

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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Spring Newsletter

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Winter Picture Gallery



Bystock's future secured – page 6

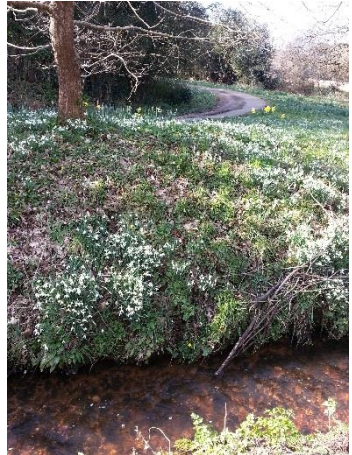


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**Spring is on the way
Walk Report page 10**



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Cover photograph courtesy of Mo Sandford

From the Editor

I hope that you will appreciate this, our first full-colour issue. It has been a pleasure to be able to include some of the lovely photographs taken by members to illustrate the articles and walk reports which, I hope, will increase your enjoyment of the content.

We have a full programme of events coming up over the next few months, one of the most important being the AGM, notice of which is below. A summary report is contained in the centre pages and the full Trustees Report and Accounts will be available at the AGM and on the website. You will note that there are still vacancies for officers on the Executive Committee and, as a recent 'volunteer', I can assure you that all offers of help and support are much appreciated.

Jacqui Baldwin

Notice

The 37th Annual General Meeting of the Otter Valley Association will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 18th May 2016 in the Masonic Hall, Budleigh Salterton

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 13th May 2015
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report including the Trustees Report and Accounts
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Executive Committee Members
7. Appointment of an Independent Examiner
8. Any other business
9. Date of the next AGM

The formal business will be followed by refreshments and a talk by Chris Jenner, Project Manager of the FAB powerline project.



Blue Plaque in recognition of W.H. Hatchard-Smith

As the result of an initiative from Anita Jennings, a founding member of the OVA, the work of local architect William Hatchard-Smith is to be recognised by the mounting of a blue plaque on Budleigh Salterton Public Hall. Funding for the project is being provided jointly by the OVA and Fairlynch Museum and the plaque will be unveiled later this year.

William Hornby Hatchard-Smith (1887-1987) was the son of architect John Hatchard-Smith, whose practice, J Hatchard-Smith & Son, had offices in London, Epsom, and later Budleigh Salterton. Educated at Charterhouse School, William received training in his father's practice and became ARIBA in 1914 and FRIBA in 1923. During the Great War he served with the Territorial Army in India and Mesopotamia, attaining the rank of Colonel. He designed and built over 50 private residences in Budleigh Salterton between the First and Second World Wars. His work in the town also included the Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (1922) and the Public Hall (1925) pictured here.



Photo courtesy of Michael Downes

Watch Hill, built in 1929, is generally considered to be Hatchard-Smith's finest house. The property was commissioned by Blake Thompson, an American millionaire, and through marriage to Blake Thompson's daughter, Margaret, later became Hatchard-Smith's family home. His architectural commissions outside Devon included the Arts and Crafts style Dyers Almshouses in Crawley in 1939.

For those wishing for further information, the Hatchard-Smith archive is kept at Fairlynch Museum and Art Centre, Budleigh Salterton.

Cannington Viaduct

The fascinating article below was written by member A.L. (Tony) Venning whose eye was caught by the photo of the viaduct on the inside front cover of the Winter edition and by Dee Woods' account of the walk on 13th November "Flirting with Dorset". Tony has a personal affection for the Axminster-Lyme Regis branch line, having travelled on it as a schoolboy, and thought readers might like to know a bit more about the structure.....

Cannington viaduct, at Compyne, Devon was constructed over a 3 year period and completed in 1903 by "Concrete Bob" McAlpine. It was an early example of concrete construction, similar to the better known Glenfinnan viaduct (on the line to Mallaig) completed the previous year. The piers and arches were faced up with concrete blocks and infilled with in-situ mass concrete. Instead of traditional scaffolding, an overhead cableway some 350 yards long was used to transport men and materials, and the 10-arch structure that marched across the valley floor 93 feet below was 203 yards long. Each arch was elliptical and spanned 50 feet.



Problems were experienced during construction however, with subsidence in the western abutment and major settlement of the adjacent piers; the sandy footings proving unable to fully support the design load of 3 tons per square foot. The third arch, weakened by the movement was stabilised by the insertion of a diaphragm brick jack arch which spoiled the symmetry and functional grace of the structure (see photograph). Thereafter the viaduct displayed a pronounced dip at the western end but remained stable. During the first year of operation a watchman was employed at each end to monitor the structure. The last passenger train crossed the viaduct on November 27th 1965. It is now a Grade 2 listed structure.

Bystock's Future Secured

Bystock Pools, one of Devon's most loved wildlife sites, has been secured for the future by Devon Wildlife Trust.

The popular nature reserve has been saved thanks to a record-breaking fundraising appeal. Generous donations were received from local residents, Devon Wildlife Trust members, the nature reserve's own team of DWT volunteers and people from far and wide who love Bystock Pools. The appeal launched in June 2015 raised a fantastic £83,000, the most successful appeal in the charity's history.

DWT Nature Reserves Officer Edric Hopkinson commented: "Had Bystock been sold on the open market, who knows what would have happened to the heathland, ponds and meadows? DWT is grateful to South West Water for giving us a year to raise the full purchase costs. Securing the future of the site is great news for everyone who loves this place – but it's even better news for the wild creatures that call Bystock home".

As part of the annual East Devon Heath Week, every July hundreds of people attend a family-friendly Discovery Day event at Bystock. This year's event, on Tuesday 26 July, promises to be an especially joyous celebration of the wildlife and peaceful beauty of this special corner of East Devon.

The Hidden Secrets of A La Ronde

On 19th January at Knowle Village Hall, we were privileged to be given a talk entitled 'Hidden secrets of a la Ronde' presented by Trevor Adams the leader of the team of researchers at this National Trust property. Many of the audience had visited this property before, some on several occasions, but are now likely to look at it with new eyes.

The house was built for two spinster ladies, Mary and Jane Parminter, who were second cousins. In 1874 they departed on 'The Grand Tour' - unusual for young ladies at this time as the Tour was generally undertaken by young gentlemen over a period of 3-4 years after leaving university. Their route took them to Paris to study art and to Rome to study architecture, and many other places en-route. The Parminter cousins made a rather grander tour taking 9 years. Researchers have

been able to trace their route by identification of pictures, souvenirs and even press cuttings.



Their adventure prompted the ladies to embark on the project to build A La Ronde, which commenced in 1795. They were able to incorporate their finds and souvenirs into the construction of the house. Shell collections were sunk into the plaster of the walls in the most intricate designs. Feathers collected were used to make the wonderful friezes surrounding the rooms. The cousins carried out the most delicate work on various objects to be found in the house, as was the way with Regency ladies. In

fact there are so many artefacts that they have to be displayed on a rotational basis. We were shown pictures of mystery objects, the most entertaining being a flea trap. This was a semi spherical object made of clay. This fiendish device was worn against the body to keep the wax inside it soft. The insects crawled through holes in the trap and became stuck in the soft wax. Nobody could guess that one! Another item was a ring worn on the finger which contained a quantity of rosewater. Bodily washing was not the order of the day. Pictures constructed of seaweed and sand were much admired.

The property was built as a semi fortress as Napoleon was expected to knock on their door and was constructed around a central octagon, with a thatched roof. Now it is roofed with tiles. There is a gallery running around the top of the house where most of the shell artwork is to be found. Unfortunately, due to its narrow construction, it is now considered unsafe for the visitors. Upon the death of the surviving cousin in 1849, the estate was bequeathed to unmarried ladies of the family who were of limited means, to ladies associated with Exeter prison and to retired clergy. There is a little known chapel nearby where the two cousins are buried in the aisle. Due to struggling finances the estate became the property of the National Trust in 1991. The building has become a victim of its own success, as it welcomes 45-50,000 visitors a year. Perhaps it is the cream teas served in the café which have been voted the best in the area!

Bob Wiltshire



Since Christmas Clinton Devon Estates have continued to work in partnership with the Environment Agency to investigate the possibility of reconnecting the lower Otter valley to its floodplain. An expanded stakeholder group was formed and met in January to discuss the many issues faced by the lower Otter, and how these might best be resolved. The meeting included representatives from the Environment Agency, Natural England, residents and businesses at South Farm and Granary Lane, Devon County Council, EDDC, the East Devon AONB, Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club, the OVA, Budleigh Salterton Town Council, East Budleigh & Bicton, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh Parish Councils.

Issues of concern that were raised at the meeting included the impact of the project on access to South Farm, the cliffs adjacent to Granary Lane, the old municipal tip and the cricket club. The project is working with the cricket club to try and find a more sustainable site less prone to regular flooding, and favours either raising South Farm Road, or the building of a bridge, to ensure that access is maintained which is not impacted by tidal flooding in the future. Funding development bids are currently being prepared for both the Heritage Lottery Fund and Interreg (a European funding stream). This funding will enable the project to get a much better clarity of the technical constraints, and benefits the project can deliver by allowing the commissioning of further investigations. A new project website is being developed which we hope to have launched by Easter.

In essence the initiative seeks to safeguard threatened public access in the lower Otter Valley in the face of climate change whilst enhancing the area's wildlife, natural habitats and national conservation standing. The project aims to naturalise and restore the ecological functioning of the estuary through allowing natural processes to once again re-assert themselves across the full original extent of the original floodplain. Should it proceed the project would create 50 hectares of rare intertidal and wetland habitat for the benefit of wildlife and public enjoyment, and allow the lower Otter Valley to respond and adapt naturally to a rapidly changing climate far into the future. Addressing and resolving multiple longstanding problematic management issues related to the erosion of embankments, public footpaths and the prolonged flooding of public amenities, the Lower Otter Restoration Project seeks to demonstrate sound stewardship by pre-emptively working with nature, rather than against it.

Dr Sam Bridgewater, Nature Conservation Manager, Clinton Devon Estates

Walk Reports

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

Walk in the New Year - 9th January

Traditionally, the first walk of the New Year is eagerly anticipated and draws a good crowd, keen to reject seasonal slothfulness and enact new resolutions. The weather can be relied upon to be clear, crisp and sunny; inviting even. As we know, that was then; even in East Devon, the weather has been far from traditional, with excessive rain, wind and high temperatures; uninviting for some. Nonetheless, eight



walkers followed their leader out of Knowle village under heavy showers and benign temperatures. The gales did not arrive until we were safely ensconced in Knowle's latest reincarnation of its village pub, to be known again as the Dog and Donkey. First we had a couple of hours enjoyable walking ahead of us.

Dalditch Common, Squabmore Reservoir, where all the fishermen and women were in their tents, lots of mud and running water that did not come over the top of one person's wellies, and then we were at beautiful Bystock Ponds. Reminiscences of Terrapins and frozen lakes.

Our return on this figure of eight course, took us past Dalditch Farm, where we encountered another innocent walker who had the good sense to inquire of us who we were, where we had been, where we were going and our place in the universe. In response we gave him our very best recruitment powerpoint presentation, and sent him on his way after he had promised to post his enrolment forthwith. Ian said we should not have released him until he paid up.

Now, salivating along Dalditch Lane to the pub, where they had opened their kitchens especially for us, and we spent a typically OVA sociable end to the walk. Thank you Steve for kick starting our new programme with an old favourite.

Chris Buckland

Mud, mud and more mud – 27th January

We met our leader, Jon, at the Otter Inn car park, and pulled on our wet weather gear. Perhaps the thought of an 8 mile walk brightening an otherwise rather gloomy day was the reason for the very respectable total of 14 walkers and three well behaved dogs who started off along the quiet lanes of Colaton Raleigh. It was good to be joined by two non-members (who were, of course, given a newsletter and membership forms!).

Jon quoted Winston Churchill in that all that he could guarantee was “mud, toil, sweat and tears - and more mud”. We were soon walking through muddy fields, a theme that stayed with us throughout the walk – slippery mud, deep mud, muddy puddles, boggy paths.....those of us with sticks were glad to have them to keep us (mostly) upright.

We passed through Newton Poppleford and walked up beside well-manicured orchards. We had a brief coffee stop and then proceeded up onto the heathland of the Harpford and Aylesbeare Commons, from where there were good views; in better weather these would be fabulous. Jon showed us erosion in action – a stream was gradually cutting through the hillside, as demonstrated by tree roots which now hung in mid-air. It would only be a matter of time before the footbridge would be swept away.

Unfortunately the mud took its toll on one of our members – Jacqui's Swiss boots decided they'd had enough and the sole of one began to fall off and she and Peter had to cut short their walk. (New boots have now been purchased – Ed). The rest of us descended through drizzle along quiet roads to Colaton Raleigh to complete our walk; a select few of us rewarded ourselves with a good lunch at the Otter Inn.

Penny and Paul Kurowski

Two Rivers Way – 30th January

~~Plan A~~ ~~Plan B~~ Plan C

The advertised walk from Stoke Cannon was to be along the Exe Valley Way, along the banks of the River Exe, along the Devonshire Heartland Way, crossing several tributaries of the Rive Exe, and along the River Creedy to Newton St Cyres and lunch at The Beer Engine. The instructions were to meet at Exeter Bus Station at 9.45am for the outward bus at 10:00am.

Penny and I had our first experience of the Park and Ride into Exeter and had had the foresight to get an “explorer” ticket which would give us unlimited travel on “all Stagecoach buses across the South West”. We arrived at the Bus Station with time to go into the Travel Centre to try and get some clarity on the types of bus tickets available. The man behind the desk explained that I could have got a Senior Explorer ticket as I am over 60 and saved £1.20! He then proceeded to explain about Stagecoach's new Bus Station and centre whereby he would be out of work as there would be no Travel Centre facility and that everyone will have to buy their tickets on-line.

After this devastating news, could things get any worse? We met up with Mike and Paula, Chris, Graham and Peter for Mike to tell us that things were in fact worse – the River Exe had flood warnings and that the Two Rivers Way (Plan A) was not an option as sections of the planned walk would be under water. Mike glossed over Plan B as this too was not feasible due to the rain; however, Plan C was viable and that we would still get the bus at 10.00 to Newton St Cyres. Plan C was a high-level six mile walk with views over the River Exe and it might be a bit muddy!

Once the driver was on board, we leapt into the bus like excited schoolchildren and rushed upstairs to 'bags' the front seats. At least this meant that we had a good view of where we were going once we had wiped the condensation off the



windows! 15 minutes later, just as everyone was beginning to get comfortable, it was time to get off in Newton St Cyres. Mike explained that the village comprised two parts – one section along the main road where we were and the other half a mile away by the station and The Beer Engine. Before Chris could ask, I volunteered to do the walk report and take some photos.

We set off past a garden filled with gnomes, meerkats and other stone fauna and within 20 metres Mike veered off the road to collect a 'Country Walks Newton St Cyres' pamphlet – we all followed suit. A chap said that he was pleased to see the pamphlets being taken as he was the author – it transpired that we were going to do Walk 2. Roger Wilkins, for that was his name, declined the opportunity to join us on the walk but he did mention that the wild boars had disappeared and that it could be “slightly wet underfoot”.

As we ascended the road, Graham recounted some of his adventures in Antarctica. At the top of the hill, Chris outlined the walk which was to go along a ridge to a radio mast and then around and back to Newton St Cyres. We left the road onto our first mid-Devon brown muddy track and descended to the Blake River. The path ascended steeply before following field boundaries - Peter commented that the walk 'was not muddy but squelchy' and Penny compared the uphill to going up sand dunes (in terms of effort, not moisture content!). From the fields, we came to a 'quiet lane'; this provided an opportunity to stride out having marvelled at some of the fungi on a dead tree. We followed signs towards Venny Cleave and Sherwood but then descended into Northridge Copse to sample some of the claggy paths through Sherwood and then Whiptail Wood which provided a respite from the cloying mud as it was mainly pine trees so we had a needle-cushioned path to help us on our ascent. At another turning point and another discussion about where to go, Chris mentioned coffee: democracy deemed that we should finish the ascent and imbibe in the sunlight. 20 minutes later we had a well-earned break - Chris suggested that there ought to be a choir of angels singing "Hallelujah". The sun warmed us but then the cold wind picked up as we picked our way across more energy-sapping muddy fields. We spotted some frog spawn in one of the puddles and marvelled at nature. We emerged onto a road where talk turned to our average speed and actual pace as we discussed the East Devon Way 24 hour challenge in June.

We had a good stretch out past the mast on Rowland Road but then had to almost double back on ourselves onto an uphill quagmire of boot-high, gloopy mud – the wood chippings strewn along the path did little to absorb the ankle deep water. At the top of the hill, Mike marvelled at how clean Paula's boots were ... the rest of us had mud encased boots and gaiters! We descended into Newton Wood and into a new category of muddiness When discussing the potential of finding as many ways of describing mud in a walk report, Chris stated that the report did not have to be factual and could be about anything ... another made-up walk entirely or the meal that we were going to have – surely Mississippi mud pie would be on the menu!!!

We entered Coombland Wood where large tractors had carved deep tracks in the pathway – mud took on many different guises: thick sloppy slime, stagnant path-side, and sneaky mud hiding under water ... we reached a point where we were faced with an extensive stretch of path that was under six inches of slime: I thought that we could go round the edge so Mike ploughed on into boot high slimy, watery goo – we didn't follow him this time. With hindsight, we should have left the path and walked in the field the other side of the hedge! We met the

tarmac at Tinpit Hill and caught tantalising glimpses of Newton St Cyres as we descended. On the outskirts, was the ford to the Shuttern Brook, Mike produced a brush and cleaned his gaiters and boots; the rest of us tried to rub the mud off boots in the water but this mid-Devon mud is tenacious and would not budge!

We got to the bus stop and the sign stated that it was half a mile to The Beer Engine by this time (13.30) Penny's stomach rumblings were audible! We crossed the River Creedy which was in full flow but not above its banks and reached the pub, an outdoor (water) tap provided another opportunity to remove this stubborn brown stuff from boots and gaiters; and finally in the first pint disappeared very quickly. The meal was excellent, substantial and freshly cooked; a second pint helped with the relaxation and recovery.

The half mile back to the bus stop flashed by and the bus to Exeter arrived within five minutes – great planning Mike.

Paul Kurowski

THE DEVON COAST TO COAST - Stage 1 – 3rd February

We couldn't wait to get started! After all we had 117 miles to go! The A38 seemed to go on and on, before dumping us at the mercy of Plymouth's urban sprawl and its ubiquitous road works. Suddenly, however, the veil was lifted: the sky was blue, the sea was blue, the bay was a perfect semi-circle, and a half a mile off shore was the Great Mew Stone, brooding like some rocky iceberg. There below us was Wembury Beach and the start of our adventure.

While our Drivers sacrificed their coffee to take the cars to the end of the walk the rest of us indulged ourselves in the chilly, wintery sunshine, under the superior gaze of St. Werburgh Church, whose 15 Century tower has been a 'daymark' for sailors for centuries. Photographs were taken before we set off confidently on our way. Mike strode off, determined to hit the 2.7 mph that would be required to complete the East Devon Way in 24 hours; a project for a summer's day to look forward to! The South Hams is not unlike East Devon; largely agricultural, with rolling fields and steep valleys.....and lots of mud! No matter if, like Jane and Sue, you have new gaiters to show off, especially if they appear to repel mud.



Travelling South to North meant that the only way to see that inspirational view of the sea was to keep turning round or walk backwards. Gradually, we reset our mental compass, to enjoy our surroundings, like the masses of Snowdrops that Paula pointed out for me, or the bank that contained every wild spring flower imaginable to test Penny's identification skills, or the postcard picture of the ford crossing of the Cofflete Creek, a tributary of the River Yealm.

"And on Wood" was the site for coffee and an official welcome to new member John, although we spared him the usual initiation ceremony. Onwards, and two and a half hours after leaving Wembury, we settled down to picnic under the trees in a small park next to the parish church of St Mary at Brixton, where, outside its gate is a beautifully restored Victorian lamppost, honouring Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897.

Refuelled, we had barely a mile and a half to the finish of this 7.5 mile stage, a distance our resident nerds would dispute at the end, when Graham and Mike reported that the satellites, on which their GPS technology relies, indicated less than seven miles; the first time that an OVA walk had failed to deliver its promise. No time to be complacent, however, as there was a 'sting in the tail' of this walk, as we ascended a short, sharp hill of about 70 metres and a 1 in 4 gradient. Our efforts were rewarded with tantalising views of the Dartmoor that awaits us.

So to Yealpton and the Manor Street Café, where we arrived at 2.58pm, just as it was about to close, but were made very welcome by its cheerful owner, who made light of the mess our muddy boots made on her floor.

The drivers returned and we journeyed back to East Devon with heightened anticipation for the next stage; only 110 miles to go!

Chris Buckland

Templer Way, Stage 1 - 17th February

Late morning. Seven of us adjusted our hoods and piled out of the people carrier into driving rain. We crossed the road from Haytor Visitor Centre and advanced up a saturated moorland slope. Ahead and above, Haytor Rocks, massive and wet, loomed in the drifting mist.



Further on the mist lifted to reveal the distinctive granite setts of the Templar Way tramway snaking across Haytor Moor. Arriving at the Templar Way marker stone the group felt it prudent to have a photo taken to prove that we hadn't turned round and gone home. Some bedraggled Dartmoor ponies expressed no interest in us at all.

Constructed in the 1820's the granite 'tramway' was a formidable engineering feat relying on gravity and a gentle downward slope for the transport of quarried granite in horse drawn trucks to the canal at Teigngrace and then to the coast for export.

Continuing along a gentle downhill gradient the tramway entered a beech lined 'green lane' to contour spectacularly along the south eastern edge of Yarner Wood, magnificent even in the falling rain with a vista of tree tops dropping sharply into a deep valley to the north west.

We emerged into high pasture and mixed woodland, the granite setts playing host by now to a continuous downhill stream of water, albeit still providing a firm base underfoot. This changed dramatically when we parted company temporarily with the tramway to negotiate our way around the glutinous edge of a large apple orchard. The orchard was established relatively recently to experiment with varieties of Devon apples and is celebrated for nationally rare lichens.

Fortified by warm drinks, food and an easing of the rain, we set off along a minor road, invaded by rivulets from the neighbouring fields, to eventually enter Stover Country Park. Here firm surfaces ensured our rapid progress through conifer plantation and scrub birch to arrive at the bus stop for our return journey. Perversely, the rain stopped completely at this point to reveal quite an attractive sunset.

Many thanks to walk leader, Mike Paddison, for the accuracy of his navigational skills guiding us through a fascinating walk in challenging weather.

Mike French

A winding walk – 24th February

At last, a walk where mud was the exception rather than the rule. Could the wet Winter be finally drawing to an end and Spring be on its way? 15 people must have thought so as they joined leader Brian Turnbull for this very enjoyable walk from Knowle.

We started on what is apparently a good route from Knowle to the Sir Walter Raleigh pub in East Budleigh, over Shortwood Common. The views were excellent, the way was steep, so any walker would have earned their pint! However it was Sir Walter's birthplace rather than his pub that was our destination – we turned off and headed instead for Hayes Barton.



Dropping down from Hayes Wood we passed a cottage, and Brian pointed out the corbels on the gable ends which, together with the initials MR and a date, are a distinctive feature of Mark Rolle buildings. There are apparently about 87 of these in the area (for further information why not buy the OVA book about these buildings! – see rear cover).

After passing some smelly but happy looking pigs (delicious “outdoor reared pork”), we stood and admired the beautiful old building and garden while Brian regaled us with some interesting history.

Then onwards and upwards (or at least that is how it felt), to Wheathill Plantation. Here there were signs of WW2, including old ammunition stores which were now a different kind of battery – they have been converted to hibernacula for bats.

Having reached a high point (and enjoyed beautiful views) we descended to Squabmoor reservoir which Brian could remember skating on back in the 1960s. A delightful treat appeared just before the end of our walk – a magnificent display of snowdrops and daffodils in Dalditch Lane.

Penny Kurowski

Chairman's Report 2015 - 2016

In preparation for the AGM I like to look back over what the OVA has accomplished in the last 12 months. In my Chairman's report for April 2015 I opened with thanking our many volunteers. I make no apology for doing the same thing now. Our volunteers have allowed the OVA to maintain its programme of walks, talks, events, natural environment initiatives and planning responses, book sales, web site management and newsletter distribution. Thank-you for your dedication, time and effort – you are essential for the OVA to function.

We have a strong Executive Committee, but we still have vacancies to fill (Village Reps for Otterton and Colaton Raleigh, Honorary Secretary and Events Secretary). Please contact me if you are interested, I would be happy to talk to you about the positions.

There will be more detailed reports on our activities elsewhere in the newsletter, but I will give a brief overview here. The walks team have managed to top last year's successes with even more walks (+10%), more walkers and an increase in total miles walked to over 4,000. All without permanently losing anyone as far as I know. We have continued our winter Talks programme covering a variety of topics. Our most popular talk (held jointly with Otterton Garden Club), about the River Otter Beavers, was so well attended that we had to turn people away because the hall was full. Graham Knapton has managed the Talks programme since 2012, but he is now stepping down. Thank you Graham for the varied and interesting selection of talks you have provided us with. I am happy to report that Geoff Lake will be taking over next year's programme.

Although hampered by the lack of an organiser, we have managed to run a few events. The tour of Popham's Farm (June 2015) was very well supported and a behind the scenes visit to Donkey Sanctuary (March 2016) was thoroughly enjoyed by the participants. We also have scheduled a trip to Harpford Woods in April to learn about forestry management from John Wilding of Clinton Devon Estates.

As always, planning issues have been a significant focus for the Executive Committee. With the approval of East Devon District Council's Local Plan this year we hope to see a more managed approach to development in the area. The OVA is also committed to helping with the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans in our area, and are currently actively involved with the Budleigh Salterton plan.

The Natural Environment Committee have continued their work on Himalayan Balsam clearance along the tributaries of the Otter, completed the annual litter pick and participated in Heath Week with our best-supported walk of the year.

During a busy year for membership and finances, we have completed our transfer from Nat West bank to Lloyds, with the Nat West account now closed. We have managed to bring most of our membership with us, despite the increase in annual fee and the fuss of completing new standing order forms. We hope now to be able to continue into the foreseeable future without the need for another increase.

On the IT side our beautiful website continues to function well both as an information resource for the membership and as an advertisement for the OVA. It is also the gateway to our expanding local history resource, OVApedia. The website is now supplemented by a Facebook page, offering more news items and an opportunity for the membership to post comments.

In conclusion we try to provide a programme to suit all interests, whether hiking, working to improve the natural environment or listening to talks about the area. If you have suggestions about other things you would like to see please get in touch.

Roger Saunders, OVA Chairman

Planning

There are many initiatives affecting the future of planning matters taking place at both national and regional level that will affect the way the lower Otter Valley will look in a few years. As a result of potential changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the OVA has made comments to the House of Lords Inquiry on the economics of the housing market and this can be viewed on the House of Lords website. We have also responded to another consultation on the effect changes would have in our area, particularly on the redefinition of affordable housing and the loosening of planning controls.

We can all breathe a sigh of relief that East Devon District Council's Local Plan is finally approved and hopefully the pressure of ad-hoc planning applications by developers should be reduced. Neighbourhood Plans are being developed by Newton Poppleford, East Budleigh and Budleigh Salterton and there is the hope

that, when these are complete, local people will have an influence on the development of housing in their area. However, this year there have been many applications for larger scale developments and the OVA has responded to each application taking into account national and local planning policies. As regards to garden infill, the OVA generally responds to sensitive sites and those in a conservation area.

Finally, the next change to affect our area will come with the Devolution bid. Councillors from Devon and Somerset have come together with businessmen, educationalists and others to jointly bid for devolution “to secure greater control over skills, growth and employment in the region.” This “Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership” has been awarded £65.2 million in funding. A worry to many people is that there has been no consultation which raises the question of how they have arrived at a figure of an additional 179,000 homes proposed for the region.

The Future of the Historic Environment Conference

Two of us went to the Houses of Parliament to a conference on The Future of the Historic Environment, organised by Civic Voice. Speakers were from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England, a representative from the House of Lords and Gryff Rhys Jones. It was refreshing to find that the lower Otter valley is not the only part of the country with problems. There was an overwhelming consensus at the conference that Conservation Areas do not offer enough protection to the houses and gardens in an area. After the meeting I approached the Historic England representative to express the concerns of Budleigh Salterton residents that it is difficult to nationally list buildings built after 1840. This is a special problem in Budleigh Salterton where the housing stock is Victorian and early twentieth century with fine Arts and Crafts style.

Nicola Daniel

Natural Environment

This was the fifth year in which the OVA has been committed to an assault on Himalayan Balsam in the Lower Otter Valley and again my annual report appears on the OVA website. In 2012, 2013 and 2014 the Environment Agency headed the project, contracting out the overall organization to FWAG SW (Farmers and Wildlife Advisory Group). Sadly the project became a victim of the government’s

austerity measures and in 2015 it was left to the OVA, Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) and the small group in Newton Poppleford to continue the work, albeit just in the Lower Otter Valley. The group that had blossomed in 2013 under Dr Nick Ward in East Budleigh is in temporary (we hope) abeyance.

From June to October 2015 we continued to focus on the Colaton Raleigh brook where we met our target of completing three sweeps from the highest known point at which Himalayan Balsam had been found in 2012 (above Stowford) right down through the village to the flood plain. Meanwhile, Iain Ure and a small team attacked with the OVA brushcutter from the confluence of the Colaton Brook with the Otter working upstream towards Colaton village. His report also appears on the OVA website.

Our experiences match those of the Tale Valley Trust that has been clearing the largest tributary of the Otter (through Escot) since 2005. It is virtually impossible to eliminate this invasive species completely but each year the cleared areas expand and the task becomes easier. That this is so is entirely the result of the efforts of our volunteers who deserve all our praise.

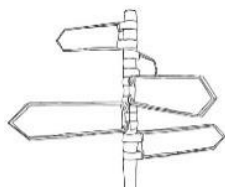
Up-valley from Newton Poppleford, the Tale Valley Trust (TVT) continue their work above Ottery St Mary and, encouragingly, a small new group is working on the block between the TVT and the OVA/CDE in, for example, Fluxton.

Our work on Himalayan Balsam is always planned in coordination with Clinton Devon Estates and this will continue in 2016. The target for 2016 is to repeat our three sweeps of the whole Colaton Brook and, if we can clear them with time to spare, help Newton Poppleford, East Budleigh and perhaps restart work on the Dalditch Brook.

The **Annual Litter-pick** on the Otter Estuary which took place in early April 2015 was again a successful and very worthwhile exercise.

Patrick Hamilton, Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee

A Walk for Everyone - Spring Programme 2016



We really are spoilt for choice, as the exceptionally wet, usually warm, and often windy winter weather, gives way to an inspirational spring, and all that mud is but a distant memory!

There is barely enough space to tell you about all the new walks; some from the creative minds of our regular Walk Leaders, and others from new leaders making their debut with us. Scrutinising the Programme with your diary to hand will be time well spent and will avoid the disappointment of reading a Report of a walk you wished you had joined!

Rest assured that all our old local favourites remain, but there are a few exciting additions to this term's programme. The Devon Coast to Coast continues to traverse the peninsular with some rugged stages across Dartmoor; Chris Gooding also takes us to Dartmoor in June for his first venture as one of our Leaders. Those who walked the latter stages of the Exe Valley Way last year will know what a delight the Simonsbath and Barle Valley area provides, and will want to join Peter for a return, at the beginning of June.

The competition to see who can provide the best Bluebell experience is between Viv on 30 April, Graham on 4 May and Jan on 21 May; all claim to have insider information! Although Viv's walk up Colmer's Hill took place last year, I can mention it, since she has moved the date to accommodate the Bluebells that she confidently expects to be at their best! Mind you, we may have to fight our way through the crowds after this 'iconic' spot was the subject of a recent television programme. Remember, we got there first!

Jon takes us to Farway, Carole to Gittisham and Kentisbeare; all hidden away in the East Devon landscape, but henceforth, no longer from the OVA. Certainly not hidden away is Killerton, which features in a new walk and Joyce Thomas's first for us that departs from her front gate in Pinhoe. Margaret is giving us the opportunity, not only to walk around Colyton and alongside the beautiful River Coly, but to be followed by a guided tour of the historic town and a cream tea, in July. Please let Margaret know if you would like to take the Town Tour. No we haven't forgotten our Coast Path. How could we? Margaret will be tackling the cliffs at Weston in April, and the heights of Beer, Branscombe and Seaton feature

on Ted's walk in May. Bettina is setting off from Exton, on the Exe Estuary in July; I don't think we've been there before!

All this, and plenty more..... but finally, you are invited to rekindle your youth, not just a time when we took our health for granted, and 'aches and pains' had not been invented, but when we had a spirit of adventure! Join Penny, Paul and more OVA walkers for some Midsummer Madness, as we take on the Challenge of the East Devon Way in 24 hours. You can read all about it and sign up by the end of April, please, elsewhere in this Newsletter and on the website.

We look forward to welcoming you on any of our walks, old or new.

Given the advanced notice this Newsletter provides, it is a good idea to check the website for any late and unavoidable alterations to the walks schedule and travel arrangements.

Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison



Events Programme – April to July 2016

Saturday 9th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start at the Joney's Cross CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 057 898). 5 Miles, 2.5 hours.

"Gently does it"

A gentle walk to Aylesbeare via Randelhayes farm and back via Manor farm and Aylesbeare common. *Walk Leader:* Graham Knapton, 01395 445872

Saturday 16th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start at Knapp Copse Nature Reserve CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 155 957) 9.5 miles, 5 hours.

"Over the hills and Far(a)way"

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

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739/ 07887 936280

Wednesday 20th April, 10:00am - WALK

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 8.30am to share cars. We will drive to Holne and use pre-booked taxis to take us to Ivybridge, the start of the walk. The cost will be £4 - £5 per head depending on numbers. Please let Chris know at least a week beforehand (13th April 2106) if you wish to use the taxi service.

“Devon Coast to Coast Stage III”

Start: Ivybridge, The Watermark, Erme Court (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 637 562), 13.5 miles. Finish: Holne, crossroads in village centre (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 705 695). Exposed track, pathless moorland, often wet underfoot. Please bring appropriate food and drink.

Walk Leaders: Mike Paddison 01395 446550, Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Friday 22nd April, 10:00am - WALK

Start at Lower Weston National Trust CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 166 889) 5 miles.

“Uphill and Down Dale”

Walking down Weston Combe to Weston Cliff and along the coast path to Berry Fort, inland to Berry Barton and past the Fountain’s Head at Street, on the outskirts of Branscombe, where lunch can be booked by those who wish to dine afterwards. Then we will retrace our steps to return. The walk includes a couple of short steep climbs, and wonderful sea views. Sorry no dogs.

Walk Leader: Margaret Read, 01392 759332.

Monday 25th April, 6.00pm – Harpford Wood - EVENT

Woodland Management in the Lower Otter Valley; Threats and Opportunities

A walk with John Wilding MBE, Head of Forestry and Environmental Economy at Clinton Devon Estates.

Wednesday 27th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start at Lime Kiln CP Budleigh Salterton, (OS Explorer 115 SY 073 820). 10 miles, 6 hours.

“Circumnavigating Budleigh Salterton”

The walk commences along Marine Parade and the South West Coast Path to West Down Beacon and heads inland to Dalditch Farm via Castle Lane. It continues through Hayes Wood and across the common, past Yettington to Colaton Raleigh. After a well-earned break, the return journey follows the riverside path past Otterton to Lime Kiln car park. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Saturday 30th April, 10.30am - WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999) at 9.30 am to share cars to the walk start point.

“Colmer’s is watching you!”

The walk starts at Higher Eype Service Area (OS Explorer 116, SY 452 922) at 10.30am (café opens at 6.45am and free parking!), 8 miles, 6+ hours.

This is a walk requiring some appetite for hills but, boy, is it worth it! There are plenty of opportunities for refreshment stops to restore body and soul. We start out through Lower Eype, skirting Eype Down heading towards Symondsburly and an excellent café. After refreshments, the highlight, a short climb up the iconic Colmer’s Hill, crowned by fir trees, which affords extensive views in all directions. The day ends over the sea cliffs from Seatown, after a visit to The Anchor pub, and finally a cream tea at Down House Farm.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insull, 01404 811267

Wednesday 4th May, 2.00pm – WALK

Start at the Salcombe Hill National Trust CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 139 883), 2 miles, 2 hours.

“A Bluebell Walk”

A ‘stroll’ to Soldiers Hill and Combe Head Wood to view the display of bluebells that are usually at their best at this time of year. The walk may be extended if the bluebells disappoint and the walkers request it. **Note:** the path to the woods is quite steep with rough steps.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445665

Friday 6th May, 10:3am – WALK

Rendezvous at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999) at 9.20am to share cars.

Start: 10.30am at 33 Park Lane, Pinhoe, Exeter. EX4 9HL.(OS Explorer 114, SX 964 949). 10 miles, 5½ hours.

“Can you hear it?”

Within minutes we have escaped our semi-urban location and, at 105m high, look west over the City of Exeter to the Haldon Hills and Haytor. Travelling north we retain this height to enjoy splendid views across the Clyst Valley to Killerton. Down now, we make our way via Poltimore to Broadclyst Church to eat our picnic, or use The Red Lion next door. On to Killerton, over (or round!) the steep embankments of Dolberry Iron Age Hill Fort to complete a detour to Columbjohn Chapel beside the River Culme. Return to Killerton for afternoon tea, before an easy, level walk back to Broadclyst and short bus ride to Pinhoe. Bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Joyce Thomas, 01392 466767

Thursday 12th May, 10.00am – WALK

“A Visit to some of the Best of the Jurassic Coast”

Start at the Seaton Down picnic area (by Seaton Water Tower), (OS Explorer 115, SY 233 913) 8 miles approx.

A hilly walk along a route via Beer and Branscombe Mouth, returning along the coastal path to Seaton Hole. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Ted Swan 01395 567450

Wednesday 18th May, 10.00am - WALK

Start: Roadside parking in Gittisham Village, (OS Explorer 115, SY 134 984), 5½ miles, 3 hours.

“Under the Shadow of Westgate Hill”

A short, circular walk from Gittisham, around Shermans Farm to Fenny Bridge. Returning via Alfington to Gittisham. Route encompasses lanes, paths and farmland tracks. Sorry no dogs.

Walk Leader: Carole Steen 01392 873881

Wednesday 18th May, 7.30pm – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – see page 3

Saturday 21st May, 10.00am - WALK

Start at Sidbury CP, (OS Explorer 115 SY 139 918), 7 miles, 4 hours.

“Bluebells and Donkeys”

A lovely walk touching parts of the East Devon Way. Following footpaths, green lanes and hopefully Bluebell carpeted woodland glades. The walk starts towards Hatway Hill and passes through the Donkey Sanctuary towards Harcombe followed by a steep climb to the top of Buckton Hill and a sharp descent down into Sidbury hopefully in time for a well-earned drink in the Red Lion. There will be a stop for your picnic half way through the walk.

Walk Leader: Jan Stuart, 01395 568235

Wednesday 25th May, 10:30am - WALK

Meet at Newton Popleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088899) at 9:00am to share cars. Full details will be given on the website nearer the date.

Devon Coast to Coast - Stage IV - Holne to Dunstone Down

Start: Holne, crossroads in village centre (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 705 695), 7.5 miles. Finish: Dunstone Down, crossroads on southern end of Hamel Down (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 704 759)

Steep-sided river valleys and woodland, good tracks, paths and lanes. Please bring appropriate food and drink.

Walk Leaders: Mike Paddison 01395 446550, Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Monday 30th May, 10:00am – WALK

Start at Kentisbeare Village Hall (OS Explorer 115, SS 068 079) 5 miles, 3 hours

A new Walk for the OVA, you may be surprised"

A walk from Kentisbeare to Orway, Henland, Saint Hill, Hollis Green & back.

Walk Leader: Carole Steen 01392 873881

Wednesday 1st June, 11:00am - WALK

Meet at the Playing Field CP, Newton Poppleford (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9.15am to share cars for departure at 9.30am.

Exmoor and the Scenic Barle Valley

Start from the National Park's Ashcombe CP at Simonsbath (top level) – (OS Explorer OL9, SS 774 394) 11 miles.

The route will follow footpaths, tracks and open moorland high up on Exmoor in a figure of eight walk around Simonsbath and the scenic Barle Valley. Bring a picnic for our lunch stop by the river Barle. A cup of tea or something stronger will be on offer at a nearby pub at the end of the walk.

Walk Leader: Peter Paine 01404 815214

Monday 6th June, 10:30am - WALK

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9.00am to share cars. Further transport details will be given on the OVA website nearer the date.

Devon Coast to Coast - Stage V - Dunstone Down to Chagford Bridge

Start: Dunstone Down, crossroads on southern end of Hamel Down (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 704 759). Finish: Chagford Bridge (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 694 880) 9.5 miles

Open moorland, undulating field paths, and woodland tracks. Please bring appropriate food and drink

Walk Leaders: Mike Paddison 01395 446550, Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Wednesday 15th June, 10.30am. - WALK

Start: Hound Tor CP, (OS Explorer OL28, SX 739 791), 7.5 mile, 5hrs

"Grimspound by the Back Door"

A fairly strenuous walk that embraces all the best that Dartmoor has to offer. Ancient trackways through hidden valleys and lonely farmsteads, along with wild moorland with its antiquities and far ranging views – and lots of ups and downs. No dogs because of widespread stock grazing. No facilities during the walk!

Walk Leader: Chris Gooding 01395 265707

Wednesday 22nd June – 5.00am - East Devon Way - 24 Hour Challenge

The Challenge is to complete the 38 mile East Devon Way within 24 hours; however, members can join in by completing one or more of the stages - see Page 29. If you want to take part you must book by 30 April.

Walk Leaders Penny and Paul Kurowski 01395 742942/07792 619748

Saturday 25th June, 10:30am – WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999). 7 miles, 4 hours.

“Three Villages, Two Commons and a Hill”

A pretty, circular walk following green lanes, footpaths and bridleways, visiting Venn Ottery, Metcombe and North Hill; and returning Via Venn Ottery Common and Aylesbeare Common providing spectacular views over the Otter Valley towards East Hill. Please bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leader: Jan Stuart 01395 568235.

Wednesday 29th June, 10:30am - WALK

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9.00am to share cars. Further transport details will be given on the OVA website nearer the date.

Devon Coast to Coast - Stage VI - Chagford Bridge to Binneford Cross

Start: Chagford Bridge (OS Explorer OL 28, SX 694 880) 9 miles

Finish: Binneford Cross (OS Explorer 113, SX 758 972) NB. Also required, OS Explorer 113.

River gorge, rolling farmland and wooded valleys. Please bring appropriate food and drink.

Walk Leaders: Mike Paddison 01395 446550, Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Saturday 2nd July, 10.45am. – WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground car park.
(OS Explorer 115 SY 088 999). 10 miles, 5+ hours.

“In the footsteps of Samuel Taylor Coleridge”

Walking up the River Otter to Ottery St Mary, the home of Coleridge. Historic town walk followed by lunch at the Volunteer Inn, returning via White Cross. Easy start but more challenging uphill on the return leg.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568158

Tuesday 5 July, 6.30pm - WALK

Start: The Village CP, Newton Poppleford (OS Explorer 115, SY 085 896). 4 miles, 2 hours.

“A Summer Evening Stroll in the Otter Valley”

A comfortable country walk, circumnavigating the village, ending with an optional celebration at the pub. 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.

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Saturday 9th July, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Opposite the Puffing Billy Inn (01392 877888) in Exton (OS Explorer 110, SX 982 864). 5½ miles, 2½ hours.

“More Puff than Billy”

The walk starts opposite the Puffing Billy Inn in Exton, climbs up through the fields to Woodbury and descends using quiet lanes (hopefully without too many manic cyclists) to Ebford, and threads back along the estuary to the start.

A pub lunch is an option, but please order your food before the start of the walk.

Walk Leader: Bettina Wilson 01395 260599

Wednesday 13th July 2016, 10.00am. – WALK

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9am to share cars. Further transport details will be given on the OVA website nearer the date.

Devon Coast to Coast - Stage VII - Binneford Cross to Morchard Road

Start: Binneford Cross (OS Explorer 113, SX 758 972) 9 miles

Finish: Morchard Road, A377 south of village (OS Explorer 113, SS 756 043)

Rolling farmland and wooded valleys. Please bring appropriate food and drink.

Walk Leaders: Mike Paddison 01395 446 550, Chris Buckland 01395 444471

A timely reminder for dog walkers:

Please keep dogs on leads around livestock and do not stray from rights of way. When dogs are allowed to foul pasture this can put cattle at risk from the parasite Neospora caninum. Neospora can cause cows to abort their calves and local farmers lost animals last year. You can help by:

- *Ensuring dogs are on leads in the vicinity of livestock and between 1st March and the 31st July in nature reserves*
- *Always picking up and disposing of dog waste in designated dog poo bins or normal refuse collections.*

Thank you!

East Devon Way - 24 Hour Challenge

For those walkers who like a challenge, we are proposing to walk all 38 miles of the East Devon Way in under 24 hours. The walk starts in Exmouth and finishes in Lyme Regis, travelling through beautiful scenery en route. Find out more about it at www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk/index.php?page=east-devon-way or in the East Devon Way booklet.

The walk will start at 5.00am on 22nd June taking advantage of long daylight hours and allowing most people to arrive in Lyme Regis before the pubs close! This will be a supported walk. At the “Checkpoint” at the end of each stage, a vehicle and supporters will be waiting with refreshments, your spare kit, extra first aid and encouragement! You can attempt the full walk, or just some stages – travelling in the support vehicle for other stages if you wish. We will provide transport at Lyme Regis to return walkers to Exmouth if required.

We anticipate that walking at a pace of 2.5 miles per hour (excluding stops at checkpoints for which 20 minutes is allowed), you could expect to be at the checkpoints as per the table below. This pace is fairly average for OVA walks.

Stage	Miles	Arrive at Checkpoint
Exmouth to Woodbury Castle	7.5	8.00am
Woodbury Castle to Aylesbeare Common	4	10.00am
Aylesbeare Common to Sidbury	7.5	1.20pm
Sidbury to Farway (Money Acre Cross)	5.75	4.00pm
Farway (Money Acre Cross) to Colyton	5.5	6.30pm
Colyton to Lyme Regis	7.75	10.00pm

We now need confirmation from everyone who wants to take part in the supported challenge so that we can finalise the logistics and transport. We do have volunteers for driving the support vehicles, but more would be very welcome – you could walk some of the way and drive some of the way if you like.

To help with our planning please complete the form overleaf and **return it to us by 30th April 2016 so that we can book minibus(es).**

Response Form for East Devon Way (EDW) Challenge

To help us plan, please fill out the form below and return it **by 30th April 2016**. We will provide everyone who confirms they want to take part with a full information pack with details of checkpoints, what to bring with you, how to prepare etc. This should be available with by mid-May. For this supported walk there will be a small charge (no more than £10) to cover transport costs. We will advise the amount in the information pack. We will contact volunteer drivers separately.

Name	
Address	
Telephone number(s)	
Email	
	Please tick as appropriate
I wish to take part in the Challenge and attempt the complete route	
I wish to take part in the Challenge and walk certain stage(s) using the OVA transport provided for the remainder	
I volunteer to drive a support vehicle (must be over 25 and under 70 years to drive a minibus)	
My spouse/partner/friend is happy to drive a support vehicle	
I will need transport back from Lyme Regis to Exmouth	

Some people will want to join us for a stage or two, getting to and from the checkpoints under their own steam – there is no need to advise us if you plan to do this.

If you have any questions please contact pandp@kurowski.me.uk or 01395 742942

Please return the form to the walk leaders:

Penny and Paul Kurowski

Southernhay

Vicarage Road

East Budleigh

EX9 7EF



Wardens have been completing winter works on Bicton Common and Hawkerland, and preparations are underway for the return of livestock in the summer. Unfortunately, they have also been spending considerable time clearing regular fly-tipping, and picking up after dog owners who leave bagged dog waste piled on the ground in car parks (with Uphams car park being particularly bad). Owners are legally required to clear up after their dog, so please make the Commons pleasant for everyone, bag dog poo, and if there is no bin, take the waste home with you. The car parks are provided free of charge for all to enjoy. If the rubbish and dog excrement situation does not improve the Trust may reluctantly consider closing the worst car parks.

Kate Ponting

Forthcoming events on the Pebblebed Heaths:

Bat Emergence Walk - Thursday 19 May 8.45pm

Wheathills car park, East Budleigh common (SY 041 846)

An evening on East Budleigh Common with Sarah Butcher, licensed bat handler and member of the Devon Bat Group. Find out about these nocturnal mammals, learn how to use bat detectors to hear different species, and have the chance to see and hear Greater Horseshoe Bats. Enjoy a hot drink as we wait for Greater Horseshoe Bats to emerge at dusk. Please wear appropriate clothing/footwear and bring a torch. Age 14 or over please (similar child friendly bat event on 14 May).

Nightjar Safari - Thursday 16 June 9.00pm

Wheathills car park (SY 041 846)

The churring call of the Nightjar is one of the quintessential sounds of summer. Join staff of the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust on a search to see and hear this distinctive nocturnal bird on East Budleigh Common. Please wear appropriate clothing/footwear and bring a torch.

Limited places and booking required for all events. For more details kate.ponting@clintondevon.com or telephone 01395 443881

Annual Spring Litter-pick in the Otter Estuary

Some 50 or so volunteers braved quite cold conditions on Saturday 19th March to give the Otter estuary its annual spring clean. This event was organized by the OVA in cooperation with Clinton Devon Estates and EDDC. It is also supported by the charity “Beachclean” which provides the litter-picking implements to spare our ageing back muscles.



The range of objects that find their way into the mud of the estuary and the salt marshes never ceases to amaze. They always include a range of bottles, cans, tubes as well as cigarette lighters, footwear and, always, vehicle tyres. The prizes for ‘best finds’ this year were for a length of heavy rope (a hawser) that could only have come from an offshore ship; and a bright red child’s toy motorbike. Where did that come from? Off a bridge up the Otter or a yacht on the open sea? What happened to the child? The mind boggles.

Clearing up litter is important for aesthetic reasons but, in this case, the major concern is the rich bird life of the estuary. Plastic, in particular, is a killer and all volunteers are to be thanked for making the estuary a safer place for the birds who give us so much pleasure.

Dr Patrick Hamilton, Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee

Upstream Thinking on the Otter

Beavers are currently the ‘stars’, but they are not the only focus of improvements to water quality and wildlife habitats in the Otter valley. Devon Wildlife Trust and West Country Rivers Trust are working together in the Otter catchment as part of the South West Water-funded ‘Upstream Thinking’ approach to water resource

management. What does the Upstream Thinking project mean for the River Otter, its wildlife and the water abstracted in the catchment for homes and businesses? Drinking water from the Otter is abstracted by South West Water (SWW) via a series of boreholes in the lower catchment, before treatment at one of three Water Treatment Works. The catchment is an important water source for SWW - hence the Otter's selection as part of the 'Upstream Thinking' project.

'Upstream Thinking' takes a land management approach to solving the problems affecting the quality of water in our rivers. Unwanted soil, silt, pesticides and animal waste in rivers increase the cost of water treatment. They also have a negative impact on wildlife - from aquatic insects like mayflies and damselflies to the fish, birds and mammals higher up the food chain. By working with landowners, conservationists can make changes to how land is managed to keep unwanted material and chemicals out of rivers. Devon Wildlife Trust's Project Officer is David Rolls, who started work on the Otter in January and said "Much of the recent weeks have been spent visiting local farms and developing farm plans. It has been great working alongside Yog Watkins from West Country Rivers Trust, who has been working in the Otter catchment since 2009".

The main aim is to reduce the levels of nitrate in the water. Nitrate enters the water via fertiliser-enriched soil from farmland washing into the river after rain. Nitrate levels build up in the groundwater stored in aquifers which are important sources of the public water supply in East Devon.

David and Yog offer free services to landowners in the Otter catchment, including advisory farm visits, production of Integrated Farm Management Plans, assistance with application for 'Upstream Thinking' Capital Grants and Agri-environment funding and practical assistance with fertiliser spreader calibration. David explained: "We are helping landowners with reducing pesticide use, riverside fencing, prevention of run-off, soil management and habitat restoration. We offer free advice and help in applying to the new Countryside Stewardship scheme and can offer some capital grants for work".

Over the next four years, Upstream Thinking work on the Otter aims to reduce the need for expensive chemical filtration of drinking water, thus bringing down bills for consumers - and to improve both freshwater and farmland habitats for a wide range of wildlife.

A jam sandwich, whole-wheat and no crusts – the OVA visits the Donkey Sanctuary

On 15th March 14 OVA members gathered in the Events Barn for our ‘behind the scenes’ visit to the Donkey Sanctuary with Conservation Officer, Ruth Angell.

Elisabeth Svendsen started caring for neglected donkeys in 1969, but she moved to a much larger scale operation in 1974 when she was unexpectedly bequeathed 204 donkeys with the message “take as many as you can and the rest will be shot”. Since then the Sanctuary has given a home to over 15,000 donkeys, with 3,000 currently in their care. The Sanctuary also supports projects in 30 different countries for veterinary care or small projects that impact donkey welfare. We also heard that donkeys are friendly, can live for up to 50 years and find a friend and pair up for life.



After the background we were off to meet the farm manager at Trow Farm, a brief walk from the centre. He explained that the Sanctuary is self-sustaining, growing all the hay needed for the donkeys (stored as haylage, a drier version of silage and better suited to a donkeys dietary needs). The fields are swept frequently and all droppings removed to prevent potential parasite infections. After Trow Farm we walked past the enormous haylage store and a willow coppice. Ruth described the considerable work the Sanctuary does to encourage wildlife, including skylarks and Greater Horseshoe bats.

We finished in the hospital. The well-equipped centre has 7 full time vets to look after the residents, and it also provides free diagnostic services and advice to donkey owners throughout the UK. Whenever a donkey needs surgery, his or her friend has to come as well, so there is plenty of space in the operating area, and large windows in the theatre. The easiest way to get donkeys to take medication is via a jam sandwich, but they can be picky eaters, some preferring white bread and others refusing a sandwich with crusts! After an information packed explanation of donkey care we finished in the restaurant for lunch, hungry and impressed.

Roger Saunders

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

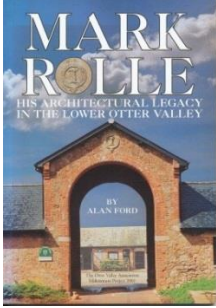
Assistant Minutes Secretary	Robert Wiltshire	444395
Membership Secretary	Clive Bowman membership@ova.org.uk	446892
Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

Other Contacts

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Publications: Visit www.ova.org.uk or for book sales, contact Andrew Beresford by phone on 01395 446543 or email booksales@ova.org.uk

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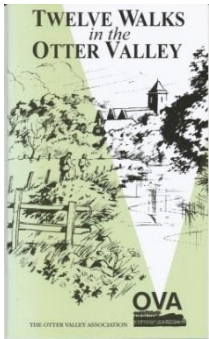


Mark Rolle

His Architectural Legacy in the Lower Otter Valley

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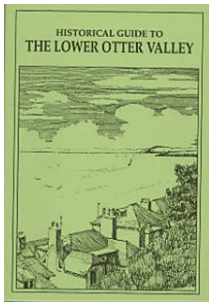
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



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 20th century.

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

Leaflets

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