



AUNE CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

'Conserving the Devonshire Avon from source to sea'

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2008

Dear ACA member

There are several items of topical interest to tell you about. If you know of members who do not receive e-mail, please help the Association by passing the information on.

Dates for your diary

Our AGM will be on Wednesday 16th April at 7.30pm in Bigbury Memorial Hall, St Ann's Chapel. A formal notice will follow in due course.

We shall be arranging two lectures this summer, on Tuesday 5th and Tuesday 12th August at 7.30pm in Thurlestone Parish Hall. The topics have not yet been finalised, so if you have ideas for speakers, please let me know as soon as possible.

Mike Garton-Sprenger has organised a reunion meal for ACA members in The Journey's End, Ringmore on 6th March. These occasions are always highly enjoyable; if you are interested and would like to book a place, please contact Mike (m.gartonsprenger@btopenworld.com or 810920) for details, rather than contacting me. Please see the menu, circulated separately.

John Crawford Memorial Fund

After careful consideration, the Committee has decided to celebrate the memory of the late John Crawford and his huge contribution to the ACA and the local community by making an annual award of £1000 to encourage original research investigations anywhere on the river. This decision was taken after consulting John's family and we all feel that John would have approved as he was always very keen to promote fresh interest in this special environment. The competition for awards will be open to all ages including schools, colleges, universities or individuals but preference will be given to local applications. The initial generous donations by ACA members to John's memorial fund (£515) will be supplemented as necessary by funds raised by other means. The investigations may be on any topic that might help to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical or natural environment of the river, in accord with our charitable objectives. This is a fairly broad remit! The awards may take the form of several smaller amounts rather than one lump sum, depending upon the applications. Assessment of applications will be made by a panel assembled by the ACA. A formal announcement and invitation to apply will be made in the local press and elsewhere in the near future.

Projects

The very fruitful Avon Estuary Siltation Research Project (AESRP) that John had managed has now reached its conclusion. A series of well received lectures on the findings were presented last August. The formal summary reports are available (through me) for inspection by interested parties and I hope soon to make them accessible via our website (www.aca.aveton-

gifford.co.uk). These reports have been independently scrutinised and approved by Prof Des Walling (Geography Dept., University of Exeter) and our recommendations have been passed on to the Avon Estuary Forum to inform the new Avon Estuary Management Plan which is currently being prepared.

The Avon's Associate Project within the national Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative (CSFI) will be drawing to an end in February after two years. The future funding of the national programme is uncertain at the time of writing but we hope it will be extended later in 2008. This local project was a very effective collaboration between the ACA, AONB, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the Small Farms Association; it has met all the agreed targets in our grant application to DEFRA, making a significant contribution to improving river water quality by reducing agricultural run-off. You may remember the ACA made an important 'seed' contribution of £1200 to help get the Avon programme on the road and we have formed part of the Steering Group throughout. Interestingly, the combined funds that the ACA has managed to attract to the AESRP and CSFI total over £79000; much of this was due to John's untiring efforts.

Our September litter clean up on Cockleridge was depressingly successful. Apart from several sacks full of the usual large plastic objects and bits of fishing net, Maya Plass concentrated our attention on collecting some of the very many tiny pieces of polystyrene foam to be found amongst the shingle; it is these bits that are the biggest threats to wildlife, of course, rather than objects such as the unsightly but more spectacular freezer carcass which we managed to haul ashore for SHDC to collect. A second clean up below Aveton Gifford, early in January, similarly accumulated many sacks of rubbish in Timbers car park for SHDC; some of it potentially useful recyclable items. What turns up is often surprising!

'Cherish the Avon' leaflet

If anybody has ideas for inclusion in a 'Cherish the Avon' guide to the area, please let a committee member know as soon as possible because we hope to collaborate with the AONB and our Estuary Officer in producing an advisory leaflet for summer visitors - and others. Possible items include various waste disposal issues, fishing restrictions, use of detergents, water safety, tidal road dangers, conservation of flora and fauna, etc.

Stop Press

Many of you will be aware of the appearance on the river just before Christmas of a large houseboat of questionable seaworthiness and aesthetic value - a 'gift' from Salcombe where no mooring was available. As an environmental conservation charity, the ACA is very concerned about the threat to safe navigation and the threat of pollution - chemical and physical - from this vessel (it is already shedding copper sheathing from its hull as it scrapes its way around the river in search of a berth). The Salcombe Harbourmaster, Environment Agency and the Evans Estate's agent have been kept informed. On a closely related matter, we are pursuing the issue of mooring controls at Aveton Gifford with the Duchy of Cornwall and others. We suspect the lack of controls in that part of the river has contributed to the present situation and may become an even bigger problem in future if something isn't done.

With best wishes

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