



**The Otter Valley Association
TRUSTEES' REPORT
for the year ended 31 March 2020**

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 (EC), which during the 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. The Committee includes 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 2019~2020

Chairman's Introduction

As always, as Chair, I have to thank all the members who over the year have devoted their time and efforts to keep the Association thriving: be they attending meetings, taking part in surveys, giving their valuable advice or stepping out to brave the elements to pluck the balsam, lead the walks, for which the OVA is famous, or simply taking part in the numerous activities in which we become involved. Thank you, to you all.

This year we are sorry to see three committee members stepping down. David Daniel has been with us and working the history section since 2005. I am pleased to say that he will continue to run the OVAPEDIA which has been in existence since 2011. Nicola Daniel is also leaving us. Since joining the committee in 2008 she has held a multitude of offices. Events, social, chair and finally heading our Planning Committee. Both David and Nicola have put so much valuable work into our organisation to make the OVA what it is today. We also see David Hatch stand down as chair of the Environmental Committee. With Patrick Hamilton, he has been particularly active on our balsam eradication campaign. He has shown great dedication in that he has driven down from Exeter for all the activities that he has attended. We are now pleased to welcome Chris Hodgson to take his place. We will hear more about him in a subsequent newsletter.

This last year we have been approached to financially support the setting up of a wildlife sanctuary at the St Peter's Cemetery, Budleigh Salterton. We were able to support this initiative. We have also continued to support Clinton Devon Estates in its educational programme to encourage local primary schools to develop a love of nature. We have done this by contributing to the cost of their transport to the Pebblebed Heathlands and local farms. We are willing to look at other relevant projects which may require financial backing.

We ourselves have been the recipients of two grants this year. Both from the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Sustainable Development Fund. This fund administers monies from DEFRA, Devon County Council and East Devon District Council.

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Chairman's Introduction, *continued*

We were funded for a workshop to train volunteers to compile Heritage Asset lists for all the communities within our region. We also had a grant to set up fencing around the 'Clump' in Otterton Park, where we renewed the planting of pine saplings.

We have joined a national organisation called Civic Voice as associate members. This body promotes civic pride and celebrates and protects the places in which we live. Their aims are as ours are and we felt that we should support them.

Elsewhere in this Trustees' Report you will find contributions from the various parts of our association and you will see that despite recent events it has been a busy year of activities in which so many of our members have taken part. The walking group have covered a phenomenal number of miles despite adverse weather and the virus. Our financial position remains healthy thanks to the diligent stewardship of the Hon Treasurer. The Christmas Party, although slightly down on numbers was deemed to have been a success. Following a drastic drop in membership numbers following the change of banking arrangements, we are slowly climbing back up again and there will be no talk of a waiting list. Thanks to the Membership Secretary and all those who have encouraged new members. The Environment Committee have recorded a busy year of activities, despite some inevitable cancellations. The Planning Committee has experienced frustration caused by the occasional non-compliance of planning permissions.

Finally I would like to thank the Executive Committee for the support and encouragement that they have given to me during this last year, particularly during this rather difficult period. To use a much used word, this has been an unprecedented end to our year, but we can only look forward to a brighter future.

Bob Wiltshire

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.

Natural Environment

Himalayan Balsam (HB). We have reached the satisfactory stage in our campaign to eliminate HB from the lower Otter river valley and its tributaries where we have been successful in reducing HB abundance to the point where there was insufficient HB in much of the valley to keep a dozen volunteers fully occupied for a whole morning session.

We, therefore, needed to take on a second target area and the hope was that Bicton College would agree that, along with Clinton Devon Estates (CDE), we might tackle the worrying increase in infestation on their land. Sadly, this did not happen. However, in early June, CDE invited us to take on the Knowle Brook which runs from Squabmoor reservoir past Dalditch Farm and on down to Knowle village and Budleigh. This has provided an ample challenge to our team and good progress has been made to eradicate HB from this difficult terrain. A fuller report of our experiences will be posted, as usual, in Patrick Hamilton's annual assessment on the website. Suffice it to say, at this stage, the challenge of taking on a second valley has been successfully met, thanks in part, to the welcome addition of eight enthusiastic new volunteers to our team. The Colaton Raleigh brook still shows signs of life, with a couple of completely new "hotspots" appearing, but it remains under control. At the same time, the team has made a huge impact on the Knowle Brook, parts of which were very seriously affected, notably in the Dalditch Plantation.

Scots pines. (off Park Lane near the BS estuary) which we attempted to reinforce in 2018 with five saplings to replace the ageing mature trees, unfortunately did not survive. A re-planting with 15 new saplings were installed by a small group of volunteers who cleared brambles to prepare the ground and the whole area has now been fenced to protect them. Planting the trees during spring was far from ideal; they would ideally have gone in last autumn. The weather has been dry since they were planted, so not all are expected to survive. Some daily walks are taken to water them from a supply provided by Jim Pyne (Farmer).

Heath week. Mr and Mrs Porter manned the OVA gazebo on behalf of the NEC on the opening day and Dr Patrick Hamilton took over at lunchtime. A beautiful day with some new recruits signed up.

EDDC AONB meetings and conferences: The Chairman (who sits on this committee) and NEC representatives have attended these events.

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Stantyway Organic Farm (Otterton): The OVA paid for a natural history information board which stands outside the farm coffee stop in co-operation with Sam Walker (farmer) to provide local information to visitors and walkers. It displays current information on insects, mainly butterflies on one side and David White's photographs of birds and animals on the other. We hope to develop this further with perhaps, a second board to add information about local wildflowers.

Lambing Sunday. The OVA attended this on a very cold, windy day.

Harebells The project to re-introduce harebells into the Jubilee Meadow (BS) sown in 2018/9 have not, so far, made an appearance, but we will inspect the site this summer to evaluate the need for future sowings.

ELMS project: The Environmental Land Management Scheme. We were represented at this Partnership of local Wildlife and Natural History groups to provide input to the trials that CDE will be undertaking, the results of which will inform the Government of how the EU Farm subsidy schemes can be re-directed to preserving the countryside and delivering Ecosystem benefits. The OVA's priorities were: soil conservation and particularly concerns about run-off from maize cropping and the impact of heavy agricultural traffic on country lanes; hedgerow management; increasing wildlife habitat; support for farmland birds e.g. over-wintering stubble and reduction in the use of pesticides.

LORP: NEC represented at these meetings, along with Haylor Lass for the EC. Particular concerns expressed on the impact on traffic, parking and footfall in Otterton (up-river of the scheme).

Dr D J Hatch, Chairman, Natural Environment Committee, OVA

Planning

The Otter Valley Association's main concerns with planning matters has been that of several approved planning applications being built and not conforming to the approved plans with resulting major alterations. Like all local planning authorities, East Devon District Council has suffered a shortage of money and enforcement has been the department to have suffered.

This has resulted in policies in Neighbourhood Plans and the EDDC Local Plan being ignored and bypassed. In particular trees have been lost and the AONB, the World Heritage Site and Conservation Areas harmed.

Nicola Daniel

Walking with the OVA, 2019-2020 review

In the 12 months ended 31/3/20, 644 walkers have undertaken a total of 61 walks covering a total of 4,299 miles with an average of 10.6 attendees per walk. This is a drop since last year. Three walks were cancelled due to extreme weather forecasts, and another three due to Covid 19. However, many walks have seen over 20 walkers which is very encouraging, especially as some of these are new walkers who then continue to walk with us.

We have a great team of volunteer walk leaders who respond to the quarterly calls for walks to fill the programme. A mixture of repeating old favourites and developing new walks makes sure we can offer a varied programme, and it is great to have some new leaders too. In all cases, there is much work done before the walk itself: checking transport details and reconnoitring the route beforehand, sometimes more than once, to check paths, gates, potential hazards and so on. Even so, sometimes floods or bad weather intervene and our walk leaders “think on their feet” to re-route on the day. A huge thank you from the Walk Team to all our walk leaders for all the time and effort they put into their roles.

In summer 2019, our long-distance staged walk was the River Otter Source to Mouth. We started at Otter Head near Churchinford and 4 stages took us to Otter Mouth where we enjoyed a glass of fizz. It was heartening that 11 people completed all 4 stages, and 38 different people joined at least one. As usual our programmes have covered the local commons, Dartmoor, West Dorset, the coast path and of course the many familiar routes of our own Lower Otter Valley. Amongst our “themed” walks were an enjoyable exploration of the Sidmouth Tree Trail, and a visit to Hogchester Farm on National Meadows Day.

We are sad that, due to Covid 19, we have had to cancel our walks for the time being, but we are looking forward to starting up again as soon as it is permitted.

Penny Kurowski and the Walk Team,
Stella French, Heather Fereday, Paul Kurowski and Jon Roseway

Membership Report

There is always a drop in membership numbers after the start of April, when those members who have cancelled their membership or stopped their standing orders are no longer counted. 2019 started with 41 fewer members, which with a high proportion of members being over the age of 70yrs, it's not surprising we lose a few each year. Recruiting campaigns by EC members at events helped bring the numbers back up, as did the efforts of our walk leaders and those organising talks,

This year we have started identifying the sources of new members, so we can see which recruiting efforts are most successful. Though not able to always identify a single source for that new membership, the highest identifiable source has been friends adding 29 new members, followed by events adding 17 new members, walk and talk leaders added another 5, the total number of new members was 80. So membership numbers still grow every year, we end the 2019-2020 membership year with 892 members.

The 2020-2021 membership year is likely to see a change in membership numbers again, as we cope with the Covid-19 Coronavirus, which has resulted in our walks and talks being cancelled during the first part of the year – plus the events where members man our display stand and recruit new members. The OVA walk calendar will be published on the website and in the newsletters when the Government starts lifting restrictions, the talks program is ready for the Autumn - Winter period.

So I would like to ask all members to think about helping recruit when you are talking to family and friends during this first lockdown period, encouraging them to try a walk or talk when lockdown is lifted and think about joining to support the work of the OVA going forward.

Clive Bowman, Membership Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Income for the year was slightly down on the previous year. This is due to a lower surplus when fewer members attended the Christmas Party this year. However, membership subscriptions, always our main source of income, increased slightly as we continue to attract new members, whilst retaining the existing membership. Other income arose from the successful talks programme and the sale of publications. During the year the OVA engaged in the East Budleigh Heritage Pilot Project for which funding of over £3,000 was obtained from the Sustainable Development Fund administered by the AONB and a further £500 from the Norman Family Charitable Trust to cover the costs. The AONB's Sustainable Development Fund also contributed with a grant of over £400 to the fencing around the trees on The Clump; the OVA paying the balance of £241. A further grant of £100 was received from Budleigh Salterton Town Council for the OVA's work on clearing Himalayan balsam.

Expenditure was slightly less than the previous year. The newsletter, as always, is our largest expense: it is our main means of communication with the membership. We made payments to schools for transport to the Pebblebed Heaths. We also made a contribution to the wildlife sanctuary in St Peter's graveyard, replaced a memorial tree outside East Budleigh church hall and provided fencing and additional trees at the Clump above Clamour Bridge.

Assets at the close of the financial year stand at £23,634 which includes a reserve fund of £12,543 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.

Martin Smith, Treasurer

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.

Otter Valley Association ~ Registered Charity No: 278266

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
Incoming Resources		
Membership	4262	3913
Donations	25	0
Surplus on Talks	261	460
Surplus on Events	64	358
Surplus on Publications	67	406
Gift Aid	750	747
Interest	47	70
	<u>5476</u>	<u>5954</u>
Resources Expended		
Newsletters	2620	2394
Affiliation fees	125	75
Insurance	336	336
Website maintenance	300	390
AGM	0	33
Donations	0	125
Administration	626	697
Schools Transport	600	0
First Aid Training	12	0
Promotional Goods	0	543
Otterton Church display boards	0	829
Himalayan Balsam Leaflets	0	99
Other minor payments	0	75
St Peter's wildlife sanctuary	100	0
East Budleigh Hall memorial tree	77	0
The Clump fencing & trees	241	0
	<u>5037</u>	<u>5596</u>
Net Surplus/Deficit for Year	439	358
General Fund		
Balance at start of year	<u>23195</u>	<u>22837</u>
Balance at end of year	<u>23634</u>	<u>23195</u>

Otter Valley Association Registered Charity No: 278266

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
Current Assets		
Stock of books	142	274
Debtors & prepayments	1562	532
Cash at bank	<u>22,551</u>	<u>22,518</u>
	<u>24,209</u>	<u>23,324</u>
 Current Liabilities		
Creditors & accruals	<u>575</u>	<u>129</u>
 Net Assets	<u>23,634</u>	<u>23,195</u>
 Represented by:		
 General Fund (Unrestricted)	<u>23,634</u>	<u>23,195</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 (electronically) by the Committee on 24th April, 2020
and signed on their behalf by:



Martin Smith, Hon Treasurer

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

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Otter Valley Association for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Otter Valley Association you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Otter Valley Association as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the forms and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signature



Date

21st April 2020.

B E Leveridge C.A.

44 Honey Park Road
Budleigh Salterton
EX9 6EG

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
Virgin Money plc, Newcastle upon Tyne

Trustees

The following people served as Trustees during the year:

Bob Wiltshire	Chairman
Haylor Lass	Vice Chairman and Newton Poppleford
Roger Saunders	Hon. Secretary
Martin Smith	Hon. Treasurer
Jacqui Baldwin	Newsletter Editor
Peter Baldwin	Talks Organiser
Clive Bowman	Membership Secretary
Nicola Daniel	Planning
David Daniel	History
David Hatch	Natural Environment
George Maddaford	Budleigh Salterton
Pat & Geoff Porter	Otterton
Jon Roseway	East Budleigh

There are vacancies for an Events organiser and a Colaton Raleigh Parish Representative

Membership

As of March 2020 there were 245 single and 319 joint memberships, accounting for a total of 892 people.

This Trustees Report was approved by the chairman
on Monday 29th June 2020
for publication on request and on the website.

Addendum

(matters for members in 2020, not part of the formal report for the year ending 31st March 2020)

From the Chairman

Well, the Pandemic continues and we all watch it with great anxiety although we are advised that there is light at the end of the tunnel. However, due to the uncertainty surrounding the time scale, the Executive Committee have decided that this year's AGM should be cancelled. However the Trustee's Report has still been compiled and following its approval by the EC you will find it on our website under 'About us'. The accounts have been completed and verified by the Independent Examiner, Brian Leveridge. They have been submitted to the Charities Commission as are required. The Minutes of the last AGM have been agreed as a true reflection of the meeting. The appointment sheet for positions in the Association has been prepared and the EC is authorised by our General Rules to make up to three appointees between AGMs as necessary.

From the Secretary

Minutes of the Virtual Executive Committee Meeting - held by email May 13/14 2020

Present: Bob Wiltshire, Chairman, Jacqui Baldwin, Peter Baldwin, Clive Bowman, David Daniel, Nicky Daniel, David Hatch, Haylor Lass, George Maddaford, Geoff Porter, Pat Porter, Jon Roseway, Roger Saunders, Martin Smith.

Annual General Meeting

- **Proposal** – The OVA Annual General Meeting to be cancelled for 2020 due to circumstances beyond our control (Corona virus epidemic). Members confirmation of the Executive Committee actions to be postponed until the next AGM in May 2021.
- **Result:** In Favour – 13, Opposed 0, Abstain 1

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Executive Committee Membership

- The committee were informed that David Daniel (Local History and Website) Nicky Daniel (Planning Chair) and David Hatch (Natural Environment Chair) were standing down from the Executive Committee effective at the date of the cancelled OVA AGM (13 May 2020) having completed their term in office. Chris Hodgson has agreed to replace David Hatch as NEC Chair. David Daniel has agreed to continue to manage Ovapedia.
- **Proposal** -That the EC approves membership of the new EC as in the attached document (Committee remains the same with the exception of changes noted above)
- **Result:** In Favour – 14, Opposed 0, Abstain 0

Annual Accounts

- **Proposal** - That the EC approves the Annual Accounts (as previously circulated) for inclusion in the Annual Report
- **Result** In Favour – 13, Opposed 0, Abstain 1

From the Natural Environment chair

Litterpick.

Unfortunately cancelled due to Corovid 19 restrictions on what would have been perfect weather conditions. The substantial heavy rains this winter and spring had washed a great deal of litter down the tributaries and into the Otter river, estuary and sea, so very frustrating not to have been able to deal with it.