

# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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VOLUME 26/2 APRIL 2005

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY: OVA WALKS AND TALKS  
APRIL TO EARLY JULY 2005**

**9 APRIL, SATURDAY, 10 a.m.** BOWD INN, REAR CAR PARK, G.R.107900. 2½ HOURS, MODERATE. OLD RAILWAY, EAST DEVON WAY, RIVERSIDE, TIPTON ST JOHN. *Walk leader:* JED FALBY, 01395-445455.

**20 APRIL, WEDNESDAY, 10 a.m.** CANAAN WAY CAR PARK (pay and display), OTTERY ST MARY, G.R.095955. MODERATE. RIVERSIDE WALK, KNIGHTSTONE, WIGGATON. *Walk leader:* DAVID NANGLE, 01404-811752.

**21 APRIL, THURSDAY, 7.30 p.m.** TALK ON 'MARINE LIFE' BY KELVIN BOOT (National Marine Aquarium). PETER HALL.

**30 APRIL, SATURDAY, 10 a.m.** PUBLIC HALL, BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, G.R.061821. 6 MILES, MODERATE. KERSBROOK, EAST BUDLEIGH, RIVERSIDE, COASTAL, GREEN LANES, FINE VIEWS. *Walk leader:* EDWARD DIX, 01395-442326.

**12 MAY, THURSDAY, 7.30 p.m.** PETER HALL, BUDLEIGH SALTERTON. OVA AGM AND ILLUSTRATED TALK ON 'THE FAEROE ISLANDS' BY HAYLOR LASS.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The recruitment campaign has been a great success. The 150 new members who joined after March 2004 have been invited to a New Members' Party at Bicton College where the Committee and I look forward to welcoming them to the OVA.

All members, whether new or maturing nicely, are warmly invited to the AGM on Thursday 12 May at 7.30 p.m. in the Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton. Immediately after the meeting there will be light refreshments, and an illustrated talk on 'The Faeroe Islands' by Haylor Lass. Don't miss it!

At the AGM, the officers and other members of the Executive Committee which runs the OVA will be elected for 2005/06. If you would like to play a more active role in the OVA you should seriously consider standing for election. The election procedure is summarised below the Agenda on page 3 of this Newsletter. Nominations should reach the Hon. Secretary at least 14 days before the AGM. The Hon. Secretary or I would be happy to talk to anyone thinking of standing.

Meanwhile the OVA goes from strength to strength. Litter has been picked, trees have been planted. The visit to Sand, and our walks and talks programmes have been extremely well supported. It was a full house at Newton Poppleford Church Hall recently for Dr Harris's talk on 'The Salt Marshes of the Otter Estuary'. Although Newton Poppleford's hospitality is unequalled, we have had to book larger halls for next year's talks.

Our Built Environment Sub-Committee continues to review all new planning applications in the five OVA parishes - a considerable task. Where necessary, they write to the planning authority commenting on applications, and making constructive suggestions to encourage higher standards of planning and development. Brian Brown, who has chaired this Sub-Committee for the last three years, will not be seeking re-election at the AGM. On behalf of all members of the OVA, I would like to thank him for his outstanding contribution.

**Brian Turnbull**

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### **SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER, 2005/06**

Members are reminded that their subscription to the Otter Valley Association is due on **1 April 2005**; this is still £3 for single membership and £5 for a family.

Payment can be made by standing order and a form for this can be obtained from the Honorary Treasurer at:  
'Luttrell House', Harpford, Sidmouth EX10 0NJ.

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# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Notice of Annual General Meeting  
Thursday 12 May 2005 at 7.30 p.m.  
in the Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton

## AGENDA

- 1) Apologies for absence
- 2) Minutes of AGM held on 13 May 2004  
(circulated in July 2004 Newsletter)
- 3) Matters arising
- 4) Chairman's Report
- 5) Hon. Treasurer's Report
- 6) Adoption of Report and Accounts
- 7) Election of Officers
- 8) Election of Executive Committee
- 9) Appointment of Independent Examiner
- 10) Any other business
- 11) Date of next meeting

Refreshments, followed by an illustrated talk  
on 'The Faeroe Islands' by Haylor Lass

**Election procedures** - Officers and other members of the Executive Committee are elected annually at the AGM. Nominations shall be made in writing to the Honorary Secretary (Woodstock House, Shepherd's Lane, Colaton Raleigh EX10 0LP) at least 14 days before the AGM. They must be supported by a seconder, and have the written consent of the nominee.

**Officers** - The Officers of the Association are the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. Officers serving in an office for three consecutive years shall not be eligible for re-election to that office until the AGM in the following year.

**Executive Committee** - The Executive Committee shall consist of the Officers and not less than six and not more than twelve members.

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## EXTRA DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Two more interesting OVA events have been arranged for June and September, in addition to the normal programme of walks and talks. They are:

1) **A Jurassic Cruise, Saturday 4 June**, in conjunction with the Sid Vale and Axe Vale Societies. Departure from Exmouth Docks (Stuart Line) at approx. 9.30 a.m., returning around 5 p.m., with a lunch stop in either Seaton or Lyme Regis (weather permitting). Each society is providing its own speaker on board for the relevant stretch of coast, so let's hope we go the right way this time. The OVA and the Fairlynch Museum have an allocation of tickets, at £12 each. But availability is limited so book quickly with Rowan Turnbull at Hayes, Church Road, Colaton Raleigh, Sidmouth EX10 0LH. Please make your cheque out to the OVA and include an s.a.e; tickets will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. (Warm and water-proof clothing is suggested!)

2) **An all-day visit on Thursday 15 September to the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth and tour of docks.** The cost for the day, including coach, entry fee and cruise is £15. We leave Budleigh Salterton Public Hall at 9.30 a.m.

As a follow-up to our April OVA talk on 'Marine Life' by Kelvin Boot of the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth, we have organised a visit to the Aquarium by coach. It is Europe's deepest and the UK's biggest and

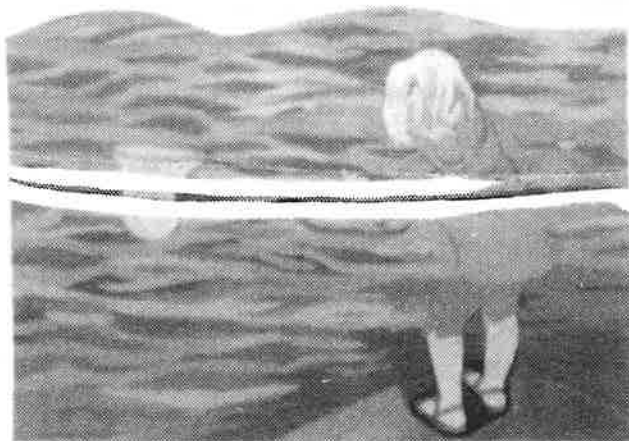
is set up solely for the purposes of education, conservation and research. We will have plenty of time to immerse ourselves in the fascinating life of the ocean, river and shore. Lunch can be taken at the Aquarium, on the Barbican or bring a picnic. We finish with a short cruise on the Tamar.

Tickets, with the itinerary, can be obtained from Mrs N. Daniel, Highbury, 7 Marine Parade, Budleigh Salterton EX9 6NS, tel. 01395-445960. Please make cheques payable to the Otter Valley Association and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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### **An Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Megs Rimmer**

OVA member, Megs Rimmer, who has supplied the cover illustration for both this and the previous Newsletter, is exhibiting 22 of her oil paintings in



The Georgian House, Silver Street, Ottery St Mary, from 1 to 30 April. The exhibition is open 10 to 5.30 p.m. Monday to Friday, 10 to 2 on Saturdays and is closed on Sundays.



## FOOTPATHS

Many people are concerned about the plans announced by Clinton Devon to allow off-road vehicles to use an area of the Jurassic Coast Path north-east of the Otter estuary. In fact, I do not recall any subject which has caused so many people to approach me to complain.

One reason given by Clinton Devon is to allow them, in spite of falling income, to spend money on conservation in other parts of the estate. It is difficult to imagine what could be done with the money sufficient to compensate for the damage which off-road vehicles would do to the cliff area. This should be a quiet stretch of path where both walkers and birds are left in peace.

I remember when cultivation used to be taken right up to the edge of the cliffs. When no crop was growing during the winter, streams of mud and sand poured over the edge of the cliffs, forming gullies and eroding both the fields and the cliffs. The strip of grass and wild flowers now left between the pig farm and the path prevents this. The soil is so sandy that quite a small use by vehicles will break up the surface and form ruts which will then be widened by rainwater to form gullies, bringing the erosion back.

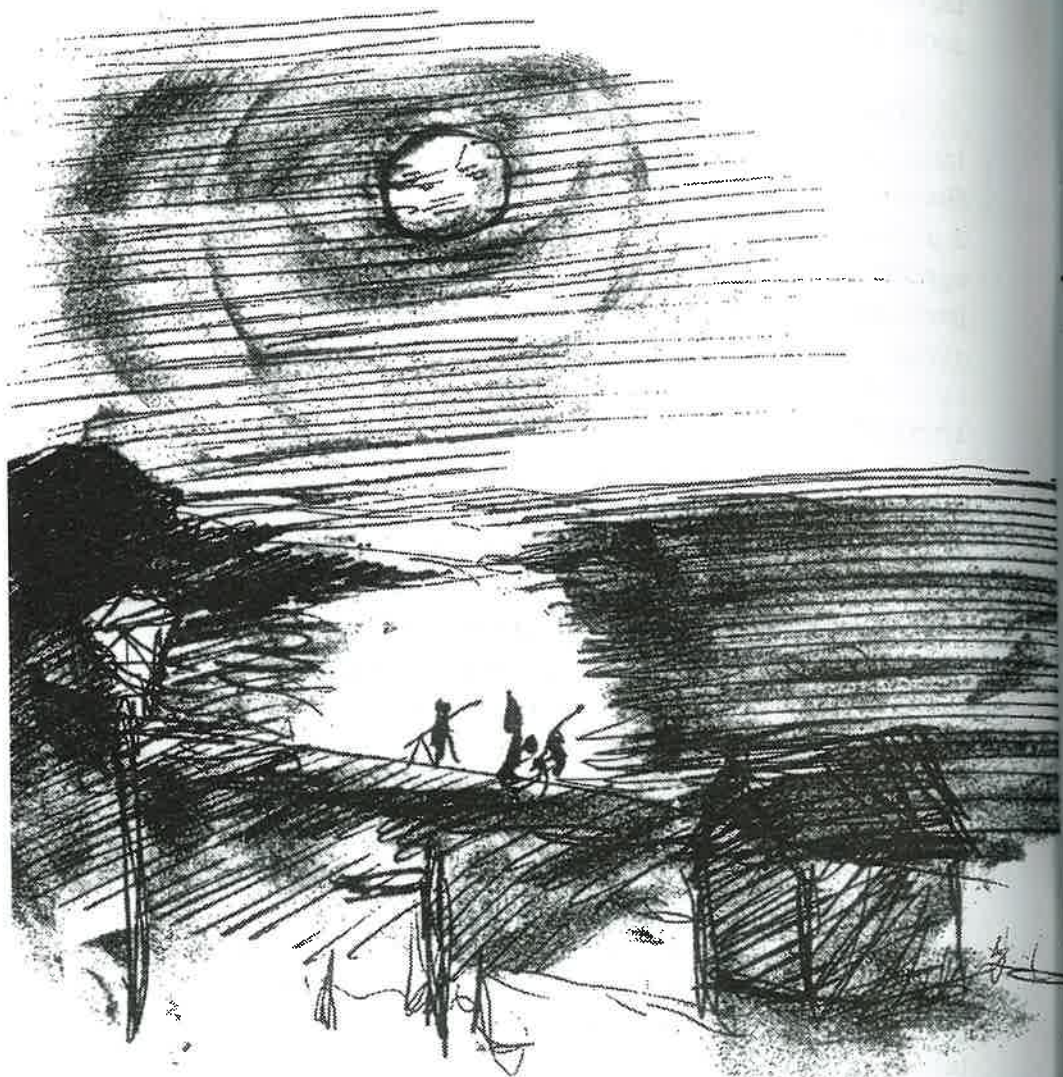
This proposal by Clinton Devon seems completely out of character with the responsible attitude they take to improper use of the Commons by vehicles.

The plans seem very tentative. Maybe Clinton Devon are merely thinking aloud. I hope the idea is soon dropped completely.

There is wonderful news from **Newton Poppelford**. A lane near Venn Ottery has for years been so badly flooded as to be unusable by walkers, much to the annoyance of many of the residents. The OVA had an agreement with the owner of a field adjacent to the flooding that walkers could walk through the field to avoid the flood. This made it possible to include the lane in our booklet *Twelve Walks in the Otter Valley*. Then the field changed hands. The new owner kept pigs. As is well known, walkers and pigs don't mix; the pigs might catch diseases from the walkers. So just as the flooding got even worse the field was closed to walkers, making that walk impossible. This was especially embarrassing because we could not warn people who had bought the book. We repeatedly tried to persuade the County to do something to prevent the flooding, but they always told us they didn't have enough money.

Now the lane has been scraped and a new ditch dug, passing through a new gap in a Devon bank. The water has gone. There is still some mud though this may be where the scraping has still to be completed. I only hope the improvement is not simply because the water table is low at the moment.

**Alan Jones**



*Full moon over the sea,  
late March 2005*

*JF*

## HISTORY SECTION

Robert Lipscomb, the Hon. Mark Rolle's Steward from 1865 to 1892, worked as a young man under Sir Walter Trevelyan's Steward in Northumberland.

Hazel Harland, on visiting the Robinson Library at Newcastle University, discovered two letters that Lipscomb wrote to his old chief. The letter of 3 December 1868 is particularly interesting, as the following extract shows.

'Thank goodness our Elections are over. I have taken the somewhat unusual (for a Steward) position of declining to interest myself in them in any way. In the first place I cannot help being a Liberal. Secondly I believe it to be best for the interests of a Landowner that his Steward should be neutral in politics, especially as my chief dealings for the improvement of the property are with other builders who are for the most part Liberals and Dissenters. Thirdly because I have never yet asked a man to vote in one way or another and I never intend to do so if I can help it. I hope to live to see the day when every man can honestly record his vote without doing himself an injury. As things are, all or nearly all the Rolle tenants vote for the Conservatives, and they are wise to do so - but, as Mr Good of the Dolphin said to me the other day, "they are mostly yellow in my kitchen, but they were all blue when they got to Axminster". (sic) The fact is that if no canvassing or other pressure was put upon Farmers, not two in three would take the trouble to vote.

As a matter of good taste of course I did not vote but I cannot help feeling a little sore that I could not give my vote to the disestablishment of the Irish Church for I have always longed to see her on the footing of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.

I have the good fortune to serve a man who in spite of his strong feelings on the questions of the day and his great (temporary) disappointment that I would not work for the Conservatives, likes me as well as ever now the Election is over.

I am told that the bribery at Bridgewater was shameful.'

Not only does the letter confirm what we already know of Lipscomb's political views, but it also throws an interesting light on the influences to which voters were subjected in those days.

Perhaps it also says something of the character of the staunchly Conservative Mark Rolle that he was happy to employ a Steward whose political views were the opposite of his own.

**Alan Ford**

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# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

## Himalayan Balsam

Himalayan Balsam, *Impatiens glandulifera*, is a tall, annual plant with pretty pink flowers and is abundant along the banks of the River Otter. It is in the same genus as the colourful betting Impatiens or Busy Lizzie. It was introduced from Western Himalaya by Victorian gardeners and is now widespread throughout much of Britain, particularly along river banks. The flowers appear from June to October and seed pods in September/October. Each plant may have a dozen or more pods and each pod up to a dozen seeds. The pods react to the slightest disturbance and will split open explosively, scattering seeds far and wide. The seeds are buoyant and can thus be carried far downstream with the prevailing current. In this way, the plant has spread all over Britain, taking over any damp spot it may find.

Because of its fast rate of growth and ability to colonise new habitats at an alarming speed, Himalayan Balsam has been described as 'a bit like a Busy Lizzie on steroids'. Its tall growth shades out many of our native wild flowers and when it dies back in winter it leaves behind a mass of dead stems which shade out the spring flowers as well. In certain places on the River Otter the growth of balsam has become so dense that little else can be seen. Anglers complain that it interferes with their ability to cast a fishing line.

Walkers complain that 'walks are quite spoilt by the sight and smell of this invasive plant'.

What then can be done to control or eliminate this unwanted plant from the river? There are three basic methods of control. The first, and probably the most effective, is by the grazing of cattle and sheep. Cattle really enjoy eating this plant and where this method has been tried balsam has all but been eliminated. Unfortunately, not everywhere is suitable for grazing and in such areas the plant needs to be cut back or, better still, uprooted. This is a very labour-intensive process and it is not always very effective. Finally, herbicides such as glyphosate or 2,4-D amine have sometimes been used to control balsam but they are not generally acceptable for use in or near waterways.

Unfortunately there is no easy solution to the problem. Ideally, control measures should start at the upstream end of the river and work downstream to prevent the recolonisation of sections that have been treated. But there are various upstream tributaries of the river which are infested and a programme aimed at control on the whole of the watershed would require an immense amount of labour and participation of many of the riparian owners.

We intend to carry out a small pilot programme to investigate the effectiveness of hand-removal of clumps of Himalayan balsam from the river and its banks. The plant is shallow rooted and therefore relatively easy to uproot by hand. Should this prove to be a cost-effective method of control, it might be possible to exercise some degree of control over the spread of this invasive species.

**Norman Crossland**

## OTTER VALLEY TREES

We don't take trees for granted but, just like us they do not live for ever. In the first few years of this millennium OVA members have played a vital role in planting and sustaining trees in the Otter Valley.

Beginning back in 1998, it took member Sheila Ashby two years of negotiations with official bodies to bring her idea of a 'Millennium Avenue' to fruition. Finally, in the year 2000, a group of 13 local organisations planted, and agreed to look after, the 30 trees that EDDC donated.

In the five years since, not all have been 'looked after' as well as they might, so the OVA team (and others) have often done the necessary work for the whole line of trees. I think we all learnt a lesson there from the replanting of the pines on Otterhead. There, the 100-plus trees enthusiastically planted by OVA volunteers were hit by the lack of 'looking after' the following spring, when the surge of bracken, ferns and brambles choked them and killed most of them.

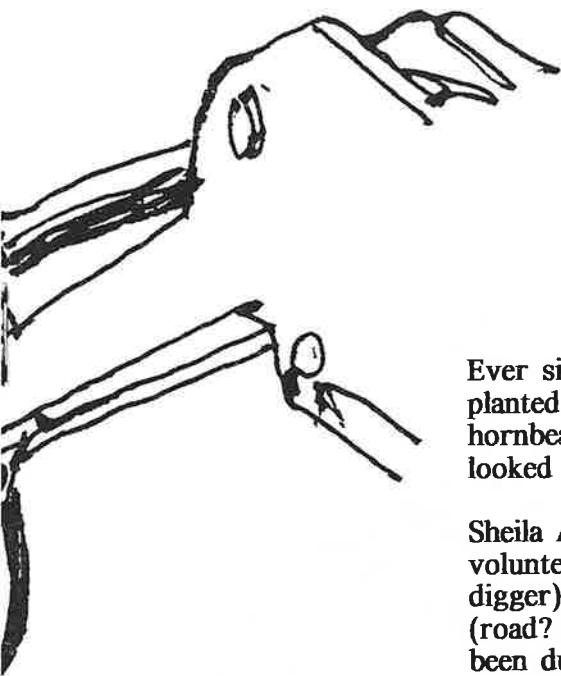
This sad fate was avoided on East Budleigh Road where the five-year-old hornbeams now raise their heads well above the gorse. The only exception was the very first tree, by the Kersbrook Bridge, which had been looking sickly for a long time. So in January 2005 Sheila Ashby recalled her OVA team to plant a new hornbeam. The results are shown overleaf.

Then in March, the Natural Environment Subcommittee took up its tree interests with further plantings, which are described on page 17.

**Jed Falby**

WHY THAT'S  
TARMAC!





Ever since the 'Millennium Avenue' was planted in the year 2000, the very first hornbeam (at the southern end) has looked very sickly.

Sheila Ashby and an OVA crew of six volunteers (with David Pratt and digger) discovered a tarmac layer (road? rail?) at root level. Now it has been dug out, we have high hopes for the new hornbeam

*Jed Falby*



SHEILA ASHBY  
DISCOVERING SOME  
HARD FACTS  
28 JAN 2005



ROBERT SELWIN  
SECURING OUR  
REPLACEMENT  
HORNBEAM  
28 JAN 2005

## **Oak Tree Planting Around Budleigh Salterton**

A team of six Natural Environment Sub-Committee volunteers recently spent a very worthwhile morning planting young English oak trees around three sites in Budleigh Salterton. With the aid of a mechanical digger to push through tough terrain, replacements for diseased elms were planted in existing tree lines along the Tidwell Valley bordering town, and by the Lime Kilns in Granary Lane. These two habitats support a wide range of wildlife, and are both places of exceptional beauty which need healthy trees to help them survive.

The plantings were done in association with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, with Assistant AONB Officer Kimmo Evans organising the tree supply, and EDDC's Senior Estates Surveyor Robert Speers, and Parks Development Officer Mark Pollard helping the OVA to gain the landowners' and tenants' permission to plant. The planting session was the product of so much organisation and cooperation that it felt a bit like a military operation! Getting everything (trees, posts and ties, compost and fertiliser, water, key to access gates) and everyone working together showed how much commitment all our local environment protection agencies have to the Otter Valley.

The plantings are part of the OVA's ongoing tree-planting project, which we hope will continue afresh next season in vulnerable sites around our valley.

**Mo Bowman**



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Looking back over the three years of my chairmanship of the Built Environment Sub-Committee I became aware of a stark contrast in emphasis between the planning applications considered by the previous committee under Alan Ford's chairmanship, and those viewed by my committee. That earlier period produced a flood of applications based upon the principle of demolishing an existing dwelling in order to replace it with a high-density development of apartments. Vigorous local campaigns were fought to resist this form of development and refusals were obtained for the demolition of Links Pinewood at the top of Victoria Place and for the demolition of 11 Coastguard Road. The battle was lost in respect of Elvestone on Fore Street Hill, Cintra (Palm Court) on Coastguard Road, The Chance (Chandlers Court) also on Coastguard Road and Nattore Lodge (Belgrave Court) on West Hill. The impact of these developments, in particular the impoverishment of the local landscape, is now clearly visible.

In the last three years the only scheme of a similar nature was for the demolition of Wenlock at 5 Westfield Road, where local campaigning again led to refusal of planning approval. It would be interesting to speculate whether this welcome change is a result of local pressure against this form of development, a lack of demand for such properties as indicated by the poor sales at both Belgrave Court and Elvestone, or a more

rigorous application by the planners of the requirements of the East Devon Local Plan. Whatever the reasons, the emphasis in more recent applications has been towards small-scale developments of individual dwellings in low-density areas. Whilst this will no doubt be of concern to near neighbours it is surely the better way of providing for the natural increase in the population of the area which will become unavoidable.

Over the last three years the committee has constantly been concerned about the depressing standard of design apparent in nearly all applications, both large and small. This, combined with the motivation to build to the lowest possible cost, and a lack of attention to detail and proper respect for materials, is resulting in a meanness of spirit totally out of keeping with the local character. Small, carefully crafted details are extremely important to the quality of a building, as vividly expressed in the local Mark Rolle developments which we now admire so much. What are we now producing that will be appreciated in the same way by future generations?

The new national planning policy, recently unveiled, demands that *design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted*. Maybe this policy will provide the planning authority with the necessary support to reject the low standards of design which we have somehow come to accept as normal.

**Brian Brown**

## OVA VISIT TO SAND

One of Devon's most attractive and historic homes welcomed 50 members of the OVA on Tuesday 15 March. Most were familiar with its discreet entrance on the Sidmouth-Honiton road, a few had visited its beautiful sequestered gardens, but none had been inside the house, which is open only for a few days each year, unless by special arrangement. We were grateful to Rowan Turnbull for making our visit possible.

Gathered in the courtyard before the elegant, mostly late-sixteenth century façade, the present owners, Stella Huyshe-Shires and her husband Stephen Shires, gave us the background to the house and the Huyshe family which has occupied it for five centuries. After documentary evidence from the twelfth century, the story leapt to the sixteenth, when Rowland Huyshe built the present Tudor mansion between 1594 and 1600. Another Rowland, in 1908, showed equal discernment in his rebuilding of the north wing, destroyed by fire in the nineteenth century, by using similar local materials, Chert and Beer stone. For the centuries where written records have disappeared, one must rely on architectural evidence which we were duly shown on our ensuing tour.

We moved first to the garden front, where the different periods of construction were almost seamless, although some features intrigued sharp-eyed members, and then to the rear of the house where we were shown what must be the most elegant electricity generating building in Devon, now a most useful garden house.

Round the corner we came to the thatched fifteenth-century building which might have been the medieval hall predating Rowland's Tudor mansion.

Inside, the roof timbers told their story: jointed cruck trusses, moulded purlins and curved upper and lower windbraces revealed where the various rooms were situated. Delicate mouldings and ornamentation showed which portions were probably open to view. One mystery was the site of the fireplace, but this, like the chapel, was probably destroyed in the nineteenth-century fire and so may not be solved.

From the medieval hall, we returned to the front door of the main house and via the panelled screens passage entered the Tudor hall. The screens themselves contain much Tudor work and the fireplace and sideboard aroused equal admiration. Our guide showed us some of the secrets of the latter - where high-quality seventeenth-century carved Jacobean figures had been rightly rescued and reused for the later nineteenth-century reconstruction. Stained glass and coats of arms were also in evidence. From the hall we climbed to the first floor where a large saloon displayed more fine carving, some of it recycled from a four-poster bed! Downstairs we visited the charming lounge with its views over the gardens towards the hills opposite, with no other house in sight. Here we saw the original bread oven beside the large kitchen fireplace.

Throughout the visit our group of 25 was led by Stephen Shires, while his wife, Stella Huyshe-Shires,

guided the first OVA group round. Stephen fielded our questions on architecture, botany and heraldry with equal ease, and his love and enthusiasm for the history of Sand enriched our experience.

Sand is a house which grows on one. It hides many intriguing mysteries. In particular, the pretty thatched summerhouse with its Tuscan columns and arms of Rowland and Anne Huyshe displays a short inscription in Greek and Latin: *Euthumias fons bene convenire cum deo* (translation: the spring of tranquillity is harmony with God). This is a sort of meditation on a passage from Seneca, in turn based on Democritus, in which the philosopher muses on the search for tranquillity. There can be few places more conducive to this than Sand.

**Francis Davey**

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The garden at Sand is open every Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 1 April to 30 September, from 2 to 6 p.m. The house is open on bank holiday Sundays and Mondays only. Admission: £5, adult (house & garden); £1 child or student; £3 (garden only - under 16s free). Light teas are available.

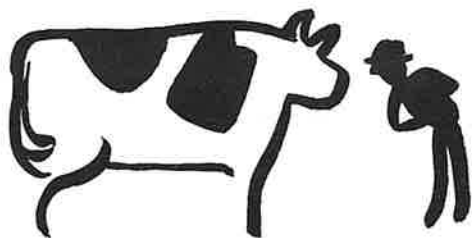
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### OTTER NATURE RESERVE LITTER PICK

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the Litter Pick on Saturday 5 March. We had a good response and were helped by two members of the Coast and Countryside Office who arranged the collection of rubbish found. We did manage to obtain parking concessions from EDDC, for which we are grateful.

**Dorothy Friend**  
**Voluntary Warden**



# TALKS AND WALKS

## A Devon Farmer Looks Back

Ottertton Village Hall was full of OVA members on 18 January to hear Cyril Shere's delightful reminiscences of his life on a Bradninch farm. The town of Bradninch is an outpost of the Duchy of Cornwall and the lord's seat was at Rougemont Castle in Exeter. In the past, the mayor, albeit an illiterate thatcher, appeared to take precedence over the mayor of Exeter - but all that has changed now.

We heard tales of the giant faggots that were burned on the great hearth in the farmhouse and how the water for baths had to be carried in pails, heated over the fire and carried upstairs. We heard of the changes on the farm, from having a dairy herd to the main production of barley and just one house cow. We saw the old farm wagon, now in Tiverton Museum, and then the arrival of a succession of tractors and a combine harvester.

The landlord came to call and there were photographs of the Prince of Wales at shoots on the farm. And the Sheres, as Duchy tenants, went to call too, and we saw pictures of their car parked outside Windsor Castle, apparently guarded by a troop of guardsmen!

Altogether a fascinating evening with our Devon farmer.

**Margaret Sellin**

## Natural History of the Salt Marshes of the Otter Estuary

A packed Newton Poppleford Church Hall was treated to a fascinating talk by Dr Tegwyn Harris on Tuesday, 15 February.

Any river will deposit mud when it meets salt water. With impressive expertise and good humour, Dr Harris explained how the particular characteristics of the mouth of the Otter have created the salt marshes. The unusual pebble bank restricts tidal flow, giving the mud a chance to consolidate. Bound together initially by felt-like seaweed, the mud is further secured by the complex root structures of fast-growing corn grass and other salt-resistant plants. This forms islands of salt marsh, separated by wide mud channels. A series of historic maps showed how these islands have expanded since 1888. Today the mud channels are no longer wide, and the salt marshes cover most of the estuary.

It soon became apparent that, for a real enthusiast, the only way to explore the salt marshes is on hands and knees, preferably with a magnifying glass! Fortunately for us, the beauty and variety of the plants which flourish there were clear from Dr Harris's photographs. He explained that these plants, such as sea aster, thrift and scurvy grass, were specially adapted to the salty environment. He outlined some of the mechanisms by which they conserved essential fresh water. He then went on to show how the plant life changed progressively as the water became first brackish, then fresh towards White Bridge, allowing sedges and rushes to flourish.

Not many animals can survive twice daily salt-water immersion. However, we were shown slides of some that can, including worms, crustaceans and bivalves. Most of them were very small and very ugly, but some were phenomenally successful. Up to a million microscopic snails may live on one square metre of mud. Finally, he reminded us that the bird life for which Ottermouth is famous is dependent on the humble flora and fauna of the salt marshes for habitat and food.

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### **Canterbury Green and Hawkerland Walk, 5 January**

With Christmas excesses to work off, and New Year resolutions still fresh, 18 walkers gathered at Crook Plantation near Stowford. There had been some frost overnight, and a weather front was advancing from the west, but the weather was kind as we set out.

Almost immediately, a little stream crossed the track. This was part of the leat built to take water from Colaton Raleigh Common to the Lake at Bickton House. The track led north-west onto the Common, climbing past the grenade range and crossing the East Devon Way. Although the views were fine, nobody wanted to linger in the bracing wind. The trees of Hawkerland Brakes offered some shelter from the breeze as we headed down Kingsell Lane to Canterbury Green.

By a happy coincidence, the B3180 had been closed to traffic while maintenance was carried out. We strolled expansively down the middle of this normally busy road for a few hundred yards before plunging back

into the woods. Canterbury Green Plantation is part evergreen and part broad-leaved trees. Along the path there are delightful clearings allowing occasional glimpses to the horizon. Marion Nalder spotted some fine Blushing Bracket fungi growing on a fallen willow. Out on the open Common, she also found Buttercup mushrooms on the site of an old bonfire, and encouraged us to feel their buttery texture.

Just below Joney's Cross, we cruised downhill towards Stoneyford drinking in the panorama along the Otter Valley to the sea. From Hawkerland Cross, the wooded path (also popular with badgers) followed the contour line, just above the limit of cultivation. At mid-day, we paused at a junction of paths to observe three minutes silence, broken only by the sighing of the wind, in memory of the victims of the Asian tsunami.

Then, after one last short climb, we rejoined our outward track and turned downhill back to the starting point. The first specks of rain fell as we drove away. How satisfactory!

**Brian Turnbull**

### **Mutters Moor and Bulverton Hill, Sat. 19 February**

I think it was the Duke of York who marched his 10,000 men to the top of the hill and marched them down again. On a very pleasant Saturday morning, from Peak Hill car-park we 23 marched down the hill and up again, but were only 22 when we returned. It was a walk in the woods, with views towards Newton Poppleford on our left as we descended, then round part of Bulverton Hill, across the hazards of Sidmouth Golf Course (ably monitored by our back-marker, Ken

Watson) and then up again. I have no knowledge of trees, I'm ashamed to say, but I was told there were lots of beeches; anyway, they were lovely!

And no, I didn't lose one - he left us at the half-way point.

This is quite a short walk, 1½ hours only; next year it might be a good idea to have it as our start-the-year walk, early in January, so we can all get into walking mode.

**Patricia Doran**

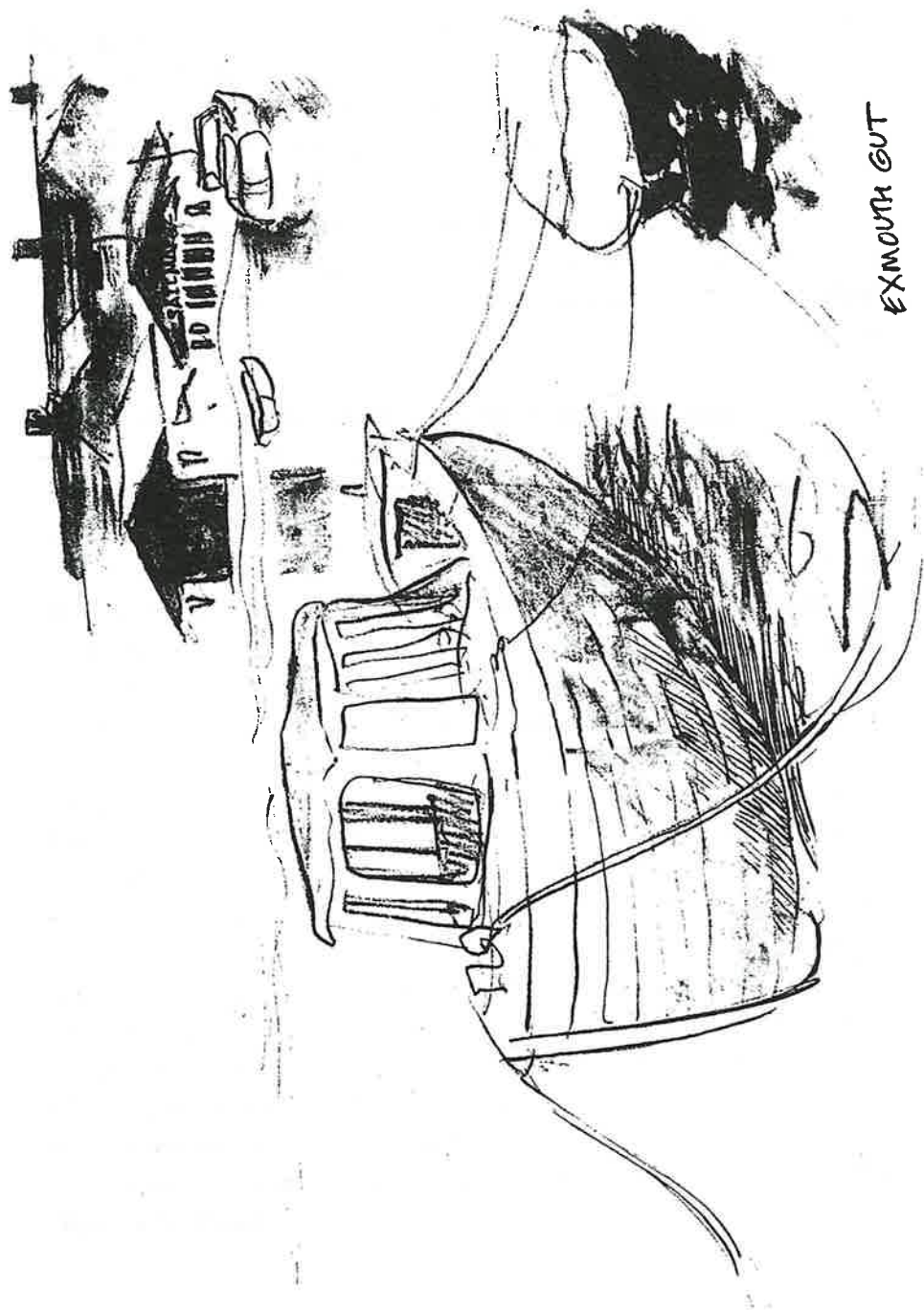
### **Exmouth: port and resort, Saturday 12 March**

Despite the sunny weather forecast, 31 adults and one child encountered a squally sleet shower as we walked the length of Exmouth's sea wall at the start of the walk. Luckily, the sun came out by the time we reached the docks where we took in the new developments as well as what remains of the history of the port of Exmouth in its heyday. Hopefully, expansion of the former will not eradicate what remains of the latter.

After an unscheduled detour to 'The Gut' (see next page), we walked into town, spotting blue plaques commemorating the town's famous former residents and their achievements. Our walk continued up The Beacon, the 'in place' to live in the nineteenth century, as the eight blue plaques testify.

On the homeward stretch we took the high road, enjoying the sea views, and more blue plaques, before dropping back to the coast. Thanks are due to David Jannaway for sharing his local knowledge with the group. It was good to welcome some new members on what I hope will be the first of many OVA walks.

**Hazel Harland**



EXMOUTH CUT

14 MAY, SATURDAY, 10 a.m. JONEY'S CROSS, G.R.057898. 14 MILES, ALL DAY. ENERGETIC. BEATING THE BOUNDS: THE CIVIL PARISH OF NEWTON POPPLEFORD AND HARPFORD. ONE LONG HILL, FINE VIEWS. LUNCH (OR PICNIC) AT THE BOWD INN, OR JOIN FOR HALF A DAY, LEAVING BOWD INN AT 1.45 p.m. PLEASE ARRANGE YOUR OWN TRANSPORT. *Walk leader:* HAYLOR LASS, 01395-568786.

25 MAY, WEDNESDAY, 10 a.m. WESTON CAR PARK, G.R.166889. 5 MILES, 2½ HOURS, MODERATE. OUT TO COAST, EAST VIA COASTAL PATH. STUNNING VIEWS. RETURN ALONG COUNTRY LANES; MUDDY PATCHES. *Walk leader:* PETER HILLS, 01395-568576.

11 JUNE, SATURDAY, 10 a.m. SQUABMOOR RESERVOIR, G.R.038843. 5 MILES, 2½ HOURS, MODERATE. COMMONS, WOODLANDS, FAR-REACHING VIEWS. COULD BE MUDDY, STONY UNDERFOOT. *Walk leader:* BRIAN LEVERIDGE, 01395-443358.

22 JUNE, WEDNESDAY, 10 a.m. OTTERTON GREEN, G.R.080852. 2½ HOURS, EASY. RIVERSIDE WALK, LOOKING AT THE WEIRS, FISH PASS AND WILDLIFE. UP RIVER AS FAR AS DOTTON. *Walk leader:* ROBERT SELLIN, 01395-443283.

2 JULY, SATURDAY, 10 a.m. WHITE BRIDGE, G.R.076830. 2½ HOURS, EASY. ARTISTS' WALK, STOPS FOR SKETCHING, COFFEE. RIVER FOOTPATH. END AT PARK LANE, OTTERTON. *Walk leader:* JED FALBY, 01395-445455.

# **OVA COMMITTEE AND OFFICE-HOLDERS, 2004/5** **(01395)**

<b>Chairman:</b>	Brian Turnbull	567339
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	Robert Sellin	443283
<b>Hon. Secretary:</b>	Christopher Briscoe	568111
<b>Hon. Treasurer:</b>	Brian Ludlow	568501

## **Executive Committee**

### ***Representing the Parish of:***

Budleigh Salterton	Clive Bowman	446892
	Nick Speare	443944
East Budleigh	Norman Crossland	445129
Colaton Raleigh	Alan Jones	568339
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786
Ottertton	Philip Greenhow	567996

## **Sub-Committee Chairmen**

Built Environment	Brian Brown	446013
Footpaths	Alan Jones	568339
Natural Environment	Robert Sellin	443283

## **History Section**

## **Membership Secretary**

## **Social Secretary**

## **Talks Secretary**

## **Publicity Secretary**

## **Newsletter Editor**

Topsham, Exeter EX3 0AP. (01392)-873251

## **Newsletter Distributor**

Gill Speare 443944

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. It is also affiliated to the CPRE. It cares for the environment and queries should be put to your Parish Rep.

With thanks to Jed Falby for the illustrations on pages 14-16 and 28. Contributions for the next issue should be received by 10 June.

Miss F Matty  
Sunrise  
Shepherds Lane  
Colaton Raleigh  
Sidmouth  
EX10 0LP