



OTTER  
VALLEY  
ASSOCIATION

OVA  
PO Box 70  
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Salterton  
EX96WN

SPRING  
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Newsletter  
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[www.oval.org.uk](http://www.oval.org.uk)

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## Annual Litter Pick - 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017



**Pictured are our youngest recruits, twins Toby and Benedict Sach, aged 4, with their parents and the Mayor; Poppy Harrison, aged 10, in action with her mum and various other members and supporters who helped out on the day with their 'haul'. Many thanks to all.**

**This issue's cover "Spring has sprung - Primroses garland the whole UK" was photographed and produced by Mo Bowman**

## **From the Editor**

I understand that 17<sup>th</sup> March was the 'equilux' (a term I have never heard before). This is the point when day and night are exactly equal. From now on our days will be longer than the nights - a welcome relief after the winter. To enable you to make the most of those longer days we have a full programme of events coming up over the next few months, one of the most important being the AGM, notice of which is below. A summary report is contained in the centre pages and the full Trustees Report and Accounts will be available at the AGM and on the website. We also have the first programme of walks organised by our new Walks Team which offers something for everyone – including those who like their walking a little less strenuous – of which I am one!

**Jacqui Baldwin**

### **Notice**

**The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Otter Valley Association will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017 in East Budleigh Village Hall, East Budleigh**

### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report including the Trustees Report and Accounts
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Executive Committee Members
7. Appointment of an Independent Examiner
8. Any other business
9. Date of the next AGM

The formal business will be followed by refreshments and an illustrated talk about wildlife on the River Otter by David White.

## The Devon – Newfoundland Story

In the last issue we highlighted the historical and cultural connection between Devon and the 'new world' and the events being run by The Devonshire Association in April this year celebrating nearly 600 years of contact and interaction between Devon and Newfoundland. This prompted Trevor Waddington, a former OVA committee member, to contribute the following story:



### Admiral Preedy and the Victorian Internet

2017 marks the bicentenary of Admiral Preedy's birth. Although born in Worcestershire he retired to Budleigh Salterton and his life will be celebrated in a Fairlynch Museum exhibition this year. By coincidence 2017 is the year that the Devonshire Association is to celebrate the Devonshire/Newfoundland link. The two events are related.

*Preedy as a Captain circa 1870*

So you've never heard of Admiral Preedy? The clue to his special achievement is a stained-glass window in the chancel of All Saints Church, East Budleigh. The image depicts the Gospel of St Mark's account of Christ calming the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee. The inscription reads:

*In memory of Vice Admiral George William Preedy CB who  
when Captain of HMS Agamemnon with the Captain of  
USS Niagara successfully laid the first Atlantic Cable  
uniting Europe and America in 1858*

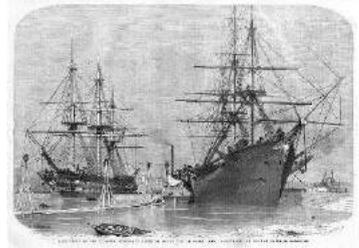
At this time London was the hub of the British Empire and the commercial capital of the world. Communication time between London and New York was about 40 days - the time it took a ship to cross the Atlantic - and American business desperately needed a connection to Europe by telegraph. Cyrus Field, an American businessman and entrepreneur, provided the drive to achieve this by founding the Atlantic Telegraph Company.

A hydrographic survey of the North Atlantic had shown the route from Ireland to Newfoundland - a distance of some 2,000 miles - to be the most suitable. Purpose-built cable ships did not exist, so it would be necessary to adapt vessels already in service. As the cable had to be laid in a straight line the ships would need to have steam-powered propulsion - very new technology at this date.

The project was to be jointly shared by the British and American governments who would have priority use of the telegraph. HMS Agamemnon and USS Niagara were the ships selected for the task. Agamemnon was a 91-gun screw ship-of-the-line of 4,600 tons built in 1852 - the first British warship to be constructed from keel up with installed steam power.

The technical challenges were immense, but so were the rewards. Electrical technology was in its infancy and the problems of producing over 2,000 miles of electric cable insulated to withstand pressure at 2 miles ocean depth had to be overcome. The Gutta Percha company of Greenwich rose to the challenge using gutta-percha - the natural latex from Malaya.

*Agamemnon's* conversion to cable ship had resulted in almost 3,000 tons of deadweight: 1100 miles of cable in the hold and 350 miles of cable in 2 coils on the upper deck. Loss of coal bunker storage in the hold had required sacks of coal to be stored on the upper deck adding further to the ship's instability. *Niagara* had been similarly converted but, being a larger ship by over 1,000 tons, she was better suited to the task.



*Agamemnon (L) and Niagara (R) at Devonport*

Several attempts in 1857 had failed due to cable breakage. There being sufficient cable remaining, it was decided to start afresh the following year. Captain Preedy was appointed in command of Agamemnon in the Spring of 1858. This would prove to be the greatest challenge of his naval career..... To be continued

***Trevor Waddington is Chair of Trustees at Fairlynch Museum***

## Devon Invasive Species Initiative

27 March to 2 April was *Invasive Species Week* an initiative bringing Defra and non-governmental organisations together to raise awareness of invasive non-native species. Tackling these alien invaders costs the UK economy £1.8bn each year. Not every non-native species is bad and only a minority have serious negative impacts on British wildlife, our health or the economy. Unfortunately, around 80 species of animals and plants do cause issues and these are known as invasive non-native species.

Some are relatively well known, such as **Japanese Knotweed** which can quickly colonise and dominate railway embankments or riversides to the detriment of other species, or the **Grey Squirrel** which is having catastrophic consequences on the regeneration of woodlands. Others are less well known – such as **American skunk cabbage** which is a threat to wet woodlands, or **North American signal crayfish** which outcompete our own native crayfish. To help combat the growing threat of these alien invaders a new Devon Invasive Species Initiative is being developed under the umbrella of the Devon Local Nature Partnership (<http://www.naturaldevon.org.uk/home/devon-invasive-species-initiative/>).



One non-native species of particular concern locally is **Himalayan balsam** (*Impatiens glandulifera*) shown left, the dense stands of which dominate many rivers banks, damp woodlands and hedgerows. It can impede water flow during heavy summer rainfall, out-compete other plants, and when it dies back in winter, leaves soils prone to erosion. Seed capsules explode when ripe spreading seed far afield. If you look carefully at riverside vegetation, you will already see the next generation of plants emerging.

During the summer landowners, local organisations and individuals will be tackling this problematic plant across the catchment of the River Otter, with the focus primarily being on tributaries and outlying populations before main river valleys are tackled. Total control is a long-term aim. This work is supported by small teams of enthusiastic volunteers. (see next page).

**Kate Ponting, Clinton Devon Estates**

## Himalayan Balsam Campaign: Volunteers needed!!!!

Spring is with us and, everywhere, seeds are germinating. On riverbanks a good proportion of them will be Himalayan Balsam, the invasive species that is damaging the ecology of so many of our river catchments. As a result of our efforts over the last 5 years, infestation in our target area will be relatively low this year. Working with CDE in the Lower Otter, and in coordination with groups at Tipton St John and Escot, OVA have brought our particular target area, the Colaton Raleigh brook, under control. The plan now is to maintain that control and seek to extend to neighbouring tributaries. Whether we can do this depends very much upon the size of our “happy band” of volunteers.



This, then, is a plea. If you enjoy the open air, good company and get a kick out of doing something environmentally useful, PLEASE get in touch with me. The work is not difficult. Himalayan Balsam plants are easy to pull as long as they are

not allowed to grow too tall. Our job is to make sure that they don't! After pulling, they are piled up or strung on barbed wire or branches of trees where they rot completely within a couple of weeks. Our progress over the last 5 years can be seen in my (illustrated) Annual Reports on [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) . Click “OVA Teams” then “Natural Environment” and then “Himalayan Balsam”.

From mid-June until October we go out every Thursday and Saturday from 9.30am to noon (with a short coffee break). You do NOT have to commit to regular outings. Just come when it suits you, even if it is only once or twice. Your reward will be a good deal of satisfaction ... as well as a “Thank You Dinner” provided by Clinton Devon Estates!

**Patrick Hamilton, Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee**

Tel 01395 445351 or 07812 987452

Email: [patrickhamilton35@outlook.com](mailto:patrickhamilton35@outlook.com)

If you would like to know more about Devon's Invasive Species then the following event is for you:

## **From American skunk cabbage to Zebra mussels: An illustrated A-Z of Devon's alien invaders!**

Thursday 27 April, 1900-2100 Rolle Estate Office, Bicton Arena, EX9 7BL  
Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of wildlife and conservation for Clinton Devon Estates will introduce common and less well known plants and animal invaders and discuss how to combat the threats some of these pose to British wildlife, our health or the economy.

Places are limited so booking essential: 01395 446918.

[kate.ponting@clintondevon.com](mailto:kate.ponting@clintondevon.com)

## **Bird ringing on the Pebblebed Heaths and River Otter Estuary**

For the last two years, a bird ringing programme has been running on the Otter Estuary to monitor and study the breeding and migration patterns of birds along the estuary. This year, three more research projects have extended this programme.

The first involves standardised ringing in the reed bed to provide the best information on breeding numbers, productivity and survival. The second is the cannon netting of *Wigeon* on the grazing marshes of the Lower Otter, in order to fit coloured rings, which helps to understand their movements, survival and possible site fidelity. When the cannon netting is launched, there is an associated 'bang'. The third project is to study ***Dartford warblers*** on the Pebblebed Heaths. The Dartford warblers are caught by licensed bird ringers using fine nets. Lightweight leg rings are fitted to enable birds to be identified. Twenty-six birds have been ringed to date, the year ring for 2016 was lime green and for this year it is black.

Each bird is aged, sexed, weighed and measured and the data entered into the British Trust for Ornithology's database where it can be used to identify contributors for population change.

Grazing marshes are important bird sanctuaries for a broad range of wading birds. The Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust, the landowner, Clinton Devon Estates and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) are keen to improve the understanding of

these birds, their habits and population dynamics for conservation purposes. The work is approved by the BTO and will be feeding into national monitoring programmes.

## Rare birds at Stantyway Farm



Until 2015 Stantyway Farm was tenanted by Martin Williams and managed primarily to produce arable crops. The tenancy period of Mr Williams saw the arrival of Cirl Buntings at the site. This rare red-listed bird was nearly lost from the UK in the latter part of the 20th century, with its decline associated with changes in farming practices. The small population at Stantyway is believed to be the eastern-

most breeding population. After the retirement of Mr Williams in 2014, the farm was taken back in-hand by *Clinton Farm Partnership*. To support other farming areas of the Estate it was decided to put Stantyway Farm into organic conversion. This process takes two years to complete. The farm will be officially certified organic in January 2018.

In addition to continuing to manage the farm productively, it was also important to the Estate to build on the Cirl Bunting success of Mr Williams. To this end, and with the support of the RSPB, an agri-environment scheme was applied for, and awarded in 2016. Wildlife stewardship will enable the planting of 4km of hedgerows, the expansion of wildlife buffer strips along field margins, the planting of bird feed mixes and ensure that the choice of crops supports Cirl Buntings and other threatened farmland birds.

Cirl buntings benefit from rough grassland strips at the edges of field which support their summer food of insects (especially grasshoppers and crickets) and over winter they need weedy stubbles to feed them with seed until spring. Over the coming years, we hope that the conversion to organic status, the planting of new hedgerows which started recently, buffer strips, the choice of crops including the planting of specialised bird mixes will allow wildlife to thrive and help illustrate that productive farming and wildlife can co-exist.

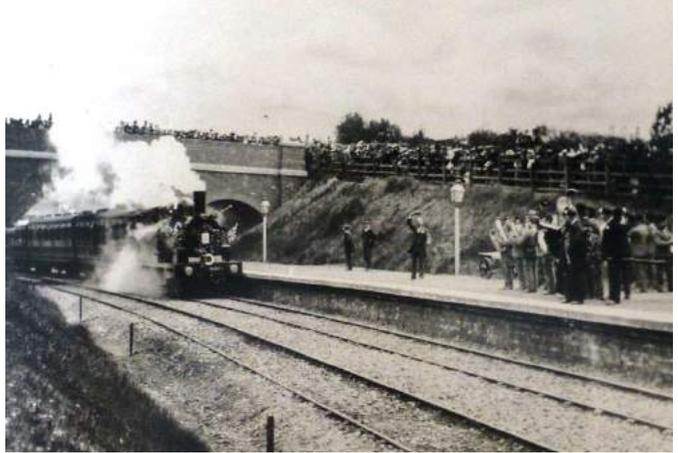
***Kate Ponting, Clinton Devon Estates***

## Budleigh Salterton Branch Line Commemorative Celebration

As featured in our last issue, to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of the Budleigh Salterton Branch Line, on 6<sup>th</sup> March the OVA, in conjunction with the Railway Ramblers, walked part of the route of the original branch line from Newton Poppleford to Exmouth. This is the report of that walk:

45 of us assembled at Newton Poppleford to start the walk – mostly OVA members and friends, plus half a dozen “Railway Ramblers” some hailing from as far away as Cardiff! This was a rarely available opportunity to walk the course of the railway on which the last passenger train ran 50 years ago. Kate Ponting from Clinton Devon Estates had arranged for us to walk the sections that ran through private estate land, and, together with walk leader Paul Kurowski, led us along these sections.

Paul and Newton Poppleford resident, Haylor Lass, showed us old photographs so that we could make out where the old station had stood, with its accompanying goods yard, and imagine the road bridge over the railway, and even the camping carriages in a nearby siding.



We soon set off, crossing our first hurdle, the A3052, with the help of Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison, sensibly wearing fluorescent jackets. Then it was a flat level walk to Otterton along the line of the railtrack, giving us a new perspective on the beautiful Otter Valley, and allowing the railway enthusiasts to inspect remaining pieces of railway architecture, some dating from 1895. Kate explained how the route was now used for movement of farm vehicles and cattle – indeed we had to use it in the morning before cows were moved along it later for milking.

As we neared Otterton, we saw the obvious signs of beaver activity – flooded fields belonging to Bicton College. Kate explained that beavers had dammed one of the streams, causing the flooding. Mitigation measures were now in place to discourage further dam building, whilst allowing the beavers to flourish.



***All aboard!!***

We arrived at the old East Budleigh Station as Otterton Church clock chimed 12. The station building is now the home of John and Margaret Edmonds, and John had kindly opened up the gate to allow us to walk under the road bridge and into his garden where we could eat our picnics on the station platform. We felt like excited children as we took up his offer of rides round the garden on “The Otterton and East Budleigh Light Railway”! A collection for his charity, Millwater School, raised over £54. The Old Station is opening to the public on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2-5pm, again raising money for the School. There will be cream teas, free steam train rides, and a display of miniature traction engines – a treat not to be missed.

Well refreshed, 43 of us walked on along the now rather muddy track to Budleigh Salterton. At one point the slurry was ankle deep and Kate led a party of “slurry dodgers” on a detour round the fields. The hardy enthusiasts, keen to keep to the line of the railway where possible, picked the best route through the slurry, and Penny demonstrated how a walking pole can be usefully employed as a depth gauge.

Once at Budleigh we met the end of the track, as it reached the site of Budleigh Salterton Station at the junction of Leas Road and Upper Stoneborough Lane. At one time there had been a cash and carry supermarket built on the station site, but this has now been replaced by modern housing. We wound our way through the town to the Fairlynch Museum which had been opened especially for us. Museum Chair of Trustees, Trevor Waddington, and a team of volunteers showed us their exhibits about the railway, and many of us watched a video which showed the railway in operation and how it had now changed. Thanks to the museum for providing the much appreciated tea and biscuits.

Many walkers left at this point, but a hardy 18 set off on the last stretch to Exmouth. For the first section we had to use our imagination (and Paul's old



maps), as housing in Budleigh now obliterates the railway line, and the cutting to the east of Bear Lane appears to have been filled in. However we were soon “back on track” on the cycle path to Exmouth.

By the time we reached Littleham more walkers had left us to catch buses, leaving a band of 13 to be led into Phear Park along the almost-finished cycle track (pictured left) by Peter from GAP Group Contractors.

Our now weary group walked out of Phear Park, inspecting the route of the long-gone viaduct, marked now by the modern infill housing; again Paul's photographs and maps helped our imaginations. The final stretch was along the daffodil strewn embankment alongside the main road; where cars now roar along there were once 4 lines of railway.

We crossed to Exmouth station and yes, we'd made it! A quick check of GPS devices and Fitbits concluded that we'd walked 12.5 – 13 miles; the detour to the museum had added extra miles to the 10.25 mile route of the railway. After the obligatory photograph (thanks to the teenager who volunteered himself to take it), we retired to the pub whilst we awaited the 157. ***Penny Kurowski***



List of resources for those seeking further information:

The Budleigh Salterton Railway 1897-1967 - Fairlynch Museum

Branch Lines to Exmouth - Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith - Middleton Press - ISBN 1-873793-00-6

British Railways Past and Present East Devon - David Mitchell - Past and Present Publishing Ltd - ISBN 978-1-85895-211-6

LSWR West Country Lines Then and Now - Mac Hawkins - David and Charles - ISBN 0-7153-0122-5

The Book of Budleigh Salterton From Salt to Watering-Place - D. Richard Cann - Halsgrove - ISBN 1-844114-406-1

DVD Memories of the Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton Branches In association with Ian Pringle - Branch Line Video 2007

## **Walking with the OVA 2016 – 2017 review**

When we assumed the role of Walks Organisers in May 2013, one of our aims was for our 18 Walk Leaders to provide a walk for our members each week of the year; last year there were 85 walks led by 28 Walk Leaders! Such has been the enthusiasm of our 'leaders' and their 'followers' we have been able to develop a programme encompassing a choice of length of walk, timing, location, terrain, well-loved local paths in the Otter Valley and more challenging designated named trails further afield. Our special thanks go to our colleagues who are willing to share their enthusiasm and expertise, by leading walks for us.

On mid summer's day 2016 members accepted the challenge to complete the East Devon Way's 40 miles in 18 hours, and the last stage of Devon's 117 mile Coast to Coast trail was completed in October. We have combined with other organisations, like the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, which attracted over 30 people to Woodbury during Heath Week, and recruited some new members, and most recently a small group of Railway Ramblers were part of a group of 46 who commemorated the closing of the Budleigh Branch line in March 1967. Of course, these are the walks that catch the headlines, but the core of our work has remained trying to meet the needs of all members, who simply enjoy exercise and good company in the Great Outdoors. Attendances on those walks (which average 12) have never mattered. As we compose this review, we are about to embark on our annual walking weekend in the West Country.

You can read a list of the aim and objectives that have motivated our planning, a statistical analysis of walk records, together with the current programme, and breaking news, as well as reflections and photographs by our members of some of the walks that have taken place, on the OVA website, under "OVA Diary".

The 2017 AGM will mark the end of our four years in office for which we would like to thank all those who have walked with us and so readily lent us their support and friendship. We believe we leave OVA Walking in good shape, and at the perfect time to introduce a new vibrancy to the organisation, in the manner of Team OVA Walking. Heather Fereday, Jon Roseway, Paul Kurowski, Penny Kurowski, Peter Paine and Stella French will share the role of Walks Organisers to promote and enhance the future of OVA Walking. We thank them and trust they will enjoy their responsibilities as much as we have.

***Mike Paddison & Chris Buckland***



## Beavers win top BBC Countryfile award

The remarkable story of Devon's wild beavers goes on with the announcement that the Westcountry rodents have now won a top national award. Readers of BBC Countryfile Magazine have selected the River Otter Beaver Trial, along with the Scottish Beaver Trial, as their 'Wildlife Success Story of the Year' for 2017. The public poll attracted 56,000 votes across its 12 award categories.

The accolade is recognition of the work being done with the East Devon beavers by Devon Wildlife Trust. The beavers are the first wild population of the animals to exist in England for 400 years. Devon Wildlife Trust leads the River Otter Beaver Trial in partnership with Clinton Devon Estates, University of Exeter and the Derek Gow Partnership.

Devon Wildlife Trust's Mark Elliott manages the River Otter Beaver Trial and said: *"We're delighted to have won this prestigious BBC Countryfile Magazine Award. The fact that thousands of members of the public have taken the time to vote for beavers in Devon and in Scotland shows the wide support these charismatic creatures enjoy."*

Dr Sam Bridgewater, Conservation Manager for Clinton Devon Estates, said: *"There was a lot of stiff competition. The award is testament to the hard work of all the partners involved. Clinton Devon Estates recognises that the beavers can have great benefits for wildlife and society and this award is affirmation that these benefits are being recognised nationally. We are very grateful to everyone who has voted for this project."*

News that Devon's beavers were in the running for the BBC Wildlife Magazine Awards was announced in February. Nominations were made by a panel of judges which included the author Bill Bryson, along with broadcasters John Craven and Anita Rani.

***This is an extract - the full text of this article can be seen at [www.devonwildlifetrust.org](http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org)***

# The World of Fungi

Lecture given by Dr Mark Ramsdale, a mycologist, from Exeter University at East Budleigh Village Hall on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Dr Ramsdale, sadly, only spoke to 23 members and friends. He did however have us enthralled, despite the content being about three light years more advanced than your scribe's 'O' level biology.

First of all we were put into our places about the correct and incorrect pronunciations and meanings of the word FUNGI (this being the plural of fungus). First of all, it is pronounced 'FUNJEE', rather than 'FUNGEE'. Next the word 'fungi' in lower case is a general word that refers to organisms that all look and act the same, but are not related. This 'artificial' group includes yeasts, mushrooms, slime moulds and water moulds, (this particular mould was responsible for the Irish potato famine and for the present 'sudden oak death'). Then there is the word 'Fungi', with a capital 'F', this refers to an evolutionary group that includes most of the best known 'Fungi' such as moulds, other than slime and water moulds. Are you still with me readers? I never said that it would be easy.



*The Honey Fungus (Armillaria)*

It seems that we take in thousands of fungi with every breath that we take and our entire body is covered both internally and externally with such 'things'. There are approx. 1.5-30 million species of fungi and many trace back at least 40 million years. I wish mycologists could be a bit more exact and not so vague! What is the largest living organism in the world, we

were asked? No, not the humble Blue Whale, but a Honey Fungus (*Armillaria*) found in Oregon, USA, which covers 3 square miles. As they say, everything is big in America.

Fungi are the fastest moving organisms on the planet in terms of acceleration. Another thing that you may not know concerns sex and the single mushroom. They will not share a DNA and will mate with any sex other than their own and there are thousands of different sexes to choose from. Fungi have cell walls which react to physical stimuli. They are able to break down other organisms such as leaves and wood and they enable herbivores to break down the cellulose found in greenery.

Who is afraid of flying we were asked? Only one hand was timidly raised (*mine – and with good reason – Ed*). Apparently fungi grow on the surface of aviation fuel. It blocks the filters and, to make matters worse, the secretions given off, in the form of organic acid, eat away at the tanks. It's a good job that he didn't ask for another show of hands!

This whole subject was taking on the form of a science fiction horror movie. Dr Ramsdale bombarded us with facts, some terrifying and some reassuring. Some fungi take over the brains of insects in a form of procreation. However, on the good side, they are responsible for penicillin, suppression of some immunity responses, cholesterol control and many agricultural benefits to name just a few. They are present in one's steak dinner, wine, beer and soya sauce and even citric acid which is the main constituent of coca cola. Medical research into cancer and aging involves the understanding of fungi and has been the subject of several Nobel prizes.



***Appropriately named - the Death Cap***

At last it was over, our brains were reeling, and we re-entered the world of the familiar. Such blessed relief. The final part of the lecture was entitled 'The top 70 fungi in Devon'. Images and examples of our old friends the common field mushroom, the inkcap and his relative the shaggy inkcap and the dreaded deathcap – the most toxic of them all. It was so reassuring to escape from all those billions and trillions of aliens to be found in our midst. But had we? One has to be reminded of the maxim, 'the more we find out, the less we know'.

Dr. Ramsdale offered to take the OVA on a fungi expedition sometime in the Autumn, so standby your diaries - it will be an event not to be missed.

***Bob Wiltshire***

## Chairman's Report 2016-2017

As a prelude to the OVA Annual General Meeting (May 10<sup>th</sup>, East Budleigh Village Hall), I will review our activities over the last 12 months.

First, I would like to thank our volunteers – without you there would not be an Otter Valley Association. What do our volunteers do? Organise walks and talks, write, edit and distribute the newsletter, manage the membership, pay the bills, maintain our website and Facebook pages, manage our Planning, Natural Environment and History functions, help clear Himalayan Balsam, litter pick in the Estuary and much more. This year I would especially like to recognise the efforts of Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison, who have been our walks organisers for four years and run an amazing programme, they are stepping down and handing over to a new team. Thank you all volunteers for the time and effort you put in to help the OVA.

The Executive Committee is fortunate in retaining many of its members for another year, with Penny Kurowski (Hon. Sec), Jon Roseway (Treasurer), Haylor Lass (Vice Chair), Nicola Daniel (Planning), David Daniel (History), George Maddaford (Budleigh Rep) agreeing to stay on, together with Jacqui Baldwin (Newsletter) and Geoff Lake (Talks). We have vacancies for an Events Organiser, Natural Environment Committee and village reps for Otterton and Colaton Raleigh. Finally, I will be standing down as Chair, having completed my 3-year tenure. Please contact me or another members of the EC if you are interested in any of these positions.

The nature of the planning process means that while we write letters about various planning applications we can rarely claim credit for decisions that are reached based on many factors. However, we welcome the decision to close Blackhill Quarry, with an eventual reduction in the number of HGV trips across Woodbury Common when all operations cease. We can also celebrate planning decisions that have recognised and strengthened our Conservation Areas (although more needs to be done), and also the decision to refuse a development proposal beyond the built-up area boundary of Budleigh Salterton near Barn Lane. The OVA has also been closely involved with the development of the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plan. This important document is now with East Devon District Council and will shortly be forwarded to an independent examiner for review. Even prior to approval this document is beginning to be quoted in reference to planning applications. In the year ahead I expect we shall see more

progress on the Lower Otter Restoration Project (the OVA is a member of the stakeholder committee). A list of potential alternative strategies is being reduced as in-depth modelling and analysis continues.

The Natural Environment Committee have continued to grapple successfully with the invasive Himalayan Balsam. After 6 years working along the Colaton Raleigh tributaries to the River Otter they are seeing a real impact, with much less balsam showing up in most areas. 11 volunteers put in 255 hours pulling up Balsam this year. The annual litter pick in the Otter Estuary continues to be well supported, and we have maintained our 100% record of no volunteers lost to the mud or the incoming tide (although some boots were at risk last year). The Natural Environment Committee is very keen to recruit new volunteers and committee members - if you are interested please get in touch.

The walks programme has been expertly managed by Chris Buckland and Mike Paddison. They organised an amazing 85 walks last year, with 859 walkers (up from 500 in 2013/4) covering 634 miles in our area and beyond. Please welcome our new walks team that is now in place, I wish them every success as they take over from Chris and Mike.

Geoff, our new talks organiser has provided a varied programme of talks this winter, covering history, farming and fungi.

There have not been many events this year, mostly due to the lack of an Events Organiser. We did have a guided bird identification walk. We are hoping to manage a few more events next year, with the possibility of a Members Summer Party and an autumn fungi-foray type walk. Watch future newsletters for developments. If you have an idea for an event, please get in touch, we may be able to help.

Our website functions well as an information resource and an advertisement for the OVA, supplemented by a Facebook page. It also hosts the OVA local history resource – OVApedia, which continues to expand.

In conclusion, the OVA strives to provide a varied programme of activities for its members, as well as improving the natural environment and protecting the built environment. In all of this we are dependent on our volunteers to succeed, and we look forward to another year of activities in the beautiful place that we live.

***Roger Saunders***

## **Membership**

Following the change of bank and the increase in annual subscription fees, membership numbers dropped as had been expected. However, we have had a steady stream of new members joining, via walks and talks, word of mouth, and the website, and membership numbers are slowly creeping back up, currently 775 members as we end this year.

Several members cancelled their membership during the year, because they are moving away from the area. It is sad that members feel that, if they leave the valley, then they must leave the OVA as well. The quarterly newsletter is a great way to keep in touch with what is happening in the area, and supporting the various activities of the OVA.

Can I remind those who don't pay by bank standing order, that the 2017 subscription is due on the 1st April, please send your subscription to: Membership, OVA, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN.

*Clive Bowman*

## **The Himalayan Balsam Project – Annual Report 2016**

In 2012 we commenced our campaign in the badly infested Stowford Woods on the Colaton Raleigh brook with the aim of reducing the level of infestation to one in which a small group could keep the scattered plants under control with annual outings. This has almost been achieved. In the early years there had been so much Himalayan Balsam (HB) in the upper reaches that we had been unable to execute a complete longitudinal transect down to the flood plain. We almost made it in 2013 but in 2014 we did it twice and nearly succeeded in executing a third. Since then, in 2015 and 2016 the three sweeps have been comfortably achieved with the number of plants encountered steadily decreasing and the completely clear areas steadily increasing.

Having said this, surprise new hotspots have continued to cause frustration. Three cropped up in late 2015 and one of these continues to be problematic. Worse, a completely new one emerged this year and looks set to trouble us for several years. These hotspots are away from the original target zone which is the stream banks and the immediately adjacent fields. One is on a footpath along the valley

side well above the brook (opposite Colaton Raleigh Church), the second is in a farmyard and adjacent field again well above a tributary of the brook at Kingston.

## **Volunteers**

It goes without saying that all of the progress referred to above has depended on volunteers. Here the picture for 2016 is mixed. Quantity has been poor; quality excellent. The number participating dropped to a record low: just 11. The good news is the excellent turn-out by this smaller group. Expressed in hours per volunteer it was the highest ever: 23.2, so that the total of hours input emerged as 255 which was above the 2013 input of 245 achieved with a larger volunteer force. What might have been achieved if we could have hit a total input of 375 hours is, of course, a major issue. So why did numbers drop to such a low level?

In each of my previous annual reports I have commented on the high turnover of volunteers. This year “anno domini” seems to have played a big role, at least 6 dropping out from last year’s 19 because of aches and pains. Some may well return but clearly it is essential to boost the number of new volunteers. There were two this year and they did mightily well. We have two more for 2017 already but clearly another dozen would make a huge impact.

What is disappointing in this context is the poor response to efforts to boost the number of volunteers. Most of the trickle who reach us come from responses to the website or word of mouth. In 2013 the OVA made a big a big effort with the gazebo and display materials on the Otter Riverside Path but it produced no more than a couple. This year, in 2016 Kate Ponting of Clinton Devon Estates/Pebblebed Heaths organized a display tent on Wednesday 17th August at Otterton Mill. The aim was to explain the Himalayan Balsam project and recruit volunteers. OVA volunteers helped staff the tent, discussing the project with interested visitors. Sadly, again, the results were disappointing. The problem remains.

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January this year a review meeting of the 2016 season was held in the Clinton Devon Estates offices attended by representatives of several groups who are working on the HB problem. Publicity and the Volunteer problem were discussed and a coordinated approach will be planned in the coming weeks.

***Patrick Hamilton, Acting Chairman, Natural Environment Committee***

## **A Walk for Everyone – Spring Programme 2017**

With Spring well and truly upon us it's time to get out those walking boots and check out the programme of walks we have lined up for you over the coming months.

As I'm sure you will know, Chris and Mike are stepping down from the job they have done so competently and with such enthusiasm over the past four years and are handing over the reins to a new Walk Team. The new team will be building a programme of walks to take us through 2017 and beyond, the programme depending very much on the invaluable expertise and experience of our walk leaders, who give up their time to develop and lead walks for the OVA.

With the future in mind we held a review meeting back in February in order to gain feedback about past walks and to generate ideas for the future. We will be continuing with many of the favourite and standard walks, but also aiming to incorporate some shorter walks, evening walks and walks with specific themes. Plenty of the walks will be on our home territory but we will also be visiting many other locations too, including Dorset, Dartmoor and Exmoor. We welcome any feedback from members about the Walks Programme, including any comments on past walks and on those during the coming year. If anyone has a favourite walk, or an idea for a walk (even if they don't wish to lead it), then please do let us know.

It has been the practice over past walks to ask for a volunteer to write a walk report. Whilst these have proved interesting reading, we have decided to make the task a little less onerous so will be asking for walk 'reflections' instead. These can be detailed or brief and come with no guidelines, so it will be up to the writer to interpret as they see fit. All submissions will be entered in a draw with a mystery prize at the end of the year. How could you refuse!

The Walk Programme for the coming three months is set out in detail in the following pages. This includes the East Devon Way, which is being walked in 5 stages throughout the summer - a brief synopsis of this is also set out below. On occasions it may be necessary to make last minute changes to a walk so it is always advisable to check the OVA website beforehand.

Finally, the new Walk Team. We are: Heather Fereday, Stella French, Paul Kurowski, Penny Kurowski, Jon Roseway and myself – Peter Paine.

For general enquiries contact Peter (p.paine555@btinternet.com/ 01404 815214) and for specific enquiries about the Programme contact Heather (feredayh@gmail.com)

We are very much looking forward to an interesting and varied programme of walks over the coming months.

*Peter Paine*

## **East Devon Way – using the bus - Overview**

In 2016 some OVA members completed the whole of the East Devon Way in just over 17 hours. We enjoyed it so much that for 2017 we are offering members the chance to walk it again– but this time at a more leisurely pace and in the opposite direction, splitting the walk into 5 stages. We will start at Lyme Regis on 6th May and finish up with an easy 4 mile walk to Exmouth on the morning of Friday 21st July, followed by a celebratory lunch. We have organised the stages so that they can all be done using public transport to reach the start and finish points. For the early stages, Newton Poppleford is the meeting point before onward travel – we suggest you use the bus to get there if convenient or car share where possible.

For those who don't know it, the East Devon Way is a 40 mile walk across East Devon, from Lyme Regis to Exmouth. It passes through some beautiful unspoilt countryside and lovely villages, and on a good day there are outstanding views to be enjoyed. For more details see <http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk>

The stages we will cover are:

Stage 1 – Lyme Regis to Colyford – Saturday 6th May – 8.5 miles

Stage 2 – Colyford to Hare & Hounds – Saturday 20th May – 9.5 miles

Stage 3 – Hare & Hounds to Newton Poppleford – Saturday 8th July – 10 miles

Stage 4 – Newton Poppleford to Brixington – Monday 17th July – 10 miles

Stage 5 – Brixington to Exmouth – Friday 21st July – 4 miles

Full details are given in the Walks Programme below. As we are relying so much on buses, **please check the OVA website or contact the walk leaders** a couple of days before each walk, just in case the bus times have changed.

## Events Programme – April to July 2017

Please consult the OVA Website for late alterations or additional information  
All OS references are to Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Explorer maps.

### **Saturday 8th April, 10:00am - WALK**

Start: Joney's Cross CP (OS 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 445872

### **Wednesday 12th April, 10:00am - WALK**

Start: East Budleigh CP (OS 115 SY 065 849). 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 446550

### **Saturday 15th April, 10:00am - WALK**

Start: Knapp Copse Reserve CP (OS 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 488739/ 07887 936280

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

Start: Upton Pine Village Hall CP, (OS 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 Popleford Rec Ground CP, (OS 115 SY 088 899) 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 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! 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 811267

### **Wednesday 26th April, 10:00am - WALK**

Start at Lime Kiln CP (OS 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 567339

### **Saturday 29th April, 10:00am – WALK**

Start at Columbjohn CP (OS 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 759332

### **Wednesday 3rd May, 2.30pm – WALK**

Start at the Salcombe Hill NT CP (OS 115 SY 139 883). 2 miles, 2 hours.

#### ***“A Bluebell Walk”***

A short walk to see the display of Bluebells on Combe Head Wood and Soldier’s Hill which are usually at their best at this time of year. The walk may be extended if the bluebells disappoint and the walkers request it. **Note:** the path to the woods is quite steep with rough steps.

*Walk Leader:* Graham Knapton, 01395 445665

### **Saturday, 6th May, 10.45am - WALK**

Meet: Newton Popleford Rec Ground (OS 115 SY 088 899) at 8.50am

#### ***“East Devon Way Stage 1 - Lyme Regis to Colyford”***

Catch the 8.57am bus, number 9A, from Newton Popleford to arrive in Lyme Regis at 10.26am. Start at Lyme Regis seafront (Cobb Gate at the eastern end of Marine Parade) (OS 116 SY 343 921) at 10.45am, 8.5 miles, 5 hours.

Walk from Lyme Regis seafront via Uplyme and Musbury to Colyford, Seaton Tramway (OS 116 SY 254 927) where we catch the bus back to Newton Popleford, aiming to arrive there at 5pm.

The route is quite hilly, and from Uplyme passes through lovely countryside, passing Musbury Castle hill fort descending into the Axe Valley. Please bring a picnic lunch.

**Nearer the time, please check the OVA website (or contact the walk leaders) for the latest bus times.**

Walk Leaders : Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742942 [pandp@kurowski.me.uk](mailto:pandp@kurowski.me.uk)

### **Tuesday 9th May, 10.30am – WALK**

#### ***“ A good walk not spoilt”***

Meet at Newton Popleford Rec Ground car park (OS 115 SY 088 899) at 9.45am to share cars. The walk starts at 10.30am from the roadside parking area by Honiton golf club (OS 115 SY 174 991), 7 miles, 4 hours.

This hilly walk takes a path by the golf course to the lovely area above the Coly valley. Then via the wooded Alpin's Common and Colwell Wood returning across the golf course. Please bring a picnic lunch.

*Walk Leader:* Ted Swan, 01395 567450

### **Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> May – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – see page 3 for details**

### **Thursday, 11th May, 10.30am - WALK**

#### ***“Popleford Anniversary”***

In mid-May, Ruth and Haylor will have been resident in Newton Popleford for 40 years. We will walk around the village to celebrate the joys of this lovely area, starting from the Church Green (War memorial) (OS 115 SY 085 897). We start in the morning at 10.30am (after the buses have arrived from Sidmouth, Exeter or Budleigh), and walk 5 miles eastward to Harpford, Northmostown and the River Otter. Lunch at the Cannon Inn. In the afternoon from 2.05pm, we walk 4 miles westwards to Goosemoor, the Commons and Hunger Hill. Join us for the morning walk, lunch, and the afternoon walk, or any combination of these.

Timings to suit return buses in all three directions.

Walk Leader: Haylor Lass, 01395 445872

### **Wednesday 17th May, 10.30am - WALK**

#### ***“Up and Down at Uplyme”***

Meet at Newton Poppleford recreation ground CP (OS 115 SY 088 899) at 9.30am to share cars. 5 miles 3 hours. The walk starts at the Uplyme Village Hall overflow car park behind the hall (OS 116 SY 325 935) at 10.30am. The route follows part of the East Devon Way, Mill Lane, Rhode Hill and Hodder's Corner. A moderate walk but taken at a leisurely pace. Some really lovely views and some points of interest. One section can be muddy. There are quite a few stiles. Possibility of lunch at the Talbot Arms.

*Walk Leader:* Carole Steen, 01392 873881

### **Saturday 20th May, 10.00am - WALK**

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS 115 SY 088 899) at 8.50am.

#### ***“East Devon Way Stage 2 - Colyford to the Hare and Hounds”***

Catch the 8.57am bus number 9A, from Newton Poppleford to arrive at Colyford at 9.50am Start at Colyford Seaton Tramway (OS 116 SY 254 927) at 9.50am, 9.5 miles, 5 hours

Walk from Colyford to Colyton and then through the isolated villages of Farway and Northleigh to the Hare and Hounds at Putts Corner (OL 115 SY 145 962).

From here we catch the number 9 bus back to Newton Poppleford, aiming to arrive there at 4.30pm. After Colyton the route becomes hilly, with good views. Please bring a picnic lunch.

**Nearer the time, please check the OVA website (or contact the walk leaders) for the latest bus times.**

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, contact details as Stage 1

### **Tuesday, 23rd May, 10.00am - WALK**

#### ***“In Search of Mutter’s Treasure”***

Start: Mutter’s Moor CP (OS 115 SY 109 873) at 10.00am. 5.5 miles. 3 hours  
A circumnavigation of the moor, offering beautiful views of the valleys of the Sid and Otter, returning to the coast via Seven Stones Lane and the short, steep but immensely rewarding climb of Peak Hill.

Walk Leader: Chris Gooding, 01395 265707/ 07852 630431

### **Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 11:00am - WALK**

Meet: Playing Field CP, Newton Poppleford (OS 115 SY 088 899) at 9.15am to share cars for departure at 9.30am.

#### ***Exmoor and the Scenic Barle Valley***

Start from the National Park’s Ashcombe CP at Simonsbath (top level) – (OS OL9 SS 774 394) 11 miles.

The route will follow footpaths, tracks and open moorland high up on Exmoor in a figure of eight walk around Simonsbath and the scenic Barle Valley. Bring a picnic for our lunch stop by the river Barle. A cup of tea or something stronger will be on offer at a nearby pub at the end of the walk.

*Walk Leader:* Peter Paine, 01404 815214

### **Monday, 5th June, 10.40am WALK**

Meet at Exmouth Train Station at 10.15am. Outward via train, dep. 10.23am, arr. Newcourt 10.40am.

Start at Newcourt Train Station (OS 114 SX 961 903), 10.40am, 5.5 miles, 3.5 hours (to include lunch).

#### **“Take the train for a pub walk”**

A walk from Newcourt station over the ancient Clyst River Bridge to the village of Clyst St Mary. Then through fields to the village of Sowton with its grand church and thatched village hall before returning to Clyst St Mary for lunch at the Half Moon Inn. After lunch, a gentle half hour or so takes us to Digby and Sowton station for the train back to Exmouth.

This is an opportunity to explore in detail places we usually see fleetingly from the car or train. The going is easy with only gentle climbs. It may be muddy in places if it has been wet. We suggest that if you don't have a railcard, you travel in groups of 4 to take advantage of a “Groupsave” train ticket - buy a return from Exmouth to Digby and Sowton.

**Nearer the time, please check the OVA website for the latest train times.**

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742942 [pandp@kurowski.me.uk](mailto:pandp@kurowski.me.uk)

### **Wednesday, 14th June, 10.30am - WALK**

Meet at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS 115 SY 088 899). 8.5 miles, 4.5 hours.

#### **“Around the Beacon”**

A varied walk along paths, lanes and tracks heading out to Venn Ottery and Fluxton before crossing the Otter on our way to Waxway. We return going around Fire Beacon Hill and passing through Harpford.

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton, 01395 445872

### **Friday, 16th June, 2.30pm - WALK**

First **Beginner's walk** starting from Budleigh Salterton Public Hall entrance near the free car park and bus stop. 3 miles, 1- 1.5 hours. Total ascent 75 feet. This is a fairly level walk along the coastal path to the Otter estuary. We then walk along the river Otter to the White Bridge and return.

Walk Leader: Heather Fereday, 01395 446796

### **Wednesday, 21st June, 6pm. WALK**

#### **“Ghost Train”**

An evening walk on the longest day to trace the remains of the branch lines Newton Poppleford - Tipton St John - Bowd.

Start at the Village CP in School Lane, Newton Poppleford, (OS 115 SY 085 896). No more than 2 hours walking, gentle hills, optional evening meal at the Cannon Inn to follow.

Walk Leader: Haylor Lass, 01395 568786

### **Friday, 23rd June, 10.45am - WALK**

#### **‘Victorian pier and black swans’**

Meet at Exmouth train station at 9.15am to catch the 9.23am train arr. Teignmouth at 10.23am.

Start at 10.45am from Teignmouth pier and walk the coastal path to Dawlish Warren stopping for lunch in Dawlish. The walking is mostly easy on flat ground but does follow the sea wall and there are a couple of descents. The intention is to walk to Dawlish Warren, which is about 5 miles but the train stops at Dawlish, Dawlish Warren and Starcross if you wish to return earlier or later. Either bring a packed lunch or visit one of the many cafes in Dawlish.

**This walk will not go ahead if the weather forecast is for heavy rain due to its exposed position. Please check the OVA website or contact the walk leader.**

Walk Leader: Heather Fereday, 01395 446796

### **Tuesday, 27th June, 10.00am - WALK**

#### **“A stroll to Venn Ottery Common”**

Meet at Tipton St John CP (OS 115 SY 091 918) 5.5 miles, 3 hours

A gentle walk along quiet lanes and tracks to Venn Ottery Common with panoramic views over the Otter Valley. Return alongside the River Otter. Bring your own mid-morning refreshment with an option of a late lunch or drink in the Golden Lion pub afterwards.

Walk Leader: Stella French 01395 445724

### **Monday, 3rd July, 2.30pm - WALK**

Second **Beginner’s walk** starting from Budleigh Salterton Public Hall entrance near the free car park and bus stop. 3 miles. About 1.5 hours. Total ascent 151 feet. This walk builds on walk 1. We walk to the White Bridge via the river Otter, then walk to the old railway track and return via the park.

Walk Leader: Heather Fereday, 01395 446796

### **Saturday 8th July, 11.15am - WALK**

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS 115 SY 088 899) at 10.15am.

#### **“East Devon Way Stage 3 - Hare and Hounds to Newton Poppleford”**

Catch the 10.26am bus, number 9, from Newton Poppleford to arrive at the Hare and Hounds at 11.12am. Start at the Hare and Hounds (OL 115 SY 145 962) at 11.15am, 10 miles, 5 hours

Walk from the Hare and Hounds via Roncombe and Beckon Hill to Sudbury and then Fire Beacon Hill awaits before we descend to Newton Poppleford. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, contact details as Stage 1

### **Monday, 17th July, 10.30am - WALK**

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS 115 SY 088 899) 10 miles, 5 hours.

#### **“East Devon Way Stage 4 - Newton Poppleford to Brixington”**

Catch the 10am bus number 157 from the Public Hall, Budleigh Salterton to arrive at Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground at 10.24am.

Walk from Newton Poppleford across the Pebblebed Heaths, taking in the atmospheric Woodbury Castle, before finishing in Brixington where buses can be caught back to Budleigh Salterton or Exmouth. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, contact details as Stage 1

### **Friday 21st July - WALK**

Meet: Brixington, Jubilee Drive. (OS 115 SY 014 833) at 10am.

#### **“East Devon Way Stage 5 - Brixington to Exmouth”**

Catch the 9.35am bus number 58 from the Public Hall, Budleigh Salterton to arrive at Jubilee Drive, Brixington at 9.56am. This stop can also be reached from Exmouth by bus number 57 (every 15 minutes).

Start: Brixington (Jubilee Drive) (OS 115 SY 014 833), 10am. 4 miles 2 hours

After the first 4 stages, this final stage will feel like a gentle stroll as we walk from Brixington past A La Ronde to Lypstone and along the estuary to Exmouth, where we plan to have a celebratory lunch!

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, contact details as Stage 1

### **Wednesday 26 July, 10:00am - WALK**

Heath walk across the Commons as a contribution to Pebblebed Heath Week - details to follow in the next Newsletter.

## 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.*

### An Ancient Conflict and a Country Park – 11<sup>th</sup> January

Surveying the blustery public car park as I drove in at 9.45am only two other walkers could be spotted other than the three of us in the car. But it soon became apparent that there were more brave souls about than I had initially thought. We were just about to get moving when Chris arrived and was so keen to get his boots on and get going that he had to be reminded that he needed to buy a parking ticket before we set off.

So it was that 13 of us headed northward along the river Otter and ultimately along the old railway line that came from Feniton Junction to Sidmouth and Exmouth. The line is the subject of a campaign to create a cycleway all the way to Sidmouth, but this is a long term project needing much work if it is to become a reality. Approaching the A30 we were aware of the din created by the traffic, especially as we now headed east going parallel with the road to Fenny Bridges.



A rather lonely plaque at the roadside announced that this was the site of the battle of Fenny Bridges in 1549, when about 7000 Cornish and Devon men protesting about the introduction of the English Book of Common Prayer confronted 8,500 government forces. The government soldiers were intent on quashing the rebellion, but despite their greater numbers and superior equipment, the ensuing battle was not conclusive in beating the rebels. About 300 men were killed from each side, but further campaigns at Clyst St Mary and Sutton Courtenay finally put an end to the West Country protestations.

Carrying on into Escot Country Park the wind became very strong forcing the group to shelter in trees for an impromptu lunch stop. Later on in the park a circular arrangement of carved wooden seats proved irresistible and the group just had to

stop for a unique photo opportunity. By now the route was south following the river Tale through Taleford and back to Ottery St Mary.

The 7.5 mile walk was in an area not usually frequented by the OVA and though not being very hilly was compensated by some lovely countryside and a rather sombre history lesson!



***Ted Swan***

## **Pop Goes the Weasel – 25<sup>th</sup> January**

The walk description was “This walk circumnavigates Newton Pop on riverbanks, 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.”

Chris B and I battled for the right to be “Billy No Mates”, ie, back marker. This is a very serious role not to be taken lightly ... I dutifully counted Jon and the 25 walkers as we set off into the sunshine out of the car park where the frost was melting and falling from the branches onto us below. Last year’s walk was called “Mud, mud and more mud”, today the weather was bright and sunny with a nip in the air ... a real chance to appreciate life in wonderful company!

The first stop was to marvel at the gravity fed water filter; however, as back marker, I missed out on the scientific explanation!



The group was stopped at the site of Dotton Mill. At one time there were as many as 50 watermills powered by the River Otter. Dotton Mill is known to have operated from before 1086 to closure in 1946 and in 1968 the local council ordered the building to be demolished because the wheel pit was regarded as a danger to children. The site was excavated by Channel 4's archaeological television programme Time Team, the episode "The Domesday Mill" being broadcast in 2007; the team found the wheel pit and two millstones, which were used to grind the corn. This mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book, to the value of five shillings whereas the whole farmland and mill were valued at seven shillings. A weir diverted water to the mill's leat, supplying the vertical breast-shot wheel. Jon produced a photo (above) of what Dotton Mill used to look like by pausing the "Time Team" programme on youtube and doing a 'Print Screen' (clever).

*Paul Kurowski*

## **So who was Dr Blackall?**

We set off early on a foggy morning to get to the starting point of the walk, several miles west of Ashburton, at New Bridge car park, beside the magnificent River Dart. Luckily the fog cleared once we had escaped the Otter Valley, and the day improved so much that by lunch time we were basking in warm sunshine. 14 curious walkers gathered to find out who Dr Blackall was, and were

entertained in the car park watching the large congregation of kayakers and their crafts getting ready to challenge the rapids on the River Dart. Rosemary and David Hatch, the walk leaders, took us up hill, heading for Mel Tor via Hannaford. We soon got to 'Dr Blackall's Drive', where Rosemary explained that he had been an eminent doctor from Exeter, who loved Dartmoor so much that he moved to nearby Spitchwick Manor, and had this carriage driveway constructed in the 1880s so that he could drive out to view the wonderful scenery. And indeed there was a superb view of the Dart Valley and distant tors. We then headed towards Bel Tor, on the Two Moors Way, and down to Ponsworthy Ford, where we followed the road down to Leusdon Church, and a peaceful lunch stop. The church yard was delightful, with views across the Wedderburn Valley to distant Buckland Beacon, as well as carpets of snowdrops and comfortable benches for weary walkers. We discovered the last resting place of Dr Thomas Blackall, MD, FRCP, as he had an imposing tombstone near the church. Feeling well rested, we continued with the walk, crossing fields close to Spitchwick Manor, heading down to the road and the River Dart again. It was a delightful stroll beside the river, spotting early Brimstone butterflies and colourful kayakers, and so back to the car park. The group then adjourned to the nearby Tavistock Inn at Poundsgate, lured by the promise of cream teas. Thanks to Rosemary and David for showing us this lovely part of Dartmoor, and for organising such a delightful day out.

### *Dee Woods*

## **A Monument to Wellington – 25<sup>th</sup> February**

OVA members may be familiar with a distant view of an impressive monument as they travel the M5 near Wellington. However, 8 intrepid walkers decided to have a closer look at the tallest obelisk in the world. Sharing cars we met at the National Trust car park on a cool and breezy morning, but soon warmed up as we set off southwards along a ridge with fine views towards Culm Davey Hill and the Culm Valley. After a short time we joined a lane and headed down to Culm Pyne Barton, a fine old farmstead, mentioned in the Domesday Book, but now with a more modern farmhouse dating from 1860, and a large commercial orchard nearby. We carried on along this quiet lane,



stopping briefly for coffee and parkin, before joining a very pleasant riverside path taking us into Culmstock. We paused to admire the medieval church of All Saints, which strangely had a yew tree growing out the top of the tower (picture previous page). The tree is said to date from 1750, and during the drought of 1976 a villager climbed the tower to water it. We walked through the village to the Riverside Inn where we stopped for lunch. As well as serving a fine pint, the 'specials' menu was indeed very special, and the recommended Portuguese fish stew was enjoyed by half the group.

Suitably fortified we set off northwards climbing steadily up the hill towards Culmstock Beacon on Black Down Common. This was one of the Armada early warning beacons of 1588, and was built of stone in a beehive shape to provide shelter for the watchers whilst on duty. As you would expect, there were views to distant hills, somewhat spoilt by the misty conditions. It is Grade II listed, and was rebuilt in 1870 after it collapsed.



We crossed the common, and again the views to the north opened up over the Tone Valley and beyond. Gradually we were getting closer to our goal, and glimpses of the monument came into view through the trees. As we got nearer, it was disappointing to see heras fencing surrounding this very impressive structure, which somewhat detracted from its impact. The foundations were laid in 1817, but it took 75 years to complete the project in 1892. It is 175 feet (53.8m) high, and celebrates the famous battle of Waterloo in 1815. It was built on Arthur Wellesley's estate, which was given to the National Trust in 1933. The monument is built on the highest part of the Blackdown Hills (272m), and the National Trust is hoping to raise funds to restore it.

## ***Dee Woods***

# The Otter Valley Association

## **Executive Committee (01395)**

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

## **Committee Chairmen**

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

## **Other Executive Committee Members**

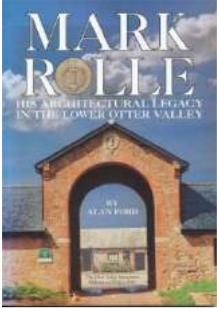
Assistant Minutes Secretary	Robert Wiltshire	444395
Membership Secretary	Clive Bowman membership@ova.org.uk	446892
Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

## **Other Contacts**

Webmasters	David Daniel 445960 & Martin Smith	442333
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Walks Organisers	Chris Buckland Mike Paddison	444471 446550
Newsletter Distributors	Pam and Tony Harber	445392
Newsletter Editor	Jacqui Baldwin <b>jacquibaldwin@btinternet.com</b>	567599

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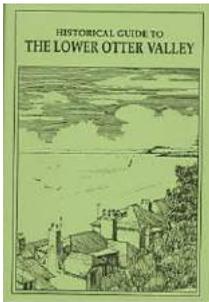
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## Leaflets

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.