OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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OVA FOOTPATH USURK PARTY 23 Jan

VOLUME 24/1 APRIL 2003

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

APRIL 19th - JONEYS CROSS, GRID REF.056897
SAT. 10 a.m. 4 MILES, 2 HOURS, MODERATE: AYLESBEARE COMMONS, WOODLANDS.
RELAXED SPRINGTIME WALK
Walk Leader: LIN FORD, 445230

APRIL 23rd: Talk by Malcolm Roper, Exeter Leukaemia Fund Wed. 7.30 p.m., Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton

MAY 7th: WIDWORTHY CHURCH GR SY 220991
WED. 10 a.m. LIMITED CAR SPACES, CAR-SHARING A MUST; 2½ HRS MODERATE:
BY SPECIAL INVITATION OF THE OWNER OF ONE OF DEVON'S FINEST BLUEBELL
WOODS, PLUS VISIT TO 13th-c. CHURCH. PLEASE BOOK IN ADVANCE AS PARTY
WILL BE LIMITED TO 20 PERSONS ONLY.
Walk Leader: PHILIP GREENHOW, 567996

MAY 15th: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Thurs. 7.30 p.m., Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton

MAY 24th: COLATON RALEIGH CHURCH GR 082872 SAT. 10 a.m. 5 MILES, 2½ HOURS ENERGETIC: PASSAFORD LANE, MUTTER'S MOOR, NORTHMOSTOWN. GREAT VIEWS, ONE STIFF CLIMB Walk Leader: BRIAN TURNBULL, 567339

JUNE 11th: E.B. HAYES LANE CAR PARK GR 065849
WED. 7.00 p.m., 2½ HOURS MODERATE: EVENING WALK, COUNTRY LANES,
FINISHING AT PUB
Walk Leader: KEN WATSON, 445859

JUNE 28th: SQUABMOOR RESERVOIR GR 038843 SAT. 10 a.m. 5 MILES, 2½ HOURS MODERATE: COMMONS, WOODLANDS, FAR-REACHING VIEWS. COULD BE MUDDY, STONY UNDERFOOT Walk Leader: BRIAN LEVERIDGE 443358

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CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

I must first pay tribute to the hard-working members of the Executive Committee for the generous support they have given me during my year as Chairman. Nor must it be forgotten that a great deal of work is done by our Sub-committees, and by none more than the members of our Built Environment Sub-Committee who have to inspect an endless stream of planning applications. The chairmanship of this Sub-committee was taken on by Brian Brown this year, and he has made an excellent job of it.

Altogether, some 30 to 40 people actively carry forward the work of the Association, and they deserve our recognition and our thanks.

It is gratifying that our worth as an Amenity Association has been recognized by the powers-that-be by a recent invitation to be represented on the AONB Partnership, which is the body that oversees the preparation of the management plan for our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and monitors its implementation. Our main concern will be to do what we can to ensure that AONB status is fully recognized when planning applications in our area are considered by the District Council; something that does not seem to have been taken into account adequately in the past.

We are faced with some gaps in our ranks. After a year of serving very ably as Secretary, Angela Taylor will not be available for re-election as she is leaving the district. Also, Maggie Morgan, who has done such a very good job as our Social Secretary for the last four years, feels that it is time to hand over to someone else. We are therefore looking for nominations for both these posts, and we also need a Village Representative for East Budleigh. If you are willing and able to volunteer your services for any of these three posts, I would be extremely grateful to hear from you as soon as possible in view of the forthcoming AGM in May.

Members will be aware that a Budleigh Salterton Town Design Statement Group has been formed. The Group has made an energetic start in preparing ways of finding out the views of the townspeople on the future of the town. The Association is represented on the Group, and has contributed £100 to assist with the initial expenses of this very worthwhile operation.

This year has seen the formation of a History Section, whose researches are expected, in the fullness of time, to produce publications of local interest. The idea for establishing this Section was prompted by the publication of the Mark Rolle book in the summer. Currently, links are being forged with the Fairlynch, our admirable local museum. We have also made contact with the Ottery St Mary Heritage Society, which produces a series of journals on historical topics which may serve as a model for our own publications.

There is no shortage of ideas in the Association! The Natural Environment Sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Robert Sellin, is actively preparing two leaflets for the benefit of those walking by the River Otter: one for summer use and one for winter. A very generous donation of £500 from Professor Harrington will be put towards the cost of publication.

Also being considered is a revised format for the Budleigh Salterton Town Trail. The present leaflet, available from the Tourist Information Centre, has proved popular and is the basis for the guided walks in Gala Week, but it could do with updating.

Lastly, a word about the forthcoming Annual General Meeting. It has to be admitted that the attendance at the last AGM was pitifully small considering that the membership of the

Association is more than 900. Yes, I know that AGMs are generally not the most exciting of event, but they do give the membership the opportunity to show support for the the Executive Committee and the Sub-committees, so I do hope that I will see a fair number of you this year on 15 May at 7.30 p.m. in the Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton. After the refreshments following the formal business of the meeting, there will be a short illustrated talk. by Brian Leveridge on 'China Today – and Yesterday'.

Alan Ford

FORMAL NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday May 15th 2003 at 7.30 p.m., Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for absence
- 2. Minutes of the meeting on 16.05.2002 (circulated in July 2002 Newsletter)
- 3. Matters arising
- 4. Chairman's Report
- 5. Treasurer's Report
- 6. Vice-Chairman's Report
- 7. Adoption of Accounts
- 8. Election of Officers
- 9. Election of Executive Committee
- 10. Appointment of Honorary Auditor
- 11. Any Other Business
- 12. Date of next A.G.M.

Refreshments

Talk: Brian Leveridge, 'China Today - and Yesterday'

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Nominations (which must be in writing) for Officers and members of the Executive Committee must reach the Secretary at least two weeks before the AGM. They should be seconded by a member of the OVA and must be signed by the nominee as willing to stand (Constitution, clause 6).

RESOLUTIONS: Members wishing to put resolutions to the meeting should submit them in writing, duly seconded, to the Secretary at least two weeks before the AGM. It would be appreciated if members wishing to raise questions at the AGM would inform the Secretary by the same date to enable adequate answers to be provided.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subscriptions for 2003/04 are due at the beginning of April. Minimum subscription rates are £3 p.a. for individuals and £5 p.a. for families or households. If you have not already done so, please pay your subscription now to:

The Hon. Treasurer, OVA, Hayes, Church Road,

Colaton Raleigh, Sidmouth EX10 0LH.

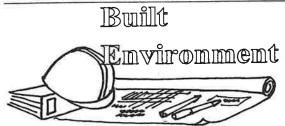
This will ensure that you receive your copy of the next Newsletter.

Cheques should be made payable to Otter Valley Association. Alternatively, you may like to consider using a Banker's Order to ensure that your subscription is paid regularly each year. Eighty-three per cent of OVA members already pay by Banker's Order. If you would like a form to complete, please contact the Treasurer at the above address or by phone (567339), or by e-mail: brianturnbull@ova.org.uk.

FROM THE EDITOR

This is my first issue as editor of the OVA Newsletter, although I have enjoyed a year or more as an OVA member despite living in Topsham. I am grateful to Alan Ford, Brian Hawkes, Angie Taylor and Jed Falby for initiating me gently into the editorship and hope that this April 2003 issue will prove to be as good a read as past numbers. A reminder of my address and telephone number (sorry, no e-mail) for future contributions: 1 North Street, Topsham, Exeter EX3 0AP, tel.: (01392)-873251.

Pat(ricia) Quaife



Recent months have seen a continuing steady flow of planning applications, mostly for relatively minor works of a non-controversial nature. However, there is one current submission which has caused this committee some alarm.

This application, which initially appears somewhat innocuous, is for the felling of three mature trees, together with the shaping and reducing of nine others, in the grounds of Summerlands, a house recently built on the hillside just below Watch Hill. This group of trees forms an intrinsic part of the green belt of mixed coniferous and deciduous forest planting which runs continuously from Madeira Walk, through Elvestone, behind Umbrella Cottage, and along Chapel Hill and Upper West Terrace to Westfield Road. It forms a crest along the northern rim of the valley in which Budleigh Salterton town centre sits. That this is an important landscape feature of the town was recognised in 1983 when the designation of the Conservation Area was formalised, and the Conservation Area appraisal of 1995 observed that this tree belt gives rise to 'a landscape that has an almost Mediterranean quality'.

A battle has already been fought over the obligation to preserve this important landscape feature in the redevelopment of the Elvestone site. The Design Statement supporting the original application for this development is worth quoting here in full:

'The site contributes to the area most significantly by the tree belt which is visible from most locations to the south of the site. This must be protected, and no excuse created throught the proximity of buildings to the loss or aggressive trimming of ANY of the existing trees.'

The Coastal Area Planning Committee's decision to approve that development was based upon the understanding that this commitment to retaining the tree belt would be upheld. In the event, it is now clear for everyone to see that wholesale felling and trimming has taken place in order to obtain the heavily-advertised panoramic coastal views, and a yawning gap has been carved into this green belt.

In the light of this unfortunate outcome of the aggressive development at Elvestone, this Committee considers it essential that a stand is made against any further diminution of this valuable asset, one of the landscape features of the town which helped to determine the designation of Budleigh Salterton itself as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is appropriate to emphasise that the quality of the built environment is determined as much by the quality of the spaces between and around the buildings as by the quality of the buildings themselves.

Brian Brown



When I first told the County of the soft area in Back Lane, Colaton Raleigh, they posted notices closing it to vehicles. So I pointed out that it was also dangerous for horseriders. They then posted notices closing the lane to horses and to walkers. But the lane has never been dangerous for walkers. My protests went unheeded until I tried approaching a different officer. It looks now as if the lane will soon be opened to walkers. Meanwhile the surface of the lane is firming up near the drainage we put in, but I am not sure whether it is safe for horses yet.

Torrential rain has continued to gouge out the surface of many of our lanes and footpaths. In Colaton Raleigh Pound Lane was so badly affected that I e-mailed the County to suggest they might want to consider closing this too to horseriders. Then an experienced rider told me it was not dangerous to horses. I e-mailed this information to the County. After many further e-mails reminding them that they had not answered I was at last told that their surveyor judged the lane was dangerous, and notices closing it had been put up. But there are still no such notices in the lane. Meanwhile the lane seems to have got safer: some of the gulleys have silted up and some have been collapsed by a hedge-cutter. The impressive volume of water flowing down the lane makes it certain that it will be further damaged. When I walked it recently water was spouting out of holes in the bank above the level of my head.

There is still no indication that anything will be done about the horrific damage to Hayeswood Lane in East Budleigh.

On the Otter, the bank under Ricketty Bridge has been rebuilt. The river was threatening to cut off the bridge from the path and to undermine the bridge abutments. The bank is now reinforced by willow wands woven like basketry in and out of stakes. It looks very neat and strong. I only hope the river doesn't intrude round the ends.

A bridge in Harpford has been vandalised for the second time. On the last occasion I used it I had to balance across a single plank. I think the County was right to judge it dangerous and to close the path. Finding suitable materials to repair it is a problem because long sleepers are not now available.

The coast path behind Links Pinewood has now been reopened.

Otterton has decided not to join P3. I am sure this is a bad decision. It means that normal maintenance on Otterton paths must come out of the precept, and that means the work will not be done.

Nan Dickens is to leave the Footpaths Committee because she is moving house. She has been a member of it for more than 10 years, including a long stint as Secretary. We will miss her.

David Jannaway, our Secretary, is also resigning. His period in the job has been characterised by brilliant initiatives, his latest being that a circular path suitable for wheelchairs could be made on Mutter's Moor. Once the idea is put to you, and you envisage the route, it seems surprising that nobody thought of it before. David is contacting the organisation which led the work on the path down by the estuary.

During January, working parties cleared a path in Otterton and another in Budleigh Salterton.

Alan Jones



Rural Flooding

An interesting article appeared in the Western Morning News on 4 January this year. It reported a serious flood that occurred in the village of Crowlas, near Penzance, last November in which muddy water inundated homes and businesses in the village. In the early hours of New Year's Day the village was flooded for the eighth time in seven weeks. The cause was ascribed to a combination of above-average heavy autumn rainfall combined with the drainage pattern from the surrounding fields, which are all intensively cultivated and lie on higher ground than the village.

My own work involves a study on the River Blackwater at Farnborough, Hants, and I have recorded over 100 storm flows in that river during the period 1997-2002. Some 20 or so I would describe as serious. While this record is not long enough to reach conclusions about the effect of global warming on the climate in the UK it is glaringly obvious that the worst floods in that region happened during October and November. High flows did occur at other times of the winter and spring, but not nearly so frequently.

The effect of floods on our area is twofold. The River Otter floodplain goes under, taking the cricket pavilion with it on occasions, and the road to Woodbury and beyond gets closed from time to time. As in Crowlas, the amount of soil and small stones washed out of the filed gates is noticeable here too. Good ploughing practice, of course, can help this situation but that is by no means the sole factor involved. The timing and method of cultivation employed is an important factor, but we have to accept that these high rainfalls may be a sign of changing weather patterns. However, let us not forget that we have just enjoyed the best March weather I can remember.

Robert Sellin

ON THE BUSES

We've had recycling and the right to roam; now congestion, Ken Livingstone and local transport are in the news. It's a subject close to my heart because way back, the Keeper of the Gene Pool left out my driving gene. So, I'm a great fan of Stagecoach and Route 57 (Sidmouth to Exmouth and Exeter). I did foolishly once buy some Stagecoach shares but you can take loyalty a bit too far. Public transport is a great leveller – no first-class treatment on the 9.17 a.m. to Budleigh. The front seats are reserved for the elderly and as we are nearly all pensioners we would all be sitting on each others' laps! No prisoners taken when it comes to young mums – pushchair under one arm, bags and baby under the other and a step to negotiate. You can take your dog – for another 25p or so – which is something you can't do in most countries. Bargain of the month, courtesy of National Express is: 'Go Anywhere in England for £10' as long as you are over 50. There used to be a bus driver whose perfect make-up and manicure I admired but I haven't seen him (!) for a while.

We're a mixed bunch. There's the lady from Sidmouth who goes bird-watching in the estuary, the Tesco lady in her uniform and an old neighbour who fills me in on village gossip. Summertime is more interesting with rucksacked ramblers in serious walking boots.

Waiting at the Rolle Arms bus stop in the pouring rain is one time I wish I had that elusive driving licence. Ninety percent of the cars that pass me have only passenger, the driver, usually just popping into town and back. We now have a wonderful Community Transport Action Strategy from Devon Councy Council but I am not convinced that anyone is going to readily give up their quick, easy and warm car journey to wait for ten minutes at a draughty bus-stop by the side of a busy road, even if there is a babbling brook, swallows swooping over the power lines and Britain in Bloom flower baskets to contemplate. Just lately, as the bus bumps along the East Budleigh Straight, the Otter Valley lies shrouded in mist. Flooded fields glisten towards Otter Mouth like a Constable painting and Tom Pyne's dairy herd steam safely on high ground. Being higher than the hedgerows gives you a wonderful view of East Devon's scenic goodies, especially on the Sidmouth run. For a truly spectacular bus trip, the Dulverton to Minehead route travels through some of the prettiest rural scenery in Britain. You're not allowed to eat on the bus but, as compensation, the driver will conveniently make comfort stops miles from anywhere. It's a long journey after The back seats on our trip were occupied by the manager and some members of a famous football team, whose black striker declared himself 'a lean, mean sex machine'. The local Somerset young lady passengers of sturdy build seemed impressed.

I wonder when was your last trip on the bus? Why not support your local bus service and invest in a Go Anywhere ticket? You might get to like it.

For general enquiries about rural and community transport, contact Karen Hill, Rural Transport Partnership, D.C.C. Matford Offices, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW.

Angie Taylor

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THE BUS IS AVAILABLE!

Devon County Council financially supports many rural bus services, as bus companies do not operate them commercially.

Please make use of the services available to you in your area, even if only occasionally Maybe use it for shopping and to meet other local people, or take the children for a ride. Buses are part of your community.

All public transport timetable information is available from Traveline on 0870 608 Please make a note of this number is it is used countrywide now. 2608.



Saturday 4 January, 2003 Thirty-six turned up on a cold but sunny morning for a five-mile walk from Peak Hill carpark, winding down through the woods, passing Bickwell Farm and then following Higher Higher Greenway Lane before skirting Bulverton Hill, with glimpses of the Otter Valley. It was muddy underfoot

Bettina Wilson

Wednesday 15 January - Birdwatching Stroll

Seventeen keen birdwatchers assembled on a grey, showery morning to walk along the River Otter. We set off to Donkey Turn to look at any birds on the sea - a pair of Red-breasted Merganser, plenty of Herring Gulls and Black-headed Gulls. We identified the large black and white Gulls, the Greater Black-backed Gull by its pink legs and the Lesser Black-backed Gull by its yellow legs. On the rocks a Turnstone was doing just that to gain a meal. When we turned away from the sea to look towards White Bridge there were large numbers of Wigeon and Teal, the whistling calls of the Wigeon a delight on such a dismal morning. We had been out barely 30 minutes when the heavens opened and it was decided to stop the walk. One of the members suggested we reconvene and try to continue at 2 p.m. I spent the next two hours drying out my birdwatching equipment - telescope and two pairs of binoculars - anxious that the downpour may have damaged them. Tumble dryer, airing cupboard and radiators all served to dry out waterproofs and other clothing.

Dry, fed and watered, eight of us met again. At the mouth of the river we saw eight Ringed Plovers. A Kingfisher was spotted on Otter Head. I used the telescope to give everyone a close-up. There was, as usual, a good variety of birds including several Finches, Reed Bunting, Brent Geese and Snipe. The rain was determined to spoil our fun, however, and an hour and a quarter later we reluctantly gave up and headed for home.

David Jannaway

Saturday 1 February - Colaton Raleigh Common and Hawkerland

It seems mid-winter walks remain popular when, after a spell of excessively cold and windy weather, 30 people and three dogs assembled at the start at Stowford. It was pleasing to see several new OVA members at this walk.

The weather was ideal for walking with clear air, sunshine and good visibility - the views were worth the effort of the initial climb. After descending to Morish Cotley and making a short climb by road, we negotiated a woodland loop which several people had never walked. Thereafter, it was back to Kingston Farm and along the lane to Stowford.

Positives

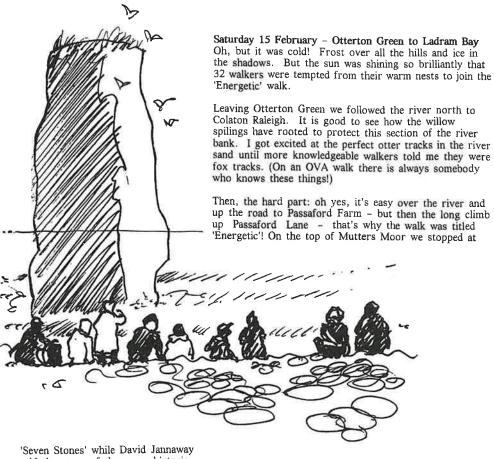
- There were no stiles.
- 2) We got close to some Red Devon calves.
- 3) David Jannaway found an old-style penny (1d) buried in the tarmac road surface!
- Signs of spring snowdrops near the end of the walk.
- 5) A useful ford to clean muddy boots.

Negatives

- 1) The walk is described as being from 'Stowford Plantation', which is not shown on the OS maps; the quoted grid reference is correct.
- 2) One path was very muddy.
- 3) Back Lane, Colaton Raleigh, had been closed by Devon County Council because of dangerous mud and therefore the walk was slightly shortened.

We returned to our cars 20 minutes earlier than expected.

Ken Watson



'Seven Stones' while David Jannaway told the story of these pre-historic stones being 'lifted' to Bicton in the days of Lady Rolle. The OVA is now actively working to get these pieces of our history replaced as they were before there was even such a thing as 'Devon'.

So on down Seven Stones Lane, following the beginnings of the Otterton Brook, then over to High Peak and down the cliff path in a comedy of slips and slides now that the sun had thawed out the frozen mud.

To a final coffee-break on the empty Ladram Bay beach - so beautiful in the sun, and so empty at this time of the year. Once up off the beach slope it was a welcome down-hill run to Otterton and the warmth of the King's Arms.

Jed Falby

Coffee Break Ladram Bay 15 Feb 03

Early Aviators

When Richard Duke purchased the Manor of Otterton in 1541, not only did he acquire a multitude of houses, farms, mills and over 12,500 acres of land, but also the 'whole watercourse of the River Otter and all fishing rights, and the wreck of the sea; and the Chattels of felons, fugitives, outlaws and of persons about to fly!

Local history note from Harry Lane

BATS, BUNTING AND BOTTLENOSES

Torbay bats have the luxury of both draught-excluders and dung beetles, the latter encouraged by special grazing on their doorstep. They are pretty special creatures, living on the edge of extinction, together with the Cirl Bunting and the Goldilocks Aster. They are just a few of the species nurtured by the recently-formed Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, based at Cockington, near Torquay. One of the last strongholds of the ultra-rare

Greater Horseshoe Bat is Torbay's Berry Head cave complex.

Charismatic Lisa Brunwin is an attractive ambassador for the Trust. During her March talk to the OVA at East Budleigh Village Hall she delighted her audience with a completely ad-lib tour of the diverse wildlife of Torbay. From the guillemots whose eggs are pear shaped to avoid rolling off cliff edges and the gentle dolphins killed en masse by fishing trawlers, to the giant vegetarian basking sharks and minute sea-horses, she made us acutely aware of man's disregard for the fate of his animal neighbours. Torbay's rare and exquisite Small Blue butterfly needs a good supply of kidney vetch for its survival, a plant the Trust ensures is available to this little insect. The Trust already keeps over 30 miles of footpaths open, manages 300 acres of woods and works with schools and community groups. It will shortly acquire even more land for its husbandry under the local Council.

Only 26 people attended Lisa's talk. I wonder what will attract people away from TV's

'The Bill' and 'At Home with the Braithwaites', unless it's free beer!

Help is needed: volunteer dolphin watchers are wanted to track the local dolphin population. We are also invited to support a new organic farm project at Ockumbe, where myriad orchids dot the meadows. Lisa invited us to visit the Craft Centre at Cockington Court for a great day out, with pottery-making and glass-blowing, followed by a pint at the Drum Inn. What could be a more enjoyable way of picking up tips on conservation to bring back to the Otter Valley?

For organic volunteering, gardening advice, courses and events, ring (01803)-607930. The Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust is at Cockington Court, Torquay TQ2 6XA and its

website is www.countryside-trust.org.uk Cockington craft shop: (01803)-690345.

Angie Taylor

Saturday 22 March - Town Walk Discovering Buildings on the Exmouth Blue Plaque Heritage Trail

On a lovely sunny spring morning 22 of us set off to discover more about the history of

Exmouth and the achievements of some of the people who have lived there.

Starting at Chester House, the home of Mary Ann Clarke, the notorious mistress of the Duke of York, our walk took us via Mona Island and three other blue plaques to the last remaining thatched cottage in Exmouth town centre. From Primrose Cottage we braved Saturday-morning traffic and safely reached the Beacon. Eleven plaques later we arrived at Gunfield Gardens where, to my consternation, I spotted a new blue plaque (Excliff) which had been put up since I planned the walk! Moving on, we took the high road and enjoyed good views and two more blue plaques before reaching the Barn Hotel, described as the finest example in Europe of the 'butterfly' plan for a dwelling. After a pleasant break in the sun, we strode on along the seafront with only two plaques to go, and completed our walk in exactly two hours.

It was good to see new faces on this walk and thanks to all those who came along, including those who added to the walk by sharing extra facts with us all. Hopefully, we all now know more about these buildings and the people who, like us, chose to settle in such a

beautiful part of the world.

Hazel Harland

OFFICIALS 2002/2003

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Vice-Chairman	Mr Robert Sellin	443283
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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 the 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 15 June, please.

Miss F Matty

****** Sunrise
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