



# OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Spring 2023 Newsletter

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Reg. Charity No. 278266

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## **From the Editor:**

This issue is devoted almost entirely to developments at the Lower Otter Restoration Project. Activity at the site has increased several-fold in the last few months, in preparation for the breach of sea defences, which will be taking place over a period of several weeks as a phased, gradual process.

The new Cricket ground will come into use in May, also on a phased basis. The changes in the landscape of our estuary are dramatic, and the benefits for wildlife are already palpable. There are some minor gripes of course, raised in our LORP Watch and Letters to the Editor, which do not detract from the major achievements of the PACCO initiative.

At our AGM on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June (Notice on page 2), if you have an inclination to become a Trustee, please take the opportunity to talk to one of the Officers of the Association.

*Andrew Kingsnorth, Vice-Chair, Interim Editor, Interim Events & Talks Organiser. ([kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com](mailto:kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com))*

## **Chairman's Musings**

This will be the last of my 'musings' as at the AGM in June I shall be stepping down as Chairman. It has been a great privilege to hold this position for the last few years and I would like to thank everybody who has supported the association and myself whilst I have been in harness, particularly the Executive Committee. Many other of our members carry out sterling work, beavering away in the background and never seeing their names in the bright lights. They are greatly appreciated.

The most recent talk about local Iron Age Hillforts seemed to tick the box for many members and guests. We had 87 people packed into the Masonic Hall to enjoying the talk, which is a record number in recent years.

Enjoy the summer when it finally arrives.

*Bob Wiltshire. Chairman*

# Notice

**The 44<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Otter Valley Association will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at the Peter Hall, Budleigh Salterton**

## Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Previous AGM held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report including the Trustees Report and Accounts
5. Election of Trustees as Officers
6. Election of other Trustees
7. Appointment of an Independent Examiner
8. Any Other Business
9. Proposed Date of next AGM to be confirmed.

The formal business will be followed by a short presentation, by Ed Parr Ferris, Conservation Manager for Devon Wildlife Trust, on the Two Moors Pine Martin Project.

Nominations are invited for Trustee vacancies in accordance with the Constitution.

The draft Minutes of the AGM held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022, together with the Trustees Report and Accounts will be available on the OVA website prior to the meeting or available on written request.

**The lower Otter valley pre-LORP**

## Natural evolution and human intervention over the centuries

Until the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Otter Estuary was completely open to the sea, with a wide entrance channel. It was navigable for vessels of 100 tons or more, to berth at various moorings on either bank to well beyond Otterton, probably to Newton Poppleford/Harpford. In the late fourteen hundreds the river mouth gradually silted up and by the 1530's passage for larger boats became prohibitive, seriously affecting the lucrative maritime trade which existed.

Salterns had worked the saltpans (used for the preservation of fish and meat) on the estuary from Roman times. Lime kilns were in use from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, for production of fertiliser in agriculture and were situated near the saltings. As the river silted up, a pebble bar formed at the mouth of the river, further restricting access to the estuary and a salt marsh formed behind the bar.

Natural salmon pools were sited close to the shingle bar (at the current location of Lime Kiln car park). Licences could be obtained to fish in the river and in the pools.

In 1513 Henry VIII used skilled shipwrights and caulkers from different parts of Devon to construct his ship *Harry Grace a Dieu* and 3 galleys at Woolwich. Amongst them were 5 impressed men from Otterton. Shipwrights and five sailors are named for Colaton Raleigh, which suggests a further slipway must have existed higher up the Otter.

By the 1650's boat building had declined in the Otter Estuary, by which time many of the shipwrights and artisans in the trade had diversified, many to become farmers.

A freak storm in 1703 caused a further mass movement of the shingle bar at the mouth of the estuary, causing additional problems for navigation up river. In November 1824, another terrible storm occurred, which washed away several cottages down by the sea. The waves deposited an additional great mass of pebbles which remain to this day.

During the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, some of the salt marsh was reclaimed, using the labour of the French prisoners of war. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century embankment, confining the river Channel to the east side of the lower valley, was designed by James Green, the pioneering builder of tub boat canals. "Little Bank" was built to prevent seasonal flooding, allowing land to be reclaimed for agriculture. The Channel provided a canal to maintain navigation and transportation up the river. "Big Bank" was engineered later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to protect Pulhayes farmland.

An aqueduct was built in the 1920s to carry the Budleigh Brook over the valley to the Otter, preventing waterlogging and creating land more suitable for grazing. The tip for household waste was first used in 1928 and was in use until 1978, gradually spreading east.

As late as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a small fleet of herring drifters existed in Budleigh Salterton and later boats netted the mackerel shoals offshore. Fishing is now very limited for white fish and shellfish. Farming now constituted the major employment and continues to dominate the valley in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with arable crops, sheep and dairy.



*High tide and full flood at the mouth of the Otter river*

*Ed (Source: OVApedia)*

## **LORP & Baase-Saône 2050 Collaboration**

The PACCo (*Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts*) sites in East Devon and Quiberville, Normandy are making good progress - with the new road &

footpath bridges, cricket club and creek network at the LORP - and the campsite and waste water treatment plant - at Quiberville.

At the LORP, the concrete aqueduct running between East Budleigh and the Otter river has been removed, allowing Budleigh Brook to flow directly into the floodplain through new channels. This will increase its ecological value to fish and invertebrates and allow the landscape and wildlife to return to a more natural state.



Big and Little Bank have been lowered, with the creation of two newly surfaced footpaths: between East Budleigh and the River Otter (picture) - over Little Bank, with a causeway - and along the west of the valley between Big Bank and South Farm Road.

Seven new viewing platforms are being provided, accessible from the main footpath network. They will provide views across the floodplain of wildlife and wading birds attracted to the new wetlands.



Between December 2021 and December 2022, 131 bird species were recorded on site including a recent spotting of over 100 black-tailed godwits: a new record for the area. At the southern end of the site, construction has taken place of a new 70-metre footbridge on the South West Coast Path, near to the location of the future breach of the flood-bank.

Across the Channel, the Basse Saône 2050 project is well underway.





The new tourism facility, located on an adjacent hillside, began with the completion of earthworks, roads & utility networks, and will be constructed entirely of wood. Nearby in Longueuil, the Soléa, a new wastewater treatment plant will enable better quality water to be discharged into the Saône (and thus into the Channel).

The creation of an intertidal environment, rich in biodiversity will develop in the lower Saône valley, changing the landscape from freshwater to brackish wetlands.



In July 2022 the French partners visited the LORP and were impressed with the on-site solutions that had been implemented by the Environment Agency.

A fauna and flora habitat inventory in the two valleys has been established and future contacts through PACCo will enable extensive scientific exchanges and ensure that research on adapting low-lying coastal valleys, brought about by climate change, can be monitored and compared, illustrating the importance of institutional cooperation.





In September 2022, the English partners visited the Saône Valley, where they were warmly welcomed by members of the Conservatoire du Littoral.



A study of the fauna and flora in the Saône valley carried out in 2021, had uncovered a vast range of species in its 256 hectares of wetlands.

The English visitors were taken to the Foyer des Jeunes, where they met the Mayor of Quiberville, Jean-

François Bloc and his team, who had organised a tour of their project. This included the wastewater treatment plant where the latest technology is being implemented, and the new campsite, which will provide the town with the infrastructure to attract many new tourists.

An inspection of the position of the 10-metre breach in the current coastal defence, was compared with the 70-metre breach that is planned in the Otter valley and led to discussion of the rationale and technical design behind the two schemes, as well as how implementation will vary.



The final stages will involve more educational presentations and webinars.



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

With acknowledgements to *Jasmine van der Eijk*,  
Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural  
Affairs (Defra)

*Ed*

## PAACo Webinar Report

In the UK, sea levels have risen 16 cm since 1900. This trend is set to continue with the sea level likely to rise by up to 1.0 - 1.2m by 2100 (Met Office, 2021). The impact of climate change on our coasts is one of the biggest challenges we face today. Rising sea are putting our coastal communities at risk.

The *PACCo (Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts)* initiative will use the work carried out in the Otter and Saône Valleys to show the benefits of early adaptation to climate change and create a guide to help other communities decide whether to adopt similar methods of adaptation.

Over 70 other estuaries on the north coast of France and the south coast of England may benefit from following a similar approach.

A webinar “Natural Capital and Socio-economics” took place on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022, with 2 presentations from Dr Roger Auster and Dr Susanne Armstrong.

## **Engagement in the Lower Otter Restoration Project and Saône Territorial Project**

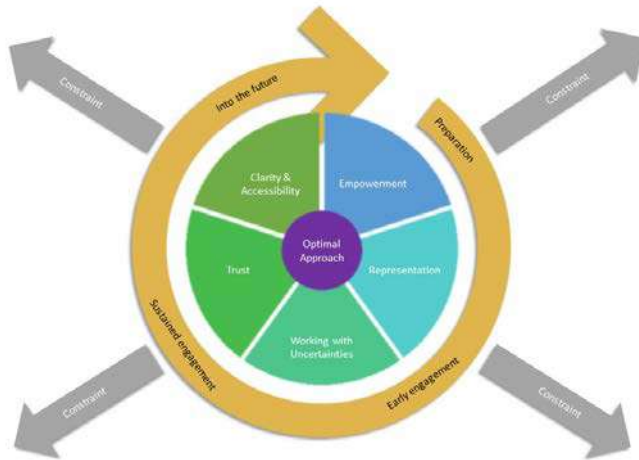
***Dr Roger Auster, University of Exeter***

PACCo is a project seeking to learn from the Lower Otter Restoration Project, and the Saône Territorial Project in France. The University of Exeter was commissioned to identify learning points about the engagement of communities and stakeholders to inform similar schemes in future. As independent researchers, we undertook:

- An evaluation of engagement undertaken for the project sites, based on historical documentation;
- Identification of common themes in planning consultation responses submitted for the Lower Otter Restoration Project;
- Interviews with project partners and representatives of stakeholder groups;
- Workshops with local residents in both project areas.

Drawing on findings from all the above, we developed a ‘Model for Engagement in Coastal Adaptation and Landscape Change’. This shares the

transferable learning we identified and hopes to encourage engagement processes where communities and stakeholders are represented and empowered, where there is trust between groups, information about a project is accessible, and uncertainties are worked through. The Model also recognises that there can be constraints that influence the engagement process and project development (for example, financial, technical, or regulatory limitations).



We would like to say thank you to all the research participants who took part in the interviews and the workshops. We are very grateful for all of their contributions towards this research.

Our project reports are now available at: <https://www.pacco-interreg.com/downloads/>

The research was undertaken by the University of Exeter, with support from Lisode Consultancy in France.

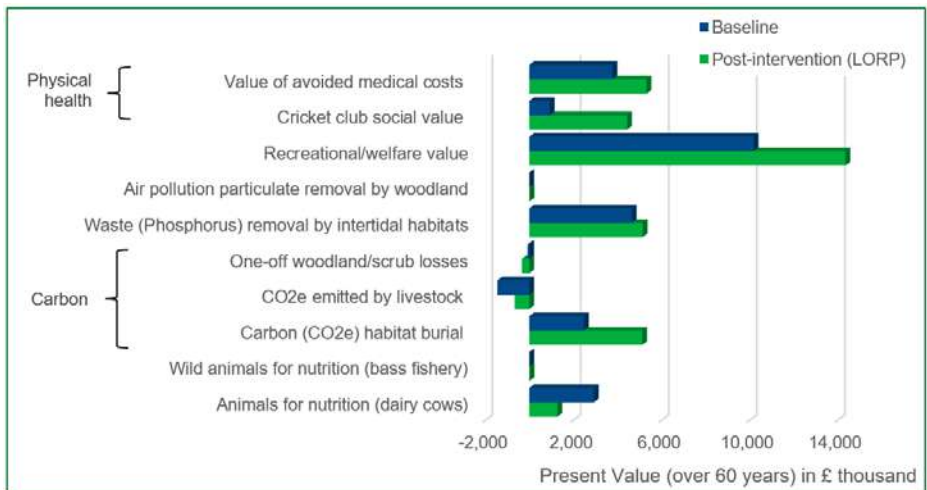
## **LORP: Socio-economic benefits assessed and quantified**

***Dr Susanne Armstrong, ABPmer Consultancy***

The Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) is now reaching its final stages. A report on the socio-economic benefits from the natural capital created/impacted, is now available: <https://www.pacco-interreg.com/downloads/natural-capital-assessment-for-the-lower-otter-assessing-and-quantifying-the-socio-economic-benefits-from-adaptive-management-of-estuarine-sites-wp2/>].

A presentation on the study was given as part of a webinar in December, this can be viewed here: <https://www.pacco-interreg.com/video/> - see PACCo: Natural Capital and Socio-economics (webinar)

This work was undertaken by marine consultancy ABPmer and environmental economics consultancy etfec. The three areas to be studied at the LORP will be Big Marsh S; Big Marsh N and Little Marsh. In the last year the Otter river valley had 106,277 visitors.



The study compares the situation as it would have been without LORP with one where LORP is implemented. The results show that, when compared to the ‘without LORP’ scenario, the LORP scenario has clear additional ecosystem service benefits, with a total value improvement of *circa* £11.2 million (over the 60 year accounting period).

The vast majority of the benefit value is connected to benefits to wider society, in relation to physical health (value of avoided medical costs, continuation of cricket club), and also recreation welfare benefits. Nutrient cycling benefits, specifically phosphorus removal, are also associated with fairly high benefit values, as are those related to carbon sequestration/burial.

With regard to the carbon calculations, whilst there are some one-off woodland and scrub losses with both scenarios, overall, there is net carbon burial. It has been estimated that the new intertidal habitats created by LORP will bury almost 8,000 tonnes of carbon over 60 years. On average, every year, the new habitats will bury enough carbon to offset the annual fossil fuel consumption of almost 300 cars.

+++++

### **Kier LORP Update**

The new South Farm Road became operational on 4<sup>th</sup> March.

The Western Footpath North will be closed until 31<sup>st</sup> May so that it can be linked to the new South Farm Road. During construction of the footbridge, when this section of the SW Coast path is closed, the Western Footpath South, will be complete, so there will be an alternative route providing continuity.

The revised date for the embankment breach is now in May\*, which is a slight delay due to high winds in late 2022, preventing the use of the large crane - and cold weather preventing the pouring of concrete.

The new car park beside South Farm Road will be opening in the summer.

Raising the water levels over the low-lying areas of the site have been taking place at the north of the site. The depth of water will be limited and carefully

monitored to ensure that it does not have an impact on wildlife residents. This is taking place ahead of the breach, to ensure that wildlife such as small mammals and reptiles do not move into the area which will ultimately become intertidal.



*Controlled flooding north of South Farm Road*



***Dan Boswell***

***Environment Agency Project Manager***



With acknowledgement to:

[www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk](http://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk)

*Ed; Perhaps the final embankment breach might occur on Coronation Day!*

News from East Devon Area Of Natural Beauty (EDAONB)

The *East Devon Farmers Group*, which has been running for four years and includes 69 local farms, continues to receive training in environmental stewardship, connectivity, emissions and water management.

As part of the national *Nature Recovery Plan*, which aims to restore and increase wildlife-rich places, four zones in the Area have been identified, including our local Pebblebeds, the Otter valley and the East Devon coast.



The regional programme of powerline removal funded by the *National Grid* continues. There are two schemes within the Area, one on the Lower Otter and another on Fire Beacon Hill. The Lower Otter scheme is almost fully removed.

An *Audit of Signage* along the Coast highlighted an urgent need for updates at Exmouth, Budleigh Salterton and Beer.

EDDC has put together a proposal for *limitation of windsurfing and paddle boarding* on the lower Otter, where an area of open water will be introduced by the LORP, but these have not been adopted, and the matter is now in the hands of Clinton Devon Estates, who are in discussion with Natural England.

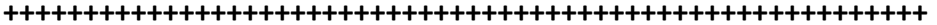
Defra have now gone live with the *Slurry Infrastructure Grant (SIG)*, and large parts of East Devon (and Somerset) are regarded as target areas for England. Therefore it is likely that a number of applications for compliant slurry stores in our Area may be received.

### **LORP Watch – recent events in the lower Otter valley**





*The bird hides on the East and West side of the estuary have been removed. The former was frequently vandalised and unusable. The other, on the West side, has been dismantled and will be replaced with a viewing platform.*



**A selection of shots from near the mouth of the river Otter  
by David White (reported in January)**



The lapwings were part of a flock of 80 which came onto the newly created marsh during the recent cold spell



Some of the curlews move between the marsh & the estuary to feed. They will frequently find small crabs which are quickly swallowed



Several coots have been seen & these are really scarce visitors to this area



A flock of 70+ black tailed godwits, a site record for me, were seen on the new marsh (& among these was a surprise ruff)



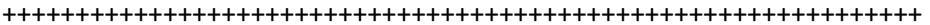
Several redshanks seem to prefer the estuary most of the time



Similarly, dunlin seem to prefer the mouth of the river too. Observant members may spot the ringed plover among them.



Water rails are still in the area &, with luck, will occasionally emerge from dense cover.



Raised Western footpath, north of South Farm Road. This broad, level path will revert to its former use as a cow road (and the odd horse), to enable them to access South Farm Road and meadows east of White Bridge. As a result, it will be unattractive for wheelchair users.



Landfill along 200m length of South Farm Road, burying thousands of yellow irisesthat provided a brilliant show in the Spring

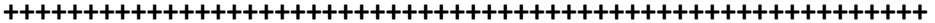
## Contributions from the long lens of Tony Gray



*Egrets, we have a few*



*Fishing on the Otter Estuary*



*The site of the former Budleigh Tip will be enhanced by the planting of over 12,000 trees*



## Reedbed Management

As a reedbed matures, detritus and debris begin to build up, causing the reedbed to silt up and start drying out, allowing scrub (willow, bramble etc) to grow in.

This is happening at the reedbed below the old landfill site on the LORP. Without management, natural succession will progress and the reedbed will be lost. So, some form of management is required at some stage, if the reedbed is to be retained. Successful reedbed management is implemented on many of the RSPB reserves.



As part of the Lower Otter Restoration Project cutting (picture) management of the reed bed below the old landfill site commenced the week of 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023. This will allow the reedbed to regenerate with younger and stronger regrowth.

For further enquiries, contact; [exmouth.PLO@kier.co.uk](mailto:exmouth.PLO@kier.co.uk)

## **Sewage Pipeline Project at Budleigh Salterton**

South West Water is undertaking works to a piped outfall between the Lime Kiln Car Park pumping station and Otter Head as part of the Environment Agency's wider Otter Estuary Restoration Project.

The works consist of drilling a new replacement outfall deeper below the Otter Estuary. This is essential to protect the outfall from future damage due to rising sea levels and increased storminess. This will reduce the risk of pollution of the river Otter.



*Drone picture of Pipeline Works (photo: SWW)*

The project requires a temporary working area on Otter Head (this will be reinstated following the works) and a large temporary working area in Lime Kiln car park which will reduce the number of spaces available. For this reason, the works have been planned outside of the busy summer period. Work is expected to be completed by Easter 2023 and South West Water would like to thank local residents for their patience.

*Beth Slow (she/her)*

*Reactive Media Manager*

*Peninsula House, Rydon Lane, Exeter EX2 7HR [pennon-group.co.uk](http://pennon-group.co.uk)*

**New Budleigh Salterton Cricket Pavilion**

Following completion of its final season at the Ottermouth ground in September, Budleigh Salterton Cricket Club has been relocated to a site on higher ground north of South Farm cottages. In 2009 the club was part of the initial working group that looked at the future of the lower Otter valley and its adaptation to climate change.

The move to the new ground, which will accommodate 2 pitches, practice nets and pavilion, was funded through the *PACCo (Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts)* initiative and the Lower Otter Restoration Project. The Club has taken the initiative to build the pavilion to its own 2-level design, which requires them to raise an additional £600k, on top of the £1.4m provided for the development of the site by the Environment Agency.



*Artist's impression of the new Pavilion (front)*

At a meeting in November to launch the public appeal for the funds, there was overwhelming support. Planning permission had been approved for an impressive, Functional building which will also serve as a community venue for the town. Temporary bar and changing facilities start in April 2023. The clubhouse is due to be completed at the end of the 2023 season. The



facilities will host minor county cricket, league and youth cricket, women's cricket, disability cricket, a Third Team and its first Girls' hardball Team.

Cricket Club Committee member Jasper Westaway said: "Very few clubs are provided with the opportunity that was offered to Budleigh. We have been very lucky. We opted to build a facility that will remain fit for purpose for generations to come. And one that we hope inspires people never involved in cricket to play or become part of the community."

Cricketing legend Sir Alastair Cook CBE praised the club's proposals. In a video message, he said: "The plans look absolutely fantastic. A new state of the art clubhouse will be a great facility for the community, and two new cricket pitches mean that four teams can play at once. I can't wait to see it!"



*Artist's impression of the new Pavilion (side and rear)*

## Otters and Bird Flu

The *Animal and Plant Health Agency* (APHA) has tested 66 mammals found dead in areas where large numbers of birds have recently died of bird flu. . Sites are spread across England and Wales, including Cornwall. Four of the mammals detected in the last 12 months were otters, and are likely to have contracted the disease after scavenging bird carcasses.

In January last year, an infected quora of Muscovy ducks in Buckfastleigh were culled. The APHA have said that there is no evidence of the disease passing between mammals in the wild. The have stressed that the danger to humans remains low, and people are advised not to handle sick birds.

APHA (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency>)

## Beavers in Alaska

Climate change and warming in Arctic Alaska is causing the permafrost to thaw, creating new rivers and lakes and allowing vegetation to flourish. These changes have enticed beavers to move from the Yukon and British Columbia into this virgin, far-north territory in vast numbers, and they are transforming the landscape.

The dams they build to alter the flow of streams and to create their still-water pond habitat, warms the water, causing further melting of the permafrost. The exposure of the top-soil releases greenhouse gases, adding to the warming of the climate. Studies by satellite of the tundra have revealed thousands of recently developed beaver ponds.

It is now well-established that these changes will restore biodiversity – but in Alaska they will also exacerbate climate change and at a rate that may be causing disturbances that are greater than those caused by the migration of humans into the melting Arctic.



*Picture: David White*

The pair of beavers with a lodge near Otterton, added five new kits to the colony on the Otter river, with frequent sightings by walkers and visitors around the area of Otterton Mill. There are now

more than twenty family groups of beavers living along our river and its tributaries. Devon Wildlife Trust continues to work with local landowners, farmers and riverside residents monitoring where beavers are active and addressing issues where they arise.

## **Beavers in Scotland**

CCTV footage recorded at an RSPB reserve at Loch Lomond, has revealed that an otter was likely to have been the culprit that killed two of five sibling beaver kits, recently relocated with their parents from Tayside. Post-mortem examination of one of the kits confirmed it had been preyed upon by an otter.

RSPB Scotland has commented that: “It is known that young beavers, particularly small kits, can be predated (killed to eat) by otters, foxes, pine martens, birds of prey and even large pike. Studies also show kit mortality can be quite high especially in their first year.”

Loch Lomond is the third location in Scotland where a beaver translocation has taken place since the initial beaver reintroduction trial at Knapdale, Argyll, began in 2009.

## **Walk Programme April / May / June 2023**

***Welcome to our spring / early summer programme with lots of choice and walking in different areas.***

***We are trialling extra ‘pop-up’ walks where the walk date and details will be published on the OVA website nearer the time. Two to look out for:***

- ***Sarah Westacott: in June***
- ***Heather Fereday: date to be agreed***

**Tuesday 4 April – 10.00am – 9 miles.**

***‘Coleridge Link Trail’***

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground CP (OS115, SY 088 899)  
Tipton St John, Ottery St Mary, Knightstone, White Cross, Harpford Wood and Harpford. Stops for coffee and either a picnic or lunch at the Volunteer Inn.

**Walk Leader:** Iain Ure 01395 568822 / 07597 921007

**Saturday 15 April – 10.00am – 8 miles – about 4 hours.**

***‘A Spring loop of the Commons’***

**Meet:** Wheathill car park (OS115, SY 041 847)

Squabmoor Reservoir, Dalditch Common, West Down Beacon, Knowle and Shortwood Common. Coffee break and picnic lunch.

**Walk Leader:** Sarah Westacott 01395 277644 / 0770 6078143

**Monday 17 April – 10.00am – 9 miles OR the option of 5 miles.**

**5-6 hours including lunch and coffee stops for the full walk**

***‘Circumnavigation of Exmouth’***

Meet: Exmouth Station.

We start from Exmouth station and follow the course of the railway line back towards Knowle before heading to the coast and walking the coast path via Orcombe Point and then along the seafront to the station. Quite a bit of road / track walking, but the coast path may be muddy! Please bring a picnic lunch. For the 5 milers we will provide bus times back to Exmouth on the day.

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

**Wednesday 26 April – 10.00am – 4.5 miles. Booking required**  
***'Bluebells at Killerton'***

**Meet:** Paddleford Bridge CP (OS114, SX 955 998) nearest post code EX5 4ER. Columbjohn Chapel, Killerton Park, masses of bluebells. Views over the valley and ancient trees. Ellerhayes Bridge, Park Wood, River Culm.

Easy walking, most paths gravelled, may be some mud.

No dogs, only assistance dogs, as cattle in the meadows.

**Walk Leader:** Margaret Read 01392 759332 to book a place

**Sunday 30 April – 10.00am – 7 miles.**

***'Plenty of Greens, Green views and a village Green'***

**Meet:** Crowshute car park, Chard (opposite Sainsbury's) post code TA20 2DH. (OS116, ST 320 084)

Chard, Crimchard, Chardleigh Green, Combe St Nicholas, Wadeford.

Lovely walk in the Blackdown Hills. Bring a picnic. No booking required.

**Walk Leaders:** Paul and Fran Dike 01297 20695 / 07977 057546

**Thursday 4 May – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 3 hours.**

***'Bystock and Bluebells'***

**Meet:** Dalditch Farm, north of Knowle, near Budleigh Salterton (OS115, SY 047 836)

From Dalditch we will walk alongside Squabmoor Reservoir to Bystock Nature Reserve, returning via Wheathill Plantation and Shortwood Common, where we hope to see some bluebells. No severe hills but there could be mud in places if it has rained. We will break for coffee, so bring a flask.

**Walk Leader:** Ross Hussey: [rdandamhussey@hotmail.com](mailto:rdandamhussey@hotmail.com) or 01395 227991

Mobile for contact on the day only: 07902 255915

**Tuesday 9 May – 10.15am start – 7 miles**

***Sidmouth Arboretum:***

***‘Sidmouth Tree Trail & Salcombe Regis Walking Trail’***

Meet: Sidmouth Triangle. Catch 157 bus (Budleigh Salterton 9.23) arriving at Sidmouth Triangle for a 10.15 start.

Gentle but undulating and sustained walk along these two trails spotting the many interesting trees. About 4 hours with retail opportunities at the end.

Please bring packed lunch for cliff top stop, camera, and your well-thumbed copy of the eye-spy book of British trees or equivalent.

**Walk Leaders:** Iain Ure & Dee Woods 01395 568822 / 07597 921007

**Saturday 20 May – 10.00am – 6 miles.**

***‘Otter Valley Old & New’***

**Meet:** East Budleigh CP (OS115, SY 065 849)

A 6-mile circular walk following some ancient and some very new paths in the Otter Valley. Bring your own hot drink or buy one from Otterton Mill.

**Walk Leader:** Steve Hagger 01395 442631

**Tuesday 30 May – 10.00am – 6.75 miles**

***‘A Bimble in the Blackdown’***

**Meet:** Chardstock Community Hall. (£ donation to the Hall). EX13 7BJ (OS 116, ST 312 042)

Chardstock, Burr ridge, Bounds Lane and Hook.

Bring a picnic. No booking required.

**Walk Leaders:** Paul and Fran Dike 01297 20695 / 07977 057546

**Friday 2 June – 10.00am – about 7 miles.**

***'Not quite the 100 acre wood' but parking at Eeyore's place!***

**Meet:** Donkey Sanctuary

Walk details to follow. Please see OVA website.

**Walk Leader:** Carolyn Cox

**Wednesday 21 June – 10.00am – 5-6 miles. About 3 hours**

***'Tors and Mires'***

**Meet:** Haytor National Park Visitor Centre (OL28, SX 765 771)

(about 50 minutes drive from East Budleigh)

We will walk from Haytor Visitor Centre via Haytor Quarries to the Devon Wildlife Trust nature reserve at Emsworthy Mire. Here we will take our time to explore the remarkable plants and animals that live here. We take a different route back, crossing Saddle Tor for great views on a clear day. You might like to bring a picnic lunch for afterwards or visit the nearby café.

Check the website for more details about this walk nearer the time.

Please book with the walk leaders: Paul and Penny Kurowski 01395 742942 or 07792 619748 or [pandpkurowski.me.uk](http://pandpkurowski.me.uk)

**Tuesday 27 June – 10.00am – 5.5 miles. 3 hours**

***'Branscombe – Beer Loop'***

**Meet:** Branscombe Village Hall CP (OS 115, SY 1974 8876)

A fairly steep climb up from Branscombe on the inland route to Beer for coffee and then up again onto Beer Head for outstanding views of the coastline. Then we take the Hooken under-cliff path with its microclimate 'jungle' and well-exposed geology. Optional lunch at the Sea Shanty café or Branscombe beach.

**Walk Leader:** Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07787 936280



## Walk Reports

### Easing the Spring

Nine of us gathered on a lovely sunny early Spring day to join Brian Turnbull on a walk to discover more about the remains of the sites used by the soldiers training at Dalditch Camp in WW2, but we had a surprise in store.

He explained how 'easing the spring' is also a military term which relates to the rifle used in training. We were also promised a poem during our coffee break, so we set off with a spring in our step heading uphill towards Squabmoor Reservoir.



We stopped briefly here for Haylor to give a quick history on the building of the reservoir and subsequent de-commissioning. Apparently, it would now only serve Exmouth for 6-7 days, so is only used for recreational fishing. The eagle eyed amongst us spotted a shag or cormorant diving and we also learned there is a substantial number of freshwater mussels living in the reservoir.

Our route then headed across East Budleigh Common towards Frying Pans passing decontamination buildings, Nissan hut sites and rifle ranges. We stopped for coffee and Brian read a poem which inspired the title of the walk, a small extract is reproduced below:

### **Naming of Parts by Henry Reed**

*And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
Is to open the breach, as you see. We can slide it  
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this  
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards  
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:  
They call it easing the Spring.*

It was very atmospheric to listen to the poem with signs of Spring around us and imagining all the troops who had passed through the area. We continued briskly on, viewing rifle ranges, two more decontamination units and evidence of support buildings.

Circling around Wheathill plantation we made our way back having enjoyed a lovely sunny walk which eased us into Spring with echoes of all the men who trained and lived in such challenging circumstances.

*“Quotation copyright the Estate of Henry Reed and reproduced by permission of the trustees of the Royal Literary Fund”*

Jane Connick

### **Letters to the Editor**

Having been an OVA member for many years, I have lately been disillusioned by the enthusiastic backing by the Association for the Lower Otter Restoration Project - AKA The Lower Otter devastation project.

However, amongst the Chairman's Musings in the Winter edition I see that disillusionment may be beginning to dawn, namely the likely proliferating of water sports on the newly flooded area and the effect on wildlife. Also, the intention of allowing the river to "follow its natural course". There are no plans to reinstate the footpath from White Bridge to Otter Hill when this has been washed away - as is already happening, as this means that walkers will no longer be able to enjoy this riverside walk.

Finally, the increase in OVA membership fees. Having spent my working life in magazine publishing, may I suggest to the editor that savings could be made by reducing the paper weight and gloss of the Newsletter with no noticeable detriment to its quality. Also, to devote 5 very spaced-out pages to the George Monbiot (spare us) article on pre-historic climate change and 3 pages to the goings-on at Quiberville is a bit wasteful of pages.

*Robert Redman, East Budleigh*

Dear Mr Redman,

Thank you for sending your views on several topics, vital to the mission of the OVA. First and foremost, we remain fully supportive of the aims and objectives of the LORP, while on occasion reserving the right to constructive criticisms.

We have experiences to share with Quiberville, as the Basse-Saane 2050 project emerges – and lessons to learn from them: viz-a-viz; their emphasis on educational tours for school children, with such attractions as a henhouse, beehives, insect hotels, birdhouses, hedgehog shelters, squirrel shelters, bat shelters and toad and frog shelters. In addition, there will be a visitor platform, similar to seven open-air viewing platforms at the LORP.



Already the natural environment is increasing in biodiversity and the new elegant infrastructure at the LORP, landscaping and hedgerow & tree planting taking place in the estuary will stun those seeing it for the first time – and provide a marvellous back-drop for those of us who walk beside it, daily.

George Monbiot (politics aside) is an environmental activist, winner of a United Nations Global 500 Award and of several book awards; and in 2022 was awarded the Orwell Prize for journalism.

Regarding your suggestions about reducing the paper weight and gloss of the Newsletter; this has been discussed recently in committee – and the consensus has been that a cheaper, flimsy, dull version is not preferred over the quality of our “coffee-table” publication (production, printing and distribution costs are less than £2/copy).

*Ed*

Dear Andrew

Following on from my previous email sent on the 23 October 2022

I have been investigating why the metal gates make so much of a clang. Even though there is a rubber pad for the gate to bounce off, it then bounces back onto the drop down catch and the whole gate rattles. If the catch is taped-up there is much less noise. I am considering writing to the gate manufacturers to see if it is possible to produce a catch made of a hardwearing rubber or

plastic that could replace the metal catch and hopefully reduce the noise. On some of the gates it looks as if the bolt holding the current catches could easily be undone and a new quieter catch fitted. Has anyone else come up with any solutions ?

Christine Hadley

## OVA website

The current website runs using Drupal 7 software, which will no longer be supported after November 2023. The OVA reviewed the website and found that it was fit for purpose but that we needed to upgrade to supported software. Various alternatives were considered, but the consensus of advice given was to stay with Drupal software. The hosting company, Cosmic, in Honiton, who already host the website, provided a competitive quote for the upgrade. East Devon AONB were approached for help with funding. The AONB kindly offered 50% of the upgrade costs from their Community Project Fund.

The upgrade is now complete. Visitors to the site will see very little difference, but behind the scenes there have been major changes: first, our software will have the maximum available supported life, and, second, for those maintaining the website, it will provide greater ease of use and more flexibility.

The OVA thanks East Devon AONB for their help in funding this project.



# The Otter Valley Association

<b><u>Executive Committee:</u></b>		<b>(01395)</b>
Chairman	Bob Wiltshire	444395
Vice-Chairman	Andrew Kingsnorth	443069
Secretary	Jane Kewley	445598
Treasurer	Martin Smith	442333
President	Haylor Lass	568786

## **Other Committee Members:**

Natural Environment	Chris Hodgson	01404 815604
Built Environment	Dee Woods	568822
	<a href="mailto:planning@ove.org.uk">planning@ove.org.uk</a>	
Membership	Clive Bowman	446892
	<a href="mailto:membership@ova.org.uk">membership@ova.org.uk</a>	
Interim Events & Talks	Andrew Kingsnorth	443069
Interim Newsletter Editor	Andrew Kingsnorth	443069
	<a href="mailto:kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com">kingsnorthandrewn@gmail.com</a>	

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

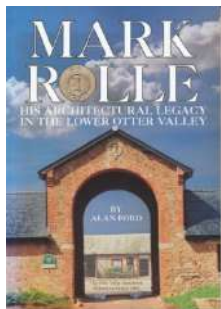
Budleigh Salterton	George Maddaford	446077
East Budleigh	<i>vacant</i>	
Otterton	Dee Woods	568822
Colaton Raleigh	<i>vacant</i>	
Newton Poppleford	Haylor Lass	568786

## **Other Contacts:**

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

**Publications:** Visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk) for book sales, or e-mail [booksales@ova.org.uk](mailto: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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Donations**

The OVA always welcomes donations to help fund its projects and meet its aims.

If you wish to make a donation to the OVA please credit our bank account or send a cheque to: OVA, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN. Lloyds Bank, Otter Valley Association; Sort Code 30-98-75; Account No. 49855168.

Reference: 'Donation' or your name. Thank you