



## AUNE CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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

### **NEWSLETTER – April 2014**

We are currently funding another project with Aveton Gifford Primary School and we are very fortunate that the project is being run for us by Maya Plass, ACA member and author of the 'RSPB Handbook of the Seashore'. This time, Maya and the children are exploring the Devon Wildlife Trust's newly created, South Efford marsh and its wide variety of plant and animal life. By all accounts the children (& Maya) are having a wonderful time whilst learning a great deal across a surprisingly wide range of subjects. You can catch up with what is going on via the project's 'bog blog' at [www.ourbogblog.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.ourbogblog.blogspot.co.uk) - it's well worth a visit! This early experience of wildlife and becoming inspired by the great outdoors is how we create future ecologists and conservation-minded adults. As part of the project, we have bought a 'bog box' consisting of various sampling nets, traps, field guides, binoculars and a simple microscope which the ACA is prepared to loan, subsequently, to other *bona fide* interest groups or individuals. Maya's project is running over 10 workshops, finishing in May, with an Open Day on 5<sup>th</sup> June when the local community and the school will be asked to come on guided tours of the marsh (led by the children). We believe this will be a truly transformational experience for the children involved. It's worth noting that this project is only possible through the incredible generosity of several of our members who have made large financial donations – I'll spare their blushes but they have the ACA's undying gratitude!

I'd also like to thank the rest of the committee for the hard work they have contributed in their different ways to help make the river a better place over the past year: that is, Ros Brousson (Secretary & Treasurer), Pat Cassidy, Mike Cooper, Peter Marsh, John Peters, Bill Starey and Eric White.

Our AGM this year will feature a talk by Maya about the school project, as above, and will be capped off by a light buffet (provided FOC by the ACA) at the Fisherman's Rest on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 7.00pm.

On a different topic, we'd like to trace a Dr Woods, botanist of international repute, who used to visit Cockleridge Ham in the not-too-distant past whilst staying in the small abode on the river bank just upstream of the beach, opposite Bantham. Apparently, she maintained that of all the habitats she had experienced in her career, Cockleridge presented one of the most interesting. If she kept any records of her findings on Cockleridge, these could be of great conservational importance. If you know anything of relevance about this lady, please tell one of the committee members.

Although our main focus is on the river and its estuary, rather than on village issues, many ACA members are concerned about the impact of the forthcoming sale of the Evans Estate. Management of the estate, including Bantham Harbour and the associated mooring licences, has always been very benign and conservation-minded - as is well known. We have always maintained a good working relationship with the Estate by direct personal contacts and through the biannual Avon Estuary Forums; we shall be doing our best to do the same with whoever takes over the management responsibilities after the May sale.

Elsewhere, we have paid to cut a passage through some of the very large fallen trees on the estuary bank below Milburn Orchard. Although not a formal right-of-way, this is a popular alternative walk to Bigbury-on-Sea at low tide which was being made much more difficult by the required diversions into deep mud around the fallen trees!

Together with Aveton Gifford Parish Council and the Duchy of Cornwall, we continue to keep a watchful eye on some of the less desirable but long-standing features of the estuary, namely all the boat and car junk at Bridge End. Unfortunately, these problems cannot be solved overnight!

The ACA is still organising the 6-monthly meetings of the Devon Avon Water Quality Group which feeds an 'Avon perspective' into the South Hams Rivers Improvement Project (SHRImP). The new SHRImP project manager, Scott West of the Westcountry Rivers Trust, will be presenting a talk entitled 'Restoring good ecological quality to the Devon Avon' at a Kingsbridge Natural History Society meeting on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November (1930 at West Charleton Village Hall) and interested ACA members have been invited to attend.

Other events for your diary are as follows:-

1. Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April 1100 – a river clean along the Tidal Road from Milburn Orchard to Aveton Gifford (we missed our planned New Year's Day event owing to foul weather and exceptionally high tides). LW is ≈1130.
2. Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 1500 – meet at John Crawford's memorial bench near the downstream edge of Stiddicombe Wood for a picnic tea when we hope to also enjoy the floral beauty of this idyllic spot – bring your own picnic! N.B. You can find guides about the wood and its ecology at [http://auneconservation.org.uk/?page\\_id=266](http://auneconservation.org.uk/?page_id=266) and the AONB team have done a brilliant job in putting together a guide for the Avon Estuary Walk which includes Stiddicombe Wood (see - [http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/uploads/walks/walks%20with%20audio/Avon\\_esturay\\_we\\_b\\_walk.pdf](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/uploads/walks/walks%20with%20audio/Avon_esturay_we_b_walk.pdf) ).
3. Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June 1100 – Cockleridge beach clean in association with the Marine Conservation Society. LW ≈ 1245. See the link below for details of the threat to our beaches. [http://www.mcsuk.org/what\\_we\\_do/Clean+seas+and+beaches/Pollution+and+litter+problems/British+beaches+are+dumping+ground+for+litter](http://www.mcsuk.org/what_we_do/Clean+seas+and+beaches/Pollution+and+litter+problems/British+beaches+are+dumping+ground+for+litter)

4. Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July 1800 – BBQ and ram roast at Folly Hill Farm, courtesy of the Tucker family. This will be a 'bring & share' event, supplemented by the ram. Warm clothes are advised!
6. Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September – walk and picnic lunch by the Avon Dam. Again, this will be a BYO occasion; if you bring it, you'll have to carry it! Assemble in the Shipley Bridge car park at 1100.
7. Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September 1100 – Beachwatch 'Big Weekend' event in collaboration with the Marine Conservation Society (MCS); a 'collect & count' beach clean at Cockleridge. LW ≈ 1100
8. Sat. 8<sup>th</sup> November 1100 – River clean along the Tidal Road. LW ≈ 1145
9. Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November 1930 KNHS talk by Scott West – as above. Warning: parking is a nightmare at WCVH, arrive early!

Please keep an eye on your e-mail inbox and on our website at [www.auneconservation.org.uk](http://www.auneconservation.org.uk) for further details about the beach and river cleans. Please also check our safety advice at <http://auneconservation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ACA-BEACH-CLEANS3.pdf>

Finally, if you know of ACA members who do not have access to e-mail, could you share the contents of this Newsletter with them, please?

If you have any ideas for future ACA activities, please let me or another committee member know.

Wishing you an enjoyable summer beside, in or on the river.

Stuart Watts (Chairman)

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