

Helping to support and protect the lower Otter valley

OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION



July 2024

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Our Cover Photo

A monochrome view of the Aurora Borealis and stars over the Otter mouth pine trees.

Chairman's update

Author: Haylor Lass, Chairman

A busy few months for the OVA – as in all good theatre, much going on behind the scenes; but you will have had a flavour of the committee's efforts if you have read the monthly email updates. If you haven't seen these updates, perhaps it's time you let our membership secretary have your email address! Much of the busyness of meeting has been giving timely attention to current matters, but we also keep our sights on some of the big long-term concerns for our environment.

Holiday season, and we all relax a bit. I recently returned from a splendid fortnight with an expedition ship around the coasts and islands of southern Scandinavia. What has this got to do with the OVA? Are we planning to twin Arendal with the Lower Otter? Not at all; but three environmental concerns made me think of home.

The ship had its own fresh-water making plant as part of its complex engine-room equipment, so why were two large tankers of fresh water waiting on the quayside at our first large port of call? I was assured by the Chief Engineer that the reverse-osmosis plant had ample capacity for over twice the daily demand of the ship's crew and passengers. In the open ocean they used this plant continuously, but close inshore the polluted water clogged the membranes so quickly that it was uneconomical to run. And this was the apparently crystal-clear waters of Norway's coastline! What a state we have made of our world.

Later on in the trip, we enjoyed a lovely long walk up a wooded valley to a glacier lake, with the sound and sight of clear tumbling water between the trees and rocks. The lake was that wonderful blue which only comes from ice-water, but the nose of the glacier was only just visible in the distance. Our guide assured us that last year it had been 200 metres closer and that in the last 5 years alone it had retreated 700 to 800 metres (half a mile to you). At over 400 metres thick, that's a lot of ice-cap has gone down the river to the sea. Climate Change is here and urgent!

Lastly, we walked around a number of villages and small towns in our travels, and were struck by how tidy everywhere was – not a scrap of litter to be seen, even outside the fast food and ice-cream kiosks. Came home to see pictures on the TV of the clear-up after Glastonbury – fields of ankle-deep litter as far as the eye could see. Culture change needed here, but that's something we can all be engaged in.

Haylor Lass
Chairman, Otter Valley Association

Annual General Meeting - Outcomes

Author: Jane Kewley, Secretary

The AGM occurred on Tuesday 11th June at the Peter Hall in Budleigh Salterton. The meeting comprised two parts:

- official AGM business.
- an excellent presentation given by Dr. Sam Bridgewater, director of environment strategy and evidence at Clinton Devon Estates.

In front of a capacity audience of OVA members, the AGM business was conducted successfully. As a result, the OVA now has a new team of officers and trustees. You can find all trustees and members of the executive committee listed on the back page of this newsletter and the OVA website. All relevant documents from the AGM are also on the OVA website.

Thankyou to everyone who came and joined-in. It was lovely seeing so many familiar and new faces. Also a massive thankyou to those of you who stepped forward to volunteer for various roles and working groups.

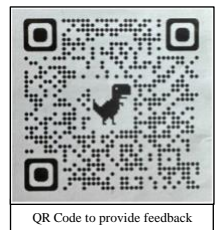
Landscape Recovery: Heaths to Sea

Author: Chris Boorman, Vice-Chairman

Following the official business of the AGM, Dr. Sam Bridgewater (Director of Environment Strategy & Evidence at Clinton Devon Estates) gave an insightful and dynamic presentation on the Heaths to Sea Landscape Recovery initiative is led by Clinton Devon Estates and located in East Devon's lower River Otter catchment. The project development is funded by one of the government's environmental land management schemes, and will include river/floodplain restoration and woodland creation.

The scheme spans 4,000 hectares of the East Devon countryside and will power nature recovery across the agricultural hinterlands linking three parts of the Pebblebed Heaths National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Although the scheme has a focus on nature recovery, it is not about stopping food production; Dr. Bridgewater explained that their vision is for this diverse landscape to be nature rich and ecologically healthy whilst also supporting agriculture, net zero, timber and access needs. Throughout the project it is vital to ensure communication and engagement with the right stakeholders and local communities. He mentioned that they will be launching a new project website to provide updates and information on the project, in the interim, if are interested in being kept up to date on project plans and progress you can register interest and give your initial thoughts on the project through the Stakeholder Engagement Survey [here](#), or by scanning the QR code shown.



Communication

Author: Chris Boorman, Vice-Chairman

The OVA uses a combination of printed newsletters, online website, Facebook groups, WhatsApp and email to help ensure everyone knows what is going on:

- Website (www.ofa.org.uk) where all information is posted.
- Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ottervalleyassociation>) where daily discussions occur, and interesting articles shared.
- WhatsApp is used by the walkers to share information
- Email is used to provide monthly updates and other communications.

Please do consider joining the Facebook group – we now have over 700 people on our group. There are many interesting articles that are shared on that which don't make it into our printed newsletter.

Out of Sync – Climate Change

Author: Geoff Porter, OVA Natural Environment Co-ordinator

As an amateur naturalist, I find it very difficult to know where to begin when it comes to commenting on the impact of climate change. The following is based on my local observations.

Our Christmas table in 2023 was adorned with a display of red and green. Nothing unusual about that, except, it wasn't poinsettia or holly. It was camellias from the garden, a variety normally at its best for the village spring show, but not last year. It would have been past its best by show-time in March. The camellia is just one example of normal seasonal cycles being way out of sync. No doubt you will all have seen abnormal events in your garden and in the countryside that were not happening 'normally', whatever that is these days?

2023 proved to be the latest in a worrying sequence of record breaking years and 2024 continues this trend. The National Trust reported in January 2024 that the previous year had been the hottest on record in fact probably in the previous 120,000 years. This rapid change in our climate is resulting in longer summers and shorter winters and more extreme weather events. It's not just these extremes that are of concern but the speed at which the climate is changing. As in many parts of the world, the UK has been experiencing exceptional rainfall, storms and hot dry spells resulting in floods one season and drought the next. These extreme weather events are having a major impact on agriculture, infrastructure, transport and the natural world.

Over millennia, plants, birds, insects and humans have evolved life cycles and behaviours that are adapted to the seasons. Human kind has been able to plan when to plough, what to sow and to choose a suitable time to harvest but this is becoming increasingly difficult due to the uncertainty of weather patterns. However, humans are

able to make rapid adjustment, (one hopes), to these changes but much of the natural world does not have that ability to adapt; it cannot change fast enough as their behaviour requires time to adapt. Birds, animals and insects require flowers, fruits and seeds to be available at the right time when they are breeding, hatching, feeding or migrating and when these are out of 'sync.', they are in trouble.



In mid-May 2023, local downpours caused flash flooding particularly in Newton Poppleford and Harpford. This not only caused considerable damage to properties but washed vast amounts of soils, chemicals and litter into a flooded River Otter. Some river banks suffered considerable erosion, notably by Harpford footbridge which is now cut off by a rapidly moving meander in the river and above Clamour Bridge at Otterton where the bank is washed out with every flood. Flash floods are a major problem

exacerbated by lost hedgerows and grass field margins, bare earth following the harvesting of maize and cereal crops especially where they have been grown on hillsides. New housing developments are often built on sites that do not allow for the risk of flooding. Floodwater carries with it deposits the seed of invasive Himalayan balsam resulting in its establishment away from its favoured water courses. This plant smothers our native riverside plants leaving bare banks susceptible to erosion when it dies back in the autumn.

The constant soaking and drying out of soft Jurassic cliffs cause them to erode and tumble especially when they're then battered by storms. By contrast, during very dry periods, low river levels result in warmer water that then contain higher concentrations of nitrates causing increased algal growth which reduces oxygen that can result in the death of fish and other aquatic life. The local LORP project was undertaken in anticipation of rising sea levels, repeated storms and flooding on the Otter.



Last years' warm autumn resulted in some unusual natural events. A warmer than usual October saw hummingbird hawk moths feeding on our garden honeysuckle late into the month whilst on the riverside, numerous Common Darter dragonflies were

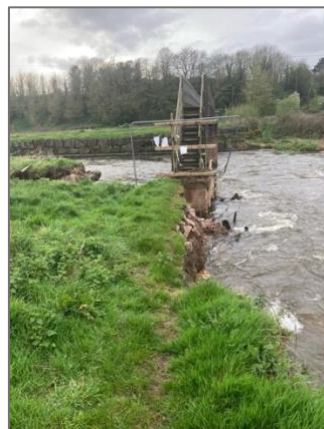
flying and mating in the warm sun days before a flood. Some plants continued to bloom whilst others fruited earlier than usual.

The impact of climate change on trees is difficult to quantify. Last years warm autumn resulted in many that would normally have dropped leaves remained green. Periods of drought put large trees in particular under stress, making them weaker and more vulnerable to disease. Over recent years, many mature elm and ash trees have been lost to non-native diseases and currently, horse chestnuts are under attack from a micro-moth whose thousands of minute caterpillars burrow between its leaf layers causing them to turn brown and fall early. Whilst this doesn't kill the tree, it reduces the trees growing period causing it to weaken and become vulnerable to further diseases. Whilst these trees may not have been lost as a direct result of climate change, it has resulted in a significant change to our landscape and the loss of habitats to a broad range of creatures. Sadly, mainly due to current farming practice, many hedgerows have few remaining mature trees and young trees are cut down exacerbating the problem.

On the Clump near Otterton on the east side of the valley, three old Scots pines that are increasingly vulnerable to strong winds and long periods of drought. They provide a well known local landmark and over recent years, the OVA has been endeavouring to plant young trees to replace them. When the old trees were planted the colder climate may well have been more suitable and one wonders whether the new trees now starting life in warmer climes on an at times very dry hill-top will manage to reach maturity? Perhaps, rather than replace like for like, alternatives such as maritime pines would be more suitable? Elsewhere, perhaps we should be looking to plant other varieties of oak as well as our native *Quercus robur*?

For mature trees, extended periods of rain lead to saturated ground which, combined with strong winds make them vulnerable to heaving over especially when they're still in leaf. Whilst large numbers of young trees are being planted to increase our woodlands, failure to control the non-native grey squirrel is resulting in many young trees so damaged by ring-barking they don't reach maturity. Increased numbers of deer add to the problem.

Native species such as birds and insects rely on native plants and trees. Whilst plant growth is triggered by temperature, insects emergence mainly as a result of day-length. Above average warm periods early in the year will produce early leaf growth. If caterpillars, for example hatch later, the young fresh foliage they require will have matured and be less nutritious or even inedible. If caterpillars fail to thrive then so do insect eating birds that rely on them as a food source.



By contrast, cold, wet spring weather prevents honey bees from flying and pollinating early blossom, a worrying scenario for fruit growers. Aside from cold weather, honey

bees are already in decline due mainly to the continued use of toxic insecticides. They also face the future threat of Asian Hornets that target and kill them in large numbers. So the onus of pollination may be increasingly be falling to our native bumble bees that have the ability to fly in colder weather; they have the ability to shiver and warm themselves up. They also have hairy bodies that help them to help retain their body warmth. Hover flies and other insects are also important pollinators and need to be valued.



The arrival of insects from Europe is not new, either blown or transported over the channel. Painted lady butterflies can arrive in large numbers. Weather conditions in north Africa influence growth of their food plants and that determines their numbers. Red admirals, ladybirds and hoverflies and even Asian hornets also cross the channel. In the southeast especially, mosquitoes carrying schmallenberg virus are causing fetal abnormalities in sheep and cattle that result in still births. 'Mossies' thrive in warm, damp

climates. Last winter, I found a unfamiliar spider in our greenhouse. It was a 'false widow', *Steatoda grossa*, again an arrival from Europe. In England, it is now increasingly common along the southwest coast. This spider mainly feeds on woodlice and has a bite in severity similar to that of a bee sting.

Hedgehogs can also be weakened if warm weather wakes them early and they expend too much energy searching for still scarce food.

Bird migration patterns may change as birds preferring warmer climes visit and those requiring somewhere colder head north. We are seeing birds such as egrets establishing themselves here and more exotic species like spoonbills making an appearance.

With so many changes and uncertainties, one thing's for sure, our environment is changing. Those of us who are older grew up in a quite different world and our grandchildren will likely see even greater change.

(My thanks to Chris Hodgson who as ever guided me in correcting and editing this)

OVA Talks Programme

Author: Jane Kewley, Secretary

With thanks to Keith Grundy who has volunteered to help organise our programme, the Otter Valley Association talks are coming back! Starting in October we are looking at a range of talks aligned to our goals and objectives. We hope that these will be interesting to everyone. As we build out this programme, we will post information on our posters, Facebook group and the OVA website. Here are the candidates for our first two:

Title: **Are we doing enough to help nature in the climate crisis?**
Date: October (to be confirmed)
Speaker: Olly Watts
Overview: A personal account of developing climate policy and action at the RSPB for more than twenty years, from the early climate and nature impact modelling studies, to developing approaches for how nature conservation needs to move forward in this era of change. Olly has been at the forefront of adaptation for nature at national and international levels, working with NGOs and governments. His talk will ask 'are we doing enough, and what can we do better to help nature thrive as it faces its greatest long-term threat?'

Title: **London's New River**
Date & Time: November 20th – starting 6pm at the Peter Hall in Budleigh Salterton
Speaker: John Polly
Overview: John's talk tells the story of how in the early 17th century a project was undertaken to bring fresh drinking water to London's expanding population and where parts of it still exist

Water Quality Initiative: Update

Author: Chris Boorman, Vice-chairman

When one looks at the press, water quality is an issue that is always present. At the OVA we formed a water quality working group, under the leadership of Geoff Porter, to look specifically at the issues surrounding the River Otter. However, it became very apparent that other areas such as the beach at Budleigh Salterton also need strong representation.

Water quality is affected by a number of issues – farming practices unfortunately have a big impact up the river, while sewage discharges from South West Water are also an issue. But there are many other issues – such as plastics, road-runoff to name but two. This was highlighted extensively in an article from Bruce McGlashan – secretary of the River Otter Fisheries Association – in our last issue. Since then, there are many initiatives being conducted by OVA members and others.

Recently we sent a letter to the CEO of South West Water expressing the concern we have heard from many of you to the sewage situation at Lime Kiln. We have included

here both our letter to the CEO, but also her reply to us. We have also received comments from Budleigh Town Council and plan to meet with them and others to further discuss what we can do.

OVA member Peter Williams arranged a meeting recently with representatives of South West Water and local East Devon District councillors. He did this as part of the ESCAPE group – a strong campaigning group based in Exmouth, originally formed to protest the transport of sewage from the Maer Road sewage works in Exmouth. The objectives of that meeting were:

- to gain a full understanding of the status and root causes of SWW failures at Lime Kiln sewage pumping station, and associated sewage infrastructure.
- to understand and discuss SWW's plan (both actions and timeline) to fully resolve the situation.
- to confirm interim discharge targets and timelines.
- to discuss how to quickly stop Lime Kiln from being a major source of beach pollution.

Peter has reported back that the meeting was very positive and that there are actions now being taken to resolve the critical situation at Lime Kiln. Further follow-on meetings are needed. We, the OVA, are also planning to meet with Budleigh Town Council and others to discuss this.

Unfortunately, that is not the only issue facing the river Otter – the sewage discharges at Honiton and other sewage works up the river have also been extensive. As such, we are also interested in understanding how to help resolve water quality issues across the entire river Otter.

Our water quality group has been setup to look at these issues and to work with Citizen Scientists, Westcountry Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, River Otter Fisheries Association, East Devon Catchment Partnership and other like-minded organisations, groups and individuals to help identify issues, suggest improvements and enable real change. We look to use our planning expertise to review and contribute to local and national planning policy and implementation that may affect the water quality of the river. We want to continue the current water quality testing overtaken by the Environment Agency and Westcountry Rivers Trust Citizen Scientists, and investigate the means of funding the purchase of up-to-date monitoring equipment. But fundamentally we want to provide our members and the wider community with accurate, current information relating to water quality, pollution and plans to resolve these problems

This is clearly a significant issue with many different strands. As we progress our work, we believe the OVA is well positioned to help facilitate and engage in these initiatives. Our planning expertise can work alongside water initiatives to help improve the habitat and nature of the river and surrounding areas. We clearly cannot do this alone and our intention is to work closely with partner charities and associations and other organizations.

We welcome anyone who would like to help this important initiative. Please do call us if you would like to volunteer.

Communications with South West Water

Author: Chris Boorman – Vice-Chairman

Many of you have commented about the continuing issues that are affecting Lime Kiln pumping station. In order to represent our members and to add our voice to the ongoing debate, we have sent an official letter to the CEO of South West Water – copying Mrs Caz Sismore-Hunt - the Budleigh Salterton Town Mayor, Mr. Geoff Jung - Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment, East Devon District Council and Dr. Sam Bridgewater - Director of Environment Strategy & Evidence at Clinton Devon Estates. Here is the text of the letter we sent to Mrs Davey:

Dear Mrs. Davey

By way of introduction, I am the chairman of a registered charity in Devon called the Otter Valley Association - we are celebrating our 45th year and aim to promote interest, understanding, conservation and sustainable enhancement of the Lower Otter environment, mainly the area south of Ottery St Mary to the small town of Budleigh Salterton on the coast. Recently the Otter Estuary, alongside your sewage pumping station at Lime Kiln in Budleigh Salterton, has been designated as a National Nature Reserve. The nature reserve has been honoured to be 1 of 25 Nature Reserves in the UK as part of the "King's Series" celebrating the King's coronation.

On behalf of our 700+ members, and the local community, we have been extremely concerned at the situation that has developed at Lime Kiln. We are now seeing tankers moving sewage regularly from Lime Kiln (something that has never happened to our knowledge at such scale before) and far more sewage pollution alerts than in any previous year. We have also seen from the Environment Agency data, dangerously high levels of eColi recorded at the river mouth. According to data provided by the "Surfers against Sewage", there have been 60 significant sewage alerts so far this year at Budleigh Salterton - which is significantly higher than the 47 that occurred in the whole of last year, and greater than 2019-2022 combined (55 sewage pollution alerts). Indeed, over the last weekend in May two sewage alerts were issued on consecutive days - after many days of dry weather.

We have been told by your representatives that the tankers were being used to help manage the flows in the catchment as a result of the prolonged wet weather - to prevent spills into the environment. We were also told that there is infiltration of surface water into the network which is being investigated. Clearly something is amiss since spills are still happening. Our members are very concerned about the impact on swimming, on our tourist industry locally, and on the well-being of our environment. Of particular note is the impact of this situation on the new National Nature Reserve.

We are extremely proud of our valley and the surrounding area. We would like to invite you, or one of your representatives, to come to Budleigh Salterton and explain what has gone wrong at Lime Kiln, what your recovery plans are and the timelines for returning to a well-managed sewerage system befitting your organisation.

*We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience,
Yours faithfully,
Haylor Lass
Chairman, Otter Valley Association*

We received a reply to this from the office of Mrs Davey. We reprint it here to allow you, our membership, to see the response:

Dear Haylor Lass

Thank you for your letter received on 17 June 2024 addressed to our Chief Executive Officer, Susan Davy. As a member of the Executive Liaison Team, your email has been passed to me to review and respond to, however, please be assured that Susan does review all correspondence addressed to her.

We have recently investigated the issues in Budleigh Salterton, and surveys have shown that the storm overflow that operates in Budleigh Salterton, Lime Kilns, is subject to groundwater infiltration. This means that groundwater from the local area is entering the sewage system as a result of damaged pipework adjacent to the river, and through land drains in the Knowle area.

When too much groundwater enters the system, the capacity of the pumping station which sends wastewater to our treatment works is exceeded, and the additional wastewater gets released from the storm overflow. We have plans in place to address the groundwater infiltration with repairs starting in July. In the meantime, we're utilising tankers in the area in order to avoid the pumping station from being overwhelmed by groundwater and therefore to reduce the use of the storm overflow.

Once our repairs to address the groundwater infiltration have been completed and we are able to lower the flows into the pumping station, we will be carrying out thorough cleansing of the tank and maintenance of the screen. As well as this, we have planned surface water separation in The Green area, where we will be installing a new section of sewer to divert the surface water directly to the watercourse, rather than into our foul sewers. We have applied for the necessary Highways notice requesting to start this work in October, and we're currently awaiting confirmation of this.

Longer term, Lime Kilns pumping station overflow is expected to be subject to improvements to ensure it meets the Government target of 10 spills per year, by 2030. Our consultants and modellers are looking at ways we can improve the catchment with further groundwater infiltration reduction and surface water separation in the catchment area, looking to begin in areas that would result in the biggest benefit to spill reduction.

Additionally, we have plans to increase the pumped flows to the sewage treatment works, using an intermediate pumping station halfway up the existing sewer main, along with potential mains replacement works. We already have a scheme in place to increase the treatment capacity at this treatment works, which would allow for the additional flows. Our consultants will of course be reviewing the benefits of these planned solutions so that we can establish whether additional action is required, such as increased storage within the catchment.

I'm pleased to confirm that our community van is scheduled to attend Budleigh Salterton on the 12 July 2024 between 14:00 and 17:00 at Lime Kiln car park. Please feel free to visit us and speak with members of our team.

I trust my email has addressed the concerns you've raised with us, however if you have any further questions, please feel free to respond to this email or call me on XXXXXXXX. I'm available Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. For your information, please find attached copies of our Complaints Procedure and Customer Promise leaflets.

*Yours sincerely
Executive Liaison Customer Manager*

(Note: telephone number and specific named individuals have been removed from this article).

Planning for a healthy future for the river Otter and it's catchment

Author: Rob Jones FRICS

My colleague Bruce McGlashan, the Secretary of the River Otter Fisheries Association (ROFA), wrote a great piece in our last issue outlining the many issues and pressures currently facing the River Otter. Many are serious issues in themselves but, when combined, they give us considerable cause for concern about the present state of the river and the wildlife and activities it supports.

There are, as Bruce pointed out, a multitude of bodies working actively to help address these issues and improve conditions for the riverine environment generally. Along with these bodies many individuals are also involved, such as our many Citizen Scientists and, together with public opinion it is fair to say that awareness is now overwhelmingly in favour of rivers being protected and improved.

With personal observation of the river both as a fly fisherman and member of the former River Otter Association (now ROFA) since 1986 I have a long perspective and have seen many changes to agricultural practice in the vicinity, the quiet but steady un-noticed invasion of unwanted species both on the banks and in the water, and seen the quality of the fish and fishing decline along with the noted absence of the insects that trout feed on and which are direct indicators of a decline in water quality and the river's health generally.

The river catchment is some 25,000 hectares and the combined length of the main river and its tributaries is close to 590 km and for 2/3rds of that length it is in AONB defined areas or National Nature Reserve. This alone should lend the river special status to be considered among very few like it in England. It is indeed an ideal candidate for Natural England's protection. I hope this summary demonstrates the size and importance of the issue at stake.

The University of Exeter report on the catchment is excellent so if you want to delve in detail see [here](#).



I now fish worldwide, although mainly in New Zealand. So here is a small piece of what a clean natural riverbed should look like. It is hard to find an equivalent example in the River Otters catchment.

As a Chartered Surveyor living and working in East Devon since 1985 I am keenly aware of the huge increase in the population of East Devon with the accompanying housing development much of which we all know has

been poorly thought through, poorly built and designed, and crucially allowed to take

place when 'planning control' should in many cases have delayed or prevented it completely or, controlled the development with careful thought as to whether the required infrastructure needed to accommodate them was adequate. In this context, we have to remember that there is no 'mains sewer' in the Otter valley just a series of sewage treatment works which discharge the 'treated effluent' straight back into the river. The Otter does not have a headwater supply reservoir to dilute that treated water or that could supply drinking water all of which now comes from the ground over which the river flows. We should again remind ourselves that the water supply network is just that, an interconnected network that can flow in either direction to suit demand, so we cannot assume for example that development in another catchment is not going to affect the River Otter and of course, it has huge implications for the Exe / Clyst river catchment as a result of more new town proposals just west of the Otter over the hill that I have in mind. Do we pay for our water? Actually no, we don't, we pay for our water to be piped to us in clean potable condition. It is that that we are paying for, not the water itself which belongs to us all. The water companies have a legal and moral duty to look after it for us.

'Pennon PLC' aka 'South West Water' have their own 'plan' currently under public consultation and to save you the trouble of reading it I can simply say that they have recognised that there are 'issues' relating to water supply, quality and low flow in the Otter. If you do want to read it be warned it's a bit 'dry' but see [here](#).

'Planning' at District Council level should not though be solely focused on controlling development per se. Ideally it should be equally focused on preserving and enhancing what attracts people who want the housing and to live here in the first place! It is one of those ironies that, like tourism, which attracts people to far-away places, the resulting development can inadvertently destroy the essential attraction of areas such as East Devon, particularly if it is not properly and strategically managed.

My primary concern in writing this article is to aid a better understanding of the 'Planning Policies' that are in place now and proposed for the future to protect the River Otter. The river cannot defend itself so needs a catchment wide voice and at present there really isn't one, but we can all be that if we take the trouble. The effort being made now by all the bodies involved with the river will unfortunately not prevail in the long term, even if we each meanwhile act as responsible consumers in every way possible, if the 'planning policy' that guides from the top is absent or just simply inadequate for the purpose.

So, what are the 'policies'? Well, I hate to say this but there are virtually none and we are at a crucial point in EDDC's new Local Plan preparation cycle with final revisions of the 'draft new plan' under way right now – yes RIGHT NOW. In fact, we are strictly 'out of time' to make comment but have been advised by their 'policy officer' that any comments made now will be considered. Strategic committee meetings are underway now considering the draft policies chapter by chapter with those relevant to the river yet to come forward. So, we have time – just. The chapters we are primarily concerned with are 12, 13 and 17 – scheduled for discussion from July onwards. See the Timetable published by EDDC on the East Devon website [here](#).

EDDC's current adopted 'Local Plan', the legal basis upon which they exercise their planning powers and planning control, has in my view more policies that should protect the river than the draft new 'Local Plan'. I find this very surprising and disappointing given the growing public interest in rivers along with an increasing realisation by many parties, including the government, of the social/economic/health and environmental benefits healthy rivers bring. So, this is where we all need to say our piece. The draft new 'Local plan' is almost totally obsessed with 'development', by which I mean the construction of buildings for housing and commercial purposes, but does not seem to me to be a properly balanced 'plan' with proposed policies that are equally strong in other areas which will concern us all – not least of which is 'the river that runs through it' to coin a phrase.

This imbalance is brought into sharp focus as regards the River Otter when comparing the relevant policies in the Draft Plan relating to the River Axe. Here you see what should be expected for all rivers in East Devon namely, extensive fully drafted policies which will help to protect, preserve and enhance The Axe and its catchment. I haven't the capability to run a word count on the policies in the plan connected to the Axe versus the Otter, but it would not surprise me if that proved to be 100/1.

The fundamental reason for this disparity is that the Axe catchment has recently become protected by a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status which by law EDDC are required to 'plan' for and which status is overseen by Natural England, so EDDC have to be fully on top of their responsibility.

So, on the one hand, EDDC is happy to 'protect' the Axe with extensive fully drafted policies, but on the other have almost completely ignored the other rivers in East Devon including the Otter which are equally valued by the local community. This is especially puzzling when scientific evidence from sampling and data already available proves that the River Otter has all the same species as the River Axe. So, the fundamentals are the same even if the river hasn't been officially designated as a SAC. All this information is fully accessible and publicly available if you know where to look which surely professional planners are best qualified to do. In fact, the River Otter has almost more factors that demand special policy attention namely a newly declared National Nature Reserve which includes the LORP designated area at the bottom of the whole catchment and a thriving population of beavers which the river is nationally famous for.

Natural England only have to be 'considering the implementation' of a SAC on part of the Otter catchment for EDDC to be legally required by planning statute to take it into account in their 'plan' so naturally we have asked NE for their views. The limited unofficial response to date amounts to their being too short staffed at present to progress designation but supportive in principle given the similar/same features being present on the Otter which have led to the Axe's SAC designation. Meanwhile, draft 'planning policy' advances remorselessly and will be soon cast in stone. There is of course 'reputation', 'moral obligation' and 'taking the high ground' to consider. EDDC's own statements and policies on protecting the environment and biodiversity in East Devon should encourage them to do the right thing and introduce,

by amendments to the 'draft local plan', similarly protective policies for the River Otter as The River Axe.

EDDC have now stated publicly 'that they have a statutory duty to allocate sufficient sites for housing but no such statutory duty to protect the environment'. The draft Local Plan allocates 2276 new houses to the valley and crucially they do not yet have the result of the 'Water Cycle study' they commissioned, and which is surely an essential to the formation of any policy relating to future development. To further their adopted policy, they have now stated that the allocation of sites will over-ride all other policy considerations! This cannot be right surely so what we need now is an expert Local Government lawyer. Is there any out there able to help? Please get in touch.

So, there you have it! If you do agree that the river Otter should have the same protection as the Axe, then please get writing and address EDDC by e-mail to PlanningPolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk

Walks Report: Silver studded-blue butterfly

Author: Geoff Porter

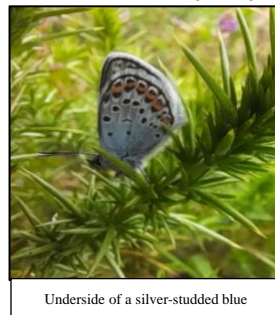


To date, this has not been a good year for butterflies. Wet and windy weather does not suit them, especially the Silver-studded Blue (SSB) which was the focus of these two walks. Weather conditions on the first walk were not ideal and the second walk had to be re-arranged twice and even then the weather was not ideal. Apologies to those who couldn't make the walks and thanks to those who made it.

The SSB is a small butterfly only found

locally on the Commons. Lesley Kerry kindly agreed to lead these walks and explained their fascinating life cycle which relies on a symbiotic relationship between butterfly and ants, far too complex to detail here.

Thankfully, careful searching succeeded in finding just a few SSB's on both walks, even the difficult task of finding a brown female on the second walk. In the interim,



Underside of a silver-studded blue

Lesley's extensive knowledge of the Commons revealed much else of interest, birds, plants and insects much appreciated by everyone.

I'm pleased to say that Lesley has offered to lead two more walks next summer so a future opportunity for others to learn more about SSB's and life on the Commons. Let's hope we get a summer next year! Sadly, we only have a photo of those attending the second walk.



A well camouflaged Grayling



A solitary Potter wasp nest



A Goldenring Dragonfly

Walks: Programme [Aug – Oct]

Author: Jane Connick & the walks team

Welcome to our walk programme for late Summer and early Autumn. Once again, our walk leaders have done a superb job of offering a wide variety of walks to suit everyone.

Fancy a stroll round Otterton learning about the history of many of the beautiful buildings, then join Dee on Tuesday 13 August in the afternoon to learn more. Anyone for Dartmoor, shorter walks, longer walks and everything in between? We have chosen not to clash with the Sidmouth and East Devon Walking Festival which takes place from 14 – 20 September and offers a superb selection of local walks in East Devon. Pick up a leaflet at libraries, tourist information offices or www.visitsidmouth.co.uk. You will need to book but it is easy either by telephone 01395 516441 email tic@sidmouth.gov.uk

We may also be offering pop-up walks later in the programme and these will be advertised on the OVA website / monthly OVA update and Facebook – so keep your eyes open. Enjoy your walking in our stunning coast and countryside.

Friday 9 August – 10.30am – 8.75 miles.
‘A ramble around Dartmoor’

Meet: North Bonehill Rock car park nearest Bel Tor (OS 28, SX 731 775)

Walk visits Widecombe in the Moor, Hameldown Beacon, Grimspound, Natsworthy Gate and Chinkwell and Bel Tors.

Coffee and lunch stops.

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott 0770 6078143

Tuesday 13 August - 3.00 pm – 1.5 hours - stroll
‘A local heritage walk around Otterton’

Meet: Otterton Green. (OS 115, SY 081 852) [what3words:///origin.uncle.movement](https://www.what3words.com/origin.uncle.movement)

A gentle stroll around the village for 1.5 hours looking at the wealth of beautiful listed buildings and the history of this lovely village.

Walk Leader: Dee Woods 01395 568822 / 07789 334469

Tuesday 20 August – 10.00am – 5 miles – 3 hours.
‘Walk 2: 12 walks in the Otter Valley’

Meet: Otterton Green. (OS 115, SY 081 852) [what3words:///origin.uncle.movement](https://www.what3words.com/origin.uncle.movement)

Otterton Green to Budleigh taking in the old railway route on our return. 3 hours including ice creams on the beach.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568822 / 07789 670297

Tuesday 27 August – 10.00am – 9 miles – 5 hours
‘River Otter, Bulverton and Peak Hill’

Meet: Otterton Green. (OS 115, SY 081 852) [what3words:///origin.uncle.movement](https://www.what3words.com/origin.uncle.movement)

Starting at Otterton Green we will follow the River Otter, Burnthouse Farm, around Bulverton Hill and Peak Hill.

Bring lunch and plenty of water.

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568822 / 07789 670297

Tuesday 10 September – 10.00am – 6 miles. 3hours.
‘Fire Beacon, White Cross and the riverpath’

Meet: Newton Poppleford recreation ground car park (OS 115, SY 0882 8995)
[what3words:slap///menswear.cavalier](https://www.what3words.com/slap///menswear.cavalier)

This is a simple route going up and along East Hill then down and along the River Otter. There should be good views of the Sid and Otter valleys. Mostly tracks and footpaths. Bring lunch.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07887936280

Tuesday 1 October
'Mystery Walk'

Check website for details

Walk Leader: Iain Ure 01395 568822 / 07789 670297

Thursday 17 October 10.00 am – 7.5 miles – 4 hours
'The Hunter's Path and Teign Gorge'

Meet: Fingle Bridge roadside parking. (OL 28, SX 7375 8980) what3words ///risky.called.subsystem.
Contact the walk leader if you wish to car-share.

We walk the classic Hunter's path from Fingle Bridge with fine views towards Chagford and Dartmoor beyond. Passing just below Castle Drogo we descend to the River Teign and follow it upstream towards Dogmarsh Bridge before looping back to the gorge where we walk downstream along the riverside path to the start. Optional lunch at the pub.

Walk Leader: Jon Roseway 01395 488739 / 07887936280

Saturday 26 October 10.00am – 8.3 miles
'Killerton, Columb John and Ratsloe'

Meet: Broadclyst village car park. (OS SX 983 972) what3words:///topics.sleepy.scrambles
Walk visit some well-known places but also some lesser known on this lovely area of rolling Devon countryside.

The walk will visit Killerton Estate, Columb John, Ratsloe and Poltimore.
Coffee and lunch stops.

Walk Leader: Sarah Westacott 0770 6078143

w/commencing 28 October date to be confirmed (check website for date nearer the time) 10.00am – 5.5 miles - 3 hours *'From Valley to Beacon'*

Meet: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground car park, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford. (OS115, SY 088 899) what3words: /// wisely.amazed.configure

A walk from Newton Poppleford to Tipton and then up towards Fire Beacon Hill returning via Harpford Woods. This is a moderate walk, with one significant ascent. Some sections may be wet and/or muddy after rain. There will be a coffee stop part way round (so bring a flask).

Walk Leader: Ross Hussey rdandamhussey22@gmail.com or 01395 227991
Mobile for contact on the day only: 07902 255915

Walks: Co-ordinator Role

Author: Jane Connick

Sadly, Jane Connick is standing down from the role at the end of 2024 and we are looking to replace her! If you would enjoy a voluntary role which you can fit in at a time to suit you and enjoy co-ordinating, liaising and planning this could be for you.

We are looking for a walks co-ordinator that will work with the walks committee of 4 members. 3 of these are experienced walk leaders who offer invaluable pragmatic, useful advice when needed.

The walks committee usually meet once per year (over coffee obviously) and everything else is usually sorted either by email or chatting on a walk. It is a dynamic and active team who are also involved in the current project to update and re-launch the booklet '12 walks in the Otter Valley'

Tasks Jane is involved in:

- Produce 4 walk programmes per annum (to fit in with the OVA newsletter deadlines)
- Liaise with the walk leaders, by email, on walks / dates etc
- Upload the programme to the OVA website (no I hadn't done it before either – it is easy)

Jane has always found support from the walk team, leaders, and IT whizz Martin. They will all support and advise the new co-ordinator if necessary.

If you would like more details of the role – email Jane at: walks@ova.org.uk

Please join us all in thanking Jane for her amazing leadership – our walks program has been, and continues to be, a crown jewel in the Otter Valley Association.

Blue Plaques: July Update

Author: Dee Woods, OVA Built Environment Committee

The Blue Plaque Group met on 19 July. This is a collaborative effort between the OVA, Fairlynch museum, the Budleigh Salterton Information office and local historian Michael Downes. The team has decided to look in detail at 13 candidates for blue plaques. Work will continue over the summer months assessing the suitability of each candidate, and the property associated with them. There are a number of criteria which have to be met, not least the willingness of the owner to have a blue plaque on their property. We also need to investigate the funding required for these plaques. We will continue to provide more information over time – please contact the OVA if you would like further information at this time.

Built Environment: July Update

Author: Dee Woods, OVA Built Environment Co-ordinator

The Executive Committee continues to consider and comment on various planning applications within the Otter Valley over the past year. We are awaiting substantial changes to the existing planning system, in line with the new Government's pronouncements.

In June we responded to the further consultations on the Emerging East Devon Local Plan 2020 - 2040. This was mainly about the possible loss of Green Wedges separating settlements, and the policy relating to the Coastal Preservation Area. In addition, we highlighted the need for nature recovery and stopping river pollution. We are seeking better protection of the River Otter and its valley, and joined up policy working on the Landscape Recovery Project being run by Clinton Devon Estates. We believe that the River Otter valley is of high ecological importance, and should be afforded greater protection for its wildlife biodiversity and landscape beauty. The comments submitted are available to view on our website under the Built environment heading.

Recently, we made representations in person to the Planning Committee, strongly objecting to the change of use and regrading of the top field at Ladram Bay Holiday Park. The proposal was for 32 very large luxury lodges on this conspicuous site, above the existing site. It was contrary to National, local and the Neighbourhood Plan policies, which aim to protect and enhance the East Devon National Landscape (AONB). Fortunately, the Planning Committee followed their officers' recommendation and refused permission.

Permission was also refused recently for a new house in Newton Poppleford, because it was outside the Built Up Area Boundary in the open countryside and would result in the loss of Grade 1 agricultural land, trees, hedgerows and habitat loss. The development was considered to be harmful to the East Devon National Landscape.

Did you know? All about Aphids!

Author: Chris Hodgson, OVA Natural Environment

This series of short articles will discuss facts about animals and plants that are perhaps less well known but which are amazing. I am starting the series talking about aphids (green fly, black fly, etc). Yes, I know they are a bane to anyone growing plants, particular gardeners, but they are also among the most extraordinary animals you will meet. They look incredibly uninteresting, but I hope I can convince you that they are not!



This first essay will describe their feeding habits etc. Aphids face a number of problems in obtaining food. They are plant sap-sucking insects. The sugary sap that they feed on is the product of photosynthesis in the leaves and is transported to the growing parts of the plant down vessels known as the phloem that are located deep within the plant. What, then do aphids use to reach these phloem vessels?

The basic insect mouthparts consist of an upper lip and lower lip (known as the labrum and labium) with two sets of jaws in between that work laterally – the mandibles and the maxillae. This arrangement is typical of, for

instance, beetles and caterpillars. Aphids have the same arrangement – except that the lower lip and both jaws (mandibles and maxillae) are extended into long needle-like structures, known as stylets. Each is only a few microns in width but can be very long - those on aphids are usually about half their body length but in other closely related insects, these stylets can be much longer than the body! - typical of, for instance, insects that suck sap through tree bark. Together these stylets form a 'stylet bundle', which has two very narrow ducts running through it – one duct for the saliva to run down and the other for the plant sap to run up. So, the mandibles and maxillae form a feeding tube, and are more or less surrounded by the labrum or lower lip, which is grooved to support them.



So - aphids have mouthparts that are long enough to reach the phloem – but how do aphids get their stylets into the plant and how do they know where the phloem is? Each stylet is manipulated by a set of strong muscles in the head which can move each stylet independently. By moving each in turn, the stylet bundle can be pushed into the plant – mainly between the cells. By careful manipulation, the stylets can even be made to change direction within the plant, but they still generally lie between the cell membranes. So far so good – BUT finding the phloem is rather like hunting for a needle in a haystack - there are no

outward indications where it is in the plant. Also, the plant has evolved defences against sap-sucking insects in the form of other structures through which the stylets cannot penetrate (sclerenchyma). For instance, the squarish stems of broad beans have sclerenchyma running up each corner with the phloem vessels lying beneath them. The aphid, therefore, has to go around the sclerenchyma to get to the phloem. Nonetheless, an aphid feeding on a broad bean stem can locate the phloem in about half an hour! How do they manage this? The stylets have sensory structures on their tips which can detect changes in sugar concentration. As mentioned above, the phloem transports the sugars manufactured during photosynthesis and so the concentration of sugar within these vessels is high. There is therefore a sugar concentration gradient from high in the phloem to low near the plants' cuticle. The aphids are able to detect this gradient and so manipulate the stylets to penetrate along this increasing concentration towards the phloem. Microscope studies have shown that aphids, whilst very good at this, sometimes lose their way and have to start again. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that they can reach the phloem so quickly.



The next problem that aphids have to solve is that plant sap is about 90+% sugar, with very little of the amino-nitrogen that the aphids actually need for growth. This means that they have to imbibe very large amounts of plant sap in order to get enough amino-nitrogen to grow and reproduce. How can they manage this? Aphids have a greatly modified gut in which the posterior part (hind gut) runs alongside the anterior part (foregut). During feeding (which is almost continuous!), the sugar is separated from the rest of the sap in the foregut and is actively pumped through its walls into the hindgut, leaving a small

amount of other sap ingredients, including the amino-nitrogen in the foregut. With an almost continuous flow of sap through the gut, enough amino-nitrogen is accumulated quite easily. However, this active pumping of sugars through the gut wall requires a lot of energy – which, of course, is easily obtained from the excess sugar!

A further 'problem' experienced by aphids is that the plant is turgid. In other words, in order to prevent the plant from wilting, all the contents of vessels such as the phloem are under great pressure. In fact, this high pressure probably works to the aphids' advantage in that, once the stylet has pierced the phloem, the pressure within it pumps the sap up the stylets and into the aphids' gut! To control this flow, the aphids have strong sphincter muscles in their mouths.

What happens to the excess sugar? This is passed out through the anus as a liquid known as honeydew. The next essay will discuss the importance of honeydew (much of the economics of Greece and Turkey rely on it!). And I will discuss how aphids defend themselves.

A Moorhen family

Author: David R. White, Naturalist

During a walk one morning, I noticed a large damselfly hatch which had also been noticed by a moorhen. These were easy to catch insects & the bird was soon taking beak fulls to nearby vegetation. During each delivery I felt sure I could here faint "cheep" type calls. Scouring the dense vegetation from a safe distance with my binoculars, I eventually spotted the nest. I could see several chicks & that one last egg was in the hatching process.



I decided to settle down, well hidden, to watch how events evolved. For about an hour the other adult continued to deliver more of these foods, in the same manner, to his mate at the nest while the last egg hatched. The last chick to hatch then took a further while to dry out its black downy fluff. Once this had dried, mum was out into the water & calling to her chicks to follow. The family swam about 20 feet to the waterside where it was covered with vegetation.



Dad continued to deliver the plentiful supply of food. I felt those newly hatched chicks must probably be very full by now; but neither mum or dad seemed to realise & continued to offer more food!. This continued until the chicks, probably tired from their first swim & eating so much, started to doze off for a well-earned rest. I suspect the chicks also needed some warmth, as they quickly snuggled under mum's warm body feathers, instinctively knowing that it would be really warm there.

I did wonder if these were new, inexperienced parents, or that they had just been instinctively reacting to a brief, but plentiful, supply of food. At this point I quietly left the moorhen family so that the parents could continue to care for & protect their new family. It was a privilege to share the start of these chicks' new lives for this brief period.

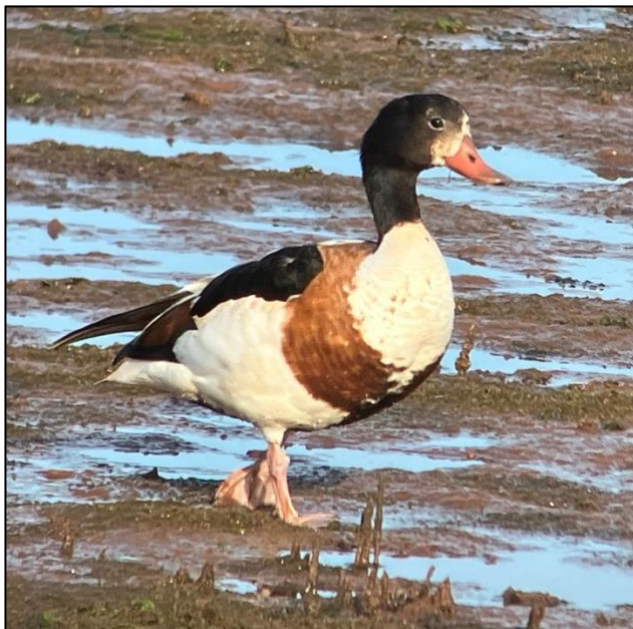


Recent Wildlife sightings on the Otter Estuary Nature Reserve

Author: Rick Lockwood

April saw a northerly airflow dominating the weather and as a result spring migrants were thin on the ground for much of the month, although more wading birds were moving through at the months end.

Whimbrel, the smaller relative of curlew, were seen on most days, and a high count of 21 feeding on the reserve on the 28th was notable. These birds are migrating north from Africa to breed in Iceland, Scandinavia, and northern Scotland. Travelling in small groups their effervescent, piping calls often alerts one to their presence before they are seen. By the end of the month many songbirds had finally arrived, with reed, sedge, willow, and garden warblers all being heard, as well as common and lesser whitethroat. A few little egrets were seen displaying in the rookery but again they failed to breed.



Early May began with the sighting of a green-winged teal, a rare visitor from North America on 2nd-4th May. This is only the third sighting of this species on the estuary with previous records in 1970 and 1999. A drizzly morning on Sunday 5th May brought a large flock of waders that included 55 dunlin, 2 sanderling, and 7 ringed plovers. Single ospreys were seen on the 7th and 8th May, and a barn owl was noted hunting over the island (old tip area) on the evening of the 24th. Up to 60 shelduck were present with at least six pairs raising young. The number and variety of migrant

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wading birds declined towards the end of the month. A few oystercatchers were present providing hope that they may breed, and an influx of mute swans was a welcome surprise with numbers peaking at 36 on the 27th, most of these on the river.



The beginning of June saw the expected lull in wildlife movements as the breeding season progressed, although there has still been plenty to see. There were many broods of young mallard amongst the 240 counted on the 28th. A female goosander with two young were also frequenting the river. A few wading birds still passing through included 3 sanderling and 5 dunlin on 3rd June, which included a small pale-headed

bird, likely to be of the subspecies *arctica*. There is still much to learn about this poorly known subspecies which winters in NW Africa. Even in early June this bird was probably still migrating north to its breeding grounds in NE Greenland inside the Arctic Circle.



And... saltmarsh plants, including glasswort and sand spurry, can now be seen over bare earth areas as natural colonisation progresses across the reserve, only 9 months on from the tide coming in.

Rick Lockwood, Otter Estuary Ranger
Rick.Lockwood@clintondevon.com [07976 062709]

Reminder: OVA Photo Competition

Author: Chris Boorman

We wanted to remind everyone about the OVA photographic competition. There are two competitions that you can still enter:

- Children (15 years old or younger, as of September 30th 2024)
- Adults (16 years or older, as of September 30th 2024)

The closing date for this competition is the 30th September. All entries must be submitted via email to Editor@ova.co.uk or by direct message to the editor on Facebook. Each entry must include contact details (name, phone, email), the date of the photograph and the location where the photograph was taken. The winners will be announced in October and included in the winter Newsletter.

We are looking for photographs of any fauna (mammals, birds, bugs) taken anywhere between Exmouth to Sidmouth and from Ottery St. Mary to Budleigh Salterton. Photographs must be taken in the defined competition timeline (May 1st to September 30th). Anyone who is a member of either the OVA Facebook group, or the OVA charity can take part. People can submit up to 5 photographs MAXIMUM. Judges decisions will be final. NO disturbance of habitats is allowed in the taking of pictures. Indeed, for certain species it is illegal to do this. Pictures will be judged in digital form.



Take Part!

Our first ever OVA photo competition

Judging panel
Mr. David R White, naturalist
Mr Rick Lockwood, Otter Estuary Ranger
Lucilla Phelps FRPS



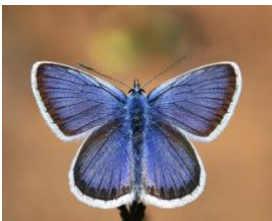
Insects & mini-beasts

Image Credits: Geoff Porter & David R. White

A small selection of the insects and mini-beasts that you will see when walking around the Otter valley. Come rain or shine, we tend to notice insects when the sun shines but sometimes it's easier in wet weather when they are inactive. Many hide from the rain on the underside of leaves.



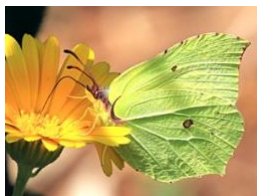
Common Blue Butterfly



Silver Studded Blue Butterfly



Red Admiral butterfly



Brimstone butterfly



Speckled wood butterfly



White Admiral butterfly



Male Emperor Dragonfly



The Footballer hoverfly



Digger wasp feeding on Hogwort



Sawfly larva devouring a rose leaf



Peacock caterpillar caught in web



Cinnabar moth caterpillar

Fairlynch Museum: Talks Programme

Author: Phil Ashworth, Fairlynch Museum

I'm writing this as the sun beams down on Budleigh Salterton. This is the one day of summer 2024, the unpredictable weather! However we can rely on the acclaimed Fairlynch Museum Coffee Talks, which start a new season on the 4th of September.

They say today's news is tomorrow's history and so we start on the 4th September with events which are, sadly, making both the news and history .

East Budleigh's Andrew Canning OBE served for over 33 years as a Royal Marines officer and was involved in operations and training in many parts of the world. Since September 2022 he has been volunteering for the not-for-profit Ukraine Freedom Company, collecting and delivering much needed aid to the Ukrainian forces close to the frontline in the war with Russia, and elsewhere in Ukraine.



*Andrew Canning on left in Ukraine
Credit Andrew Canning*

Who knows what will be happening out there by 4th September so we are sure of an up to date talk on "Delivering aid to Ukraine ".



Credit: Commons

23 years after he died Robert Maxwell still needs no introduction . His was a life that began in Czechoslovakia and ended in the Mediterranean. Along the way he left many pensioners impoverished.

His death has been the subject of much speculation. David Kerr was a Daily Mirror journalist for 40 years, he now lives in East Devon. If being sacked by Maxwell is a qualification then David's verdict on whether he jumped or was pushed should be most illuminating.

November's talk is still to be fixed but work is going on behind the scenes!

Jackie Moggridge was one of the unsung heroes of WW2, delivering planes to keep the war effort going. Her daughter Candy Atkins has researched her mum's amazing story. It was known as the "graveyard run" working for the Air Transport Auxiliary. Jackie survived, many of her friends didn't.

January's talk is also up-to-date but closer to home. The Lower Otter restoration project may have been controversial in some quarters but it has transformed the area. As anyone looking at Limekiln car park will know it's rapidly becoming a tourist attraction in its own right. Rick Lockwood, the nature reserve warden and Dr. Sam Bridgewater from Clinton Devon Estates will give their verdict on how the project has

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gone, the lessons learnt and the plans for the future. It will be the first time they've talked about the project to groups like ours and promises to be an insightful event. The talk will be on the 8th of January because we may all have other things to do on New Year's Day!

In February, we turn our attentions to Budleigh's own film star Belinda Lee who died in a road accident in California at the age of 26. She was often compared, unfavourably with Diana Dors. She was fine actress when given serious parts but many directors saw her as a type cast "blonde". Prof. Phil Wickham, from Exeter's Bill Douglas Cinema Museum will tell us her story.

In March we welcome so well to Raleigh's mother. Well, not actually his mother but the acclaimed writer and historian Rosemary Giggs, who has researched the story and lovingly plays out the part of Katharine Champernowne. Her book, "A Woman of Noble Wit", was published recently.

We end the talks season in April with a look ahead to the Battle of Britain commemorations . The focus of attention, quite rightly, is on the role Kent played. But Devon had a significant part in the successful defence of Britain's skies. John Smith's talk and demonstration of life in the area as a Roman soldier delighted us a couple of years ago. He returns to Budleigh Salterton with what promises to be an equally informative insight.



Credit: Commons

So I hope that's whetted your interest with the promise of more to come .

The talks have become part of the Budleigh calendar but just as importantly they raise funds to keep our acclaimed museum open. Please put the dates in your diary and tell your friends. They are all welcome either as guests or as new members of the Friends of Fairlynch Museum. Once again we will meet in St Peter's Hall for coffee at 10:30 and the talks will begin at 11. £4 for Friends and £6 for non-members .

So please put these dates in your diary.

- 4th Sept. Delivering aid to the Ukraine.
- 2nd Oct. Robert Maxwell. Did he jump or was he pushed?
- 6th Nov. To be announced later
- 4th Dec. Unsung heroes; The WW2 delivery woman of the Air Transport Auxiliary.
- 8th Jan. The Lower Otter Nature Reserve. What we've learned so far.
- 5th Feb. Belinda Lee, Budleigh's controversial film star.
- 5th Mar. Meet Sir Walter Raleigh's mother.
- 2nd Apr. Devon's part in the Battle of Britain.

The Otter Valley Association

Web: www.ova.org.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ottervalleyassociation>

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