

OTTER VALLEY
ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN
Newsletter
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OVA POBox70 Budleigh Salterton EX9 6WN

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Coast to Coast – the Photo Album

With thanks to Stella French for the pictures



This issue's cover "Fly Agaric mushroom" was photographed and produced by Mo Bowman

From the Editor

A wonderful summer, sadly, appears to be drawing to a close. Thank goodness that there is so much to look forward throughout the Autumn with a jam-packed OVA events programme including some very interesting talks organised by Geoff Lake.

Another sad fact is that, next May, our very able and committed Walks Organisers, Mike and Chris, will be 'retiring' and the search is now on to find volunteers to step into their walking boots – see below. The importance of walking to our members is clear as the statistics show that in the period 1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016 there were 85 walks covering 634 miles with an average attendance of ten.

Jacqui Baldwin

Walks organisers

When we accepted the role of Walks Organiser(s) at the AGM in 2013, we agreed to step down after a four year period, which will elapse in May 2017. Although we are thoroughly enjoying our responsibilities, we have always been clear in our view that, if an organisation is to remain vibrant and relevant to its members, it requires new enthusiasm, expertise and experience at appropriate intervals; in the meantime we are endeavouring to encourage our successors!

The role is not prescriptive and there is absolutely no obligation or expectation that the new Walks Organiser(s) will pursue an identical path. For example, an alternative model might incorporate your particular interests while working with others, perhaps in a small team. We have produced a list of the core tasks that need to be delivered, as well as a more aspirational Job Description for those who may have the time and energy!

If you would like to share your passion for walking with our members, receive a copy of the 'job' specification, or would just like to chat about the possibilities, do please get in touch. The clock is ticking!

We look forward to hearing from you.

Mike Paddison 01395 446 550; mike.paddison@me.com

Chris Buckland 01935 444 471; chris.buckland4@btinternet.com

Chairman's Report

In the last newsletter I described the FAB Link project – a plan to build a high voltage transmission link between France, Alderney and Britain, probably coming ashore at Budleigh Salterton. While the project manager has made firm assurances that all the cables will be underground, resulting in minimal environmental impact after completion, during the construction phase it is inevitable that there will be disruption as the area needed to lay cable is large. Two potential routes have been proposed from the landfall site at Lime Kiln Car Park, one running along Coastguard Road and Granary Lane, and the other up the western side of the estuary along the “Little Otter” footpath (Footpath 12). The alternative routes then share the same path from White Bridge continuing through fields and open countryside for most of the way towards a converter station near Exeter Airport. Full details can be found on the FAB Link site (<http://www.fablink.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FAB-UK-Draft-onshore-cable-route-plans.pdf>). To minimise the impact on Budleigh residents, my guess is that FAB is more likely to propose the estuary route. In July and August the project carried out public consultations, the OVA submitted comments requesting that footpath access be improved, and also that known historical dock and quay sites along the estuary be archaeologically studied before any cable excavation starts (see following article). In response to comments from the Environment Agency and the OVA, the project clarified that it is proposing a new all-purpose non-motorised user route along the alignment of Footpath 12. Rumour suggests that it might be raised above its current level. The actual planning application for the project is due to be submitted in December. We will continue to monitor the project as it progresses.

Another area of planning involving the OVA is the development of Neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood Plans give parishes the ability to influence development within their boundaries, in our area they are the planning level below the East Devon District Council (EDCC) Local Plan. In the Otter Valley several Neighbourhood Plans have achieved significant milestones in their development. East Budleigh is the furthest advanced, with their draft plan already reviewed by key stakeholders and currently with EDCC for further review. The Budleigh Salterton plan has been written by a team of volunteers with relevant experience and local knowledge, overseen by representatives from the Town Council. The Budleigh plan covers housing and the built environment, the natural environment, business and employment, community, leisure and wellbeing and traffic and transport. The OVA has been involved in helping develop the draft plan, with

particular focus on the built environment and traffic and transport sections. We hope that the plan will provide a vision for the development of Budleigh for the next 15 years or more. The proposed policies have been presented at displays in the town hall for public feedback. The plan now has a completed draft, which has been submitted to Budleigh Salterton Town Council for approval. The next step, assuming Council approval, is a review by key stakeholders in October and November. If all goes according to schedule the plan could be approved by mid-2017. More details about the Budleigh NHP are available online at: <http://budleighsaltertonnp.uk/index.html>

Can you help the OVA Executive Committee widen its focus? We have Executive Committee members from Budleigh Salterton, East Budleigh and Newton Poppleford, but none from Otterton or Colaton Raleigh. If you live in Otterton or Colaton Raleigh and would like to get more involved with the OVA, join us as a Village Representative. If you are interested contact me for more details (email rsrbioventures@aol.com), I promise it is not a big commitment in terms of time or effort, but would strengthen the Executive team.

Roger Saunders

Historic Quays on The Otter

The proposed estuary route of the FAB Link project will cut across the known Admiralty Charted locations of two of the historic Otter Estuary docking sites. The FAB Archaeology and Cultural Heritage impact appraisal doesn't mention these, probably because it is only in the past few years that Gerald Millington, Honorary Archivist to Clinton Devon Estates (CDE), has been able to piece together a history of the navigability of the Otter. This is now recorded in a series of articles on the OVApedia section of our website.

Essentially, the notion that the river Otter was barred to navigation by a cataclysmic storm in the 16th century is a myth. The silting up of the river is an historically continuous process and has resulted in a sequence of docks and quays being established seaward of the original ports of Otterton and Budleigh (East Budleigh) as this process has progressed.

In 1808 Lord Rolle had plans drawn up for a circular embankment to be built across and around the estuary mouth, construction began in 1810. Its purpose was to

New 'Heritage Trail' features East Devon Parks

The history of eight East Devon parks will feature in a new EDDC Heritage Trail as a result of funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Sharing Heritage' programme.

The Green in Budleigh, Canaan Way in Ottery St Mary, Sidmouth's Connaught and Blackmore Gardens, Beach and Manor Gardens in Exmouth, The Glen in Honiton and Seafield Garden in Seaton have all been selected as part of the project. Information boards on the history of each park will be provided and the Council will also distribute trail leaflets to libraries and visitor centres. As part of the scheme, EDDC's park team is appealing for local residents to send in photographs and share their memories of events that have taken place at these sites. If you have anything that may be of interest please contact the Streetscene team in Exmouth or email streetsceneops@eastdevon.gov.uk.

Walking away with the OVA in 2017: an invitation

We are pleased to invite OVA's walkers to our next walking adventure in the spring of next year, arrangements for which are as follows.

DATES: Thursday 23 March to Monday 27 March 2017, inclusive. (4 nights)

VENUE: Treloyhan Manor Hotel, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 2AL. Treloyhan is one of five Christian Guild hotels nationally (there's one in Sidmouth!), with ensuite rooms and all the usual communal games/facilities, including a licensed restaurant and café. The hotel will have been refurbished before we arrive.

COST: For B&B, an Evening Meal on Thursday and Sunday (we plan to eat out on Friday and Saturday), £246 per person for 4 nights. No single supplement!

The Coast Path is minutes away from the hotel and we will be walking every day. A deposit has secured the reservation of 5 double/twin rooms and 6 single rooms, which must be booked by 1 November.

If you would like to join a convivial group of OVA walkers you will be most welcome. **Please complete and return the application form overleaf.**

Friends of the Commons

Perhaps the most important conservation partner of the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust is the public itself. Thousands of local people visit Woodbury Common on a regular basis. They represent the eyes and ears of the Trust who are only able to respond to issues such as fly-tipping or illegal motor vehicle access due to information provided by the public.

The Conservation Trust has a Friends of the Commons group to keep local people notified about conservation work and ensure that the Trust continues to develop with public support. If you would like to receive updates on activities and help influence the future direction of the Conservation Trust please consider becoming a Friend. Membership is free and you'll be updated regularly by email, will be contacted directly about new initiatives, and will have the chance to enjoy one-off wildlife events only available to Friends.

To become a Friend or find out about volunteering opportunities please contact Kate Ponting: 01395 466918 kate.ponting@clintondevon.com

OVA AWAY IN 2017

Please complete and return the form below with a cheque or cash for the deposit of £50, to Chris Buckland, 4 Coppledown Gardens, Budleigh Salterton EX9 6QN, as soon as possible. Applicants will be processed on a 'first come, first served' basis and applications close on 31 October 2016. The balance of £196 per person will be payable by 23 January.

NAME(S).....

ADDRESS.....

..... **POST CODE**.....

EMAIL.....

PHONE..... **MOBILE(S)***

*If you are sharing accommodation, please provide a mobile phone number for each of you, for emergency use, while we are out walking. Thank you.

Please reserve me Double/Twin room.

Please reserve me Single room.

I enclose a cheque (payable to C R Buckland), or cash, for in respect of a deposit of £50 per person.

Museum of Jurassic Marine Life opens in Kimmeridge

Those with a particular interest in the geology of the Jurassic Coast will be pleased to note that the Etches Collection Museum of Jurassic Marine Life in the village of Kimmeridge, Dorset will finally open on 21 October.

The museum will house the remarkable collection of one man's passion, bringing to life stories from deep time through an amazing collection of marine fossils many of which are unique to science.



Kimmeridge gives its name to a period in the late Jurassic called Kimmeridgian, a significant period that encompassed much of Europe and beyond. Steve Etches collection of over 2,500 specimens including crocodiles, sharks, flying reptiles, corals, shells, insects, crustaceans, ichthyosaurs (picture above), belemnites and dinosaurs will be brought to life through an exciting visitor experience, housed in a purpose-built £5 million Heritage Lottery-funded building. Whilst exploring these amazing exhibits, CGI projections on the ceiling will give visitors the impression of being underwater some 150 million years ago. The visible workshop will enable people to watch Steve Etches as he cleans and conserves his latest finds.

The building also houses a dedicated education, study and research centre, the Wolfson Discovery Room and community space - all which feature the latest facilities for conferences, meetings, lectures or other special events.

Further information about this exciting venture can be found on the website of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Partnership www.jurassiccoast.org and at www.theetchescollection.org

Beaver family attracts visitors to the Otter

This summer the Otter valley has played host to the highest number of 'beaver-watchers' in England for centuries, thanks to a remarkable family. A pair of beavers near Otterton successfully bred earlier this year. The pair had been re-released in March 2015 on Clinton Devon Estate-owned land by a team led by Devon Wildlife Trust, as part of the River Otter Beaver Trial.



Mother with kits: Mike Symes DWT

Beavers only breed once a year and their average litter size is three. So the female beaver at Otterton has been hailed as a 'super-mum' after giving birth to five young, called kits, and successfully rearing all five throughout their first summer.

Unusually, the mother and kits spent many summer evenings in a highly visible part of the River Otter, upstream of Otterton Mill, apparently undisturbed by the large number of human visitors to 'their' riverbank. Crowds of 20 to 30 people gathered on evenings throughout July and August to see mum nursing her kits, kits engaging in play and mum fetching willow branches for the kits to be weaned on.



Super-mum: Mike Symes DWT

Visitors from Canada, New Zealand and London talked to Devon Wildlife Trust staff about hearing that there were beavers on the River Otter and setting out for the river in the hope of seeing the animals. So the beavers are adding another string to East Devon's 'nature tourism' bow.

Devon Wildlife Trust estimates there are now between 15-20 beavers living in the Otter catchment. At least one adult spent last winter exploring much of the area further upstream towards the headwaters in the Blackdown Hills, and along the tributaries of the Otter. This number of animals still remains a long way short of what the River Otter could carry.



Kits eating willow: Mike Symes DWT

At the time of writing in late September, the kits are showing more independence – although they will remain with parents throughout their first winter – and, as far as we can tell, all five kits are still thriving.

This unusually fecund family reinforces the views of beaver ecologists consulted before the start of the Trial that the River Otter contains very suitable beaver habitat and abundant food resources, and represents an ideal opportunity to study beavers in a modern English landscape.

But the beavers' influence on that local landscape remains subtle. During the day, one could easily walk the riverside footpaths from Ottery to Otterton – the area where most beaver activity is concentrated – and not be aware of their presence. There has been no damming of the River Otter, their lodges are discretely built into the river's banks and they have concentrated their feeding on bankside trees – almost exclusively the fast-regenerating willow - and other plants, including the invasive Himalayan balsam.

And on the evidence of the crowded riverbanks near Otterton this summer, there is still a great deal of enthusiasm and local pride felt towards the River Otter beavers by local residents of all ages.

**Dan Smith – Communications Officer
Devon Wildlife Trust**

Red Bridge question remains unresolved

A recent report from District Councillor, Val Ranger, indicates that no decision has yet been made regarding the future of the bridge over the Otter on the East Devon Way between Newton Poppleford and Harpford. The Parish Council and local residents had an engineering scheme drawn up by Soft Engineering Solutions which was reviewed by Devon County Council, the Environment Agency and local landowners. Everyone appeared to agree that the solution was to realign the shingle so the river went back to its former course and took the strain off the banks and bridge. The shingle would then be tied in and the banks protected with rock cushions, essentially mesh sacks filled with small stones that both protect the banks and allow flora and fauna to fill in between the stones. These give the river bank protection but are much greener than traditional rock gabions.

Subsequently, the County Council has indicated that the bridge may need renewing and the Environment Agency have blocked the moving of the shingle. The alternative would be to reposition the bridge at Webbers Meadow but this would require quite an expensive legal process to move the public footpath and involve a private landowner. As this bridge is an integral part of the East Devon Way and the only safe off-road route for local residents to cross from one village to another it is to be hoped that a solution can be found soon.

A Walk for Everyone – Autumn Programme 2016

The coincidence of the demise of summer, the arrival of autumn and the prospect of winter can play havoc with our emotional well-being. Should we be sad at the loss of those long, lazy days in the sun or melancholy for opportunities missed; revel in chilly, misty mornings with expectations of warm fruitfulness or be fearful of unknown climate record-breaking to come? Whatever your seasonal psychology, there is a perfect antidote: a convivial walk with the OVA!

Let's enjoy our very own Otter Valley and East Devon: learn more of the architectural legacy of Mark Rolle when Brian Turnbull sets out from Colaton Raleigh on 19 October, while Doug Cullen leads one of his Guided Bird Watching walks along the Otter on 19 November. Or simply focus on the variety of appealing landscape, as we head out from Colaton on 16 November with Mike Paddison, and return again on 3 December to start another of Brian Turnbull's walks; Newton

Poppleford hosts on 29 November with David Buss (You can leave your car behind and use the 157 bus to the start and to get you back!). Budleigh Salterton features in two walks: on 7 December Margaret Read will be hoping for good visibility, and Chris Buckland will be round and about the town on 18 January 2017 (Another year gone by!) We can't resist Colaton in this programme, and will be paying our fourth visit to the village, when Jon Roseway is back to take a walk on 25 January. Before then Newton Poppleford will be the setting for those traditional, tentative steps into a New Year, with Steve Hagger on 7 January. Ottery St Mary is very much part of the local scene, although often overlooked for a walk, so Ted Swan's visit on 11 January is eagerly anticipated. Finally, in this summary of local delights, a reminder that David Daniel will be providing pre and post-Christmas stress reduction walks, starting on the Commons at Wheathill on 26 November and at East Budleigh on Boxing Day. (Don't forget to book with David if you want lunch at the pub!)

As if all this wasn't enough, we also have the Jurassic Coast Path to step on to. Jon Roseway will be reminding us how awe-inspiring the Branscombe cliffs can be on 29 October, with more outstanding coastal views from Weston with David Buss on 22 November. Chris Buckland will be leading our annual, and only, walk to the West, visiting Orcombe Point, gateway to the Jurassic coast, on 14 December. We go East, to enjoy panoramic views and autumn colours from Iron Age hill forts, as we set off from the Dorset coast at Charmouth on 14 October with Mike Paddison and Chris Buckland. There is another Iron Age hill fort to inspect, when Iain Ure takes us to the Blackdown Hills on 25 October. Back to the coast on 9 November, when Chris Buckland invites you to test an alternative inland route between Seaton and Lyme Regis.

An appreciation of our stunning locality need not deny us the pleasure of exploring new terrain and being rewarded for the extra effort required to reach our destination or to challenge our resolve or fitness. For those who like to venture further afield, we will be celebrating our completion of Devon's Coast to Coast 117 mile trail with our triumphant arrival at Lynmouth on 10 October. Complete the adventure with us!

Given the advanced notice this Newsletter provides, it is a good idea to check the website for any late and unavoidable alterations to the walks schedule and travel arrangements.

Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison

Events Programme – October 2016 to January 2017

Monday 10th October, 10:00am – WALK

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 8.30am to share cars. Further transport details will be given on the website nearer the date.

“Devon Coast to Coast - Stage XII, Simonsbath to Lynmouth”

Start: Simonsbath, Ashcombe CP (OS Explorer OL 9, SS 774 394), 11.25 miles

Finish: Lynmouth, The Pavilion on The Esplanade (OS Explorer OL 9, SS 723 497)

Open common, rough paths, tracks, and wooded valleys. Please bring appropriate food and drink. Join us to celebrate the conclusion of this 12 month walk.

Walk Leaders: Mike Paddison 01395 446 550, Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

Friday 14th October, 10:45am - WALK

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground at 9.30am (OS 115, SY 088 999) to share cars.

“So much to see!”

Start: Charmouth Beach CP, (OS 116, SY 365 930), safe all day parking for £2.00, 10 miles, 5-6 hours.

A panoramic walk following the Wessex Ridgeway with extensive views over the Dorset countryside, taking in the iron age forts of Coney's Castle and Lambert Castle. Enjoy wall-to-wall autumn colours. Please bring a packed lunch.

Walk leaders: Chris Buckland 01395 444 471, Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

Wednesday 19th October, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Colaton Raleigh Church (OS Explorer 115, SY 082 872), 4 miles, 3 hours .

“A Mark Rolle Walk”

Mark Rolle's architectural legacy in the Otter Valley lies in the farms that he built and the many cottages he provided, often identified with the characteristic MR signature stone. Walkers will find out who he was, and what he did, by visiting a selection of his buildings in and around Colaton Raleigh.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull 01395 567 339

Wednesday 19th October, 7:30pm – TALK

Peter Hall, St Peter's Church, Budleigh Salterton

Richard Holladay will give an illustrated talk on Garton and King Ltd of Exeter.

The history of one of Exeter's last Iron Founders and family Ironmongers from 1661 to the present day. Topics include Victorian ironmongery, kitchens, stoves,

hot water and heating systems for homes, mansions and churches as well as 20th century foundry products, civil castings and the AGA cooker.

Tuesday 25th October, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Castle Neroche car park, (OS Explorer 128, ST 274 157), 8½ miles, 5 hours.

"Another Iron Age Hill Fort"

Castle Neroche, a 1 hour drive from Budleigh, is 3km north of the Eagle Tavern on the A303 just after the short dual carriageway road at Marsh. Alternatively, assemble at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899), to share cars for a 9:00am departure. Easy walking, mostly good tracks, with a short length of country road. The walk is mainly in the forest, adjacent to agricultural farmland.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568 158

Saturday 29th October, 10:30am - WALK

Start: Branscombe Village Hall, (OS 115, SY 1975 8872), 8 miles, 4½ hours.

"Bootiful Branscombe!"

Car parking at the Village Hall (donation requested). Anyone who can offer others a lift or needs one should contact the walk leader. The walk circles the centre of Branscombe giving good views of this charming village. It then follows the SW coast path eastwards to Branscombe Mouth for lunch at the Sea Shanty Café and continues via the Under Hooken to Beer. Returning along the cliff top (with impressive views of Lyme Bay on a clear day) completes a figure-of-eight. Paths are generally good but can be steep and/or rocky over short sections.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488 739/ 07887 936280

Wednesday 9th November, 11:00am - WALK

Rendezvous: Newton Poppleford village centre. (OS 115, SY 085 088) Free car park behind the church and at the Rec. Ground or arrive by local bus 157 from Exmouth or Sidmouth. Bus Stop opposite the War Memorial. Catch 9A bus, dep. 9.56am to Seaton arr. 10.52am.

Start 11.00: Seaton Marine Gardens (OS 116, 244 899), 8 miles.

"Not the Undercliffs"

When the cliff falls of 2013/14 closed the Undercliff coast path between Seaton and Lyme Regis, the South West Coast Path Association designated an alternative inland route. OVA walkers have already reacquainted themselves with the newly realigned coast path that opened in Spring this year, but the inland alternative remains to be tested! Join us for this inquisitive walk using

minor lanes, bridleways and footpaths through the Rousdon Estate, with its quaint Church of St Mary, Tudor Peek House, and All Hallows School; get up close to the awesome Cannington Viaduct; and tip-toe round affluent East Devon hamlets, with views of distant Dartmoor and Lyme Bay, and the promise of tea and ice cream to finish at Lyme Regis. Please bring a packed lunch.

Return 9A bus, dep. Lyme Regis Square 16.35 to N. Poppleford arr.17.54

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

Wednesday 16th November, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Colaton Raleigh, the Otter Inn (OS Explorer 115, SY 0778 8734), 6 miles

“Hawkerland before Lunch”

An ‘easy’ walk north, briefly by the River Otter turning west along green lanes, agricultural tracks and footpaths via Monkey Lane to cross the Hawkerland Valley, before returning to Colaton Raleigh and lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison 01395 446 550.

Saturday 19th November, 10:00 am - Guided Bird Watching WALK

Start: White Bridge (OS Explorer 115, SY 076 830), 2½ miles, 2 hours

A leisurely walk along the River Otter watching and identifying the arriving winter birds with Doug Cullen, Voluntary Warden of the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust. Please bring binoculars if you have them.

Walk Leader: Doug Cullen, 01395 567 574

Tuesday 22nd November, 10:00am - WALK

Start: car park opposite the Norman Lockyer Observatory (OS 115 SY 139 881), 6½ miles, 3 hours.

“Beyond Sidmouth”

Some strenuous sections along the SW Coast path, with outstanding coastal views, to Weston Mouth, Weston, the Donkey Sanctuary and Salcombe Regis. Please bring a picnic and/or enjoy refreshments at the Donkey Sanctuary.

Walk Leader: David Buss, 01395 442 621/07920 114 573

Wednesday 23rd November, 7:30 pm - TALK

Otterton Village Hall, Otterton.

Janet East from Yellingham Farm, Payhembury will talk about the trials and tribulations of running a small farm and will give us an insight into some of the hilarious characters who stay as B&B guests!

Saturday 26th November, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Wheathill Plantation car park (OS 115 SY 041 847) 3 miles.

“Improve Your Mood”

A short and sociable walk on the commons to relieve those growing pre-Christmas pressures.

Walk Leader: David Daniel 01395 445 960

Tuesday 29th November, 10:30am - WALK

A linear walk that starts and ends on the 157 bus route. Start: 157 bus stop opposite Back Lane (which leads to the Rec. Ground car park) (OS 115 SY 084 897), 7½ miles, 3 hours.

“The Lower Otter Valley”

From Newton Poppleford, we walk south along the west bank of the Otter Valley, cross the river to walk above and around Otterton to join the east bank above Clamour Bridge, then rejoin the west bank at White Bridge to reach the estuary, ending with a walk along the promenade to the 157 bus stop and/or a venue for lunch in Budleigh Salterton. Lovely views throughout.

Walk Leader: David Buss 01395 442 621

Saturday 3rd December 10:00am - WALK

Start: Colaton Raleigh Church (SY 082 872), 5 miles

“An ideal walk for a short winter’s day”

Down green lanes and over the commons, visiting Dotton, Goosemoor and Naps Lane. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull 01395 567 339

Wednesday 7th December, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Knowle Village Hall car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 053 828), 5 miles

“Views to Portland”

Along the old railway track to Leaford Plantation, up across the golf course to West Down Beacon at 129 metres above sea level, from where there are extensive views across the Exe estuary to Berry Head to the west and the Dorset coast and Portland to the east across Lyme Bay. Then downhill along the coast path to Budleigh, with an option to stop for refreshment, before using footpaths where possible to return to Knowle.

Walk Leader: Margaret Read 01392 759 332

Wednesday 14th December, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Knowle Village Hall car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 7½ miles

“Exploring the Western Front”

A largely level walk to Orcombe Point, the Gateway to the Jurassic Coast, using the disused railway track to Littleham Church and attractive rural paths. Distant views across the Exe estuary to Berry Head while we eat our lunch, before the gradual climb back along the coast path to West Down Beacon and views to Beer and Portland. (Yes, even in December... sometimes!)

Please bring a picnic. Optional lunch at the Dog and Donkey in Knowle, if it's open and we are back before it closes.

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

Monday 26th December, 10:30 am - WALK

Start: East Budleigh car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 066 849), 4 miles

“A Celebration”

Gentle Boxing Day walk across the commons at this time of good cheer

Optional lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

(Please telephone walk leader by 4th December 2016 to book lunch)

Walk Leader: David Daniel 01395 445 969

Saturday 7th January, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford Rec Ground (OS 115, SY 088 899), 6+ miles, 3 hours.

“Walk in the New Year”

A circular walk with one gentle climb. We use minor lanes and old tracks before joining the East Devon Way for a pleasant walk through quiet countryside.

Optional lunch at The Cannon Inn

Walk Leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442 631

Wednesday 11th January, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Canaan Way CP, Ottery St Mary [payment required] (OS 115, SY 095 995), 7½ miles.

“A walk to the site of an ancient conflict and a country park”

The walk heads north from Ottery and follows the River Otter, before crossing the A30 at Fenny Bridges, taking in Escot Park and the River Tale on the route back. Please bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Ted Swan 01395 567 450.

Wednesday 18th January, 10:00am - WALK

Start: OVA Jubilee Shelter on the Budleigh seafront, (OS 115, SY 067 818), 7 miles, 3 hours.

“Byways and Boundaries”

A devious figure of eight route along the alleyways and byways of Budleigh and its boundaries, including part of the old railway track and some of the coast path between Budleigh and West Down Beacon. Finish with an optional lunch in Budleigh Salterton.

Walk leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

Wednesday 25th January, 09:30 - WALK

Start: The Otter Inn, Colaton Raleigh (OS 115, SY 0778 8734), 8 miles, 4 hours.

“Pop goes the Weasel”

Bus 157 from Budleigh Salterton Public Hall (8:58) to Colaton Raleigh (9:20) for 9:30am start. Car parking at the Otter Inn.

This walk circumnavigates Newton Pop on river banks, footpaths, green lanes and quiet roads. We start out northwards along the River Otter to join the East Devon Way at Harpford Bridge. Then we climb gradually through orchards and heathland to Joney's Cross before descending to Stoneyford, along Naps Lane with rapidly increasing anticipation of a warming drink and/or lunch at the Otter Inn. No steep slopes, rough ground or steps.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway, 01395 488 739/ 07887 936 280

Saturday 4th February, 10:15am - WALK

Start: Stoke Cannon (OS Explorer 114, SX 9384 9793), 6 miles, 3 hours.

Meet at Exeter Bus Station at 9:45am. Outward via bus 55, dep. Exeter Bus Station 10:00am, arr. Stoke Cannon 10:11am.

“Two Rivers Way”

Walk north from the village along the Exe Valley Way to Burrow Farm from where we follow the banks of the River Exe to Bramford Speke where we will stop for coffee. We then head further west along the Devonshire Heartland Way, crossing several tributaries of the Rive Exe, to Upton Pyne. From this point we head downhill to the River Creedy whose banks we follow all the way to Newton St Cyres and lunch at the famous Engine pub & brewery. A short walk takes us to the A377 where buses run to Exeter every 15 minutes.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446 550

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.

A Summer Evening Stroll in Newton Poppleford – 5th July

On the most beautiful summer evening in early July, we gathered by the church in Newton Poppleford on the occasion of our first Summer Evening Stroll in the Otter Valley.

Decision making centred on what to leave behind, rather than on what to carry or to wear. No need for a fleece, or extra layers, or waterproofs; you could probably have worn your old school plimsolls such was the absence of loose stones, running water or mud. We were able to disregard our modern day obsession with ‘taking on fluids’, and leave (some) of our bottles behind, since our bodies would not be working hard enough, nor for long enough to need ‘refuelling’ on our two hour short saunter. However, we could not cast caution to the wind entirely, since there was none; instead the air was still, the sky was blue and the sun warm. East Devon had never looked so idyllic.

The usual fascination with bare knees and the ensuing conversation about the dangers of Ticks and Lyme disease enabled me to pass on my last information leaflet to a grateful (?) recipient.

Our comfortable four miles took us south alongside the Otter, north on Monkey Lane, and others less conspicuous, to Goosemoor, a cautious crossing of the A3052, then across a meadow (Ted says he saw a fox) and east to skirt Harpford Common. We entered the village by the back door and over the new bridge that “will never be washed away again”, to confront the last of Newton Pop’s once three pubs.

We had enjoyed the company of like-minded individuals, the gentle exercise, in perfect surroundings and perfect conditions, and when all the elements of a good walk are compatible, contentment is the result. If that were not enough to invigorate our endorphins, we sat in the pub garden refreshing ourselves, while we put the world to rights, and darkness began to close in.

Chris Buckland

Bystock Ponds to Hayes Barton – 19th July

For me this was a record...only one other walker, apart from Brian Gannon our leader, and me. And that person was, only one guess allowed...our walks joint mastermind. It just so happened that this particular day was the warmest yet this year, and this probably accounted for the low attendance. All I can say is that those who remained in the cool of home missed a beautiful walk.



We left the car park and walked down heather banked paths to the Bystock Pools, where we were lucky enough to see a terrapin reclining on a tree trunk. We met a nature lover and keen photography enthusiast, wearing around his neck one of the largest telephoto lenses I have seen, who kindly took a photo of us with Brian's camera. Then on to

Squabmoor Reservoir, where there were surprisingly no fishermen in residence, perhaps the heat had deterred them too. But there was plenty of birdlife and various types of dragonflies about which Brian showed a wide knowledge.

On the way we admired some marvellous sea views and then descended to East Budleigh where we had our picnic on the lawn next to the village hall and enjoyed the luxury of a slightly wobbly wooden table. After this, suitably refreshed, we made our way up the hill past the large malodorous pig farm, and past Sir Walter Raleigh's Hayes Barton, and then up to the Common again.

At one point, overlooking the Blackhill Quarry, we came upon another local nature lover, installed in his camping chair, who greeted us and said he had been sitting there for some time on the look-out for various types of butterfly, as recommended by a family member who had been lucky enough to spot them a few days earlier. He himself had had no luck and obviously welcomed a chat with us. After a short stop with him we then pressed on, water bottles getting low by now in the heat of the afternoon. We welcomed the shade provided by the beautiful woods until we finally emerged back at the parking area. It had been a lovely summer's walk, which was rounded off for me at least by seeing a grey squirrel sitting happily in the middle of Wright's Lane, not a care in the world. Thank you, gentlemen, for your company and to Brian for leading us.

Jacqui Ruhlig

The Magnificent Seven, or was it Eight?, still not sure – 27th July



On an idyllic morning for walking, twenty one people gathered at Woodbury Castle car park for the start of the annual eight commons walk. The composition of the group was about half visitors to the area and half regular OVA walkers. It was obvious that the Heath Week organisers had again done a very good job advertising the events.

The goal for the walk was to visit eight (seven known and one 'iffy' one) of the thirteen commons that are in the vicinity of Woodbury Castle.

Kate Ponting gave an introduction on the purpose and scope of the Pebblebed Heath Week and the work of the Conservation Trust. Copies of A Walkers Guide, published by the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, containing a description of six walks across the heaths were available at the beginning and the end of the walk.

The walk started with a short amble to a point in the middle of nowhere where a yellow ribbon had been thoughtfully placed to identify the point where three parish boundaries and their respective commons come together. An eagle-eyed walker spotted the yellow ribbon first and commented that the yellow had faded somewhat over the preceding year. Walkers walked around the bush and thus

visited **Woodbury Common**, **Colaton Raleigh Common** and **Bicton Common** all in one fell swoop.

After walking alongside Uphams plantation and crossing the Four Firs/Yettington Road we entered an area containing a disused rifle range and other military paraphernalia. In the middle of this we came across a concrete construction partially blocking a stream and associated pool. Eyebrows were raised when it was explained soldiers have to crawl through this tunnel full of water as part of their Marines training. Fortunately the entry and exit points were padlocked so no demonstrations were possible!

At Tucker's Plants, we crossed the road into **East Budleigh Common** where we stopped for mid-morning coffee in a sheltered copse adjoining Wheathill Plantation. This was followed by a steady walk along Hayes Lane, where at its crest we stopped and enjoyed the views over East Budleigh, Otterton and beyond to Portland Bill.



We then turned south for a short walk onto **Shortwood Common** where we were able to see the effects of not 'managing' a common. The rampant brambles and bracken the result of letting nature do its thing. We stopped for lunch in an area adjoining the Buzzard Route. There someone had thoughtfully erected several tarpaulin shelters and placed logs around a central area.

After lunch we walked through **Dalditch Common**, across Inner Ting Tong and into Dalditch Plantation. Squabmoor Reservoir was clearly visible and it was pointed out that it no longer serves its original function and is now used exclusively for recreational purposes.

We exited the plantation onto a minor road and immediately climbed over a stile/gate into **Withycombe Raleigh Common**, a little known area that is in the main managed by the RSPB (Aylesbeare). This stile/gate/path is not used very much and is overgrown. The walk leader had thoughtfully brought along a pair of secateurs which, combined with another walker's substantial walking stick,

proved more than a match for the brambles and so the path into the common was cleared

Bystock Fishponds (originally 19thC reservoirs) managed by The Devon Wildlife Trust Bystock Nature Reserve was our next point of call. Within the Reserve we took a different track, utilising extensive 'board walks', through 'The Valley' from the one taken in the previous year, but still emerging onto Wrights Lane. From there we headed north onto **Lympstone Common** and proceeding in a northerly direction we clipped the edge of **Coombe Common** (not on the OS map) which is the eighth and last common.

From this point we proceeded northwards across Black Hill, alongside water filled quarry workings, through a small fir tree plantation, and across Bicton Common and Woodbury Common back to the car park. Many people stated they enjoyed the variety of terrain, flora and fauna. And for some it was a longest walk they had done for some considerable time, but they thought they had enjoyed it!

Backmarker

Devon Coast to Coast Stage VIII – Morchard Road to Witheridge – 30th July

Today was billed as a green transport day using the local railway and bus network for the eighth stage of our Coast to Coast from Morchard Road to Witheridge. The writer cheated and drove to Exmouth due to the unreliability of the return bus transport.

Eleven of us gathered at Exmouth station for our one hour train journey to the start. So far, so good. We were expecting to see a 12th walker but he didn't materialise unless he had morphed into a lady who was busily mapreading when we got off the train and who we assumed walked in the opposite direction to us.



The walk crossed abundant hilly farmland, trackless and pathless fields and wooded combs. Early on, we spotted a large hunting bird flying over and landing in a tree. We passed a few alpacas who were interested in our presence. The next animal encounter was a herd of sheep who came galloping and leaping up in the air out of a barn in front of us after presumably having just been milked. We

walked through a field of cows with their calves and when we were all safely over the stile, we spotted and heard the bellowing bull who was definitely the boss. Later, we encountered a field of young bullocks who were curious but no problem.

Our guide book states that we reached the half way point of the whole trail at Morchard Bishop, a pretty little village where we stopped for coffee. However, I would disagree with this statement as we now have approximately only 40 miles left to walk in 4 sections out a total of approximately 117 miles.

We passed a few very pretty houses and a colourful rectory as we approached Witheridge, a sleepy village where we had ice treats before catching the bus to Exeter, or so we thought. Unfortunately, the bus had a mechanical fault and we were fortunate that the bus driver managed to limp into Tiverton where we had to wait for another bus to return to Exeter and made our separate ways back either by train or bus.

The weather was kind and we enjoyed views of Dartmoor behind us and Exmoor in front of us with more adventures to come. Thanks to Chris and Mike for organising the walk and Paul and Graham for acting as back markers in turn and closing abundant gates at different parts of the ten mile walk.

Heather Fereday

Branscombe to Weston – 4th August



It was a sunny summer's morning and the legions were massing at Branscombe Village Hall car park. However, they all toddled off to the beach, leaving only five OVA stalwarts to begin the walk up the valley to Hole House. On the way I saw my first ever hedgehog since moving to Devon. Sadly, it was only half an inch thick and had clearly come off worst in an argument with a car! At Hole House, originally a mediaeval manor, we descended to the stream and walked behind what was the watermill for the manor. Moving upstream brought us to another ancient habitation site on a steep hillside; Edge Barton, currently a renovated 16th century manor house with extensive views up and down the valley.

A gradual climb up the access road beyond the house was followed by a flatter section of arable farmland. We reached Weston village and turned onto the path that passes through woodland until it eventually joins the coast path. Stupendous views of Lyme and Tor bays awaited us and were much appreciated during our lunch stop from a perfectly positioned cliff-top bench.

Another stretch of the coast path and a long descent to Branscombe Mouth in the hot sun was the excuse for tea or an ice cream at the Sea Shanty restaurant. One of our group, a new member from Exmouth, misjudged the width of the bench he was about to sit on and inadvertently performed a back somersault worthy of the GB Olympic gymnastics team.



What's more, in an amazing feat of dexterity, he managed to save his ice cream by placing it on the table in mid tumble. A stroll into the village completed the eight miles and we all thanked the heavens for perfect weather.

Jon Roseway

A Little Local Walk – East Budleigh – 6th August

A highly expectant crowd turned up in East Budleigh for the start of Stan's 5 mile walk to East Budleigh Common on a gloriously sunny summer's day, only to have their hopes dashed by the news that their leader was unable to meet them. Surprisingly, and undaunted, the same number set off up Hayes Lane past the remains of the fallen cob cottage, now, finally, showing signs of resurrection and a signboard displaying the inspirational slogan: "buildsomethingbeautiful.com"! Not in need of any "tlc" is Vicar's Mead, just up the lane, with its thatched rooftop carvings where, Paul reminded us, that local celebrity Walter Raleigh had been educated.

Quickly off the road, we stepped into Lillaye Lane, where it felt as if we had strayed onto private land, so effectively had a collective called "Irresponsible Dog Owners

of East Budleigh” (IDOOEB), customised the ground over which we skipped and jumped to the accompanying shouts of “mess!”, much like walkers shout “car!” to warn each other when confronted on a narrow lane.

Opting in favour of delayed gratification, we passed one path option to which we would return, and set off up the boring slog that is Hayeswood Lane. At the summit I was chastised by Penny whose description was far more poetic. “Like stepping through a tropical canyon of hanging creepers and lush ferns”, she waxed. How could I have got it so wrong?

Hoping Stan would never find out, we left East Budleigh Common briefly, to put a toe on Shortwood Common, lingering en route to absorb our first magnificent view towards the sea and High Peak, before taking a lesser used fringe path to the south west through spruce, decorated beneath by prolific Rosebay Willowherb, more tall lush ferns, Ragwort, and the ubiquitous Himalayan Balsam. Mike has a less romantic view of this “mismanaged” stretch of common!

Down Shortwood Lane, skirting it’s reliable four seasons puddle, (scene of Jim’s cycling demise, some years before), then reassuringly back on East Budleigh common heading north west, through Holly Woods, up a short climb towards our most northerly point, and a welcome coffee break in the sun.

One of the joys of walking on the Commons is to set a course and then be able to find a path that suits, rather than choose a path and have to go where it takes you! So we headed off to the north and east, slightly uphill through more woods and a pine plantation with evidence of recent military activity, gathering to admire a silhouetted view of High Peak, Otterton Church and the Obelisk, down an enclosed stony path, emerging from this vegetative tunnel into a clearing of bright sunshine, with distant views to the sea and a vibrant palette of purple heather and yellow gorse. Photographers were busy. Next was the discovery of “Great Mullein”. (Thank you Ervine and Margaret), an indigenous biennial producing a rosette of woolly leaves in the first year and a tall yellow flowering stem the following year after which the plant dies. So hurry up or the chance will be gone.

A little ‘big dipper’ on dry, sandy paths, past a huge stack of logs used as the backdrop for the commemorative photograph of the “Magnificent 7”, downhill to skirt Hayes “Keep Out” Wood, and up a short rise to witness one of the most breathtaking views we enjoy locally. Looking over East Budleigh and the village of Otterton, the Obelisk, High Peak, Peak Hill and Mutters Moor, beyond to Beer Head, the Dorset Coast, and Portland Bill. Or was it? Has it moved? Could we really

see it through the mist or were we seeing a familiar 'picture' we carry in our heads? Well, one person is convinced she saw it. She probably saw the Loch Ness monster too.

Gently downhill to Wynard's Farm and through the village, where, I think it's fair to say a very contented group of OVA walkers said their goodbyes, while some continued their bonhomie at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

Chris Buckland

A Summer Evening Stroll in the Otter Valley – 17 August

Our first evening stroll in early July had been prefaced by the wettest June for 50 years, yet gave us the most beautiful summer weather; on the day of our second evening stroll, and after a fortnight of warmth and sunshine, it was humid and overcast. As we gathered outside the pub in the village of Otterton it started to rain; warm and refreshing. One or two umbrellas were raised, others enjoyed the sensation.

We set off on a familiar stroll along the west bank of the Otter; what are those several pairs of 'capstans' on the bank? Clamour Bridge provided its usual viewing platform to watch Grey Mullet, but unusually, only one, which was a portent for a later experience. Colliver Lane was atmospheric in its dankness, and then a steep hill and Lea Lane brought us to Stantyway Cross.

Linking up a series of paths, green lanes and minor roads makes circumnavigating the village a satisfying accomplishment, so we continued our circle along Piscombe Lane, past the Hoff House to the Alpacas field, now neglected, overgrown and devoid of Alpacas. More atmosphere down the tunnel that is Bredon Lane, then a short steep climb past Anchoring Farm, Barn, and Cottage to Anchoring Hill and misty views over Otterton.

But we had to move on; the cabaret would be starting soon, so we diverted across the hill and down to the River, where the expectant audience were already in their seats. The curtain rose and there it was, swimming serenely in our river; there was whispering, pointing and lenses zoomed in. We had been promised a performing troupe, but they only sent the one. No matter, for those of us who had begun to think that the story had been invented by the Tourist Board to boost visitor numbers, seeing our first Beaver was a memorable experience.

With light fading, we skipped along the riverside to the Kings Arms, where David used his celebrity status to obtain a table that the group could sit round and enjoy a sociable end to the evening.

Chris Buckland

Walking Statistics 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2016

SUMMARY	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total number of walks:	56	63	85
Total number of walkers:	498	643	859
Average attendance:	8.9	10.2	10.1
Range of attendees:	1 to 28	1 to 33	2 to 35
Total number of miles walked:	335 miles	412 miles	634 miles
Total number of miles walked by Members:	2911 miles	4154 miles	6077 miles

Distances and Attendance

<i>Distance (miles)</i>	<i>Number of Walks</i>		
	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
0 < 4.99	15	7	12
5 < 9.99	34	50	61
10 < 13.5	7	6	11
<i>Distance (miles)</i>	<i>Average Attendance</i>		
	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>
0 < 4.99	10.5	12.3	13.2
5 < 9.99	8.1	9.8	10.1
10 < 13.5	9	10.8	6.9



Good weather on the opening day of **Heath Week** brought over 700 people to Woodbury Castle for the festival day. Organised in partnership between the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust, East Devon Countryside team, Devon Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, Heath Week celebrates all aspects of this important heathland site. Trailer tours, walks, and wildlife-spotting activities were all filled to capacity. New events are added each year to ensure it continues to grow and develop.

The wildlife and history will always take centre stage but the Pebblebed's team were grateful to several other organisations including the OVA for offering walks and activities which reflect the importance of the site for recreation.

2017 will mark 21 years of East Devon Heath Week, so you can expect next year to be even more special. The dates for 2017 will be 23-29 July.

Himalayan balsam



Mid-August found us teaming up with the OVA again, this time at Otterton Mill, to raise awareness of non-native and invasive Himalayan balsam. There was plenty of balsam about. Visitors were able to 'have a go' and joined conservation volunteers to clear a sizable chunk on the island between the mill race and the river.

Although not everyone thought enough was being done we explained the current policy of tackling from the top of the river catchments. The picture is at times a depressing one but we reinforced the need for a joined up approach and celebrated the successes on tributaries of the River Otter. We also educated many holiday makers who will take their new knowledge back to other parts of the UK. Thanks to those who helped on the day.

Kate Ponting

For more details kate.ponting@clintondevon.com or telephone 01395 443881

The Otter Valley Association

Executive Committee (01395)

Chairman	Roger Saunders	443248
Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	Penny Kurowski	742942
Hon Treasurer	Jon Roseway	488739

Committee Chairmen

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History	David Daniel	445960
Events	<i>vacancy</i>	

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East Budleigh	Jon Roseway	488739
Otterton	<i>vacancy</i>	
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacancy</i>	
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786

Other Executive Committee Members

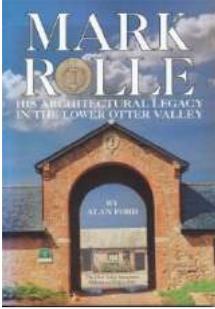
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Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

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Publications: Visit www.ova.org.uk or for book sales, contact Andrew Beresford by phone on 01395 446543 or email booksales@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 19th century.

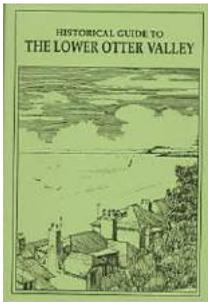
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



Twelve Walks in the Otter Valley.

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

£3.00 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



Historical Guide to the Lower Otter Valley

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

£3.50 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)

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.