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OVA
PO Box 70
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OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

WINTER Newsletter

2020

Vol: 41/1

Front cover image photographed and produced by Mo Bowman

From the Editor

I write this in anticipation of our forthcoming Christmas party – although there is a small amount of trepidation as I understand that someone is going to be murdered! It is sure to be a great evening and I hope to have a report and images (hopefully not too ghoulish) in the next issue.

In looking forward to a new year and a new decade I make no apologies for re-printing a previous plea for your help and support. We know that there are many members out there with experience, skills and talent which could be very useful to our organisation. Our aims and objectives are very relevant at the moment and membership is growing. However, as with all organisations and societies, we do need people to become more than 'passive' members. At the start of this new year please give some thought as to how you could help move the OVA forward.

Happy New Year to you all.

Jacqui Baldwin

Volunteers needed

Everything we do – and we do a lot of things - has to be done by volunteers. Is there any way in which you could help? Whatever your area of interest or expertise we would be glad of your input whether on a regular basis or just a few hours – distributing newsletters, getting involved with the Natural Environment team, leading a walk, becoming a village rep, organising events, joining the Executive committee, publicity, history, planning – even writing an article for this newsletter! Fresh ideas and fresh faces are always welcome. See the point of contact list (inside back cover) for the relevant person who will be very happy to hear from you.



**SPRING
LITTER PICK**

Where?

Lime Kiln Car Park, Budleigh
Salterton

When

4 April 2020 10:00-12:00

Why?

Explore the Lower Otter
Estuary at low tide and take
part in this annual litter pick
to improve this important
wildlife site.

**Volunteers of all ages are
most welcome, but
children must be accompa-
nied by adults. Wellington
boots and gloves are
essential!**

Join the **Otter Valley Association**
with **EDDC** and **Clinton Devon**
Estates to clear litter including
plastic from the Otter Estuary SSSI
below White Bridge.

Meet by 9:45 when free parking
tickets will be distributed along
with bags and litter pickers. Bring
your loaded bags back to the car
park where at 11:45 prizes will be
awarded to the most unusual finds!

No booking required but for more information
please contact:

info@oval.org.uk

oval.org.uk

or

kate.ponting@clintondevon.com

pebblebedheaths.org.uk

Chairman's Musings

It is an odd sensation writing about something in the future which will be read in the past. I hope that that makes sense. I, of course, refer to the Christmas Party. Arrangements have nearly reached their conclusion. Jenny Young has been so very busy preparing the way with huge help from Membership Secretary, Clive Bowman. In Jenny's eyes, he has achieved sainthood. Our playwright, Steve Hagger has finally laid down his quill after scratching away into the night, to produce a bespoke play for us. Its opening night is of course on 16th December. The cast have been assembled and not an EQUITY member in sight. We all look forward to another successful party.

Now is the time to start thinking about what is to take place in year 2020. If only we had an events secretary! The annual litter pick is due to take place on Saturday 4th April at 10.00am. We always get a wonderful turnout of young and old alike. The former, eager to find the most unusual discovery and win the prize. We are also planning on holding a new members' party. It is some years since we have held this event and there are a considerable number of members who are eligible to be invited. More of this in the next newsletter. Following on the hugely successful visit to Stantyway Farm last summer, Kate Ponting of CDE has suggested a visit to the Pebblebed Heaths in their 'Safari Bus'. Last time we were towed around by tractor. Don't forget that seats will be limited to those of the vehicle. Once again, more in next newsletter.

The Local Heritage Asset List, mentioned many times before, has finally made a very promising lurch forward. You will recall that, due to staff shortages and other factors, the 'list' has remained dormant on the desks of the EDDC. A person has been appointed to oversee this project and to this end, a training course took place during October for 14 volunteers. This was organised by Dee Woods and Nicola Daniel. This has been a pilot exercise centred on East Budleigh.

As our next AGM once again looms on the horizon, thought must be given to the replacement of the Planning Committee Chairman and the Environmental Committee Chairman, who are both standing down. It is the nature of Associations such as ours to have a constant circulation of committee members which is often beneficial as it results in new and innovative ideas. Thankfully though there is still a core of 'father/mother' figures who are able to pass on their invaluable experience.

There is no further news on the Lower Otter Restoration Project or the FAB cable project. They seem to have become casualties of Brexit/political and financial implications. However, we hope for further developments in the spring.

Don't forget to put the litter pick in your diaries.

Bob Wiltshire, Chairman

Membership Reminder

To those members who pay their subscription by cash or cheque each year, can I remind you that this is due by the 1st April 2020, which is the start of the next membership year.

Please send by post to Membership, Otter Valley Association, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN. Cheques should be made payable to 'Otter Valley Association' in full, rather than 'OVA' please.

Should you wish to change to a Bank Standing Order Form, please contact me at membership@ova.org.uk, or via the phone number shown on the inside cover of this newsletter, or download the website application and complete just your name and the standing order form part and send to the address above.

Clive Bowman
Membership Secretary

Talk Report - The Natural History of Moths and Butterflies – Wednesday, 13th November

The OVA's November evening talk was given by Barry Henwood, an authority on moths and butterflies in the South West and former chairman of Devon Butterfly Conservation. He is now Recorder for the region – an important task for conservation.



We were treated to a wealth of great images and interesting information. As an almost breathless introduction, Barry showed examples of the huge range of moths - far more numerous than butterflies - ranging from the very small (micro moths), the many dull and disguised to our largest and spectacular, the Deaths Head Hawk Moth (left), and the rapidly declining High Brown Fritillary Butterfly.

He then told us about the complicated lifestyle of a number of species, some with different larval stages, and different seasonal colouring, before pupating. And many whose detailed life is as yet unknown. And the difficulty of finding many species – disguised as tree bark or with green larvae on or within green leaves. Several moth species live and tunnel between the epidermis layers of a leaf: often they are specific to the type of tree, like the Poplar Moth. Many use silk to spin a cocoon for pupating or overwintering.



Barry moved on to talk about predators and showed us stunning pictures of disguises – some camouflaged against tree bark, some shaped and coloured like a broken twig, some like a bird-dropping (shown left is the Chinese Character moth – not very appetising!), and one evolved to look like a hornet, same size and colour. The Elephant Hawk Moth can look like a snake, provoking an

innate wariness among birds. Defences are clearly necessary – it's estimated that blue-tit chicks eat some 50 billion caterpillars each season in England! And we've all seen the advertisement of poison with the warning colours of the orange and black 'football jerseys' of the cinnabar moth on groundsel plants.

Bats are also great predators of the mainly nocturnal moths – the defences and counter-measures are all about sound, detecting the bat's echo-location or even responding with out-of-sync clicks to confuse the bat.

Barry is obviously a walking mine of information and, with his wonderful and extensive picture gallery, he kept us enthralled – many of us could easily have enjoyed another hour of his expertise. He closed with a plea for support for environmental campaigns to reduce pesticides and promote a wildlife future – moth numbers have reduced by over 40% in the last twenty years. He also gave a plug for his forthcoming new book 'Field Guide to the Caterpillars of Great Britain and Ireland' due out in March 2020.

Haylor Lass

Invasive species: MPs call for a million people's help

In this magazine we have highlighted the issue of invasive species on a number of occasions. Most recently, we have heard about ash dieback, which travelled from SE Asia through northern Europe to the UK, and every year our volunteers are tackling the onward march of Himalayan Balsam. Now, a report by the Environmental Audit Committee suggests that between 36 and 48 new such species will become established in the next 20 years and MPs say that more than a million volunteers are needed to tackle the spread of invasive non-native species in the UK.



Climate change is putting "the future of our natural landscape at risk," said EAC committee chairwoman Mary Creagh. The phrase "invasive non-native species" (Inns) describes those species that have been directly moved as a result of human activity. In the UK, examples include the Asian hornet and giant hogweed (shown on previous page). The report says slowing their rate of arrival is the first priority in stopping their establishment.

The committee wants 1.3 million people to be taught how to spot "outbreaks" of invasive species. It also calls for a dedicated border force to be established in 2020 to improve biosecurity at UK borders, and bans on importing problem species before they present a risk to the UK.

The report also wants the government to set up a rapid-response emergency fund to enable agencies to tackle a threat before it gets out of control and to increase funding for the Non-Native Species Secretariat to £3m per year. A spokesman for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "Invasive non-native species not only challenge the survival of some of our rarest species but damage our natural ecosystems as well as costing the economy more than £1.7bn per year. We are committed to being leaders in tackling invasive species, and our 25-year Environment Plan commits us to enhancing the biosecurity of the country even further."

Our Natural Environment Committee members look forward to the call to arms!

Editor

Otter Estuary Litter Pick 2020

As we enter Winter, it feels strange on the one hand to be looking ahead to next Spring's litter-pick, whilst on the other it's good to think that by then Winter will be behind us. Next year's event will take place on **Saturday 4th April** starting at 10.00 am. After having to put back last year's 'pick' by an hour in order to work around difficult tide-times, thankfully, this year's are almost perfect.

Two years ago, concern was raised about the number of small pellets, used to manufacture plastic items, discovered on the banks. Last year, there appeared to be a lot of pieces of fishing net along with the usual array of debris. On both occasions, those volunteering picked up large quantities of rubbish that, whether

left on the estuary or washed out to sea, would have harmed the environment. This autumn has already seen several episodes of heavy rain and flooding which will have washed litter down tributaries, the River Otter and into the estuary and sea. At the time of writing it remains to be seen what weather events Winter will bring. Needless to say the litter-picking event continues to be important.



Another thing that doesn't change is the need for vigilance for those volunteering to go onto the estuary. To date everyone has returned safely and there is a risk that for those who regularly volunteer tend to underestimate the possibility of an accident. It was concerning that last year some volunteers set off onto the estuary whilst Kate Ponting of CDE was still delivering the safety guidance, so, a plea to all who plan to come along next year, to please take safety seriously.



On a lighter note, each year's event ends with the presentation of two prizes for the most interesting or unusual finds. This year, a mud coated cuddly toy dog won the child's prize. Having rescued the now salty sea-dog from a muddy bank, it seemed a shame to commit it to landfill, so it was rescued and shampooed. Despite a return to the estuary to search for its owner, none could be found and so it was re-homed. What novelties will next years' event turn up?

If you wish to take part in the litter-pick, please arrive at Lime Kiln car park, Budleigh Salterton by 9.45am for a 10.00am start. Free parking tickets will be provided. With luck it will be a fine day but if not, please come well prepared. This event takes place in partnership with Clinton Devon Estates and EDDC.

Geoff Porter. OVA Natural Environment Committee

Winter Talks Programme

Apologies for the postponement of our December talk – we were overtaken by political events. Fortunately we have been able to reschedule and – in a departure from our usual format – we are holding this talk in the afternoon. So come and join us for a cup of tea on Thursday 23rd April.

The Seaton Down Hoard – Wednesday, 15th January 2020

Venue - Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 7.30pm

Speaker - Mr Thomas Cadbury, Curator of RAMM Archaeology Collections

An illustrated talk on the Roman Hoard discovery by an amateur metal-detectorist near Seaton consisting of over 22,000 Roman coins, the largest such find in Devon, the third largest ever found in Britain. Why was it buried? Who buried it? Curators at RAMM say that the coins are now one of the most important parts of the museum's archaeology collection.

The Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project – Wednesday, 19th February 2020

Venue – Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 7.30pm

Speaker Ann Mitchell, Devon Wildlife Trust

The talk will give information on Greater Horseshoes and why their numbers have fallen dramatically to the point where Devon and some parts of South Wales are the only places in this country where they can now be found. Ann will describe the work of the project and what is being done to raise awareness of the species and to increase their numbers. Bats are an important pollinator and indicators of a healthy environment. They are also an iconic species that also have perhaps a ghostly reputation!

The Building of Exeter Cathedral - Wednesday 11th March 2020

Venue – Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 7.30pm

Speaker - Mr John P Allan, Exeter Cathedral Archaeologist

In his illustrated talk, John Allan will describe the structural history of the cathedral and its place in the story of English medieval architecture, as well as describing new research insights in understanding the church.

Mapping the Otter Valley – Thursday, 23rd April 2020

Venue – Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 3pm (doors open 2.30pm)

Speaker - Mr Brian Carpenter, Community Learning Officer Devon Heritage Centre

Brian Carpenter, Archivist and Community Learning Officer for the Devon Archives and Local Studies Service, will talk about the ways in which the Otter Valley has been mapped over the centuries and how historical maps can illustrate the ways in which land use and settlement patterns have changed through the years.

Entry fees for all talks: £2.00 per member and £3.00 per visitor. On Thursday, 23rd April your entry fee will include a cup of tea.

Talk Report: Wartime Dalditch Camp presented by Simon Fogg

An audience of 80 attended the first of this autumn's OVA evening talks. For those of us who are used to enjoying a quiet wander over a peaceful Common, Simon's talk came as something of an eye-opener. Many of us will have seen the occasional red brick building remnant on the Commons without appreciating how extensive the military camps once were. By searching for and identifying remnants of bullets and shell cases, Simon has managed to pinpoint who, where and when different armed forces used the Commons for training.

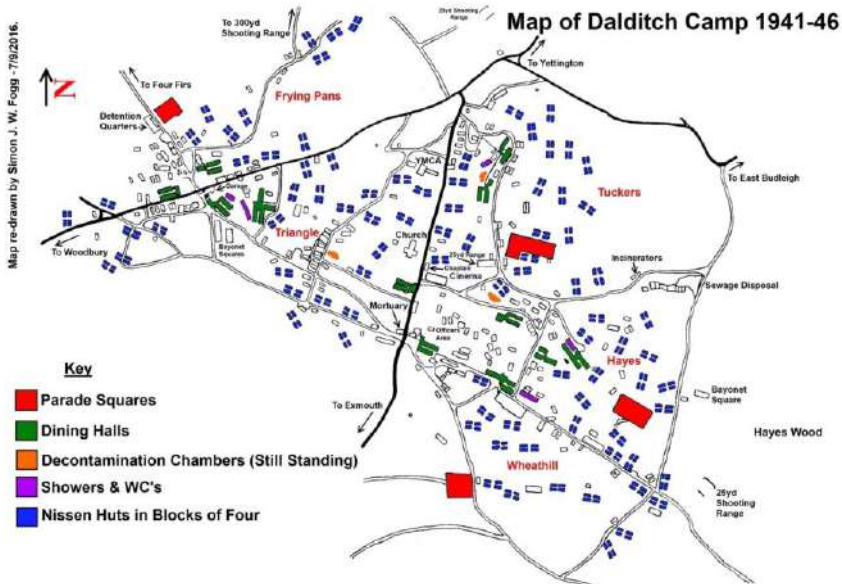
Whilst the talk focused on WW2, the military in its various guises have used the Commons since 1798; at its height, 13 battalions comprising 10,000 soldiers were supported by a shop, theatre, library, NAAFI and Post Office (with its own postmark). By 1942, the camp comprised 378 huts including church, cinema and mortuary with a population larger than Budleigh Salterton.

Soldiers were being trained for all elements of war including use of rifles and bayonets, hand grenades, mustard gas attack, land and anti-tank mines, flame-throwers etc. By using aerial photographs, Simon has managed to plot the position of multiple buildings and firing ranges (*see over page*).

In April 1942, Aylesbeare Common was used to convince German flight crews that they were bombing Exeter and its airport by building a mock runway and supposed burning buildings. During 1943-44, the American Navy also had a storage depot in Hawkerland Valley and they, the Canadians and Greeks used the area below Woodbury Castle for shelling practice.

So, next time you take a stroll across the Commons, it's worth reflecting on the very different life experiences that thousands of armed forces personnel once had there. Thank you for enlightening us Simon.

Geoff Porter



Simon Fogg popped up again on Brian Turnbull's **'Squabmoor and Dalditch Camp'** walk on Dec 12th. Brian knows the ruins of the camp well and had chosen a route that took in most of the interesting sites including a detour to the rifle range on Bicton Common, but Simon was able to show us some well-hidden 'extras' along the way.



It was fascinating to see how, 75 years on, Nature has reclaimed its own and covered almost everything in vegetation. In the image left we are standing in the former mess hall with the recently cleared steps up to the kitchen visible. You don't have to dig very deep in many places to reveal hard evidence. The camp was

cleared of reusable buildings and kit at the end of the war, so most of what's left are the concrete pads the buildings stood on.



However, several brick-built structures are preserved including ammunition stores, rifle range butts and firing ditches, and three large decontamination shower blocks (left), whose only permanent residents are bats but are also used as a canvas by accomplished graffiti artists (not to be condoned of course!).

Cartridge cases are two-a-penny on the Commons, but Simon can read them like a book. On the day he picked one up stamped with the date 1941 and could tell us the calibre, where it was manufactured, and that, based on the percussion imprint, it had been fired from a Bren gun.



For more information, purchase Simon's book "Wartime Dalditch Camp and Finds on Woodbury Common" (available from Best Books in Exmouth, Littleham Post Office, Colaton Raleigh shop and Budleigh Salterton TIC) and see the Walk Reports section of our website or Ovapedia.

Jon Roseway

East Budleigh Heritage Pilot Project

The OVA has been working with East Devon District Council on an innovative community project involving the training of volunteers interested in local heritage.

The training of 14 volunteers took place on 23rd & 24th October in East Budleigh Village Hall. It covered planning legislation and how to carry out the assessment of conservation areas using East Budleigh's Conservation Area as the study area. Practical assessment and mapping tasks were undertaken in order to review the existing, but out of date, Conservation Area appraisal. A further training day was held on 11 December in order to complete the review work, help to develop a management plan for the Conservation Area, and identify any local heritage assets.



The volunteers found the training enjoyable, informative and stimulating, and are looking forward to completing the tasks, and learning more about conservation areas and heritage.

The OVA is very grateful to the AONB for the generous funding of this project through their Sustainable Development Fund. The sum of £3,000 has been granted which was used to pay for the two days training. Funding from the Norman Family Charitable Trust has also been obtained, which is covering various other costs, such as the hire of the hall etc.

Dee Woods

WALKING



A Walk for Everyone

Firstly I would like to offer my grateful thanks to our walk leaders who continue to offer to lead a variety of walks despite the inclement weather that has been thrown at us this last autumn. Apparently, 2019 “was the fifth wettest autumn on record with some areas experiencing a volume of rain unprecedented in modern times”. Let’s hope that 2020 brings some more co-operative weather on OVA walk days.

We have some new walks to tempt you and also some old favourites. Ruth & Haylor are going to lead us around Tipton St John and Brian takes us on a journey from Colyton Raleigh. We visit our local commons both with Graham and then a different area with Sarah. We are lead along the river Otter by both Jacqui, and Rosemary & David, and along the river Exe with Penny & Paul. We have a new linear walk in two sections along the Sid Valley ring with Vivien.

We are walking along the coastal path towards Exmouth and further afield along the coast to Salcombe with a visit to the Donkey Sanctuary, both walks with David & Rosie. Another walk along the coast taking in Peak Hill is being lead by Ross. Paul & Penny are completing the circuit around Exeter in the opposite direction affording different views. Paul & Fran are taking us I-spying into Dorset, Jane is taking us gliding from Broadhembury and I am leading another circuit from Colyton.

Finally, further afield we have two visits with Paula & Mike to Dartmoor, one starting at Parke in Bovey Tracy and the other from Yarner Wood.

A Happy New Year from the walk team, Heather Fereday, Stella French, Paul and Penny Kurowski and Jon Roseway.

Heather Fereday

Events Programme – January to April 2020

Please consult the OVA Website for late alterations or additional information.
All OS references are to Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Explorer maps

Friday, 10th January - 10.00am - WALK - 7 miles

Start in Tipton St John Playing Fields CP (OS 115 SY 091 917)

“Tipton West Bounds”

A 3 hour walk around the western boundary of the parish of Tipton St John with Venn Ottery: green lanes, tracks and paths, embracing Fluxton, Metcombe and Venn Ottery and fringing West Hill, Newton Popleford and Harpford. Light hearted new-year quiz about places visited. Bring elevenses: Optional lunch at the Golden Lion at the end.

Ruth & Haylor Lass, 01395 568786

Wednesday, 15th January - 10.00am - WALK - 5½ miles

Meet at Bowd lay-by (west of pub on A3052) (OS 115 SY 104 898)

“A circle around Fire Beacon”

The walk starts by following the old railway line through Harpford Wood to Tipton St John. We then start our steady climb to Hollow Head Cross before retuning via Core Hill Wood and the edge of Harpford Common to our cars.

Walk leader: Graham Knaption, 01395 445872

TALK - The Seaton Down Hoard – Wednesday, 15th January 2020

Venue - Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 7.30pm

Speaker - Mr Thomas Cadbury, Curator of RAMM Archaeology Collections

Wednesday, 22nd January - 10.00am – WALK – 5½ miles

Start: The Green, Fore St, Otterton, parking in nearby roads (OS 115, SY 081 852),

"From Otter to Peak"

We walk northwards beside the Otter to cross using the new Rickety Bridge. After a long gradual ascent we reach the top of Peak Hill, with fine views over Sidmouth. There's a pause there for coffee, so bring a flask. We then follow the coast path south through Ladram Bay, returning via Colliver Cross to Otterton. Approx 3 hours.

Walk Leader: Ross Hussey, 01395 227991

Friday, 31st January - 10.50am - WALK – 6½ miles

Start underneath Iron Bridge (OS 114, SX 915 928)

“Exeter Green Circle the other way round – Part Two”

Following on from Part One, this walk takes us from Exeter city centre through the beautiful university grounds and the Duryard, Mincinglake and Ludwell Valley parks (now managed by Devon Wildlife Trust). We plan to stop en route at St Katharine's Priory Community Cafe for lunch. Our finish point is Topsham Road and we can then travel back to Exmouth by the 57 bus. 4½ hours including lunch. The start point of the walk can be reached by taking the 9.40am number 58 bus from Budleigh Salterton Public Hall (arrives city centre 10.35am), the 9.48am number 57 bus from Exmouth (arrives city centre 10.33am) or the 9.49am number 9 bus from Newton Poppleford (arrives city centre 10.24am), and then walking to Lower North Street, which is under the Iron Bridge.

Nearer the time, please check the OVA website (or contact the walk leaders) for the latest bus times and to make sure St Katharine's Priory will be open for lunch.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski, 01395 742942 pandp@kurowski.me.uk

Saturday, 8th February - 10.30am - WALK - 7 miles

A leisurely walk from Joney's Cross car park (RSPB Reserve, OS SY 057 898), (EX10 0BL) with a stop for coffee and picnic lunch. Visiting Harpford Common, Venn Ottery and Newton Poppleford.

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott, 01395 277644

Saturday, 15th February - 10.15am – WALK – 7 miles

Meet: Sidmouth Triangle for 9.49am bus or St Giles Church, Sidbury (OS 115 SY 139 917) at 10.15am

“Sid Valley Ring Part 1 - Linear Walk”

From Sidbury we ascend to White Cross and Fire Beacon Hill following the East Devon Way before descending through the Western side of Sidmouth. Bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insull, 01404 811267

Monday, 17 February - 10.00am – WALK – 5½ miles

Start: Steamer Steps, Budleigh Salterton (OS 115 SY 065 818)

“A walk of two promenades”

A relatively gentle walk along the coast path from Steamer Steps in Budleigh Salterton to the dock at Exmouth. From Exmouth, the 157 bus from Exmouth Parade takes us back to Budleigh Salterton Public Hall. We should be in Exmouth by 1230, so those who wish to enjoy the culinary delights of Exmouth can do so;

those who do not should be in time for the 1300 bus back to Budleigh and onwards to Sidmouth.

Walk leaders: David & Rosie Conner, 07831 406959

TALK - The Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project – Wednesday, 19th February 2020

Venue – Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 7.30pm

Speaker Ann Mitchell, Devon Wildlife Trust

Wednesday, 26th February - 10.00am - WALK - 6 miles

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.00am to share cars or meet at the start point.

“Yarner Wood, Trendlebere Down, Becky Falls and Houndtor Ridge”

Start: Yarner Wood CP (OS OL28, SX 785 789 / TQ13 9LJ) 6 miles

The walk commences with a steady climb through towering stands of ancient oak woodland drenched with lichen and ferns. We pass bird hides which are famous for spotting pied flycatchers, lesser spotted woodpeckers and wood warblers to name but a few. We exit the wood at North Lodge, the most westerly point of the wood and commence a short walk over the western side of Trendlebere Down and drop down onto the road that leads to the entrance to Becky Falls where hopefully this time of year we will be able to see the falls through the trees. The next stage is a walk along the path below Houndtor Ridge to arrive at Holn Brake where we enter Yarner Wood again. After a short walk through the wood we reach the car park. There are toilets at the car park, but no other facilities en route, so bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leaders: Paula & Mike Paddison, 01395 446550

Wednesday, 4th March - 10.00am - WALK - 6 miles

Start: Colaton Raleigh Church (OS 115, SY 082 872, 6 miles)

“An ideal walk for an early spring day”

Along the riverside, up and down green lanes and over the commons, visiting Dotton, Goosemoor and Naps Lane.

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull, 01395 567339

Saturday, 7th March -10.15am – WALK - 7 miles

Meet: Sidmouth Triangle for 9.49am bus or St Giles Church, Sidbury (OS 115 SY 139 917) at 10.15am

“Sid Valley Ring Part 2 – Linear Walk”

From Sidbury we take country lanes to Harcombe before a steep ascent to cross the A3052. We then head to the coast with sea views before turning inland to

Salcombe Regis. We then ascend back to the Coast Path and descend through the Eastern side of Sidmouth. Bring a packed lunch.

Walk Leader: Vivien Insull, 01404 811267

Tuesday, 10th March - 10.00am - WALK - 6 miles

Meet at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground (OS 115, SY088 899) at 8.45 am to share cars, or meet at the start point.

“Eggardon Hill Fort and King John's Castle”

Start: The Spyway Inn at Askerswell, Dorset. DT2 9EP. (OS 117 ST 528 933) at 9.30am and we can have lunch afterwards at The Spyway Inn.

Be prepared for some hills (it is Dorset!) but these will be rewarded with some wonderful views... Weather permitting!

Walk Leaders: Paul & Fran Dike, 01297 20695/07977 057546

TALK - The Building of Exeter Cathedral - Wednesday 11th March 2020

Venue – Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 7.30pm

Speaker - Mr John P Allan, Exeter Cathedral Archaeologist

Friday, 13th March - 10.00am - WALK - 5½ miles

Meet: Otterton, Fore Street, (OS 115, SY 083 853). 2-3 hours

“A Riverside Ramble”

This familiar local walk will start in the village of Otterton and follow the river path to the sea at Budleigh, returning by a different route to the starting point. Flat terrain 5½ miles. Refreshments/lunch available at the Kings Arms or Otterton Mill café.

Walk Leaders: Rosemary & David Hatch, 01392 444290

Thursday, 19th March -10.30am – WALK – 6½ miles

Start: Donkey Sanctuary car park (OS 115 SY 161 892)

“Sanctuary, Sidmouth & Salcombe”

A fairly energetic walk with two steep pulls. From the Donkey Sanctuary, we join the coast path at Lower Dunscombe Cliff and walk to Sidmouth. Following the course of the Sid, we walk through Sidmouth, climb back up Salcombe Hill to walk through the delightful village of Salcombe Regis and return to the Donkey Sanctuary where those that wish can enjoy a cup of tea at the café. Please bring a picnic.

Walk leaders: David & Rosie Conner, 07831 406959

Wednesday, 25th March - 10.00am - WALK - 7 miles

Meet: Newton Poppleford Rec Ground (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.00am to share cars or meet at the start point.

“Parke (Bovey Tracy), Lustleigh and the Bovey River”

Start: Parke (National Trust) CP (OS 110, SX 805 784 (Parke Entrance) / TQ13 9JQ)
NT Membership cards will be required for free parking.

The walk commences with a ‘walk thru the park’ followed by a steady climb to Higher Knowle Wood and a coffee stop. A shortish down hill segment will then bring us to the pristine cottages of Wrayland and Lustleigh where refreshments at a tea shop or The Cleave might be available. However a picnic may be the safer option.

The next stage will take us past the May Queen’s Chair to commence the return journey via Pethybridge and into Hisley Woods. The homeward stretch to Parke is steadily downhill through the length of Hisley Wood and ultimately alongside the River Bovey. On reaching Parke we join the old railway track for a short walk through the Grounds to Home Farm Café for tea and a bun!

Walk Leaders: Paula & Mike Paddison, 01395 446550

Monday, 30th March - 10.45am – WALK – 5½ miles

Meet at Exmouth Railway Station at 10.15am. Outward dep. 10.23am, arrives Digby & Sowton 10.42am.

“Take the train for a walk from town to Topsham”

Start at Digby & Sowton Railway Station (OS 192, SX 960 915), 10.45am. A walk from Digby and Sowton station that wends through houses and a retail park, then magically transfers us to rural Ludwell Valley Park with its ancient history and great views. We then descend to the River Exe for an easy walk to Topsham where there are plenty of lunch opportunities and a half-hourly train service back to Exmouth. About 2½ hours.

We suggest that, if you don’t have a railcard, you travel in groups of 4 to take advantage of a “Groupsave” train ticket - buy a return from Exmouth to Digby and Sowton.

Nearer the time, please check the OVA website (or contact the walk leaders) for the latest train times.

Walk Leaders: Penny & Paul Kurowski, 01395 742942 pandp@kurowski.me.uk

Friday, 3rd April - 10.00am - WALK - 8 miles

Meet at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.15 to share cars or meet at the start point, 4 hours plus lunch.

“Colyton, Shute Hill & Axe Valley circular”

Start: Car Park in Colyton, Dolphin Street (OS 116, SY 246 940) at 10.00am.

The route covers part of the Axe Valley and surrounding countryside with superb views of Musbury Castle Hill Fort and down the Exe estuary to the sea. Please bring a picnic.

Walk Leader: Heather Fereday, 01395 446796

Wednesday, 8th April - WALK - 10.00am - 5 miles

Start: Newton Poppleford, Robert Way free CP (off School Lane) (OS 115, SY 087 897), 3 hours.

"Paddocks, Commons and Orchards"

We walk through the paddocks and smallholdings behind Newton Poppleford's main street, before skirting the fringe of Harpford Common, then swinging north east to Venn Ottery. We'll pause there for coffee, so bring a flask. We return to Newton Poppleford via Southerton and the orchards sloping down to the Otter.

Walk Leader: Ross Hussey, 01395 227991

Friday, 17th April - 10am - WALK - 7 miles

Meet at Newton Poppleford Rec Ground CP (OS 115, SY 088 899) at 9.00am to share cars or meet at the start point.

"A walk from Broadhembury and a glide back"

Start Broadhembury Village centre opposite the Drewe Arms Pub (OS 115 ST 101 048) at 10am. 3 hours plus coffee stop - bring your own drink.

Walk clockwise from Broadhembury village to Kerswell, Orway and via Saint Hill to Rhododendron Wood and then on to North Hill passing the gliding club before returning to Broadhembury. The walk should afford magnificent views and is on footpaths that may be muddy in places when wet, and in part on quiet lanes.

There should be an opportunity to have a drink and/or lunch at the Drewe Arms in Broadhembury after the walk.

Walk Leader: Jane Kewley, 01395 445598/07966 280147

janekewley7@gmail.com

Tuesday, 21st April - WALK - 10.30am - 7 miles

Start: Colaton Raleigh Church, (OS 115, SY 082 872), 7 miles, 4 hours

"A wide circle"

River Otter, Bar's Lane, Windgate, Peak Hill, Passaford, Burnthouse Farm.

Bring a picnic lunch.

Walk Leader: Jacqui Ruhlig, 01395 443763

TALK - Mapping the Otter Valley – Thursday, 23rd April 2020

Venue – Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton @ 3pm (doors open 2.30pm)

Speaker - Mr Brian Carpenter, Community Learning Officer Devon Heritage Centre

Walk Reports

All walk reports and accompanying photographs can be found on the OVA website. Below is just an abridged selection. Many thanks to all contributors.

Castle Drogo walk - October 19

This is the third year that Stella has led this walk and it's still popular. The clear blue sky may have helped people decide. We started at Castle Drogo and made a long gradual descent to Fingle Bridge, where the strong flow and deep brown water in the river could be studied up close. Inevitably, the next stage was a long and fairly steep ascent. About halfway up we got the classic view west down the valley with Dartmoor as a backdrop.



There was something odd about the castle though, and then I realised - the cocoon of white plastic I've got used to seeing for the last I don't know how many years has gone. To be truthful, I preferred it wrapped in plastic because naked, it doesn't look nearly as impressive, but I'm sure the NT would disagree.

For our group photo at the top we stood inside another castle - Cranbrook Castle, an Iron Age hilltop fort. There was a chilly breeze blowing as we sat on the earth

wall of the castle and ate our lunch, but well wrapped up it was worth it to enjoy the commanding views of the Teign Valley.



Descending from the castle to Fingle Bridge, conversation covered such critical issues as the shenanigans that had gone on in *Strictly Come Dancing* the previous evening and the likelihood of England winning the Rugby World Cup. I saw a waymarker labelled 'The Dartmoor Way', which was new to me, but others thought they had heard of it. A bit of research back at home told me that it's a 100 mile-long path that hugs the perimeter of Dartmoor NP. It was first defined in the year 2000 but, curiously, not waymarked until this year and therefore not shown on OS maps. Not yet walked by the OVA (as far as I know), I vote that it goes to the top of the list for our annual long-distance path projects.

We strolled along the riverbank and noticed the trees starting to show their lovely Autumnal colours, then it was the long haul back up to Castle Drogo for a cup of tea and cream scones for the greedy ones. Well done to Stella, who was doing the walk for the second consecutive day as her recce had been delayed to the last minute - what devotion to duty!

Jon Roseway

Town, Tors and the Taw – 4th November

A round dozen of us met at Belstone car park, on a slightly threatening weather day, having driven through torrential rain to get to the start.



We set off through the village and along a lane lined with hedges covered in verdant green mosses. After a short while we turned onto a footpath, across fields with distant views towards Exmoor, and headed down to a picturesque path beside the East Okement river, walking on a carpet of leaves through woods showing fine autumn colours, below Ball Hill.

The path then forked to follow a leat to lead us to the disused Okehampton Mill and our coffee stop. Light showers caught up with us at this point but dried up for a brief spell to give us a sunny stop for refreshments while David gave us the history of the Mill.

Continuing through the town we followed a path beside the West Okement river past the old town workhouse, until we cut up through the woods, with glimpses of the ruins of Okehampton Castle through the trees. After crossing the bridge over the A38, we head back up towards the moor, gradually climbing to leave the town of Okehampton behind us. The track took us through Halstock & Blackertor miniature and Shetland ponies stud farm which provided a *cute ponies* distraction for some of us on the way through.

Not surprisingly on a walk in the autumn, not only were we treated to the brown hues of the bracken and grasses of the moor, but also various fungi in the woods and fields – perhaps most unusually fungi growing out of splits in silage bales and very small bright lemon coloured fungi beside the path. The wet weather caught up with us, so after a brief pause to adorn waterproofs we continued onto the open moor with good views despite the showers, of various tors as we headed along a wet track towards our lunch stop.

As we approach Winter Tor, the cloud breaks to give us a brief sunny interval, complete with rainbows and views as we shelter beside the Tor for our lunch.



No sooner did we resume walking after lunch then the rain returned, but fuelled by our lunches we head on up and across the moor until we turned to make our return to Belstone along a track above our third river of the day - the River Taw, and past the Irishman's Wall – a wall to nowhere on the open moor !

Our return to Belstone is spurred on by the prospect of a welcome warm up, cuppa and cake in the Old School Tea Room – the perfect end to an enjoyable walk organised and led by David & Rosie Conner.

Jane Kewley

A walk around Dalwood – 7th November

Mention Dalwood and most OVA members' respond with "where's that?". Well it's not far away at all, just north of the A35 between Honiton and Kilmington, at the southern edge of the Blackdown Hills AONB.

Like so many East Devon villages, there's a surprisingly large Medieval parish church and an olde-worldle pub, the Tuckers Arms. Despite dire warnings about very steep muddy slopes, slippery stiles and yet more rain the night before, our small group negotiated the first hill out of the village without incident. We walked along the ridge appreciating the far-reaching views and then dropped down into the Yarty Valley and followed the river downstream to Beckford Bridge. There are actually two bridges. One is a small but perfectly formed packhorse bridge, not much more than a metre wide at the crest of the single arch, probably 600+ years old in origin, and one of only a few still standing in the UK.



In contrast, the parallel modern road bridge is utilitarian in the extreme and so low that the rain-swollen river was threatening to flow over it. From there it was a hard slog back up to the ridge and then down to Dalwood for a delicious pub lunch. Well done to Paul and Fran, who had planned and checked the walk meticulously and even arranged for free bags of apples for us to take home!

Jon Roseway

There was somebody in! - 13th November

Not only was somebody in at The Nobody Inn at Doddiscombsleigh, they let us use the car park and toilets before setting off on our walk.

Ignoring the enticing aromas emanating from the kitchens, nine of us set off up the hill beside the pub. As we approached the hamlet of Higher Ashton we passed Place Barton, an old manor farm with a wonderful “Great Barn”; at 23m long and 7m wide it lives up to its name. The farm buildings have been tastefully restored and are now hired out as a wedding venue.



Our route then crossed France Brook (does anyone know why it has this name?) and took us up steep roads to Haldon Forest. The forest was looking lovely, with the golden larches amongst the drabber evergreens. Up and up we climbed, and views towards Dartmoor unfolded. We passed under the “Go Ape” cables, and gratefully reached the visitor centre area with welcome benches and toilets. Thanks to Derek and Elizabeth for bringing their delicious Sunset apples to add to our coffee break.

From there it was an easy stroll along the “Discovery Trail” through the woods with, at times, good views towards Exeter, before heading steeply up to Haldon Belvedere. This landmark, also known as Lawrence Castle, has stunning views – it was just clear enough to see Exmoor, Dartmoor, the Exe Estuary and the sea and, of course, down to Doddiscombsleigh. Paul gave us a quick geology lesson: Doddiscombsleigh is placed on the outer perimeter of what is known as the “metamorphic aureole” surrounding Dartmoor, i.e. the rocks were altered by the heat generated by the magma which eventually formed Dartmoor. This has

resulted in minerals being deposited in fissures in the rocks, and the area was historically known for its mining activities – in Doddiscombsleigh there were manganese workings and jasper could be found.



The only way now was down – all the way to The Nobody Inn! We stopped in Tick Lane to admire some friendly alpacas. It just began to rain as we reached the cars, so it was a quick boot change, bag a few more apples from Derek and Elizabeth, then into the pub for a well-earned lunch.

I have promised Paul a return visit to the area very soon, to explore the Grade II* listed church at Higher Ashton, which apparently has the finest collection of medieval glass outside Exeter cathedral, as well as painted plaster and a decorated rood screen. The Grade I listed church at Doddiscombsleigh is also on the list, again with medieval stained glass. Perhaps we will go on a summer Sunday afternoon when the Belvedere itself should be open for visits (see <https://www.haldonbelvedere.co.uk/visit/opening-times/>)

Penny Kurowski

A riverside walk from Exmouth to Darts Farm – 28th November

A group of 16 walkers and two dogs gathered outside M&S's Foodhall to walk to Darts Farm. For the first time in many days it was not raining and we were blessed with some sunshine.

Rosemary set off at a good pace. Once we had left the urban sprawl of Exmouth behind we could enjoy Exe Estuary views and see bird life on the mudflats. Among the birds spotted along the shore were brent geese, dunlins, oyster catchers, turnstones; and the cry of the curlew could be heard. It was decided to leave the tarred 'cyclists' path and we took the narrower path to the south of the railway line. It was muddy and boggy in parts, but it afforded us an unimpeded view of the wide River Exe. And for a while, at least as far as Lypstone, we could stop worrying about cyclists coming up behind us.

We reached Lypstone Village at a convenient time for coffee stop/refreshments. A number of the group remained outside and enjoyed their snack sitting on the benches beside the sea wall overlooking the river and mudflats, others visited a local cafe nearby, and another enjoyed an early pint. The two dogs were able to be unleashed and had a great time getting muddy down by the water.

Back now to the main path, eyes and ears ready for cyclists, past the barracks where Marines could be seen receiving instruction, and on to Exton where the path turned inland for a while, finally to Ebford. Now there was a parting of the ways; some of the group took the left path on to Topsham and the rest turned right to Darts Farm. From there some of the group caught a bus home and others visited the shops or had a picnic outside. A lovely morning, very few hills, and, even better, no rain.

Thank you, Rosemary for leading us on this walk.

Jacqui Ruhlig

The Otter Valley Association

Executive Committee (01395)

Chairman	Bob Wiltshire	444395
Vice-chairman	Haylor Lass	568786
Hon Secretary	Roger Saunders	443248
Hon Treasurer	Martin Smith	442333

Committee Chairmen

Natural Environment	David Hatch	01392 444290
Planning	Nicola Daniel	445960
History	David Daniel	445960
Events	<i>vacancy</i>	

Parish Representatives (to whom queries should be addressed initially)

Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	446077
East Budleigh	Jon Roseway	488739
Otterton	Pat & Geoff Porter	567055
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacancy</i>	
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786

Other Executive Committee Members

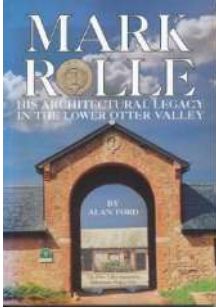
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Publicity Secretary	<i>vacancy</i>	

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OVA Publications



Mark Rolle

His Architectural Legacy in the Lower Otter Valley

Ever wondered about the many improved farm buildings and cottages in this area? This lavishly illustrated book gives a very readable overview of how a large landed estate was managed in the last 40 years of the 19th century.

£4.95 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)



Twelve Walks in the Otter Valley.

The area of the Lower Otter Valley is covered by a network of footpaths, mostly waymarked and in good condition. OVA members have compiled these walks, each with clear directions and illustrated with a sketch map. They range from 4 mile easy walks to a more energetic 9½ miler. There are notes on places of interest to whet your appetite for further exploration.

£3.00 from your village rep (or plus £2.00 P&P)

Leaflets

The OVA also publish a number of leaflets about the history, flora & fauna and walking in the lower Otter Valley. They can usually be found in the Tourist Information Centres and in other outlets around the valley.