of Coney's Castle and Lambert Castle. Enjoy wall-to-wall autumn colours. Please bring a packed lunch.

*Walk leader:* Vivien Insull 01404 811 267

17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> October and 31<sup>st</sup> October/1<sup>st</sup> November **EVENT**

### **What's on Your Doorstep?**

A FREE two-weekend event aimed at showing you how you can find out which mammals are on your doorstep. Mammal expert Adrian Bayley will introduce you to trapping and recording techniques, as well as how to identify tell-tail signs and droppings used to survey for a range of mammals. The evenings will be spent looking for badgers and seeing bats in the hand. The two-weekend event will focus on areas around the historic parkland at Bicton Arena, managed by Clinton Devon Estates. Families are welcome, but booking is essential as places are limited. People signing up will be expected to attend both weekends. More details on the OVA web site.

Please book direct with Adrian Bayley ([adrianbayley@btconnect.com](mailto:adrianbayley@btconnect.com)).

***Note this is not an OVA organised event***

### **Monday, 19th October, 10:00am WALK**

Start at East Budleigh Car Park (OS Explorer 115, SY 066 849) 8½ miles.

#### **“A showcase for the SWCoast Path, and our own Otter Valley”**

A walk to the Coast Path and the top of High Peak (great climb, great views!), returning along green lanes round Anchoring Hill to afternoon tea at Otterton. Refreshed, we skip past the ruins of Old Bicton Church, to reach East Budleigh church, contented. Please bring a picnic.

*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

### **Monday, 26th October, 10:00am**

Start at Colaton Raleigh, the Otter Inn (OS Explorer 115, SY 078 8740) 5 miles  
An 'easy' walk north, briefly by the River Otter turning west along green lanes, agricultural tracks and footpaths via Monkey Lane to cross the Hawkerland Valley, before returning to Colaton Raleigh and lunch at the Otter Inn.

*Walk Leader:* Mike Paddison 01395 446 550.



***Please consult the OVA Website or the Autumn Newsletter for the latest details about walks scheduled from November to December 2015***

**Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 10.00am WALK**

Start at Colaton Raleigh Church (OS Explorer 115, SY 082 872) 7 miles.

**“A wonderful walk, well worth the effort!”**

Passaford Lane (steep uphill!), Mutters Moor, coastal path, green lanes, River Otter, Colaton Raleigh Church

*Walk Leader:* Brian Turnbull 01395 567 339

**Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00am WALK**

Start: Castle Neroche car park, (OS Explorer 128, ST 274 157), 8½ miles, 5 hours.

Castle Neroche, a 1 hour drive from Budleigh, is 3km north of the Eagle Tavern on the A303 just after the short dual carriageway road at Marsh.

Alternatively, assemble at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), to share cars for a 9.00am departure.

Easy walking, mostly good tracks, with a short length of country road. The walk is mainly in the forest, adjacent to agricultural farmland.

*Walk Leader:* Iain Ure 01395 568 158

**Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00am WALK**

Start: Trinity Nature Reserve car park (OS Explorer 116, SY 307 957), 5 miles.

A circular walk starting through the plantation and then dropping down Hayton Hill towards Yawl. Then to Yawl Cross Walk, via Mary's Lane, to Yawl Hill and then down Carswell Bottom, with good views towards Uplyme before heading back around Knoll Hill; ending with a steep walk up Cathole Lane back to the Trinity Plantation.

*Walk Leader:* Vivien Insull 01404 811 267

**Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 10:00am GUIDED WALK**

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

A leisurely walk along the River Otter watching and identifying the arriving winter birds with Doug Cullen, Voluntary Warden of the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust. Please bring binoculars if you have them.

*Walk Leader:* Doug Cullen, 01395 567 574

**Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 10:00am WALK**

Start: Car park opposite the Norman Lockyer Observatory (OS Explorer 115 SY 139 881), 6 miles, 3 hours.

Some strenuous sections along the SW Coast path to Weston Mouth, Weston,

the Donkey Sanctuary and Salcombe Regis. Refreshments available at the Donkey Sanctuary or bring your own.

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

**Saturday, 28th November, 10:00am WALK**

Start at Wheathill Plantation CP. (OS Explorer 115 SY 041 847) 3 miles.

A short and sociable walk on the commons to relieve those growing pre-Christmas pressures.

*Walk Leader:* David Daniel 01395 445 960

**Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 10:30am WALK**

Start: Car park at the Blue Ball Inn, Sidford (OS Explorer 115 SY 138 898) 8 miles, 3-3½ hours.

Moderate with some steep ascents. Walk to Knowle House, Lower Sweetcombe, Mincombe Wood, Harcombe Hill, and Harcombe. Please bring a picnic and/or enjoy refreshments at the Blue Ball afterwards.

*Walk Leader:* David Buss 01395 442 621

**Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> December 10:00am WALK**

Start at Colaton Raleigh Church (SY 082 872) 5 miles

**“An ideal walk for a short winter’s day”**

Down green lanes and over the commons, visiting Dotton, Goosemoor and Naps lane. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

*Walk Leader:* Brian Turnbull 01395 567 339

**Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 10.30am WALK**

Start: Newton Popleford Recreation Ground. (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), 5-6 miles

A circular walk picking up the East Devon Way at Harpford going up to Fire Beacon Hill (this is a fairly steep climb, but well worth the effort). We will then walk around the hill and drop down to Coombe, through Hollowhead Cross and onto Tipton St John. We then follow the Otter back to Newton Popleford.

*Walk Leader:* Viv Insull, 01404 811 267

**Saturday, 16th December, 10:00am WALK**

Start: Knowle Village Hall car park (SY 052 827) 7½ miles

**“Exploring the Western Front”**

A largely level walk to Orcombe Point, the Gateway to the Jurassic Coast, using the disused railway track to Littleham Church and attractive rural paths. Distant views across the Exe estuary to Berry Head while we eat our lunch, before the gradual climb back along the coast path to West Down Beacon and views to Beer

and Portland. (Yes, even in December... sometimes!)  
Please bring a picnic. Optional lunch at the Britannia Inn in Knowle, if it's open!  
*Walk Leader:* Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

**Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> December 10:30 am WALK**

Start at East Budleigh Car Park (SY 066 849) 4 miles  
Gentle Boxing Day walk across the commons at this time of good cheer  
Optional lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.  
(Please telephone walk leader by 6<sup>th</sup> December to book lunch)  
*Walk Leader:* David Daniels 01395 445 960

## **Other dates for your Diary:**

**Family Bug Hunt and Devon Fly Group Field Day**

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July – 10.00am to 4.00pm – Uphams car park (SY041861)**

Learn about the amazing invertebrates of the Pebblebed Heaths with family friendly bug hunting and other activities.

**Heathweek**

**Commencing on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July – Woodbury Castle**

An exciting week of events for all ages across the Pebblebed Heaths. Mountain bike taster rides, Dartmoor ponies, wildlife walks, storytelling, crafts, competitions and much more.

**Blackdown Hills AONB**

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August – a 2 hour walk commencing at 1.45pm**

**Heritage, flora and fauna walk – Otterhead Lakes**

Meet at Otterhead Lakes Car Park, Ander's Lane, Otterford TA3 7EE

**East Devon Countryside**

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July - Try out orienteering at Mutters Moor 10.00am to 1.00pm**

Go along to Mutters Moor and try out orienteering. Suitable for beginners and families. All maps and instructions provided. In partnership with Clinton Devon Estates. Meet at Mutters Moor car park.

For full details of activities taking place throughout July and the school holidays visit [www.eastdevon.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/countryside) or telephone 01395 517557

## Walks Reports

### Glass Hill and other delights – 15<sup>th</sup> April

On a bright and sunny morning so typical of the weather we have been so lucky to have during April, 16 walkers gathered in East Budleigh for the walk that would show all the aspects of countryside that so typify the Otter Valley.

After the normal H & S chat from the Walk Leader, he reminded us that critical factors for a successful walk were finishing with the number of walkers that you started with and starting off in the right direction! At this point one local resident pointed out that our proposed route out of the village was closed to pedestrians and motorists. After some discussion we started out in the opposite direction to that originally planned under the temporary joint leadership of 'local people' who knew the area. All was going well until another 'local' pointed out that we had missed an important turn. Although we were still in the village, maps and gps(s) were consulted, and a consensus formed as to the way forward.

Thankfully there were no surprises along the rest of the walk as the route had been reconnoitred the week before. The walk continued at a steady pace via Clamour Bridge, Colliver Cross, and immaculately cultivated fields until the SWCP was reached. The walk continued in bright sunshine along the SWCP to Ladram Bay and the prospect of a "convenience stop" and coffee. Some walkers immediately headed for the beach and a rest in the sun, others preferred the comfort of picnic tables. Only too soon our Walk Leader was marshalling us together for the long climb to High Peak. After reaching the top of the SWCP, there was some discussion and a consensus view that we should all try to get to the trig point at the top of High Peak. With mutual support and encouragement, we all made it to the very top. For many it was the first time, for some it was a major achievement, but for everybody it was well worth it for the splendid views.

After this, the walk down the SWCP, across Windgate and Peak Hill and up Seven Stones Lane, seemed relatively easy and we all looked forward to lunch on Mutter's Moor. The Walk Leader had promised us logs to sit upon; we had visions of sitting in comfort. What transpired was a pile of logs more suitable for the fire grate; but we improvised, moved the logs into the shade and had a very convivial lunch.

After lunch we set out for Otterton via Passaford Lane and a riverside walk along the Otter from Colaton Raleigh to Otterton Mill for a well-earned cup of tea and



cake. We did not see any beavers! The next and final stage took us back to East Budleigh via the remains of St Mary's Church in Bicton, around the obelisk and across the East Budleigh sports field.

At the end we were four down in number, but that could be explained. In summary, this was a walk encompassing villages, agriculture, coastal path, climbing hills, forest cultivation, riverside walks etc., all those aspects of the Otter Valley that we love, but do not take for granted. Many thanks to Mike for organising and leading this walk.

**'Back marker'**

## **Exe Valley Way – Stage 1 – 20<sup>th</sup> April**

It was a bright and sunny Monday morning that 15 brave souls from all corners of Exmouth and East Devon converged towards Exmouth Quay where the 10:40 ferry would whisk them across the Exe to Stage 1 of the Exe Valley Way. £4.50 lighter and a bright smile from the ferryman, who was beginning to believe Christmas was coming early with all this foot traffic on a usually quiet Monday, we partook a very pleasant crossing against the tide to Starcross.

Disembarkation was quickly followed by attendance to "convenience matters" after which our leader entertained us with a broad-brush description of the route we were to follow and an insightful set of rules on how to share a pathway with middle-aged men in lycra who owned expensive bicycles but were not able to afford a bell!

With that conundrum in mind, the walkers set off at a steady pace that was to be the norm for the day except when a hostelry was seen.

The first part of the walk was along paths and a minor road designated part of the SWCP. As we passed Powderham Castle grounds, herds of deer (small pretty fawn ones with white spots) were easily seen on one side, but the view to the estuary on other side was obstructed by the railway track. Shortly after passing Starcross Sailing Club the road turned inland and the new cycle route started straight ahead with a magnificent new cycle/pedestrian bridge that replaced an old railway level crossing. After the bridge, pedestrians and cyclists were separated and were never to join again. We pedestrians, from our lofty perch on top of the canal bank, were able to look down smugly on the new cycle track with its ominous warning to cyclists "in case of floods, seek an alternative route". A sign prohibiting cyclists from the canal path was not helpful!

Turf Lock Hotel was now visible in the distance and the pace picked up at the thought of a coffee stop. Duly revived we continued along the canal path being entertained by rowers, fishermen and wild birds. At the Topsham Ferry we paused to give any tired walkers the opportunity to take an “early bath” with Plan B which involved public transport back to Exmouth. One experienced, much loved and respected lady in the party gave us all a fright by crossing over the ferry bridge. But relief was felt all around when she advised she was only finding out the opening hours of the ferry teashop. We would have felt mortified to lose such a revered walker so early in the EVW walks.

We pressed on between the canal on one side and the Exminster Marshes Nature Reserve on the other – not an area of great natural beauty especially with the ever-present drone of the M5. However the weather was unbelievable with not a cloud in the sky and this kept up our spirits. The next high point, after passing the Old Sludge Beds Nature Reserve, was the sewage works where the observant could see “a ground level flare stack burning off the methane by-product of the purification process” as advised by one knowledgeable walker. The next hurdle was the busy A379 that we had to cross at the Countess Wear canal swing bridge. Fortunately we were blessed with a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing. Oh joy at being able to halt a stream of fast moving cars, to amble across the road and to face down the glares of the drivers - bliss comes in small measures!

And the joy was not short lived because the awnings of the Double Lock Hotel beckoned as we again took up the canal path and lengthened our stride. Some fifteen minutes later we were able to find comfortable tables for lunch and light refreshment to quench our thirsts on this beautiful, dry, but dusty day.

Lunch was of necessity a slow affair with some walkers sampling the many varieties of refreshment and others relaxing in the warm sunshine. The barking of our Leader soon brought us down to earth and we were pressed into the last three kilometres of the walk alongside the ship yards and watersport facilities to Haven Banks and the Exeter Quay. After congratulations all round for a successful finish to Stage One of the Exe Valley Way and strong exhortation from our Leader about the importance of Stage Two, we said our fond farewells and departed to our public transport or to a local teashop where the high points of the day’s walk were relived. In particular, no one could ever recall walking so far without a discernable hill. OVA walkers are not used to such luxury. Many thanks to Chris for organising and leading this walk.

**‘Back marker’**

## An Important Announcement – 24<sup>th</sup> April

I have reflected before, in a walk report, how the world order is changing, and that members are increasingly confident about challenging the status quo. I reported that anarchy was narrowly avoided on a walk to Orcombe Point last December, but on this occasion, it finally happened: on the 24th day of the month of April in the year twenty fifteen, an OVA walk was completed without a coffee break!

So we can't blame a caffeine rush on the aggressive behaviour exhibited by some of the group on what had been planned as a leisurely 5 mile walk in mid-Devon. From the tranquil village of Lower Ashcombe, we strode the 1 in 5 hill to its big brother at Higher Ashcombe, with mediaeval church and screen, then across high fields with views to Dartmoor, down to the picturesque village of Trusham, before returning alongside the River Teign. But so much anger!

For example, no sooner had our resident photographer got off her knees having framed a *Common Spotted Orchid* than her partner narrowly failed to stamp on it, and then tried to barge his way through an electrified fence! Mind you this same photographer, posing as a highly educated botanist, and no doubt thinking that the rest of us were completely ignorant, called every wild flower Heather, when even we knew they were *Silene dioica*, or *Myosotis arvensis*, or *Primula vulgaris*, or *Stellaria holostea*, or *Smyrniolum olusatrum*, or *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. I think she realised she had blown her cover, when climbing a steep path out of Trusham, and in a blatant attempt to gain our sympathy, she threw herself to the ground.

But one of our walkers still harboured pent up angst and resentment that just had to be relieved. Fortunately he was able to attack an election advertising hoarding, after which he was calm and felt much better, and so did the rest of us. However, he still retained sufficient public spiritedness to deliver an impromptu lesson on the rules of the road to a horse rider with a riderless horse in tow. This time, he again felt better, but the rider didn't and the rest of us weren't sure.

Finally, never let it be said that our walks do not deliver all that they promise. We had been promised "views of Canonteign Falls" and sure enough, as we traversed some high ground approaching Rydon, a cry went up to "look to the west!" Several minutes later, the ground was strewn with people dizzily trying to orientate themselves. The rest formed a human pyramid and sent our lightest member to the top, with the most powerful pair of binoculars we possessed, and indeed, a distant sighting was confirmed.

It is said that water has a calming effect on the human condition, just to be within its sights and sounds can have a therapeutic effect, so fortunately our final meander alongside the River Teign brought us to lunch at the Manor Arms in a contemplative and relaxed state of mind.....and then the Landlord, in a blatant example of social stereotyping, welcomed us by directing the men to the “list of real ales on the board”. It was the boots ‘what done it’, since there was not a beard or a pair of sandals between us.

**Chris Buckland**

## **“So near and yet so far” – 29<sup>th</sup> April**

The BBC were correct, the threatening skies soon cleared but not before playing with us a little - jacket on, jacket off, jacket on - you know the drill. Seven evenly paced walkers met to enjoy Brian Turnbull’s delightful 10 mile circular tour taking in the coast and golf course before turning north towards Dalditch Farm. We passed the memorial bench Brian had thoughtfully placed to give golfers a rest at the top of the incline. The bench is a memorial to Brian’s parents who were leading lights at the golf club.

The walk soon turned out to be a nature ramble showing off the best that Devon in Spring can offer. Late primroses were complemented by whitebells and bluebells. David Hatch, our resident butterfly expert, was able to identify all of these many colourful insects, telling us when to examine the amazing underwing colours when a butterfly settled down on a nearby twig.

After taking in the old Exmouth to Budleigh railway footpath, a coffee stop was taken alongside one of the old WW2 pistol firing range structures in Hayes Wood. The walk then proceeded to Yettington and Bicton Common for a well-deserved lunch.

We then proceeded to Stowford along Back Lane, giving the group the opportunity to see where Patrick Hamilton and his OVA Himalayan Balsam team have been attacking, over the past few years, this uninvited invasive species that has colonised the Otter Valley.

As we walked through Colaton Raleigh, Brian pointed out the numerous solitary bees that were resident in the many holes of the cob wall to Place Court. So numerous that they hardly seemed solitary! Arriving at the river we turned south for home. The river here is so beautiful and peaceful, only slightly spoiled by the huge quantities of Himalayan Balsam already shooting out of the ground. A short

diversion was taken at Otterton to admire the new Community Shop and to sample some of their ice-creams.

One of the advantages of having Brian as a walk leader is his extensive knowledge of local features. Without him we would never have known when we were passing over the start of the leat that feeds the Lake at Bicton gardens or the old ford along the Otter, just south of Colaton Raleigh. A great walk appreciated by all.

**Iain Ure**

## **When is a hill not a hill? – 14<sup>th</sup> May**

What a difference a day makes! Twelve hours after Wednesday's sunny, spring weather, we awoke to unrelenting wind and rain, which is why we remained ensconced in our cars until 9.59! When we emerged, there was little to see from the lofty height of Seaton Tower, but Ted was happy because he wanted to test the efficacy of the recently reproofed coat that had served him so well for 25 years!

We headed south, downhill through Couchill Farm, on a figure of eight route that would take us to Beer, then a climb up the coast path to Beer Head to admire the Roman remains underfoot, while looking in vain for a glimpse of Portland as it drifted in and out of view behind rain clouds. You will be reassured to know that we drank coffee. (See the report of our walk on 24 April). Down now through the Under Hooken, which will have to suffice until the Undercliff reopens, then back up through the shanty town of cliff side holiday chalets to look down on Branscombe Mouth. Bets were taken as to whether the beachside café would be open; it was and, displaying commendably flexible decision making (he was outvoted 2 to 1), our leader agreed that we should stop for a pot of tea. So, within a fortnight our walks had gone from creating history by dispensing with coffee breaks altogether, to having two before twelve o'clock!

Only one way to go from sea level, so up we climbed through the village past Little Seaside and Great Seaside and the steep Stockham hill, on top of which we sat under a dripping tree to eat our lunch. Ted remained dry.

Up high, and easy walking along the green lane known as Mare Lane, before our next descent through paths and alleyways, to return once more to Beer; the crossing of paths on our figure of eight course. Gradually and grudgingly the rain abated. Ted's coat had passed the test and was dispensed with.

Going north and inland, we passed the permanently collapsed coast path to Seaton and up a delightful but unnamed wooded valleyside. “The last hill of the day”, said our leader. This was greeted with a degree of scepticism and he was invited, but declined, to retract this statement. “Be it on your own head”, we said. Soon enough, on a walk of regular ascents and descents, another incline was felt. However, it was decided, charitably, that this would be designated a ‘slope’ and not a hill, so that Ted was able to retain his integrity.

As the top of the Tower was sighted and we reached the summit of Seaton Down, the mist lifted and the sun shone on the most majestic view of Seaton and the Axe Valley laid out beneath us. Thanks Ted for eight miles of interest, variety, lots of hills, and the odd slope or two!

**Chris Buckland**

## **A Wander from Woodbury – 20<sup>th</sup> May**

With a first time leader, Carole Steen, nine of us left the free car park in Woodbury, a first time starting place. Past the old parsonage house we took to the fields, with early sowings of maize, to a minor road with glimpses of Greendale Industrial Estate through the field gates. The tracks continued past isolated country houses; we were able to ignore their manicured grounds, but instead celebrate the plant and tree life around us.

Skirting Woodbury Park – cars many, golfers few, and ground staff riding their buggies – we left it all behind onto a short stretch of the East Devon Way, the only damp patch but with glimpses of a small, young deer, enjoyed by those not trying to identify distant Dartmoor Tors! Rushmoor Wood enticed us and we were charmed by an early blue butterfly beside some blue speedwell. The perfect weather persuaded us to retrace our steps across the fields to appreciate the less distant views of the coast and river Exe.

**Ruth Lass**

## **Green Lanes and Woodland Glades - 23<sup>rd</sup> May**

Ten walkers, a walk leader and one dog met in Sidbury Car Park - the weather was overcast and it looked as if it might rain. We were a little late to leave which was quite fortunate as one of our members had encountered County Show traffic and arrived a few minutes after our 10.00am start time.

Past the side of Sidbury Church we encountered 'chocolate box' cottages with wisteria and roses adorning the white cob walls. We made our way out of the village climbing the steady incline of Hatway Hill, the banks of the road oozing with spring flowers joining the East Devon Way just after the Old Dairy House. A wonderful rambling house that would not look out of place in a fairy tale. One member commented that there must have been more money in dairy in the past!

We walked through ancient woodland carpeted in a haze of bluebells just beginning to fade and had a coffee stop in a clearing where we were able to feast our eyes on the wonderful panorama of the Sid valley with farmhouses nestling among the green fields. The threat of rain passed and we enjoyed the warmth of the spring day although the sun was still a bit shy of making an appearance.

Having crossed the main road we descended into an undulating woodland valley to the promised lunch stop in a covered woodsman's barn where we found plenty of logs tastefully arranged by previous walkers to sit on. Afterwards we made our way via Fire & Smoke Farm to pass through Paccombe Farm which is home to numerous donkeys that belong to the Donkey Sanctuary. We were greeted by very loud braying and the walk split into two distinct groups while some took photos of the donkeys.

Our next point of interest was Harcombe. A tiny hamlet away from the main road and very quiet. We crossed the ford via a footbridge and ploughed our way across a field of very tall, very green grass. Nobody appeared to have been that way for a long while. We then climbed up a steep wooded hill to rejoin the East Devon Way and make the very steep descent. Resting for a while before arriving back into Sidbury. A very pretty undulating walk was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

**Jan Stuart**

## **'Colmer's is watching you!' – 12<sup>th</sup> June**

Six of us met up at Newton Pop for Vivian Insull's 'Assault on Colmer's Hill'. Vivian graciously volunteered to drive the ladies team and our shorts-clad Walks Co-coordinator chauffeured the gent's team. Chris has an interesting driving style - one hand on the wheel and the other hand waving around to emphasise whatever he's talking about, maybe he has some Italian ancestry (fact: Italians can't talk without gesticulating).

We re-grouped at Higher Eype Service Area (Stop 1) where Vivian explained that our main goal was lunch on top of Colmer's Hill, the perfectly rounded hillock topped off with Scots pines that will be familiar to anyone who has driven through Bridport on the A35. She also promised us plenty of refreshment stops, the greasy spoon in the parking area being the first. It narrowly escaped 'null points' for its so-called coffee and received one point because it only cost a quid.

The path started off through chin-high nettles and hanging brambles but soon changed to open meadows with sea views as we reached Down House Farm (Stop 2), where we booked our cream teas for later in the day, but resisted sampling the goods beforehand. We continued through the charming hamlets of Lower and Higher Eype before safely crossing the busy A35 to reach the peaceful haven of Symondsburry, where the Estate has recently opened a very chic café (Stop 3) adjoining an enormous Medieval tithe barn, all sympathetically restored in mellow Dorset stone (fact: a local variant of Cotswold Limestone). The café scored 9 out of 10 points only being penalised for failing to provide us with umbrellas outside when a rain shower passed over.

Contrary to their previous policy, Symondsburry Estate is now encouraging walkers to climb Colmer's Hill and, as a quid pro quo, spend money in their café/shops. This hill is steep-sided but not a killer climb and the top (125 m) was soon reached. Lunch (Stop 4) at the top provided good views given the misty conditions and a tinge of smugness at the thought that we were probably the only OVA members to have bagged this summit. As we sat under the pines, we were rained on not by water but by moneyspiders abseiling down from the trees in their thousands (was this a sign that we should all buy lottery tickets?). Back down the hill and along Hell Lane, not red-hot and ringing with the anguished screams of sinners, but cold and muddy with only the rare cry of a walker sliding on the slippery stones in this ancient and atmospheric sunken lane.

Just before reaching North Chideock, we took a path across open fields and encountered a large wooden cross erected in memory of seven 16th century Catholic 'martyrs' and also marking the now bare site of Chideock Castle that was razed to the ground in 1645 during the Civil War. In Chideock, we went back across the A35 and continued on to the sea and the conveniently situated Anchor Inn for refreshments (Stop 5), including excellent coffee and friendly service. There followed a stiff climb up Doghouse Hill and then Thorncombe Beacon (150 m). It could have been clearer, but the haze added an extra something to the distant views. It was all downhill from there, as they say, with a delicious two-scone cream tea at Down House Farm (Stop 6) giving us extra



momentum and one of our group her sixth cup of tea for the day. We were back at the parking area (Stop 7) by 6 p.m. to find that the greasy spoon was closed - fortunately.

The Stop-Go theme of the day resulted in an average speed of 1.1 mph and a net gain in calories, but was well worth it. Many thanks to Vivian and her assistant Chris for putting in the many hours of planning that made this walk so successful.

**Jon Roseway**

## **LET THEM EAT CAKE!**

### **The OVA's Walking Holiday to Mevagissey. March 2015**

Fifteen OVA Walkers with high expectations, gathered in the rain, outside Bodrugan Barton, a 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead with a colourful heritage, about 1½ miles south of Mevagissey. Sir Henry Bodrugan was a brutal henchman of Richard III during his fifteenth century struggle with Henry Tudor. All had enjoyed a safe journey. In fact the 97 miles seemed to take just a minute, as one of my passengers managed to speak on a variety of subjects without repetition, hesitation, or deviation for 1 hour and 48 minutes!

The route took us inland to Gorran Churchtown, with a peep at the 15<sup>th</sup> Century pew ends. Our Leader had done a splendid job and provided a choice of three different routes to get us from Gorran Churchtown to Gorran Haven. Eventually, two thirds of the party arrived at Gorran Haven, to wait for the remainder. Well, they waited, and waited. Unbeknown to them, two stragglers, who were bringing up the rear, were egging each other on to visit the village shop to acquire essential liquid refreshment to consume at the celebratory dinner that evening. Eventually, one staggered up the hill carrying chinking shopping bags. He rejoined the group with an apology and the immortal words "I didn't think time was an issue!"

Before we got to dinner, however, we had to have tea and cakes and biscuits. They were delicious and kindly provided by the female bakers, one of whom might have said that next year the men should bake, but I don't think any man heard it. The cake became a feature of the trip and was returned to, time and again. Dinner was a splendid occasion in our hosts farmhouse and only marred by the absence of a Boar's Head on the table and serving wenches!

Chris Buckland

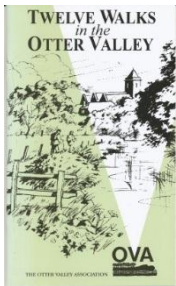
# OVA Publications

The Otter Valley Association uses the knowledge and assistance of local individuals and organisations to create and maintain a selection of publications. These are a mix of free leaflets, books and historical maps for sale intended to be of interest to local residents as well as the many visitors to this area.

OVA publications are available from local book shops and Tourist Offices or direct from [booksales@ova.org.uk](mailto:booksales@ova.org.uk) and the free items can also be downloaded from our web site. Wholesale book prices are available and are set at the discounted prices available to OVA Members and Schools.

The historical maps dating back to the tithe apportionments of the 1840's are printed on oversized A3 card which can be cling film wrapped or framed for display upon request. Some people have added colour and electronic copies can be made available by arrangement to facilitate this process.

Much of the focus of our publications is to encourage and facilitate exploration of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The free leaflets include leisurely walks around the local areas and guides to the local wildflowers. The wildflower guide is in very high quality colour, A3 size and is of use to schools and colleges for field trips for which appropriate quantities can be supplied. The books on the History and Architecture in this area are highly regarded and are reprinted from time to time. We are very fortunate to have so much excellent local material.



The Twelve Walks guide is perhaps our most popular publication and sits well with the regular programme of walks led by a team of OVA volunteers exploring the local area as well as further afield. The OVA walking team have a good reputation for catering for all walking needs whilst ensuring that no one is left behind or made to feel a burden. Details of the walking programme are in this newsletter, on our web site and displayed in local shops and tourist centres.

The OVA is always open to suggestions about adding to its publications and invites ideas from anyone which may be helpful to further promote and conserve the environment, landscape and history of our valley.

**Andrew Beresford**

# The Otter Valley Association

## **Executive Committee** (01395)

Chairman	Roger Saunders	443248
Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	
Hon Treasurer	Trevor Waddington	443978

## **Committee Chairmen**

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

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

Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	446077
East Budleigh	Jon Roseway	488739
Otterton	<i>vacancy</i>	
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacancy</i>	
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786

## **Other Executive Committee Members**

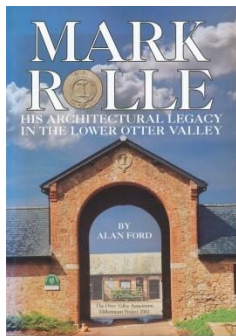
Assistant Minutes Secretary	Robert Wiltshire	444395
Membership Secretary	Clive Bowman membership@ova.org.uk	446892
Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

## **Other Contacts**

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Walks Organisers	Chris Buckland Mike Paddison	444471 446550
Newsletter Distributors	Pam and Tony Harber	445392
Newsletter Editor	Jacqui Baldwin jacquibaldwin@btinternet.com	567599

**Publications:** Visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) or for book sales, contact Andrew Beresford by phone on 01395 446543 or email [booksales@ova.org.uk](mailto:booksales@ova.org.uk)

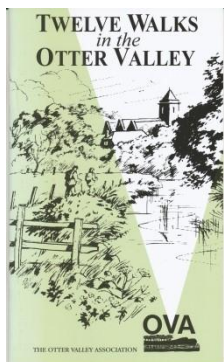
## OVA Publications



### **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 19<sup>th</sup> century.

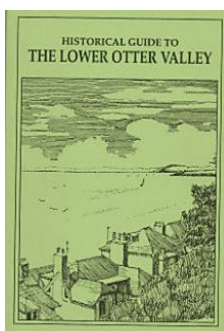
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



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

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

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



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

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

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

## **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 Centre and in other outlets around the valley.