

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

PO Box 70 Budleigh Salterton EX9 6WN
www.ova.org.uk



Summer Edition

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cover picture: Looe to Polperro Walk, see page 26

Chairman's Message



At the end of April the OVA found itself in the situation that many organisations find themselves in when the chairman, vice-chairman and secretary came to the end of their tenure at the same time. Within the Executive Committee the experienced members held active positions and the newer members did not feel that they could allow their names to go forward at that time to fill these posts. No nominations from the general membership were forthcoming either. To resolve this situation three longstanding members of the committee agreed to take on these additional roles – myself as acting chairman, Haylor Lass as acting vice-chairman and David Daniel as acting secretary.

As far as you, the members, are concerned you should see little change in the newsletter, walks, talks, website development and events. We will continue to discuss planning matters of significance within the Executive Committee. Committee members can draw on their wide-ranging experience and local knowledge of the setting to emphasize the importance of recognising that the Lower Otter Valley lies in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with its coastline forming part of the World Heritage Site.

We do, however, need new blood on the Executive Committee, so please come and see how we work to begin with and then we do have a process of co-option. We also need volunteers in many capacities. We have approximately 70 members who help the OVA in some role, be it big or small; the walks leaders, the distributors, talks organiser, technical equipment organiser, events organisers, web-site monitor, newsletter editor, wild life monitors, village representatives, Christmas Dinner organiser – etc. etc. With natural wastage we have a continual need to replace.

And of course the members to co-ordinate and organise all these activities. We are looking for succession planning. eg. Gill Speare, after many years, has given notice that she will give up her co-ordination of the newsletter distribution next year. Ideally we would like someone to work alongside her now to learn the ropes. The cost of posting the newsletters to all would be prohibitive. The newsletter editor is producing it in an acting capacity and would dearly love a replacement.

continued overleaf

We also have nobody to distribute our posters in Colaton Raleigh. Please do not wait to be asked, please come forward.

David Lindsey-Halls has spent a lot of time focusing on forming active working parties to improve the local environment. We had such a tremendous turn-out for the Litter Pick so we hope some of you think about helping on other working parties as well.

With over a 1000 members we cannot know each of your individual strengths, interests and skills. But the OVA needs you. Please volunteer to do something. Our phone numbers are at the back of the newsletter.

Finally, the views of the membership were sought in a recent newsletter about the need for membership cards. No response was forthcoming so the Executive Committee has decided to stop their issue this year. All details of our activities can be found in the newsletter and the website.

Nicola Daniel

From the Events Committee

Normally in the summer our special events wind down, but this year there is an exception with Bettina Wilson leading a series of walks exploring the River Otter from source to sea. These are proving extremely popular so please consult your last newsletter for details and contact numbers as the buses only hold a finite number of people. (See also p 30) John Jones has also arranged some interesting summer walks for us in the valley. In July we also have another Met. Office visit which Caroline Allen has arranged for those remaining on the waiting list from the last visit.



With the start of autumn Lizzie Everett-Wright has arranged a Compass and Map Reading Day on Dartmoor with Tony Burgess, and to continue the Dartmoor theme the Bowmans will take a coach party with Tony leading a walk on the Moor late in September.

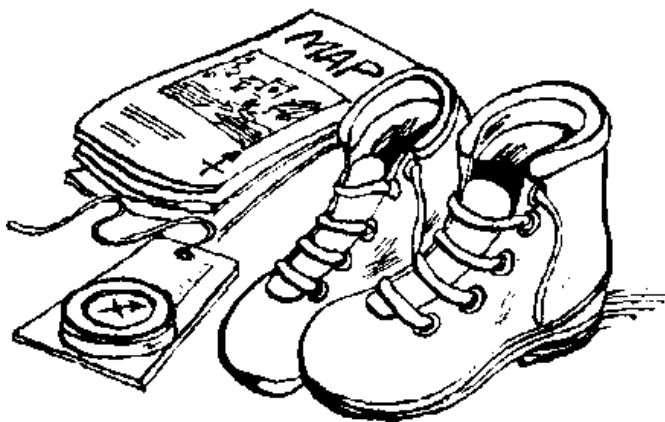
For those of you with an interest in fossils Rosemary Jerrard has booked a fossil walk at Lyme Regis; if this proves as popular as I think it will be she will repeat the walk next spring.

With the onset of winter what could be nicer than a cream tea at Combe House and to end the year with a Christmas Dinner at the East Devon Golf Club on the 15th December?

Compass & Map Reading Course on Dartmoor , Saturday 10th September

On Saturday 10th September, Tony Burgess will lead us on a Compass and Map Reading Day, based at the High Moorland Visitor Centre in Princetown. The course aims to teach basic navigation and procedures needed to safely enjoy the countryside. It will cover the use of an OS map using a Silva type compass to find your way around; how to take and walk on a compass bearing; planning routes by recognising land forms from maps, and making a simple route card. Compasses and maps are provided, but you may wish to bring your own.

The morning, commencing at about 10.00am, will be spent in the classroom at the Centre. Then, after a break of about half an hour for lunch, we shall walk onto the Moor with Tony, to practice what we have just learned.



The Course is limited to 12 people only, so this will mean own transport – hopefully car sharing, so using 3 or 4 cars, and allowing about one and a half hours to get there. The cost of the Course is £10 per person. The Centre will provide refreshments in the morning, but participants need to bring a picnic lunch. Waterproofs and sturdy shoes are recommended! The course will finish at about 4.00pm.

Applications will be opened on Wednesday 20th July. If over-subscribed, there will be a reserve list in case there are sufficient numbers to warrant another date.

Please respond using the form on pages 15/16 of this newsletter.

Lizzie Everett-Wright

Tel. 01395 446633

Dartmoor Layers of History Adventure

Friday 30th September

We shall have an historical theme for our next adventure to *they foreign parts* with Tony Burgess. We shall see how settlements from prehistorical times have been overlayed by human activities spanning the two and a half thousand years since. Bus departs Budleigh Salt. Public Hall at **8.00am**



Weather permitting, we shall be splitting the day into two parts based around Grimspound and Bellever. Each part will cover a distance of 3 to 4 miles. Weather not permitting, we shall take little bites of history, with lots of short stops. Please bring a picnic lunch. The cost of this coach trip and guided tour is £18. We always take these adventures at a very easy pace, with lots of stops to enjoy the landscape and study particular places, but you will need to have reasonable stamina, and wear suitable clothing and footwear.

We shall be looking at how prehistoric settlements have withstood the moor's elements for thousands of years, despite having been purloined by the medievalists (stones to make walls), damaged by the 18th century tanners' relentless digging (channels through them), or damaged by 19th and 20th century granite quarrying and forestry.



Grimspound will be approached from above via Shapley and Hookney Tors, so that we can fully see its hut circle layout. Then, on to Headland Warren (a tanners' rabbit farm) and the Challacombe stone row, and the Golden Dagger Tin mine, ending our morning at the medieval Bennett's Stone Cross. In the afternoon, we shall follow the lych way to Bellever Tor and forest, visiting the Bronze Age pound and reeve system, 2 cists, and stonerow, all fighting for survival amidst modern day forestry.

The day will be rounded off with our traditional adventurers' optional cream tea, at Badger's Holt, Dartmeet.

Finally, we shall return home to Budleigh Salterton by about 7.00pm.

Please respond using the form on pages 15/16 of this newsletter.

Mo Bowman

Come Fossil Hunting

- Explore where Dinosaurs once roamed!

Monday 17th October 2011 at 11.00am in Lyme Regis

Join us on one of the famous Fossil Walks along the Dorset coast with Museum Geologist Paddy Howe and his expert colleague Chris Andrew (Learning & Outreach Officer).

Your Fossil Walk ticket gives you free admission to Lyme Regis Museum, where you will be able to see displays of rare fossils, learn all about Mary Anning the famous early Palaeontologist, who once lived



on the site of the Museum. Search among the sand and rocks for fossils that have been washed down onto the beach after 150 million years.

The walks last for approximately 3 hours starting out from the Museum. Times for the walks vary according to the tides. The walk is over uneven ground on the beach east of Lyme Regis, so you will need to be reasonably agile and steady on your feet and should wear walking boots or wellies and suitable clothing for the weather. A backpack is advisable so that you can collect fossils and remain hands-free. It promises to be an interesting and informative day!

Cost: £10 – This includes an Introductory Talk, the Guided Fossil Walk and entry to the Museum.

Arrive in Lyme Regis by Car-Sharing earlier in the morning - large Council Car Parks are either side of Lyme Regis; allow time to walk down the hill. Look around the many interesting little shops and meet at the Guildhall next to the Museum for an introductory talk at 11.00am. Then have lunch in one of the numerous cafes (bring a packed lunch if you prefer) and meet at the Museum at 1.00pm for the Fossil Hunt.

30 Maximum divided into two groups of 15, so early booking is advisable. If over-subscribed a second walk will be arranged in Spring 2012.

Please respond using the form on pages 17/18 of this newsletter.

Rosemary Jerrard

Autumn Treat

Combe House Hotel is tucked away just outside Honiton in the village of Gittisham. Set in a wooded valley the Elizabethan House retains its grand reception rooms and contemporary features. A Georgian kitchen has been preserved and William Morris wallpaper adorns some rooms. The gardens provide a beautiful setting as well as fresh fruit and vegetables for the hotel.

We have booked two visits for OVA members to enjoy a cream tea and to view the historic building, Tuesday 1st November and Wednesday 9th November. Arrive at 3.00pm using your own transport, sharing cars where possible, taking care along the narrow lanes which are single track in places. Cost £10.00 per person and numbers will be limited to 25 on each day.

Please respond using the form on pages 17/18 of this newsletter and send in by 30th July to Helen Tickle, 30 Station Road, Budleigh Salterton.

A Note from the Interim Editor

‘Pick up the baton and run with it’ – the Olympics may be heading this way, but those who know me will agree that I am not a trained sprinter. A couple of months ago, the Executive Committee was facing the harsh reality that either someone picked up the baton from Nick Speare or there would be no newsletter.

Now, the Otter Valley Association has some 1100 members. I see some two or three dozen on the walks and maybe twice that at some of the interesting talks (not always the same people, I hasten to add). That leaves an awful lot of people whose only regular contact with the OVA is through this Newsletter, and I hope they would be bitterly disappointed if that contact were to be lost. So I have picked up the job, but have insisted that my job title is Interim, as we are still looking for someone with enthusiasm for a small (quarterly) desk-bound job to offer their services on a more permanent basis. If you’d like to know more about what the job entails, please contact me for a ‘no obligation’ chat – I’ve recently been through the ‘learning curve’, and it’s fresh in the memory!

I trust that all readers will find this edition so interesting and informative that at least one of you will want to get hands-on experience.

Haylor Lass (contact details on back cover)

OVA Volunteering

Many members of the OVA have expressed an interest in doing some voluntary work in our countryside. With this in mind Helen Tickle, past Chairman, asked Graham Napton and I to investigate what is available. Therefore, in March, I visited Diane Berry, a conservation officer at EDDC and discovered a great variety of opportunities could be offered. This would be subject to training (at least for leaders) and the approval/co-operation of the many organisations involved, of which there are at least six. These include EDDC, DCC, the Parish Paths Partnership (p3s), Clinton Devon Estates, the Environment Agency and local landowners. However, the tasks available are varied and interesting and include:

- Clearing footpaths
- Hedgerow diversity surveys
- Wildlife surveys of birds, mammals and bats
- Clearing footpaths of weeds such as Himalayan Balsam
- Mink raft checking
- Coppicing
- Scrub clearance

Necessarily some of these tasks would involve training in identification, use of tools, first aid and risk assessment. In order to better explain all this Diane Berry has agreed to give all those interested a talk. This would only be worthwhile if sufficient people are keen to be involved. In February I attended a meeting of the Axe Valley Volunteers and was very impressed by the large number of attendees and the variety of activities.

With this in mind I would be grateful if those wishing to be involved complete and return to me the form on page 17/18 so we can gauge what the OVA can offer. Alternatively, you can send me an email via dlindseyhalls@yahoo.co.uk

In the meantime 12 of us under the guidance of Jim Hunter are to carry out a Himalayan Balsam clearance along a stretch of the Otter above White Bridge on Monday 6th June. There will, hopefully, be further clearances in the near future as this has to be carried out before the flowers have set. I will report more of this venture in the next magazine.

David Lindsey-Halls

Letter to the Editor

Newton Popleford: A Derivation.

From time to time one hears varying views as to how Newton achieved its name.

The first part, Newton is simple - it is a corruption/shortening of "Newtown". It was one of Devon's medieval new towns (Cranbrook is nothing new!) with a market charter being granted to William Brewer in 1226. (1)

Popleford is however more interesting : one hears that it is a corruption of "pebbleford" on the strength of the round stones in the river, or even that these stones are known as 'popples'. As someone who has spent all his life in Colaton, as a boy on the farms and with the farm men (real locals), neither I nor my remaining contemporaries ever heard of these big round stones thus referred to in this village.

I suggest an alternative : up to and including much of the C18th black poplars were known as popples in certain parts of the country and were important, and perhaps rare enough even then, to be referred to as such on certain estate maps of the time (2). The natural habitat of black poplars is beside water, preferably moving, and I would therefore think a much more likely derivation is therefore "the ford beside the popple" = poppleford.

It would be interesting to know if there are any contrary views.

C D C Pound

References

- 1 Pevsner : The Buildings of England - Devon.
- 2 Quarterly Journal of Forestry - vol.103 No.1.

Have Your Say

The editor welcomes letters concerning the history, geography, environment, flora and fauna of our lovely lower Otter valley, and hopes that letters such as this might promote a lively debate. As always, the editor reserves the right to shorten or correct material submitted, or to omit it if space is limited.



Talks Reports

Devon Place Names, Robert Hesketh. February 10th 2011

A popular topic, about 80 members gathered for an interesting overview of how the places we live and visit reflect our history and geography.

A delightful selection of slides reminded us that there's more to a name than meets the eye or to mangle a quote from an unknown author,

“The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling
Doth glance from heaven to earth
And as imagination bodies forth
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

Robert emailed a researched PS:

‘Ting Tong may well have been named after the sound of bells from East Budleigh or alternatively it may have been an importation from Far Eastern expatriates.’

~~~~~

## A History of East Budleigh, through its Buildings, Gerald Millington. March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

A full house turned up to hear a detailed, illustrated talk by Gerald, Archivist to Devon Clinton Estates. Too much information to recount here but imagine East Budleigh, birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh, as a thriving community with blacksmiths, lace makers, coachbuilders, watchmakers and shoemakers, a full complement of artisans and tradesmen to support a prosperous area with a port, wealthy farmers and smugglers.

Despite flood, fire and silt the village retains elements of its glorious past in more than 60 listed buildings or features.



### **Saturday 2 July - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

The Warren free CP, SY041882. 6 miles, 3 hours. Woodbury Common visiting sites of Tumuli. Walking on footpaths on the common, some rough ground.

*Walk leader:* Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

### **Wednesday 13 July - WALK Otterhead to Ottermouth**

Section 2 - Upottery to Honiton (main group)

Please see article on page 11 of April news for details.

*Booking Essential: contact:* Bettina Wilson, 01395 578450

### **Wednesday 20 July - 10.00am. WALK (Energetic) Pub or Picnic**

**Lunch** Morcombelake, Dorset. 7 miles, day trip. Walk from Morcombelake to West Bay on the coastal path via Golden Cap returning to Morcombelake by bus at around 1600. Travel options to Morcombelake: by X53 bus (0911 from Newton Poppleford) or independently by car (share where possible). *Walk leader:* Peter Hills, 01395 568576

### **Monday 25 July – 10.00am. TOWN WALK (Easy)**

Temple Methodist Church car park (donation to OVA & Music Festival).

Learn more about Budleigh's history through its people and places.

*Walk leader.* TBC

### **Wednesday 27 July - WALK Otterhead to Ottermouth**

Section 2 - Upottery to Honiton (overflow group)

*Booking Essential: contact:* Bettina Wilson, 01395 578450

### **Wednesday 10 August - 10.00am. WALK (Easy)**

Exmouth Railway Station (charges apply). 3 miles, 2 hours. One way easy walk to Exton on footpath and cycle path. Travel back to Exmouth via bus, train or walk, it's up to you!

*Walk leader:* Peter Hills, 01395 568576

### **Wednesday 10 August - WALK Otterhead to Ottermouth**

Section 3 - Honiton to Tipton St John. (Main Group)

*Booking Essential: contact:* Bettina Wilson, 01395 578450

**Saturday 20 August - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

East Budleigh CP, SY065849. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Up Hayes Lane and through woods and over the commons returning via Yettington.

*Walk leader:* Stan Herbert, 01395 445113

**Wednesday 24 August - WALK Otterhead to Ottermouth**

Section 3 - Honiton to Tipton St John. (overflow group)

***Booking Essential: contact:*** Bettina Wilson, 01395 578450

**Wednesday 7 September - 10.00am. WALK (Energetic) / Pub lunch**

Otter Inn CP, SY078874. 6½ miles, 3½ hours. Walk around Colaton Raleigh commons, visiting site of Woodbury Castle. Optional pub lunch.

*Walk leader:* John Jones, 01395 443651

**Saturday 10 September: Compass and Map Reading Day – 10.00am**

The High Moorland Visitor Centre, Princetown, Dartmoor.

**Booking essential** – see centre page forms

**Saturday 10 September - 10.00am. WALK (Energetic) / Packed Lunch**

Peak Hill CP, SY109872. 8½ miles, 4 hours. "Town and Country".

Walking to Sidmouth along the coastal path and then following the river Sid to Sidford. Returning to Mutters Moor via farms, hills, woodland and some road. Energetic and muddy in some places. There will be a stop for a sociable (bring your own) picnic lunch .

*Walk leader:* Jan Stuart, 01395 568235

**Wednesday 14 September - WALK Otterhead to Ottermouth**

Section 4 Tipton St John to Budleigh Salterton (both groups)

See previous details and organise own transport to/from start/finish

**Saturday 24 September - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Newton Poppleford CP, SY086897. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Newton Poppleford to Venn Ottery returning via Southerton. Interesting exploration of lanes and paths with constantly changing views

*Walk leader:* Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

**Friday 30 September - Dartmoor Layers of History Adventure**

Our next OVA adventure to *they foreign parts* with Tony Burgess.

**Booking essential** – see centre page forms.

**Lizzie Everett- Wright  
Sunbank, 9 East Terrace,  
Budleigh Salterton,  
EX9 6PG.**

and don't forget the **SAE**



**Mo Bowman  
9 Hayes Close  
Budleigh SaltertonS  
EX9 6SR**

*tel: 01395 446892*

and don't forget the **SAE**

**Compass & Map Reading Course on Dartmoor**  
**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September**  
**10.00am at the High Moorland Visitor Centre in Princetown**

Please send me ..... tickets

Name(s) .....

Address .....

and postcode .....

tel: ..... email .....

I/we can offer .... seats in our car / I/we would like a lift with others .....

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... (£10 per person) payable to OVA  
and a **Stamped Addressed Envelope**

**Reply address overleaf**



**Dartmoor Layers of History Adventure**  
**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September**

Depart Budleigh Salterton Public Hall at 8.00am  
Remember to bring packed lunch and wear suitable clothing

Please send me ..... tickets

Name(s) .....

Address .....

and postcode .....

tel: ..... email .....

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... (£18 per person) payable to OVA  
and a **Stamped Addressed Envelope**

**Reply address overleaf**



**Come Fossil Hunting in Lyme Regis**  
**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011 at 11.00am in Lyme Regis**

Please send me ..... tickets

Name(s) .....

Address .....

and postcode .....

tel: ..... email .....

I/we can offer .... seats in our car / I/we would like a lift with others .....

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... (£10 per person) payable to OVA  
and a **Stamped Addressed Envelope (reply address overleaf)**



**Autumn Treat – Gittisham, Combe House and cream tea**

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November or Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November. Arrive at 3.00pm

Please send me ..... tickets

Name(s) .....

Address .....

and postcode .....

tel: ..... email .....

I/we can offer .... seats in our car / I/we would like a lift with others .....

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... (£10 per person) payable to OVA  
and a **Stamped Addressed Envelope (reply address overleaf)**



**OVA Volunteering**

Name(s) .....

Address .....

and postcode .....

tel: ..... email .....

Particular Interests .....

**Rosemary Jerrard  
20 Swains Road  
Budleigh Salterton  
EX9 6HT**



**Helen Tickle  
30 Station Road  
Budleigh Salterton  
EX9 6RR**



**D Lindsey-Halls  
22 Hulham Road  
Exmouth  
EX8 3HS**

**Tuesday 4 October - 7.30pm TALK "Coastwatch."**

Otterton Village Hall. Not RNLI, not coastguards, what exactly are they doing in the water tower in Exmouth?

*Speaker:* Bill Nash, Ex Station Manager

**Wednesday 5 October - 10.00am. WALK (Easy/Moderate)**

Exmouth Maer CP (charges apply) SY012802. 4 miles, 2 hours. A chance to explore what remains of the port of Exmouth. Hazel will be sharing some interesting historical snippets during this route around Exmouth Port and Resort. We begin by walking along the seafront to explore the docks and then turn back into the town via "the Gut", our tour will end as we go up the Beacon and return on the higher road to our cars.

*Walk leader:* Hazel Harland, 01395 445665

**Wednesday 12 October - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) Pub Lunch**

East Budleigh CP, SY065849. 4 miles, 2½ hours. Very interesting town walk which includes a visit to the historic East Budleigh church. Stan will share his vast local knowledge of the people and places of bygone East Budleigh. Optional lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

*Walk leader:* Stan Herbert, 01395 445113

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October – 11.00am Come Fossil Hunting in Lyme Regis**

Explore where Dinosaurs once roamed!

**Booking essential** – see centre page forms.

**Wednesday 26 October - 10.30am. WALK (Easy-please note later start time) Optional Pub Lunch**

Tally Ho Inn CP and local road parking, SX940904. 4 miles, 2½ hours. Providing an unusual and at times surprising perspective this walk around the pretty Ludwell Valley gives panoramic views over both Exeter and the Exe estuary with optional lunch at the Tally Ho Inn. Please note start time.

*Walk leader:* Trish Bisley, 01392 410423

**Wednesday 9 November – 10.00am. WALK (Easy)**

Newton Poppleford Sports Ground CP, SY087900. An easy walk looking for and identifying fungi including waxcaps. Marion is a member of the Devon Fungi Group and has an excellent knowledge of the subject.

*Walk leader:* Marion Nalder, 01395 442176

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November and Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November – 3.00pm**

Combe House historic building visit and cream tea

**Booking essential** – see centre page forms.

**Saturday 12 November – 10.00am. WALK (Easy)**

Exmouth Railway Station CP (charges apply). 3 miles, 2 hours. A one way easy walk to Exton on footpath and cycle path. Travel back to Exmouth via bus, train or even walk, it's up to you!

*Walk leader:* Peter Hills, 01395 568576

**Thursday 17 November - 7.30pm TALK "Bees"**

Colaton Raleigh Village Hall Why are honey bees so important to the environment and what can we do to help?

*Speaker:* Roger Lacey, President of Devon Beekeepers.

**Saturday 26 November – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Four Firs CP, SY032864. 5 miles, 2½ hours. A varied walk across the commons visiting Woodbury Castle, Yettington, Hayes Wood and Blackhill Quarry

*Walk leader:* Stuart Lovett, 01395 443141

**Wednesday 7 December – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) Pub lunch**

Colaton Raleigh Church, SY082872. 5 miles, 2½ hours.

Green lanes, commons, Stowford, Hawkerland and Naps Lane.

Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

*Walk leader:* Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

**Saturday 10 December – 10.00am. WALK (Easy)**

Wheathill Plantation SY041847. 3 miles, 2 hours. A short and sociable walk on the commons to relieve those pre-Christmas pressures.

*Walk leader:* David Daniel, 01395 445960

**Thursday 15 December - 6.30 for 7.00pm OVA Christmas Dinner**

East Devon Golf Club Note the date now, **Booking Form** in next issue.

**Monday 26 December – 1030am. WALK (Easy)/Pub Lunch.**

East Budleigh CP SY065849. Gentle Boxing Day walk across the common with optional pub lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh at this time of good cheer

**Ring Walk Leader, David Daniel, 01395 445960 by 5 December to book.**

## **Dowsing Workshop Led by Aaron Bray, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Aaron is a water engineer covering much of the country and the Channel Islands for a large company. He has been developing dowsing skills for many years. He holds the British Society of Dowsing's highest water divining award and is a tutor for the Society. He has used his skill in Zambia where he dowsed for water in a number of villages, leaving them with wells and a clean supply of water. He holds a number of positions relating to dowsing which can be found on his website [www.discoverdowsing.com](http://www.discoverdowsing.com)

Aaron began by asking each of us why we were there. This revealed varying degrees of experience of dowsing or none and some for whom it had not worked and they were therefore sceptical. His presentation was carefully constructed and began with slides of his time in Zambia.

His explanation of what dowsing is states 'that it is finding things whose location is not known and which cannot be perceived by using the five senses, or past experience'. Developing a sixth sense is possible for all of us but has been largely neglected over the years. Dowsing can be said to date back to Moses where it states in the Old Testament – "And Moses lifted up his hand and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly"

Through the years dowsing has been used by governments in peacetime and in war, businesses, farmers and individuals. Although it is by most people associated with finding water its uses are far more widespread – including finding minerals, in archaeology, mine workings, investigating sunken ships, dealing with problems in water pipes, drains and heating systems, finding lost articles and even people, map reading and healing.

Aaron instructed us on how to start. We can purchase or make the tools and everybody can do it. You must first state what you want to find out, followed by asking if the time right. There might be negative days when it would be better to wait. Your search must be for a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

We played 'games' to test the veracity of the answers, using first a pack of cards, then three bottles containing water, vinegar and gin and we were asked to identify which was in each bottle. We tried map reading, using a real life example of a problem Aaron had been called upon to solve by a local authority and finally identified the extent of our aura. Using coat hangers we made angle rods.

We were very happy: 'ploughman' provided with an excellent lunch before moving outside to find the route of services to the hall. Then followed a field trip to a place where there was known to be a well. It was our task to identify exactly its position.

For the final session Aaron answered questions and summed up the day. His advice was to enjoy, to believe in yourself, to realise that there could be negative times and not to be deterred by them. So ended a most valued workshop.

**Grace Upton**

# Estuary Litter Pick

It's the nineteenth of March  
we congregate by the estuary:  
we're all engaged in a worthwhile project -  
to help stop pollution - to some degree.

We're first given a chat on the type of objects  
we should put in our litter bags;  
like plastic bottles, discarded fishing tackle,  
foam and other bits of rag.

We then make our way, in twos and threes  
with black plastic bags in hand;  
stride forth in wellington boots into the 'Otter Med'  
we look a merry band.

We converse with other members  
of our esteemed association  
we know we're all engaged in a mission  
and, there's a degree of anticipation.

We help one another,  
after we have cleared the rubbish away,  
by carrying other people's precious bits of wood -  
which deserved to be saved on this auspicious day.



Someone takes a chance  
by throwing himself upon a thorn hedge,  
encouraged to grasp a 'poobag'  
stuck in branches and somewhat firmly wedged.

A fellow participator on the midday soiree  
thinks the act of retrieving 'poo'  
might be an act of folly.

But, nevertheless she holds on firmly  
as he stretched out his hands.  
and then helped to pull him back -  
but the 'poobag' did not smell grand.

The weary band of intrepid LitterPickers  
then continued upon their way -  
striding along the 'Otter Path' to the car park  
- it had been a worthwhile day!



Joan Payne



Olly Swain, winner of the OVA Litter Pick Youth Prize  
with some of the trophies.

# Artists' Walk Saturday 7 May 2011

Lightning! Thunder!

Sharp Showers and rolling Sea Fog.

Not the best start to the annual "Artists' Walk".

In fact I was on Peak Hill Car Park just to tell any artist walker that turned up that the walk was off.

I should have known better.

The seven walkers that came out of the mist wouldn't hear of it.

There might not be much to see, but an OVA walker was not going to let a bit of weather stop them.

So off we went to the lookout point on High Peak where earlier in the week I had sketched the Sidmouth cliffs in glorious sunshine. Showing this earlier drawing was the only artist's view possible as the sea fog (fret?) had made the cliffs disappear.





Turning from the cliffs we followed the Otter Village stream climbing up to its source on the Seven Stones path. The Bluebells here were putting up a most beautiful display – but still too misty and grey to draw.

Over Mutter's Moor we descended to the Beech Woods next to the Sidmouth Golf Club where the mist had vanished and the Bluebells were beautiful. The artists did some colour sketches as the walkers caught their breath and took a coffee break.



An 'easy' climb back to the start followed by a social lunch at the King's Arms rewarded this unstoppable hardy group.

**Jed Falby**

**Otter Watch** – Otter(s), with young, have been seen playing in the Back Brook in the centre of Newton Poppleford, despite the low water levels due to the very dry spring. If you're a dog owner, please keep your animal under control – otters are disturbed more by dogs than people.

## Looe to Polperro May 13<sup>th</sup> 2011

28 members set off on a dry bright morning, led by Mo Bowman. Our guide for the day was Tony Burgess; who shared his knowledge with us along the way. After a brief watering stop we arrived at Looe, which looked idyllic in the morning sunshine. We walked around the harbour to the coastal path and wonderful uninterrupted sea views. We saw the monument to 'Nelson,' the one-eyed seal, who had lived and fed in the harbour for almost 25 years.



Just off the coast is Looe Island, (one mile in circumference) once a Celtic site and Christian settlement with a ruined chapel. The Atkins sisters purchased the island in 1965 for £65,000 and bequeathed it to the Cornish Wildlife Trust. *(See picture on the front cover).*

After an ascent of around 80 steps we reached Portnalder Bay with spectacular views of the coast and out to sea. We walked over carpets of Tormentil, which apparently can cure a sore throat. Several members tasted the coconut flavoured gorse flowers!

A steep walk across a field of playful horses brought us to the cliff top church of St Tallanus with its detached tower. The present altar is thought to be built on ley lines and one or two people had a go at tracing them. There are fine examples of carved pew ends and the ancient woodwork in the wagon roofs is spectacular. Among the many things of interest in the church is the headstone of Robert Mark, who was killed mistakenly in 1802. There is some confusion as to who he was. Some accounts say he was a smuggler shot at sea, others that he was a revenue collector killed on duty. The church celebrated its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1990

We descended to Talland beach where we ate our picnic lunch. One and a half miles further on we reached the quaint little harbour of Polperro, with its winding streets, Roman and Saxon bridges and fish market. Polperro fish industry now consists of 3 trawlers, 2 scallopers, 2 crabbers and 6 netters. After enjoying a very generous cream tea, we strolled up to the car park where Dave, our driver was waiting.



Thank you Mo and Clive; this was a perfect day in good company. We look forward to the next one.

**Mary Watkins**

## Otterhead to Ottermouth Walk - Section 1

Ten of the 11 people who'd agreed to do the walks on the alternative dates were in good time for the bus at Upton. (There had been such demand to follow the course of the Otter, the group had been split to avoid overcrowding the buses.) One who shall remain nameless to spare my blushes only just made it. Bettina Wilson, who is leading both groups on the parallel walks, was most forgiving. The bus seating was all taken up once we'd got on, though it did say there was room for 16 people to stand for the short journey to Churchinford.

We discovered that Churchinford does not have a church and that it was not possible to start our walk from the very beginning of the Otter since the source is on private land. However we started the walk only a couple of fields away and soon found a trickling ditch which was the infant Otter. Otterford Church tower was not long coming into view and we stopped to visit it briefly and read the inscription of a worthy gentleman named William Beadon Esq. who had lived at Otterhead House and had been instrumental in restoring the church.

As we walked on we came to the woods which surround the Otterhead lakes. The sun was out and dappled through the fresh green leaves. There were quite large swathes of native bluebells under the trees as well as red campion, stitchwort and buttercups. We stopped for coffee beside the first of two large lakes, though there was another (large) walking group taking up the viewpoint that Bettina had selected for us. There were two black swans as well as mallard on this lake. We walked on through lush woodland – no shortage of water here. Haylor advised us that this area is one of water-bearing rocks which ooze water all year round, hence the site's suitability for artificial lakes and the profusion of vegetation. The second large lake we came to had a pair of mute swans on it with a brood of four or five grey fluffy cygnets. We had to leave the lakeside because the public had misused the path in the past. The new path went up the valley side and then along a very muddy track.

We stopped for lunch at on the border of Devon and Somerset. We walked on a mixture of side roads, with very occasional cars, and footpaths across fields. We crossed fields through herds of curious cattle of varying ages. The sun obligingly went in when we were crossing open country and we agreed that it made for more comfortable walking.



In dry weather, ford footways make a good lunch bench!

The stream became recognisably a river and we crossed it one more than one occasion. Because we were unable always to follow the river bank, we had one or two climbs and were rewarded with marvellous views down the valley. We passed farms that had not seen the beneficial effect of Mark Rolle's 19<sup>th</sup> century investment. At one point we crossed a deep sunk green lane (with grass across the entire track). This was carefully labelled with footpath-size signs announcing that it was a "County Road"!

Eventually we sighted the tower of Upottery Church and as we walked back to our cars noted an interesting topiary whale and that the village hall is known as Upottery Manor Room. Altogether we had enjoyed a varied and interesting walk in some very beautiful countryside.

**Kerensa Pearson**

See overleaf for an important note about future sections of this grand walk.

## THE BIG WALK: Otterhead to Ottermouth

There was a great response for the walk to complete the whole of the Otter Valley in four sections during the summer (see April newsletter, page 11, for full details).

Bettina has therefore very kindly organised an extra walk for each of the first three sections, to help with overcrowding on the little Dartline bus! By the time you receive this newsletter, approximately 35 members will have walked from Otterhead to Upottery, and which for most will have been new territory. There is a write up on this section, previous page. If you have not registered for the walk and are interested in taking part in the remaining sections, **please check first with Bettina (01395 578450) for space availability.** Diane Gee



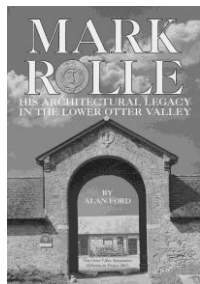
OVA members enjoyed superb weather for a most interesting visit to Slapton Ley Field Studies Centre. I hope to carry a full report in the next Newsletter – *editor*.

This handsome creature is an Oil Beetle: c.1¾ inches long, black with blue sheen, head broader than thorax. Seen strolling leisurely across the Lower Way, Harpford, where there is a sandy bank alongside the



stream – apparently a favoured habitat. The Beetle lays eggs in (eg.) a dandelion flower, the larva hitches a lift on a visiting bee and is taken to the nest where it feeds on the bees' eggs and honey stores.

# OVA Publications



**Mark Rolle**

## **His Architectural Legacy in the Lower Otter Valley**

Ever wondered about the many improved farm buildings and cottages in this area? This lavishly illustrated book gives a very readable picture of how a large landed estate was managed in the last 40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

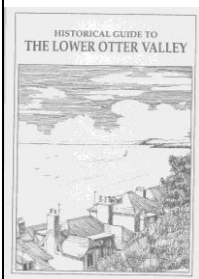
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £1.50 P&P)



## **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.

£2.50 from your village rep (or plus £1.00 P&P)



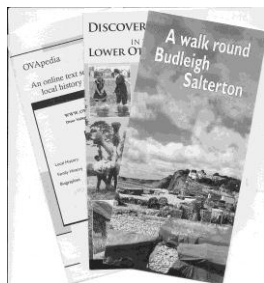
## **Historical Guide to the Lower Otter Valley**

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

£3.50 from your village rep (or plus £1.50 P&P)

See our website [ova.org.uk](http://ova.org.uk) or from

Booksales, OVA, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN



## **Leaflets**

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

# The Otter Valley Association

## **Executive Committee** (01395)

|                        |                |        |
|------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Chairman (acting)      | Nicola Daniel  | 445960 |
| Vice-chairman (acting) | Haylor Lass    | 568786 |
| Hon Secretary (acting) | David Daniel   | 445960 |
| Treasurer              | Roger Saunders | 443248 |

### *Committee Chairmen*

|                     |                  |        |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|
| Natural Environment | Patrick Hamilton | 445351 |
| Events              | Nicola Daniel    | 445960 |
| History             | David Daniel     | 445960 |

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

|                    |                  |        |
|--------------------|------------------|--------|
| Budleigh Salterton | John Jones       | 443651 |
|                    | George Maddaford | 446077 |
| East Budleigh      | Christine Hadley | 443607 |
| Otterton           | John Winson      | 568274 |
| Colaton Raleigh    | <i>Vacancy</i>   |        |
| Newton Poppleford  | Haylor Lass      | 568786 |

### *Other EC Members*

|                             |                  |        |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------|
| Assistant Minutes Secretary | Robert Wiltshire | 444395 |
| Membership Secretary        | Clive Bowman     | 446892 |
| Publicity Secretary         | Faye Pratt       | 443877 |
| Without portfolio           | Lynne Wright     | 442703 |

### *Other contacts*

|                           |               |        |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Webmaster                 | Alan Huddart  | 446761 |
| Speaker Secretary         | Susan Chapman | 445620 |
| Walks Organiser           | John Jones    | 443651 |
| Newsletter Distributor    | Gill Speare   | 443944 |
| Interim Newsletter Editor | Haylor Lass   | 568786 |

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