



# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Winter 2023 Newsletter

[www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) © 2023

Reg. Charity No. 278266

OVA PO BOX 70  
Budleigh Salterton  
EX9 6WN

## **From the Editor:**

A very **Happy New Year!**

And thank you to the readers who have sent Letters and comments about issues raised in the last Newsletter. I hope that this interaction will continue, through the initiation of a "LORP Community Watch" (page 6), through observation and recording of the change and increase in diversity to wildlife that occur on the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) as the inter-tidal mudflats evolve.

This edition includes information about the 2020 – 2040 Local Plan, a selection of topics highlighted by CPRE and Devon Wildlife Trust and a special article by George Meniot, who recently delivered a Talk at the Literary Festival, about how recent archaeological study has revealed evidence, apparent on our local beach and cliffs at Otter Head, of the catastrophic effects of climate change 250m years ago.

Andrew Kingsnorth, *Vice-Chair, Interim Editor, Interim Events & Talks Organiser.* ([kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com](mailto:kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com))

## **Chairman's Musings**

The winter talk season started well. The first being about the 'River Otter Beavers'. The numerous other talks on this subject have been to celebrate their presence. This talk given by the Devon Wildlife Trust was much more informative and was able to give further information after the five years of study. This resultant report gave us such detail as their numbers, families, colonies and the effect that their presence has had on the landscape. The second talk concerned the historic 'Charting the Estuary of the River Exe'. This was well

attended and was of particular interest to me, having spent many hours in my previous life poring over charts. Please note charts NOT maps!



We should all be aware that the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) is continuing apace. With the addition of two bridges, one complete and the other under construction, the effected area is almost unrecognisable.

*Bridge over flooded waters – the new South Farm Road bridge. Ed*

It is apparently running to schedule and we expect to see completion by the end of next spring. Many people were dismayed at the whole project but the OVA, although regretting the requirement, felt that it was inevitable. It is better that it takes place in a managed way rather than the total unmanaged inundation of the valley and the ensuing question of who was going to pick up the pieces.

There is however one aspect of the project which is giving us great concern, which I brought to your attention in the last edition. When flooded this large expanse of water is expected to become a haven for birdlife, both resident and migratory. We have already seen evidence of this.

However with the proliferation of water sports such as wind surfing, paddle boarding and kayaking the area is likely to become a magnet for such recreational activities. I am told that a club promoting such , is already being organised.I have written to numerous organisations and individuals warning them of the possible effect that this will have

on wildlife and hoping that legislation can be introduced to prevent it taking place. Sadly it is not simple and Clinton Devon Estates (the owners of the land) and Natural England are trying to find a solution.

Another fear that I have and this has no reflection on LORP. It is intended that the river will in future be allowed to follow any natural route that it desires. Presently when the valley floods it bursts through the bank just north of Clamour Bridge. I understand that there are no plans to reinstate the footpath if it becomes impassable.

I am pleased to report to you that our Built Environment sub Committee , after a period of dormancy has been resurrected under the leadership of Dee Woods, a retired Planning Officer. She has a good back-up team. Welcome Dee to the Executive Committee.

Finally, I have to finish on an less welcome note. Everything is increasing in price, with the exception I read of orange juice. Even the OVA is feeling the effects. Although our finances are healthy at the moment, they are starting to experience a decline. Lowering membership numbers, hire of halls, newsletter costs will all have to result in an increase in our annual subscriptions. This will be our first increase since 2015. A single membership subscription is not sufficient to cover the cost of the newsletter and often the cost of postage when this is necessary. More details elsewhere in this edition. I think that you have to agree that even with the increased subscription , the OVA offers good value for money and we carry out a very valuable role in society. Read our ethos on the OVA website.

It only remains to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year.

*Bob Wiltshire. Chairman*

## Quiberville



The small coastal town of Quiberville (population 500) lies at the mouth (Basse) of the Saâne river, in Normandy.

The Basse-Saâne 2050 and the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) are jointly-funded projects, “Adapting to Climate Change” affecting coastal areas. The change is being achieved by establishing inter-tidal mudflats in the lower river valleys of the Saâne and the Otter. The substantial engineering work taking place will prevent the consequences of rising sea levels and coastal erosion, caused by the increased intensity of storms and tidal surge – and will increase biodiversity by restoring the natural estuarine environment.



The infrastructure at risk in Quiberville is a caravan park (in Budleigh Salterton it is the cricket field and South Farm Road).

Centuries of estuarine management of the Saône have limited outflow from a meandering river in a broad valley. The consequences of this man-made environment is periodic flooding and potential demolition of fragile sea-flood defences on the coast.



Outflow of the Saône river via a small culvert under the coast road.

Quiberville is dependent on tourism based on the caravan/campsite. The site has 100 touring pitches and 100 permanent pitches. Relocating the campsite is complex, but the construction of a 70 metre bridge in the carriageway of the new South Farm road in the LORP, is the most challenging engineering task of the two projects.



The Town Hall

The town centre, with traditional pavement cafes, is situated alongside a small, sheltered mooring for fishing boats.



Out on the sea front, beach huts stretch for a short distance and in the distance the bay is flanked by steep, chalk cliffs.

The current municipal campsite will be dismantled and a new tourist facility will be built nearby on higher ground, which will take over from the current campsite in the summer of 2023. Meanwhile, an archaeological survey is taking place to exclude “promising remains”.

A new waste-water treatment plant is being built, where a henhouse, two connected beehives, three insect hotels, five to ten birdhouses, three hedgehog shelters, two squirrel shelters, two bat shelters and four toad and frog shelters will be installed. A visitor platform will allow educational tours for school children.

*The Editor.....read on....*

### **LORP Community Watch**

Six partners are involved in the PACCo project: Environment Agency, the Pebblebed Heaths Trust/Clinton Devon Estates [CDE] and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs [Defra] (UK);

Communauté de Communes Terroire de Caux, Commune de Quiberville and Conservatoire du Littoral (France).

A number of these groups (CDE, Commune de Quiberville and Conservatoire du Littoral) have already established links in order to monitor the evolving habitat of the estuarine environments. The OVA has been unable to join these groups, therefore as an alternative we are encouraging environmentally conscious members of our Association to play their part in observing the Lower Otter Valley over the next decade by contributing to a *Community Watch*.

You can do this by sending photos (“a picture is worth a thousand words”) with a caption or short message, to *the Editor* ([kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com](mailto:kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com)). The subjects may include the landscape, marine life, birds, insects, flora – and almost anything else of interest.



*Mistle Thrush. Photo: David White*

The Kier Autumn LORP Update noted: “during the 2022 breeding season a multitude of species successfully bred and fledged young, including mistle thrush and spotted flycatcher, both species have been absent in recent years.





*Spotted Flycatcher. Photo: David White*

Newly constructed bird islands, topped off with pebbles are likely to attract nesting plovers. Little Ringed Plovers have spent the summer in the Lower Otter.



*Little Ringed Plover. Photo: David White*

This schedule 1 species is not known to have stayed for so long in this area before and it is believed to have favoured this area due to the changes in habitat being undertaken as part of the LORP.”



Erosion of the footpath between White Bridge and Otterton Mill will be allowed to follow its natural course.



*Impatiens glandulifera* on the LORP. Policeman's helmet, also known as **jewelweed** or **Himalayan balsam**, thrives in moist areas and riparian zones. This native is an invasive noxious weed.

Bring back the “Himalayan Balsam Bashers”?

*The Editor*

## **Fossil fuel burning once caused a mass extinction;**

### **Now we're risking another**

The Devon coastline reveals that 250m years ago, the Earth was in a near-lifeless state for five million years.

Budleigh Salterton, sits above the most frightening cliffs on Earth. They are not particularly high. Though you don't want to stand beneath them, they are not especially prone to collapse. The horror takes another form. It is contained in the story they tell. For they capture the moment at which life on Earth almost came to an end.

The sediments preserved in these cliffs were laid down in the early Triassic period, just after the greatest mass extinction in the history of multicellular life that brought the Permian period to an end 252m years ago. Around 90% of species died, and fish and four-footed animals were more or less exterminated between 30 degrees north of the equator and 40 degrees south.

Most remarkably, while biological abundance (if not diversity) tends to recover from mass extinctions within a few hundred thousand years, our planet remained in this near-lifeless state for the following 5m years. In studying these cliffs, you see the precipice on which we teeter, in the present day.



*Bed of rounded pebbles at West end of Budleigh beach. Ed*

The lowest stratum at the western end of the beach is a bed of rounded pebbles. These are the stones washed off Triassic mountains by flash floods and deposited in great dumps by temporary rivers. Because the forests and savannahs that might have covered the mountains had died, there was nothing to hold the soil and subsoil together, so erosion is likely to have accelerated greatly.

At the top of the pebble bed is a stony desert surface. The pebbles here have been sculpted by the wind into sharp angles and varnished with shiny oxides, suggesting the surface was unchanged for a long time. Above it are towering red Triassic sand dunes. Through a quirk of erosion, these soft deposits have been sculpted into hollows that look uncannily like fanged and screaming skulls.

We now know that there were two main pulses of extinction. The first, which began 252.1m years ago, mostly affected life on land. It coincided with a series of massive volcanic eruptions in the region now known as the Siberian Traps. The second, more devastating phase, started about 200,000 years later. It almost completed the

extinction of terrestrial life, as well as wiping out the great majority of species in the sea.

Though we cannot yet be sure, the first phase might have been triggered by acid rain, ozone depletion and metal pollution caused by volcanic chemicals. As rainforests and other ecosystems were wiped out, more toxic compounds were released from exposed soils and rocks, creating an escalating cycle of collapse.

The second phase appears to have been driven by global heating. By 251.9m years ago, so much solidified rock had accumulated on the surface of the Siberian Traps that the lava could no longer escape. Instead, it was forced to spread underground, along horizontal fissures, into rocks that were rich in coal and other hydrocarbons. The heat from the magma (underground lava) cooked the hydrocarbons, releasing vast amounts of carbon dioxide and methane. In other words, though there were no humans on the planet, this disaster seems to have been caused by fossil fuel burning.

Temperatures are believed to have climbed by between 8°C and 10°C, though much of the second phase of extinction might have been caused by an initial rise of between 3°C and 5°C. The extra carbon dioxide also dissolved into the oceans, raising their acidity to the point at which many species could no longer survive. The temperature rise appears to have brought ocean currents to a halt, through the same mechanism that now threatens the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation, which drives the Gulf Stream. As wildfires raged across the planet, incinerating the vegetation protecting its surface, ash and soil would have poured into the sea, triggering eutrophication (an excess of nutrients). In combination with the high temperatures and stalled circulation, this starved the remaining life forms of oxygen.

Recovery took so long because so many of the world's rich ecosystems had been replaced by desert, plants struggled to re-establish themselves. Their total weight on Earth fell by about two thirds. Throughout these 5m years, no coal deposits formed, as there wasn't sufficient plant production to make peat bogs. In other words, the natural processes that remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and turn it into wood and soil or bury it as fossil carbon stalled. For 5m years, the world was trapped in this hothouse state. In the cliffs at the eastern end of the bay, you can see when conditions began, at last, to change, as the fossilised roots of semi-desert plants twist down through the ancient sand dunes.



*Cliff erosion at Otter Head. Ed*

The story the cliffs tell is of planetary tipping points: Earth systems pushed past their critical thresholds, beyond which they collapsed into a new equilibrium state, that could not be readily reversed. It was a world hostile to almost all large life forms: the monsters of the Permian were replaced nearly everywhere by dwarf fauna.

Could it happen again? Two parallel and contradictory processes are in play. At climate summits, governments produce voluntary commitments to limit the production of greenhouse gases. At the same time, almost every state with significant fossil reserves – including the UK – intends to extract as much as they can. A report by Carbon Tracker shows that if all the world’s reserves of fossil fields were extracted, their combustion would exceed the carbon budget governments have agreed sevenfold. While less carbon is contained in these reserves than the amount produced during the Permian-Triassic extinction, the compressed timescale could render this release just as deadly to life on Earth. The increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> at the end of the Permian took about 75,000 years, but many of our fossil fuel reserves could be consumed in decades.

Already we seem to be approaching a series of tipping points, some of which could trigger cascading collapse. Everything now hangs on which process prevails: attempts to limit the burning of fossil carbon, or the determination – often on the part of the same governments – to extract (and therefore burn) as much of it as possible, granting the profits of legacy industries precedence over life on Earth. At the climate summit in November in Egypt, we saw how close to the cliff edge the world’s governments intend to take us.

***George Monbiot***

Reproduce with permission of the author ([www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com)) and *The Guardian Unlimited*. Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd. First published 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022. [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)

## **The Emerging New East Devon Local Plan 2020 – 2040**

This document is being prepared by East Devon District Council to replace the existing Local Plan 2013 – 2031. The process takes several years to complete, before it can be adopted for use.

A Consultation Draft has been published recently and is available online, and in local libraries. The District Council is seeking feedback from residents and businesses via an online feedback form. The closing date for this is Sunday 15 January 2023.

The Local Plan is part of the statutory Development Plan, and has to align with National Planning Policy Framework. Neighbourhood Plans also form part of the Development Plan, which guides the future development of an area.

The vision is for better homes and communities; a greener East Devon and a resilient and prosperous economy.

There are 11 objectives concerning tackling the climate emergency; meeting future housing needs; supporting jobs and the economy; healthier lifestyles; supporting sustainable villages; preserving our outstanding built heritage and natural environment; promoting sustainable transport; securing infrastructure; high quality design; and vibrant town centres.

The Local Plan comprises strategic policies to achieve these objectives, and detailed development policies to guide the determination of future planning applications.



It also has to take account of the future housing requirements set for the District by Central Government. The target is around 20,000 new dwellings over this 20 year period, so about 1000 new houses to be built every year.

The Spatial Strategy is concerned with establishing an overarching picture of the amounts, types and distribution of future development. That is how much development should occur and where it should be located. Development will be focussed on the western side of the District, including a new town and large development close to Exeter. This is because almost two thirds of the District is covered by two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Significant development will be focussed on Exmouth, and Axminster and the main towns. Smaller towns, (Tier 3) such as Budleigh Salterton, will support development that meets local needs. The larger service villages, (Tier 4) such as East Budleigh, Newton Poppleford and Otterton, will have limited development to meet local needs.

As part of this process, the District Council called for landowners to submit sites for housing and employment development (HELAA). Full information about this process is provided in the Evidence Base and Supporting Documents, which are separate appendices to the Plan. The Local Plan determines which sites are most suitable to meet those requirements. Some initial assessments have been made of these sites. Not all sites are suitable for development due to various constraints such as flooding or access etc.

The current proposed housing numbers are set out below:

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Completions and commitments</b>	<b>Total New Housing</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Exmouth	923	1033	1956
Budleigh Salterton	95	152	247
East Budleigh	9	0	9
Newton Poppleford	21	0	21
Otterton	17	23	40

This table had been extracted from the table on pages 17/18 of the Consultation Draft. Completions and commitments are those dwellings built or granted planning permission in the 2020-2022 period.

Members are encouraged to look in detail at the emerging Local Plan Consultation Draft, and its appendices, and to submit their feedback directly to East Devon District Council either online, by email or in writing.

*Dee Woods (Built Environment)*

## Beaver news

Matt Holden from Devon Wildlife Trust at his Talk to the Association in October, gave us a glimpse of things to come in the Otter Valley. At their Enclosed Beaver Project in west Devon, a recent survey reported ecological changes in the abundance and diversity of wildlife made by beaver activity.



*River Otter beaver with kit. Photo: David White*

This included: from seven to twelve species of dragonfly and damselfly (including the scarce small red damselfly); from 15 breeding birds species in 2011 to 27 eight years later, with swallows feeding and mating on site, more sightings of willow tit and grasshopper warbler and a larger number of blackcap and willow warbler territories; and increased diversity of water beetle species, from eight recorded soon after the beavers' introduction to a staggering 42 different species in 2020.

You can find more about the impacts beavers are having by reading the full Devon Beavers report at [devonwildlifetrust.org/research-and-evidence-beaver-re-introduction](https://devonwildlifetrust.org/research-and-evidence-beaver-re-introduction)

## CPRE's "Help for Hedgerows"

CPRE is increasing England's hedgerows by 40% by 2050, through a replanting and restoration initiatives around the country. This year CPRE has secured funding for seven "hedgerow heroes" projects in Lancashire, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Avon and Bristol, Suffolk and Hampshire.

Between them, these projects will plant 11km of hedgerows in areas ranging from inner-city green spaces to farmers' fields and restoring 6km of degraded hedgerow through coppicing or hedgelaying, and seek to reduce the intensive management of hedgerows across many more kilometres, encouraging hedges to thrive and support more wildlife.



*Hedge-planting along the footpath by River Otter between Otter Mill and White Bridge. Hedge replacement is a part of the LORP project. Ed*

Much of this work will be done by volunteers, with training courses on hedgelaying and planting, along with hedgerow survey work, talks, walks and workshops. Involvement with schools is encouraged, while CPRE groups will also be working with parish and local councils to improve the management of their hedges.

Coming soon to a hedge-less area near us – time to start lobbying?

*The Editor*

## **Devon Wildlife Trust *Wildlife Gardens Award***

The wildlife in your garden could earn you a DWT plaque. The Devon Wildlife Trust Wildlife Garden Award began life as an Exeter initiative but thanks to DWT's Wilder Communities team, the scheme now covers gardens across the county. There are 15 million gardens in the UK totalling an area greater than all our National Nature Reserves put together, so what you do in your garden really matters.



*Two hornets on an ivy flower*

*Photo; David White*

Whether you have a large garden or a small balcony our outside spaces can provide vital stepping-stones for wildlife across the landscape. To find out how you can qualify for the Wildlife Garden Award visit [www.devonwildlifetrust.org/wildlife-garden-award](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/wildlife-garden-award).

## Winter Talks Programme

Refreshments will be available from 7:00PM

**Date: Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February**    **Time: 7:00 for 7:30PM**

Venue: Budleigh Salterton, Masonic Hall, 1 West Hill, **EX9 6BW**

Speaker: Maggie Davidson

Title of Talk: *What do we really know about the local Iron Age Hillforts?*

### Brief Summary of Talk

: There are a number of Iron Age Hillforts in the local area including Sidbury Castle, Hembury, Dumpdon, Woodbury Castle and Blackbury Camp. Further afield and over the border in Dorset are the larger and more imposing structures of Maiden Castle and Hambledon Hill. They were all built around 2,500 years ago and have been investigated and theorised about by antiquarians and archaeologists over the past 300 years. This talk will examine how the different types of archaeological investigations and analysis of finds have informed, and in some cases transformed, our understanding of the purpose, construction and use of these sites.

### Brief biography of Speaker

Maggie Davidson set up the Lyme Regis U3A Archaeology Group back in summer 2020 and the group has been researching and visiting local Iron Age Hillforts over the past two years. Maggie has a passion for prehistoric and landscape archaeology, a diploma in Archaeology and has taken part in a number of archaeological excavations and

other investigations in the UK and Bolivia. In a previous existence, Maggie worked as a statistician and social researcher leading projects investigating housing policy and the links between poor housing and poor health.

**Date: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March**

**Time: 7:00 for 7:30PM**

Venue: Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton.

Speaker: David White

Title of Talk: *LORP 's changing habitat & it's possible changes to bird life in the Lower Otter Valley*

#### Brief Summary of Talk

This talk is about the birds on or near the Lower Otter estuary. It includes some of the common & scarce birds which are residents, over winter with us or pass through on passage migration. The Lower Otter Restoration project has created major changes to this habitat. Some of the new species which may take advantage of these new habitats when the project has matured are also included.

#### Brief biography of Speaker

David grew up in the countryside of the Cotswolds where he developed his life long interest in the natural world.. He retired to East Devon over 10 years ago& spends many hours photographing the local wildlife.

## **Walk Programme: January / February / March 2023**

Please refer to the OVA website [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) for any additional walks or updates to the programme. Due to publishing deadlines the website will always have the most up-to-date information.

### **Wednesday 4 January – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 3 hours.**

*'Beside the Exe'*. Meet: Exmouth, at the junction of Halsdon Avenue and Mudbank Lane, parking in either road (OS 115, SY 300 821).

### **Tuesday 10 January – 9.30am – 9.5 miles. 5 hours plus lunch**

*'Circumnavigation of Bulverton Hill via Harpford and Peak Hill'* Meet: Otterton Green (OS115, SY 081 852)

### **Tuesday 17 January – 10.00am – 8.5 miles. About 4 hours.**

*'New routes around Newton Poppleford?'*. Meet: Layby off the A3052 near the Bowd public house. (OS 115, SY 104 898)

**Saturday 21 January – 10.00am – 5 miles. 2.5 hours.** *'No Beer on Aylesbeare'*. Meet: Parking free at Joneys Cross car park (EX10 0BL), on A3052 opposite RSPB Aylesbeare Reserve. (OS 115, SY 057 897)



**Thursday 26 January – 10.00am 6.5 miles. 3 hours.**

Booking required. '*Colmer's Hill and Thornecombe Beacon*'. Meet: Symondsburry Estate parking area (OS 116, SY 4456 9376).

**Friday 3 February – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 3 hours.**

Booking required. '*Straight to the Point*'. Meet: Budleigh Salterton Public Hall. (OS 115, SY 061 820)

**Saturday 11 February – 10.00am – 8.5 miles. 4.5 hours**

'*Around the Commons*'. Meet: Joney's Cross car park at 10am (OS115, SY 057 897)

**Thursday 16 February – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 3 hours.**

'*A Round of Brandy*'. Meet: The Green Fore St, Otterton, parking in nearby roads (OS 115, SY 081 852)

**Friday 24 February – 9.24am train from Exmouth. 5 miles.**

About 3 hours including stops. Booking required. "*A Green-ish walk with City Views*". Meet: Exmouth Station.

**Tuesday 28 February - 5 miles. 2.5 hours**

'*Easing the Spring*'. Meet: Dalditch Farm (OS115, SY 047 835)

**Tuesday 7 March – 10.00am – driving + walking 6.5 miles.**

*'Hillforts Explorer*. Meet: Newton Poppleford Playing Field car park (OS115, SY 088 899) to share cars.

**Wednesday 15 March – 10:00a.m – Walk – 5.5 miles. 3 hours.**

*'Salcombe Hill Circular'*. Meet: Salcombe Hill NT CP (OS 115, SY139 882)

**Thursday 23 March – 10.00am – circa 6 miles. 3.5 hours**

*'A mid Devon walk from Bickleigh Mill*. Meet: Bickleigh Mill car park, EX16 8RG (OS 114, GR 938 074).

*Jane Connick Walk Programme Co-ordinator*

+++++

### **Walk Report**

Tuesday, 18th October “Odcombe and Ham Hill” with Iain Ure

On a lovely misty morning, 12 members travelled into South Somerset to meet up at Odcombe Village, near Montacute. We set off along leafy footpaths and tracks across fields on an uphill leg-stretcher towards Ham Hill and its massive earthworks, where we had a coffee stop. Then we crossed the top of the hill, part of Hamdon Hill Country Park, past quarries and car parks, to a large

stone war memorial, which is visible from far and wide and the A303. Ham Hill is a very impressive iron age hill fort, one of the biggest in England. Fortunately, it was a warm sunny day and the views from it were superb, and we were able to pick out distant hills and Glastonbury Tor.



From there we followed woodland paths to St Michael's Hill, on top of which is a stone tower folly. A very steep, slippery descent took us down towards Montacute, and we stopped for lunch in a pleasant field, and were invaded by an "aggregation" of ladybirds, which were flying all around.



It was such a lovely warm Autumn day, and a real joy to be wandering about in the delightful rolling hills and Ham Stone villages of Somerset. Many thanks to Iain for finding this interesting walk.

*Dee Woods*

## **Tuesday, 29th November “A Jaunt from East Budleigh to**

### **Budleigh beach and back” with Paul & Penny Kurowski**

Fourteen people and two dogs assembled in East Budleigh car park on a sunny morning. We set off down the High Street to take Tidwell Lane towards Kersbrook, the old railway line. past the Croquet Club, down a footpath to the seafront.

On the way along the seafront, a lady collapsed from a bench in front of the Longboat Café and Alison leapt into action (aided by instruction gained on a recent First Aid course). After helping the old lady onto a chair, and an ambulance had been called, Alison was able to return to the walk. We met David White who gave us a list of interesting birds to see. We stopped to look at the large machines at work by the old cricket pitch in preparation for the 70m bridge for the South West Coast footpath to span a large breach (see photo).



Walking along the main footpath we saw Green Sandpiper, Teal and Widgeon We went along South Farm Road to join the new Little Otter path, then along Big Bank back to the river to highlight where the Budleigh Brook aqueduct had been and what had happened to the Brook. We returned to East Budleigh and the Sir Walter Raleigh pub.

*Paul Kurowski*

### **Letters and Emails from our members**

Dear Andrew,

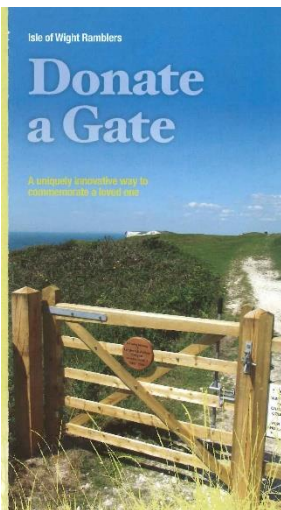
I would like to add my voice on the matter of stiles.

My parents (now deceased) were both members of the OVA and very keen walkers. My father sadly developed osteoarthritis and straight away a lot of walks were barred to him because he could no longer climb the stiles. This affected their walking when they went on holiday or for a day out, too. Sometimes they might be lucky enough to start out on a walk but then had to turn round if they encountered a stile. I used to feel so sorry for them.

Whilst I am very much for preserving the countryside I do feel it is the least we can do to let go of anything that hinders those already struggling, from not being able to enjoy what we, in many ways, take for granted. What do we do then? We should also consider the farmers who are working so hard to feed us and for whom, some are finding everything too much and are committing suicide. I'm sorry if that sounds over dramatic but I have heard on various occasions that this is the case. Like yourself, I would prefer wooden gates to metal ones but I imagine metal ones may be more cost effective in the long term. Self closing wooden gates are to be welcomed both in terms of

ensuring the safety of livestock and in helping any walker who doesn't have great strength: have you ever battled with a gate that needs lifting in order to close it?

On one of our holidays we came across beautiful wooden gates that had been paid for by a scheme set up by the Isle of Wight Ramblers' and Island Council rights of way department and with support from the National Trust.



This ***Donate-a-Gate*** scheme is an opportunity for members of the public to set up a memorial that will provide practical ease of access for fellow walkers for years to come - just as we have benches on the sea front at Budleigh.

Since there's now hardly a space for another bench, perhaps Donate-a-Gate could be a new way to remember loved ones. There was nothing depressing about them. They were beautiful gates.

With kind regards *Tricia Critchley*

*Ed's note:* The IOW scheme aims to provide stretches of footpath wholly converted to gates. A donation of £460 finances a gate incorporating an oak plaque.

Dear Andrew

I read with interest your article about Metal Field Gates in the OVA Autumn newsletter.

I agree that a peaceful walk in the countryside is now disturbed by the squealing of the gate hinges on the opening and the harsh clang of the gate shutting. I realise that the metal gates will probably last longer than the wooden ones but it's a shame that environmental aesthetics have not been considered.

Maybe the manufacturers can be persuaded to fit an opening catch made of rubber that can be replaced easily and the fitters of the gates could give the hinges a good greasing. I have taken a grease gun on several walks to use on the hinges with long lasting results.

Regards *Christine Hadley*

+++++

Dear Sir,

May I make some - somewhat rambling - comments about the article on the decline of insects in the Autumn Newsletter. Near the beginning it is said that the loss has been gradual over 50 years or so. No doubt that was true a few years ago, however although our garden is very insect-friendly, having many nectar-rich plants, ponds and 'wild' areas with shelter, we see a significant reduction in the larger insect numbers every year, and there are now very few. This is not a gradual loss - it is catastrophically fast. I think we are unable to attract many insects to the garden because there is no longer a reservoir of insects 'out there' able to take advantage of our efforts.

As well as the reasons given in the article, another likely (major?) cause is the annual severe cutting of the hedges in the surrounding fields, on both sides and top. This kills all insects on or near the surface, destroys the fruit and much of the seed. All of these are winter food for birds, of course.

I would take issue with the inclusion of wasps among the nuisance and pest insects; wasps are invaluable predators of genuine pests, along with the ladybirds and lacewings mentioned.



Wasps normally only interfere with us during later summer, when their stored food supply runs out and their breeding is completed. Then they can usually be attracted away by providing something sweet in a convenient place.

*Wasp feeding on ivy flower. Photo: David White*

Finally, you the OVA might help with some sort of publicity campaign, especially aimed at landowners, extolling the advantages of less frequent hedge cutting?

Yours sincerely *Brian Evans*



## **New Membership Rates**

The OVA last increased their membership rates in 2015. Since that time, as with everything else, inflation has taken its toll on our finances. The OVA now have to increase the membership rates to £10.00 for an individual and £15.00 for joint/household members from 1 April 2023.

It would greatly help us if you could amend your payment to the OVA prior to 1st April. If you use online banking it should be a simple matter to update the amount of your payment.

If you don't use online banking you will need to complete a standing order for the new payment, using your membership number (on the address label on the back of this newsletter) as the reference. The form must be signed and returned to the OVA, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN or sent to your bank. Please note the banks' require an original signature.

A standing order form can be found here:

<https://www.ova.org.uk/sites/default/files/common/OVA%20Standing%20Order%20Form.pdf>

Another small way in which you can help us, if you haven't already done so, is to complete a Gift Aid declaration to allow the OVA to claim back the tax you have paid on your membership payment if you are a UK taxpayer.

A Gift Aid declaration form can be found here:

<https://www.ova.org.uk/ova-gift-aid> **Thank You**