



# AUNE CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

*'Conserving the Devonshire Avon from source to sea'*

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - MARCH 2008

Dear ACA member

We do our best to keep you all informed of matters of concern on the river by a variety of means; these include personal e-mails, notices on our website ([www.aca.aveton-gifford.co.uk](http://www.aca.aveton-gifford.co.uk)) and in the parish magazines for Thurlestone/ Bantham, Bigbury/BoS/Challaborough, Ringmore and Aveton Gifford, and announcements at reunions. Unfortunately, some members still seem to miss out, hence I have prepared a further report for this conventional mailing. The maintenance of a topical membership e-mail database has many advantages, including speed of communication and cost-savings but it is also problematic and prone to errors for a variety of reasons. If you use e-mail but have not been receiving any recent messages from the ACA, please let me know of your current e-address.

### Dates for your diary

We shall be arranging two lectures this summer, on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 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. You can all help by publicising these awards.

### Projects

The Avon Estuary Siltation Research Project (AESRP) 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. 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) drew to an end in February, making a significant contribution to improving river water quality over two years by reducing agricultural run-off. The future funding of the national programme is uncertain at the time of writing but we hope it will be extended later in 2008. Our local project was a very effective collaboration between the ACA, AONB, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the Small Farms Association; it met all the agreed targets in our original grant application and was well received by DEFRA.

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 what turns up is often surprisingly useful!

### **'Cherish the Avon' leaflet**

Having consulted widely with other interest groups, we have produced an advisory leaflet entitled 'Cherish the Avon' - a simple DO's and DON'Ts guide for visitors and residents in the area to help protect the river and individuals using it. The leaflet will be appearing as an insert in parish magazines and will be available in other local outlets. Please look out for it and bring its contents to the attention of others. We'd like to thank the Duchy of Cornwall for help in funding the printing.

### **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. The Salcombe and Bantham Harbourmasters, Environment Agency, Evans Estate's agent and the Land Steward of the Duchy of Cornwall have been kept informed of developments and of our concerns. Many locals are also very worried about the situation - especially since the vessel moored, in full visibility, below the bridge at AG. 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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