

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

A winter landscape featuring a snow-covered beach, a rocky cliff, and a line of trees under a cloudy sky.

OVA
PO Box 70
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www.ova.org.uk
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WINTER
Newsletter
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Coast to Coast – the Photo Album from start to finish



To find out who made it from beginning to end see report on page 24

This issue's cover "The Crystal Landscape: Otter Head" was photographed and produced by Mo Bowman

From the Editor

A Happy New Year to you all. For those of you who have resolved to get fitter, lose weight or improve your mind we have a fantastic programme of walks and talks in the coming three months. You can learn about everything from Jane Austen to fungi with much in between and enjoy a huge variety of walks.

I thought our walks organisers had excelled themselves when I spotted an event entitled 'A Ramble with Temptations' but, on reading further, realised it was not an opportunity to go hiking with members of the 70's pop group – perhaps next year!

Happy reading.

Jacqui Baldwin

THE 2017 SPRING LITTER-PICK (FOR YOUR 2017 CALENDARS!)

Can another year already have flown by? My calendar tells me that it is indeed time once again to check out those tide tables and fix a date for our Annual Spring Litter-Pick. So, by the time that you read this, you will have your new calendar and can make the following entry:

Annual Spring Litter-Pick : Saturday 25th March 2017 at 10am

Low tide on that day will be at 10.22am GMT so the estuary will have had plenty of time to dry out since the previous high tide at 4.21am. As always, we run this event in cooperation with EDDC and Clinton Devon Estates and the aim is to clear all litter from the Otter estuary below White Bridge by 12 noon. We assemble at the Lime Kiln Car Park in Budleigh Salterton at 10am and free parking tickets will then be distributed along with plastic bags and tongs. At noon we bring our loaded bags to the car park where prizes will be awarded for the most unusual finds.

Wellington boots and gloves are essential; waterproofs may be necessary but we hope for the usual good luck with the weather!

All volunteers are most welcome.

Patrick Hamilton, Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee

Chairman's Report

As we start the New Year, maybe it is a good time to update you on the major long-term projects in progress. Last year at this time I wrote about the East Devon District Council Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans in our local area, the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) and the High Voltage power link between France, Alderney and Britain (FAB link).

The East Devon Local Plan was approved in 2016, but the neighbourhood plans are still in the development phase. East Budleigh is furthest along, closely followed by Budleigh Salterton. Both are likely to reach the referendum stage (and hopefully approval) this year. Newton Poppleford and Otterton are also in the process of preparing neighbourhood plans. With the Local Plan in place there is now more control over where houses get built, and better protection of areas outside the built-up area boundaries. However, getting neighbourhood plans in place will help reinforce local preferences for how our villages grow.

The LORP carries on, with a much expanded stakeholder group, led by Clinton Devon Estates and the Environment Agency. This project is about managing the lower reaches of the River Otter in the face of increased storm frequency and ageing embankments. The main proposal being investigated is the option of allowing the river to return to its original flood plain. The project is still looking for funding, with a bid due to go in to the Heritage Lottery Foundation in March with a decision later in 2017. If the bid were successful, the next stage of the programme would be an in-depth investigation around the plans, including modelling of the potential water flow patterns, investigation of the old tip and ways to maintain access to the South Farm area. See page 11 for an update from Clinton Devon Estates on this subject.

The FAB link project appears to be progressing quickly behind the scenes. There is now a detailed route for the power cables available on-line (www.fablink.net/cpo/) and at Budleigh Public library. The route follows the west side of the Otter estuary to South Farm Road, and then heads across fields. On its way through the area it will cross a number of roads, which will likely cause significant disruption during the construction phase. The OVA will continue to monitor this programme.

From this report it may seem that the OVA Executive must do nothing but talk about planning; and while this is a significant and important part of what we do,

we are also concerned with the natural environment, local history, and events. Following a request from some OVA members we have started to put summaries of our Executive Committee (EC) meetings on the OVA website, under the “About Us” tab (<http://www.ova.org.uk/about-us/ova-executive-committee-reports>). The Executive Committee generally meets monthly, and the summaries need to be approved by the committee at the following meeting before we post them, so they will be on-line about a month after the meeting. We try to communicate everything of importance from our meetings to the OVA membership through the quarterly newsletters, our website and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/OtterValleyAssoc), but the summaries will offer a bit more detail month to month about what is going on. If you find the summaries interesting or useful, or not, please let me know. At the moment this is just an experiment and depending on feedback from our members we will decide on how long to keep it going.

Finally, is there anything you would like the OVA to do differently this year, or is there a new topic that we should be addressing? Please let us know, the easiest way is through our website or Facebook page, other contact details are at the back of the newsletter.

On behalf of the OVA Executive Committee, I wish you all the very best for 2017.

Roger Saunders

Advance Notice OVA Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday May 10th, 7.30 pm
East Budleigh Village Hall, East Budleigh**

Hear about the OVA's work in the last year, future plans and elect your representatives.

Followed by refreshments and a talk by David White about wildlife on the River Otter (Beavers, Otters and Birds and more), illustrated with his own photographs.

Historic Quays on The Otter

In our Autumn publication we mentioned that the OVA had raised concerns about the proposed route of the FAB link project crossing the historic sites of Kersbrook Quay and Granary Dock on the Otter.

In response to our communications the following has been received from Chris Jenner, Project Manager of the FAB powerline project:

“We have reviewed the information on the OVA website and also the available historic maps including those provided by yourself and another one provided to us by the Archivist at the Clinton Devon Estates.

We can confirm that we will update the Baseline Environment section of the chapter in the final version of the UK Cable Route Environmental Risk Assessment Report accordingly.

It is clear that the cable route option which runs along the footpath north from Limekiln Car Park at Budleigh Salterton crosses the locations of the former Granary Dock and Kersbrook Quay, as marked on the chart of c. 1851. At both locations there is the potential for construction works to impact on remains of former structures (docks, wharfs, jetties etc) and possibly also the remains of vessels that utilised these facilities.

The detailed designs and the consequent construction methodologies for the works in these locations are still under consideration. We will continue to liaise with Bill Horner and his team at Devon County Council in order to agree the appropriate requirements for archaeological work that may be needed at these locations ahead of and/or during construction.”

David Daniel
History Cordinator

Why did Jeff Conant fly 5,286 miles from Berkley, CA. to visit us last month?

Sir Walter Raleigh is well known but few outside East Budleigh may know of his contemporary, Roger Conant. Roger was born in the Mill House, East Budleigh, on 9th April 1592 (since demolished but just above Hill Farm). He was the youngest son of Richard Conant, miller, who had married into one of the leading merchant families of Colyton. Both Roger's and Walter's fathers were Church Wardens and both families have their crests carved on bench ends in All Saints' Church.

As the youngest son of a family of eight, Roger couldn't expect a share of his father's estate. In 1610, or soon after, Richard followed his brother Christopher to London. Christopher became a member of the Grocers' Guild and merchant. Roger became a salter, a trade concerned with preserving meat and fish, not to be confused with salt production. By 1618, the year Sir Walter was beheaded, Roger was well enough established to marry Sarah Horton in Blackfriars. Having lost their first child in 1619, their second child, Caleb, was born in May 1622.

So why did Roger, with his wife and baby son, set sail for New England in 1623 and eventually become the founder of Salem, Massachusetts?

Religious, political and trading conditions were changing adversely under James I. Roger was a puritan by inclination, as were some of his ordained brothers, though not a separatist (or dissenter). In 1622 three influential sermons on the subject of colonization were published. The plantation colonies of: Jamestown, Virginia (1607); and Plymouth, New England (1620) were beginning to succeed. The Plymouth Colony was well placed to supplement the century old cod fishing industry that Merchant Venturers were keen on extending throughout the year, providing opportunities for a salter. Forty vessels sailed to New England in 1623, the Conant family in one of them.

They spent their first year in the Plymouth Colony founded by pilgrim separatists who originated from Nottinghamshire but became disillusioned by the factions within the community. After a year in more congenial company in Boston Bay they moved northward to Cape Anne where Roger became the manager of the "fishing plantation" set up on speculation by "The Dorchester Company". This Company failed and when the next boat arrived from England, Roger learned that a new Company had taken over. He was offered free passage home but instead led a small group of seasoned settlers to an abandoned Native American settlement, Naumkeag. Further funds and provisions were raised in England and in a 1626

Thanksgiving Ceremony it was renamed Salem. Roger's leadership provided the stability to survive the first two years, but he was replaced as Governor in 1628 by John Endecott, one of the new arrivals at the start of the mass migration, by order of the Massachusetts Bay Company.



From time to time descendants of Roger and Sarah Conant visit East Budleigh. Jeff (pictured) is the latest. He stayed at the King's Arms, Otterton; took part in a quiz night; was shown around East Budleigh by members of the OVA and Fairlynch Museum; and enjoyed some hospitality in the Sir Walter Raleigh. Jeff is the Forestry Programme manager for Friends of the Earth and already knew all about our Beavers!

(Main history source: Roger Conant, A Founder of Massachusetts, by Clifford K. Shipton, © 1944, Harvard College, USA)

David Daniel
History Coordinator

The Devon – Newfoundland Story

Anyone interested in the historical and cultural connection between Devon and the 'new world' may be interested in events being run by The Devonshire Association in April 2017 celebrating nearly 600 years of contact and interaction between Devon and Newfoundland (claimed as a British Colony by Sir Humphrey Gilbert who came from Compton). The aims of the two-week celebration are to develop connections and to make Devonians and Newfoundlanders more aware of the importance of each place in the history and development of the other and their shared heritage. Representatives from both sides of the Atlantic will explore aspects of shared history and trade, dialect, folklore, music, mumming and dance with main events taking place in Exeter and Bideford.

For more information visit www.devonassoc.org.uk

The Sign of the Golden Hammer – History at your feet

In October the OVA welcomed Richard Holladay, who gave us a talk about Garton and King of Exeter, a business established over 350 years ago.

In 1661 King Charles II had been King of England for a year and at the top of Fore Street in Exeter, under a hanging sign of a Golden Hammer, John Aitken ran an ironmongers shop. He sold a wide range of goods in wrought iron, brass and copper, including toasting forks, spits, saucepans, fire-baskets, hooks, chains, bolts and nails. The business flourished, and on John's retirement was taken over by John Southcombe, and then by his apprentice and nephew Lewis Portbury. John Southcombe spotted cast iron products of a superior quality (lighter and thinner than the usual supply), and was able to track down the source to Coalbrookdale in Shropshire. They were able to sell this cast-iron hollowware (pots, pans, kettles, coffee pots etc.) for less than the brass and copperware that was otherwise available in Exeter. The profitable business that they established enhanced the social standing of Portbury, who became a Bailiff for the city in 1719 and a churchwarden at St. Petrock's in 1721. The ironmongery business then passed on to his son (also named Lewis) who served as Sheriff of the City and also as Mayor. On his death in 1766 he was reported as having "acquired a handsome fortune with the greatest reputation".

The business was sold on and ended up with Samuel Kingdom, who ran "an extensive business through a long period with honour and integrity". An advertisement in the Flying Post (1783) listed him as manufacturing "all kinds of brown tea-kitchens, coffee urns, coffee pots, etc". Sam died in 1797 and was succeeded by his wife Jane and sons William and Sam. They established a foundry in Waterbeer Street at the turn of the 19th century, which was unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1826. A newspaper article of the time reported that "the manufactory was probably the most extensive in the west of England, and gave employment to upwards of 250 persons."

The foundry was rebuilt, and the business diversified into other lines including greenhouse heating equipment. Sam served as Mayor of Exeter in 1836. William and Sam retired in 1849, selling the business to John Garton and Ambrose Jarvis. In 1851 Garton and Jarvis exhibited at the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, London. Their enterprise was rewarded when Prince Albert purchased a Garton and Jarvis Cottage stove and had it installed in one of his Model Cottages in Hyde Park. The model proved to be very popular with at least 30 ordered from Budleigh

Salterton alone. Stoves became an important part of the business, and some Exonian and Rectory models are still in existence. Garton and Jarvis were issued a Royal warrant to Queen Victoria for Hot Water Apparatus for conservatories, with one system installed at Kew Gardens. An export business to Australia and New Zealand was established. The firm continued to sell smaller items including fenders, tea trays, cutlery and general ironmongery.

After Jarvis's death in 1865 a new partner, John King, joined and the firm finally became known as Garton and King. Following John Garton's death, Hugo Holladay became a partner in 1898, focusing on the retail side of the operation from the store at 190 High Street. The firm continued selling a wide range of goods including stoves, bedsteads, bath and toilet ware and hot water engineering. They supplied many of the local gentry including Lord Poltimore as well as Exeter Cathedral. Hugo's brother, Edgar, took over the engineering side.

After World War I the foundry expanded into municipal work (e.g manhole covers, grates) and small builders' castings (e.g door handles, hinges, latches). On Hugo's retirement in 1933 the retail shop was closed, and three years later the foundry was forced to relocate when the City of Exeter decided to redevelop the area into a new civic centre. A new foundry was established at Tan Lane in the St. Thomas area of the city manufacturing the same range of products, including engineering and municipal castings, gears, stoves etc. In 1973 Garton and King split into two businesses, one with the foundry and engineering, and the other (Garton and King Appliances) for kitchen appliances and domestic engineering.



As the customer base consolidated through local government reforms, the market changed to much bigger bulk orders and lower price points. The foundry company struggled with these developments and closed in 1977. Today the most visible traces of Garton and King are the Golden Hammer from outside the Tan Lane

foundry which is now in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, and man-hole covers and grates across much of Devon. Look around next time you are walking around, I expect you will see the Garton and King name at your feet.

Roger Saunders

River Otter Beaver Trial

One of the conditions of the Natural England licence for the beaver trial is that the animals are carefully monitored and tagged wherever possible. Over the coming two months, experienced and licensed staff will be trapping and checking the health of the beavers around Otterton.



Any animals caught will be quickly health checked on the riverbank before being released back into the river. If previously unknown animals (e.g. the kits) are caught they will also be sexed and ear tagged.

Although they are situated away from public footpaths, please do not disturb the traps, or allow dogs near them. If you have any questions about the trapping please email beavers@devonwildlifetrust.org In an emergency please contact Mark Elliott on 07968 850510 or Roisin Campbell-Palmer on 07882 519027.

Devon Wildlife Trust, the landowner, Clinton Devon Estates and other partners in the trial are working together to understand these fascinating animals and how they are using the river. Monitoring the health, welfare and population dynamics is a key part of that.



The latest heavy rains of early November once again left their mark locally. Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club was flooded yet again, with part of the upper flood embankment also heavily eroded. When the water was at its highest, South Farm Road and the old municipal dump were about six feet, and four feet under water respectively. Water was also flooding across the popular public footpath below South Farm Road in an easterly direction.

Throughout 2016 the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, Clinton Devon Estates (CDE) and the Environment Agency (EA) have continued to investigate whether reconnecting the Lower Otter to its floodplain to allow more natural drainage of the river valley is desirable and achievable. Important issues that continue to be considered include how the cricket club might be relocated to drier ground and how existing wildlife habitat and public access can be safeguarded for the future. The dual spectres of sea level rise and increase in frequency and intensity of storms related to a changing climate are the driving force behind this initiative. It is our belief that current management of the Lower Otter, including of the drainage outfall on Budleigh Salterton beach, is unsustainable. Full details of background information and current progress on the project are available at www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk. Contact details of stakeholder representatives can also be found on this site. Views from the local community are very much welcome.

If the Lower Otter is reconnected to its floodplain one of the most problematic aspects to resolve is the relocation of the cricket club to a flood-free site. Should the project proceed, this is likely to be an expensive part of the initiative, but is also one of the hardest to fund, despite the club being a fantastic community asset. Neither the Estate, the EA nor some of the key potential funders currently identified, including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), are able to fund this aspect of the project. During the first half of 2017 the partnership will continue to seek funding to support all aspects of the project, although a risk remains that sufficient funding will not be found. In that eventuality, CDE would not be looking to pursue the project further as it would be too costly without support. The EA may look to other sites further afield to deliver compensatory habitat for flood defence works on the Exe, which is their reason for potentially investing in the Lower Otter.

We are still hopeful that a solution to the cricket club conundrum can be found as we believe a relocation is in the best long term interest of the club membership. However, regardless of the eventual outcome, the Lower Otter Restoration Project will have served a useful purpose in highlighting the risks of climate change to the local community and public agencies responsible for managing access, recreational and drainage infrastructure.

Adaptation to climate change is never easy, and seldom cheap. Our aspiration remains to reconnect the Otter River to its floodplain to allow the river and estuary to behave normally, create an additional 50 hectares of wildlife habitat, relocate the cricket club out of the flood plain and safeguard public access. However, we have always accepted that we might not be able to deliver this vision.

One final point regarding the old municipal tip. Western Power have requested that the Corsican Pines and Poplars covering the area are felled to protect the 11kv power line that crosses the site and which supplies part of Granary Lane and South Farm. This is part of the 'Resilience Network Project'. Dependent on the weather, this work will now take place in February 2017, although mature broadleaf trees and larger poplars on the southern fringe of the site will be retained. The site will not be re-planted with trees, but allowed to scrub up naturally with native species such as blackthorn. In time this will provide a valuable wildlife habitat. This work is not related to the Lower Otter Restoration Project.

Dr Samuel Bridgewater

Nature Conservation Manager, Clinton Devon Estates

Budleigh Salterton Branch Line Commemorative Celebration

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Budleigh Salterton Branch Line, on 6th March the OVA, in conjunction with the Railway Ramblers, will be walking part of the route of the original branch line from Newton Poppleford to Exmouth. See the Events Programme for further details.



The history of the line (in brief overleaf) and photographs such as this above of Budleigh Salterton Station can be found in a booklet 'The Budleigh Salterton Railway', a new edition by Michael Downes, available at Fairlynch Museum, the Tourist Information Centre and The Card Shop Too. £5 with all proceeds to Fairlynch Museum.

Branchline to Budleigh and Beyond

- 1860** Exeter – Waterloo main line via Salisbury completed. Intermediate station at Feniton.
- 1874** 8¼ mile branch line to Sidmouth opened with intermediate stations at Ottery St. Mary and Tipton St. John. Feniton station renamed Sidmouth Junction.
- 1897** 6½ mile branch line from new junction at Tipton to terminus at Budleigh Salterton completed in 18 months. Intermediate station at Otterton named “East Budleigh”; goods siding only at Colaton Raleigh for farm produce (closed in 1953)
- 1899** Additional intermediate station at Newton Poppleford opened.
- 1903** 5 mile extension from Budleigh Salterton to Exmouth opened with intermediate station at Littleham. (*Exmouth already connected to Exeter by rail via Topsham*) Construction took 400 men assisted by two steam excavators four years due to heavy engineering works – embankments and deep cuttings, Dalditch Bridge and 30 foot (9 metre) high 23-arch curved viaduct on approach to Exmouth. This section of line was engineered for double track width but only a single line was ever installed. The summit of the line was near Castle Lane overbridge, almost 300 feet above sea level. Camping coaches for holidays were installed at Littleham, East Budleigh, Newton Poppleford and Tipton.
- 1924** Exmouth station rebuilt with four platforms.
- 1963** Steam traction replaced with diesel railcars.
- 1967** Line closed to passengers on March 6th – last train (shown below) ran on March 4th. Goods traffic ceased on May 8th and the track was lifted that summer.



Seaton Jurassic proves a hit in first season

Seaton Jurassic, East Devon's newest visitor attraction, has proved hugely popular with families, locals and visitors alike. Following years of planning and fundraising, the centre, owned by EDDC and managed by Devon Wildlife Trust has welcomed more than 40,000 'time-travellers' through its doors since opening in March 2016.

Seaton's claim to geological fame rests on the close proximity to the town of visible rock formations representing all the three periods – Jurassic, Triassic and Cretaceous – that make up the World Heritage Coastline.

Around the town the natural world is rich, both on land and at sea. Seaton Jurassic is a short walk from both the Axmouth-Lyme Regis Undercliffs National Nature Reserve and the Axe Estuary Wetlands. Out to sea, the precious reefs of Lyme Bay are such important marine wildlife habitats they are protected as a Special Area of Conservation. For all these reasons, Seaton forms an ideal home for a visitor attraction that tells the story of millions of years of terrestrial and marine wildlife on East Devon's doorstep.

The colourful, interactive exhibit offers a family-friendly experience suitable for the naturally curious of all ages. Your visit begins in a Victorian library with a difference. Many drawers, bookshelves and displays have clearly been



physically impacted by the Jurassic Coast's own forceful geological history, including the famous Bindon landslip of 1839. A holographic time-traveller character guides you through the eras, with the rise and fall of many species on what is now the Jurassic Coast.



Visitors can enter a submarine to visit the seabed off Seaton across three geological periods. Control the vessel's speed and direction and discover ancient marine animals great and small on the digital displays outside the craft's 'windows'.

In the contemporary display, visitors are shrunk to the size of a shrimp in a large rockpool. How do marine animals survive and thrive in this environment of dramatic changes with each tide?

Staff and volunteers at the centre also run an array of wildlife events and activities at a number of natural 'Discovery Points' around the town, including Seaton Hole and the Axe Estuary Wetlands.

It took 15 years of volunteer effort by the local community (from 2007 by the Seaton Visitor Centre Trust), working with Councils of East Devon, Devon County and Seaton Town to move from vision to reality at Seaton Jurassic; with Devon Wildlife Trust being appointed in 2014 to develop the interpretation, manage the centre and raise more than £4 million of funding to create what visitors see today.

So Devon Wildlife Trust is immensely proud of the Seaton Jurassic team and partners, following such excellent visitor numbers, positive national media coverage and tourism award success in the first season.

Seaton Jurassic is closed briefly in the early part of 2017, then open again from Saturday 11 February with a full programme of walks and talks in the Spring.

For more information see www.seatonjurassic.org

Dan Smith, Communications Officer, Devon Wildlife Trust
Photos courtesy of Matt Austin

A Walk for Everyone – Winter Programme 2017

Who knows what the weather will be like when you read this preview of our winter programme, so let's make a mental leap to the sights and sounds of *Spring*.

Our first opportunity is likely to be Viv's visit to Exmoor and Snowdrop Valley on 15 February, while Brian is issuing a cautious invitation to enjoy the "signs of Spring" on the Commons on 20 February. Chris will be testing the rumour that Blackbury Camp is the place to see bountiful bluebells on 11 March, and we shall certainly be expecting the coast path at St. Ives to be sprouting with pink thrift when we make our annual away trip in March. Margaret is confidently advertising her "Bluebell Walk" on 29 March, and on the 15 April we won't be far away enjoying springtime in unspoilt woods and farmland, with Jon. By the time of Viv's walk up the iconic Colmer's Hill on 22 April, we will be expecting (after last year's memorable experience!), the most stunning banks of bluebells. Finally we end the month with another confident prediction from Margaret, of bluebells at Columbjohn on 29 April.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves, since we have a whole variety of walks to enjoy both within, and occasionally outside, the Otter Valley. We are out on the Commons with Steve in the New Year, tackling seasonal slothfulness on 7 January, and we will be returning to our much loved 'back garden' at the end of the month (25th) for Jon's walk out of Colaton Raleigh, Graham's Woodbury dominated walk on 8 February, and his gentle stroll to Aylesbeare on 8 April. On 12 April, Mike reminds us that we really do have it all in East Devon when he shows off the best of our coast and country. Ted takes us along the route of not one but two rivers, from oft neglected Ottery St Mary on 11 Jan. Not to be outdone, Mike leads us into Mid-Devon on 4 February for the "Two Rivers Way", and more riverside walking around the Coly, with Ted on 1 March.

It is usually the villages that hog the limelight, but on 18 January, Chris leads the first of three walks that lead through and round, to and return from with Penny and Paul on 3 April, or go around with Brian on 26 April.... Budleigh Salterton, which is also the subject of our special themed walk that Paul has arranged on 6 March to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Budleigh Salterton Branch Line. We have another themed walk on 19 April when Margaret shows us parts of Mid-Devon that inspired Jane Austen to write "Sense and Sensibility".

For our more adventurous members we shall be walking down (yes, down!) from the heights of Haytor Quarry to the sea at Teignmouth following the historic Templer Way, in two stages, on 15 Feb and the 15 March. Hope we've got the tide times correct! We shall be back to Dartmoor on 18 Feb, when we are invited to join Rosemary and David as they follow in Dr Blackall's footsteps. On 25 Feb Iain provides an opportunity to calmly visit the Wellington Monument, and enjoy the views, rather than race by on the M5 with barely time for a cursory glance up!

As always we hope there is enough variety of distance, location and terrain to entice all of our walking members, and if you are not one already, do please join our very convivial group.

AND..... As this is the last occasion on which we will be presenting the OVA's Programme of Walks, we would like to say how much we have enjoyed being your Walks Organisers, and thank you for your interest, feedback and support. Now, after four years, we will be standing down at the AGM in May, after which time we are delighted that OVA walking will receive a new impetus from **TEAM OVA WALKING**, six enthusiastic and experienced walkers who will share the role of Walk Organisers. They are Heather Fereday, Jon Roseway, Paul Kurowski, Penny Kurowski, Peter Paine and Stella French, and they have already begun planning for their succession, and the Summer Programme. In the meantime general enquiries will be handled by Peter (p.paine555@btinternet.com; 01404 815214) and specific enquiries regarding the programme by Heather (feredayh@gmail.com). We wish all of them every success and fulfilment.

Happy Walking!
Chris and Mike

Events Programme – January to April 2017

Please consult the OVA Website for late alterations or additional information

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.

Thursday 12th January at 7:30 pm - TALK

Budleigh Salterton Masonic Hall.

Nick Loman presents a selection of his ever expanding photographic collection about Budleigh Salterton, the Otter Valley and growing up in the area.

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, 9:30am - 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 along the River Otter to join the East Devon Way at Harpford Bridge. Then climb gradually to Joney's Cross before descending to Stoneyford, along Naps Lane with rapidly increasing anticipation of refreshment 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. 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. 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

Wednesday 8th February, 10:00am - WALK

Start at the Four Firs car park (OS Explorer 115, SY 032 864), 5.5 miles, 2.5 hours.

“All things Woodbury”

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

Saturday 11th February 2017, 10:00am – WALK

Meet at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground at 8.30am to share cars.

Start at Wheddon Cross CP (OS Explorer OL9, SS 924 338), 8 miles, 4-5 hours.

“Exmoor Highs”

A lovely walk taking in Dunkery Beacon, the highest point on Exmoor at 519 metres, and returning through the famous Snowdrop Valley, before a warming drink in the pub or café to end.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insul, 01404 811 267

Wednesday 15th February, 11:30am – WALK

“Templer Way Stage 1”

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 18 miles (29km) long and winds through a wide range of scenery from open moorland to estuary foreshore. The walk is ‘nearly’ downhill all the way! Please bring a picnic lunch.

The first stage is 8 miles between Haytor Information Centre (OS Explorer OL28 & 110, SY 766 772) and Drumbridge Roundabout on the A38 where we will catch the 39 bus back to Exeter.

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 a maximum cost of £5.00 per head. If you

intend to come, please make a firm commitment to Mike by Monday 13th February 2017. Nearer the time, please see OVA website for the latest bus times.
Walk Leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446 550

Saturday 18th February, 10:30am - WALK

Rendezvous at Newton Poppleford CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 899) at 9:15am to share cars, or make your own way to meet at the start. Start at New Bridge CP, Nr. Ashburton. (OS Explorer OL28, SX 711 709), 6.5 miles, 3.5 hours approx

“Who was Dr Blackall?”

This invigorating and undulating route combines moorland, woodland and riverside walking, with splendid views of the Dart Valley and surrounding tors, taking in part of the Two Moors Way and Dr Blackall’s Drive. Who was Dr Blackall? All will be revealed when you come on the walk! Please bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leaders: Rosemary and David Hatch 01392 444 290 / 07186 128 546

Monday 20th February, 10:00am - WALK

Start at Knowle Village Hall CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 052 827), 6 miles, 3 hours

“A Winding Walk”

The walk winds its way across the commons encompassing Shortwood Common, Hayes Wood, Hayes Barton, the birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh, and returns via East Budleigh Common and Squabmoor, observing Mark Rolle buildings, WWII remains and signs of Spring.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567 339

Wednesday 22nd February at 7:30 pm – TALK

East Budleigh Village Hall

Dr Mark Ramsdale from the University of Exeter will give us a presentation about fungi. He hopes to bring along specimens as the talk coincides with a lectures he is giving at the University.

Saturday 25th February, 10:00am – WALK

Meet at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground at 8:45am to share cars.

Start at Wellington Monument CP (OS Explorer 128, ST 143 167) 10 miles, 5 hrs.

“A Monument to Wellington”

Outstanding views from the monument, followed by a delightful walk down into the Culm Valley for lunch at one of the two pubs in Culmstock. Return via a ridge walk overlooking Clements Common.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568158

Wednesday 1st March, 10:00am – WALK

Start at Seaton Water Tower (OS Map Explorer 116, SY 233 913.) 7.5 miles.

“River Coly and Around “

This inland walk takes us through Holyford Woods nature reserve and ascends high ground affording good views. We then descend into the Coly valley and along the river to Colyton for a possible pub stop. The route is then via water meadows and over the hills back to the start. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk leader: Ted Swan 01395 567 450

Monday 6th March, 10.30am – WALK

A linear walk that starts and ends on the 157 bus route.

Start at Otter Reach, Newton Popleford, on the A3052, by the bus stop opposite Back Lane (which leads to the Rec. Ground CP) (OS Map Explorer 115, SY 084 897) 10 miles, a leisurely 7 hours, to the finish at Exmouth Station, with the opportunity to stop at Otterton or Budleigh Salterton and return by bus.

“Budleigh Salterton Branch Line Commemorative Celebration”

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Budleigh Salterton Branch Line, the walk follows the route of the original branch line from Newton Popleford to Exmouth. We will be guided across the Cinton Devon Estates’ land and have lunch on the old East Budleigh station platform, with the chance to have a ride on Mr John Edmonds’ miniature railway. On to Budleigh Salterton, where the Fairlynch Museum will be opened for us to see an exhibition about the line, before following the old track to Exmouth Station.

An interesting and educational walk is in store as members of the Railway Ramblers have been invited to join us. Please bring a packed lunch, or plan to buy something at Otterton Mill or the village shop.

The number of walkers will be limited to 50. Please book your place with Paul as soon as possible, by phone or email: pandp@kurowski.me.uk.

Walk Leader: Paul Kurowski 01395 742 942

Saturday 11th March, 10:30am - WALK

Start at Blackbury Camp Hill Fort CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 188 924) 6 miles

“Blackbury Camp Hill Fort”

A last minute vacancy in the Programme has provided an opportunity to explore an area unfamiliar to me. I’ll put some enticing words on the website, when I’ve been to look around, or you could just turn up for a Magical Mystery Tour!

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland 01395 444471

Wednesday 15th March, 11:30am – WALK

Travel to the start is by the X38 bus from Exeter Bus Station (Stand No 12), dep 10:45, arr Drum Bridge Roundabout (OS Explorer 110, SX 837 739) at 11:15.

“Templer Way Stage 2”

The second stage is 9½ miles between Drum Bridge Roundabout on the A38 and Teignmouth via Newton Abbot Quay. A picnic lunch at Newton Abbot Quay will be followed by tea at Combe Cellars before catching the Shaldon ferry (50p) across the estuary to New Quay in Teignmouth. Definitely downhill all the way! Return travel by train dep Teignmouth 16.38/17:22, arr Exmouth 17.50/18:29 respectively and onward to East Devon by bus 57/157/357 or alight at Exeter Central to catch the 9 bus from the bus station. Please see OVA website for any necessary changes to travel times.

Walk Leader: Chris Buckland, 01395 444 471

Thursday 23rd March at 7:30pm – TALK

Knowle Village Hall.

Tom Garner, Wildlife Ranger for Clinton Devon Estates, will talk about his work and life on the Estate. He will be bringing along some of the interesting 'tools of the trade'!

Thursday 23rd March to Monday 27th March – OVA Away Days in St Ives

We shall be staying at the walker-friendly Treloyhan Manor Hotel a few minutes from the centre of St Ives, right on the SW Coast Path and ideally placed to enjoy four days of convivial springtime walking or the delights of St Ives in the off season. If you are quick, there is still time to join us. Please refer to your last Newsletter (Vol 37/1, Oct 2016), the OVA website, or get in touch with me. You will be very welcome.

Organiser: Chris Buckland.

Saturday 25th March - 10am – Annual Spring Litter-Pick on the Otter Estuary

Wednesday 29th March, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Clifford Bridge roadside parking (OS Explorer 110/OL28 SX 782 898), 5 miles, 3 hours.

“A Daffodil Walk”

Starting at Clifford Bridge, near Dunsford and walking uphill through Cod Wood to Smallridge Farm and then down to Steps Bridge walking adjacent to Woodcock Wood. Return is a delightful walk alongside the River Teign through Dunsford Wood. There is a short steep climb. Please bring a picnic. Sorry no dogs.

Walk Leader: Margaret Read, 01392 759 332

Monday, 3rd April, 10:15am - WALK

Start at East Budleigh CP (OS Explorer 115 SY 066 849) on bus route 157
6 miles, about 4 hours, including stops for refreshments

“A Ramble with Temptations”

Through East Budleigh village, then fields and tracks on a hilly back route to B Salterton, and perhaps a break for an ice-cream or a coffee, and a stroll along the beach. Returning alongside the Otter, looking out for otters, beavers and interesting birdlife, before a break for lunch at Otterton Mill. Finishing along back roads to East Budleigh.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742 942 / 07792 619 748

Saturday 8th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Joney’s Cross CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 057 898) 5.5 miles, 2.5 hours.

“Gently does it”

A gentle walk to Aylesbeare via Randelhayes farm and back via Manor farm and Aylesbeare common.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445 872

Wednesday 12th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start: East Budleigh Church CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 065 848). 9.5 miles, 4.5 hrs.

“Coast and Country”

A varied walk giving an ever-changing perspective using the coast path, local roads and tracks. Visiting Ladram Bay, High Peak and Windgate returning inland via Otterton and Bicton. Some hilly sections. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Mike Paddison, 01395 446 550

Saturday 15th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start: Knapp Copse Reserve CP (OS Explorer 115, SY 155 957) 9.5 miles, 5 hours.

“Over the hills and Far(a)way”

This walk gives us the opportunity to enjoy springtime in the unspoilt farmland and woods around Farway. There are a few hills to climb (maximum ascent of 100m) but the views of the Holcombe and Coly valleys make it worth the effort. Bringing a packed lunch is recommended, although refreshments are available afterwards at the Hare and Hounds.

Anyone who can offer others a lift or needs one should contact the walk leader.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488 739/ 07887 936280

Wednesday 19th April, 10:00am - Jane Austen themed WALK

Start: Upton Pine Village Hall CP, (OS Explorer 114, SX 910 978), 5 miles, 3 hours

“Sense and Sensibility”

An interesting literary walk in mid Devon discovering the inspiration that Jane Austen found to write her novel. From Upton Pine Church to Woodrow Barton, Pynes and Lakes Bridge returning via Bamford Speke for lunch. No dogs please.

Walk Leader: Margaret Read 01392 759332

Saturday 22nd April, 10:00am – WALK

Start: Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP, (OS Explorer 115, SY 088 999) at 9.30am to share cars to the walk start point.

“Colmer’s is watching you!”

The walk starts at Higher Eype Service Area (OS Explorer 116, SY 452 922) at 10.30am (café opens at 6.45am and free parking!), 8 miles, 6+ hours.

This is a walk requiring some appetite for hills but, boy, is it worth it! There are plenty of opportunities for refreshment stops to restore body and soul. We start out through Lower Eype, skirting Eype Down heading towards Symondsburly and an excellent café. After refreshments, the highlight, a short climb up the iconic Colmer’s Hill which affords extensive views in all directions. The day ends over the sea cliffs from Seatown, and a cream tea at Down House Farm.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insull, 01404 811 267

Wednesday 26th April, 10:00am - WALK

Start at Lime Kiln CP (OS Explorer 115 SY 073 820). 10 miles, 6 hours.

“Circumnavigating Budleigh Salterton”

The walk commences along Marine Parade and the South West Coast Path to West Down Beacon and heads inland to Dalditch Farm via Castle Lane. It continues through Hayes Wood and across the common, past Yettington to Colaton Raleigh. After a well-earned break, the return journey follows the riverside path past Otterton to Lime Kiln car park. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567 339

Saturday 29th April, 10:00am – WALK

Start at Columbjohn CP (OS Explorer 114 SX 959 998). 4 ½ miles, 3 hours.

“A Bluebell Walk”

From the car park we visit Columbjohn Chapel en route to Columbjohn Wood and then via a gentle climb to the enclosure in Killerton Wood, and a convoluted walk will then lead through the grounds and woods of Killerton Park. Returning to Columbjohn alongside the River Culm. No dogs please.

Walk Leader: Margaret Read 01392 759 332

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.

Devon Coast to Coast Stage XI, Tarr Steps to Simonsbath – 5th October

It was not a very auspicious start to this penultimate stage of the Devon Coast to Coast walk with extensive road works in Newton Poppleford causing varying delays for everybody. However the transport arrangements were quickly sorted and we set out for Simonsbath by a variety of routes.

Thirteen walkers set off for the next stage of our adventure, the short walk to Tarr Steps, having taken note of the nearby pub/inn opening hours. Tarr Steps is a wonderful bridge structure comprising 17 spans of clapper stones across the River Barle. It has stood the test of many floods even if some parts of it get swept away by the most ferocious river torrents. We were told that the bridge can now be more easily rebuilt, once all the pieces are found, because all the elements in the bridge are now numbered and identified on an appropriate drawing and thus make re-assembly much easier.

After taking many photos, we set off alongside the river. At the beginning of Lear Wood, as the valley sides became steeper, the path became more narrow, wet and rocky and so we had to gradually climb up away from the river, but fortunately it was always in sight. After Pit Wood, we all heard a curious mechanical “clacking” sound and we deviated from the path towards the sound.



One of the “hydraulically knowledgeable” walkers said it was a ‘hydraulic ram’. Many of us had seen the term on OS maps, but few had seen or heard a working one. There was not much to see, because the apparatus was contained in a small ramshackle building. Wikipedia contains a useful description of their purpose, construction and historical development.

We continued to Oakbeer Wood joining another path high up overlooking the river below. We then descended through riverside meadows, passed fords and stepping stones to eventually reach a bridle path to Withypool Common. About this time houses on the edge of Withypool came into view with Exmoor clearly visible in the distance.

After stops at the shop and the café, we settled down for some lunch on benches on a grassy bank that is a popular summer picnic spot. Although the river looked very inviting, nobody ventured into the water for a paddle!

After lunch, and several kilometres, we reached the edge of the Exmoor moorland and managed to locate a section of the Two Moors Way that many of us had walked before, most recently on Peter Paine's walk 'Exmoor and the Scenic Barle Valley' on the 1st June this year. There was much excitement as walkers vied to be the first to spot the iconic Landacre Bridge.



Duly spotted and photographed we continued and, after walking around Cow Castle Settlement, we stopped for afternoon tea by the River Barle. The remainder of the walk continued along the Barle Valley until reaching woodlands on the outskirts of Simonsbath. A short walk through these familiar woods brought us to the main road close to the car park.

A splendid day out left us looking forward to the final stage of the Devon Coast to Coast.

Mike Paddison

Devon Coast to Coast, Final Stage Simonsbath to Lynmouth – 10th October

The adventure that had begun on 3 February 2016, to walk the 117 miles from Wembury on the south coast of Devon to Lynmouth on the north coast, was accomplished when 13 OVA walkers completed the last of 12 stages; 11 miles from Simonsbath to the finish. During those nine months we had enjoyed the gradual ascent from sea level, constantly turning round for reassurance, unsure of what lay ahead; the rugged expanses of beauty and, at times, the sense of isolation that Dartmoor provides; the softer, quintessentially mid-Devon agricultural heritage,

so quiet; and the steeply wooded river valleys and sculptured combes of Exmoor, and a return to sea level.

The first couple of miles, indistinct and boggy, before reaching the Dure Down, retrace a section of the Exe Valley Way to the source of the River Exe, which several of the group had completed in 2015. Today, a muddy trickle gave no hint of the vast estuary 60 miles to the south where the river floods out into the sea at Exmouth, but it provided a significant spot for a coffee break.

Now, a delightful, sheltered path through the manicured valley of Hoar Oak Water, up to the symbolic 100 year old Hoar Oak tree (*har, anglo-saxon for boundary*), which had replaced one purported to have blown down after 254 years, the last of a line marking the boundary of the Royal Forest, and now the Devon/Somerset border. Safely back in Devon, we forged ahead high along the Cheriton Ridge, with distant views across Brendon Common to the east and Furzehill Common to the west.



After lunch, we began our descent to sea level, but any expectations that our route would be “downhill all the way” were to be dashed! Yes, downhill through Combe Park Wood, to the National Trust’s Combe House, but there followed a long drag uphill, as the Farley Water (one of several tributaries

draining the Moor) receded further and further beneath our feet, before we reached the Cleaves, and a first sight of Lynmouth, our destination, bathed in sunlight, touchable, but a mile away and 265 metres below!

116 miles completed, so one to go! We let ourselves skip down the steep zig-zag decline, over the West Lyn River, past the insignificant stone, recording the opening of the Two Moors Way in 1976, the Harbour, and the scene of the great flood of 1952, when 34 people lost their lives as the East Lyn River deposited a 40ft wall of water onto the village... and we had arrived!

The National Park Visitor Centre on the esplanade is the official end of Devon's Coast to Coast. 21 different walkers had participated in our adventure, completing one or more stages; we averaged 10 on each stage, but five people had managed to put their lives on hold for nine months. So it was that Graham Knapton, Heather Fereday, Paul Kurowski, Penny Kurowski and Chris Buckland signed the book of completers and collected their Certificate of Achievement. Others promised to fill in the gaps in their record! For the 'Five' and others who had begun at Wembury, where a pebble had had to be taken from the beach and carried throughout, it now had to be laid to rest at Lynmouth. A procession duly picked their way over the rocky beach to the water's edge and a misty eyed, emotional ceremony took place.



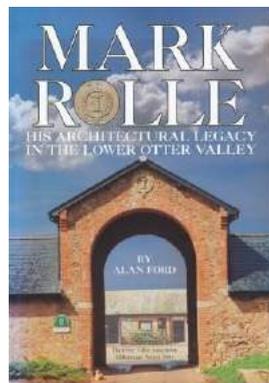
But enough! Pots of tea were needed desperately. From the upstairs panoramic windows of the Visitor Centre Cafe, Lynmouth can be seen squeezed between Hollerday Hill to the west and the towering Foreland, drenched in sunlight, to the east, sharply contrasted with the dark, shaded, sombre, black rock chills beach below. A thirst quenched group spilled out onto the Esplanade for one final acknowledgement of our achievement. A champagne toast!

Chris Buckland

A Mark Rolle Walk – 19 October

On a bright sunny morning 20 of us met by the church at Colaton Raleigh for a planned three hour walk looking at the architectural legacy left by Mark Rolle in the Otter Valley. After a brief introduction to the subject from our leader, Brian Turnbull, we set off to walk a figure of eight over an estimated four miles.

At the age of 6, Mark Rolle unexpectedly found himself in line to inherit the Rolle Estate. It may have proved something of a poisoned chalice as many of the farms and buildings on the estate were in a poor condition. Rolle was determined to make substantial improvements and in 1865 he hired Robert Lipscomb as steward/manager for the estate. It was to prove a successful partnership. Over the remaining part of the century, they carried out an ambitious programme of improvement which would leave a substantial legacy in the Otter Valley. Farms were either rebuilt, extended or renovated whilst numerous houses for their workers and labourers were built.



Commencing our walk westwards we passed one of several water taps which brought the first fresh water supply to the village in 1887 financed largely by Mark Rolle. Further up Church Road examples of the standard estate houses were evident when we stopped to look at a row of four cottages with red brick elevations. A fairly simple design was used providing ground floor parlour and kitchen with three bedrooms upstairs. Outside each had a yard with outbuildings providing a privy, washhouse, fuel store and space for a pig. A garden for produce helped tenants to achieve self-sufficiency. Brian explained that the estate properties built or improved at this time had incorporated subtle but distinctive architectural features common to their construction and making them most recognisable. The main one being decorative brick corbels to each gable end.

Other typical architectural features included vertical and fan shaped contrasting brickwork arches above windows and doorways adding some style. Local materials were used from the sawmill at East Budleigh and brickworks near Ladram Bay.

After crossing into Hawkerland Road, Hardys Farm showed how farm buildings at the end of their useful life had been successfully and sympathetically converted

into an attractive residential courtyard. Today the name of each cottage bears witness to the past use including Dairy Barn, Threshing Barn and The Granary.

After Hardys Farm we turned left down the lane and picked up a footpath taking us back across the main road to pause at Drupe Farm. From here a footpath parallel to Church Road took us back to our starting and halfway point. Turning east and across the river we headed northwards past Pavers Farm, Passaford Farm and Ashtree Farm, all built or altered by Mark Rolle. Crossing back over the river, we looked at Dotton Farm probably known by many people due to the signing for Devon Hardwoods. Entering the courtyard we could appreciate how redundant farm buildings can gain a renewed life, in this case as small workshops and offices.



Leaving Dotton Farm, Brian prompted us to look back at the southern wall of the farmhouse where a prominent “MR 1871” (pictured) was the most obvious statement of the pride in the achievements of the Mark Rolle and Robert Lipscomb collaboration. An excellent guide, friendly group and good weather made for a well worthwhile outing.

Colin Haynes

Bootiful Branscombe! – 29th October

The village of Branscombe is believed to be the longest village in the country, but is really three hamlets as it sweeps down a spectacular valley past colourful cottages from Street through Church to Vicarage (but some say includes Bridge) down to the sea.

Branscombe has a number of historic, but still working buildings: the old bakery was the last traditional bakery in Devon before it closed in 1987; and the NT compact working forge built about 1580 is the only thatched one of its kind in England.

There are two public houses at opposite ends of the village: the Fountain Head and the Mason's Arms. The Fountain Head is sited at the source of a spring in the

hamlet of Street. The name of the Mason's Arms is a reminder that stone quarrying in the nearby Beer stone caves was once a major employer in the village; from the undercliff path east of Branscombe Mouth, an adit to the former Beer stone mine can be seen.

From the 17th to the 19th centuries, Branscombe was a source of hand-made lace, and Branscombe Point is a style that is still practised by lacemakers worldwide.

Enough of the history - what of the walk? There were 10 plus two dogs for the first loop that set off uphill from the Village Hall along footpaths until we had a magnificent view across one of the valleys encompassing Hole House and Edge Barton.

It is said that Hole House (right) was built in 1075 by Simon de Holcombe, a Saxon bowman at the Battle of Hastings. The house stayed in the family for over 500 years. Sir John de Holcombe was knighted by Richard the Lionheart for bravery in the Third Crusade. According to legend, he killed three Turks with one swing of his sword - a feat celebrated in the family coat of arms, which depicts the three heads!



We continued along the road past Hole House and then on footpaths through Pits Copse admiring the fungi. There are a number of overgrown pits in the woods along the walk. It is thought to be where chalk was quarried in order to make lime for using as a fertiliser in the fields, and for use as mortar. There is also flint among the chalk, and there is extensive evidence of this being used for tools by the local inhabitants in Neolithic (late Stone Age) times, as much as 5,000 years ago.

We emerged from Pit Coppice onto the South West Coastal footpath near Berry Camp, an Iron Age Hill Fort. There were magnificent views of the beaches and cliffs and these would continue throughout the rest of the walk particularly as we descended to Branscombe Mouth and the lunch stop at the Sea Shanty. Pasties, baked potatoes and soup were consumed with gusto!

We skirted below Branscombe East Cliff and Hooken Cliff and Jon (Roseway – walk organiser) gave an excellent explanation of the geology that we were admiring, eg, the age of the Greensand and Chalk rocks (right) and the Hooken Undercliff which was formed in 1790 after a dramatic landslide. Beer is home to a cave complex, the Beer Quarry Caves, resulting from the quarrying of Beer stone.



This stone has been prized since Roman times, because of its workability for carving and for its gentle yellow colour on exposure to air. Beer stone was used in the construction of 24 cathedrals around the UK, including Exeter Cathedral, St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

We headed towards Beer and then turned back inland before the caravan park. Over the top of the hill past the Old Coast Guard's Lookout and a different path from the steep steps down to Branscombe Mouth to complete the final leg of the figure of eight and down into the Branscombe valley.

Our thanks go to Jon for organising an excellent route, arranging good weather, and providing an interesting narrative of all the features on this walk.

Paul Kurowski

(Apologies for abridging this report, the full text is on the website – Ed)

The Lower Otter Valley – 29th November

A linear walk....a sparkling day.....and a whistle

The 10am 157 bus from Budleigh and points along the way was abuzz with conversation as it wended its way to Newton Poppleford. There ten OVA walkers gathered and embarked on what was to be a most enjoyable morning's walking.

We set off along reasonably dry paths and crunched our way through piles of freshly fallen leaves. Soon we were looking down over the River Otter and could see piles of debris which had been washed up by the recent heavy rains and strong winds. A little way along we stopped and mused over that strange device, cogs and wheels, churning water, neatly protected by a fence. No one was sure what its actual purpose in life was. Hopefully someone amongst the walkers remembers to ferret out the truth?

Down to Colaton Raleigh and then an enjoyable walk for a while along the river bank. We had entered 'beaver country'. The beaver 'viewing site' was pointed out. We saw fairly recent evidence of their work; gnawed tree trunks, some chewed to the shape of a sharpened pencil. Our coffee stop was near the strangely named 'rickety bridge' which we then crossed and climbed up along some ancient sunken lanes to the rear of Otterton Village, where we saw three grazing alpacas in a field.

Up then to the Stantyway football ground where we met a very friendly lady and her dog who offered to help us (we must have looked lost to her). After assuring her that we were fine the majority of us passed on to continue the walk. However, our 'Backmarker' and current joint walks organiser stayed behind to chat..... The result of this was that having walked a good way further on and having turned a few corners down a lane, someone said, 'where is he?' There was no sign. After a while one of our number phoned him, not really expecting a reply, but luckily contact was made. For good measure, our leader let loose several blasts of his football whistle (one must never walk without one) and soon he arrived, telling us quite impenitently what an interesting conversation he had had with the lady, apparently a former licensee of the Kings Arms Pub, and how things have changed over the years.



The lost sheep returns to the fold

Time was marching on now. In fact it was lunchtime with quite a way to go. We walked down along the lanes to White Bridge and a final march along the well worn, but beautiful, path along past the mudflats and reed beds. There were surprisingly few wild birds about despite all the remaining flood water. Back then to the Lime Kiln car park and a parting of the ways.

Thank you David Buss for a lovely walk in perfect weather with good company. What more can one ask for?

Jacqui Ruhlig

The Otter Valley Association

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Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	Penny Kurowski	742942
Hon Treasurer	Jon Roseway	488739

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Planning	Nicola Daniel	445960
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

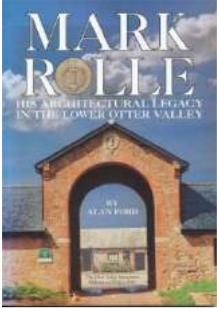
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Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

Other Contacts

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Talks Organiser	Geoff Lake	446828
Walks Organisers	Chris Buckland Mike Paddison	444471 446550
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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.

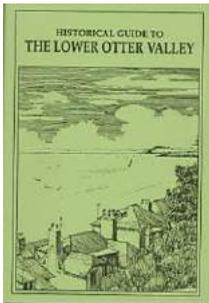
£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



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.