



**OTTER  
VALLEY  
ASSOCIATION**  
Summer 2023 Newsletter



# Contents

## Page

1. Chairman's Musings
2. Anita Jennings
3. Butterflies
4. Butterflies, Wildflowers
5. Making Rivers Better
7. Fairlynch Museum
10. Walks Programme
13. Walk Report
15. Talks Review
16. Talks, Membership, Bird Boxes
17. LORP Update
19. Spring in the Lower Otter Valley

## Our Cover Photo

The River Otter on from the path between the playing fields at Newton Popleford and the Red Bridge which carries the path, and the East Devon Way, across the river to Harpford. Harpford Church can be seen in the distance on the right.

Concerns have been expressed that the rapid bank erosion will lead to loss of the footpath and the undermining of the bridge foundations. This is a vital pedestrian link between the two communities and well used by longer-distance walkers on the East Devon Way. The only alternative is by the very busy main road bridge, which is narrow, has poor visibility and no footways whatsoever.

At the time (mid June) the photo was taken, a large flock of sand martins was thoroughly enjoying both the exposed sandy cliffs and the number of insects over the water in hot sunshine.

## Chairman (and temporary editor)'s Musings

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to the outgoing chair, Bob Wiltshire, who has guided the OVA through five quite difficult years, what with Covid lockdowns and the aftermath, criticism from some difficult people, learning new skills for Zoom meetings, and a perpetual shortage of people willing and able to take an active part in the organisation (*more below*). I'm delighted he has decided to stay on the Executive Committee and agreed to be Vice-Chair.

There is plenty happening in our world for the OVA to take an interest and an active part in – from the climate crisis, through changes in planning policy and farming practices, to the growing realisation of the vital importance of our wildlife and its habitat. Now the construction phase of LORP is coming to its end, it will be fascinating to watch and be involved in the natural development of the change from water meadows to salt or brackish marsh and the plants, birds and animals which will thrive there.

Now for the serious bit. Only a few weeks ago, when your Executive Committee were preparing for this AGM and reviewing nominations, we were on the brink of having to propose closure of the organisation due to a lack of candidates for Officers/Trustees. I agreed to the nomination for chair (for one year only), as thereby we could obtain the seven trustees necessary for the continuance of the OVA. And I have picked up the role of interim editor of the newsletter for the summer edition only. Ideally we could do with another four or five trustees to restore a viable and active organisation – so I need you all to seriously consider what you can do for the Otter Valley.

If the thought of being a trustee frightens you, or if you are unwilling to make the commitment to regular committee meetings, we have opportunities for roles, such as newsletter editor, who do not need to attend every committee meeting, and for organisers of on-off events (like a seasonal party) who would only need to report to the committee on occasion. Talk to one of the current Officers/Trustees to allay your fears and discuss how you may be able to contribute.

I am pleased to report that, following the AGM, we have a volunteer for Newsletter editor – I will leave him to introduce himself in the next edition. Anyone fancy the Autumn Talks?

Haylor Lass

# Dr Anita Jennings (nee Mandl)

1926 Born into middle-class family of Jewish heritage, Prague, Czechoslovakia. 1939 Arrived England age 13 on Kindertransport to evade Nazi persecution and the Holocaust. Her parents did not survive WW2.



1942 Learned typing at college and became a secretary at an electrical company earning £5 per week. This financed night school studies at Birkbeck College during the London Blitz.

1946-51 Attained a general BSc and a First Class Honours in Zoology. Awarded a PhD for original research at Birmingham University working closely with the celebrated zoologist Lord Zuckerman (1904-1993).

1960 Gained a DSc during a full career at Birmingham University. At night school studied sculpture at Birmingham College of Art.

1965 Married Dr Denys Jennings (1904-1995) and moved to Northview Road, Budleigh Salterton.

As Anita Mandl, set up a garden studio and created a thousand or so sculptures of animals in wood, coloured marbles and stone. In 1980 became a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors exhibiting many times at the Royal Academy of Art.

*Otter Family  
Bronze  
10cm high*



1979 Founded the Otter Valley Association to uphold conservation of the built and natural environment in Budleigh Salterton and the Lower Otter Valley.

1980-2010 Fought controversial planning applications and redevelopments, documenting them for Fairlynch Museum. These included Marine Court, the Rosemullion and the Longboat Café saga. Fondly remembered as quietly spoken with a steely resolve. An influential force for conservation of the best of Budleigh Salterton and its environs. Anita's greatest legacy, the Otter Valley Association, lives on.

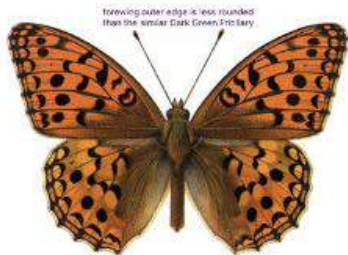
# Butterflies

Forty-three species of butterfly are fairly-regularly recorded in Devon - indeed, the county has a relatively rich butterfly fauna compared with much of the UK. However, a recently published report (*The State of the UK's Butterflies 2022 Report*) about the status of butterflies in the UK concluded that **80% of our butterfly species have declined since the 1970s**. This is a clear warning of the precipitous decline in the biodiversity of our countryside. Indeed, half of the remaining species are now classed as threatened or near threatened with extinction in Britain.

Habitat loss has been the main driver of this decline - particularly of those species which require flower-rich meadows, heathland and marginal areas such as woodland clearings. These species have very precise habitat requirements, and the increasing fragmentation of their habitats has caused their populations to become less viable and the natural pattern of local extinction and re-colonization has been disrupted. The abundance of many of these species has been reduced by a quarter and their distribution reduced by nearly 70% since 1976. Species found in farmed countryside and urban areas are managing a little better, but even they have declined by nearly a fifth in abundance and their distribution reduced by almost 10%. British butterflies are among the most threatened in Europe.

Climate change is also having a marked effect. For some species, these changes may be beneficial due to the warmer winters allowing them to emerge earlier, thus enabling them to breed earlier and even have extra generations. Indeed, in Europe, many species are spreading northwards. The average annual temperature of Europe increased by 0.8C during the 20<sup>th</sup> century - shifting climate isotherms northwards by about 120 km, approximately the range shift of many of these species. Although this could mean that some currently rare visitors, such as the long-tailed blue and the large tortoiseshell butterflies, might colonise these islands, other species, particularly those adapted to cooler or damper climates further north, are undergoing serious declines and their status as British species is becoming seriously threatened.

As regards Devon, we have colonies of several species that have a very restricted range within the UK, in particular, some of the larger and flashier fritillary species (high-brown, dark -green and marsh fritillaries), whilst a few colonies of silver-studded blue are still holding on. *continued > >*



High-brown fritillary (male)

Intense conservation work is needed to maintain these populations and to ensure that further reductions in our more common species are limited. Nonetheless, the risk of extinction of some of our most loved and spectacular insect species is unfortunately high.



Silver-studded blue (male)

Chris Hodgson

## Wildflowers

The OVA provided wildflower seed growing and thriving on Otterton Green

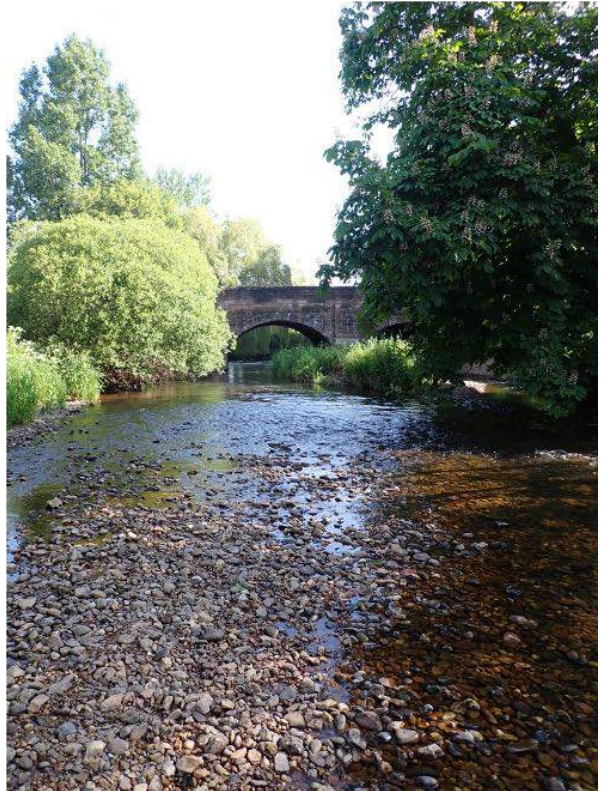


# Making Rivers Better

Since reporting on concerns about pollution in our rivers in the OVA Spring 2021 Newsletter, matters have not improved. Much of my focus then was on micro-plastics in watercourses. A joint study conducted by Exeter University and Greenpeace had revealed that all of England's rivers were polluted to some extent. Since then, due to increased reporting in the press and on TV, it has become apparent just how polluted many of our rivers have become, a matter of national concern.

The recent heavy localised rainfall that resulted in the flooding of nearby East Devon villages has served to highlight one of the issues. Rain falling onto dry, maybe compacted land results in it washes off – rather than soaking in – taking with it soil containing herbicides, pesticides and animal faeces. This runs into streams, rivers and ultimately the sea. Silt smothers riverbeds, and nitrates encourage algal growth, taking oxygen from the water.

Recent focus has been on the level of human waste discharged from treatment works. Whilst it was known that following periods of heavy rainfall the aged sewage infrastructure didn't have the capacity to contain both waste and storm-water, it was not understood the degree to which water companies were making regular discharges. Water companies and the Environment Agency are tasked to monitor discharges. The latter only have resources to focus on extreme pollution incidents rather than comprehensive monitoring. cont'd



In order to fill this testing vacuum, a range of organisations have been monitoring their local watercourses. In Devon, we are very fortunate to be a part of the Westcountry Rivers Trust, a charity based in Callington, the largest in the UK. ([info@wrt.org.uk](mailto:info@wrt.org.uk)) The Trust provides training to enable volunteers to become citizen scientists; their ambition is to monitor every water course in the southwest region. The Environment Agency's staff undertake comprehensive testing whilst Citizen Scientists provide simpler information. Their strength is in numbers. Sites approved by the W.R.T. are ideally tested monthly. The intention is to produce comparative data on the water quality at each site over time.

The OVA were invited to a Making Rivers Better training event in autumn 2022 hosted by the W.R.T. Following the course, volunteers undertake a 'dry run' using their mobile phone to record an allocated site on a watercourse. This includes details of the immediate environment, the current appearance of the watercourse, supporting photos but not water testing. Once satisfied by returned information, the W.R.T. provide volunteers with a testing kit; a donation is requested to cover the charities costs. The kit contains a turbidity

tube used to measure how murky the water is, a probe to test the quantity of total dissolved solids, thermometer to take water temperature and tabs that measure the phosphate level. Volunteers also report on observed flora including invasive species and fauna in the vicinity, whether there has been recent rainfall, speed of water flow, estimated depth and width of the watercourse and signs of pollution.

Much of the Otter and its tributaries are now being regularly tested by Citizen Scientist volunteers. Thanks to the Eager Beavers Group based in Tipton St. John who are particularly active and have been working with the OVA.



Geoff Porter



# Fairlynch Museum 2023

A good number of OVA members are also Friends of Fairlynch Museum, so this article is intended mainly for those who are unfamiliar with the museum.



The building itself, originally called Primrose Cottage, was built around 1810 by Matthew Lee Yeates, a businessman and ship owner. Built in the *marine cottage orné* style fashionable in the Regency period, Yeates is said to have watched his ships bringing coal and limestone to the limekilns at Salterton from the lookout tower on the thatched roof. Fairlynch, the name first recorded in 1870, is now Grade 2 Listed and is owned by the Budleigh Salterton Arts Centre and Museum charitable trust.

Fairlynch became a museum in 1967 when the cottage was acquired by two remarkable women; Mrs Priscilla McMullen (later Priscilla Hull) and Miss Joy Gawne. Priscilla had inherited a considerable collection of local archaeological and geological objects from her father George Carter. Joy Gawne and her sisters had amassed a very large collection of costumes, teddy bears, dolls and toys. A museum in which to conserve and display these objects was just what was needed and Fairlynch came up for sale at exactly the right time. *continued >>*

The object of the museum is to collect and display the history and heritage of Budleigh Salterton and parishes of the lower Otter Valley; the same area of interest as the OVA. A number of exhibitions remain in place year after year, some of them staying largely unchanged: the railway display, the speaking model of Jack Rattenbury in the smuggler's cellar, the archaeology, geology and wildlife collections in the Priscilla Carter room and the Sir Walter Raleigh room.



There are also a number of paintings by Budleigh Salterton's celebrated artist Joyce Denny (1893-1991).

Three other exhibition areas contain displays which are usually changed on an annual basis.

This year the local history room on the ground floor contains two exhibitions of particular interest to OVA members. The 'AONB 60' exhibition marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It records the significant changes that have taken place in Budleigh Salterton (the only town in the AONB), the lower Otter Valley and Ladram Bay since 1963.

*continued >>*

The other exhibition records the remarkable life and work of Dr Anita Jennings (1926-2022) who founded the OVA in 1979. The story of Anita's life is recorded elsewhere in this newsletter but her persona as Anita Mandl the sculptor is less well known and several examples of her amazing animal sculptures are on display.



Upstairs the Lower Otter Restoration Project exhibition remains in place for the second year with a specially commissioned 6-minute video explaining the reason behind the project and its likely effect on the estuary and its wildlife. When the embankment near the limekilns carpark is breached later this year the estuary will be restored to something like its former natural state before canalization by Lord Rolle in 1812.

Also upstairs, the Joy Gawne room contains examples of costumes and lace. This year's exhibition presents dresses of the flamboyant cocktail party era of the 1930s. There's also a display of the crowns made from recyclable items by local children in a competition recorded by BBC Spotlight TV to celebrate the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla.

The museum is open from 2:00 to 4:30 pm from Tuesday to Sunday. Entry is £2.50 for adults, for children under 16 it's free.



Trevor Waddington

# Walk Programme July – September

## Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July – 10.00am – 6.5 miles ‘A Riverside Ramble’

Meet: Newton Poppleford Playing Fields car park (OS 115, SY 088 899).

What3words ///sideburns.jots.reshapeing.

This is a linear walk down the Otter from Newton Poppleford to Budleigh Salterton. We will break for coffee along the way, so bring a flask. Also bring a packed lunch to enjoy on the sea front when we get to Budleigh, before getting the bus back to Newton Poppleford. Or make your own way back by bus straight away. Either way, bus number 157 leaves from outside Budleigh Public Hall at 23 minutes past the hour. For those without passes, single fares are currently capped at £2.

*Walk Leader:* Ross Hussey: [rdandamhussey@hotmail.com](mailto:rdandamhussey@hotmail.com) or 01395 227991. Mobile for contact on the day only: 07902 255915.

## Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July – 10.00am – about 7.5 miles.

Allow 5 hours including stops. **BOOKING REQUIRED**

### ‘Three Churches and there’s Nobody In(n)!’

Meet: Christow CP (OS 110, SX837 851) Please share cars if possible.

We will visit 3 wonderful medieval churches with a lot of original features and walk along quiet lanes and paths in peaceful countryside with great views on a clear day. We start at Christow, visit High Ashton and should be at Doddiscombsleigh by lunchtime – bring a picnic or try the Nobody Inn pub for lunch and/or drink. Walk back to Christow.

Please book with *Walk Leaders:* Penny and Paul Kurowski 01395 742942 / 07792 619748 or [pandpkurowski.me.uk](http://pandpkurowski.me.uk)

## Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July – 10.00am – approx. 6 miles. 3 hours plus stops.

### ‘Lustleigh Cleave’. **BOOKING REQUIRED**

Meet: Lustleigh Church (OL 28, SX 784 812)

Roadside parking in Lustleigh is limited – please share cars if possible.

The walk climbs steeply from Lustleigh to the top edge of the cleave (valley) above the river Bovey with views across the Moor, before descending to the dense woodland of the cleave and an undulating path back to the village. Sturdy walking boots and sticks recommended. Much of the walk is also in shade if it is a hot day.

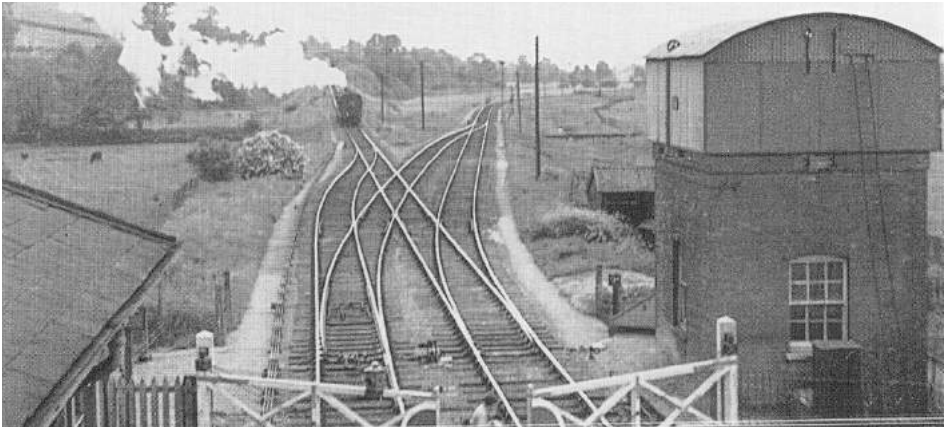
There will be a coffee stop at Hunters Tor and a picnic stop in the Cleave. Please book with the *Walk Leader:* Jane Kewley 01395 445598 or 07966 280147 or [janekeewley7@gmail.com](mailto:janekeewley7@gmail.com)

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July – 5.30pm – 4.3 miles. 2 hours. ‘Ghost Train’**

Meet: Tipton St John Level Crossing (OS 115 SY 091 917) a roadside bench between the Golden Lion Inn and the Playing Fields memorial clock. Car parking in the playing fields car park (donation) or at the pub if staying on for the meal. (Pic below Tipton Junction: Golden Lion left, garage right)

An illustrated (old photos) walk to mark 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the demise of steam trains in the Otter Valley. Across the fields to look at the 5-arch bridge and Tipton Mill, then footpath, road and track following the Sidmouth branch route as far as the Knapps Lane bridge, Harpford. Across the Otter to look at the site of Newton Poppleford station and the camping coaches siding, then follow the Budleigh branch route back along the river to Tipton St John Junction. Finishing by 7.30pm by ‘whetting your whistle’ at the pub with another look at the photos, or stay on for an evening meal together – book your own place(s) by ringing the Golden Lion 01404 812881 (ask to join Haylor)

*Walk Leader:* Haylor Lass 01395 568786



**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August – 10.00am – 7 miles. 4.5 hours**

***‘River Otter and Aylesbeare Common’***

Meet: Newton Poppleford recreation ground CP (OS 115, SY 0883 8996). This walk takes us on a trip around Newton Poppleford on riverbanks, footpaths, green lanes and quiet roads. We follow the East Devon Way up through the Aylesbeare Common Nature Reserve to the high point at Joney’s Cross. Then we head down into the Hawkerland Valley as far as Colaton Raleigh. From there it’s a pleasant stroll alongside the river Otter back to the start. Bring refreshments and a packed lunch.

*Walk Leader:* Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07887 936280

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August – 10.00am – 5-6 miles. About 3 hours**

***‘A Jaunt from East Budleigh to Budleigh beach and back’***

Meet: East Budleigh CP (OS 115, 066 849) on bus route 157

From East Budleigh we take quiet roads, tracks and paths to Budleigh seafront, 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 progress of the Lower Otter Restoration Project, we hope to be able to take in some of the new paths!

On return to East Budleigh there is the opportunity for a drink / light lunch at the Sir Walter Raleigh.

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

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September – 10.00am – 6 miles. 3 hours.**

***‘Colyton and around’***

Meet: Dolphin Street CP, Colyton (OS 115, SY 2464 9397)

An easy walk along the River Coly, over a small hill and back via the floodplain of Umborne Brook. Optional lunch at the Kingfisher pub.

*Walk Leader:* Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07887 936280

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September – 10.00am – *further details to follow, please check the website***

***‘Old Feniton Circuit via Cheriton’***

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

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September – 10.00am – *further details to follow, please check the website***

***‘Combe St Nicholas to Whitestaunton’***

A lovely walk in the Blackdown Hills.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

## Litterpick

Due to continued work on LORP, the estuary litter-pick last spring had to be cancelled. It is now hoped to hold this event at 13.30 on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September. The pick may be restricted or cancelled due to ongoing LORP work. Please see the OVA website for further details.

**[www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)**

# Walks Report

## Tuesday, 4th April “The Coleridge Link Walk” with Iain Ure and Dee Woods

**O**N A GLORIOUS sunny Spring day, 12 walkers gathered in Newton Popleford and set off for Ottery St Mary, the hard way. We headed East and crossed over the bridge to Harpford and up along the western edge of Harpford Wood. Then steeply up hill and into Fire Beacon Plantation, where the gradient was easier, and up on to the ridge, with a well-earned coffee stop at White Cross, and an open view to the West.

Rosemary Hatch not only supplied us with delicious home-made Easter biscuits, but also read a lovely poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge called ‘Life’ which referenced the Otter valley that we were looking across.



From then on it was all downhill, stopping briefly at the ancient Waxway Farm, where the owner told us the history of the Farm. We halted in a beautiful woodland garden, full of fabulous magnolias, camellias and early blossoming trees, and listened to a very abridged version of Kubla Khan. As we headed down towards the River Otter, two more walkers joined us. We halted at the ‘Pixies Parlour’ and heard the ‘Song of the Pixies’. Sadly, as it was noontide, we did not see any pixies about.

Soon we were in Ottery and stopped at ‘The Volunteer Inn’ for some very welcome refreshments. After some sustenance, Iain handed out a short but tricky and fun quiz about Ottery. Fully refreshed, we headed back towards the River Otter, passing the Tumbling Weir, and renovated Mills, now smart housing apartments. The sun was still shining, and it was an enjoyable stroll along the riverbank. *continued >>*



### Poetry at the 'Pixies Parlour

Rosemary read another delightful poem called 'Primroses' by Tipton Mill, and we had the 'Ode to the River Otter' beside Harpford bridge. It was a most enjoyable and interesting ten mile walk, so many thanks to Iain for all the planning and organising, and the fine weather.

### Dee Woods



## Walking with S T C

Coleridge virtually invented the idea of long-distance walking. He would think nothing of walking ten (or more) miles across the hills to visit a friend for lunch, and then ten miles home again.

On his 'Highland Journey' he fell out with the Wordsworths near Loch Lomond, and set out on foot on his own, on the military roads and rough heather tracks. He covered over 280 miles in the next 8 days, including two days in bare feet – he begged a new pair of boots from the Commander at Fort Augustus!

The new statue of Coleridge outside Ottery St Mary Church



# Spring Talks Programme Review

The OVA ran a popular and varied programme of Spring talks, with thanks to Andrew Kingsnorth to arranging the speakers who gave those who attended three very different and informative talks and were followed up with the post AGM talk.

The first talk titled **‘What do we really know about the local Iron Age Hillforts?’** by **Maggie Davidson** held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 23 was very well attended. The audience heard a fascinating talk which explained how different types of archaeological investigations and analysis of finds have informed, and in some cases transformed, our understanding of the purpose, construction and use of the Iron Age Hillforts that were all built around 2,500 years ago. The talk referred to examples in the local area including Sidbury Castle, Hembury, Dumpdon, Woodbury Castle and Blackbury Camp together with the larger and more imposing structures of Maiden Castle and Hambledon Hill nearby in Dorset.

To follow on from the talk, Haylor Lass led a very enjoyable day out on 7<sup>th</sup> March as part of the OVA Spring Walks programme, ‘Hillforts Explorer’ to visit and walk around a few the Iron Age Hillforts in East Devon & Dorset that featured in the Talk.

Our next talk **‘The LORP ‘s changing habitat & it’s possible changes to bird life in the Lower Otter Valley’** by **David White** held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 23 was hugely popular and probably the best attended OVA talk. As ever David White gave us a fascinating and engaging talk illustrated by his wonderful photographs all about the birds on and near the Lower Otter estuary. As David explained these include some common & scarce birds which are resident, over winter with us or pass through on passage migration. The talk also considered the major changes to this habitat created by the Lower Otter Restoration project and what this might mean for changes to the bird life in future.

The third and final talk of the Spring programme **‘Farming in Protected Landscapes’** by **Pete Youngman** from East Devon AONB took place on 10<sup>th</sup> May 23 and gave the audience an insight into how farming in Protected Landscapes has allowed landowners within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to enhance the biodiversity of their farmland and enhance its character, together with encouraging people to explore and learn more about the area. The talk was illustrated with examples of some of the achievements already delivered by the scheme. *continued >>*

Finally, a mention for the most recent talk ‘**Two Moors Project: Bringing back the European Pine Marten (*Martes martes*) to Southwest England**’ by **Ed Parr Ferris** of Devon Wildlife Trust who gave an enthralling talk to members after the 2023 AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

The talk introduced us to the Two Moors Pine Marten Project which is looking to reintroduce the pine marten which has been extinct in the southwest of England for 150 years. The talk explained that as a small woodland predator and omnivore, the pine marten is reliant on woodlands and plays a crucial role in balancing the woodland environment. We heard about their history in the UK, and the extensive processes involved to reintroduce them.

We shall hope to organise our next Talks Programme in Autumn/Winter 2023, but with a limited number of trustees, any ideas for speakers or volunteers to help organise the programme would be appreciated.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Membership

The majority of our members have paid the revised subscriptions due on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. Thank you to them, you save the Treasurer much hassle!

However, there are currently 110 members who have paid, but at the old rate. If you are one of these, please take this as a reminder to change your standing order for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 (easy if you bank on-line; or email Martin Smith: [info@ova.org.uk](mailto:info@ova.org.uk) for a form to complete and return to him). It would also be helpful if you would top up your payment of this year’s subscription to the new rates of £10.00 individual or £15.00 for household membership. Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*

# Bird Boxes and Bug Hotels

IF you own suitable land habitat, or are in touch with someone or a local council who has suitable locations, the OVA is always willing to sponsor the provision of Bird or Dormouse Boxes (species specific), or Bug Hotels, to help encourage the wildlife in our area – though perhaps not on the scale of this one spotted at Salisbury Cathedral!



# LORP Update 6 June

## The Kier and Environment Agency site presence

Our presence on site will reduce over the summer, though we will return as required to maintain and complete the outstanding works and will continue to have a presence in the Otter valley for some time yet.



## Footpaths open

We are pleased to say that the improved

footpath on the west of the side of the valley between South Farm Road and Lime Kiln car park (BS 12) has been completed and it has been open to public use.

Works around the underside of the new bridge will mean that there will be temporary closures of this footpath. However, please be assured that this footpath (both north and south of the new road bridge) will be fully operational in time for the summer holidays. We are also to open the newly created footpath on the former tip in July.

Temporary diversions will also be required for the periods of footbridge installation and connection of the creeks to the estuary (this will include the South West Coast Path) - timings of these diversions will be notified at the affected locations nearer to the time.

## Connecting to the Estuary

We were due to reconnect the Lower Estuary by removing a section of the existing tidal embankment this spring. However, significant numbers of ground nesting birds have already been attracted to the habitat created on site, including schedule 1 species (birds designated for their rarity, vulnerability, and sensitivity to disturbance). We have therefore rescheduled this work for the end of summer.

It's important to note that the breach won't be a single dramatic moment on one day. It's a process that will take approximately 6 weeks, slow and controlled, with work carried out in stages at low tide. As the new habitats develop, with more exposed mud, new invertebrates such as worms and snails will colonise them.

These will provide food for wading birds such as black-tailed godwits, dunlin and redshank.

*continued > > >*

## **LORP Update, *continued***

### **Environment and Biodiversity**

The project is starting to show the positive impacts we planned, demonstrating that if you improve conditions, wildlife will adapt accordingly. We are now seeing species that haven't previously been recorded at the site. Currently it's a freshwater wetland so species will change again once the site becomes fully intertidal.

We have planted over 23,000 trees. A significant proportion of the planting is located on the former domestic tip site, which has been raised to enable it to be reclaimed by nature and accessed (via the new footpath) by the community. 225 of the trees planted on site were planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme – a legacy for the late Queen Elizabeth II.

New hedgerows have also been planted, and other existing hedgerows have been thickened and improved. This helps improve connectivity through the landscape for wildlife such as dormice and birds that rely on them for refuge, and bats that use them to navigate.

### **Managing the Reserve Post construction**

Clinton Devon Estates and their conservation charity the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust (EDPHCT) have been working on viewing areas for people to use to sit and enjoy the nature reserve. Four viewing areas are already open alongside public footpaths on the main embankment and on Big Bank, with a fifth soon to open on the old tip. The viewing areas in the new nature reserve car park on South Farm Road and in Lime Kiln car park will be installed once the main Kier work is complete in these locations. New orientation signs are also being installed at all the entry points to the nature reserve. These have a useful map of the reserve and information on how visitors can help care for the site during their visit. The Estate's Conservation Trust also manages the core areas of the Pebblebed Heaths.

A new Ranger - Rick Lockwood - has now been employed by EDPHCT to provide greater onsite presence for what we believe will become a new inter-tidal reserve of national value. Rick will lead on environmental monitoring once the scheme has been completed, manage repairs to signage, interpretation and viewing platforms, host education visits, engage with the public and patrol the reserve regularly to manage interactions between people and wildlife. He should become a very familiar face in the area and we are delighted that he has been able to take up the position a little before the project is complete.

The OVA Committee look forward to meeting and greeting the new Ranger.

# Spring in the Lower Otter Valley

May 9<sup>th</sup> – Flash Floods in Newton Poppleford,  
Venn Ottery and Tipton St John



*The Main Road (A3052) outside Woodley's Joinery, Newton Poppleford*

A short, but intense storm, starting with heavy hail and continuing with rain falling at a rate over 150mm/hour for 15 to 20 minutes before easing to more steady rain for an hour of the early afternoon. The storm was notable for washing large amounts of soil from newly cultivated fields, with large amounts of liquid red mud engulfing properties which were not near watercourses. The brooks feeding from the commons to the river failed to carry the torrent and overflowed. Also notable was the amount of community help that was instantly available, though some 50 householders will be displaced, some for as much as 6 months while things are dried out and repaired. As an erstwhile water and environmental engineer, I venture three comments:

- 1) Climate Change isn't something to leave to our grandchildren to deal with – it is happening now, and we need to badger world politicians to do something other than just talk about it. Meteorologists have been telling us for some years that storms will become more frequent and more intense.
- 2) Changes in farming practice don't help – particularly turning what used to be permanent grassland into arable. Don't just blame the farmers, all of us who buy our milk at the supermarket have contributed to making the local dairy industry uneconomic.

*continued >>*

3) Highway drainage is commonly designed for only the historic 1 in 2 year storm – by definition there will be bigger ones. Prudent designers allow for overland flow when the gully and pipe system is overwhelmed – a road between kerbs can carry a surprising amount of fast-flowing water. But only if it has somewhere to go – developers squeeze every last house across the end of cul-de-sacs, leaving no escape route. (and the developer won't be around to pick up your insurance bill).

The Environment Agency recognised (2) above and have since been working with local farmers to ameliorate the problems.

**June 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> – East Budleigh Scarecrow Festival**



Humpty before his fall, The weekend of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> June was the Budleigh Scarecrow Festival. Officially opened by Lord & Lady Clinton, as it was the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, there was a 'village-full' of colourful inventiveness and humour displayed in front gardens, driveways and the school playground. Well worth a morning of strolling around, particularly with sale of cakes in the village hall and an expansive display of knitted goods on their way to support the needy in Moldova.

and the band played on



No pint for Sir Walter at the pub!

# The Otter Valley Association

## Trustees (and Executive Committee)

Haylor Lass	Chairman, Newton Poppleford	01395 568786
Bob Wiltshire	Vice-chair, Budleigh Salterton	01395 444395
Jane Kewley	Secretary,	01395 445598
Martin Smith	Treasurer, Membership, Web	01395 442333
Chris Hodgson	Natural Environment	01404 815604
Geoff Porter	Natural Environment	01395 567055
Dee Woods	Built Environment, Otterton	01395 568822

## Other Contacts

Jane Connick	Walks Organiser	01395 233614
David Daniel	History Advisor	01395 445960
Heather Fereday	Newsletter distribution	01395 446796
<i>tbc</i>	Newsletter Editor	
Jon Roseway	Publications, Walks	01395 488739

**Otter Valley Association**

© 2023

**[www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)**

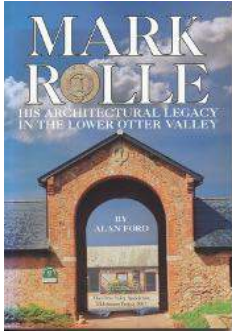
Reg Charity No. 278266

OVA PO BOX 70

Budleigh Salterton

EX9 6WN

# 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 Budleigh Salterton Tourist Information Centre  
Or visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)



### 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 Budleigh Salterton Tourist Information Centre  
Or visit [www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)



### 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 Centre 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: Otter Valley Association, Sort Code 30-98-75, Account No. 49855168; or send a cheque to: OVA, PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX( 6WN  
Reference: 'Donation' or your name. Thank you.