

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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

Winter Newsletter

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The Chairman's
'Lucky Dip' -
see his report
on pages 4 and 5.

"A most enjoyable
Christmas Dinner at the
East Devon Golf Club on
13th December 2014."
- jottings page 3



This year's Litter Pick
is on Saturday 28th
March, 10.00am at
the Lime Kiln car park
- we need you!
- page 8

A new face on the
Pebblebed Heaths -
introduction to
Kate on page 10



Editor's Jottings

YET ANOTHER NEWSLETTER packed with Activities – a long list of walks for you to get out and enjoy the countryside into the spring, complemented by the second part of the OVA's season of talks for the darker evenings, with a range of subjects to interest you.

My thanks to those who have responded to my pleas for reports of walks and talks – what you do is invaluable in keeping this newsletter lively and interesting. I am sure that there are a number of readers thinking, "I could do better than that!" So next time you're at a talk, or on a walk ... jot it down.

An innovation this time – we're printing some of the pages in colour, which should enhance the pictorial enjoyment. At present the EC feel that the expense (and complications) of colour throughout cannot be justified, but it would be interesting to have your thoughts, and particularly if you have experience in graphics and layout. In this connection, I am still only 'Interim Editor'. I took on the job as a rescue when otherwise the Newsletter would have died, but I'd love to pass the job on, especially to someone with time to develop some publishing skills. See also the plea below for a Publicity Person

On the 13th December it is traditional in Scandinavia to celebrate St Lucia's day with a 'festival of lights'. This involves a procession wearing crowns of evergreen and candles, but someone should tell Chris, *pictured on page 2*, that the role is reserved for young ladies!

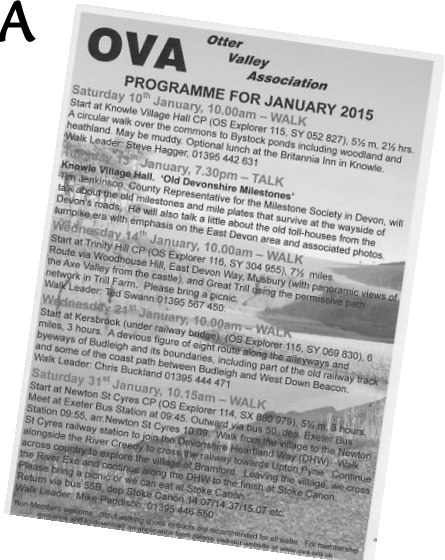
Volunteer with the OVA

We need a Publicity Secretary
–this could be YOU

Raise the profile of the OVA by making sure that our walks, talks and events are well publicized in the local and, if possible, social media.

Help with the preparation of promotional materials and displays. No experience necessary.

If you are interested email us at info@ova.org.uk or contact an Executive Committee member directly (see page 30 of this newsletter).



Chairman's Report

THE OVA NEEDS YOUR HELP! You may have noticed that there were fewer OVA organised visits and events this year. This is because we don't have an Event Organiser. We need somebody to take charge of publicity and would also love to have a newsletter editor. None of these jobs would be a huge time commitment, and we can offer lots of help getting you started. Because we have no one in these positions, the OVA is not as strong an organisation as it has been in the past. Without a focus on publicity we will find it harder to attract new members, and with fewer events we are a less interesting organisation to join. So why not get involved and help the OVA? Email us at info@ova.org.uk or contact an EC member directly.

By now you should have received a new standing order form from us. As previously advertised we are increasing our annual fees to £5 (individual) and £9 (family). We are also changing banks from NatWest to Lloyds – so it is very important that you return the form to us, otherwise your subscription will go to the wrong bank. If you have misplaced your renewal form send an email to membership@ova.org.uk and we will send you a replacement.

No Chairman's Report seems complete without some discussion of planning issues. Partly I suppose because even a single development in the wrong place can have a huge impact on our local area. The OVA only gets involved with planning applications that we think could have a significantly negative impact, generally the larger developments that are proposed outside of the built boundaries of the local villages. A couple of recent policy changes or clarifications are likely to have an impact on potential developments in the Otter Valley.

Natural England, in commenting on a recent planning application, emphasized the statutory protection of our local landscape. Any planned residential development within a 10 km zone of the Pebblebed Heath Special Area of Conservation (i.e. most of the lower Otter Valley) has to be assessed for its potential environmental impact. Planning permission can only be granted if there is no impact, or satisfactory mitigation is provided. If this regulation is appropriately enforced it may help prevent some developments that the OVA opposes as unsustainable and undesirable.

The other policy changes are in government policy relating to alternative energy provision. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has recently announced that it will stop farm subsidy payments for fields used for solar panels, and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) is ending renewable energy subsidies for large-scale solar farms.

Together these policies are likely to impact the economics of solar farm development in the countryside.

Finally, an update on the River Otter beavers. Devon Wildlife Trust has submitted a five year plan and license application to allow the beavers to remain on the Otter. Natural England will be holding a public meeting to invite comments from the public on the plan. The meeting will take place at Ottery St Mary Scout Centre, Winters Lane at 6.30pm on Wednesday 14th January 2015.

All the topics in this report, and more, fall within the OVA's charter. If you like what we do, why not give us a hand by volunteering. If you disagree, let us know so that we can represent our members more accurately.

Wishing you all the best in 2015, **Roger Saunders**, OVA Chairman.

Website Wildlife Gallery

WITH THE HELP of members keen on photography we are developing a gallery of reference photos of wildlife on the OVA website. The aim is to help others to appreciate the extent of the wildlife in the Lower Otter Valley and be able to identify what they see.

We are starting with the birds most frequently seen around the River Otter, particularly the estuary. If this is successful we may extend this to other species. The development of this part of the website is being made "live" so everyone can watch and contribute to its progress (link on natural environment team page or just search for birds). We will always be interested in updating our photos and filling in the gaps. As we start there will be many gaps to fill. Guidance on how to submit a photo is on the web.



We have organised the gallery so that in any section there are never more than about twenty images of birds to scroll through. This has meant that we have used simple descriptions, rather than scientific ones, to group birds into families. We are always open to suggestions for improvements on how best to do this.

David Daniel

Planning in the Lower Otter Valley

~ autumn 2014

THOSE OF YOU who live in Newton Poppleford may be aware that the Downs Close planning application, so firmly rejected by East Devon District Council, has gone on appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. Those outside of Newton Pop may not know that this is a site, on the edge of the village, where children would have to negotiate two busy roads to get to school. It is also one of the few remaining old orchards left in our area, and indeed the country, and teems with wildlife. The OVA has sent an objection to the Planning Inspectorate and if you are interested to see it please contact me.

The OVA has also sent an objection to the planning application outside Budleigh Salterton's town boundary on the busy B3178. As we all know, that road is busy, twisty, single lane in places, and the gateway to the town. The developer claims in the application that views of the development would be transitory as traffic would be passing at 60 mph! The site is also grade 1 agricultural land as well as in the AONB, as all the land in our area is. We have just lost a dementia home in the town to housing and now a 60 bed new one is proposed. It is a mad world.

Since the announcement that Tesco has bought Prior's shop in Budleigh Salterton I have found that shopping in the town takes me a lot of time. So many people come up to me and have spoken of their worries that three supermarkets in the town is one too many and that our existing local shops will be very vulnerable. I fear that there may be no planning reason that Tesco can be stopped, as a change of use is not required. It would have to be an outcry from the townspeople as Tesco is very sensitive to local opinion. After all, Hadleigh, a town of 7,000 in Suffolk, stopped Tesco, and Totnes stopped Costa.

Nicola Daniel



Membership Subs

Important information about your existing
Bank Standing Order
from the Membership Secretary.

The OVA Executive Committee approved the transfer of the OVA's bank account from Nat West Bank to Lloyds Bank, and for this to coincide with the increase in Membership Fees. Lloyds Bank offers better terms and accounts to charities like the OVA, and unlike Nat West Bank who are closing their Budleigh Salterton branch, Lloyds Bank are staying in Budleigh Salterton and are also open 5 days a week.

As Membership Secretary, I drafted the letter and form sent to you, and included the contact details held on the Membership Database. In addition to the change in fees, the new Bank Standing Order (BSO) also has the new Lloyds Bank account details and your bank reference.

The form has the instruction to your bank, to cancel the existing standing order to Nat West Bank, and replace with the new one to Lloyds Bank. The OVA cannot cancel a BSO, only the account holder can do this.

By returning the completed BSO to me, I can up-date any changes to your membership details, record the returned form, and then forward directly to your bank for them to make the changes.

If you bank on-line, you can change the details of your standing orders via your account, and please remember to change the bank details and add our bank reference. If you have chosen to do this, please could you send me a quick email via membership@ova.org.uk, so I know not to send you a reminder.

If you have been making a donation to the OVA as well as your membership fee, you will still need to complete the new BSO, to transfer this from Nat West Bank to Lloyds Bank.

Where I have received a reply that mentions continuing to pay using your existing BSO, I will be sending a reminder of the change in bank accounts out in February, and a copy of the new BSO for you to complete then.

This has been a mammoth task, which included members of the Executive Committee hand delivering to members living in the valley. Your co-operation means we can complete the task before the next renewal date, and that linking your future payment to your OVA membership will be much easier.

Thank you, **Clive Bowman** – Membership Secretary

The Spring Litter-Pick

PREPARATIONS ARE IN HAND for the annual Litter-Pick in the Otter Estuary, which the OVA runs in coordination with Clinton Devon Estates, the Area of Outstanding Beauty team and East Devon District Council.

The date has now been decided, so please enter it on your new calendars that will no doubt be hanging on your walls by the time that you read this! It is **Saturday 4th April 2015**, as usual from 10.00am to 12.00noon.

The tides this year are even kinder than last year. On the chosen date high tide is at 5.12am and low tide 11.31am which gives plenty of time for the mud to dry a little. We do not like to push the date too late for fear of disturbing nesting birds although few, if any, actually nest on the open salt marshes, preferring the covered river banks above White Bridge where there is shelter from predators. Nor do we wish to be too early for obvious thermal reasons. The trick is to pick the sunniest day, which requires great skill.

In the week before the chosen date it is a good idea to watch weather forecasts carefully and if there is any problem (eg severe flooding), **please visit the OVA website** at www.ova.org.uk where last minute information will be posted.

Readers will be well aware that litter, especially plastic, constitutes a serious hazard for wild life, especially the water birds that proliferate on the marsh throughout the year. It is essential that the threat is removed each year. For this to be done, the efforts of volunteers are crucial, so please come and join us.

We will assemble for a briefing at 10.00am in the Lime Kiln Car Park in Budleigh Salterton, where litter pickers may park without charge for the 2-hour period. As last year, the OVA is offering a small prize for the most interesting piece of debris collected, so this gives an added interest. Clinton Devon Estates and the EDDC AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) will again be combining to organize the removal of the collected rubbish and provide plastic bags and suggestions as to where to operate. Both sides of the estuary will be scoured up to the White Bridge.

Wellington boots are strongly advised and, since it is not difficult to get stuck in the mud, it is essential that children are accompanied by adults.

It is also a good idea to wear protective gloves. A health and safety briefing will be given at 10.00am and all should wait for this before setting off. Dogs are not permitted in the salt marshes. Participants enjoy this event every year. I look forward to meeting you all there.

Patrick Hamilton – OVA Natural Environment Committee

Local Heritage Assets Listing Project

THE CALL FOR LOCAL HERITAGE ASSET (LHA) nominations in the Lower Otter Valley finished on 30 November 2014. Over 45 nominations were received and, bearing in mind that this is a 'live' project with an ongoing nomination process, many more are expected. The LHA project team has been busy researching, photographing and mapping the objects nominated. This is quite a time consuming but rewarding process.

In Budleigh Salterton these include good examples of 1920s-30s public buildings and private residences by the architect Hatchard-Smith. In East Budleigh, Otterton, Colaton Raleigh and Newton Poppleford the team has been working on a whole variety of architectural and natural features, ranging from barns, special letter boxes, walls and water artefacts.

The next stage of the project is to present the nominations at public exhibitions, when it is hoped to generate feedback from the community and also encourage more LHA nominations. Dates for the exhibitions are:

Budleigh Salterton ~ Temple Methodist Hall

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 February (10.00 – 15.00)

East Budleigh ~ Village Hall

Saturday 28 February and Sunday 1 March (10:00 - 15:00)

Support and assistance in manning the exhibitions would be most welcome.

Names please to: **Dee Woods** or **Trevor Waddington**

01395-568158 01395-443978

Himalayan Balsam Campaign 2014

My Annual Report on the Himalayan Balsam Campaign 2014 is now online at our website: www.oval.org.uk >OVA Teams>Natural Environment>Himalayan Balsam>Annual Report 2014. So also are the reports by Iain Ure on his brushcutting programme on the flood plain; and also the FWAG Report for the whole Otter Valley for 2014.

This was the third year of our participation in the FWAG project and it was very successful. Numbers of volunteers increased from 16 to 27; there was less balsam to pull, thanks to efforts in 2012 and 2013; and, for the first time we subjected the whole of the Colaton Raleigh brook to two or more clearing sweeps right down to the flood plain. The team did a wonderful job and have earned a good winter break!

Patrick Hamilton – Chairman, Natural Environment Committee

A New Face at CDE

CLINTON DEVON ESTATES appointed their first Countryside Learning Officer last month. Teacher Kate Ponting has recently taken up the new role and will be delivering countryside learning activities to primary and secondary school pupils in East Devon, as well as engaging with community groups and the wider public on issues impacting on the countryside. The aim of the post is to stimulate broad debate on how the local landscape should be managed.



Kate's background is in outdoor and primary education. She taught for 13 years in Exmouth, has recently delivered events with Exeter based Fun Kitchen and is also a forest school practitioner.

“I am looking forward to getting out and listening to the views of local people. The more there is a two-way dialogue between those who manage the countryside and those who live on it, the more we can learn from each other. Engagement enables organisations like Clinton Devon Estates to understand the things that people living in the countryside value most, and for this to influence how we operate. We are keen to show what we can contribute to society.”

The Estate's outreach work for many years has focussed mainly on wildlife and the management of Woodbury Common and the Otter Estuary. The Estate's conservation charity, the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, hosted classes from local primary schools last summer, for example. The children looked at heathland ecology and how the local wildlife is managed. They learned to identify tree species and recognise some of the heathland's rare species. Kate's appointment will allow the Estate to expand this important work to include other aspects of landscape management, including dairy farming, forestry, the provision of local homes and the production of renewable energy.

“Reconciling the many different demands we place on our countryside can be difficult. I am passionate about giving others the opportunity to explore and interpret the countryside around them. I believe we need to recognise it as a living landscape where local people work extremely hard to provide something that meets all of society's needs into the future. The challenge is to do this whilst safeguarding the beauty and wildlife of our special part of Devon.”

Kate has also taken over the management of the Friends of the Common Group for The Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust. She will plan their programme of events and develop some with a family focus to increase the membership from young people.

Kate will provide the OVA Newsletter with regular updates on what is happening locally on the Estate and is planning three events specifically for OVA members later in the year. To contact her please email kate.ponting@clintondevon.com



A Walk for Everyone

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LATEST PROGRAMME OF WALKS in the Newsletter, or on the attractive and informative new web-site, is the signal for many to get out their diary (an extra pleasure at this time of year with all those pristine and tightly pressed pages!) and record the dates of all the walks. Their New Year's resolution is to attend every walk. But for those of you with a more impromptu attitude to planning your life, or perhaps who have often thought about walking in good company, but not got around to it, perhaps we can entice you.

Get the New Year off to a righteous start by joining our local walk to Bystock Fishponds and then undo all your good work by eating at the Britannia Inn afterwards. Stay local on 21st January when the alleyways and byeways of Salterton and its surrounds are the focus, and on 7th February you can stroll alongside the Otter (Devon's most used path?) identifying the birds. We are reminded of a much loved local location, when there is a walk from Woodbury Castle (our very own Iron Age Hill Fort) on 11th February. A couple of weeks later we explore another part of the Commons on the 4th March, with an option to lunch at the pub afterwards.

If you have reached the end of March and still not made a start, how about a gentle walk on the 18th of the month, with an optional lunch at the Otter Inn afterwards? If you are less familiar with the Nature Reserve north of the A3052, then the walk on 11th April may interest you. Of course, we don't have a total monopoly in the Otter Valley (well nearly!) of attractive places to visit, so on 24th April we take a short trip to the village of Lower Ashton to enjoy a delightful spring flower walk and it's pub, afterwards, if you wish.

Continued overleaf



All of the above walks are between 2 and 5 miles and generally on gentle terrain, although, as this is East Devon, there might well be a hill to stroll up or down, as well as the obligatory winter mud! Warm and waterproof clothing, appropriate footwear (well fitted walking boots are a good investment), some refreshment and a small haversack, will enhance your enjoyment.

In an effort to meet the needs of more OVA walkers, the Programme usually includes walks that aim to satisfy those who wish to explore new locations outside the Otter Valley, and challenge themselves over hillier terrain or longer distances. So, we are off to Trinity Hill and Musbury Castle on 14th January; Newton St Cyres and the Devonshire Heartland Way on 31st January; the Templer Way, a splendid two part route from Dartmoor to the sea on 18th February and 11th March; and Dartmoor again, for some Tor hopping on 8th April.

No Programme would be complete without homage to our very own section of the Jurassic Coast and this will happen on a walk from East Budleigh on 15th April that includes the conquest of High Peak. Finally, the route on 29th April starts from Salterton, along the coast before heading inland to circulate our very own Woodbury Commons, which is where we began this review.

Please don't forget: it's not a race! We walk for the exercise, the company (although you don't have to talk if you don't want to!), to enjoy the scenery and being in the great outdoors ... and the group will only move at the speed of the slowest!

OVA members can be assured of a warm welcome on every walk.
Still not sure? Have a word with our experienced Walk Leaders.

Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison

Saturday 10th January, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Knowle Village Hall CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 5½ miles, 2.5 hours. A circular undulating walk over the commons to Bystock Fishponds with varied topography including woodland and heathland. May be muddy. Optional lunch at the Britannia Inn in Knowle Village.

Walk Leader: Steve Hagger, 01395 442 631

Tuesday 13th January, 7.30pm – TALK.**Knowle Village Hall. ‘Old Devonshire Milestones’**

Tim Jenkinson, County Representative for the Milestone Society (a registered charity) in Devon, will talk about the old milestones and mile plates that survive at the wayside of Devon's roads. He will also talk a little about the old toll-houses from the turnpike era with emphasis on the East Devon area (such as East Budleigh, Exmouth and Sidmouth) with associated photos.

Wednesday 14th January, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Trinity Hill CP (OS Explorer 116, SY 304 955), 7½ miles.

Route via Woodhouse Hill, East Devon Way, Musbury (with panoramic views of the Axe Valley from the castle), and Great Trill using the permissive path network in Trill Farm. Please bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Ted Swann 01395 567 450.

Wednesday 21st January, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Kersbrook (under railway bridge), (OS Explorer 115, SY 069 830), 6 miles, 3 hours. A devious figure of eight route along the alleyways and byeways of Budleigh and its boundaries, including part of the old railway track and some of the coast path between Budleigh and West Down Beacon.

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444 471

Saturday 31st January, 10.15am – WALK

Start at Newton St Cyres CP (OS Explorer 114, SX 880 979), 5½ miles, 3 hours. Meet at Exeter Bus Station at 09:45. Outward via bus 50, dep. Exeter Bus Station 09:55, arr. Newton St Cyres 10:09.

Walk from the village to the Newton St Cyres railway station to join the Devonshire Heartland Way (DHW). Walk alongside the River Creedy to cross the railway towards Upton Pyne. Continuing across country towards Bramford Speke where we will explore the village. Leaving the village, we cross the River Exe and continue along the DHW to the finish at Stoke Canon. Please bring a picnic or we can eat at Stoke Canon.

Return via bus 55B, dep Stoke Canon 14:07/14:37/15:07 etc.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446 550

Saturday 7th February, 10.00am – Guided WALK

Start at the White Bridge (OS Explorer 115, SY 076 830), 2½ miles, 2 hours. A leisurely walk along the River Otter watching and identifying the 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

Saturday 7th February, 10.00am – 12.30pm Joint OVA/Fairlynch TALK. 'Wildlife photography and illustrations', Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton.

The photographer David Spears will talk about "**Tiny Lives in Rivers and Estuaries**". David uses various imaging tools to illustrate the range of organisms that he finds interesting. He will include brief descriptions of the methodology he uses, but more importantly, show images of organisms that form critical stages in the food chain that sustains the larger and more accessible and familiar animals living in the Otter.

Mike Langman, a full-time wildlife illustrator with a passion for birds will present "**Make a note of it**". This is an interactive, informative talk on how to make field notes quickly and efficiently. Bring along a pencil and small notebook to join in the fun. We'll even go on a 'virtual' field meeting to find a couple of rare birds to practice on!

£2.00 members, £2.50 non-members to include coffee at interval.

Wednesday 11th February, 10.00am – WALK

Start at the Four Firs CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 032 864), 5½ miles, 2.5 hours. A circular walk visiting Woodbury Castle then turning west to Woodbury and returning via the golf course. Includes tracks, paths and some wooded areas.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445 872

Wednesday 18th February, 11.30am – WALK (Templer Way Stage I)

The Templer Way follows, as closely as possible, the historical export route of granite from the Haytor Quarries to the sea port at Teignmouth. It is 18miles/29km long and winds through a wide range of scenery from open moorland to estuary foreshore. NB the walk is downhill all the way –promise! Please bring a picnic lunch.

The first stage is 7½ miles between Haytor Information Centre (OS Explorer 115, SX 766 772) and Drum Bridge Roundabout on the A38.

Travel to the start is by the 39 bus from Exeter Bus Station (Stand No 12), dep 10:30, arr Bovey Tracy 11:14, where we will collect prearranged taxis to Haytor. Provisional booking has been made at £4.00 per head, max. If you intend to come, please make a firm commitment to Mike by Wed 11th Feb 2015.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 February, 10.00 – 15.00 – Heritage Asset Listing Exhibition – Budleigh Salterton ~ Temple Methodist Hall

Wednesday 25th February, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Knowle Village Hall CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 5 miles, 2.5 hours The walk across the commons encompasses Shortwood Common, Hayes Wood, Hayes Barton and return via East Budleigh Common and Squabmoor. Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567 339

Saturday 28 February and Sunday 1 March, 10.00 – 15.00 – Heritage Asset Listing Exhibition – East Budleigh ~ Village Hall

Wednesday 4th March, 10.00am – WALK

Start at the Otter Inn CP, Colaton Raleigh (OS Explorer 115, SY 078 874), 7 miles 3 hours. A flat circular walk mostly on local tracks, crossing the commons to Canterbury Green and Stowford. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn. Walk Leader: Mike Paddison 01395 446 550

Wednesday 11th March, 11.15am – WALK (Templer Way Stage II)

Second stage, 10½ miles, Drum Bridge Roundabout to Teignmouth via Newton Abbot Quay. Start is by the 38 bus from Exeter Bus Station (Stand No 12), dep 10:45, arr Drum Bridge roundabout (OS Explorer 110, SX 830 752) at 11:15. A picnic lunch at Newton Abbot Quay, followed by afternoon tea at Combe Cellars before the Shaldon ferry (50p) across the estuary to Teignmouth. Return travel by train dep 16.38/17:20 arr Exmouth 17:51/18:25. Walk Leader Chris Buckland, 01395 444471

Tuesday 17th March, 7.30pm – TALK. Speaker: John Lowe
Masonic Hall, Budleigh Salterton. ‘The Boys.’

An hour before midnight on Friday 21st March, 1941, a returning Royal Air Force Bomber crashes onto Dartmoor. And so begins the fascinating and often emotional story of ‘The Boys’. It attempts to bring into focus the events of that day and reflects on the young aircrew whose lives ended that night amidst the fire and destruction on the wind swept slopes of Hameldown. It also tells of the courage of two mothers, thousands of miles apart, whose lives were changed.

Wednesday 18th March, 10.00am – WALK

Start at the Otter Inn CP, Colaton Raleigh (OS Explorer 115, SY 078 874), 3 miles, 2 hours. If you don't walk much or want to start walking this gives you the perfect opportunity with a short mainly level walk along local lanes and banks of the Otter. Optional lunch at the Otter Inn. Walk Leader: MP/CP

Wednesday 25th March, 10.00am – WALK

Start: Clifford Bridge car park, (OS Explorer 110 SX 782 898). 5 miles, 3 hours. A 'daffodil walk' starting at Clifford Bridge car park near Dunsford and walking uphill through Cod Wood to Smallridge Farm and then down to Steps Bridge walking adjacent to Woodcock Wood. Return alongside the river Teign through Dunsford Wood. Bring refreshments or a picnic. Sorry no dogs.

Walk Leader: Margaret Read, 01392 759 332

Friday 27th March to Sunday 29th March, Mevagissey Week End

The OVA's first walking weekend away will be near Mevagissey in Cornwall. There has been an enthusiastic response so this weekend is fully subscribed. However, if this venture is successful we hope to arrange another weekend away next year and priority will be given to those who were disappointed this time. The plan is to share cars for the journey, with a short walk on the Friday afternoon followed by a group dinner; a longer walk on the Saturday with supper at a pub. Another short walk will take place on Sunday morning before returning home. More detailed information will be sent to those who have signed up.

Walk Leader Rosemary Hatch, 01392 44290

“Our thanks to Rosemary Hatch who has done so much to ensure that this weekend will be a success” Mike & Chris

Wednesday 8th April, 10.30am – WALK

Start at Haytor Visitor Centre, (OS Explorer OL28, SX 766 772), 9½ miles, approx. 5 hours. Ten Easy Tors! Not the route of the famous challenge, but a mere 9½ mile focussed walk across undulating Dartmoor with the prospect of superb views throughout. Tors visited are Haytor, Saddle Tor, Pil Tor, Top Tor, Bell Tor, Chinkwell Tor, Honeybag Tor, Hound Tor, Greater, and Holwell Tor. No public transport available. We suggest meeting at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999) at 09.00am to share cars. Please bring a packed lunch. Light refreshment available at the end of the walk at the Dandelion Café, Moorlands Hotel near the car park.

Walk Leader: David Buss 01395 442621

Saturday 4th April, 10.00am – Spring LITTER PICK

Start at Lime Kiln car park, Budleigh Salterton.

Saturday 11th April, 10.00am – WALK

Start at the Joney's Cross CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 057 898). 5 Miles, 2.5 hours. A gentle walk to Aylesbeare via Randelhayes farm and back via Manor farm and Aylesbeare common.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445872

Wednesday 15th April, 10.00am – WALK

Start at East Budleigh Church CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 065 848). 9 miles, 4½ hours. A varied walk giving an ever-changing perspective using the coast path, local roads and tracks. Visiting Ladram Bay, High Peak and Windgate then returning inland via Otterton and Bicton. Some hilly sections, could be muddy. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446550

Friday 24th April, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Manor Inn CP, Lower Ashton (OS Explorer 110 SX 844 841). 4½ miles, 2½ hours. Walk via the church with lovely screen, along footpaths, through fields and woods with a view of Canonteign falls, returning to the car park via the riverside path bordered by a plethora of wild flowers. Sorry no dogs.

Food available at the local pub.

Walk Leader: CB/MP *details to be confirmed*

Wednesday 29th April, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Lime Kiln CP (OS Explorer 115 SY 073 820). 10 miles, 6 hours. The walk commences along Marine Parade and SWCP to Westdown Beacon and heads inland to Dalditch Farm via Castle Lane. The walk continues via Hayes Wood to Yettington and Colaton Raleigh via Bicton and Back Lane and a well earned break. The short return journey is via the riverside path past Otterton to Lime Kiln CP. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnball, 01395 567339

Wednesday 6th May, 2.00pm – WALK

Start at the Salcombe Hill National Trust CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 139 883), 2 miles, 2 hours. Guided walk to Soldiers Hill and Combe Head Wood to view the display of bluebells which are usually their best at this time of year.

Note: the path to the woods is quite steep with rough steps.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445 665

Saturday 9th May, 10.00am – GUIDED WALK

Start at White Bridge, (OS Explorer 115, SY 076830. 2½ miles, 2 hours. A leisurely walk along the River Otter watching and identifying the spring birds with Doug Cullen, Voluntary Warden of the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust. Please bring binoculars if you have them.

Walk Leader: Doug Cullen, 01395 567574.

Wednesday 13th May, 7.30pm – OVA's AGM

Hear about the OVA's work in the last year, elect your representatives and share refreshments. Followed by a speaker, **tba**

Thursday 14th May, 10.00am – WALK

Start at the Seaton Down picnic area (by Seaton Water Tower), (OS Explorer 115 SY 233 913) 8 miles approx. hilly walk. Route via Beer and Branscombe Mouth returning along the coastal path to Seaton Hole. Please bring a picnic.
Walk Leader: Ted Swan 01395 567450

Wednesday 20th May, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Woodbury Free CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 011 871), 4½ miles, 3 hours. A circular walk to Woodbury Salterton using lanes, paths and farmland tracks.
Walk Leader: Carole Steen 01392 873881

Saturday 23rd May, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Sidbury CP (behind Sidbury Social Club), (OS Explorer 115 SY 139 918), 7 miles, 4 hours. A fairly challenging walk, following part of the East Devon Way, using footpaths, woodland trails and green lanes. Some steep climbs and stunning views before a welcome, if steep, downhill section towards the end. Unsurprisingly, it can be very muddy in places following rain. Please bring sufficient fluids and a packed lunch.
Walk Leader: Jan Stuart, 01395 568235

Thursday 28th May, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP, (OS Explorer 115 SY 088 999). 10 miles, 5+ hours Walking up the River Otter to Ottery St Mary, the home of Coleridge. Historic town walk followed by lunch at the Volunteer Inn, returning via White Cross. Easy start but more challenging uphill on return leg.
Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568158

Saturday 6th June, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999). 7 miles, 4 hours Circular walk on green lanes and commons, visiting Venn Ottery, Metcombe and North Hill, returning via Venn Ottery Common and Benchams. There will be a stop for a sociable picnic lunch (bring your own).
Walk Leader: Jan Stuart 01395 568235.

Friday 12th June, 10.15am – WALK

Start at Seaton Sea Front Gardens, (OS Explorer 115, SY 245 899). 7 miles, 4+ hours. Not the “Tunnel of Love”, but this unique under-cliff coastal route, patronized by the Victorians, spends much of its distance enclosed by overhanging trees and vegetation. Love it or loath it, but like any visit to the Jurassic coast, an experience not to be missed. Please bring refreshments. Outward travel by bus X53, dep Exeter 09:00, arr Newton Poppleford 09:32, arr Seaton Sea Front Gardens 10:07, and the start of the walk. (*cont'd. next page*)

Activities Diary

June – July 2015

Connecting service: bus 157, dep Sidmouth 08:45 arr Newton Poppleford 09:01.
Connecting service: bus 157, dep Exmouth 0840, arr Budleigh Salterton 09:00,
arr Newton Poppleford 09:24. For car users, the CP at the Recreation Ground
at Newton Poppleford can be used, also the CP by the tramway station in Seaton.
Return by bus X53 dep Lyme Regis 17:10, arr Seaton 17:34, arr Newton
Poppleford 18:12 and Exeter 18:40. Please check the bus times against the latest
timetable, published in May. Walk Leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Friday 19th June, 10.00am – WALK

Start near Stockland Church. (OS Explorer 115, ST 245 047). 5 miles, 3+ hours.
The walk starts with a gentle uphill climb towards Marlpit Cross and a final
steeper section to the village of Heathstock. Then easterly, past Paradise Farm,
downhill to Three Ash Cross and Waterhouse Farm in the River Yarty valley.
The route follows the river along paths back to Stockland enjoying the wild
flowers. Please bring your own refreshments or a picnic. Sorry, no dogs.
Walk Leader: Margaret Read 01392 759 332

Wednesday 24th June, 10.00am – WALK

Start at The Donkey Sanctuary CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 161 892). 4 miles, 2½
hours. Circular walk visiting Salcombe Regis and Weston Mouth, includes parts
of the coastal path with splendid views, there are some steep climbs.
Lunch at the Donkey Sanctuary if desired.
Walk Leader: John Jones 01395 443651

Monday 29th June, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Knowle Village Hall CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827). 10 miles, 5½
hours. “Pushing the boundaries” a circular walk around Woodbury Commons,
along lesser used paths around Crooks Plantation with splendid views towards
the sea; north to Hawkerland; west past the castle; south and east of the B3180
through the quarries, across Lymptone Common, past Bystock ponds, then
Dalditch Plantation overlooking Squabmoor reservoir, to return to Knowle
Village and Britannia Inn for those who deserve it! Please bring refreshments.
Walk Leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Saturday 4th July, 10.45am – WALK

Start at Abbotsbury CP (OS Explorer OL15, SY 579 852), 9½ miles, 4+ hours.
Abbotsbury is approximately 50 miles, 1hr 30mins, drive from Newton
Poppleford. We suggest meeting at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP
(OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999) at 09.00am to share cars. Walk commences with
a steepish climb up to the Ridgeway to obtain good views. Walk along the ridge
and then down to West Bexington and back along the coast path to the ruins of

(continued next page)

St Catherines Chapel on the hill above Abbotsbury. Please bring a picnic or take advantage of refreshments available at West Bexington and tea at Abbotsbury.

Walk Leader: Bettina Wilson 01395 578450

Wednesday 8th July, 11.00am – WALK

Start at Charmouth Seafront Information Centre (OS Explorer 115, SY 365 930). 6½ miles, The Jurassic coast at its best! Enjoy the pleasure of climbing Cain's Folley, Golden Cap, the highest point on the south coast at 191m and Thorncombe Beacon with their outstanding panoramas. Descending to Seatown, Eype mouth before finally being rewarded with the culinary delights (cockles, mussels, winkles and fish & chips) of West Bay harbour. Bring refreshments.

Outward travel by bus X53, dep Exeter 09:00, arr Newton Poppleford 09:32, arr Charmouth 10:48. From the bus stop walk south down the lane to the seafront Information Centre and the start of the walk.

Connecting service: bus 157, dep Sidmouth 08:45, dep Newton Poppleford 09:01. Connecting service: bus 157, dep Exmouth 08:40, dep Budleigh 09:00, arr Newton Poppleford 09:24. For car users, the CP adjoining the Recreation Ground (SY 088 999) at Newton Poppleford can be used or the CP at the Charmouth Information Centre. **Return** by bus X53, dep West Bay 16:20, arr Charmouth 16:57, arr Newton Poppleford 18:12 and arr Exeter 18:40.

Please check the bus times against the latest timetable, usually published in May.

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland. 01395 444471

Wednesday 15th July, 10.00am – WALK

Start at White Bridge, (OS Explorer 115, SY 076 830). 5 miles, 2½ hours.

A pleasant walk covering both coast and river to Otterton and return. Coast path (exposed), Monks Wall, Otterton and Park Lane.

Walk Leader: MP / CB

Tuesday 21st July, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Squabmoor Reservoir CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 038 044). 6 miles, 3½ hours. A walk based upon a Devon Wildlife Trust route starting at Bystock Nature Reserve, taking in Squabmoor Reservoir, East Budleigh and Hayes Barton. Please bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Brian Gannon 01395 443502

Wednesday 29th July, 10.00am – WALK

Start at Budleigh Salterton Free CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 061 821). 4½ miles 2½ hours. A walk over varied terrain visiting the Golf Links, Knowle Hill Plantation, Dalditch Common and returning via Shortwood Lane.

Some muddy areas in wet weather.

Walk Leader: John Jones, 01395 443651

Plantation woodland on the old tip - alongside the lane to White Bridge

CLINTON DEVON ESTATES is planning to remove the plantation woodland located on the old domestic refuse site adjacent to South Farm Road in 2015, to reduce risk to power lines.

Cables supplying electricity to the homes and businesses at South Farm, on the eastern side of the Otter estuary run through the plantation and Western Power has asked the Estate to clear some of the trees to prevent them falling on the lines.

Removing some of the trees would make others more vulnerable to wind damage, so it has been decided to remove them all. The work does not constitute part of Clinton Devon Estates' Lower Otter Restoration Project, which is still at an early stage of development.

The plantation is in three sections: Corsican Pine planted in 1969 on the oldest part of the former tip; a small section of Lodgepole Pine planted in 1970 and now in very poor condition; and poplars planted in 1981 on the later area of landfill, which closed in 1978. The poplars have been badly damaged by grey squirrels, causing them to snap during high winds.

Last year's unusually wet conditions caused many trees to fall, cutting the 11kV powerline and damaging the capping of the tip. In addition, invasive plants, including both Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed, have become established and are spreading despite efforts at control.

The proposed clearance of the whole plantation, which would require a felling licence, would allow the invasive species to be treated more effectively and enable the establishment of native species scrub with more value for wildlife.

The fringe of native species on the southern edge of the plantation, which includes some nice oaks, will not be affected. No firm date has yet been set for the work and surveys will be undertaken to ensure that no adverse impact, for example on nesting birds, results from the work.

The work will be managed by Clinton Devon Estates' Forestry team, led by John Wilding. "We have looked carefully at our options for this area which has become unstable. We believe that felling the whole plantation and replacing with native broadleaved species is the most appropriate way forward" said John, who can be contacted at the Rolle Estate Office on 01395 443881.

Mike Williams

'From Beer to Brisbane and back'

ON 25TH NOVEMBER at Otterton Village Hall, 45 hardy souls braved a miserable evening weather-wise and the various obstructions and diversions put up by DCC as they were resurfacing the road.

The talk this evening was given by Peter Dare, a mastermason of some repute. His narration was in effect the story of his life's work. He started work as an apprentice at Beer Caves and learnt the work of a banker. This is one of the trades of a stonemason where the large pieces of limestone are literally sawn up. Other skills of masonry included 'fixers' and 'walling', although the overall name of 'stonemason' is used nowadays. The Beer Quarry has been in existence since Roman times and only ceased production in the 1950's. It is now a popular tourist attraction. In medieval times the stone was carted to Seaton from where it was shipped. In the 1930's it was carted to Seaton train station. The quarry also produced lime for the land.

Peter left Beer Quarry and began to work at most of the cathedrals in the westcountry. Occasionally reopening closed-down quarries to source a matching shade of limestone. In 1969 he became the mastermason at Exeter Cathedral, a position which he held for some 16 years. During his tenure much restoration took place. Some of the stone from the nearby demolished church of St Mary Major was used.

Peter left the cathedral in 1985 and some time after that moved to work on Brisbane Cathedral in Australia. We were given an insight into the problems that he encountered, among which was his battle to prevent the use of steel in conjunction with stone, being due to the incompatibility of the two materials. His total faith in the intrinsic strength of the stone structures, such as roofs and arches were a measure of his experience. His work in Australia resulted in several awards from both Government and academic bodies. Achievements for which he was obviously very proud.

This insight into the life's work of Peter proved to be a fascinating talk and the range of questions raised by his audience reflected this.



The Home Front in Devon, 1914

“UP WITH THE CREAM and down with the sausage!” was the shout that greeted the 4th Devon regiment as it marched off to the war. But how supportive of the war effort was the population of Devon?

Dr Richard Batten, of Exeter University, explored the evidence in a talk to the OVA on 7th October in East Budleigh Village Hall.

When Britain declared war in August 1914 there were a wide range of emotions throughout the county of Devon. Crowds in Exeter were cheering and enthusiastic, but in other areas people were concerned. The holiday industry was significantly affected, with records of many cancelled reservations in Exmouth and Ilfracombe.

The county landowning social and economic elite planned to transform Devon into a county at arms. However it was not to be. Despite an early initial rush of volunteers, by December 1914 Devon had a volunteer rate of 0.6% of the population compared to 1.2% in Somerset and 3% in Birmingham. A survey commissioned by Devon County Council for parish level returns showed wide variations in recruitment rates, with residents in rural areas generally slower to enroll. Parishes with a recruitment rate of less than 4% were named and shamed. In late August, the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, Lord Fortescue voiced his scepticism about the loyalty of the men from the north Devon town of Bideford. He said that it was his belief that ‘the traditions in the area were “all against war and anything connected with it”’. Similarly, Exeter struggled to recruit, aiming for 250 recruits in December 1914 they managed only 8.

To explain the lack of recruitment, ignorance of the importance of the situation, lack of loyalty and lack of patriotism were blamed. However it is possible that some of the low recruitment could be due to the needs of farming in the rural Devon economy. It was hard for Devon farmers to let workers leave at the height of the harvest season, especially when demand for crops was growing significantly. The Newton Abbot NFU chairman argued that the ‘world could not go on, nor could the troops be supplied, without the man behind the plough’. If a farmer lost his sons, it could put the whole family business in jeopardy.

In addition the army recruitment effort faced stiff competition from the Navy. The strength of the naval tradition in Devon could also help explain the low recruitment figures for the army. In 4 months from August 1914 Exeter had 425 recruits into the Naval and Marines Recruiting Office.

On the social side a number of charities were created to help the war effort. The mobilisation of women into charitable work was considered to be very important by the county elite. Knitting was considered to be a patriotic act. Over 5,000 pairs of socks and 1,500 body belts were knitted in six weeks. The Devon Patriotic Fund, founded by Lord Fortescue was formed to manage the relief and assistance of wives and families of armed service regulars.

Overall, while the cry endorsing Devon dairy over German sausage showed patriotic fervour, the home front displayed a lot of diversity in its emotions and reactions to the war. While large crowds gathered and cheered, the actual recruiting was slow. Conversely, charitable efforts were well supported.

OVA WALK - 29 October 2014

ON A LOW CLOUDY DAY, Brian Turnbull led an interesting seven mile walk, with eight OVA members in tow, starting at Colaton Raleigh Church. We saw that the original controversial plans for an enlarged Otter Farm had been sympathetically resolved with the re-siting of the large dairy shed, as well as a new access road along the old railway line to reduce large vehicle movements through the village. Crossing the River Otter over the fine new bridge, we noted the plaque to Alan Jones who did much good work in the local area, and soon we arrived at Passaford Farm. Here we saw the 1886 MR plaque, of which similar examples are to be seen throughout the area. Mark Rolle (MR) had innumerable architecturally excellent houses, farms, cottages and outbuildings built during his time as landowner, and here we could see several of the small refinements that adorn his architectural legacy.

During the long climb up Passaford Lane into the cloud – it was a grey day – we climbed through many millions of year’s geological rock formations, from the sandstone layers into the later flint country and, surprisingly high up the hill, passed fields that were once apple orchards. We were in cloud on Mutters Moor but Brian took us unerringly to the site of Seven Stones. This is now a “virtual” ancient monument as the stones were removed to Bicton Park during the 1800s on Lady Rolle’s instructions. The site was excavated in 2012, but nothing of note was found. *(picture on page 31)*

Colourful fungi were spotted prior to our coffee stop at the National Trust woodland on Peak Hill. Dropping out of the cloud, we briefly followed the Coast Path before descending Bar’s Lane, green lanes and County Roads, which are pretty rough underfoot, passing another old orchard, and crossing the Rickety Bridge arch over the River Otter. Walking north beside the River, we passed the site of Grim’s Ford, where masonry can still be seen, and soon arrived back at Colaton Raleigh Church. After this excellent walk, several members enjoyed lunch at the Otter Inn.

Tim Liles



Lost and Found

IT TAKES LITTLE SKILL to lose someone on a walk, our Walk Leaders do it all the time, but to lose someone before the walk has even begun is an accolade being claimed by the leader of one of our walks. *(cont'd.)*

To Pat (not his real name!): the rendezvous was outside *John Lewis* in Exeter, and we did look diligently for you, and even went back to the bus station in case you were thinking of taking a ride on a vintage bus. I thought we had searched everywhere ... but, on reflection, there's one place we overlooked. So, Pat, if you are still playing astronauts in the lift at *John Lewis*, time to come down to earth.

Postscript: Pat was seen marching over Golden Cap on our walk a week later, wishing someone would give him a lift.

Chris B



Mud and Flood around Aylesbeare

I LOOK INTO THE BOOT of my car and ponder: wellies or boots, boots or wellies. I opt for wellies ... good choice. All was reasonably dry underfoot as ten intrepid mud wrestlers headed off from Newton Poppleford towards Venn Ottery. We had been warned of boggy conditions and we were not disappointed as we encountered our first flooded stretch of track on leaving Venn Ottery, making use of a well-used detour avoided testing the dubbin.

The walk through Venn Ottery Nature Reserve was delightful and the leaf scuffers amongst the party were in heaven as we shushed through piles of russet leaves and admired the colours still on the trees. We then took to the roads – bring on the mud, I say.

I was looking forward to wading through the flooded track on the approach to Aylesbeare so I could feel smug about the wellies but alas the water had subsided so it was a slippery slither into the village.

We mourned the loss of the pub in Aylesbeare, now forlornly empty, before diving into the mud once again. We squelched our way back over Aylesbeare and Harpford Commons before raising our hoods as the weather deteriorated. By this time we were back on the East Devon Way and terra firma so it was heads down and a push for home.

As always, it was an enjoyable outing with fellow OVA-ers and thanks to Chris who took on the mud at least twice in the last week.

Vivien Insull



Walk on 6th December

OVA walk on 6th December 2014 led by Brian Turnbull.

WITH FROST STILL ON THE GROUND and the bonus of bright sunshine overhead, this could be said to qualify as the first truly winter walk of the season. Stalwarts who would normally be wearing shorts were “barely” recognisable in long trousers! A good-sized party of sixteen walkers plus two dogs set out from Colaton Raleigh for a six mile circuit looping north and west of the village. The first point of interest was the new farm service road that Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) had constructed to take the increased farm traffic generated by the expected doubling of the local dairy unit. There were splendid views across the Otter to Beacon Hill, which we were reliably informed by Brian was, at 224 m AOD, is the highest point in the valley. We hugged the river bank for a short spell before branching left towards the site of the ancient Dotton Mill (featured in a BBC “Time Team” programme) and the uncertain location of an ancient priory from which Monkey Lane probably derived its name (a corruption of Monke’s Lane?). We then took a slight detour to inspect the “model Victorian Farm” established by Lord Rolle in 1871, which boasted intricate brickwork in the form of shaped arches over windows and rounded corner bricks to protect animals and machinery, or perhaps simply to improve the aesthetic appearance of the structure.

After a steep climb we heard a commotion from adjacent fields and saw fieldfares (winter migrants to the UK) shooting away and three mistle thrushes that had been feasting on hawthorn berries. These birds congregate together in open fields in the winter months. A family of long-tailed tits and a lone buzzard made up the bird-spotting tally. On Goosemoor Common we came upon a quaint little hamlet (the earlier home of one member of the group, it transpired) with an oddly shaped thatched cottage. Past a pack of boisterous dogs and on to Hawkerland, emerging at Stoneyford. Here was another fine example of a converted Rolle barn with the characteristic rounded corners, fancy corbels and fine brickwork that we were now able to recognise. Continuing along a network of green lanes we emerged in Napps Lane (perhaps named after the process of shaping flints?) and a reminder of summer past with a lone red admiral taking in the last warmth of sunshine, before attempting to overwinter. However, only few survive as the Imago (adult form) in even in the mildest of our winters. Only five species of our native butterflies successfully overwinter in the adult form. It is a member of the *Nymphalidae*, a large family of butterflies; the adult insect has the diagnostic feature of having only two pairs of functional legs, the first pair being vestigial.

Evidence of CDE's concern for the environment, as applied to their farming enterprise, was to be seen in a cunningly disguised mobile-phone mast incorporated into an artificial fir tree. The nearby fields were rich in clover: essential sources of nitrogen on organic farms and highly attractive to insect life. We crossed the busy B3178 and made our way back to the church, from whence half of the party opted for lunch at the Otter Inn Pub. A very sociable and informative medium length walk.

David Hatch



A Glass Half Empty

THINGS DID NOT START WELL. In a brazen attempt to ingratiate himself with the group, the Walk Leader described them as “elite” and consequently in no need of his usual briefing about the walk's terms and conditions. Most were flattered, as was intended, but a member of the OVA's Executive, posing as a ‘mystery shopper’ was heard to mutter something about “Health and Safety protocols” and the “invalidating of the Association's Insurance cover,” etc, etc.

We had only reached the pub (3 minutes), when it transpired that one of the group, the one who self-confessed to “falling out of bed at five to ten” (the walk had been due off at 10.00am), had not brought any lunch. But this is what a village shop is for, so a packet of biscuits and a bottle of water were purchased, although she won't get away with it again. Sadly, the shop will close in the New Year. Another sucker was inveigled to carry the spoils.

Half way to West Down Beacon, we veered to the west to use the route of the old railway line to make quick progress (2.6 mph to be precise!) to Littleham Church; so quick that the obligatory coffee break was spurned. But what's this? A dissenting voice, and order was soon restored and coffee imbibed. You might think that one among eight had a disproportionate effect on the democratic process, but we live in changing times, where the authority of the rich, and the powerful and Walk Leaders is being challenged. At least the biscuits were offered round, and being those half coated plain chocolate ones, were well received.

Meanwhile, the Walk Leader was harangued because he was unable to deliver a power point lecture on “Littleham Church and its efficacy as a fifteenth century pilgrimage for OVA walkers”.
(continued overleaf)

Fortunately, he saved himself by remembering that Lady Nelson was buried there, and another, even more knowledgeable walker, knew exactly where to look, so we minced around the headstones to view. Since no more biscuits were forthcoming, and the Executive member had failed to repeat last year's seasonal offering of mulled wine, we went on our way.

There followed some attractive rural paths alongside Littleham's babbling brook (oh yes it was!), although the spectre of Exmouth's urbanisation brooded over us on the hill tops above. We didn't follow the brook all the way to the sea, but crossed it to the south and climbed to the cliffs at Higher Orcombe, before gliding down to Orcombe Point; the start of the Jurassic Coast at its most westerly point, and recognised by the Geoneedle.

Although a somewhat modest location for such a world renowned geological phenomenon, one tries to be sympathetic towards visitors who want to record their presence at this iconic landmark. Fortunately, the OVA's dignity was just about preserved, since no one tried to climb to the top, probably because there wasn't a traffic cone to hand, and no mulled wine had been consumed. Instead, advantage was taken of the attractively landscaped seating and we all cosied up to eat our lunch and enjoy the captivating views of the Exe Estuary. A pair of kestrels hovered close by.

It was mild, but nonetheless if you had forgotten your string vest, you were keen not to hang about (although we contrived to hang about for 52 minutes on this walk!) and sure enough the cry came that we should begin the 3 mile climb along the South West Coast Path to West Down Beacon. No more biscuits, so we concurred.

En route we diverted our gaze as we hurried past multitudes of mobile holiday homes, pausing briefly, with our backs firmly set to this blight on the landscape, to gaze at a deserted Sandy Bay beach. An appropriately short, sharp, shock of a climb took us uphill past the Commandoes training camp at Straight Point, before that familiar view of Otter Head hove into view. We skipped along the crumbling cliff edge on the already rerouted path, before the next landslip occurred, to reach the view from 129 metres above sea level and 260 metres of ascent.

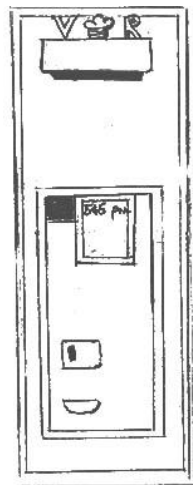
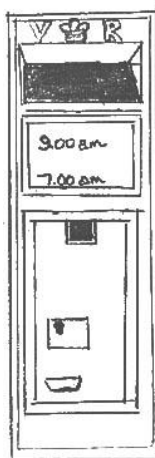
Downhill now. We'd done 7 miles and the sign said "Knowle 1 mile", but not before one of the group began to get 'the shakes' as we skirted the golf course. All those 'pulls' and 'slices' from Christmases past, coming back to haunt her. And then it was all over. 4.01 hours after we left, we were back at the pub.
– 3 minutes after closing time!

Chris B

Heritage Postboxes

The postboxes of Budleigh Salterton were nominated for inclusion on the local heritage asset list. As a result I have had an enjoyable month seeking out the boxes, noting their locations and descriptions and photographing them. As one may guess, the most numerous are those of George V vintage, a) because he was on the throne a long time from 1910 to 1936 and poor George VI had to use the surplus stock until 1937, and b) a massive increase in housebuilding in Budleigh Salterton occurred in the first years of the last century. Postboxes came with new housing.

The 16 postboxes are 10 wallboxes; 5 freestanding and 1 lampbox. The regnal names are 2 VR; 8 GR; 2 GVIR; 4 EIIR. I am sure there is someone reading this who could help date the Victorian postboxes. I have sketched them below. The smaller measures 10 x 30 and the larger 13½ x 32½ inches.



Nicola Daniel

New National Park?

On Wednesday November 12th Sandra Brown, Chairman of the Dorset and East Devon National Parks Team presented to the Axe Vale Conservation Society the benefits of a new national park for Southern England. Representatives from the Sid Vale and OVA also attended. We thank Axe Vale for this invitation.

Sandra emphasised that, hand in hand with the protection of the environment, there would be benefit to the local economy and tourism. This idea of a national park here was first mooted in 1945 (so not that new, then!). The present plan would be a park running the whole length of the Jurassic Coast with the Dorset and East Devon AONBs and Hardy's Heath in Dorset. This would be a green bridge for Southern England providing a conservation chain and increasing biodiversity.

Natural England, the statutory body which advises the government on these matters has not dismissed the project out of hand. There is every hope that we may see a National Park in our area as we saw one appear in the South Downs a few years ago. (*Don't hold your breath, though, it took over 50 years!*)

The Otter Valley Association

Executive Committee (01395)

Chairman	Roger Saunders	443248
Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	Iain Ure	568158
Hon Treasurer	Trevor Waddington	443978

Committee Chairmen

Natural Environment	Patrick Hamilton	445351
Planning	Nicola Daniel	445960
History	David Daniel	445960
Events	<i>vacancy</i>	

Parish Representatives (to whom queries should be addressed initially)

Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	446077
East Budleigh	Christine Hadley	443607
Otterton	Joan Cullen	567574
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacancy</i>	
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786

Other EC Members

Assistant Minutes Secretary	Robert Wiltshire	444395
Membership Secretary	Clive Bowman	446892
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Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

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Publications: See our website ova.org.uk or for book sales please contact Andrew Beresford by phone, 01395 446543 or email, booksales@ova.org.uk



Walking the OVA way

At the site of the Seven Stones, 29th October. The stones had long since gone, and not just disappeared into the mist.

Looking across the Otter Valley towards Fire Beacon Hill 6th December sunshine.

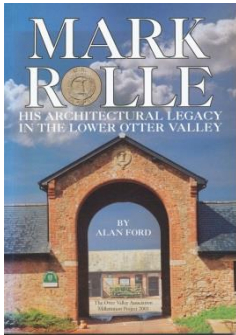


Coffee stop and views reward for climbing Fire Beacon Hill in sunshine (again) on 10th December

Thirty three walkers and six dogs braved the wet weather on Boxing Day to walk the muddy lanes from East Budleigh to Otterton, via Bickton and back. They embarked in good cheer knowing that as soon as they arrived at the Sir Walter Raleigh, Chris & Sally would give them a warm welcome and piping hot food. This annual event has now become the best attended walk in the year.



OVA Publications



Mark Rolle

His Architectural Legacy in the Lower Otter Valley

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

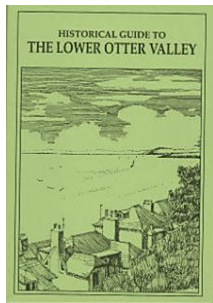
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



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 Centre and in other outlets around the valley.

