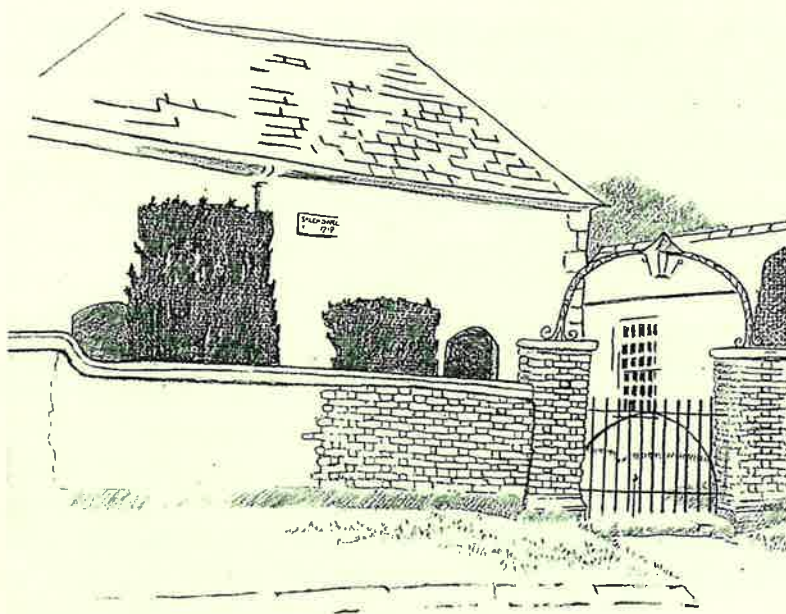


OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

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Salem Chapel, East Budleigh

Megs Rimmer

VOLUME 28/3

JULY 2007

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OVA WALKS (ONLY) – JULY TO DECEMBER 2007
(continued on inside back cover)

July 4 Wed - 10am - MODERATE

Joney's Cross CP, SY 057898. 4½ miles - 2½ h. Looking for insects, esp. damselflies and dragonflies, on the commons' ponds. Exposed, bring sun protection if necessary. *Walk leader:* Robert Sellin, 01395 443283.

July 18 Wed - 10am - EASY. Artists' walk / Pub Lunch

Bicton Home Farm, SY 075857. 4 miles - 2½ h. Old roads, green lanes, riverside. Short stops for sketching/demos. Optional social lunch at the King's Arms, Otterton. *Walk leader:* Jed Falby, 01395 445455.

July 28 Sat - 10am - ENERGETIC. Day walk, bring lunch

Budleigh Salt. free CP, SY 061821. 9½ miles - 6 h. Coast path to Exmouth, return via old railway line. *Walk leader:* Shane Badham, 01395 567531.

August 11 Sat - 10am - MODERATE

East Budleigh CP, SY 065849. 5½ miles - 2 ½ h. Pleasant country walk, good views; woods and commons.

Walk leader: Ken Watson, 01395 445859

August 22 Wed - 10am - ENERGETIC

Salcombe Hill CP, SY 139882. 5 miles - 2½ h. Circular walk with some steep steps; coast path to Weston with good views.

Walk leader: Brian Leveridge, 01395 443358.

September 1 Sat - 10am - MODERATE

Wheathill Plantation CP, SY 041847. 5 miles - 2½ h. Woodlands, some open commons, nature reserve. *Walk leader:* John Daly, 01395 279571.

September 8 Sat - 9am - EASY / Late (!) breakfast on beach

Budleigh Salterton free CP, SY 061821. 4 miles - 2h. West Down, golf links, coast path. Optional beach café "All Day Breakfast" on beach.

Walk leader: Stuart Lovett, 01395 443141

September 19 Wed – 2.30pm – MODERATE

Hawkerland Cross, SY 060887. 5 miles - 2½ h. Hawkerland Brakes, Canterbury Green, Stoneyford. *Walk leader:* Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339



A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN

The AGM on 10th May went very well and we said farewell and many thanks to Brian Turnbull for steering the OVA ship for the past three years as chairman. He will be some act to follow. We also thanked Alan Jones who stood down as Footpaths Committee chairman after many years; in his place we appointed Colin Campbell whom we welcomed. Diane Gee has taken over as Walks Organiser from Patricia Doran to whom we also owe many thanks for arranging the walks programme for the past few years.

If you were to ask the general public what they know of the OVA, their first thoughts are of the walks, but the other committees are working on that with many new initiatives. Because Diane and I have taken other posts we have appointed three new Budleigh reps, Maureen and Neville Lister and Helen Tickle. The Programme and Publicity Committee has persuaded Nicky Daniel and Maggie Giraud to help them out with the entertainment side of things, for which we are most grateful. After the business meeting was over we were treated to a glass of wine and nibbles followed by a most interesting talk and slides by Robert Sellin on rivers around the world.

Gala week in Budleigh was a great success considering that some of us got extremely wet on occasion. Many thanks to all who helped on the green, and the two Davids, Jannaway and Daniel, for two very interesting and very different town walks. This year we used our new sound system by putting the base in



the basket of my scooter with Jazz, my dog standing on the floor. We wired up the speaker in order that the Davids could go some 30 feet ahead and still be heard by all. I think when residents came to their windows to see what was happening they thought we were electioneering. There was a super picture in the *Budleigh Journal* of the Young Pirates' Treasure Hunt on the beach with them standing looking very happy in raging wind and rain!

I am looking forward to the next three years as Chairman; (a friend of mine, on hearing that I was to take up this post, gave me a quote from Ann Widdecombe's book in which she said, 'I don't wish to be addressed as chairwoman or chairlady or chairperson and last but not least, a chair ... nobody has sat on me yet'). Anyway I consider it an honour and a privilege to be the first female chairman of the OVA since it was founded.

Belinda Mountain

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 2007/2008 were due on the **1st April**. If your subscription is not received by the publication of this July Newsletter you will not receive your programme card with your copy of the Newsletter. If you do wish to continue your membership this should act as a reminder. Subscriptions are still only £3 for individuals or £5 for households. If you do not wish to renew your membership and you pay by standing order then you will need to write to your building society or bank and cancel future payments.

Payment may be made by cheque in favour of the Otter Valley Association and sent to the **Membership Secretary** at the following address:

'Pheasants Cry', Church Road, Colaton Raleigh,
Sidmouth, EX10 0LH.

A much more convenient method of payment for all concerned is by standing order. This is used by well over 80% of our members and ensures that you receive your Newsletter and programme card promptly. It saves a considerable amount of time for our hard pressed volunteers! Standing order forms can be obtained by downloading from our website at www.ova.org.uk or from the Membership Secretary by calling 01395 568176.

Please quote your membership number which is shown on your programme card when you make contact or leave messages. Your membership number will also now be shown on the address list on the back cover of your Newsletter.

Barrie Papworth
OVA Membership Secretary

E-mail Contact



The OVA would like to make more use of e-mail to keep in contact with members and to be able to send out reminders of talks and other events.

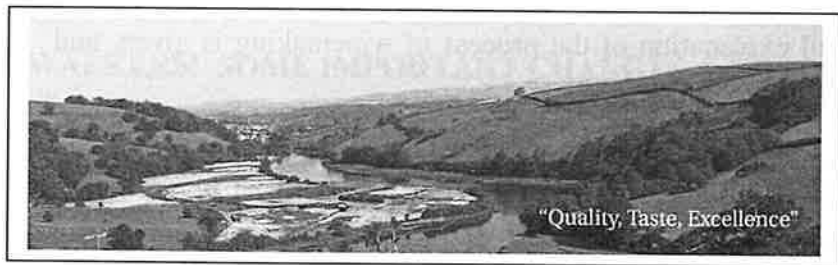
If you would like to receive these reminders (and there would only be a very limited number, e.g. about one a month) please send an email to the Talks Secretary, **Alan Huddart** at alanh@huddart.me.uk

Your e-mail address will remain private to the OVA and not disclosed to any other agency. **AH**

From the Editor

This summer '07 number of the Newsletter seems to be more varied than ever. Issues of major concern such as climate change are covered as well as those affecting an individual village, East Budleigh and its plethora of signs, and the danger to walkers that can arise from tick bites. Diane Gee, the new Walks Organiser, has added a different slant to the walks programme and provided a useful article explaining the changes that have been made. East Budleigh will be in the news again in late July with the Communityscape exhibition to be held at Drake's School. This is an important OVA initiative in educating the youngest generation about the importance of good design in the urban and rural environment.

And finally ... my thanks to artist Megs Rimmer of Tipton St John for her delightful drawing of the small grey visiting cat who monitored every issue of the Newsletter I produced, from April 2003 to January 2007. The pencil drawing is now affixed to the computer as a reminder of my faithful companion. **PQ**



LATE SUMMER VISIT to TOTNES and SHARPHAM

An OVA excursion is planned for **Friday 7th September** to **Totnes on Market Day** followed by a guided visit to nearby **Sharpham Vineyard**.

The programme

A small coach* will provide transport from Budleigh Salterton to Totnes in time for lunch at leisure. In Totnes there is an opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere of this pretty town on the banks of the river Dart. Market Day is always buzzing, with lots to see, including a wonderful people show. Dubbed the 'alternative' capital of the South West, Totnes has much to offer in terms of both sightseeing and shopping.

After lunch in any of the mass of cafes and eating places (or your own picnic on the 'island'), the coach will take us out to the Sharpham Estate which is on a very beautiful promontory overlooking the Dart. At the vineyard our group will be taken on an exclusive **Vine to Wine tour** of the vineyard and winery, together with a **tasting of wines and local cheeses**.

* We have to use a small vehicle because of the narrow lanes round Sharpham, which limits our numbers to 21 only. In case of a large take-up we will consider running the whole tour again on the following Friday, 24 September.

A full explanation of the process of winemaking is given, and lasts for about two hours.

Meet in front of the Public Hall in Budleigh at 11.15 a.m. on Friday 7th September, and you can expect to be home before 6pm.

To apply to join us for the day, please fill in the form at the end of the Newsletter and send it, with your cheque for £17.50 per person, made out to the OVA and a stamped addressed envelope to Maggie Giraud at the address given on this form.

Miscellany

1) **Colaton Raleigh's Fete**, including a relaxed dog, show takes place on Saturday 11 August. It is always a happy (and usually sunny) occasion, so please put the date in your diary.

2) The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership has produced a colourful 20-page 'Programme of (46) Guided Walks and Activities 2007'. It can be obtained from 01823-680682, or go to www.blackdown-hills.net website.

WALKERS! SOME IMPORTANT CHANGES & NOTES

Walks schedule: it has been decided that the schedule of organised walks will no longer be included on the annual membership card. This means that walk leaders will not have to commit themselves so far in advance, a move that has been much welcomed! Each quarterly newsletter will now carry a six-month schedule of walks with the information on the inside covers. The website, will give you up-to-date details and any changes.

Optional social meals: We have introduced the option of some social get-togethers over a meal or snack after some of the walks. I do hope you will enjoy participating and that we may see some new faces. The first one will be after Jed Falby's easy, 4-mile, artists' walk on 18 July. If you do not want to sketch, come and watch those who do, or just relax and enjoy the scenery on the short stops. The lunch venue will be the King's Arms in Otterton.

For the "Early Birds" (well, relatively, I didn't think that a 7.30am start would have gone down too well!), join us in September for a pleasant 9a.m. walk, followed by an "All Day Breakfast" at the cafe on Budleigh beach, where tables will be set out for us. Look out for other venues later on. Next year will see a New Year's Walkers' lunch and perhaps a midsummer beach picnic.

Let me know what you think of the idea, if you have any suggestions and if you would consider leading a walk or two - short or long, with or without a meal option. New blood is always welcome!

Grades of Walk: I have been asked to explain the grading descriptions. Much depends on the length, conditions underfoot and gradients. Short stops and picnic lunches (where

applicable) are included in the time allowed and will therefore have a bearing on the **actual walking pace**. Times may be adjusted to allow for more difficult parts. Below is a guide:

EASY - Up to 4 miles. 2 mph. Level or may be gentle gradients.

MODERATE - Between 4 & 6 miles. 2 mph. May be gradients, rough, stony and uneven ground.

ENERGETIC - Over 6 miles. 2 mph. May be steep sections and very rough terrain.

Hazards on the Commons! Please see Robert Sellin's article below about ticks and Lyme disease.

Diane Gee

Ticks on the Commons

OVA members (and others) should take precautions to avoid being bitten by ticks on our local commons. I speak with some experience! On two recent walks on Aylesbeare Common – planning OVA walks! – I acquired two ticks, one on each occasion and one on each upper arm. I had set out in long trousers tucked into my socks, but was wearing a short sleeved shirt. I stayed on the paths but occasionally got close to bracken. So, my advice is to take simple precautions as ticks can carry Lyme disease. If you want to know more about this try the internet where there is a wealth of detailed information.

Robert Sellin

PS See also the OVA Newsletter, 27/1 (Jan. 2006) for Stella Huyshe-Shires's article 'Lyme Disease - a Warning' (pp.7-8). Ed.



Natural Environment

Climate Change and its Effects on the South-West

In the last issue of the Newsletter the work of the South-West Climate Change Impacts Partnership was briefly described by Alan Huddart. In this article I would like to give a brief summary of the background to climate change concerns.

The world is warming and most of the warming is due to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide, in the earth's atmosphere. Carbon dioxide concentrations have risen by 50% in less than 200 years. Concentrations are approaching dangerous levels that could cause catastrophic effects on the global environment. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has a life of 100 years and therefore we can do nothing to prevent the current trend of global warming. However, we can and must do something to stabilise concentrations at a level that will avoid major impacts on the global climate. The pre-industrial concentration of CO₂ was 280 ppm (parts per million). The present-day concentration is 385 ppm and this is increasing at a rate of 2 ppm per annum. Climate scientists estimate that if concentrations can be kept below about 450 ppm the global average temperature will not increase by more than another 2C and major impacts will be avoided. Can this be achieved? Probably not but the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) suggests that a realistic aim is stabilisation at between 445 and 535 ppm.

The IPCC is an international organisation of 2,500 of the world's best climate scientists, including our own from the Hadleigh Research Centre based at the Met Office in Exeter. It

was established in 1988 and has issued major reports in 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2007. The latest report is being issued in four parts. The first part was issued in February and concluded that human activities, mainly fossil fuel burning and deforestation, were responsible for the warming seen since 1950. The second part was released in April and warned that billions of people face shortages of food and water and increased risk of flooding. The third part was published in May and showed that greenhouse gas emissions can be curbed at reasonable cost. The necessary reduction in CO₂ emissions can be achieved by improving energy efficiency, reducing deforestation and using sources of renewable energy.

Responding to the concerns expressed by the IPCC, the UK government established the UKCIP (UK Climate Impacts Programme). It has established that key impacts on the South-west are:

- the region is becoming warmer and by the 2050s the average summer temperatures may have increased by 3.5C;
- high summer temperatures becoming more frequent and very cold winters becoming rare;
- winters becoming wetter (5-20% wetter by 2050) and summers becoming drier (10-40% drier by 2050);
- sea levels continue to rise (up to 80cm higher by 2080);
- increases in insurance costs;
- loss of habitats and indigenous species;
- longer growing seasons and increased potential for novel agricultural crops.

The scientific evidence for global warming is unequivocal and the debate now is not on whether or not it is happening or even on what is causing it but rather on what are we going to do about it? In an effort to achieve a global consensus the UN is

organising a meeting in December this year at which it is hoped to get an international agreement on carbon emissions to be implemented in 2012. This would replace the present agreement on carbon emissions, known as the Kyoto protocol, which was signed by most of the major industrial countries – but not by the USA or Australia. This time it is hoped to get not only the USA and Australia on board but also to get firm commitments from India and China.

Our government has a policy of leading the rest of the world on climate change and - not to be outdone - Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, is leading a global consortium of 40 of the largest cities in the world to address the problem. He was chairman of the C40 Large Cities Climate Summit held in New York from 14-17 May, 2007 in partnership with the Clinton Climate Initiative, led by Bill Clinton, former President of the U.S.A. Urban areas are responsible for over 75% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Therefore reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in cities is fundamental to any effort to slow the pace of global warming. In his opening address to the conference Livingstone said: “There is no bigger task for humanity than to avert catastrophic climate change. The world’s largest cities can have a major impact on this. Already they are at the centre of developing the technologies and innovative new practices that provide hope that we can radically reduce carbon emissions.” For his part Clinton observed that: “It no longer makes sense for us to debate whether or not the earth is warming at an alarming rate, and it doesn’t make sense for us to sit back and wait for others to act. The fate of the planet that our children and grandchildren will inherit is in our hands, and it is our responsibility to do something about this crisis. The partnership between my Foundation and the Large Cities Climate Leadership Group will take practical and, most importantly, measurable steps toward

helping to slow down global warming, and by taking this approach I think we can make a big difference. I commend Mayor Livingstone and the Large Cities Group for their leadership on this issue."

Although we can only play a small part in these global efforts the Natural Environment Committee of the OVA believes that we should all be aware of the problems and do what we can to alleviate them. To this end the committee is organising a few events that will give members the opportunity to learn more and to keep up to date on climate change issues. In October/November we propose to organise a showing of "An Inconvenient Truth", Al Gore's brilliant film on climate change which won an Oscar as the best documentary of 2006. Also in November an expert from the Hadleigh Research Centre will bring us up to date with all of the latest news and views from the Met Office. Details of these events will be published in the October OVA Newsletter and on our website.

Further information on climate change is available at the web site of the IPCC (www.ipcc.ch). An excellent and readable paperback is *The Rough Guide to Climate Change* by Robert Hensen (2006).

Norman Crossland

TOO MANY SIGNS

In January this year no fewer than eight warning signs were put up in the centre of East Budleigh village within a few yards of each other. They were attached to each side of the two road bridges that go over the brook, spoiling an important view of the village High Street and church in a conservation area which is used on postcards and painted by artists.



My first thought was: are these signs really necessary? It is quite difficult to get into the brook due to the steep sides and railings and the "confined space" mentioned on the sign seemed overstated. Whoever had put the signs up would argue that they had done so to reduce the risk of being sued if someone injured themselves. Surely the likelihood of an accident should be weighed up against the impact these signs have on the environment and to those who live nearby. If we go down the road of protecting against every possible risk then we will end

up with a sign on every tree saying "Do not climb" and "Trip hazard" on every kerb.

Several people made efforts to try and discover who had put up the signs and I thought it might be worth trying to make contact with the person who had made that decision. I felt that we were in danger of more of these signs despoiling our landscape and making our villages look urban instead of rural. They were being put up without regard for their setting or environment.

I contacted the Environment Agency, Devon County Council's bridges and structures department and East Devon District Council's Streetscene, but couldn't find out who had put them up. It was most likely to have been the Environment Agency but the bridges department of DCC said that they had not asked for permission. So I decided to send 'before' and 'after' photographs to the bridges department in the hope that they could track down the instigator. I also wrote to the OVA who said that they would support my mission. Eventually the Environment Agency did admit to putting the signs up without approval from DCC and agreed to take them down.

The result begs the question as to why they were put up in the first place, but I, and many other people, were so happy to see them removed that I wasn't going to pursue the matter further.

Some signs are necessary and helpful but we cannot allow our countryside and villages to be covered in warning signs that are inappropriate to their surroundings and that are out of proportion to the degree of risk.

Now I wonder if Western Power would agree to take down those bright yellow signs on every telegraph pole?

Christine Hadley



Footpaths

The grants from County to parishes for looking after footpaths have been cut drastically. Colaton Raleigh has suffered most because we still have money in hand, although I had pointed out to County that we also have a long backlog of work needing to be done. Our grant this year is down to £675 from £1075 last year which was already a reduction on the previous year. At least County has agreed to take over mowing one of our longest paths, the path from Dotton Mill Lane to Newton Poppleford, providing some compensation. The grants to Newton Poppleford and East Budleigh have also been cut severely.

These grants used to be paid from funds managed by County but provided by English Nature under successive titles. Now that County provides the funds unaided I fear cuts may continue. The introduction of the grant system ("Parish Paths Partnership" or 3Ps) produced an enormous improvement in our network of rights of way. It was said you could tell immediately from the state of a parish's rights of way whether it was in the scheme. I do hope the scheme is not on the way out.

The spiling alongside the path by the river from Colaton Raleigh to Otterton has been further cut. The cut is very drastic, but no more so than I was told was needed when I walked the path last August with Martin Banks, the contractor, and Paul McFadden from County. Some of the cuttings seem to have been cut to uniform length and bundled, using an interesting cradle left for a while beside the path. These cuttings will presumably be used elsewhere. Some of the larger cuttings have been piled alongside the path, maybe as cover for wildlife.

Cutting down to bank level, I was told, would encourage bushy growth. The willow trees which were growing in the bank have also been cut: apparently there was a danger that they might be blown down and carry part of the bank with them. Even the branches which overhung the river have been cut away. They must have been difficult to reach.

I have received criticism that such drastic cutting is damaging to wildlife. In particular an unusual snail, a geometric snail, must have suffered severe losses. Apparently this is a very tiny snail with a spiral pattern on its shell. It is so small that only very close inspection reveals it. It is beyond my expertise to judge whether the criticism is justified but I know that Martin is very experienced and has a reputation for working with respect for the environment, so I hope for the best.

The Footpaths Committee now has a new chairman – Colin Campbell, the footpaths officer for Newton Poppleford. When Colin took over Newton Poppleford's footpaths they were in poor condition. He immediately set about putting this right, cajoling landowners, bullying County and recruiting quite a large number of monitors. And with the help of parties of volunteers from OVA he has brought the paths into an excellent state.

Alan Jones



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

'COMMUNITYSCAPE EXHIBITION', 16-19 JULY

This exhibition will take place in Drake's School, East Budleigh at the following times:

Monday 16th July	(3.30 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.)
Tuesday 17th July	(3.30 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.)
Wednesday 18th July	(3.30 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.)
Thursday 19th July	(3.30 p.m. - 7.00 p.m.)

The exhibition is the culmination of a teaching programme about caring for one's community which has been offered to the school's older pupils by members of the Built Environment Committee during the school year. The main task for the children was to identify 'village treasure' which they felt should be protected and preserved for future generations. This treasure could take the form of whole buildings or features of buildings. It could also include gardens, open spaces with trees, streetscapes, and views into and out of the village.

Stands in the exhibition will be devoted to each of these kinds of treasure. There will also be at least one stand showing what the children define as 'rubbish', that is, features that they believe should be removed from the village scene. Each stand will have photographs, drawings and short written appraisals.

The children have worked hard surveying the village, locating treasure (and rubbish), and now preparing for the exhibition.

Their efforts are certainly worth a visit. For further information phone Drake's School on 01395- 443871.

Geoff Aplin

OVA QUIZ TRAIL

Don't miss our Quiz Trail this August! It will take you around our beautiful villages in the Lower Otter Valley and provide you and your family with an incentive to explore our local heritage and find out new things. There is a £50 prize to be won! Entry is free. The Quiz Trail is designed to interest children as well as adults.

The questionnaire is all about the sights and curiosities around you: it requires you to look about you, do some checking and look for available answers. What a great way for everyone to get to know the area better!

It can be done in any order over any period between Saturday 18th August and the end of the Bank Holiday week. You can get round all the sites by public transport if you prefer. Answer as many questions as you can and then post your entry to the OVA Quiz Trail team to arrive by midday on 3 September.

From 18th August you will be able to download the Quiz Trail questionnaires from our website www.ova.org.uk or pick them up from:

Libraries in Budleigh Salterton, Exmouth and Sidmouth
Tourist Information Offices in Budleigh and Sidmouth
The Exeter Inn, Newton Poppleford
The Otter Inn, Colaton Raleigh
Otterton Mill, Otterton
Sir Walter Raleigh Inn, East Budleigh
The Rolle Arms, East Budleigh
Lesley's Stationers, Budleigh Salterton
The Feathers, Budleigh Salterton
David Rhys Estate Agents, Budleigh Salterton.

Answers will be available on-line on www.ova.org.uk immediately after the Quiz Trail closes. The judges' decision is final, the winner of the £50 prize will be notified and the winner's name will be posted on the website.

Rowan Turnbull

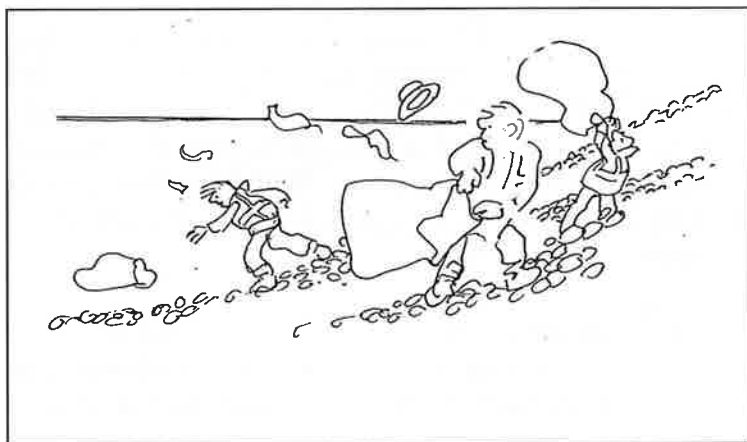
‘Where was This Taken?’

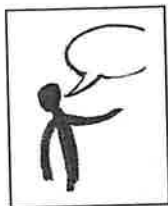
OVA Gala Day Quiz at Budleigh Salterton, 26 May 2007

Congratulations to the Pester family of Boyne Road, Budleigh Salterton for winning the OVA Quiz held during Gala Week. We were pleased to award them the £25 prize.

Young Pirates Treasure Hunt” 27th May 2007

Four brave and courageous young pirates faced all that the weather could throw at them to enter the competition on a very wet and windy Sunday morning. Their bravery and numbers were only equalled by that of the OVA volunteers who turned out in oilskins and sou'westers to run the competition. Thanks to Alice and Alan Huddart and Gill and Nick Speare.





Talks, Walks and Events - a Round-up

THE 500th OVA WALK! Saturday, 24th March 2007 – Squabmoor, Bicton and East Budleigh Commons

OVA Information Sheet No.1 was produced in October 1979 on a Gestetner machine. Only later did the Information Sheets become Newsletters, and gain an illustrated cover page. However, Sheet No. 1 records that:

“The Footpath Sub-Committee is now in operation. A programme of guided walks has been arranged, the first of which took place on Sept. 26th 1979. It was attended by 37 people, and led by Mrs Stammers.”

Robin Holt, our indefatigable archivist, had spotted that the walk on 24th March 2007 would be the 500th OVA walk – a milestone! It was “attended by” 27 people, and led by Brian Leveridge.

Setting out from Squabmoor car park on a sunny spring morning, the group headed into a character-building northerly breeze towards Black Hill gravel workings. We peered cautiously down into the gaping canyon from where the aggregates had been extracted. Then Brian announced with some pride that he had found a brand-new path just opened right through the middle of the crater. With quantities of red Devon mud on either side, we crossed dry-shod in his wake like Israelites crossing the Red Sea.

Bicton Common on the far side was more sheltered from the wind. Nature was beginning to stir with gorse in bloom, and traces of catkins on the birches. Soon, however, we saw more



traces of human activity including the notorious submerged pipe through which young marines crawl as part of their training. Had Brian led the way, doubtless the Israelites would all have followed him through it, but fortunately he declined.

At Fryingpans on East Budleigh Common, a group in mediaeval costume armed with battleaxes and halberds was taking part in a role-playing game, apparently based on Lord of the Rings. The OVA is not the only group which appreciates the Commons. Then we came across another highly organised activity – a huge colony of ants busying themselves purposefully in the sun. And soon we were back at the car park, where a celebratory glass of champagne for all those who took part rounded off an historic occasion.

Brian Turnbull

Wildlife Study on Aylesbeare Common, 28 March

On a pleasant late March afternoon, 16 of us, including two Dutch visitors, were taken around the RSPB reserve on Aylesbeare Common by David Jannaway, who shared some of his wildlife tales and knowledge with us.

The heathland is a unique habitat and has to be managed constantly to prevent it from reverting to scrub and woodland. This is achieved by controlled burning, removal of bracken and saplings, scraping off surface layers and allowing cattle to graze down the vegetation. Uninteresting looking pieces of wood were shown to be covered in a green fungus, giving the colour to the green oak of Tunbridgeware furniture fame. A tiny orange 'elf cup' lichen, growing on a fungus in the ground, was 'invisible' until pointed out; then we realised we were surrounded! Turkey tail fungi were found on the stumps of felled birch trees, and yellow brain fungi attached to the gorse.

Then to my delight, I saw my first "Dartie". We had stopped to look at a black cap perched on the gorse and I asked David if he could rustle up a Dartford Warbler as I had yet to see one. 'Look behind you', came the reply, and there they were – two of them! A quick glance at us with beady eyes, a skim over the gorse and away they flew into the depths where they will hopefully nest.



Next stop a large wood-ant nest, its 50,000 inhabitants following a marked trail, collecting vegetation and prey. In a day they can bring in 10,000 carcasses, including caterpillars,

beetles and also aphids which they either eat or milk for nectar. The nest is kept at a constant temperature all year round, heat being provided by the rotting. Several Queens produce the grubs which hatch into workers (females of course!), males or more Queens. The size of the colony is determined by the workers who can limit or increase the number of Queens by the food on which the grubs are fed. We needed to move on at last when the angry local inhabit-ants, unseen until sinking their mandibles into David's arms, made it clear that we had outstayed our welcome. Just before we moved off, what delight - there was some green woodpecker poo! OK, we asked the same question; it looked just like a discarded cigarette end. Woodpeckers eat ants, so no coincidence that it was found there. Jays may also be found close to these nests, 'anting', with outstretched wings absorbing the sprays of formic acid being squirted at them; this helps to rid themselves of parasites (you may have seen blackbirds in the garden doing the same thing).

Under some corrugated tin sheets, David found adders, grass snakes and slow worms to show us. The slow worm he caught looked wet and slimy but was quite dry and very silky to touch. Although one has to have a licence to handle snakes, the slow worm is a legless lizard, so he drew the short straw that day. We found a splendid discarded adder skin, so were able to have a good look at it without the occupant!

Two early swallows swooped over us, having just arrived that day from South Africa and apparently passing through on their way north to their nesting grounds (how on earth did he know that?). Much detailed, unbelieving examination of a leggy insect resulted in a positive identification of a crane fly - in March!

What was brought home to us was how unobservant we are when out walking; there is such a wealth of life and interest, we just have to take time to stop and look. An extremely enjoyable and educational afternoon. Thank you, David.

Diane Gee

Walking in the footsteps of monks, 18 April

This joint OVA and East Devon AONB Partnership walk, led by Brian Turnbull and Kimmo Evans, was one of a series of walks and events offered by the two organisations, giving people of all ages the opportunity to find out more about the outstanding heritage on their doorstep and throughout the Otter Valley area. "Where else can one experience the soothing sound of running water, world-class coastal views, secretive green lanes, wonderful open heathland and idyllic bluebell woods all so close to each other!" exclaimed new OVA member Alan Huddart of Budleigh Salterton, who joined the six-mile circular walk from Colaton Raleigh to Mutter's Moor.

'On our walk last week we covered everything from the geology of the World Heritage Site, through to King Alfred's cakes fungus, Mark Rolle's corbels and walking in the footsteps of monks!" said Kimmo Evans of East Devon AONB. "For more information on how you can take your first steps to becoming a landscape detective, why not visit the events page on www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk and see what other groups have to offer?" he added. (The OVA's own website, www.oval.org.uk has an up-to-date list of all its walks and events.)

Kimmo Evans (Communications Officer AONB)

‘EXPLORING THE UNDERCLIFF’ – talk by Donald Campbell, 18 April 2007

Donald is chairman of the Axe Vale and District Conservation Society and knows the Undercliff like nobody else. This term is used for the coastal strip between Axmouth and Lyme Regis, a distance of five and a half miles, and includes the area between the cliff edge and the waterline. Because of the nature of the underlying rock this cliff area has experienced a number of major landslips in historical times, the most recent occurring at Christmas in 1839. At this time a large area of the cliff top meadow broke away and moved seawards and downwards leaving chasms and ravines in its track. This patch of the original meadow, still with turf and bushes in place has survived to this day and is known locally as Goat Island. The ravines have filled with woodland now and the whole area is difficult but not impossible to penetrate. It forms, not surprisingly, a marvellous and valuable habitat for birds, animals and plants.

After outlining the geology of the Undercliff Donald gave us a riveting description of many of the rarer species to be found there. The range of insect life present is truly formidable and includes wasps of every imaginable colour, shape and antisocial habit. The butterflies and moths looked more familiar, as did not the beetles!

We learnt that the Goat Island meadow is of special interest since, because of its isolation, it has not been grazed for decades. A recent project involved introducing grazing animals to restore the turf to something like its former state. The next summer, to the surprise of all, Greater Butterfly Orchids were found there in flower. The plants or seed must have lain dormant in the soil all that time.

There is a footpath, part of the South-West Coast Path, which threads its way through the Undercliff but the only way out is to

continue to the far end (or go back). Donald explained that there are no escape routes up the cliff and the shingle beach does not offer a viable alternative.

The National Trust, which owns the area, has plans to construct the necessary paths and steps to make a shorter circular walk possible, but this will require a good deal of money which is not currently available.

Donald Campbell and his colleagues lead frequent walks through this fascinating area. As well as being fairly sure of getting out again, one would learn so much of interest in such a group that might easily be missed if on one's own.

Robert Sellin

Broadhembury walk, 2 June

A select group of seven set out from Broadhembury for a walk which proved to be most serendipitous. This time we did the walk anticlockwise, which proved to be popular. Going up the tarmac section we found the two metal gates forged in the shapes of spiders and cobwebs; then along the bridle path past the woods, with glorious views of the valley, and across the gliding field. It was a beautiful June day, with thermals, so we saw many glider launches and landings. The bluebells were over but there were foxgloves to delight, and the magic of walking through an ancient wood (apparently when dog mercury and bluebells grow together this is the sign).

Because it was dry we were spared the usual plod through cattle-churned ground, with associated cowpats, but we did encounter a bull with many cows; Diane (a.k.a. Doolittle) had a long conversation with said bull!

Altogether a most pleasant morning.

Patricia Doran

Willows & Wetlands Visit, 19 April

Clear blue skies on a sunny mid-April morning saw 45 members off from Budleigh to Somerset to experience the ancient industry of the Levels. A blip in the navigating saw us having an extended tour of the area before backtracking to find the village of Stoke St Gregory eight miles east of Taunton.

Split into two groups we enjoyed a short tour of the production facilities where the preparation of the willow whips was explained, together with the various weaves and processes which are used in this traditional craft. Baskets, trays, hampers, fences, traps, chairs, garden frames; if it's possible and practical they can find a way of making it – even coffins. A by-product of artists' charcoal is marketed around the world.

With 40 people employed Coate's is a large local employer, although it is difficult to attract people into the industry as it is necessarily organised on a piece-rate system and is hard on the hands. Workers become bored after a while and production suffers from sporadic demand. Competition is now coming from the Chinese.

The final products looked very attractive, especially the soon-to-be-completed coffin; and items are sold in the shop as well as being exhibited in the well-presented adjacent museum. A short walk took us to the fields where the willow is grown and harvested and from where you can get a splendid view across to the Quantocks. A 15-minute video explains the process from planting to finished product.

Souvenirs of all shapes and sizes found their way back on to the bus before we made our return journey across Taunton to Hestercombe where we enjoyed a buffet lunch in the atrium attached to the former stable block. Unfortunately, we were

unable to enter the gardens in view of the limited time available, but several people remarked that it would make a nice day out for later in the year.

Many thanks to Nick and Gill Speare for their organisation of this enjoyable outing.

Peter Quinnell

OVA Great Tree Day, 9 June

Bicton College was a most fitting venue for the OVA's Great Tree Day. To those of us lucky enough to get a ticket (the event was fully booked), we were promised 'lectures, walk and tea' but got much more. Belinda Mountain welcomed us to what turned out to be an educational feast that encouraged us to celebrate the intricate lives of trees and reinforce our support for their custodians.

Kate Tobin gave the first talk on 'Great Trees of the Otter Valley' and told us about the Great Tree Hunt, a three-year project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (amongst others), that she is coordinating. We were introduced to several of the chosen Great Trees in East Devon (there are 48 in total), including the Farway Yew, King John's Oak at Shute and Bicton's very own Monkey Puzzle Tree, the tallest in the UK. Kate called these Great Trees 'ambassadors' for other trees, as they tell compelling stories that are interwoven with our own, such as the East Budleigh Mark Tree, the Lovers' Beech in Hayes Wood and Tom's Willow at Newton Poppleford.

Deciding which outdoor session to attend proved somewhat of a dilemma; was it 'Woodland Ecology and Tree Identification'



OVA members with David Jannaway (right)

Photo Mo Bowman

with Geoff Jones, 'Trees and Wildlife' with David Jannaway, or 'Ancient Trees' with Kate Tobin? I chose the latter and joined 16 other members, plus one small dog (courtesy of Belinda), on an exploration of Bickton's mature trees. We pondered on questions such as: how long do trees live; the difference between an ancient and a veteran tree, and the relationship between age and girth (the trees', not ours!).

Back to the welcome shade of the College, where we had a break for tea and cakes and the chance to exchange 'lessons learnt' with the other groups. This was followed by a thought-provoking talk on 'Woodlands Management in the Lower Otter Valley' by John Wilding, Clinton Devon Estates Forest Manager. John gave us an overview of the Clinton woods (nearly all have public access) and an insight into the management strategies that will shape the future of the lower

Otter valley, the focus being on getting the correct balance between sustainability and productivity.

The whole event had been about getting the balance right and living in harmony. Understanding the interdependency between the trees and wildlife (bats, fungi and lichens); that damage done by grey squirrels to young trees can provide essential cracks and crevices for beetles and that drinking more cider can help to protect our orchards.

The number of questions at the end of the day and the very warm applause for Kate and John showed that we all felt that the Great Trees of East Devon are in extremely safe hands. As we left Bicton College in the late afternoon sunshine, some of us may have been wondering how we were going to keep balanced after drinking an extra pint or two of cider later that evening ... but that's another story best told only to the trees!

Peta Foxall

Editor's Requests re Newsletter Contributions

Dates due: 10 September, 10 December, 10 March,

E-mail address: pat@patfrancis.wanadoo.co.uk

Format: please send as a WORD attachment if using a PC;
typed/handwritten pieces also acceptable

Subject bar: please insert precise subject, e.g. 'Newsletter, article on, report on ...'

Font etc: prefer Times New Roman, 12 pt, plain with not too much bold or underlining

Length: max. 600 words for articles, max. 400 for reports of walks, talks and events.

If this all sounds unduly prescriptive and pedantic, forgive me – but the amount of time it saves me is quite surprising.

PQ

October 4 Thurs - 10am - MODERATE / Lunch

Escot Park grass CP, SY 082981. 4¾ miles - 2½ h. A mainly level walk; attractive riverside paths by the Tale & Otter; old railway line. Optional lunch at Escot Park. *Walk leaders:* Phil & Chris Ashby, 01395 512339

October 13 Sat - 10am - MODERATE

White Bridge, SY076830. 5 miles - 2½ h. River, Stantyway, coast path. *Walk leader:* Steve Hagger, 01395 442631

October 27 Sat - 10am - ENERGETIC / Pub lunch

Bowd Inn CP, SY 107900. 5 miles - 3h. Up, over and down Beacon Hill. Optional social lunch. *Walk leader:* Jed Falby, 01395 445455

November 7 Wed - 10am - EASY

Newton Popp. sports ground CP, SY 087900. 2½ h. Seeking and identifying fungi and wax caps. *Walk leader:* Marion Nalder, 01395 442176.

November 17 Sat - 10am - MODERATE

Weston CP, SY 166889. 5 miles - 2½h. Attractive circular walk including coast path. *Walk leader:* Peter Hills, 01395 568576

November 21 Wed - 10am - MODERATE / Pub lunch

King's Arms CP Otterton, SY 082853. 5 miles - 2½ h. Mostly level walk to north; riverside and lanes. Optional pub lunch (NB non -"lunchers" may have to park on road). *Walk leaders:* David & Nicola Daniel, 01395 445960

December 5 Wed - 10am - ENERGETIC.

White Cross CP East Hill (Ottery St Mary), SY 118933. 5 miles - 2½ h. Waxway, Coombe, Hollow Head, East Hill; woods, fields, bridleways, steep in places, may be muddy. *Walk leader:* David Nangle, 01404 811752

December 15 Sat - 10am - MODERATE.

Joney's Cross CP, SY 057898. 5½ miles - 2½ h. Stoneyford, Stowford, Colaton Raleigh common; may be muddy. *Walk leader:* Stuart Lovett, 01395 443141

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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. It is also affiliated to the CPRE. Queries should be put to your Parish Representative.