



**The Otter Valley Association
TRUSTEES' REPORT
for the year ended 31 March 2018**

Aims

The Otter Valley Association was established in 1979 as a civic amenity society covering the civil parishes of Budleigh Salterton, East Budleigh with Bicton, Otterton, Colaton Raleigh, Newton Poppleford and Harpford with Venn Ottery.

Its principal aims are:

- To promote high standards of planning and architecture
- To educate the public in local geography, history, natural history and architecture
- To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest
- To conserve, protect and restore natural features of ecological or scientific importance.

Organisation

The OVA's activities are governed by a written Constitution, which sets out its objects and regulations. It is registered with the Charity Commission, and is subject to the legislation applicable to charities, in particular The Charities Act 2011.

A copy of the Constitution is always available on request and can be downloaded from our website www.ova.org.uk.

Management

The management and administration of the OVA is carried out by the Executive Committee, which this year met ten times. This Committee normally consists of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, and up to twelve other members of the Association. Members of the Executive Committee, all of whom are Charity Trustees, are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. They include representatives from each parish.

The names of those who served as Trustees during the year under review are listed elsewhere in this report. Much of the OVA's work has been carried out by sub committees or individuals who report to the EC but the Constitution makes it clear that the Executive Committee is responsible for all the decisions made on behalf of the Association.

Trustees Report of Activities for 2017~18

Chairman's Introduction

I would like to thank the many volunteers who keep the OVA running. During my time as Chairman our volunteers have written, edited and delivered thousands of newsletters, organised and led thousands of miles of walks, pulled up millions of Himalayan Balsam plants, bagged tons of litter from the Otter Estuary, organized talks, responded to planning issues affecting our membership area, maintained the membership database and the website and managed our finances. Clearly, without these efforts the OVA would rapidly grind to a halt and our natural environment would be in much worse condition.

There have been some changes in personnel in the last 12 months. As mentioned in my last newsletter report, Peter and Wendy Youngworth have taken over as newsletter distributors. We also managed to fill the long-standing vacancy for Otterton Village Rep with Geoff and Pat Porter. Most of the Executive Committee has agreed to stand again at the AGM, with the exception of me. I will definitely be standing down this time. It has been an honour and a highly rewarding experience to be Chairman with the support of a dedicated and hardworking committee, but I think the OVA will benefit from a new leader.

There are still a few gaps in the Executive Committee, we need a village representative for Colaton Raleigh and would love to have an Events organizer. Can you help? If so please get in touch.

The OVA ran a wide range of activities for our membership last year – fuller details are given under the various headings following this Introduction. A full programme of walks, both local and further afield, has been organized by our walks team. We have held a varied and well supported talks programme - with talks on the local Beavers and East Devon water resources particularly well attended. The Executive Committee agreed to donate the profits from the beaver talk (almost £200) to the Devon Wildlife Trust.

The Natural Environment Committee (NEC) has continued the fight against Himalayan Balsam, with considerable success on the targeted tributaries. The 2017 litter pick was well attended with volunteers and supported by Clinton Devon Estates, East Devon District Council and the AONB.

If you are interested in being a part of the NEC please contact us through the OVA web site (info@ova.org.uk).

On the events side, in December we held a well-attended Christmas Party at Woodbury Park. There are several new events planned for the next few months. The Pebblebed Trust have kindly agreed to provide a walk and talk about Woodbury Common and Woodbury Castle in May and we also plan to hold a skittles evening in Woodbury.

Planning issues have continued to occupy our time, and especially that of Planning Chairperson Nicola Daniel. Sometimes progress can seem to be slow, we still are waiting for the District Council to act on the Heritage Asset List we sent them almost two years ago, despite our best efforts to move things along. While I reported last year that Blackhill Quarry was closing there is now an application to keep part of the site as a heavy engineering facility. On the positive side most of our local area is either protected by Neighbourhood Plans, or working towards completing them.

Membership numbers are showing a slow but steady increase, we now have about 800 members. Both the website (www.ova.org.uk) and our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/OtterValleyAssoc) supplement the newsletter in providing information to the membership and a wider audience.

Overall, I believe the OVA is well positioned for the future, and I hope that my successor enjoys leading the organization as much as I have.

Roger Saunders

Planning

This year has seen the adoption of the East Budleigh and the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plans. This involved a great deal of effort and it is hoped that they will make a positive contribution to their respective village and town.

The Local Heritage Assets List we hope will finally start on its way to adoption, but we fear progress will be very slow. Correspondence from your Executive Committee to the East Devon District Council Chief Executive and then to Councillors have finally achieved this after nearly 2 years.

continued

The other planning application, although not strictly in our area, which will affect a lot of people is that of the expansion of a heavy metal industrial unit at Blackhill Quarry. This has met with much opposition with 192 objections on the EDDC website.

It is a worrying trend that the people of East Devon are applying more and more often for retrospective and amended planning applications.

Nicola Daniel

Natural Environment

The **Himalayan Balsam** Project again constituted by far and away the most time-consuming activity of the year, our sixth year attempting to control this invasive species along the Colaton Raleigh tributary of the Otter. It was a good year. Long stretches above the village are now so clear that it is a waste of time having four people walk the riverbanks. On the other hand, near the hamlet of Stowford, there are still areas where at least half a dozen are needed to fan out and scour the area. Ironically, success means that the same area has to be covered but the plants are few and far between and have to be carefully sought out, especially since each can pack some 800 seeds in their explosive pods.

On the opening day of the 2017 season the OVA team joined forces with Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) at Yettington to tackle the top end of the Budleigh Brook that flows on down to East Budleigh village. It felt like a time warp. As in 2012 in Stowford Woods the density of white stems was so great that they formed a continuous wall with no soil visible.

Again there were some downsides in our campaign. As in 2016, the appearance of new "hotspots" and, in one case, the re-appearance of an old one, caused frustration. The former were usually the result of the movement of farm machinery. CDE are hoping to set up a reporting system to allow prompt action. One large hotspot re-appeared in the brook by the adventure playground in the village which had formerly been controlled by a local resident. We have high hopes that its elimination will result in a great improvement in the stretch from the village down past the church to the flood plain. The aim, as always, is to exert such control over the Colaton Brook that we will create time to help teams in neighbouring valleys. We managed this only once in 2017, helping the Tipton St John team at Fluxton. More should be possible in 2018. *continued overleaf*

Natural Environment – continued

We did have one excellent result in 2017. Following pleas at the AGM and in the Newsletter the number of active volunteers jumped from the depressing low of just 11 in 2016 to 25. Thank you so much! One of the great pleasures of participation in the HB project is that of meeting new people and developing new friendships. Of course the need is still there, so if anyone reading this report fancies some fresh air, modest exertion and a good social experience all in a great cause, please volunteer!

Finally, an unexpected development during the year, following a feature on Gardeners' World about a Rust (*Puccinia*, a type of fungus) that can inhibit the vigour of HB, David Hatch, on behalf of the OVA, contacted CABI (Centre for Agricultural and Biosciences International) with a request that the Otter valley might be considered as a candidate site for their release programme in 2018/19. Seeds from four locations on the Otter banks have been sent for screening and we await the outcome of tests to see if the particular biotypes of HB prevalent here would prove susceptible to rust infection. Could this be the long-term solution to the appalling infestation levels on the Otter flood plain?

On Friday 9th February 2018 Dr Sam Bridgewater (CDE) chaired the annual review meeting of all stakeholders in the HB programme.

The Three Pines Project is an NEC initiative to supplement the iconic hilltop pine trees near Budleigh Salterton, which are ageing, with new plantings this Spring. Work to fence off an area started in March and the OVA received offers of help from the tenant farmer, Tom Pyne. At the time of writing planting of 5 pine saplings is set for 17th April 2018.

The Annual Spring Litter-Pick was held on Saturday 25th March 2017 and was repeated in 2018 on Saturday 31st March. The environmental damage caused by plastic has featured prominently recently which gives added importance to this annual event. The tracts of salt marsh and mudflats in the estuary below White Bridge, are populated throughout the year by some of our favourite birds (redshanks, dunlin, curlew, lapwing, egrets etc) and it is great that so many volunteers are happy to give up a Saturday morning to ensure that the plastic threat to their lives is eliminated.

Patrick Hamilton

Walking with the OVA 2017-2018 review

Our long distance walk this year, the East Devon Way, was walked in a more leisurely style than the year before, ie over several days rather than all on the one day, and was enjoyed by all those who took part.

We were asked by Vision Hotels in Teignmouth if we would lead and give some local information to the attendees. Three walks were ably led by Dee, Penny and Geoff Porter and despite some atrocious weather, the feedback was excellent and the guide dogs enjoyed their freedom as they were allowed to be let off their harnesses.

Our themed walks are always popular and this year we had two bluebell walks, a Jane Austen themed walk, a bird spotting walk and a fungi foray led by Dr Mark Ramsdale of Exeter University.

Chris and Iain hope that some of us are better able to navigate with a compass after letting us loose on Mutters Moor and Dartmoor. We have walked some of our local favourites in the Otter Valley and local Commons, we have walked all around Exeter on the Green Circle, around Otterton on the boundary walk and further afield in Branscombe, Exmoor, Dartmoor and Castle Drogo, not forgetting our pre-Christmas mince pie walk with a warm welcome tipple on the side.

Last April started with a drought but this winter has been particularly wet, especially in March, so we are hopeful that the outlook improves, the puddles dry up and we can get out into our much-loved countryside.

Heather Fereday, Stella French, Penny Kurowski, Paul Kurowski
and Jon Roseway

Policy on Reserves

The OVA aims to build up sufficient reserves:

1. to meet occasional shortfalls arising from its regular activity
2. to be responsive to local needs and opportunities as they arise
3. to fund worthwhile projects up to £10,000 from time to time.

Risk management

The major risks to which the Association is exposed are reviewed on a regular basis. Policies and controls have been established to mitigate those risks. These include appropriate property and public liability insurance. In addition, all payments over £100 are countersigned by two Trustees, one of whom is normally the Hon. Treasurer.

2017-18 Membership Report

Membership has steadily increased again throughout the year, ending at over 800. But as always at this time of year, we also lose a few. Our biggest loss is always from those who move out of the area, and feel they must leave the OVA. Yet over 185 of members live outside of the Otter Valley, and 41 outside of East Devon, some of whom either come here on holiday regularly and want to know what events/walks/talks the OVA has arranged, or to just keep up-to-date with the community they were once part of.

This year we have also started recording where our new members come from, whether via the website, or the colourful 'Welcome' leaflet. From walks, talks, publicity around the valley, friends or neighbours, even our Facebook presence. This will help the Executive Committee decide how best to publicise the OVA, and how to maximise those opportunities going forward into the future.

Clive Bowman, Membership Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Subscriptions, our main source of income, were up by 6% on last year. The other major contributors were Gift Aid and takings from our Talks programme, with smaller additions to our earnings coming from book sales, donations and bank interest. Cash in the bank was bolstered by the recovery of several past years' Gift Aid.

The newsletter is, as always, by far the largest expenditure and fortunately its cost together with most other items have seen little change compared with the previous year. Three additional significant outlays were made this year; transport costs for schoolchildren to visit the Pebblebed Heaths, donations to local organisations whose objectives complement ours, and First Aid training for walk leaders.

Assets at the close of the financial year stand at £22,837 which includes a reserve fund of £12,426 held in an interest-bearing account.

I would like to thank Brian Leveridge for his assistance in preparing these accounts and ensuring that everything is in order.

Jon Roseway, Hon Treasurer

Otter Valley Association ~ Registered Charity No: 278266 Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2018

	2018 £	2017 £
Incoming Resources		
Subscriptions	3838	3592
Donations and Grants	110	35
Surplus on talks	485	89
Surplus on events	-35	-242
Surplus on book sales	163	191
Gift Aid	639	680
Interest	62	107
	<u>5262</u>	<u>4452</u>
Resources Expended		
Newsletters	2178	2257
Affiliation fees	100	100
Insurance	286	285
Website maintenance	360	390
AGM	171	34
Donations	635	0
Administration	425	488
Book stock reserve	0	500
Schools Transport	570	0
First Aid training	320	0
	<u>5045</u>	<u>4054</u>
Net Surplus/Deficit for Year	217	398
General Fund		
Balance at start of year	<u>22620</u>	<u>22222</u>
Balance at end of year	<u>22837</u>	<u>22620</u>

Otter Valley Association Registered Charity No: 278266

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2018

	2018 £	2017 £
Current Assets		
Stock of books	401	468
Debtors & prepayments	1036	2180
Cash at bank	<u>21,472</u>	<u>20,085</u>
	<u>22,909</u>	<u>22,733</u>
Current Liabilities		
Creditors & accruals	<u>72</u>	<u>113</u>
Net Assets	<u>22,837</u>	<u>22,620</u>
Represented by:		
General Fund (Unrestricted)	<u>22,837</u>	<u>22,620</u>

Notes:

1. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis under the historical cost convention.
2. The stock of books is recorded at the lower of cost or realisable values.
3. No remuneration has been paid to any Trustee during the year.

Approved by the Committee on 24th April, 2018
and signed on their behalf by:



Jon Roseway, Hon Treasurer

**Independent Examiner's Report
to the Trustees of The Otter Valley Association
Charity No: 278266**

I report on the accounts of the Otter Valley Association for the year ended 31 March 2018.

Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is required.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

Independent Examiner's Statement

in connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act; have not been met or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

BE Leveridge C.A.



44 Honey Park Road
Budleigh Salterton
EX9 6EG

14th April 2018

Reference and administrative information

Name of Charity: Otter Valley Association
Correspondence address: PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN
Registered Charity No: 278266
Independent Examiner: Brian Leveridge, 44 Honey Park Road,
Budleigh Salterton EX9 6EG
Bankers: Lloyds Bank Plc, online account
Scottish Widows Bank Plc, Edinburgh

Trustees

The following people served as Trustees during the year:

Roger Saunders	Acting Chairman
Haylor Lass	Vice Chairman and Newton Poppleford
Penny Kurowski	Hon. Secretary
Jon Roseway	Hon. Treasurer and East Budleigh
Clive Bowman	Membership Secretary
Patrick Hamilton	Acting Natural Environment
Nicola Daniel	Planning
David Daniel	History
Robert Wiltshire	Assistant Minutes Secretary
George Maddaford	Budleigh Salterton
Pat & Geoff Porter	Otterton
<i>vacancy</i>	Colaton Raleigh
<i>vacancy</i>	Events

Other Committee Members:

Jacqui Baldwin	Newsletter Editor
Geoff Lake	Talks Organiser

This Trustees Report was approved by the acting chairman
on 3rd May 2018
for publication at the Annual General Meeting and on the website.



OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the 38th Annual General Meeting
held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10th May 2017
at East Budleigh Village Hall

1. Apologies: George Maddaford, Michael and Anthea Downes.
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 18th May 2016 were signed as a true reflection of that meeting.
3. Matters arising: None
4. Annual Report including Trustees Report and Accounts

The Chairman thanked the Executive Committee for their support, with special thanks to Trevor Waddington who was standing down after years of service.

The Chairman also thanked Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison who were now standing down after managing the walks programme for the OVA since 2013. In the last year, they organised an amazing 85 walks, with 859 walkers covering 634 miles. He welcomed the new walks team, including Heather Fereday who manages the programme and Penny Kurowski who will liaise with the Executive Committee.

The Chairman also noted that Andrew Beresford was standing down from the book sales role, and asked for a replacement. He thanked Andrew and the many other volunteers, including Jacqui Baldwin for editing the newsletter, the newsletter distributors, Geoff Lake for organising the talks, the environmental volunteers, and those who managed the membership and website. However more volunteers are needed including an Events Organiser, members for the Natural Environment Committee, and village representatives for Colaton Raleigh and Otterton.

The Chairman said that he had completed his three years as Chairman and, as no-one had volunteered to take on the role of Chairman, he would take the role of Acting Chairman, because with no Chairman the OVA would be in breach of its constitution and could not continue to function. He asked that members think whether they could persuade someone to take on the role.

In the last year, the OVA has been closely involved in the development of the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plan. This is an important document which should help control how Budleigh Salterton develops. The OVA is also involved in the Lower Otter Restoration Project and is a member of both the Stakeholder Group and the Technical Steering Group.

The Natural Environment Committee has been active and has continued to grapple successfully with the invasive Himalayan Balsam. They also organised the annual litter pick in the Otter Estuary which was well supported.

The OVA continues to provide funding for school trips to the Pebblebed Heaths and continues its collaboration with various other local organisations such as the AONB.

There have not been many events this year, due to the lack of an events organiser, and the Chairman encouraged members to submit ideas for events which the Executive Committee could follow up. There are plans for a fungus foray and a members' party later in the year.

In conclusion, the OVA is in good shape financially, with a strong Executive Committee and stable membership, but more volunteers are needed.

The Honorary Treasurer thanked Brian Leveridge for his assistance in preparing the accounts. The last financial year was uneventful and showed that the membership fee can support the ongoing costs. The OVA has £10,000 over and above the reserve of £12,000, so there is funding available to be spent.

In response to questions, the Honorary Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Chairman explained that the drop in membership following the change to Lloyds Bank was due to the loss of "sleeping members" with long-standing standing orders, and overall the membership had reduced by 25%. Over 100 members had been "lost" due to a husband/wife who had died. The Chairman confirmed that the Executive Committee knew that switching banks was a risk, but at the same time there had been an increase in membership fees.

Regarding plans for increasing membership numbers, the OVA will have stalls at appropriate public events. Haylor Lass emphasised that members are the best recruiters.

5. Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members

The Chairman asked the Honorary Secretary to report on nominations received for Officers and members of the Executive Committee; these were: Vice Chairman – Haylor Lass; Honorary Treasurer – Jon Roseway; Honorary Secretary – Penny Kurowski; Planning Chairman – Nicola Daniel; History Chairman – David Daniel; Natural Environment Chairman – Patrick Hamilton; Membership Secretary – Clive Bowman; Budleigh Salterton Representative – George Maddaford; Talks – Geoff Lake; Bob Wiltshire; and Jacqui Baldwin. All these had been nominated and seconded. Jon Roseway will also act as East Budleigh Representative, and Haylor Lass as Newton Popleford Representative. As there were no other nominations, the appointments were confirmed. Roger Saunders will remain on the Executive Committee as Acting Chairman.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner.

The Chairman asked members to agree to the reappointment of Mr Brian Leveridge as the Independent Auditor. This was proposed by Clive Bowman and seconded by Haylor Lass.

7. Any Other Business – None.

8. Date of next AGM Tuesday 8th May 2018 at Otterton Village Hall.

**The 39th Annual General Meeting
of the Otter Valley Association
Tuesday 8th May 2018
Otterton Village Hall**

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 10 May 2017
3. Matters arising
4. Annual Report including Trustees Report and Accounts
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Executive Committee Members
7. Appointment of Independent Examiner
8. Any Other Business
9. Date of next AGM ~ proposed Thursday 9th May 2019
at Newton Poppleford Playing Fields Pavilion.

The formal business will be followed by refreshments and presentation by Sam Bridgewater, Conservation Manager, Clinton Devon Estates about their 'Space for Nature' initiative.