

# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

PO Box 70 Budleigh Salterton EX9 6WN

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



*Braunton Burrows Visit. See Page 23*

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## Contents

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
Chairman's Message	1
From the Editor	2
Built Environment	3
Natural Environment	5
Events Committee	12
Christmas is coming	15
Diary Pull-out	Centre
Walkers and Travellers	17
Competition result	22
Walks Talks and Event Reports	23
Application Forms	31
Books and Maps Cover	Inside Back
Contacts	Back Cover



## Chairman's Message



What a busy spell we had earlier in the year and with some lovely weather! Two members participated in all four events and I would like to add my thanks to theirs (See page 12). The Local History Workshop with Dr Todd Gray was a great success and all credit to David Daniel for recruiting such an eminent speaker to celebrate the launch of OVApedia.

We do need someone to take on the role of Talks Planner in which Alan Huddart has been doing a brilliant job in addition to being Webmaster. We are very grateful to Clive Bowman who has volunteered to take on the technical role of dealing with projectors and microphones on the evening of a talk. Other Events Committee members have a rota for being on the door and collecting the admission fees so the vacancy only involves organising the talks programme by booking the speakers and the venues. You would need access to email and would be a member of the Events Committee. If you are interested in this role or in helping in other ways please contact me or Nicola Daniel, Events Committee Chairman (contact details on back cover).

There is an amendment to the published talks; Kimmo Evans of the AONB team will be speaking on 25<sup>th</sup> November at East Budleigh Village Hall. Looking ahead we have the OVA Christmas Party at Woodbury Park which proved a popular venue last year but we do need you to book early (See page 15).

We are already planning the first outing of 2010 to Sidbury Manor on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March. As numbers are limited to 25 we have booked two consecutive days for a guided tour of the impressive Victorian House and the extensive gardens which will be full of spring bulbs and at my favourite time of the year. Full details in the January newsletter.

It has been a busy summer for the Association and the actions we have taken in relation to the planning application to demolish the historic Longboat Café and publicly owned shelter, replacing them with a two storey structure, are reported on page 3.

**Helen Tickle**



## From the Editor



Summer has been and gone, with some good weather and some bad. A little like events in the valley.

In this edition we have a report on the OVA's stance on the Longboat Café planning application as well as quite a few articles about our natural environment. Caroline Allen's weather forecast has been restored to its previous length following a significant number of emails and comment that I received.

Feedback, good or bad, is always welcome. If you tell me what you like or don't like then the least I can do is listen. As I said in my last editorial I cannot operate in a vacuum.

You may have noticed that there is a structure emerging in the Newsletter; the first articles are always those that come from the main committees of the OVA. The Built Environment, Natural Environment, History and Events. The latter part of the Newsletter is always reserved for reports on past events and between them are articles which are of more general interest. I hope that you agree with me that this gives a consistency to the Newsletter. However if you have any suggestions for improvements then do please let me have them.

I was particularly pleased to receive Haylor Lass' contribution (*see page 18*) because it is one of only a few responses to the challenge that I set out at the 2007 AGM for the most innovative journey undertaken using a bus pass. It is exactly what I had in mind when I set the challenge.

One thing that has been a part of the Newsletter for as long as I have been a member, is Jed Falby's sketches. I know that Jed does them for himself not for the OVA *per se* but his generosity in providing illustrations commenting on and illustrating so many of the OVA's events is often simply accepted. I would like to say thank you on all our behalves. You can see Jed's sketches in his report on the walk he lead and in Christopher Briscoe's report of the Canal Cruise. Long may they continue.

**Nick Speare**

## Longboat Café.

Many residents and visitors wrote to EDDC to express their views on the planning application to build a two storey restaurant. With a frontage of 90 feet, topped by an aluminium roof and balcony overhanging the SW Coast Path, the new building requires the demolition of the Victorian Longboat House and publicly owned shelter and viewing platform.



If built, it will have a significant impact on Budleigh Salterton's seafront. However, opinions differ on whether it would be an enhancement or an intrusion.

Mindful of its constitutional objectives the OVA opposed the plans for this high impact site. The Built Environment Committee expressed its opposition and reported back to the Executive Committee. We were advised to seek listed building status via an application to English Heritage but that was turned down on the grounds that alterations to the building had already diminished its historical significance. At the time of writing we are investigating whether there any justification for requesting a review of the recommendation made by English Heritage.

I attended the Development Management Committee meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> August and spoke as OVA Chairman emphasising the sustained objection from Natural England, the statutory consultative body for a World Heritage Site. I also drew attention to the disregarded recommendation for a Visual Impact Assessment to be carried out. This would have been an objective analysis of the effects of the proposed building and is regarded as good practice for significant sites.



Many who attended the

## Built Environment

meeting felt that the important arguments for and against the proposal had not been fully discussed and the meeting was not effectively chaired.

The decision was deferred for further details to be clarified but the scale and mass of the proposed building was accepted.

**Helen Tickle**

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### **PhD Student needs your Help**

In the autumn of 2008 at University College London, I completed my Masters dissertation about walking in the southern England locales of the Jurassic coastline (a Site of Special Scientific Interest), Fleet, Hampshire, and Greenwich Park, south east London.

In conjunction with the East Devon Pebblebeds Project (<http://www.pebblebedsproject.org.uk>) I am now researching contemporary engagement with the ancestral landscape of the Pebblebed heathlands as part of my PhD. I have a number of areas of interest, for example, why people choose to spend some of their leisure time here; what pastimes are conducted; how individuals feel about the landscape, its history and ecology; whether they have a favourite common (Aylesbeare, Bicton, Colaton Raleigh, Dalditch, East Budleigh, Harpford and Woodbury); people's memories of these heathlands; how the practice of use has changed in living memory; and whether these heathlands hold meaning or significance for those who use and appreciate this beautiful landscape.

I would very much like to hear the views of those members of the Otter Valley Association who enjoy spending time on the heathlands and am looking forward to joining you on some of the walks appearing in your Association's calendar. If you are interested in speaking with me please can you contact me? My details may be found below.

Kate Cameron-Daum

Email: [kcdaum@hotmail.com](mailto:kcdaum@hotmail.com) T 01344 761998 M 07971366071

## Climate Change & Prince Charles' Rainforest Project



2009 is a crucial year in the international effort to address climate change and it will culminate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, 7-18 December. The conference has participants from 192 countries and its aim is to formulate an international agreement on climate change that will be more comprehensive and much more ambitious than a previous agreement, known as the Kyoto Protocol. This new agreement will include the USA, China and India. As well as imposing limits on greenhouse gas emissions from industrialised countries, it will encourage developing countries to limit their use of carbon-intensive energy sources. Gordon Brown has suggested that the industrialised countries should club together to provide a fund of 100 billion dollars per annum to assist them.

A substantial part of this fund could be used to save the planet's rainforests. In the fight against climate change there is nothing more important than saving rainforests. Every year the destruction of tropical rainforests releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than all the emissions from transport, i.e. cars, aircraft and ships put together. Moreover, tropical rainforest absorbs almost 20% of man-made emissions of carbon dioxide. Reducing tropical deforestation and preventing the release of carbon emissions into the atmosphere is the most cost effective way of mitigating man's effects on the climate and has a larger and more immediate impact than any other option.

## Natural Environment

Recognising that it is in everyone's interest, The Prince's Rainforests Project has developed a proposal for emergency funding to help protect rainforests and to use incentives to encourage rainforest nations to continue to develop without the need for deforestation. The goal is to achieve a relatively fast and certainly significant reduction in tropical deforestation by helping rainforest nations to focus instead on alternative, more environmentally friendly (low-carbon), economic development activities.

The project has developed a Rainforest Declaration which has been signed by many industries, non-profit communities and environmental organisations, including OVA. The document and its signatories will be presented to the Copenhagen conference in December 2009. The following is an extract from the Declaration:-

*“The financial resources needed to implement this programme must be urgently mobilised. The rainforests provide benefits and services of planetary significance, and therefore all countries have responsibility to act, while recognising the sovereignty of the rainforest nations over their natural resources and territories. The industrialised countries, because of their economic wealth and ongoing consumption of resources that in part cause deforestation, should adopt a leadership position. In addition to reducing their own carbon emissions and making changes to their consumption patterns, we call on the wealthy nations to therefore allocate substantial new money aimed at halting the loss of the tropical rainforests.”*

For the full Rainforest Declaration, and much other information, visit the Rainforests website at [www.rainforestsos.org](http://www.rainforestsos.org), where you can also sign up as an individual supporter.

**Norman Crossland**

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## **RATTY'S BACK**

### *Water Voles Return to East Devon's River Tale*

Just a hundred years after Wind in The Willows, water voles are sadly extinct in most of Devon and Cornwall. However, thanks to the efforts of local environmental charity the Tale Valley Trust, 'Ratty' is now well

## Natural Environment

and truly back in East Devon's River Tale. After ten years of river restoration and bank-side habitat enhancement, and with the cooperation and enthusiasm of the farmers and the local community, the eight mile river corridor is once more a haven for native wildlife.

The results have been extraordinary. According to Environment Agency surveys, fish-life has increased ten fold since 1999, and in recognition of this success in 2005 the Tale Valley Trust won the national Brown Trout Conservation Award. By fencing cattle away from the river other than at designated crossing and drinking points, banks are no longer eroded, river weed and spawning beds are not trampled, and nesting tunnels and burrows are not crushed. As a result, insect life has increased, allowing fish, birds and mammals to thrive. Dippers and kingfishers are nesting, otters have repopulated the entire valley, and reptiles and bats are benefiting too.



However, there is still one villain in the plot. The Tale Valley Trust is striving to keep out Himalayan balsam. This is a tall, decorative bank-side annual plant with pretty pink flowers and explosive seed heads. But it is non-indigenous and, most importantly, highly invasive. So each year in July, Trust volunteers journey the length of the river removing by hand every balsam plant they see.

And so it was that during this year's balsam days a really exciting discovery was made: the presence of water voles along almost the entire river corridor. Burrows, runs, feeding stations and latrines were abundant, most of the clay pad monitoring rafts showed signs of voles, and there was no trace of their enemy number one – the mink. There was evidence too of otters along the entire stretch – slides, claw marks in the clay banks, pad marks in the soft mud verges, and spraints or territory markers at regular intervals.

The Environment Agency's fisheries, recreation & biodiversity team leader in Devon, Emma-Rose Herrera, said: "We're delighted that water voles are thriving on this stretch of the river and that conservation action on the ground is helping to create the habitat they need. They

## Natural Environment

are still one of our most threatened mammals and we need landowners and organisations like the Tale Valley Trust to help us ensure their future survival”.

For more information see [www.talevalley.com](http://www.talevalley.com).

**John-Michael Kennaway**

### **Not only Ratty but also Baby Beavers**



The waiting is over: the pair of European Beavers at Escot Park has produced two babies, known as kits. The parents were originally from Bavaria and are now three years old. They met for the first time in 2007 when they were introduced to their two acre home of ponds, grassy banks and woodland at Escot Park since when they have become inseparable.

But when would they become

parents?

Hopes were raised at the end of April when they built a new dam on their stream. Beneath, in the deep pool created by the new dam lay the entrance to a well disguised new lodge whose main chamber was up above ground, well covered by branches and vegetation.

At the end of May we heard shuffling within the lodge and just once or twice puppy-like yelps as if someone was vying for a feed. Neither parent was travelling far from the lodge, at least not during our twilight group beaver watches. Just once we saw the female's tummy as she reached up to nibble some willow leaves and we could see that she was lactating. By mid June she was dragging willow branches and soft rushes into the lodge. This meant that the weaning process for the kits

## Natural Environment

had probably begun because beavers are fully vegetarian, eating soft cellulose in summer (grass, bank side water plants and leaves) and then gradually switching to hard cellulose during the autumn (roots, tubers, tree bark, and wood).

Then on 23rd June in the early evening their keeper spotted a kit on the edge of the pool immediately outside its lodge. He watched it for ten minutes or so, no parent in sight, before it swam out in front of the lodge. There, after a couple of failed duck dives, he saw it master the technique and disappear back into its lodge.

For several days there were no further kit sightings, although both parents were seen regularly each evening. Then just before dark on 7th July, Escot's owner John-Michael Kennaway noticed what seemed to be the two adults grooming each other on a bank. When the male slid into the water the female remained, and there, now visible, was a kit suckling from her. Watching, enthralled, Mr. Kennaway was suddenly aware that although the male was in the pool in front of him, there was now a fourth, smaller head swimming straight towards him. Within moments this little beaver, resembling a wound up clockwork toy with a flat paddle sewn on behind, scuttled up the bank within feet of him, slid down the other side, and with a 'plop' disappeared under water back to the lodge.



European beavers are extinct in the wild in Britain but there are moves to reintroduce them to our waterways. Meanwhile these endearing nocturnal creatures can be seen an hour before dark by booking an Escot Beaver Watch appointment.

Contact Escot Park on 01404 822 188. [www.escot-devon.co.uk](http://www.escot-devon.co.uk)

**John-Michael Kennaway**

## Management of the Pebblebed Heaths

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths cover about 3400 acres and are the largest block of lowland heath in Devon. Most of this area has been



designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in recognition of the distinctive heathland habitats containing many unusual and rare species of plants, invertebrates and birds.

The heaths were created in ancient times by the clearance of woodland followed by management techniques such as grazing and burning, removing of turves, bracken and scrub, thus preventing the re-establishment of the original woodland. The heaths are no longer exploited for grazing, firewood and other resources on which the local communities once depended. However, without some kind of management they would lose their unique character and value as wildlife habitats and revert to scrub and woodland. The heaths are mostly owned by Clinton Devon Estates and their management is now the responsibility of The Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust and RSPB. The aim of the present management is to maintain favourable conditions of lowland heath habitats and to achieve this requires:

- Ongoing control and management of woodland, scrub, gorse and creation of bare ground
- Management of plant communities to achieve a mosaic of habitats
- Control of spreading grasses at the expense of heath communities

## Natural Environment

- Provision of a range of facilities to improve people's enjoyment and appreciation of the heaths
- Managing visitor pressures to minimise the impact on wildlife and the environment

Choices have to be made about which management techniques to use in future and where to use them. The options have been fully described in reports prepared by Footprint Ecology, a consultancy commissioned by the Trust. No decisions on future management have yet been made. The Trust, together with Natural England and RSPB are keen to get the views of local communities, organisations and users of the commons before making any choices. To this end, management choices have been summarised in leaflets that have been widely distributed in the local area and they have also been explained at a series of open days held at car parks and village halls in August and September. Drop-in days will be held in October at:

October 10<sup>th</sup> Newton Poppleford Village Hall

October 17<sup>th</sup> The Church Rooms, Woodbury

October 24<sup>th</sup> Salem Chapel, East Budleigh

After studying the reports presented by Footprint Ecology and the views of organisations and people during the current consultation exercise, the Trust, together with RSPB and Natural England, will present its plans for the future management of the Pebblebed Heaths.

**Norman Crossland**

## Events

### It's Nice to be Appreciated

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009

Miss Helen Tickle,  
Chairman,  
Otter Valley Association,  
PO Box 70,  
Budleigh Salterton,  
Devon.  
EX9 6WN

Dear Helen,

Please accept our thanks and congratulations to the Otter Valley Association for organizing four excellent events in the past two months which we enjoyed very much.

The evening spent looking at bats was informative and well presented, the visit to Blackhills Quarry gave an insight into an industry which had been going on right on our doorstep, the field trip to Braunton Burrows with Tegwyn Harris was a wonderful follow up to his earlier talk and the Exeter Canal Cruise provided a relaxing day on the boat as well as seeing the workings of the canal.

Would you please pass on our thanks to all those involved in the planning and organization of these events.

Yours sincerely,



David & Rosemary Huggett

The Events Committee does a wonderful job, often behind the scenes, to provide us with a programme of Walks, Talks and Events which for many are the core of what the OVA has to offer. I would like to join the Chairman and David and Rosemary Huggett in acknowledging their efforts.

Ed.

## Heavens Above! The Alternative Weather Forecast

Batten down the hatches! This may turn out to be one of those autumns better remembered than experienced. We could be in for a boisterous season this year when the Otter Valley's reputation for enjoying an exceptionally mild and temperate climate will be punctured by several sharp and turbulent squalls. The main theme is 'wind' of which we will get a lot, ranging from draughty to downright bracing! We haven't seen the last of the gales and I think we must also be prepared for a hailstorm, a hurricane and possibly even a blizzard before the end of the year!

All is not doom and gloom, however, and rest assured we should enjoy some bright and wonderfully invigorating days contrasting with delightful interludes of mist and mellow fruitfulness in the coming months. Although come to think of it, must and mildewed mouldiness may be the most remembered description as damp and disgruntled OVArians disport themselves amongst the raindrops this autumn. A forecaster's lot is not a happy one when the bearer of wet tidings.

October will splutter in spitting and blustering, but on the bright side we will enjoy some wonderful cloudscapes if perhaps lacking Tiepolo's cavorting putti. There should be a pleasant respite giving a mild and clement few days around the 4<sup>th</sup> but this could just be lulling us into a false sense of security, because conditions deteriorate into gusty showers once more from the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>, and then go downhill faster than Michael Fish on roller-skates when the wind whips up quite a storm in-between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully the latter part of the month should be drier than the first half although it will still feel briskly bracing from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. Mind you don't leave your umbrellas at home in the last week, although the rise in temperature may produce humidity which settles into romantically picturesque mist or fog rather than precipitation.

There are very disturbed atmospheric conditions as we go into November. Don't hold your fireworks party outdoors because frenzied winds could blow into a headline-making hurricane around the 5<sup>th</sup> drenching the sparklers and drowning Guy Fawkes. If I have read the

## Weather

signs aright, I am anticipating quite a storm with risk of flooding around bonfire night. A variable few days of fair weather and showers follows from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>, then difficult and gloomy undercurrents from 16<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> look like producing yet another gale! The skies should clear by the 24<sup>th</sup> however, before settling down into a welcome calm, quiet, misty and foggy patch.

December slips in meek and mild with fair weather and broken cloud. Expect rain between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> followed by a mixed few days of sunshine and showers. Note that a sudden reversal of temperature could result in a splattering of sharp hail or sleet in the third week of the month. I am reluctant to mention it as I don't want to be a party pooper, but feel I must warn you that travelling conditions look to be problematical over the Christmas period. The festivities could be hampered by erratic wet and windy weather and would you believe it but yet another heavy storm or possibly even a blizzard is in store for us during the last week of the year! I do hope Santa puts his thermals on, because unless I am very much mistaken, he will need them before the New Year! :-)

If you would like to read the autumn forecast broken down week-by-week, then go to my website at: <http://www.caroline-allen.co.uk/> and click on the button at the top marked 'Weather'.

I have also posted a short article there addressed to those curious readers who wished to know exactly how astrology 'works' entitled: "Heavens Above! Can Astrology *Really* Predict the Weather?"

Season's Greetings to All!

**Caroline Allen**



## Christmas is coming

This year the OVA is organising some events which we hope will make your Christmas go with a swing!

### Christmas Party Dinner

Last year's Christmas party was so successful at Woodbury Park Atrium Restaurant that we have booked this year's at the same venue on Wednesday December 16<sup>th</sup>. We will have a pre-dinner glass of wine, a choice of 3 meal courses sitting with congenial company in the splendidly decorated restaurant, a stimulating quiz, tremendous raffle prizes, and of course we will finish the evening with Ruth and Haylor Lass leading us in carol singing. The price will be £25.00 which is very reasonable for such a Christmas event.

On the form please indicate your choice of food and any friends you would like to sit with as we operate a table plan. Do not feel inhibited if you wish to come solo, there are others in the same position, we are a very friendly bunch of people and several of us spend an afternoon trying to make the best possible seating arrangement.

Please enter the restaurant through the main hotel entrance, not via the Leisure Centre.

We need to know the numbers by **October 26<sup>th</sup>** so please send your form in NOW. *See Page 31*

#### MENU

Homemade Leek & Potato soup with oven baked croutons, garlic oil & fresh chives **(S)** *or*

Smoked Chicken with spiced relish set on a bed of fresh herbs & rocket leaves **(C)** *or*

Scottish Smoked Salmon & baby leaf salad with a dressing of Crème fraiche, green peppercorn & lemon **(SS)**

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*Continued over*

## Christmas is coming

Roast Devonshire Turkey with a fresh sage & chestnut stuffing **(T)** *or*  
Grilled John Dory with braised fennel & chive butter sauce **(F)** *or*  
Field mushrooms baked with sun blush tomatoes, fresh spinach &  
toasted pine nuts finished with gruyere cheese **(M)**

*All dishes accompanied by garlic & thyme roast potatoes & fresh seasonal  
vegetables*

Christmas pudding with Devonshire clotted cream **(XP)** *or*  
Luxury ice cream & sorbet with a garnish of seasonal berries **(IC)**  
Bailey's crème brulee served with almond biscuits **(CB)**

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Fair Trade coffee & after dinner chocolates to finish

### Christmas Tree Festival

There will be a Christmas Tree Festival at the Temple Methodist Church, Budleigh Salterton, the weekend beginning December 4<sup>th</sup>. The OVA have booked a space and would like to decorate a tree in an ecological way by using discarded and recycled materials. I am sure I am not the only Blue Peter fan who likes to make "angels from loo tubes". If there are others in the OVA, young or old, who would like to help by making decorations please give me a ring- 445960.

### Boxing Day Walk

It has been suggested that some members would welcome a Boxing Day walk, so this year, for an experiment, I have persuaded my husband to lead one. We will start at 10.30 NOT the usual 10.00 and meet at East Budleigh Car Park for a gentle walk on the common. Our route will be determined by the weather but it will almost certainly be muddy underfoot. We will have lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh pub in East Budleigh but, as you will appreciate, the publican would like to know numbers. Therefore if you would like to join us for lunch will you please ring me by December 5<sup>th</sup> 01395 445960.

**Nicola Daniel**

OCTOBER - DECEMBER



**October 7, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Crook Plantation, SY057866. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Crook Plantation, Bearden Barn, Wheathill Plantation, Hayes Wood and Yettington.

*Walk leader:* Gordon Wilson, 01395 568594



**October 10, Sat – 10.00am. WALK (Easy)/Pub Lunch**

Tipton St John CP, SY092918. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Circular walk through varied scenery north and west of Tipton. Optional lunch at the Golden Lion.

*Walk leader:* Peter Hills, 01395 568576



**October 21, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)/Pub Lunch**

East Budleigh CP, SY065849. 4 miles, 2½ hours. Interesting town walk which includes a visit to the historical East Budleigh church. Optional lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

*Walk leader:* Stan Herbert, 01395 445113



**October 28, Wed - 7.30pm. TALK - Peter Hall Budleigh**

'The history, development and future for our National Parks'

*Speaker:* Dr George Wilkins (Distinguished Astronomer & National Parks speaker)



**November 7, Sat – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Four Firs CP, SY032864. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Blackhill Quarry, Hayes Wood and Woodbury Castle.

*Walk leader:* Stuart Lovett, 01395 443283



**November 11, Wed – 10.00am. Fungi WALK (Easy)**

Newton Poppleford Sports Ground CP, SY087900. Easy walk looking for and identifying fungi including waxcaps.

*Walk leader:* Marion Nalder, 01395 442176

OCTOBER - DECEMBER

*continued*



**November 18, Wed – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Joney's Cross CP, SY057898. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Pleasant circular walk on Harpford Common.

*Walk leader:* Robert Cartledge, 01395 576897



**November 25, Wed – 7.30pm. TALK (Note New Date)**

**East Budleigh Village Hall**

East Devon – A Living, Working Landscape

*Speaker:* Kimmo Evans – East Devon AONB



**December 2, Wed – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) Pub lunch**

Knowle Village Hall CP, SY052827. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Shortwood Common, Hayes Barton, Squabmoor, maybe muddy after rain. Optional lunch at the Dog and Donkey.

*Walk leader:* Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339



**December 5, Sat – 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

White Bridge SY076830. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Coast and river walk; coast path to Crab Ledge, Colliver Cross, Clamour Bridge, finishing along the riverside. May be muddy and/or exposed.

*Walk leader:* David Daniel, 01395 445960



**December 10 Thurs**

Final submissions for January Newsletter

**December 16 Wed - Christmas Dinner**

*Details on page 15*

**December 26 Boxing Day Walk**

*Details on Page 16*

*JANUARY - MARCH*



**January 9, Sat - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) / Pub lunch**

Knowle Village Hall CP, SY052827. 5½ miles, 2½ hours. Circular walk over the commons including a visit to Bystock ponds. May be muddy. Optional lunch at the Dog & Donkey.

Walk leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442631



**January 12, Tues - 7:30pm. TALK**

Ottertton Village Hall

“Beyond Old Harry” – the future for the Jurassic Coast

*Speaker:* Rod Lawrence



**January 20, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Peak Hill CP, SY109872, 5 Miles, 2½ hours. Along the byways of Bulverton, may be muddy.

Walk leader: Bettina Wilson, 01395 578450



**January 27, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Kersbrook (under railway bridge), SY069830. 5½ miles, 2½ hours. Along part of old railway track and back on coast path.

Walk leader: Shane Badham, 01395 567531



**February 3, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Four Firs CP, SY031863, 5miles, 2½ hours. Bicton, East Budleigh and Woodbury Commons, good views, may be muddy.

*Walk leader:* Jed Falby, 01395 445455



**February 17, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Budleigh Salterton Free CP, SY061821. 4½ miles, 2½ hours. Golf links, Knowle Hill Plantation, Dalditch common, Shortwood Lane.

*Walk leader:* Stuart Lovett 01395 443141

*JANUARY - MARCH*  
*continued*



**February 27, Sat - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate) / pub lunch**

Weston CP, SY166890. 5½ miles, 2¾ hours. Circular walk including the coastal path, starting on east side of the hill.

*Walk leader:* Peter Hills, 01395 568576



**March 6, Sat - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

White Bridge, SY076830. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Coast path (exposed), Monks Wall, Otterton, Park Lane.

*Walk leader:* John Jones, 01395 443651



**March 13, Thurs**

Final submissions for April Newsletter

**March 23, Tues - Visit to Sidbury Manor**

**March 24, Wed - Visit to Sidbury Manor**

*Full details in January Newsletter*



**March 24, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Squabmoor Reservoir CP, SY038843. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Commons and woods, tracks and paths. May be muddy and stony.

*Walk leader:* Brian Leveridge, 01395 443358



**March 31, Wed - 10.00am. WALK (Moderate)**

Joney's Cross CP, SY057898. 5 miles, 2½ hours. Harpford Common, Newton Poppleford, Dotton and Vennings Copse. Tracks and lanes, may be muddy and stony.

*Walk leader:* Gordon Wilson, 01395 568594

## A Word for Walkers Trig Points

In early July, I took a group of 16 OVA members on a walk around Aylesbeare Common. Our first point of call was the 'trig point' near Joney's Cross. Trig point is the common name for a "triangulation pillar". These are concrete pillars, about 4' tall, which were used by the Ordnance Survey (OS) in order to determine the exact shape of the country. They are generally located on the highest bit of ground in the area, so that there is a direct line of sight from one to the next. By sitting a theodolite (an accurate compass built into a telescope) on the top of the pillar, accurate bearings to nearby trig points could be taken.

In the vicinity of the Aylesbeare trig there are pillars near Woodbury Castle and at Beacon Hill some 2 & 3.5 miles away. This process is called "triangulation". A major project to map out the shape of Great Britain began in 1936. The network of trig points, with accurately known positions, led to the excellent OS maps which we enjoy today.

The trig point is represented on the OS map as a blue triangle with a dot in the centre. A number is usually along side it, e.g. 159 by the Aylesbeare one. This indicates that the top of the trig point is 159 metres (to the nearest metre) above sea level. This is not the sea level at Budleigh Salterton but at Newlyn in Cornwall! When mapping the country a constant starting point was needed for all height measurements and so the sea level, measured by a tide gauge in Newlyn, was averaged over a period of 6 years from 1915 to 1921. This gave 'Mean Sea Level' and all heights on OS maps are quoted as height above mean sea level. I don't know



who had this job but it seems like a right good one to me!

Some 22,000 trig points were built in the UK between 1936 and 1962. Nowadays, apart from a few trig points that were incorporated into the GPS network, they are no longer used for mapping purposes. In fact no maintenance work has been carried out on the majority of them since 1993. Frost, lightening strikes and erosion has taken its toll, and some are in a sorry state. The one on Aylesbeare is becoming overgrown by gorse but you can still admire it by going to Grid Ref SY055900 and where there is a splendid view of the Tumulus nearby.

Further information on Trig points and the mapping of the UK can be found at [www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) and there is even a club dedicated to trig point lovers details of which are at [www.trigpointinguk.com](http://www.trigpointinguk.com)

**Steve Hagger**

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### **Adventures with a Bus Pass**

I have been a fan of the X53 'Jurassic Coast' bus ever since the service was launched. What a great way to explore the wonderful coastline of East Devon and West Dorset – a day out in May to see the newly hatched swans at Abbotsbury; a coast path walk from West Bay to Charmouth with a leisurely pub lunch at Seatown; a lung-opening walk to the top of Golden Cap; or lunch in Beer with a gentle stroll over to Seaton for the return bus. I've even been for a lunchtime concert in Weymouth this summer. All this for the very reasonable price of a day explorer ticket, or, for those of a certain age, free with the bus pass. And it stops within 150 yards of my home in Newton Poppleford.

Last September our younger daughter married and settled in Hove, Sussex. This apparent discontinuity in my story is explained by the discovery that Brighton & Hove has a brilliant bus service (with electronic displays on all the stops giving updates every minute), and includes a similar long distance bus, the 700 Coastliner, Brighton to Portsmouth every half hour. So the seed was sown for a plan to visit daughter and new hubby using the bus pass.

Planning proved to be fairly time-consuming – there are no obvious direct bus services from Poole to Portsmouth. One needs to co-

## Walkers and Travellers

ordinate about six bus links either via Salisbury or Blandford Forum or Lymington. Even with the help of the exhaustively detailed TransportDirect website route planner one needs to pose the right questions – after all, as far as the computer is concerned, the obvious route is the Helston to Hastings National Express which does the lot in one fell swoop, but of course does not come for free on the bus pass.



So in mid August we set out with the aim of reaching Hove within a

day, although we knew we would have to break the return journey, since the timings did not fit. The X53 duly delivered us from Newton Poppleford to Poole, with those marvellous views of the coast, particularly from the hills above Chesil Beach, and pretty well on time despite the busy August holiday crowds. So time for a leg stretch and to spend 20 pennies (inflation!), and the bus to Ferndown. This ran late, so missed the connection to Ringwood – not a great concern, as we knew we had an hour to kill in either Ferndown or Ringwood, so we had a very nice (late) lunch and then caught the next bus to the gateway to the New Forest. We saw a lot of heather and a number of ponies on the next leg wandering through a drizzly Forest on a Wilts & Dorset bus to Lyndhurst.

Here, standing outside the Crown Hotel watching the holiday traffic clog, we were badly let down by Wilts & Dorset Bus. The connecting bus did not arrive, neither did the next one. The company's enquiry line gave a recorded message that they'd all gone home for the day. We were joined at the bus stop by a lady who took the last bus every day to go to

## Walkers and Travellers

work, but that one didn't come either. So by now 2½ hours behind schedule, we had to dig deep into our emergency fund to take a taxi and circumvent the next two planned bus legs. After that, the last buses of the day from Portsmouth to Worthing and Worthing to Hove were without incident and we achieved our destination within the day, being greeted by daughter at 11.40pm!

An easy partial return the next day in the sunshine along the Sussex coast, with the nostalgia of passing my birthplace and where Ruth & I had done our courting, to our Nephew's home, a half-hour bus ride north of Portsmouth. A delightful evening with his lively young family, followed by a good night's sleep on the sofa bed.



If you draw a straight line on the map between Portsmouth and Poole, it certainly doesn't include Salisbury. So next morning we took the local service back to Portsmouth Harbour, the FastCat to Ryde, two buses across the Isle of Wight, with time for a coffee at Newport, and a quick sprint down the pier to catch the ferry at Yarmouth for the crossing to Lymington. You get an enforced leg stretch here, as the pier is some 20 minutes brisk walk from the town centre. Then a wandering W&D bus that visits every housing estate to Bournemouth, an ice cream and the shuttle bus to Poole for a cup of tea and the last (very full) X53 back to Newton Poppleford, almost on time at 8.20pm. An exciting trip and very scenic, although some places on the route deserved more time for a proper exploration. One minor regret, the IOW ferries are not covered by the bus pass!

### Haylor Lass

Footnote: Haylor has emailed *"Wilts & Dorset Bus have since apologised wholeheartedly for stranding us in Lyndhurst and refunded our taxi fare; that's nice!"*

## Welsh Wanderer

Our first day walking near Abergavenny found us under blue skies and following part of the Three Castles walk. The whole route is nineteen miles so we decided to do a shorter version. I wanted to see the White Castle, the best preserved of three castles built by the English in medieval times that formed a triangle to guard the approach to the Welsh mountains when the English had won control of South Wales. After lunch in the Castle grounds we found our blue skies rapidly disappearing and were caught in a heavy shower only a kilometre from a pub!

The next day saw us crossing back into England to enjoy an easy walk along the Wye Valley. We viewed one of the famed beauty spots in the area Symonds Yat, where the Wye winds its way through a narrow gorge, swinging round in a great loop for five miles. We then walked along its restful banks for five or six miles. The following day we climbed the Sugar Loaf near Abergavenny. Well not all two thousand feet as the car park is almost half way up, but it was windy and cold at the top, despite being July and I felt pleased to have done it.

For a contrast we next enjoyed the equally delightful Usk Valley with a river walk in the morning followed by a visit to the impressive Raglan Castle. Built at the end of the Middle Ages it was soon modified into a more comfortable residence before being besieged in the Civil War and eventually falling to Cromwell's troops. We had intended to do some walking at Hay Bluff near Hay-on-Wye but the weather turned quite cold and we decided instead to have a relaxing day, which meant a little retail therapy for me in the town world famous for bookshops. The day was not entirely walking free as we later enjoyed a stroll along the pleasant Monmouth-Brecon Canal.

Our final day was a journey south to Caerphilly Castle, one of the largest in the UK and still very impressive. The Marquis of Bute, the richest man in the world in the nineteenth century, inherited the castle and set about partially restoring it. Work is still going on to-day and it is a central feature of the town, surrounded by a moat and set in parkland.

## Walkers and Travellers

Our walk commenced on Caerphilly Common and we walked to the other castle owned by the Marquis, called Castle Coch (or red castle). He found it a ruin and completely rebuilt it, so that it looks like a French chateaux on the outside, but a Victorian Gothic fantasy inside. His family, unsurprisingly, did not like it and rarely visited and he soon lost interest. Welsh Heritage now looks after it and all the other castles in Wales, a tremendous task as they apparently have more castles than any other country in the world. Despite disappointing weather we had enjoyed our foray into the land of Gwent.

**Sheridan Brenchley**

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### **The Round Table**

The Question was : What is the name of Helen's husband?

The Answer: **Roger**



Of the seven correct answers, the first out of the hat was.....

**Diane Gee**

Congratulations Diane! The book token will be with you as soon as possible.

## VISIT TO BRAUNTON BURROWS

On Saturday, 20 June, 22 intrepid OVA members headed northwards to Braunton, near Barnstaple, to spend a fascinating day on the extensive sand dunes that lie behind the beach at this point on the N. Devon coast. Our leader and guide was Dr Tegwin Harris whose extensive knowledge of both the flora and geography of that area was used to the full.



These dunes cover a vast area of about 4 square miles. We started back-to-front, that is we began with the mature dune vegetation on the inland side and then moved towards the sea, passing through less mature areas. Finally we arrived at the beach

where the first plants to colonise the sand, sea-couch and marram grass, could be seen doing their work. The going was hard in places as the dunes are high and sometimes steep with the tracks devoid of plant cover; it was frequently a case of three steps up and two sliding back.

We succeeded in identifying something over 40 different plants, ranging from common but spectacular ones, like the Evening Primrose, Viper's Bugloss and the beautiful Southern Marsh Orchid, to more unusual ones like the Marsh Helleborine, which unfortunately we were too early to see in open flower, and the pink-flowered sub-species of the Southern Marsh Orchid which is special to this area.

We passed a bank where we had the all-yellow-flowered Curtis' Sand Pansy pointed out to us and the tiny white flowers of the Purging Flax, which we were recommended not to eat! The ground here was covered with a moss, *Tortula ruraliformis*, which appeared brown, but when spat upon the leaves quickly opened up and turned green. Further on

## Reports

we came to a damp area covered in the pink flowers of Bog Pimpernel, quite unlike the scarlet form we know as a garden weed.

Before we stopped for our very welcome picnic lunch in an impressive natural bowl in the dunes called the Great Dune Slack, we were down on our hands and knees to admire the small French Toadflax, sown here in 1890 and unique to this habitat in the British Isles. We were



obviously not the first visitors here as the large tracks of wheeled vehicles were everywhere. These are doing serious damage to this fragile environment as once the delicate vegetation cover is destroyed it is difficult to get it established again..

On the way back we were searching for Yellow-wort and Intermediate Wintergreen which used to be common in parts of the dunes and Tegwin was puzzled and dismayed to find that they had apparently now disappeared. However we were rewarded by seeing one plant of Sea Stock and some Twayblade which apparently takes 16 years to come to maturity.

The grande finale and last 'eco stop' was a demonstration of the pollination mechanism of orchids. We were shown with a piece of grass how the two pollinia get fixed on the body of a bee, which was first observed by Darwin in his garden.

Because of the low tree scrub in this area the bus was invisible until we were quite close to it, but eventually all doubts and conflicting opinions were resolved and the compass and Satnav operators were relieved to find that they were not responsible for a wild goose chase.

We are grateful to Tegwin for sharing his love and knowledge of the area with us to make it such an interesting day.

*Photos © Mo Bowman*

**Margaret and Robert Sellin**

## EXETER CANAL CRUISE

Some 60 OVA members joined a larger number of “ordinary” passengers on 1st July for a trip up the Estuary and the Exeter Canal. Some OVA members have slightly jaundiced views of the good ship *Pride of Exmouth* from her habit of sailing painfully close to the bathing beach at Salterton and her gaudy livery (designed by local schoolchildren).

Your intrepid reporter can reveal that once aboard she is a well found vessel with excellent facilities, tasteful colours and an attentive crew. Our jovial skipper, Ian Stuart, advised us that it was going to be an exceedingly hot day and thought we might find it more comfortable on the lower deck. Most OVA members clearly felt that that was not the spirit that built the *Empire* and stayed firmly aloft.



We made a quick passage along Exmouth Sea Front to admire the former homes of the Ladies Nelson & Byron and the immense new Bowling Temple, now nearing completion. We then went smartly about and motored more sedately up the estuary. Initially the Skipper seemed anxious to flog off

every rotting hulk we passed to the OVA, but he later waxed informative and entertaining about the various splendid properties that front those shores, many invisible from any other viewpoint.

The boat exhibited a distinct list to starboard on the earlier part of the voyage, which was generally attributed to the stowage of the beer. It was noticeable that this defect lessened significantly as we approached the Canal (the Deputy Chairman was heard ordering his first pint almost before we had left the quay at 11am).

The Exeter Canal was the first to be built after the Romans left our shores, and was extended further down the Estuary in the 18th Century.

## Reports

It is thus of exceptional historic importance. Alas, as we approached Turf Lock two disasters overtook us simultaneously. The sandwiches ran out and the beer engine failed. Your reporter was thus reduced to a much stronger tittle than his wont on an empty stomach, which may well affect the lucidity of what follows.



We passed a number of very interesting vessels moored in the Canal and a good many birds, including many swans with their cygnets, a heron, cormorant, egrets and many kinds of duck. Turf Lock has been modernized, though

discreetly, but Double Lock is of an amazingly inefficient design, requiring huge quantities of water to fill the large basin between the gates and massive muscle power to shift them. Consequently it takes half an hour to pass. Between these obstacles we passed through the twin swing and bascule bridges at Countess Weir.

Opening these completely obstructs the traffic on the old by-pass, which builds up for some miles on either side. On the Skipper's advice we waved to the motorists to relieve their boredom, but elicited little response that can be reported in a family magazine.

The final (Tudor) section of the canal is narrow and winding. Ian informed us that we had a draft of 1 metre and as we were in the middle of a severe drought the canal might well be shallower than that in places and he expected to touch bottom (fortunately he was wrong).

There are some splendid views on the upper reaches, first of Topsham, then the Cathedral, other City towers and spires and Colleton Crescent.

We landed safely at Exeter Quay and ambled happily among the historic buildings there, which proved, thankfully, to be well stocked with sandwiches and other delights.

**Christopher Briscoe**

## **Local History Made Easy (and very entertaining)**

Local history research in the OVA area may never be the same again after a stimulating workshop led by Dr Todd Gray on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September. Dr Gray is well-known locally through his books and lectures and proved to be a lively and informative speaker

His brief was to guide participants through the maze of resources available for research into local history subjects. We found out that far from having to trail around local record offices and libraries with a notebook and camera, we were now in the era of local history made easy as so many of the sources were freely available online if you knew where to look. Thanks to Dr Gray we are now well-informed about where to access a huge range of fascinating material. He also advised aspiring local historians of the need to tread carefully as some of the material they uncovered could prove controversial or in some cases embarrassing to local families. He shared some of his own experiences in researching his books on 'The Blackshirts in Devon' and 'Devon and the Slave Trade' and the reaction of a family to his unearthing of a 300 year old scandal. It was clear that not everyone wants the metaphorical closet containing their family skeletons opened to public gaze.

Dr Gray had obviously researched the area carefully for his talk and provided numerous fascinating illustrations from the history of Budleigh Salterton. Few of us will forget the story of Lady Louisa Rolle burning her late husband's favourite things on the lawn at Bicton after being disappointed by his will, or the six children rescued from the rocks at Budleigh Salterton by fishermen who thought they were birds and had rowed out to shoot them. Heroic episodes like the rescue of the crew of the "Independiente" by launching the Budleigh Coastguard longboat were counterpointed by tragic accidents such as the death of William Baker while digging gravel or the lady who fell from the Western Cliff after a gust of wind ripped off her bonnet. Some episodes like the purchase of a tabletop made of polished Budleigh Salterton pebbles by the Lord Chamberlain after it had been commended by Prince Albert added a somewhat bizarre note to proceedings.

## Reports

Dr Gray emphasised the importance of local history in revealing contemporary social and moral attitudes. A lengthy saga of divorce, infidelity and disputed paternity in the 1850s highlighted the values of a long-vanished world, whilst the inveterate habit of Budleigh Salterton residents of writing letters to 'The Times' was illustrated by an appeal for money to be given to soldiers wounded in WW1. Budleigh's status as a retirement mecca also worked to its advantage. Many interesting people retired here including Thomas Nadauld Brushfield a 'lunacy specialist' who became an authority on Walter Raleigh and also led a double life as a children's entertainer "Ye Wizarde". Older Otterton residents may remember Frances Hermia Durham who retired after a pioneering career as a woman in the Civil Service and took a great interest in conditions in village schools as a member of Devon County Council's Education Committee.

Dr Gray's talk was followed by a lively question session after which David Daniel Chairman of OVA History Committee thanked him for a fascinating talk. He also took the opportunity to remind participants to

make their researches available on OVApedia and thus accessible to a wider audience. Several participants took the opportunity to continue the discussions with Dr Gray over lunch.



**Susan Tickle**

## Walk 5<sup>th</sup> September

"Water Always Wins" was the resigned comment of an Environment

Agency engineer. The River Otter proved him right (yet again) by changing our planned 5 Sept walk. We had planned to walk up the Eastern bank of the Otter to Ottery St. Mary, returning down the Western bank - but the river had other ideas and had pulled the Eastern footpath down into the water forcing a rethink.



So twenty-two of us started from Tipton St. John up through the narrow muddy path (no room to dodge the mud here) to the old Mill - now a beautiful wreck of a building with the skeleton of the old wheel still sitting in the leat.

Refusing the temptation of the inviting Eastern path, still in very





good shape at this level, we crossed the footbridge to the Western side and headed North.

Topped up by the recent rains the Otter was in full flow and its power only too evident in the erosion of its banks. The trees (still in full leaf) pulled down into the river bringing the bank (and the Eastern footpath) with them. The old footbridge washed away in previous floods with now not a stick left.

It took an hour and a half to reach Ottery St. Mary and their new (2000) footbridge where we all did an about-face and returned South - mostly on the old railway track which is a much faster path and so returned us to Tipton St. John on time and in time for a well-earned Social Lunch (Stilton Ploughman Please!).

**Jed Falby**

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### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2009 -Littleham Church**

Twelve walkers set off from Castle Lane in glorious sunshine for a pleasant walk together. As we crossed the golf course we began to see spectacular views and on reaching the coastal path it was clear enough to see beyond Berry Head. Care had to be taken in some places where there was cliff erosion.

On arrival at Littleham Church we not only studied Lady Nelson's grave and memorial but also looked for more obscure reminders of the past such as the Saxon scratch dial and the stained glass window of St Roch and his plague spot. The church was particularly beautiful as it was decorated for a wedding later in the day.

The walk continued through the extensive churchyard and along the railway track still in bright sunshine so everyone arrived back in high spirits.

**Hazel Harland**

Christmas Dinner Booking Form

**OVA Christmas Dinner - Wednesday 16 December 2009**  
**MENU**

Homemade Leek & Potato soup with oven baked croutons, garlic oil & fresh chives **(S)** *or*

Smoked Chicken with spiced relish set on a bed of fresh herbs & rocket leaves **(C)** *or*

Scottish Smoked Salmon & baby leaf salad with a dressing of Creme fraiche green peppercorn & lemon **(SS)**

\*\*\*\*\*

Roast Devonshire Turkey with a fresh sage & chestnut stuffing **(T)** *or*

Grilled John Dory with braised fennel & chive butter sauce **(F)** *or*

Field mushrooms baked with sun blush tomatoes, fresh spinach & toasted pine nuts finished with gruyere cheese **(M)**

*All dishes accompanied by garlic & thyme roast potatoes & fresh seasonal vegetables*

\*\*\*\*\*

Christmas pudding with Devonshire clotted cream **(XP)** *or*

Luxury ice cream & sorbet with a garnish of seasonal berries **(IC)**

Bailey's crème brulee served with almond biscuits **(CB)**

Fair Trade coffee & after dinner chocolates to finish



Please send me \_\_\_ tickets at £25.00 for the OVA Christmas Dinner. I enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_ payable to OVA and a STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

From	To
Name Address:  Phone Email	Gill Speare Pine Rise, 7a Bedlands Lane, Budleigh Salterton. EX9 6QH 01395 443944

**NB. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR MENU CHOICES AND SEATING PREFERENCES OVERLEAF**

# Christmas Dinner Booking Form

Large empty dashed box for booking details.



## Menu Choices

Name			
Starter			
Main			
Pudding			

If possible I/We wish to sit with:-

Large empty dashed box for seating preferences.

**Mark Rolle His Architectural Legacy in the Lower Otter Valley**



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**Historical Guide to the Lower Otter Valley**



£3.50 via your Rep (or plus £1.00 P&P)

**1842, 1890 and 1933 Maps of Budleigh Salterton**



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