



# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

## SPRING

Newsletter  
2020 Vol: 41/2

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Reg. Charity No: 278266

**This issue's stunning cover was photographed and produced by Mo  
Bowman**

## From the Editor

A number of events have taken place since the last newsletter, not least our 'Murder Mystery' themed Christmas Party which, thankfully, did not result in any harm coming to either humans or animals - although some reputations may have been slightly tarnished. I usually make reference to forthcoming events in this introduction but, as you will see from the statement below, we have had to follow Government advice and postpone all activities. There are reports on some very interesting talks included in this issue together with updates on river Otter Beaver Trial and the Lower Otter Restoration Project and I hope that some of the articles will be a distraction in these difficult times.

**Jacqui Baldwin**

Following government advice, it behoves us to comply. The following events which we normally run will be cancelled, although some may be rescheduled for a later date. Also cancelled is our involvement in events promoted by other organisations which we would normally support.

Meetings of the Executive Committee

Annual General Meeting - future date to be established

Talk scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> April.

Otter Estuary Litterpick scheduled for 4th April

East Budleigh Scarecrow Festival

A proposed Bat Emergence observation event at Otterton Mill

OVA walks - the OVA would not like to discourage walks being undertaken by individuals as there are considerable physical and mental benefits, so long as persons doing so behave in such a manner that there is no risk of spreading the illness

We shall continue to make plans for the following which are due to take place after the 3 month period. However we are entering into the area of the unknown. Heath Week.

The CDE Pebblebed Heaths 'Safari' tentatively scheduled for September  
Christmas Party.

**Bob Wiltshire**

**Chairman OVA**

## Chairman's Musings

Nothing that I say seems to be of any importance when the whole world is undergoing an event of such gigantic importance. Even as I pen this article over a period of days, I am having to delete whole paragraphs as they become redundant or simply out of date.

After a record breaking wet winter, when will it finish, it is so good to see all the bulbs and spring blossom in full bloom. They seem to positively welcome the rain. It has been such a mild winter so far, that I am afraid there will be many survivors from the unwelcome members of the bug world.

The Christmas party was a great success, attracting 87 revellers, thanks to the organising genius of Jenny Young and the administrative detail of Clive Bowman. For those who did not attend, you will be delighted to know that in the Murder Mystery, taking place ten years into the future, the Chairman lived to fight another day. We donated the sum of £301, being our profits from the raffle, to the Devon Wildlife Trust's 'Greater Horseshoe Bat Project'. I was beginning to fear that we would not have a Christmas party this year, but like London buses, two possible organisers appeared at the same time. There may be further details in the next newsletter, but the event could possibly go the way of so many others. Man proposes and God disposes.

Lambing Sunday at Bicton College, where we normally have a presence, was cancelled this year. No, you have guessed wrong – it was due to the field used for parking being waterlogged. We hope that conditions, be they virus or weather related, will be more favourable for Heath Week in July, when we can show off our new gazebo. Or further ahead, a Clinton Devon Estates safari on the Pebblebed Heaths, possibly in September.

The Lower Otter Restoration Project has come to life again. More details in this edition.

The Scots Pine project, at what is officially known as 'The Clump' in Otterton Park has had a rebirth. Some of the young trees, planted some two years ago, suffered when there was insufficient protection from cattle and deer. We have been given a generous grant by the East Devon AONB Partnership, to erect permanent fencing and increase the tree stock. Once again we expect to have healthy young

saplings bursting forth. You may have to wait fifteen years to see the results of our labours, but am sure it will be worth the wait.

It only remains for me wish you all a healthy forthcoming year as the world battles this pandemic.

***Bob Wiltshire, Chairman***



Funding has recently been approved to help with the delivery of the Lower Otter Restoration Project. The bid for the £8.5m grant was led by the Environment Agency in partnership with Clinton Devon Estates and the Conservation Trust who have been developing the initiative since 2014.



Although funding is in place a detailed planning application will need to be submitted and, should planning be granted, work could begin on the scheme in Autumn 2020. This will result in the creation of 100 hectares of mudflat and saltmarsh as well as naturalising the lower river valley and elevating the conservation value of the lower Otter Valley from regional to international significance.

## The Seaton Down Hoard

On 15th January an audience of over 60 people listened to a talk by Thomas Cadbury, Curator of the RAMM Archaeology Collection, about this intriguing find.

We heard that the discovery was made in 2014 by local amateur metal detectorist Laurence Egerton who found the hoard whilst metal-detecting on land known as Honeyditches near Seaton owned by Clinton Devon Estates. Fortunately, as an experienced detectorist, when Laurence realised the extent of his find he did not dig any further but contacted the Devon County Council archaeologist, Bill Horner who arranged for the hoard to be professionally excavated. However, we were told that Laurence, concerned that no-one else should disturb the site, got the farmer to park a tractor on top of it and slept in his car nearby overnight! His prompt action means that we know a lot about the hoard's archaeology.



With 22,888 Roman coins and 3 kiron ingots, it is by far the largest coin hoard found in Devon and the third largest ever found in Britain. The coins were all buried at the same time and were probably held in a large leather sack or saddle

bag. The hoard weighed 68kg and so was more than one person could comfortably lift.

Most of the coins belong to the time of Emperor Constantine I and date from AD 317 to 340. The earliest coins are from AD 260 and the last from AD 348 and they were minted in 17 different mints in what are now 9 different modern countries. This means that the oldest coins had been in circulation for nearly 90 years. Almost all of the coins are of a type called a *nummus*. *Nummi* (plural of *nummus*) were used in everyday purchases. Two *nummi* would buy a flagon of poor quality wine.

What makes this find so intriguing is that historians and archaeologists have not been able to discover why the hoard was buried at this site. It was buried in around AD 350 when the Roman Empire was in decline but why, and by whom is a mystery. Could it have been wages for workers or a merchant's savings? Were the coins stolen or were they being hidden from the taxman? The coins were found a few fields away from known Roman sites. One was a farmstead, the other an army watch tower. The hoard is probably connected to these in some way but why did whoever hid the coins never come back and recover them? We may never know.

Thomas explained the process of dealing with the hoard once it had been discovered as, technically, all hidden treasure found in the UK belongs to the Crown. The rights and legal obligations of the finders and landowners are covered by the Treasure Act of 1996. Those who find objects that they believe to be treasure must report the find the appropriate authority. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, finds must be reported to the Coroner within 14 days - and failure to do so can result in a £5,000 fine and three months in jail. The Coroner holds an inquest to determine if the object is, in fact, treasure. Once the Coroner determines that an item is treasure, a valuation committee, made up of experts in the appropriate fields, determines a market value and offers it to appropriate museums.

After a massive fundraising effort, in 2016 RAMM acquired the coins with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Clinton Devon Estates, Thomson Reuters, Devon County Council and 68 individual members of the public who helped to raise the £50,000 required. The Heritage Lottery Fund funded the conservation and display of the part of the hoard that has been on display at the museum since July 2017.

## East Devon Pebblebed Heaths visitor access consultation results

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths visitor access consultation ran for 6 weeks, ending on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019 during which period residents and visitors were asked to share their views on proposed improvements designed to ‘enhance visitor experiences’ and protect wildlife and heritage sites by completing an on-line survey or attending a consultation event. The OVA Walks Team commented on behalf of the membership.

The proposals included:

- Improving access for emergency vehicles to reduce response times.
- Installing sensitively designed information boards with maps and route markers for suggested trails.
- Improving car park accessibility and layout while at the same time helping to protect ancient monuments and wildlife.
- Improving car park surfaces and entrances for improved safety.
- Not introducing car parking charges.
- Increasing visibility in car parks to reduce theft, criminal incidents and anti-social behaviour.

Feedback from the consultation formed part of the report on the proposals, which was considered by the members of the South East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee of EDDC on 28<sup>th</sup> January. The majority of the original proposals won support although concerns raised by horseriders about height barriers at the entrances to car parks were taken into account. Therefore, some height barriers (at Model Airfield and Wheathill) will be locked open. If problems arise, these barriers could be closed in the future. In response to concerns about the reduction of car parking spaces at Woodbury Castle car park, this will not take place and appropriate parking spaces will be saved at Estuary View car park instead.

SEDHRP will pay for any agreed capital works. East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust (EDPHCT) will pay for ongoing maintenance, once the upgrades have been completed. It is likely that any approved works will happen in phases and take place over a number of years.

To see a full copy of the report go to [www.southeastdevonwildlife.org.uk](http://www.southeastdevonwildlife.org.uk)



## The Building of Exeter Cathedral

More than 60 people attended Peter Hall on 11<sup>th</sup> March for the latest in our Talks Programme. We were enthralled to learn of the history of the building of Exeter Cathedral from the very erudite John Allan, Exeter Cathedral Archaeologist. He has an obvious and infectious passion for his subject, as well as a very deep knowledge of this wonderful structure. The Cathedral is a hugely important building on the international stage, and was at the forefront of European architecture in ancient times.

The origins of the site go back to the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, with around 100,000 bodies lying under the Green, about 12 deep. The earliest parts of the building are the two unusually designed Norman Towers, which are different in detail, particularly the blind arcading. The walls are 3 metres thick, and the towers originally had spires on top.

The building works continued in phases from 1270 to 1346, and this is reflected in the different styles that evolved from the Gothic to the Perpendicular. It is very fortunate that the detailed records are kept in the cloth library on fabric rolls, so John was able to tell us about when the different phases were built, how much various works cost, and how much the craftsmen and labourers earned.



John highlighted some of the many beautiful treasures to look at when you next visit this building, such as the carved elephant misericord (left), believed to be the first representation of an elephant in Britain, dating from the reign of Henry III. A misericord is basically a medieval tip-up seat!

The Bronscombe tomb effigy is particularly fine and delicately carved. The tierceron vaulting was innovative, and there are beautiful carvings of the corbel stones at the junction of the arches. The tracery in the Lady Chapel windows dates back to 1300, and is a very elaborate design. In 1307 the new bishop Walter Stapleton was a great patron and supplied many of the ornate furnishings.

Thomas Witney designed a new bishop's throne in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, which is very ornate and 70 feet high. Luckily this was removed to safe storage during World War II. John advised us to take binoculars so that you can study all the beautiful carvings and ceiling bosses, one of which depicts a mermaid.



It is surprising how well preserved the building is, especially as it received a direct hit from a large bomb in May 1942 which demolished one side of the building. Fortunately because the structure was so well built it did not fall down and could be restored.

This was a memorable talk and it is hoped that John will come back and tell us more about this marvellous building on our doorstep, but I would urge you to go and visit it with this fresh insight.

***Dee Woods***

## Our County Flower

Did you know that Devon had a county flower? I didn't until very recently when the question came up in a general knowledge crossword. In 2004 a UK vote was organised by Plantlife International, the charity for the conservation of wild flowers, to raise awareness of an alarming decline in our native flowers.

The primrose - which traditionally heralds the start of spring - was chosen by the people of Devon as the flower which best sums up the county's natural heritage. Our front cover photograph shows what a glorious plant it is and what a joy to see that splash of yellow appearing despite the rain, wind and hail of the past few weeks. Apparently, in past centuries, Devon's old paper mills used to send primrose blooms to customers because the flower was seen as a symbol of a 'breath of fresh Devon air'.

Devon's climate, soil and geographical position ensures that the wild primrose can still be widely found in woodland and countryside right across the county - but it's nowhere near as common as it used to be. Building developments and modern farming methods have taken their toll.

As a result, Devon County Council included the primrose in its Biodiversity Action Plan of 2009 to try and safeguard the species for future generations stating: *"The primrose demonstrates vividly the role of widespread and commonplace plants and animals in shaping the character and special quality of the County and the need to value and cherish these no less than the rare or unusual. The primrose is a useful indicator of our concern for the world around us: unless we succeed in maintaining the status of this robust yet attractive species, what hope have we of saving those habitats or species which are already rare or vulnerable? By promoting the conservation of the primrose, we can look after the many habitats in which it is found - woodlands, hedges, coastlands, churchyards, roadside verges and railway banks - and the many species which are commonly found alongside it - violets, early-purple orchids and lady's smock or less well known pollinating insects such as the bee fly or the swordgrass moth. This plan is intended raise public awareness of the need to value and conserve characteristic and commonplace elements of Devon's environment - in particular the primrose - and to generate action which might help to achieve this"*.

**Primrose Day** is the anniversary of the death of British statesman and prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who died on 19 April 1881.

## Statement in relation to the Planning Report published in the Spring 2019 Newsletter

The OVA has received a complaint suggesting that part of this Report was misleading and inaccurate. The OVA does not accept that the Report was misleading and inaccurate. However, the OVA is content to publish this clarification in relation to the three points about which complaints have been made.

(a) When the Report stated that Historic England recommended for approval a planning application at Furzedene in West Hill Lane “...even though there was no mention of the specific character of the Conservation Area ie large villas in large, mature gardens in a tranquil, walled lane”, it did not say, or imply, that Historic England had not made any reference to the Conservation Area as the complainant suggests. Indeed, the OVA well understands that Historic England did refer to, and discuss, the Conservation Area in the context of the planning application. The words in the Report were a justifiable and reasonable comment on the way in which Historic England had approached their task. The OVA wishes to make that clarification.

(b) The Report stated that EDDC took the advice of Historic England and, adjacent to an aerial photograph of Furzedene, stated “...and this is the result with an additional 2 more homes to be built.” That statement is factually correct by reference to the photograph and it did not say or imply that there were to be more houses than were approved by the planning permission. The OVA is well aware of the plans submitted with the various successful planning applications and they show the number of new houses to be built. The OVA wishes to make that clarification.

(c) The OVA’s objection to the original 2016 planning application on the ‘Furzedene’ site was based on, and informed by, an EDDC Conservation Officer’s rejection, confirmed by an Appeal Inspector’s rejection of another 2015 garden infill application in West Hill Lane. In rejecting this application, the duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas by the LPA was emphasised. Attempting to uphold the integrity of conservation areas is fully in accordance with the OVA’s constitution.

**Bob Wiltshire, Chairman**

## Awaiting the early butterflies

After such a long, wet winter one of the welcome signs of spring are yet to arrive; our early butterflies. Following months of wet, mild weather it remains to be seen what impact this will have on insects. For several weeks now bumble bees have been actively seeking food. The mild winter could result in more butterflies but might also produce more of the parasites that prey on them. There is also concern that the food plants that caterpillars require may emerge out of sync; plants might well adapt faster to climate change than insects do.



Hibernating butterflies such as Peacocks, Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones can emerge on warm winter and spring days. Having overwintered as adults in ivy and evergreens, yellow Brimstone are perhaps the most noticeable spring butterfly. The male is 'brimstone' yellow whilst the female is much paler. Two other early arrivals are the Orange-tip and Green-veined White (pictured above). These butterflies emerge from chrysalis usually in March and April. The Green-veined White caterpillar feeds on Hedge Garlic and both on Cuckoo-flower.

All we need now is some sunshine!

**Geoff Porter, Natural Environment Committee**

## The River Otter Beavers – what happens next?

After 5 years studying the impacts of beavers, the results are in and the River Otter Beaver Trial Science and Evidence Report is published, finding that they bring 'measurable benefits to people and wildlife'.

The report is based on research undertaken by a team of scientists overseen by Professor Richard Brazier from the University of Exeter. It concludes that other wildlife has greatly benefitted from the beavers' presence, while their dam building activities have also helped reduce the risk of flooding to some flood threatened human settlements. It also concludes that while beavers have created localised problems for a handful of farmers and property owners, these can be successfully and straightforwardly managed with the right support and intervention.



*Beaver kits photographed by Mike Symes*

Among the key findings of the research are:

- The wild beaver population on the River Otter has expanded steadily over the past five years. At the Trial's beginning in 2015 there were two breeding pairs of beavers. Today this figure stands at least eight pairs and beavers now occupy "the main stem of the River Otter and River Tale, as well as some smaller tributaries". Looking to the future, the scientists' conclusion is that this "clearly demonstrates the River Otter environment will be able to sustain a healthy, expanding, beaver population."

- Beavers have had a positive influence on the flood-prone community of East Budleigh. A family of beavers have constructed six dams upstream of the village, with the result that peak flood flows through the village have been measurably and significantly reduced.
- The Report also highlights the ability of beavers to help clean water supplies, removing large quantities of soil, manure, slurry and fertilisers from rivers and streams.
- The impact of the beavers on other wildlife was one of the most marked findings of the Trial. “The effect of beaver engineering and feeding has delivered significant ecological benefits”, concludes the Report, “with new areas of wetland habitat created and managed, with benefits for amphibians, wildfowl and water voles”.
- Fish numbers also increased where beavers built their dams. Surveys in area of the River Otter catchment showed that in the pools created by beaver dams there were 37% more fish than in comparable stretches of the river where there were no dams.
- While the beavers have been busy building dams, none of these have been on the main ‘stem’ of the River Otter. Instead dam building has been restricted to smaller tributaries and other watercourses.
- Beaver activity has had an adverse impact on farmland at five sites during the 5-year study. The Trial has shown that the majority of issues arising can be addressed successfully by “active management.” During the Trial this was carried out by Devon Wildlife Trust and Clinton Devon Estates. This sometimes took the form of the removal of beaver dams, while elsewhere the installation of so-called ‘beaver deceivers’ (pipes through dams which reduce surrounding water-levels) were used.
- The Trial also recorded the high level of public support for beavers returning to the English countryside. When more than 3,000 people were asked by the Trial’s researchers whether they supported the reintroduction of beavers, 86% said ‘yes’.

The Report has now been presented to Natural England and to Defra for a decision on the future of East Devon’s beavers, and the status of the species in England. With the agreement of the Devon Wildlife Trust, Defra has taken the decision to extend the River Otter Beaver Trial until the 31st August 2020, so that Natural England and the Department can make the necessary assessments of the Trial reports and findings.

The full 130 page report is available on the Devon Wildlife Trust website.

## **Environmental Land Management Scheme – CDE Trial**

The new Environmental Land Management system (ELMs) will replace the EU Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship funding in the UK post-Brexit and its rollout is planned from 2024-2027. It began its test and trial period in 2019, with pilots planned to run from 2021.

Originating from criticisms of the existing land management scheme and the new policy direction that in future farmers should be rewarded for the provision of public benefit, Defra established the Test and Trial programme to invite proposals from farmers, land owners and organisations to help inform how future schemes might reward land managers for the provision of public benefit. This is an opportunity to test new ideas on the ground. From the proposals originally submitted in 2018, 45 were taken forward initially. Of these 45, following further development, 37 are now contracted as Test and Trials, of which a proposal submitted by Clinton Devon Estates relating to the lower Otter valley and Beer catchments is one. Proposals are varied in subject matter but all aim to provide feedback on learning to the relevant policy teams involved in shaping future farming support post Brexit.

The first stakeholder meeting took place in December 2019 at which the OVA was represented by David Hatch, Chair of the Natural Environment Committee. Each stakeholder had the opportunity to set out their particular priorities. For the OVA these are:

- Soil conservation, and reduction in soil loss into streams through run-off
- Hedgerow management that supports wildlife; moving away from annual flailing
- Increase in habitat creation for wildlife, including margin extent, quality and set aside land
- Support for farmland birds e.g. through over-wintering stubbles

We also raised additional issues, including

- Increasing support for organic farming and discouraging pesticide use
- Concern about maize growing in East Devon

***Editor***



## The Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project



On 19<sup>th</sup> February, Ann Mitchell came to talk to us about the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project – a 5-year project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund which is now in its fourth year. Working with local communities this project is enabling people to learn about, celebrate and help to care for these enigmatic bats and the landscape they live in.

Greater Horseshoes are one of the largest bats we see in this country and their population is now confined to SW England and South Wales and they designated an endangered species. The priority areas are their 11 maternity roosts in Devon. It is vital that the countryside near these roosts provides everything these bats need to survive

and raise healthy young for the next generation. Why is this necessary? The number of greater horseshoe bats has fallen by 90% in the UK during the last 100 years. They need countryside with good networks of hedges, woods, rivers and fields. This is why Devon is a last stronghold for them in the UK. However, even here threats are mounting as human activity is affecting their population – the use of pesticides and housing development being just two of the ways in which their natural habitat and food supply has been reduced. Ann went on to tell us that one of the biggest threats is the domestic cat which predate far more bats than sparrowhawks and barn owls.

Formerly a cave-dweller, the greater horseshoe bat now tends to roost in old houses, churches and barns. All UK bats are nocturnal, feeding on midges, moths and other flying insects that they find in the dark by using echolocation. In early summer, greater horseshoe bats will emerge at dusk and dawn, however, preferring to roost through the middle of the night. From May, females form maternity colonies to have their pups. Greater horseshoe bats hibernate over the winter in caves e.g Beer, disused mines, tunnels and cellars.

We learnt some remarkable facts: the Greater Horseshoe has a lifespan of up to 30 years during which the females produce one young every two years. Although they mate in Autumn the embryo does not attach to the uterus wall until after hibernation when the weather becomes warmer and food becomes available.

The Project is very much community-focussed with staff and volunteers making visits to villages, schools, famers and landowners. There are now a number of *Bat Friendly Communities* e.g. Beer and Bovey Tracey and *Bat Buddy Schools* and 750 individuals took part in the latest Devon Bat Survey.

How can you help?

- Make your garden wildlife friendly - visit [devonbatproject.org](http://devonbatproject.org) for help and tips
- Take part in the Devon Bat Survey (runs from April- September 2020)
- Encourage your town or village to become a bat friendly community

This year the OVA donated the proceeds of the Christmas party raffle – a sum of £301 - to this project.

***Editor***

## **Walk Reports**

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

### **Tipton West Bounds – 10<sup>th</sup> January**

A rare dry, sunny morning attracted a large group of 24 keen walkers for the first OVA walk of 2020. After a briefing from our walk leader, checking that we were sensibly shod and ready for the mud on the paths ahead, we set off northwards along the River Otter path. The first question in Haylor's New Year's Quiz concerned a 28 Kw Archimedes Screw turbine at Tipton Roller Mills. Other cryptic clues and questions followed during the morning's walk.

We'd been warned that the first half of the walk was all uphill, but it was fairly gentle, following the ancient ecclesiastical boundary of the parish along a green lane towards Heathlands. Eventually we emerged on Venn Ottery Common, with wonderful views of the Otter Valley below us. We were even able to admire some early snowdrops; the first signs of Spring. After skirting Aylesbeare Common, (the

habitat of Dartford warblers and nightjars, yet another quiz question!) we picked up a short section of the East Devon Way and then wended our way through Southerton and down to the river through a very muddy meadow to Harpford Bridge. From there it was a speedy, flat walk along the west bank of the river with the thought of lunch at the Golden Lion at Tipton St. John spurring us on!

Thanks to Haylor and Ruth for leading this interesting walk and for keeping us all amused with the quiz as we enjoyed a New Years walk on such a beautiful day.

### ***Rosemary Hatch***

## **From Otter to Peak – 22<sup>nd</sup> January**

On a still, grey winter morning with the Otter Valley shrouded in mist, eleven walkers met on the Green at Otterton. Our walk leader Ross explained that the footpath at Chockenhole Lane was so muddy, due to the recent rain, that it was not passable and that he had been forced to re-plan the route at the last minute. Our revised route took us southward, beside the river Otter, towards White Bridge and we soon saw evidence that the beavers had been at work there recently. A little further down we stopped to watch a dipper who was perched on a branch of a fallen tree, there was a striking contrast between the white bib and the darker feathers as it bobbed up and down searching for food.



We joined the coast path at White Bridge and started a slow steady ascent. When we reached Otter point, one of our group told us that we were almost on top of a possible Roman villa. A single piece of tile had been found on the path in 1988. The excavations carried out in 1989 produced evidence of at least two buildings, an oven and evidence of land management, but lack of funding meant that the excavation work could not continue.

Just before we stopped for a welcome cup of coffee, we noticed a group of 30 or so small brown birds who took off into the air as we approached, we thought they may be meadow pipits, but I have since been told that linnets also frequent that particular spot. We noticed that the sea was as still as the air and with the low-lying mist the landscape appeared to be almost mystical.

The group grew gradually quieter as we climbed the hill approaching Brandy Head. We paused for a moment in the WWII observation hut, speculating as to what it might look like once the planned renovation was completed. We learned that as well as being used to test new aircraft-mounted cannon and gun sights, Home Down to the east provided an emergency landing strip for RAF aircraft which was served by its own fire tender.

We continued along the path towards High Peak, as we got closer it was evident that the mist would have obscured any view from the top and that the original walk would be better enjoyed, at a later date, on a clearer day. We turned left off of the coast path and headed towards Stantway Farm, this was the muddiest part of the walk and once we were on the road walking down the hill towards Otterton village, we looked for puddles deep enough to clean our boots in.

***Linda Lowes***

## **Exeter Green Circle the other way round - Part 2 – 31<sup>st</sup> Jan**

I was particularly looking forward to this walk as I had really enjoyed walking “Part One” on 6<sup>th</sup> December last.

A group of seven assembled from all points of the compass via three bus stops and the some at the start point. Starting in the centre of Exeter was perhaps less attractive to some, such as yours truly, who enjoyed some shopping on the way home after part one.

The weather was mostly dry, and views were good – particularly looking across the Exe valley during a stop for coffee etc. We set off past the General Redvers Buller statue across Bury Meadows Park and passing some historic Oaks by the entrance. After heading into the edges of University territory we turned easterly into more leafy areas and briefly stopped on green land by stepping off our main track for our break. This was where the views were very good.



We then turned southerly into Mincing Lake Walk where we stopped at St Katherine's Priory for a light lunch. This proved to be like the Curate's Egg as we had not expected our modest orders – mostly bacon baps – to take so long. Although we were there for nearly two hours, I was pleased to see the inside after passing the Priory when it was under renovation on a similar walk a few years ago. The model railway club displays upstairs were interesting and they are building a 1000-yard ride on miniature steam railway in the grounds which is planned to be open by this summer.

After the unexpected delay we then heading fairly briskly through Ludwell Valley Park to catch our bus home in Topsham Road. Pleasant walking much of it alongside a brook. Although we were out for longer than planned the weather held well despite a mixed forecast.

***Andrew Beresford***

## A Walk of Two Promenades – 17<sup>th</sup> February

Whether it was the forced confinement following days of high winds and incessant rain (courtesy of Storm Dennis) or the prospect of being encouraged by the unfailingly cheerful walk leader, 14 brave souls broke cover to risk the windswept coastal path from Budleigh to Exmouth. We were warned that it would be very, very muddy and we'd be walking into a prevailing wind. Nevertheless, off we went, after a brief discussion on the merits of reversing the route (apparently against the rules!) and at a blistering pace.



After Jubilee Meadow it did indeed get extremely muddy but worse was to come on the descent from West Down Beacon to Sandy Bay, after enjoying the terrific 360 degree views from the trig point. We slithered and squelched into the caravan park, where we stopped for coffee in the children's playground. The weather held and we struck off again towards Exmouth, stopping to admire the Needle at Orcombe Point. This is the most westerly point of the Jurassic Coast which stretches from here to the Old Harry Rocks in Swanage. The "Needle" is constructed of Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous rocks, spanning approximately 180 million years (the Mesozoic era) of the Earth's history. A short bus trip took us back to Budleigh, with an unexpected bonus of sunshine.

**David Hatch**

# The Otter Valley Association

## **Executive Committee (01395)**

Chairman	Bob Wiltshire	444395
Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	Penny Kurowski	742942
Hon Treasurer	Jon Roseway	488739

## **Committee Chairmen**

Natural Environment	David Hatch	01392 444290
Planning	Nicola Daniel	445960
History	David Daniel	445960
Events	<i>vacancy</i>	

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

Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	446077
East Budleigh	Jon Roseway	488739
Otterton	Pat & Geoff Porter	567055
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacancy</i>	
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786

## **Other Executive Committee Members**

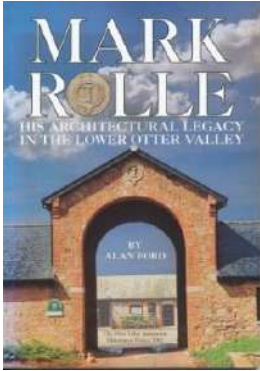
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Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

## **Other Contacts**

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**Publications:** Visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) or email [info@ova.org.uk](mailto:info@ova.org.uk)

## 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 overview of how a large landed estate was managed in the last 40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

£4.95 from Budleigh Salterton Tourist Information Centre

Or visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)



#### **Twelve Walks in the Otter Valley.**

The area of the Lower Otter Valley is covered by a network of footpaths, mostly waymarked and in good condition. OVA members have compiled these walks, each with clear directions and illustrated with a sketch map. They range from 4 mile easy walks to a more energetic 9½ miler. There are notes on places of interest to whet your appetite for further exploration.

£3.00 from Budleigh Salterton Tourist Information Centre

Or visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)

### **Leaflets**

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