

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION



THE FISH PASS FINISHED!

27 NOV 99

MIKE HARLAND OBSERVING!

VOLUME 21/1 JANUARY 2000

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Sat Jan. 8th From Exeter Hill, Yettington C.P. (GR 044860)
 Walk 10am Hayeswood via Hayes Barton. Muddy. 5 miles. Short steep hills.
 Leader Stuart Lovett (Tel: 443141)
- Mon Jan. 17th. Visit to the Norman Lockyer Observatory
 Talk 7.30 p.m. "The Eclipse: what you might have seen" Also a look through the
 telescopes if the night is clear. £3.50 per head, including coffee
- Wed Jan. 26th From East Budleigh Hayes Lane CP (GR 066849).
 Walk 10am 6 miles. Clamour Bridge, coastal path, Otterton and Bicton.
 Leader Jed Falby (Tel: 445455)
- Sat Feb. 12th From Peak Hill CP. (GR 108873). 4 miles.
 Walk 10am. Muttersmoor and Bulverton Hill.
 Leader Pat Doran. (Tel: 445954)
- Wed Feb. 16th. "The Mark Rolle Buildings - our Legacy"
 7.30 p.m. Newton Poppleford Village Hall
 Speaker R. Coates FRICS
- Sat Feb. 26th From Budleigh Salterton C.P. (GR 061820).
 Walk 10am Dalditch and Shortwood Common. 4 miles
 Leader Joan Wilson. (Tel: 443061)
- Sat March 11th From Squabmoor C.P. (GR 038843).
 Walk 10am. Stony: could be muddy. Lovely views. 4½ mi.
 Leader Frank Burke (Tel: 568864)
- Tue March 21st. "Marine Life of the Otter Estuary"
 Talk 7.30 p.m. East Budleigh Village Hall
 Speaker Professor Harris
- Sat March 25th From Tipton St. John C.P. (GR 091917)
 Walk 10am Spring flowers, River walk. Undulating. 5 miles Donations for CP.
 Leader Frank Burke (Tel: 568864)
- Wed April 5th From Otterton Green. (GR 081852) 4-5 miles.
 Walk 10am A little hilly. Green lanes.
 Leader Lin Ford (Tel: 445230)
- Tue Apr 18th. "Enterprise Neptune: the work of the NT in caring for the coastline"
 Talk 7.30 p.m. Masonic Hall, Budleigh Salterton
 Speaker An NT representative
- Sat Apr 29th From Mincombe Wood, Farway, (GR 161934) 5 mi
 Walk 10am Muddy in places, Some rough ground, 2 testing hills,
 Leader David Jannerway. (Tel: 567159)
- Wed May 10th From Branscombe Beach C.P. (GR 207882)
 Walk 10am All day walk. Hilly. One hour lunch break in Beer. Pub or picnic.
 Leader Brian Leveridge. (Tel: 443358)

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In a few more days Christmas will be upon us and the big M will be hard on its heels. The big events for 1999 were to have been the Eclipse and the Millennium. Well, as we all know the Eclipse was something of a disappointment, so I hope that whatever your expectations are for New Year, they are fulfilled.

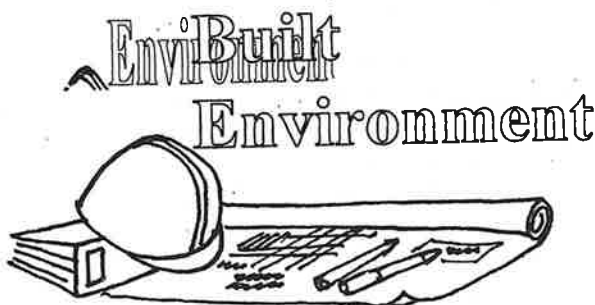
Traditionally the end of a year is a time for looking back at what sort of year we have had. I very sincerely hope that you have not had an "annus horribilis" and that you have lots of happy memories. We in the OVA have had a good year. Membership is holding up quite well, our numbers being the same as we started the year with, so the numbers of new members compensates for those who have left. Financially we are in good shape. This has enabled us to make one or two donations to worthwhile causes, notably the new fish pass on the River at Otterton. The Christmas Party was held on 8th December and were pleased to see some of you there. We are trying to organise a Summer Party of some sort, maybe a coach trip. Have you any suggestions? The Footpaths Committee have once again done sterling work organising next years walks programme, clearing overgrown paths etc, and as I write the new edition of our "12 Walks" booklet has come back from the printer. Apart from providing a first class guide to the 12 best walks in the area, sale of the booklet yields about £700 profit. This booklet is probably the best of all those available to walkers. Built Environment have reviewed over 100 separate planning applications and have written many letters to EDDC offering professional views and advice. Some of these carry on for ages. Notably Cintra was on their agenda for a long time. It was the Natural Environment committee who brought the fish pass to our attention. We were pleased to be in a position to make a donation to help make the new fish pass happen. This will improve the environment of the river and valley in several ways. Although Gala day was washed out on the Saturday we put up a good show on the Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Our efforts were well appreciated by the Organising Committee and hopefully by visitors to the Gala, and also produced a useful sum for our coffers.

Generally we are getting ourselves better known and I hope that you have noticed our increased press coverage over recent months. Hopefully as more and more people get to know about the many good things that we do, some of them will want to join us.

Finally may I say a word about the newsletter. Brian Hawkes is the Editor and he does an excellent job gathering in copy from the various contributors and getting it ready for the printer. Also at this time I would like to say a very big "Thank you" to all of those unsung heroes (and heroines) who, in all weathers deliver the newsletter to your door.

But the real riches of the OVA are the people who all the year round do their bit, in various ways, to help preserve this lovely valley not only for those of us who live here now, but for future generations and of course, visitors who are able to take away happy memories of the Otter Valley

John Lee



Over the past year, the Chairman and I have had a number of informal meetings with several of our neighbouring Amenity Societies to exchange views and to see whether we might act in concert over certain issues which affect us all.

One of the major issues we have discussed is the desirability of a Planning Design Guide for East Devon. Many planning authorities have such a guide whose purpose is to ensure that, as far as possible, new developments fit in with the best of the existing built environment. The aim is to define the special qualities of old buildings and settlements and to give guidance on appropriate design. Not only would such a guide be of help to the Planning Officers and would-be developers, but also to societies like ours who comment on applications.

It is not the intention to produce a rigid straight-jacket and thereby stifle any good innovative design, but rather to make clear to prospective developers and other applicants what would be acceptable and, equally importantly, what would not.

At the most recent meeting with our neighbouring Amenity Societies, at which representatives of the Exmouth society, the Lymptone Society and the Sid Vale Association were present, it was agreed that I should draft a letter to the Chief Planning Officer to suggest that a Design Guide be prepared for East Devon, and offering our assistance in its preparation. This draft has been approved by the Societies and the subsequent letter has been sent to the Chief Planning Officer. We are awaiting a reply.

Alan Ford



1000 YEARS OF FOOTPATHS.

Since this is the last issue of the millennium (by most people's reckoning) a review of the history of footpaths seems due. However to take such a history back 1000 years, to the days when King Harold was racing his army up and down the country trying to anticipate where the Normans might attack, is beyond me. Did he get held up by any blocked paths?

I will start instead with the period shortly before and after the last war when MPs were lobbied in favour of freedom to walk our countryside, and crowds of people joined demonstrations and mass trespasses. All this led to a climate of opinion which prepared the way for a new act in 1949.

This act put an end to most disputes about whether you had a right to walk (or ride a horse or bicycle on) a given route. If it was on the definitive map you had a right. If not you hadn't. There were of course mechanisms for deleting, diverting and introducing new rights of way, the latter little used.

First however the map had to be drawn up by the County Council, which consulted the parish councils. If the local parish council took little interest in its footpaths few appeared on the new map. If the parish council supported a path it could still be opposed by the landowner. Round here that was mostly Clinton Devon Estates, which was much less public spirited then than it is now.

Many unequal combats followed. The landowner was usually represented by experienced lawyers, the parish by amateurs. On your local Ordnance Survey map you will see many routes marked by black broken lines. Most of these are paths which we lost at that time.

The Parish Paths Partnership (P3), introduced about 4 years ago, has resulted in an

enormous improvement in the state of our paths. It is financed by the Countryside Commission out of general taxation. This means that the "grockles" who use our paths have paid for them and have a right to expect to find them in good condition.

During the first years of P3 East Budleigh, Newton Poppleford and Colaton Raleigh received quite generous funding. (Otterton and Budleigh Salterton can call on Heritage Coast, now renamed the Countryside Agency, for help with their paths, so they are not funded from P3). Now that the most serious problems on paths in the three P3 parishes have (mostly) been dealt with, funding has been drastically reduced to cover only maintenance.

The maintenance sums available through P3 are modest in comparison with what needs to be done. There is a myth that paths which are used need no clearing. This all depends on the soil and the vegetation. On our commons there are stony firebreaks which never need attention. There are also many paths flanked by gorse. No matter how much the path is used the gorse on each side keeps growing higher. Above a certain height it leans across the path and meets in the middle, and then walking the path becomes painful. There is no gorse on the path along the river between Colaton Raleigh and Otterton. Nevertheless Heritage Coast finds it necessary to trim once or twice a year.

Before P3 getting work done on paths was usually a matter of persuading someone to do it for nothing. Dorothy Stammers our vice President, who was the first secretary of the footpath committee, was particularly good at this. She got the bridleway along the south side of Hawkerland cleared by the probation service when practically everyone was saying it could not be done. Recently part of this bridleway was mowed for us by Bungy Williams, the Commons Warden. We still need help like this to keep within our budget.

We still need volunteers too for our working parties clearing paths. We are grateful for those who do this work, and to the walks leaders who foster interest in walking our paths. We also appreciate the work of those who administer the P3 system and who monitor paths in all our parishes. We can be proud that members of the Otter Valley Association carry out most of the work which is done to maintain paths in our area and to popularise walking.

Alan Jones.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The fish pass on Otterton Weir was completed in November and the commemorative plaque was unveiled on 9th. December by Lord Clinton (Jed's drawing on the cover sets the scene).

Sea Trout have already been reported spawning at the head of the river and in Metcombe Brook (a tributary), so it is evident that the work on the weir is having beneficial effects.

Philip Greenhow

BUDLEIGH SALTERTON REPORT

It has been a very busy period for us all – the normal walks, talks, working parties and meetings – but this time we have had two really major projects that we have helped bring to fruition, such as clearing gorse from around the trig. point at West Down Beacon.



In spite of washout rainfall the fish ladder at Otterton Weir was completed. The work was officially opened by Lord Clinton on 9th. December, but since the fish would not wait it is good to report that we have already seen sea trout and salmon in the upper reaches of our river.

The second “major” was the Millennium Avenue of trees on East Budleigh Road. Some twelve (12!) local organisations helped to plant the thirty trees and (just as important) will continue to look after them for at least three years. We in the OVA have ‘sponsored’ six of these young hornbeams and hope to see them grow to become a beauty spot on this naked piece of road.

We have some members who have objected to our participation in



both these projects, yet I believe it is part of our value to the community we serve to try and advance projects that the majority see as worthwhile. We are never all going to agree on everything – but it is nice if we can be seen to be more positive than just “objectors” or “dissenters” to the inevitable changes in our lovely valley.

Jed Falby
Mike Harland

LITTER PICK ON THE OTTER ESTUARY

Once again I would like to remind members that the Annual Litter Pick on the Otter Estuary will take place on Saturday March 18th. from 10 a.m. at Lime Kiln car park. This event is organised on behalf of the Devon Wildlife Trust and the Heritage Coast Office will provide dustbin bags for our use. Join us for an hour and help to make the Estuary litter-free

Dorothy Friend
Voluntary Warden: Otter Nature Reserve



IN MEMORY OF JILL

I wish to thank the many OVA members who sponsored me in the Cancer Research Campaign “Jill Burke Memorial Walk”, those who sent donations to me for the charity of my choice, or sent donations direct to charities.

The monies I have received amounted to:

£202.90 sent to the local branch of CRC (their total is currently £1300 and still rising)

£100 handed to Sidmouth Hospiscare

£25 handed to Exeter Hospiscare (Wonford),

which will be very valuable in combating and alleviating this vicious disease.

I am sure she will be remembered as a happy, friendly, loving, caring person, enjoying the simple things in life.

Frank



Please note that the walk on March 11th. will be led by Frank Burke (568864), not by Ken Watson.

Saturday July 17th. For the second consecutive year the OVA visited the Blackdown Hills to see the source of the River Otter, a smaller contingent this time (14 people in 4 cars). The day's weather was brilliant, hot and dry, and in spite of one or two dilapidated stiles there were no real problems. By kind permission of the landowner we saw the pools of moving water where the Otter emerged from the ground and the Wessex Water measuring points where it was crystal clear and flowing swiftly. A circuit of the scenic otter Head Lakes where we picnicked was followed by a five mile walk via Howstead, Birchwood, Otterford Hill and Fyfett back to the cars.

Frank Burke

Saturday October 2nd. In spite of an off-putting local weather forecast, 24 enthusiastic souls converged on Joney's Cross car park at 10 a.m. and were rewarded by sunny weather, fresh at first, but warming as we descended and negotiated the wet wooded area around Harpford Hill Plantations. By the time we had passed Outer Hanger most of us had stripped off our anoraks.

Crossing Venn Ottery Road from Hunger Hill into the field footpath, we encountered Shirley, a small black friendly heifer, completely blocking access to a kissing gate. However, she responded to having her muzzle stroked and was easy to entice away.

We crossed the Playing Fields and proceeded alongside the Otter to Harpford Bridge, then through fields and the new orchard to Brooklands Cross and Southerton, through woods and over the Common to Benchams and Woolcombes, back to the cars in 2½ hours, about five miles in the delightful East Devon scenery.

Frank Burke

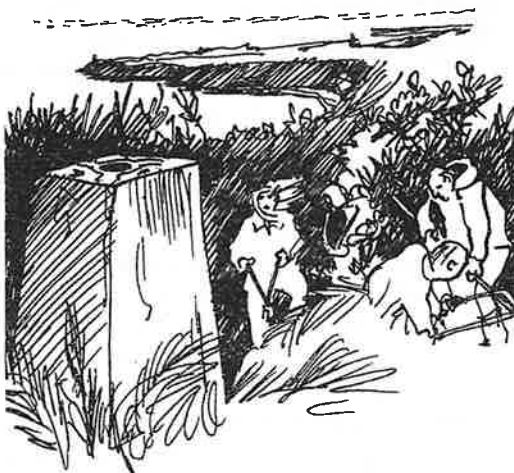
Wednesday December 1st. In a light drizzle fifteen of us and one dog left the car park behind Newton Poppleford Church and made our way south along the Otter Valley for about a mile. We then turned west and followed tracks and bridleways steadily uphill to Goosemoor. We negotiated a muddy ravine safely and then took the path over the Common to Joney's Cross where we had our coffee stop. We then crossed the main road

and headed east along the edge of Harpford Hill. We threaded our way, downhill now, through woods and on into the back of Newton Poppleford 2½ hours after we had set out. The sun never really broke forth but we never got really wet either.

Robert and Margaret Sellin

ENERGY AND THE FUTURE

At present we obtain almost all our energy from fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas). But these are finite resources, and will run out one day. It is not so long ago that the prophets of doom told us that the world's oil supplies would run out by now: however, they failed to realise that as oil became scarcer, the price would increase and it would then become economic to tap into supplies such as North Sea oil, that were previously ignored as too difficult and expensive to access. However, the principle still applies, even if it no longer seems urgent. Oil and gas will eventually run out, or become so expensive to produce as to be virtually impossible. Coal will last longer, but even that will eventually run out, and in any case it is a "dirty" fuel, producing a large amount of pollution. So what alternatives have we?



WENT DOWN BEACON
29 SEPT 99

LYN
FORD

STUART
LOVETT

GLYNN
WHITTLE

There are two major types of energy consumption: fixed installations, such as houses, power stations and factories, where bulk and weight of the fuel are of minor importance, and mobile ones, such as cars, trains and aircraft which have to carry their fuel with them, and for these oil-based fuels are virtually the only possibility -- imagine an aircraft running on coal! Electric cars are in existence, but unless there is a breakthrough in storage of electricity, they will be slow and have a limited range. They would be perfectly all right for taking the children to school, or for shopping, or even a trip to Exeter, but no use for driving to London or further destinations. A possible fuel is hydrogen, which is already used as a rocket fuel, but it needs heavy and bulky insulated containers, which would be possible in cars, but very difficult for aircraft. Another problem is that, although there is plenty of hydrogen available in water, it is chemically bonded to oxygen, and in order to separate it we need to use more energy than we shall obtain. Nevertheless, it looks as if our children may need to use it.

But what about our homes and factories? Electricity is probably the most convenient source of energy, but how is it to be generated? Nuclear power was once thought to be the solution – indeed we were told it would be so cheap to produce that the electricity companies wouldn't find it worthwhile to send bills, but, like so many predictions, that was a grave error. Even apart from the risk associated with nuclear power stations, the cost of decommissioning them will be appalling. If nuclear fusion (as in the sun) ever becomes practicable, it may provide an answer, but decades of work haven't yet succeeded, so we should not rely on it.

There are many alternative "natural" sources of energy, but they all have drawbacks. Wind power is irregular and entails large and ugly "wind farms", which have to be in highly visible locations. Solar energy is useful, though at present uneconomic, and in any case we need most energy in the winter, when solar energy is at its minimum. Tidal power again is irregular, and can cause problems to shipping, though it looks one of the most hopeful sources: wave power again can cause danger to shipping, and the rafts can easily break loose in gales. Water power from rivers is useful in mountainous countries, but not here, where we have few suitable rivers. Geothermal power, where holes are drilled down to hot rocks, is again only suitable in a few areas and involves considerable capital expense.

Two other sources, both involving burning, have been proposed. If we were to burn rubbish instead of using landfill sites, this would have some advantage; but the problem of pollution by the products of combustion immediately arises. Another is to grow coppices of saplings to be harvested and burnt to produce heat to generate electricity. This has many advantages, not least as an additional source of income for farmers whose livelihoods are threatened by their many current problems.

So it would seem that, although there is unlikely to be a serious problem in the lifetime of most of us, the distant future is much less rosy. Of course, it is always possible that some undreamed-of scientific breakthrough may solve the problem, but it would be irresponsible in the extreme to adopt the Micawberish attitude of relying on this, so what can we do about it. The bulk of us cannot contribute to the necessary scientific research, though we can contribute to the climate of opinion that supports it. What we can do is to be economical in our use of energy. Such things as insulating our homes better, choosing a car that is energy-efficient when we next replace our present one, and indeed walking instead of using the car when this is practical will all help to postpone the time when fuel runs out (or becomes impossibly expensive) and give more time for the scientists to come up with a solution.

Brian Hawkes

OFFICIALS 1999/2000

Vice-President: Mrs Dorothy Stammers

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Vice-Chairman	Mr. Alan Ford	445230
Honorary Secretary	Mr. David Leonard	445942
Assistant Secretary	Mr Alan Jones	568339
Honorary Treasurer	Mr Brian Leveridge	443358

Executive Committee

Representing the Parish of:

Budleigh Salterton	Mr Jed Falby	445455
Budleigh Salterton	Mr. Mike Harland	445665
East Budleigh	Mr Ken Watson	445859
Colaton Raleigh	Mr Alan Jones	568339
Newton Poppleford	<i>Vacant</i>	
Otterton	Mr Philip Greenhow	567996

Membership Secretary	Mr Brian Hawkes	442017
Publicity Secretary	Mrs. Margaret Yerrell	442178
Social Secretary	Mrs. Maggie Morgan	442872

Sub-Committee Chairmen

Footpaths	Mr Stuart Lovett	443141
Natural Environment	Mr Philip Greenhow	567996
Built Environment	Mr. Alan Ford	445230

Newsletter Editor	Mr. Brian Hawkes	442017
Newsletter Distributors	Peter & Ainsley Jones	443827

The Association was founded in 1979 is registered with the Civic Trust and the Charity Commissioners and is a member of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV): it is also affiliated to CPRE. It cares for the environment and any queries should be addressed to your Parish Representative.

Our thanks to Jed Falby for the cover illustration, and also for other illustrations.

Contributions for the next issue by **March 13th. please**

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