

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION



VOLUME 12/3 JULY 1991

OFFICERS UP TO MAY 1992

Chairman:	Mr P Turnbull
Vice Chairman:	Miss B P R Primer
Hon Secretary:	Mrs A F Horrell, 22 Fore Street (B.S. 3334)
Hon Treasurer:	Mr R Howell, National Westminster Bank, Budleigh Salterton

Executive Committee Representing the Parish of

Mr J Brennan	East Budleigh
Mr F Burke	Newton Poppleford
Mr R Cox	Budleigh Salterton
Mr P Greenhow	Otterton
Mr A Jones	Colaton Raleigh
Mr E Skingsley	
Mrs L Wilberforce	
Mr D Rowland	

Membership Secretary	Mrs P Sigsworth, 13 Dukes Road (B.S. 3621)
Social Secretary	Mrs L Wilberforce, 5 East Terrace (B.S. 5738)
Press Secretary	Miss M Goodhart) Bayfield,
Editor, Newsletter	Miss J Goodhart) Copp Hill Lane (To 31.7.91) (B.S. 3470)

Publications Secretaries	Mr R.J Raw, Lexden House, 18 Northview Road (B.S. 5967)
	Mr B Horrell 22 Fore Street, (B.S. 3334)

<u>Sub-Committees</u>	<u>Chairman</u>	<u>Secretary</u>
1. Built Environment	Mr G Whittle	Mr J J B Saul
2. Natural Environment	Mr D Rowland	Miss B P R Primer
3. Footpaths	Mrs D Stammers	Mr A Jones

The annual subscription, payable in advance by 1st April, of £1 single and £1.50 for married couples covers four Newsletters distributed in January, April, July and October. The Association organises a programme of lectures and walks each year and a social evening. It monitors development in the area and in selected cases passes comments to the Planning Authority. It undertakes conservation projects and produces publications on matters of local interest.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1991

The 12th Annual General Meeting of the Association was held at Bicton College of Agriculture on 7 May 1991.

In presenting the report of the Executive Committee, the Chairman began by referring to the nine meetings which had been held. The subject of the talks had varied widely, but they had all been related by a common theme of our surroundings and the changes that nature and human effort bring about. A new feature in the programme was the inclusion of a debate which was held in East Budleigh. It began with a brief presentation of the work of the Executive and the three Sub-Committees and then four brave members proposed and opposed the motion that the O.V.A. is of more value to other organisations than to its own members. The motion was lost by 35 votes to 12.

Attendances on the walks had varied from 12 to 24, which was very satisfactory for those who planned them and those who enjoyed them.

Norman Griffin had handed over responsibility for Publications to Bob Raw, assisted by Brian Horrell. The O.V.A. was indebted to Norman for the excellent system he had established for the marketing, holding and distribution of our publications.

Before commenting on the year's work of the Executive, the Chairman paid tribute to Pat Turner, the Association's first President, who died earlier this year. His presence would be greatly missed by the Committee.

Canon Capper was leaving the Committee after five years, which included four years as Vice-Chairman, and Nigel Wood was also standing down after a year and a half.

The Executive had commented on the proposed Third Alteration to the County Structure Plan; it had been represented at meetings of the Devon Conservation Forum, of its Groups of which the O.V.A. is a member and of the East Devon branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

In recognition of the help and co-operation given by Bicton College in providing accommodation for some of our meetings and in many other ways, the Executive (after discussion with the Principal) has inaugurated the Otter Valley Association Award. This consists of a grant of £100 to support the study tour undertaken by the full-time students on the one year National Certificate in Countryside Skills course. The award started in January 1991 and will be repeated in 1992; it is hoped that we shall be able to continue this in further years.

The Chairman then outlined the work undertaken during the year by the members of the three sub-committees. Most of this has been reported in previous newsletters and our thanks go to those who have contributed to the tasks accomplished. For example, the vetting of over 160 planning applications with visits to over twenty sites; tree planting, litter clearance and considerable progress in recycling facilities; collaboration with the District Council over the plans and guide for the long-distance walk and general upkeep of existing footpaths and stiles.

THE RIVER OTTER

The river Otter has been in the news lately. Members may have read in the Exmouth Journal of the scheme to reintroduce the otter to our river. One of our members, Mr Geoff Jones, Rural Affairs Officer for the District Council, is co-ordinating the work of a number of groups including the National Rivers Authority. An exhibition explaining the characteristics of the otter and its history in this country will be held at Otterton Mill from July 7 to September 8 1991.

The N.R.A. is also involved in two other interesting projects. It has a task force carrying out a detailed investigation of the river to find the exact sources of pollutants, such as nitrates, which affect the wildlife in the river. They are talking with the farmers whose land borders the river in an effort to persuade them to use alternative farming methods and fewer chemicals in order to reduce the pollutants.

The second project is to check erosion of the river at Otterton. Almost 500 tonnes of boulders have been brought to strengthen the river bank upstream of Otterton Bridge. The majority of the work was due to be completed by the end of June but a small area is being left because of a nest of sand martins. The River Otter is recognised by the R.S.P.B. as an important stronghold for sand martins in Devon. The sand martins are likely to be in residence until August and when the N.R.A. engineers are satisfied that the nest has been left for good they will return to complete the work.

FAIRLYNCH MUSEUM

The Museum is faced with considerable expenditure to maintain the fabric of Fairlynch, and has asked whether the O.V.A. can and will assist them. The Association asked for an indication of the main items and costings of what was deemed necessary. Following this the Executive Committee have concluded that they can and should help.

The Museum has been told that the O.V.A. will sponsor the replacement of the four ground floor french windows of Fairlynch and will contribute, when the work is completed, the cost of the work up to a limit of £1500, the estimated figure.

VISITS TO NATURE RESERVES

Within or very near to the O.V.A. area of concern there are four Nature Reserves, all of which have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.). The habitat of each one is managed in order to try to ensure the survival of specific species of plants and animals. The Natural Environment Committee has arranged visits to three of these in 1991/2.

How is it known what conditions different species need in order to survive and how do they fit together into the intricate pattern which forms each habitat? Individual species are studied not as isolated units but in their natural habitats to discover the part which each one plays in interaction with the others.

Orchids cannot survive without a specific associated fungus called a mycorrhiza, certain species of butterflies are nurtured by specific species of ants at a particular stage in their development, birds need supplies of different kinds of natural foods at different times in the year for their survival and that of their offspring. Each living thing has its part to play, including man.

The Reserves are areas at a certain stage in the natural cycle of their development when a particular group of species are present. In the past, left to themselves, each would develop further and the group of species in that place would change while those species now present would die out and develop in another area.

Nowadays, large areas of land are used for man's activities so that there is insufficient space for the natural cycles to continue. The habitats have to be managed to maintain them at the particular period in their development which we wish to conserve. Planned management is essential. This is based on knowledge of the requirements of the species within the habitat and the interaction between them. These species are not present only in Reserves but in Reserves they are protected from extinction. The Wardens in each of the Reserves know their own patches intimately and have management plans to suit their needs.

Of the four Reserves, the Otter Estuary Devon Wildlife Trust Reserve is probably the most familiar and throughout the year there are guided visits arranged by the Heritage Coast Officer, Devon Wildlife Trust, R.S.P.B. and Devon Bird Watchers. For this reason we have not included this saltmarsh Reserve in our programme. The three visits arranged are listed in the 1991/2 membership card enclosed with this Newsletter.

The first visit will be to Bystock Pools, a Devon Wildlife Trust Reserve leased from South West Water. The Warden is Nick Jacobs. It is a woodland Reserve of 49 acres with wet and dry heath, scrub, a series of small pools and a 1½ acre man-made lake. Extensive management work is being carried out and a lively unconventional education programme for primary school children is underway. You may also see a good variety of fungi. The date for your diary is Friday 27 September 1991, 10 am and we meet at the gate in Wright's Lane.

Information about the following two visits in May and July 1992 will be given in the Newsletter nearer the time.

"Years as they pass plunder us of one thing after another"
Horace 65 - 8 BC

REPORTS FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEES

1. Built Environment

There are about 7000 Conservation Areas in this country. Their concept stems from the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. They embrace areas of special architectural or historic interest and their preservation and enhancement is of paramount importance. There is a greater degree of planning control within these areas, for instance consent is required for the demolition of all buildings including garden walls.

The English Historic Towns Forum would like to see even greater planning powers invoked particularly over the replacement of traditional sliding sash windows with aluminium and plastic ones. The Forum maintains that some of our ancient towns are being threatened by alterations to house facades.

In the O.V.A. area there are three Conservation Areas which are in Budleigh Salterton, East Budleigh and Otterton. Salterton's Conservation Area basically covers the whole of the Victorian town and Marine Parade. In East Budleigh and Otterton the Conservation Areas embrace the original linear villages along their High Streets. There is a proposal to extend Otterton's area by the inclusion of the former Otterton Barton farm buildings.

The Association closely monitors development applications falling within these Conservation Areas. A recent application for development behind the Salterton Arms was opposed and this has been refused by the Local Planning Authority (E.D.D.C.). Unfortunately alterations to the facade of a shop in the High Street were approved and a good example of Victorian/Edwardian street furniture has been lost.

In East Budleigh the Association did not like an alteration which was proposed to a listed building in that portion of the Conservation Area between the Walter Raleigh Inn and the church. It concluded that the application should have been refused in the absence of compelling reasons for a change.

On a happier note, the Association examined in April the revised application for three new dwellings at Watering Farm in Otterton's Conservation Area. The Chief Engineer and Planning Officer of E.D.D.C. was advised that some of the architectural detailing of the three buildings was unsatisfactory and would not accord with the vernacular architecture in the immediate vicinity. He now hopes that the Association's opinions will be incorporated into the detailed work during the construction of the buildings.

On a final note, the Built Environment Sub-Committee has been criticized very forcibly in the past for not condemning outright any development of the Houstern Orchard and Behind Hayes areas in Otterton. It is interesting to note in the Otterton Village Appraisal 1990 that more residents were in favour of than against the development of these two areas.

	To build	Not to build
Houstern/Behind Hayes Orchard/ etc	28	12
Behind Hayes/Vicarage playground	11	6

2. Natural Environment

During the past few months members have been busy clearing weeds from around the hundreds of trees which were planted last winter among the pine trees on the east of the Estuary. This work plus the continuing damp weather will give the seedlings a good chance to become well established.

We have been in contact with the Budleigh Salterton Town Council concerning the litter between Normans Car Park and Stanley Mews. The Council is well aware of the situation and has been in touch with the County Council as owner of the land. Perhaps a children's play area could be created until a decision on the long-term use of the land is made.

An additional can bank is now in place beside the high fence at Normans Garden Centre. Please tell others about this and use this one or the one at Lime Kiln Car Park.

The annual children's walk during Environment Week was again popular. Some 22 children accompanied by parents and some sub-committee members were led across part of Woodbury Common by Trevor Bartlett, whose enthusiasm spilled over to us all, and we finished the walk in sunshine!

A few O.V.A. members were able to accompany a party of the Men of the Trees on a visit to Sidbury Manor. We were shown round by the owners, Sir Charles and Lady Cave, who work hard to maintain and improve the arboretum established by Sir Charles's grandfather just 100 years ago. As well as the fascinating collection of trees, the many daffodils were an unforgettable sight.

In June the visit to Bystock Reserve attracted a good number of members. Our meanderings were led by the Warden, Nick Jacobs, who also explained recent educational and clearance work.

Please read and act on the enclosed leaflet "What on Earth can I do?". It concerns not only the future of the Otter Valley, but possibly the whole of our planet.

3. Footpaths

On June 8 Frank Burke led the (almost) annual excursion to Otterhead Lakes. This year the party visited Otterford Church before going to the Lakes, then went on to an afternoon walk in Neroche Forest which was pleasant and interesting, and the rain managed to keep off until the end of the walk.

Some path improvements have been made in Otterton and Colaton Raleigh; the dangerous section of the cliff path in Otterton (caused by cliff falls) has now been fenced off. In Colaton Raleigh the bridge on the path opposite Hawkerland Farm has been replaced and fallen trees removed, and on the path at the north end of Hawkerland Valley a party of members, led by Alan Jones, have covered the two bridges, which were slippery, with netting and built up the path at one bridge to prevent walkers sliding into the ditch.

Mike Langran has now joined the Footpaths Sub-Committee in place of Cyril Shere. If you have any queries about footpaths please contact your local member of the Sub-Committee, as follows:-

Chairman	Dorothy Stammers	C.R. 68176
Secretary	Alan Jones	C.R. 68339
East Budleigh	John Brennan	B.S. 3380
Budleigh Salterton	Mike Langran	B.S. 3206
Newton Poppleford	Frank Burke	C.R. 68864
& Harpford	or George Walker	C.R. 68401
Otterton	Chairman or Secretary	

A further programme of walks has been arranged and full details are given in the 1991/2 Membership card.

THE DEVON COUNTY STRUCTURE PLAN Third Alteration 1989 - 2001

The O.V.A. responded with many others when the County Council published their consultative draft in late 1990. After considering the response, the Council have now formulated this alteration, which extends the Plan period for a further five years up to 2001, and sent it to the Secretary of State for approval.

In line with comments made by the O.V.A. it is now possible to relate the proposals to local plans and planning permissions granted - e.g. the provision intended for the East Devon District of 6,250 dwellings over the plan period can be compared with permissions already granted for 3,500 and plan allocations for a further 2,300 leaving 450 more to be met from future applications to be made to the District Authority.

There are a number of understandable adjustments to the draft circulated in October 1990 and the County Council are to be congratulated on completing this complex statutory task. The O.V.A. has however asked the Secretary of State, before giving his approval, to consider modifying two policies relating to "Housing development in rural areas" and to "the conversion of disused buildings" to avoid direct access onto the major road network in each case; and in the latter to provide that a redundant building worthy of conservation might be converted to a use other than as a dwelling.



The Grockle-Hounds are often seen
Where other Grockle-Hounds have been.
They laugh and shout and scream and titter
Leaving behind them lots of litter.

DON'T BE A GROCKLE-HOUND

We are indebted to Steve Staveley for this cartoon

SOUTH FARM ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

Members who attended the talk given by Mr Simon Timms last February may be interested to know that the Devon Archaeological Society has published a report on the excavations carried out on South Farm land. Entitled "A Roman Site at Otterton Point" and compiled by Stewart Brown and Neil Holbrook it is available from Fairlynch. The report, which is illustrated, is available to O.V.A. members at a cost of £1.25.

*"Half-wild and wholly tame,
The wise turf cloaks the white cliff-edge
As when the Romans came"*

Rudyard Kipling 1865 - 1936

MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership has dropped slightly during the past two years but we still have over 950 members although not all have paid their subscriptions for 1991/92. We hope that this is just an oversight and that the reminder that this newsletter brings will result in the 90 outstanding subscriptions being paid!

A few of these outstanding subscriptions have in the past been paid by banker's standing order and it takes a considerable amount of time when these are cancelled without any notification being sent to the Membership Secretary. It would help enormously if members wishing to resign on leaving the area could spare the time to let Mrs Sigsworth know.

Membership cards for 1991/2 are enclosed for all paid up members. Late payers are asked to send a stamped addressed envelope to Mrs Sigsworth so that their cards can be sent to them by post.

In spite of the fact that we have over 950 members no one has yet volunteered to take over the editorship of the Newsletter, so we are still hoping to find someone, or perhaps an editorial team, willing to do this.

BEWITCHED?

I believe that our Newsletter should not be restricted to serious business. There should be room for a little of life's whimsy. If you are reading this then the editor agrees with me.

What follows is not a further example of my excruciating humour, it is factual reportage, as accurate as I can make it.

Just outside the Association's area is a tree, which can be seen for miles around and is well known as a landmark. Around the middle of 1990 someone stuck a hand-written notice on it. I find it difficult to recall the exact wording of the notice because the author, in trying to impress any readers, used melodramatic language which departs wildly from normal grammatical conventions. I believe however that I can reproduce the flavour of the notice accurately.

The notice claims that the tree is "sentinel of all that is good and clean and pure". It "stands for now and always under the protection of White Magic". "Voe betide he who would seek to damage this tree for great misfortune will come upon them (sic)" Any "practitioners of Evil" who merely come near the tree are threatened with "the Wrath of the White".

Some time later a further notice, typed, appeared below the first. This states that the author of the first notice is "clearly barking and several sandwiches short of a picnic". Nevertheless it supports the aim of the first notice and threatens, should anyone damage the tree to "come round to their house and give them a severe talking to". The authors are said to be the "liberal humanist friends of the great pine of Aylesbeare".

Still a third notice has appeared, also typewritten. I believe this is an accurate reproduction:

For sale
BROOMSTICK
K reg; NOT
New stick. One owner
Guaranteed up
to 4000 ft.

I am glad that nobody has been officious enough to remove these notices. At the same time I hope there will not be any further notices. Not that I am afraid yet further drawing pins might cause the tree to die from copper poisoning. The tree is dead.

Alan Jones