

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Autumn 2022 Newsletter

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2022

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OVA PO BOX 70

Budleigh Salterton

EX9 6WN

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Front cover: “Hayes Barton Farm”, East Budleigh.

Home of Sir Walter Raleigh *The Editor*

From the Editor

After a Newsletter rather short on Content in the Summer, this issue is a more substantial one, fit for our new King Charles III, a monarch very much in tune with our core values.

You will find our regular Walks Reports and Oct-Dec Walks Programme, full details of two interesting Talks in October and November and a note about the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP). There are articles on important environmental topics: the effect of the decline in insect numbers on the natural environment, arboreal destruction caused by grey squirrels and the removal of wooden gates and stiles in our countryside.

Most importantly, please turn to Page 20, to book your tickets for our Christmas Party on Friday 9th December.

Andrew Kingsnorth, *vice-Chair, Interim Editor, Interim Events & Talks Organiser*. (kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com)

Chairman's Musings

Another edition and more musings. At time of writing our Editor/Vice Chair is off to Scotland on holiday. Hopefully he will bring back some of the wet stuff that we are so sadly lacking down here and I don't mean that found in a bottle. I am amazed about the way that the media forecasters refer to rain. Throughout the summer we have been advised of the 'threat of rain', rather than promise/hope/chance of rain. Despite the dry conditions that we have experienced this last summer, the local flower/produce shows

have proved that all is not lost and particularly the wild flower seeds that the OVA has financed to the local villages have produced wonderful displays, thanks to the work of the sowing fraternity. Probably, by the time you come to read this we will be inundated with water. When we experienced the drought of 1976, standpipes were the order of the day. When the rains finally arrived, the ground was so hard that local flooding took place in many places. In the Express and Echo, there was a wonderful picture of Tedburn St Mary, showing a lady standing in the bow of a rowing boat, possibly with her husband rowing, as she filled up her kettle from the standpipe.

In this edition you will find details of this year's Xmas Party. Due to an expected increase in numbers, we are moving back to the Woodbury Golf Club. We will however be in their smaller reception area, as a result of which, seating numbers will be restricted. Last year's party was great fun and I think that we all felt 'liberated'. Book now to avoid disappointment.

We are trying to encourage more of our members and others to pen articles or make some kind of contribution, which pertains to our ethos, in the Newsletter. There must be some of you out there, who have experiences or thoughts that they would like to share with us. We should not be relying on our usual contributors, mainly from the Exec. Comm, to fill the pages.

The Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) is running on schedule and has been assisted by the favourable weather. Completion is expected in the Spring of next year. The footpath between Limekiln Carpark and White Bridge is to be temporarily diverted to the north of the old cricket field. If you wish to be kept updated with the various developments of this project, you can apply on line to

mail@lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk. The drone flying up the valley is particularly interesting.

It only remains for me on behalf of the Exec. Comm. to wish you all a happy Xmas, and more importantly, a healthy New Year.

Bob Wiltshire, *Chair*

The Red Telephone Box

We reported in the last issue that the PTA of St Peter's primary School in Budleigh Salterton had bought the telephone box in Fore Street, opposite the Spar shop. The OVA's decision to finance the refurbishment of the box was influenced by the fact that this iconic structure was the emblem for the Otter Valley Association's Local Heritage project in 2014.



This design of the Box is known as the K6 kiosk and was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960) who was the grandson of the famous architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott. He designed many public buildings in the eclectic style of simplified historical modes, often termed 20th century traditionalism. Sir Giles designed many public buildings and churches.

In need of TLC?

His greatest commission was the New Liverpool Anglican cathedral, built in the Gothic style and not finished during his lifetime, but he also designed Battersea power station and the Bodleian library in Oxford.

History

The K6 kiosk was commissioned by the General Post Office in 1935 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. The design needed to be suitable for universal use, not repeating the mistakes of earlier kiosks. In fact eight kiosk types were introduced by the General Post Office between 1926 and 1983. The K2 and K3 were attractive designs, also by Gilbert Scott, but had proved problematic. The K2 was too large and too expensive; the K3 too brittle. The General Post Office turned again to Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, with his triumphant new kiosk appearing in 1936. Some 8,000 kiosks were installed as part of the “Jubilee Concession”, allowing towns and villages with a Post Office to apply for a kiosk.

A year later under the “Tercentenary Concession” celebrating the Post Office's 300th anniversary, a further 1,000 kiosks were installed for which local authorities paid a 5 year subscription of £4. In 1939 a more vandal-proof Mk II version was introduced. In 1949 the Royal Fine Arts Commission intervened again, and bowing to pressure allowed rural examples to be painted in different colours. Gilbert Scott did not want the kiosk to be painted red, but the GPO thought it would make it very visible. Subsequently kiosks have emerged painted in colours such as green and battleship grey, and after the 2012 Olympics, gold.

Heritage Legacy

Between 1936 and 1968 60,000 examples of the K6 were installed. There are around 2,500 Heritage listings for the K6 kiosk in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There are approximately 8,400 non-listed K6 kiosks, giving a total number of surviving K6 kiosks of approximately 11,700 (about 20% of all K6 kiosks). Of the eight kiosk types introduced by the General Post Office, the K6 was the most common type introduced, and is also the most common type in terms of surviving kiosks. The majority of listed kiosks, more than 90%, are K6 variants. Many have ceased to be used, and some have been sold off, so you sometimes see them in gardens. Some that are no longer in use have been sold to Parish Councils and have found new uses as information points or book exchanges. In Kingston-upon-Thames town centre in the late 1980s a row of them was tipped on edge and turned into an art installation.

In the Otter Valley the telephone boxes in Otterton, Yettington and Newton Poppleford have been listed, but not those in Budleigh Salterton and East Budleigh. The one in Otterton is now used as a second hand book exchange. The one in East Budleigh has recently been purchased by East Budleigh Parish Council and the interior is furnished with a display of several aspects of East Budleigh's history. It has yet to be decided how to refurbish and use the Budleigh Salterton box. All suggestions to the Editor, please (kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com).

Reprinted & updated from Spring 2018 Newsletter, with permission.

The Editor

Say “Hello” to the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP)

- Visitors to the area can use their mobile phones to find out more about the project
- Look out for signs on benches and posts near the project site.
- Use the QR code or text number on the signs to ask questions

You can have a virtual conversation to find out more about what is happening with the scheme.



The project has launched a 12-month pilot with Hello Lamp Post, an innovative virtual platform used to engage people with their environment, to give residents and visitors to the LORP project site at Budleigh Salterton the opportunity to ask questions and find out more about the project using their mobile phone.

Hello Lamp Post allows people to have two-way “chats” with objects in their local environment. Residents and visitors will be able to find

out why the LORP scheme is needed and what is happening around the site. They will also be able to give feedback on the project itself. Signs have been attached to benches and posts along the footpath between Lime Kiln car park in Budleigh Salterton and South Farm Road, close to the LORP site. Anyone with a mobile phone can scan the QR code or text the number on the sign to begin a conversation by text. Details are also available on the LORP website.



The first interactive locations are now live at the Lime Kiln car park, along the South West Coast Path, at the bird hide, on fingerposts, benches and viewing platform on the footpath and at the Kier Construction compound entrance in Granary Lane.

Mike Williams, project team member for the Environment Agency, the lead partner in the project, said: “Community engagement has always been a key part of the Lower Otter Restoration Project. We’re always looking for new and better ways to talk to people, to find out what residents and visitors think of the work we’re doing and to let

them know why we're doing the work. Hello Lamp Post lets people reach us when they're walking by the project site."

The *Environment Agency* is working in partnership with landowner Clinton Devon Estates to deliver the £15m Lower Otter Restoration Project, which is due for completion next spring. A similar project is taking place in Quiberville, Normandy – the Basse Saône 2050 scheme. Together, the two schemes form the €26m Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo) project, funded by the Interreg France-Channel-England programme.



Jasmine van der Eijk, Communications & Engagement Manager – Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo): Lower Otter Restoration Project. www.pacco-interreg.com

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Four Firs Car Park, Woodbury Common

Nature Reserve Car Park Improvements

Additional improvements at Joney's Cross and the roadside parking at Stowford and Frying Pans, will enhance enjoyment of our priceless Pebblebeds

Autumn Talks Programme

Wednesday 12 October, 7:30PM

Venue: Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton.

Speaker: Matt Holden (Devon Wildlife Trust)

Title of Talk: "*River Otter Beavers*"

Brief Summary of Talk:

The talk will cover the status of beavers on the River Otter, introducing the River Otter Beaver Trial, the current number of beaver territories and the future for beavers in Devon. Throughout the talk the myths and truths around beaver ecology and behaviour will be discussed. We will also examine the fascinating research that has taken place on the impacts and benefits delivered by this keystone species and ecosystem engineer. The talk will finish by providing an overview of ways we can maximise the benefits of beavers whilst alleviating or minimising the impacts, including pragmatic management solutions.

Brief biography of Speaker:

Matt Holden has worked in the nature conservation/research sector for the past 12 years on a range of projects including river restoration, farm nature conservation advice and agri-environment scheme support. Recently he completed his PhD with Clinton Devon Estate and the University of Exeter on the contrasting ecosystem service benefits derived from different agricultural systems in the Lower Otter catchment.

Tuesday 15 November, 7:30PM

Venue: Masonic Hall, Budleigh Salterton

Speaker: Ken Atherton

Title of Talk: "*Charting the Estuary of the River Exe*"

Brief Summary of Talk:

Based primarily on material held in the Archives of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, this presentation traces the charting of the River Exe from the early Portolan charts of the 16th century through to the modern electronic charts of the present day. The talk includes the work of the great Dutch cartographers, the first British sea atlases in the 17th century and the formation of the Hydrographic Office in 1795. Archive copies of published charts covering the River Exe are used to illustrate the development of the Admiralty chart of over the last 200+ years.

Brief biography of Speaker:

Ken joined the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) in 1963 as a Cartographer and apart from six years in the post of Curator of Original Documents, his 38 years in the UKHO has been divided almost equally between the compilation of Admiralty Charts and the application of aerial photography.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, an Honorary Fellow of the British Cartographic Society and a member of the Society for Nautical Research, the Defence Surveyors' Association and the South-West Maritime History Society.

The problem with insects

Many of you may not be aware of the very significant reduction in our insect population that has taken place over the last half century or so. Many insect species are believed to have gone extinct whilst most others are now much rarer than they were 50 or so years ago. The loss has been gradual, and it is hard to remember what it was like all those years ago. However, perhaps some of us can still remember having to clean our car windscreen at intervals on long journeys to remove the squashed insects (when did you last have to do this?) and may also, perhaps, remember the blizzard of moths in car headlights when driving at night. Many of you might say – So what? Is this reduction significant? Many of us now live in urban environments where the insects that many of us are aware of seem to be major nuisances – wasps (as now), cockroaches, houseflies, clothes moths, etc. However, many other insect groups are a vital part of our environment and we cannot do without them. Amongst other things, insects such as bees and flies are major pollinators of our crops, whilst others, such as beetles and other flies recycle dung, dead leaves and corpses, removing carrion and generally improving our soils; still others act as parasites and predators, helping to control our pests (think of ladybirds and lacewings), among many other activities. They are also at the bottom of the food chain, providing food for birds and many other animals. Of course, some insect species are pests and they can be hard to live with - such as those mentioned above - but the benefits derived from the useful ones far outweigh that done by the pest species.

As many of you will have read, we are considered to be in the middle of the latest “extinction event” – the Anthropocene. This reduction and extinction of species is, of course not restricted to insects – many bird and mammal species have undergone serious losses in this

period, with something like 150 bird species known to have gone extinct since 1500. But as far as the insect fauna is concerned, how great is this reduction? Various studies have taken place over the last 50 years that have been able to follow this decline. For instance, the weight of insects collected daily in special traps in Germany over a 26-year period decreased by between 75 and 82%. Similar reductions have been found in this country using suction traps that were intended to monitor aphid populations, whilst somewhat similar observations have been made in the USA and elsewhere, and it is now generally accepted that these large reductions in insect populations are real and are continuing. This is very serious, as we do depend on many of them and their loss would have very serious consequences, most obviously on the rate of pollination of our crops.

What are the main causes of this reduction? Firstly, habitat loss – in the 1920s, the UK had about 3 million hectares of downland and hay meadows but by the beginning of this century 97% of these had been lost – mainly replaced by monocultural crops that support almost no biodiversity. In addition, in the last 50 years of the 20th century, 9,500 km of hedgerows were removed – and this destruction was even supported by government subsidies! Secondly, modern insecticides. The first significant industrial insecticide was DDT. This was used almost indiscriminately – indeed, was applied direct to skin and clothing to control lice during WW2. DDT is now banned in most of the world although its' past use can still be detected in Greenland ice! Since then, many new chemicals have been discovered and today more than 500 chemicals that are toxic to animals are licensed for use in the EU, with, for instance, pesticides being applied to more than 45 million hectares of land in the UK in 1990 and an estimated annual use of 3,000,000 tons of pesticides globally. More recently, neonicotinoids have been introduced. These are exceedingly potent

- more than 7000 times as chemically active as DDT and, whilst these can be applied in minute amounts to specific sites (such as seeds), they have been shown to disperse into the environment and then still completely change bee (and other insects) behaviour at non-lethal concentrations. This is the main cause of our bee populations currently undergoing a major decline. Even the use of non-insecticidal chemicals such as herbicides can have a major impact, as they ensure that the crop remains a monoculture, reducing the food plants of many non-pest insects that would have supported the food web of other organisms. And fertilizers – it may seem that these can only be a good thing but the application of fertilizers to areas such as wild flowering meadows rapidly increases the growth of grasses and these outcompete the flowers, again leading to a near monoculture.

What can one do to help reverse this trend? It might all seem too huge a problem for anyone to make a difference but there are quite a lot of things which an individual could do. Gardeners can: grow flowers rich in nectar for bees and pollinating insects; grow food plants for caterpillars of butterflies and moths; if you have some spare space, grow your own wild meadow; stop using herbicides on the lawn and allow “weeds” such as dandelions to flourish - and think of them as friends; make or buy bee hotels; put in small (or even large!) ponds – almost any water brings in a multitude of new life; grow your own fruit and veg – and plant a fruit tree (or any tree); build a compost heap – these help to get rid of all your kitchen scraps, nourish your soil and encourages woodlice etc – and even slow worms. Of course, major change can only occur through your local council or the government and you can help by badgering them for change. In particular, Parliament must be badgered to ban the use of neonicotinoids and other dangerous pesticides. In an effort to encourage improvements in local biodiversity, the OVA has been

offering local parish councils a £500 grant towards obtaining wild-flower seeds for your own local wild meadow – and several, such as Otterton, have taken this up. In addition, the OVA has approached the local councils about less trimming of many road verges to allow a greater variety of flowers to survive. And, if you can think of other ways the OVA could help improve our local environment, do get in touch.

For anyone wanting to read further, I can strongly recommend “*Silent Earth, averting the insect apocalypse*” by David Goulson. It is an easy read and very informative.

Chris Hodgson, *Natural Environment*

Wildflowers and pollinators

As highlighted by Chris Hodgson, there is real concern about the massive decrease in insects.



Insects are crucial as pollinators, the base of the food-chain and their position in what we now understand is a complex integrated ecological system that has developed over millions of years.

Wildflowers on Otterton Green

During lock-down, a period when OVA activities were restricted, it was decided to offer local Parish Councils up to £500 to purchase wildflower seed.

The hope was that by growing wildflowers in public spaces, members of the public would be encouraged to seed areas in their own gardens and to allow areas to become more wildlife friendly.

East Budleigh, Newton Poppleford, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh parishes all took up the offer and have planted areas of varying sizes. It's hoped that these will develop but the schemes success depends on volunteers who are willing to do the spadework supported by their Parish Council.



For those who have been doing the work this is inevitably a learning curve. Initial attempts are not always successful. In some Parishes, seed has been planted in separate beds in others amongst grass.

Gatekeeper on Wild Marjoram

All have wisely started on a small scale. Ideally, mixes contain both annual and perennial seed so that there is colour from the annuals in the first year and they hopefully self-seed for the following year and then perennial plants get hold in the second year.



Keeping on top of grass is probably the most challenging problem; planted areas require ongoing maintenance and most wildflowers prefer poor soil.

Large Skipper on Lavender

The long, dry, hot summer has had a huge impact this year and is also likely to do so in future years. Plants have often flowered early and perhaps died and many trees are already dropping their leaves.

So, garden plants that do well in such conditions are also important. With a garden that backs onto meadows it has been noticeable how many grassland butterflies have been coming in to feed, especially Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Small and Large Skippers and Common Blues.



Mediterranean plants lavender and wild marjoram have been very popular and abelia, honeysuckle, sedum and old faithful buddleja are providing early autumn nectar.

Large Skipper on Lavender

Whilst providing food for insects in their adult stage is often the focus, they are only part of the solution to helping our insects recover. Allowing 'weeds', our native plants to grow is key as they provide food for caterpillars etc.. It's also important to recognise that not just bees but also hoverflies, wasps, moths and many other small insects are also key pollinators.



Wild Flowers on Otterton Green

Pristine lawns are really deserts for most insects so don't worry too much about weeding. One part of my lawn is more self-heal than grass and was very popular with common and small blues so the 'weeds' are staying. It remains to be seen what impact the drought will have on insects that depend on them.

And, finally, please try not to use herbicides and insecticides.

Geoff Porter, *Natural Environment Committee*



**OVA Christmas
Party
Friday 9th
December**



OVA Christmas Party

The Executive Committee is delighted to invite you and your friends to the OVA Christmas Party to be held at Woodbury Park Golf Club on Friday 9th December. It will be a great opportunity to participate in the social side of our organisation, spend time with friends and meet new ones. We particularly extend a welcome to single members and new members.

The evening will commence with drinks at 7PM, followed by a traditional Christmas Dinner. As well as delicious food and good company, there will be music and other entertainment, a fiendish quiz and a prize raffle.

Why not book **your** places right now! The cost is £37.95 per person, which includes a Welcome Drink, a 3-course meal with menu choices followed by coffee and mince pies.

Tickets are available **until 17th November** and will be sent to you **by email or post 2 weeks before the event.**

Please complete your application form and make your payment online (or by cheque). When indicating who you would like to sit with, please note that full tables seat eight persons.

Alternatively download the application form at:
www.ova.org.uk/event/friday-9-december-ova-christmas-party

Christmas Party – Friday 9th December - Ticket Application

Please complete the **application** below and return by:

Email – info@ova.org.uk

Post - Christmas Party Otter Valley Association, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN.

£37.95/ticket (available until 17th November):

By BACS (preferable) or Post to OVA (enclosing a cheque)

- Account Name: *Otter Valley Association*
- Sort Code: 30-98-75
- Account No.: 49855168
- Payment Reference: *Your Name*

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Please send me tickets

Name(s):.....

Postal address:.....

.....

Email address: (**Menu Choices***).....

I would like to be seated with:.....

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***Menu Choices** We will email you with a menu (3 courses; 3 choices/course) in November. Gluten/dairy free, vegetarian **options will be available** on request.

Changing Style

Galvanised by reports that the wooden stiles that mark the crossings from field to field and the locally manufactured wooden gates at field corners, are being replaced in the interests of access, by metal gates, I walked several of my favourite walks in the Lower Otter Valley. I discovered that the challenge of clambering over a stile or the soft creak of a wooden gate has been virtually, universally replaced by the harsh clang of self-closing galvanised gates.

The installing of gates is not a policy particular to the Lower Otter Valley but part of a nationwide policy to render stiles extinct. It has been reported that on the 79 miles of the Yorkshire Wolds Way, where once there were 120 stiles, there are now none. The Chiltern Society has been accused of “ruining the pleasure of a country walk” by removing hundreds of stiles.



Stiles have graced the countryside for centuries. The word is Old English, there are references in literature dating back to 1564 and the 19th-century poet John Clare wrote how the happy boy wending his way home from school “lolls upon each resting stile”.

Heading for extinction?

The wooden step stile is the most common form of crossing but there are many variations: stiles with dog gates, ladder stiles, Cornish stone stiles, clapper stiles and squeeze stiles. It is not that the stile is going out of style, rather that the stile police have decreed that it is no longer politically acceptable.



In February, Whitehall issued “guidance” to landowners and farmers, urging them to “create gaps or put up accessible self-closing gates instead of stiles”.

A “Clanger”

But does every wooden stile and gate need replacing? Could gates be installed alongside stiles — combining access and preserving an ancient tradition? And if there must be a gate, could it be a locally made wooden one, more in keeping with the surroundings and preserving an element of craftsmanship?

The stile is part of the simple pleasure of a rural walk. Let’s not obliterate them altogether.

The Editor

Grey Squirrels threaten Green Britain

Grey squirrels are already known for their aggressive behaviour and ability to take over habitat from our native red species. But they also present another threat: to the England Trees Action Plan which seeks to plant 1.5 billion trees by 2050.



Wildlife groups predict that grey squirrels will be responsible for killing 15% or 225 million of those trees by stripping bark. Red squirrels are less destructive due to their smaller teeth and lower population densities.

The UK Squirrel Accord, an umbrella organisation of 41 woodland, timber and conservation organisations established by the former Prince of Wales, said that the government should go further in its attempts to eradicate the 2.7 million grey squirrels that have bred in Britain since they were introduced from America in the 1870s. There are about 287,000 red squirrels, 75 per cent of which live in Scotland.

Presently, grey squirrel numbers continue to increase which will undermine the huge progress in planting woodlands across the UK and will fundamentally change the vision of Trees Action Plan by reducing by at least 15% woodland cover in a generation's time.



Not only are trees being killed by grey squirrels stripping bark, others are severely damaged and many die as a result of secondary infection and disease.

Picture: UK Squirrel Accord

Most of our favourite broadleaved species will fail to fulfil either their carbon, biodiversity or landscape potential, because of the grey squirrel.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) acknowledged the threat posed by grey squirrels but has not altered its tree-planting targets to take the damage into account. It is funding projects to reduce the grey squirrel population including one to feed them contraceptives in hazelnut paste.

Researchers at the Roslin Institute at Edinburgh University are also investigating a “gene drive”, in which male squirrels with a defective gene would be released into the wild. These squirrels would produce fertile male offspring and infertile females. The males would continue to spread the gene to later generations while females would become so scarce that the population would eventually collapse.

Defra is continuing to work with the UK Squirrel Accord to eradicate grey squirrels. Most of us will never live to see trees we plant grow to

their full majestic maturity. But future generations might — if we act now. Over fifty mature trees were sacrificed at the start of the Lower Otter Restoration project (LORP) and the planting of 2.5 hectares of broadleaved woodland has been promised to ameliorate this loss. Our communities need to hear what steps the LORP will take to protect these immature trees that are so vulnerable to attack by grey squirrels.

The Editor



Our native friend, the red squirrel. Phot: David White

Walk Programme: Introduction

Please refer to the OVA website www.ova.org.uk for any additional walks or updates to the programme. Due to publishing deadlines the website will always have the most up-to-date information.

We have had a full and varied programme of walks during Summer and early Autumn. Penny and Paul incorporated a ferry ride to Starcross on their walk which was fun, added interest, and proved to be very popular.

We have ventured into Dorset with Fran and Paul which ended up with a cream tea afterwards – a great way to end a walk. We have been around Sidbury Castle on a beautiful sunny day with Graham and Carolyn led a lovely walk through Ancient Wetlands and Woodlands.

Brian, Ross and Jon have all led diverse and interesting walks on the Pebblebed Heaths which have demonstrated the diversity of landscapes on our doorstep.

As we head into our Autumn and Winter programme we maintain the variety and range of walks starting with Sarah leading a great walk on Dartmoor followed by Heather and Michael heading to the beach.

Iain has a new route in Somerset incorporating an Iron Age Fort and stunning views.

In November Jon is heading to Dartmoor and Graham to the Roncombe Valley, Brian is leading a walk titled Riverside, Lanes and Commons and Penny and Paul are leading a loop walk from East Budleigh to the coast. To close 2022, Jon has offered to lead the ever-

popular Boxing Day walk, which has been much missed over recent years.

Finally, if you have led walks in the past, please do join a walk, just for the pleasure of walking – it will be lovely to see you.

If you need to contact the team the e-mail address is:

walks@ova.org.uk

Jane Connick

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Majestic oak lost. This tree which stood behind the “best view of Sidmouth and Lyme Bay” on the SW Coast Path near Peak Hill, was felled and cleared during the 2021 lockdown. The Editor

Walk Programme; October/November/December 2022

Wednesday 12 October – 10.30am – 9 miles. 5 hours. Moderate.

Booking required

'Early Autumn Walk on Dartmoor'

Meet: Bennett's Cross CP (OS 28, SX 679 816) (near Warren House Inn with nearest town Moretonhampstead). The walk will head towards Water Hill, Chagford Common, Lettaford, Hookney Tor and Vitifer Tin Mines. Stops for coffee and lunch. If you intend to come on this walk, please notify the walk leader by email:

sarah.westacott@btinternet.com.

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott 01395 277644 / 0770 6078143

Friday 14 October – 10.00am – 6.6 miles. 3 hours.

'Back in time for lunch by the beach'

Meet: at the steps to the right of the entrance to the Budleigh Salterton free car park opposite the Public Hall (OS 115, SY 061 820). If the car park is full, there are usually available spaces on Westfield Road opposite the town hall. A circular walk via Dark Lane, Shortwood Common and East Budleigh. We should have some good views. We will avoid walking along the main Otter river path. We will stop for coffee. We have the option of lunch along the sea front or heading back to the start. There may be some short muddy sections, if wet.

Walk leaders: Heather & Michael Fereday, 01395 446796/ 07484 627312

Tuesday 18 October – 10.30am - 7.5 miles. 3.5 hours

Booking required

'Odcombe and Ham Hill'

Meet: Odcombe Village Hall CP (OS 129, ST 508 153) post code BA22 8XP 9.00 am at Otterton Green or 10.30 at Odcombe Village Hall.

Please car share if possible. Ham hill, with sweeping views from its Iron Age earthworks. Field and woodlands paths. A few steep ups/downs. Telephone booking before 15 October: 01395 568822

Walk Leader: Iain Ure and Dee Woods 01395 568822 /07789 670297

Monday 7 November – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 3 hours

Booking required

'Bridges over Troubled Water'

Meet: Steps Bridge CP (OL 28, SW 8028 8831)

This walk through the Teign Gorge follows a simple route. Apart from a minor diversion up the valley side at the beginning, it's up one bank of the river to Clifford Bridge and back down the other to Steps Bridge. If you intend to come on this walk, please notify the walk leader by e-mail: jon.r2@talktalk.net

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 0778 7936280

Wednesday 16 November – 10.00am 5 miles – 2.5 hours

'A Roncombe Valley Walk'

Meet: Knapp Copse Nature Reserve CP. (OS 115, SY 155 957) This is a small car park so please car share if possible. A hilly route with fine views of the surrounding countryside and longer views to the sea at Sidmouth. Some sections may be muddy. Bring a flask for a coffee stop.,

Walk Leader: Graham Knapton 01395 445872

Thursday 24 November -10.00am - 6 miles. 3 hours

'Riverside, Lanes and Commons'

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground (SY 088 899)

Dotton, Stoneyford, Joney's Cross, East Devon Way

Walk Leader: Brian Turnbull 01395 567339

Tuesday 29 November – 10.00am – 6 miles. About 3 hours.

'A Jaunt from East Budleigh to the beach and back'

Meet: East Budleigh CP (OS 115 SY 066 849)

From East Budleigh we take quiet roads, tracks and paths to Budleigh sea front, then return by a different route. We will have a coffee stop at the beach, so bring a flask or you can buy a drink there. The exact route will depend on the weather forecast and the progress of the Lower Otter Restoration Project.

Walk Leaders: Penny and Paul Kurowski 01395 742942/07792
619748

Friday 9 December – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 2.5 hours.

‘A winter warm up’

Meet: at Colaton Raleigh church. (OS 115, SY 082 872)

Stowford, Hawkerland and Naps and Pound Lanes.

Stop for coffee.

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott 01395 277644 / 0770 6078143

Monday, 26 December – 10.30am. 4 miles

‘Boxing Day Walk’

Meet: Otterton village green (OS 115, SY 0803 8526).

A leisurely Boxing Day amble at this time of good cheer. A few circuits around the picturesque village of Otterton should be enough for most of us. Bring a flask for the coffee stop. Following the walk there will be lunch (optional) at the Kings Arms pub. Or forget the walk and just join us for lunch, it’s up to you!

Send an e-mail to me at jon.r2@talktalk.net expressing interest and I’ll return one with the lunch menu for you to make your choice, as the food must be ordered beforehand. Why not do it now, so you don’t forget. I’ll close the list on Dec 9th.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 0778 7936280

Thursday 26 January – 10.00am 6.5 miles. 3 hours.

‘Colmer’s Hill and Thornecombe Beacon’

Meet: Bridport Rest Area beside the A35 (OS 116, SY 4518 9220)

An excursion into West Dorset starting with a short walk into Symondsburry to have a delicious coffee in the café and admire the impressively large and beautifully restored tithe barn. Then there is a minor diversion to take in the view from the top of Colmer’s Hill. If we successfully emerge from Hell Lane (!), we’ll head into Chideock and down to the beach for a picnic or pub lunch. The coast path takes us up to Thornecombe Beacon and we descend via Eype to the start. If you intend to come on this walk, please notify the walk leader by e-mail: jon.r2@talktalk.net

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07787936280

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Heather on East Devon Golf Course. The Editor

How many? A History of OVA Walks Through the Years

A couple of years ago a chance comment was made which set me off on a quest to discover an accurate answer. The research involved reaching right back in the OVA magazine archives to the first edition but first I had to track down where all the archive copies were stored. The treasure was found in Bob Wiltshire's attic.

The research stalled when I delved into all the interesting articles, beautiful hand drawn artwork on the front covers and lots of interesting information which was not related to my research. I had a lovely relaxed time reading through every magazine especially as lockdown limited everything.

The comment made in general conversation was: "We must now have nearly reached 1,000 walks in the OVA". The chance comment was made by Brian Turnbull to Jane Connick on a walk led by him. Robin Holt was the OVA archivist for a number of years and he compiled lists of walks up to the Spring of 2015. Luckily Mike Paddison and Chris Buckland had kept details of all the walks under their watch when they were both walk organisers and avid walk leaders so together with the walks I put together as organiser and lastly Jane Connick as the current organiser, I have been able to make one very long list of all the OVA walks.

It has been well documented that the first organised OVA walk was led by Dorothy Stammers on 26/09/79 with 37 walkers. In the early days of the magazine the names and details of the walks weren't always included as they were put on the membership card and a whole years' walks were organised in advance, quite an undertaking. Walks were very well attended in the early days but they didn't have

competition from Pilates, other walking groups and all the other distractions we have nowadays.

Stan Herbert led walk number 128 to Bicton Arboretum and the China Tower, they had torrential rain and only 4 attendees. In March and April 2001, five walks were cancelled due to the foot and mouth outbreak which so badly affected large parts of Devon but not our local area. More recently, several walks were cancelled during lockdown in 2020 and 2021 when walking in groups was prohibited.

The 500th walk was led by Brian Leveridge and took place on 24th March 2007 attended by 27 people who walked to Squabmoor, Bicton and East Budleigh commons. A celebratory glass of champagne was provided to all by Brian Turnbull, a tradition which has been continued after a long staged or celebratory walk.

I discovered that I was one of only 7 walkers who attended the 1,000th walk entitled "A plod around the snod" led by Chris Gooding on 15/08/17. We started in Sidford and walked through Harcombe, Smoke farm, Higher Sweetcombe farm and Buckton farm. Little did we know at the time the significance of that walk.

Over the years, we have walked from the source of the river Otter in the Blackdown hills to the Otter mouth several times in stages, walked every path in the Otter valley, numerous footpaths on our eight commons and all the sections of the South West coast path between and including the Isle of Portland (a thunderstorm greeted us before we started) in the east and Teignmouth in the west. The East Devon Way has featured in many walks and on occasions tackled in five stages from Lyme Regis to Exmouth. Ten stalwarts decided to walk the whole of the East Devon Way on 22/06/16 in one day but in the opposite direction from Exmouth to Lyme Regis. They started

very early and finished just in time for a drink at a pub before it closed. Well done to them.

During Mike Paddison and Chris Buckland's 4 year term as organisers, we have walked a number of long distance paths in stages, including the Exe Valley Way in 7 stages in 2015 from Starcross to the Exe Head, the coast to coast in 2016 in 12 stages from Wembury in South Devon to Lynmouth in North Devon. I was one of five to complete all the stages of that interesting walk. We also walked the Templer Way, which follows the historical export route of granite from the Haylor Quarries to the sea port of Teignmouth. I confess to always missing the second stage of that one due to being out of the country.

The Exeter green circle circumnavigating Exeter has been covered a few times, latterly led by Penny and Paul Kurowski and there were 45 participants on the Budleigh Salterton Branch line Commemorative Celebration walk led by Paul Kurowski on 06/03/17 which was walk number 955, duration 11.5 miles. We had permission to walk on land usually closed to the public and were guided across the Clinton Devon estates land. The walk was in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the closing of the Budleigh Salterton branch line and followed the route of the original branch line from Newton Poppleford to Exmouth. Other significant walks have been the Ten easy tors on Dartmouth and the new Sidmouth ring. We have done some themed walks, looking at bluebells, birds on the river Otter, trees around Sidmouth and walks with a literary theme. The Heartland way has also been tackled between Okehampton and Stoke Cannon. There were 22 participants on the Sir Walter Raleigh Anniversary walk led by Brian Turnbull on 29/10/18, walk number 1078. For many years David Daniel led a popular walk around the Commons on Boxing Day followed by lunch in the pub.

We have spread our wings to sample the footpaths of the neighbouring counties both in Somerset and Dorset and walked across Dartmoor and Exmoor. There have also been group trips further afield to Cornwall for longer forays.

The last walk of 2021 was walk number 1220 and the walk on 15th September this year with Jon Roseway was walk number 1250, quite an achievement.

None of these walks would be possible without the dedication of our walk leaders, many of whom kept leading small socially distanced walks throughout lockdown when we were allowed. I am sure these walks were appreciated especially by those members living alone.

Records show that Brian Turnbull led his first walk on 02/12/00, walk number 330, around Kettle Plantation and Hawkerland. Brian remains an active and committed walk leader for the OVA and his extensive knowledge of the area makes all his walks a great pleasure. Haylor Lass led his first walk on 14/05/05, another with extensive knowledge in his fields of expertise. Both Brian and Haylor have had various roles in the OVA and have been instrumental in keeping it ticking along. Steve Hagger led his first walk on 13/10/07, Graham Knaption on 08/02/12, Ted Swan on 15/01/14 and Iain Ure on 29/05/14. Well done to these walk leaders who are still leading walks for the OVA and my apologies if I have left someone out who feels they ought to have been mentioned on the Hall of Fame. I know I haven't included everyone but you are all appreciated.

Heather Fereday

WALKING



Wednesday, 13th July “Around Sidbury Castle” with Graham Knapton

Eleven of us met in Harcombe Lane, Sidford, and Graham was pleased to state that the temperature forecast was cooler than the previous days. As promised, we started the steady and steep climb up Buckton Hill. Having passed Buckton Farm, we paused for the first of many wonderful views, and just before entering the woods, we stopped to look at a bird of prey in a nearby tree ... was it a young kestrel or a falcon? As the others started the climb up the stony path in the woods, I waited with David White-like patience and was eventually rewarded with a half-decent glimpse.

The others had waited for me at the top of the hill ... only to start the steep descent on the stony and slippery steep path out of the woods: we were on the East Devon Way. Having reced the walk a month or two earlier, Graham offered an alternative less steep detour which four decided to take .. only to report that the brambles and nettles had grown up since then! Having crossed a stile out of the woods, we were reunited with a view to our next destination - Sidbury.



We crossed the River Sid (at 6.5 miles, the shortest complete river in England), we walked along Bridge Street admiring the flowers and the thatched cottages and stopped at St Giles Church. Some of us took the chance to explore its interesting history and interior and all of us enjoyed a brief coffee break and the chance to sit down.

Leaving Sidbury on the East Devon Way, we passed Black Pits Plantation and Sidbury Castle (an Iron Age hill fort) without realising it - probably talking too much! We passed Goosemoor Farm on the ascent to White Cross where we were rewarded with the official coffee stop and another wonderful view.

From there it was more or less downhill through White Cross Plantation, more stony lanes, then into the outskirts of Sidford, passing St Peter's Church and back to Harcombe Lane and the hot cars. Two walkers decided that a trip to The Blue Ball pub for lunch was needed. The company was great with many, varied and interesting topics of conversation and, in my case, no politics! There

was an interesting debate at one farm advertising “free range eggs”: there was no hyphen between “free” and “range” ... this meant that the “range eggs” were “free”!

Thanks to Graham for leading us on new paths and some familiar paths with wonderful views.

Paul Kurowski

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Apple Orchard in Colaton Raleigh where the second largest OVA membership exists – and where there has been no OVA Parish Representative for several years – rich pickings? The Editor

Letter to The Editor,

Dear Andrew,

For several issues I have been reading exhortations in the pages of the Newsletter for volunteers to join the OVA Committees, yet I see that vacancies remain unfilled.

I would put my head above the parapet if I could find a role that was not too onerous to begin with, and had a limited time commitment. If I found the role to be fulfilling and enjoyable, I might take on a role with more responsibility to the Association.

Yours sincerely

A prospective volunteer

Reply

Dear Anon,

There are 10 Trustees of the Association: 5 Officers and 5 Chairs of the Sub Committees. In addition there are 5 Parish Representatives, who are not Trustees. It is usual to begin volunteering as a member of a Sub Committee, where there are vacancies in Built Environment, Natural Environment, Events & Talks and History; or as a Parish Representative where there are also vacancies - at East Budleigh and Colaton Raleigh.

On the inside cover of this Newsletter you will find contact details for all the Officers of the Association and the Chairs of several Sub Committees. Please feel free to contact any one of them for further information.

The Editor

The Otter Valley Association

Executive Committee: (01395)

Chairman	Bob Wiltshire	444395
Vice-Chairman	Andrew Kingsnorth	443069
Hon.Secretary	Jane Kewley	445598
Hon.Treasurer	Martin Smith	442333
President	Haylor Lass	568786

Other Committee Members:

Natural Environment	Chris Hodgson	01404 815604
Built Environment	<i>vacant</i>	
Membership	Clive Bowman membership@ova.org.uk	446892
Interim Events & Talks	Andrew Kingsnorth	443069
Interim Newsletter Editor	Andrew Kingsnorth kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com	443069

Parish Representatives (to whom concerns should be addressed initially):

Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	446077
East Budleigh	<i>vacant</i>	
Otterton	Geoff Porter	567055
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacant</i>	
Newton Popleford	Haylor Lass	568786

Other Contacts:

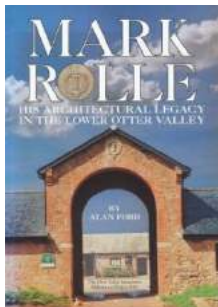
Webmaster	Martin Smith	442333
History Advisor	David Daniel	445960
Walks Organisers	Jane Connick	233614
	Jon Roseway	488739
Publications	Jon Roseway	488739

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Publications: Visit www.ova.org.uk for book sales, or e-mail booksales@ova.org.uk

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 Parish 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 Parish 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.