

Otter Estuary Secrets Uncovered!

Mysterious footprints in the mud intrigued visitors arriving at Ottermouth in brilliant sunshine on Saturday 5th April. Experienced twitchers actually sighted some of the annual spring migrants, the OVA Marsh Litter Pickers, foraging enthusiastically for all sorts of mainly plastic debris in and around the estuary. Both bearded and white-throated versions were spotted. Their appearance, the result of a combined effort by AONB partnership members, the Otter Valley Association, the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust and East Devon District Council, was greeted with many encouraging comments from holiday makers.

An eagle-eyed OVA member, Annie Dent, identified a Victorian style bottle which, when washed later, revealed the inscription, "Fellows Syrup of Hypophosphites". Internet research revealed this as "an excellent recuperative tonic" which was a lucrative business for James Israel Fellows. In business with his father in St John, New Brunswick, Canada in the 1850s, Fellows developed a wide range of remedies. He had moved to London by the 1870s and, with judicious advertising, developed a flourishing business in this treatment for bronchitis, influenza and tuberculosis. How the bottle ended up in Budleigh Salterton, in the Otter estuary will remain a mystery. Fairlynch Museum will be offered the bottle.

Press release by the Otter Valley Association (Part of the East Devon AONB Partnership)