

sid vale association



past • present • future

Newsletter

Number 81 November 2014

*The Association promotes conservation and heritage,
the museum, and facilities for recreational
and cultural activities in the Sid Valley*

www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

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A word from the Chairman...

I am aware that this item is going to wander about rather like a shaggy dog story, so I crave your indulgence!

My wife recently showed me an article in a magazine which spoke of the striking coincidences which crop up when people research their family histories. I have made some surprising discoveries in my own delving into my family's murky past. One example is of a paternal great grandfather, one hundred years before my parents even met, being born in exactly the same house where a maternal great grandmother was living thirteen years later.

Earlier this year, when the volunteers who deliver these newsletters met to collect the Annual Reports, I was saying to them – I cannot now remember the relevance – that I had on one occasion visited Sudbury in Suffolk, where my maternal grandfather's family came from. As I neared the end of my drive home, I realised with some satisfaction that I had travelled from Sudbury to Sidbury that day. Afterwards, Bob Adams mentioned his own memories of another Sudbury, the one in Middlesex. So his was another journey from Sudbury to Sidbury. He told me incidentally that the local tube station used to carry the sign 'SUDBURY for Wembley'; this was later changed to 'WEMBLEY for Sudbury', and now is reduced to 'WEMBLEY'. There must be some reason for Wembley having gained importance at poor Sudbury's expense.

The very same afternoon as that meeting of the volunteer newsletter delivery team, I attended the 100th birthday party of one of the residents of Abbeyfield Court, where I am chairman of the house committee. As I browsed through some of the photographs and scrapbooks which charted those one hundred years, I realised that Marjorie had been born just a stone's throw from Sudbury in Middlesex, and before she took up residence in Abbeyfield Court, had lived for many years in Sidbury. I was therefore able to salute yet another person who had made the journey from Sudbury to Sidbury.

The truth may well be that there are dozens of people who have made the lifetime journey from one or other of the Sudburys (there is a third in Derbyshire) to live in or near Sidbury, so to meet a few of them may be no surprise. If one adds Chipping Sodbury, the chances will become proportionately greater. It has made me muse about Sidcup to Sidmouth, and what about Sydenham, or Sydney! And, of course, there is another Sidbury in Shropshire! If you think long enough, the coincidence doesn't seem so remarkable after all.

Anyone who has done family research will have met 'coincidences'. I will finish with one more. This time it was my paternal great great grandmother who was born in a small Suffolk village, about a century and a half before my parents married



A word from the chairman *continued*

in West Ham. When she was born, my maternal great great grandfather was a six year old boy in the very same village. Her family moved away from the village a few years later, but his family continued to live there for almost another hundred years. My parents were quite unaware of this connection, and it was some years after their deaths that I discovered the link.

Thank you to all of those who have managed to navigate their way through this sprawling piece. I am sure it will have resonance with any who have peered into their own family tree.

Alan Darrant

Woodlands and Estates

It has been a lovely summer and the wildflowers in Margaret's and Gilchrist Meadows have been very successful, especially the rattle. The pond is still to be completed, but dippers and kingfishers have been seen on the river. Tree planting in Gilchrist Meadow has yet to start and careful thought is going into the varieties. Summer tasks are restricted to maintenance by Mike Davies and the volunteer group of helpers and this gives us all an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our labours.

Salcombe Regis has seen a good display of grasses and clovers on Soldiers Hill and the insect life has been prolific with large numbers of butterflies with a wide range of varieties including Silver Washed Fritillaries, Commas, Skippers, Clouded yellow, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Brimstone, Holly Blue and all the usual suspects.

Glowworms are around but not yet seen on SVA land.

The plans for the winter include some major work at Combe Head Wood to diversify the tree and shrub varieties and to introduce some grassy clearings. Allotment Field Wood will need renewal of the handrails and steps and some fallen tree clearance.

Peaslands Knapp, managed by Kate Tobin and her helpers, has been very popular with the public and will be entertaining some sheep for a few weeks this autumn.

On the downside Margaret's Meadow is suffering from some vandalism, including paint spraying, tree burning and theft of tools. We have got away lightly so far but I would ask that members are vigilant and report anyone they suspect is up to no good.

Anyone who is keen to roll their sleeves up and get stuck in once a week for a couple of hours is very welcome! Please ring me on **01395 519350**. I will be very pleased to hear from you!

Richard Huntington

Peaslands Knapp Update



Work – and fun – continues in Peaslands Knapp and we are grateful to all those who come along. Brambles had overtaken sections of the wildflower meadow over the summer, so we arranged an hour or so of bramble-bashing over a couple of weekends – followed by drinks and cake as a reward, of course!

This autumn we have removed the Pampas grass in

the meadow – a job that has been planned since we acquired it in 2010. Pampas grass is a gigantic South American grass species. It was a very popular ornamental in the UK in the 1970s, very likely when it was planted in the grounds of Villa Bohemia, which now forms Peaslands Knapp meadow. Over the decades 5 clumps developed in the meadow, had grown to great proportions and each clump was taking up a fair chunk of a very small meadow, suppressing wildlife underneath it. We decided to get in a contractor to remove it because it could have worn out our volunteers' stock of good will.

So we asked Stuart Britton, who used to work for the National Trust and now works as a specialist nature conservation contractor, to remove it and take all the cuttings away. It took Stuart a day to cut down all the pampas to around 6 inches above ground. It then took another day to clear up and take away, filling up a box trailer twice over with all the arisings. The sheep will go into the meadow



a week later and they will graze around it; when it starts to regrow in the spring, it will be treated with a biodegradable herbicide to stop it growing back. If you don't treat it or dig out the whole root, it will grow back even stronger. We look forward to seeing the wildflowers spreading into these areas next summer.

Kate Tobin

Parish Footpaths

There are almost 60 miles of Public Rights of Way in the Sid Valley parish. Our parish has one of the largest amounts of Public Rights of Way in the county and we are fortunate to have the South West Coast Path and the East Devon Way passing through our Parish. A group of volunteers monitor the footpaths looking at signposts, fences, stiles, gateposts and the general condition of the path. Any urgent work that needs to be undertaken is reported to the relevant authorities. This team also carries out an Annual Survey of all Public Rights of Way in the Sid Valley.

The team of volunteer surveyors are co-ordinated by Di Fuller, who liaises with the Town Council, County Council, land owners and other agencies, who have the ultimate responsibility for path maintenance. Some maintenance of paths is carried out by working groups, but heavier work is undertaken by contractors. The storms last winter caused a lot of damage with fallen trees and washed out paths in some areas and so county contractors were busy clearing and making good over the spring. Twelve paths had to be cleared of trees. We are having a concerted effort this year to renew missing, damaged or tilting finger posts and way markers and mending of stiles and steps where funding allows.

In addition, the wet and warm spring this year caused rampant grass growth and we had many complaints about overgrown paths prior to the scheduled annual grass cut done by the County. We have also had a volunteer cutting some paths and a second cutting takes place in the early autumn. Some additional surveys have been carried out to assess some of the damaged path conditions in dry weather. This year the survey will take place in October and findings will inform further repairs and path improvements over the coming months.

The annual survey this year is taking place in October so that we can plan further improvements and maintenance of the paths over the winter. It is clear this year that we need more volunteers for small working groups, as well as the surveyors. Work that these groups could undertake would be activities like replacing way mark arrows and signs or clearing vegetation from stiles, maybe once a month. If you would like to help with working groups or surveying, please contact me on **01395 576669** or email di_fuller@hotmail.com

Di Fuller

Woodlands and Estates

Interested in joining a working party?

Everyone welcome – Every Monday, except Bank Holidays 9:30-12:00

For details contact Richard Huntingdon 01395 519350
richardjhuntington@yahoo.co.uk

The Keith Owen Fund Grants Committee

The Keith Owen fund offers the community of the Sid Vale a wonderful opportunity, given the right purposes, to support and encourage that which makes the area so special. In many ways, the fund is still young; yet it has achieved much since its establishment in 2008. The legacy from Keith Owen has, under the steady guidance of former Chairman Handel Bennett and other members of the Keith Owen Fund committee, supported a diverse range of initiatives and projects over the last 5 years that have made a real difference to the community, local groups and organisations throughout the valley.

There are many reasons why people apply to the fund – some to develop a new club for local people – a good example being the Sidmouth Surf Life Saving Club which has grown from strength to strength and has recently successfully competed in a County event.

Others have applied to maintain the heritage of the area for public benefit – for example the National Trust and improved access and landscape works at Salcombe. Support to such events as the Science Festival, Folk Festival, and Sidmouth Hopper bus have all provided broader benefits to our community, visitors and the local economy.

The committee has and will continue to evolve; new blood is always good and as with any grant, tweaks and adaptations to the process of delivery are undertaken to ensure it works for all concerned. Inevitably as with any grant, there will be some that apply and find no luck. Part of how the fund process works will, I hope, reduce this possibility in future as we consider ways of guiding the application process; that balance between light touch and meeting the purposes of the Association.

I would like to thank all the Keith Owen Committee members past and present for their commitment, expertise, energy, enthusiasm and support. It is a fantastic fund and it is a great pleasure and honour for me to be Chairman.

As members of the SVA, please use your networks to raise awareness and spread the message about the fund all of which is detailed on the SVA web site. If you are interested in the fund in any way, please contact us at info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Chris Woodruff



Picture: Alex Walton

SVA Website Management Vacancies

There are two roles we wish to fill, although one person with the necessary skills could undertake both roles.

1. The co-ordination and management of the content of the website www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

This role involves ensuring page content is kept up to date when changes are identified by the committees owning each page, keeping the Calendar of Events up to date and distributing emails to the relevant person when they come through website forms. As and when the SVA decides to redevelop the website this person would also act as development co-ordinator.

2. The technical role of making the changes

This role involves actioning agreed changes to the website via the Content Management System. The current CMS being used is 'CMS Made Simple.' Knowledge of other content management systems such as Drupal, Wordpress and Joomla would be useful for the stage when the website is redeveloped. Technical support and training is given by our ISP, Cosmic, based in Ottery St Mary.

If you can help with either of these roles, please contact Roger Carver at sva@thetowerhouse.com

SVA Excursions

Every year the two SVA excursions, always extremely well-organised by Handel Bennett, are usually over-subscribed. We are therefore considering offering a third excursion, possibly in the Spring. To register your interest in having information on the excursion, but without committing yourself to making a reservation, please email info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk We will then email you with details when they are available.



Editor's Apology

In the July 2014 edition of the SVA Newsletter an article entitled 'Saturday and Holiday Jobs in 1960s Sidmouth' was published. Regretfully the Editor omitted to include the writer's identity. I would like to thank Norma Cox for her most interesting article and apologise for the error.

Felicity Carver

SVA Meetings

Our SVA meetings have proved very popular as was clear from the attendances this year. This is very encouraging and bodes well for future events. The talks, held at the Manor Pavilion Theatre, have been stimulating and informative. Topics have included a 'History of gardens and their development over the centuries', 'History of the Organ' and 'Volcanoes and Tsumanis, which was appropriately held in Science Week.

This year we are again providing a wide range of subjects, including 'The Great War: Stephen Reynolds in Sidmouth, a forgotten story' by speaker Nigel Hyman (Wednesday 19 November at 2.30pm) to 'Athens – but not just the Acropolis' with Fiona Eaves. See Dates for your Diary at the back of this Newsletter for full details of all talks taking place until April 2015.

We tried something new and held October's talk in the evening. This is something we may well do again as it enables those members still working, or with other Wednesday commitments, to come along.

We are always looking to improve what we offer in terms of subject matter so if you have any ideas for an event or are willing to make a presentation please contact me, on brendan.frances.lee@gmail.com or my co-organiser John Ridgley on jridgley@googlemail.com We look forward to meeting you at an event in the near future.

Brendan Lee



Posters from past meetings demonstrate the variety of subjects covered





Sid Vale 2016 Calendar Photo Competition

We live in such a beautiful area and it is great to be able to share how we each see Sidmouth from our own perspectives (and viewfinders). So, we are looking for your best photos of Sidmouth, Salcombe Regis or the Sid Valley showing the beauty of the area. They could include shots of the landscape, the sea, floral or historical aspects, and people enjoying themselves. We are hoping for unusual, adventurous and creative photos – something with that *WOW FACTOR!* Below are a couple of photos chosen for the 2015 calendar.

The Calendar is produced each year to raise money for the Sidmouth Landscape Fund, formed jointly in 1986 by the Sid Vale Association and the National Trust, for the conservation the Sid Valley countryside, to ensure that it remains unspoilt for future generations to enjoy. The Fund has contributed to the acquisition of land such as Peaslands Knapp, Margaret's Meadow and General Hunt's Pond.

The 2016 Calendar will contain 14 full page A4 landscape shape photos. If you would like to have one or more of your photos considered for inclusion, please submit them by email to ejw01@talktalk.net or on a cd to: Landscape Calendar 2016, Sidmouth Museum, Hope Cottage, Church Street, Sidmouth EX10 8LY. Please include your name, address, phone number, and email address if you have one. The photos should be jpeg or tiff files suitable for printing at A4 size, which means they should be a minimum of 2,400x1,700 pixels and preferably 3,400x2,550 or more to allow for cropping. Please note, entries are limited to three photos per person.

The 14 chosen entries will win a copy of the Calendar and everyone submitting a photograph for consideration will be entitled to order copies at a reduced rate.

The closing date for entries is 30th November 2014 so that the Calendar can go on sale at Easter next year, to give visitors a chance to buy this unique souvenir of their holiday right through the summer season.

Please note that copyright on the photos remains with the photographer. By entering the competition you are only giving the SVA permission to print the photos in the Calendar and use them to promote it in adverts etc, and not for any other use.



Already a member?

If you're reading this newsletter, you're probably already a member of the Sid Vale Association, because you appreciate the work it does in promoting the conservation of the town's heritage of listed buildings, our public amenities and floral gardens, our footpaths and the river, the unspoilt Devon countryside, and the World Heritage Jurassic Coast. You may also enjoy our cultural activities, including talks and excursions, our publications about local history and, of course, the Museum.

We know that most of you don't have the time to volunteer to help with stewarding in the Museum, or the energy for bramble-bashing at Peaslands Knapp! But there is another way you can help the Association. You probably have friends and neighbours who aren't members, and it would be great if you could let them know about us, and encourage them to join, which is why we've printed this pull-out membership form in this issue.

You could even give membership to a friend or a member of your family – how about that for an unusual stocking filler!

Moved here recently?

Have you moved to Sidmouth recently and looking for some new friends? Joining the Sid Vale Association and going to our talks, or on our excursions, or even volunteering to help with one of our many activities, is a great way to get to know like-minded people. When you join, tick the boxes for whatever you're interested in and we'll get one of our co-ordinators to contact you. To find out more about what we do, have a look at our website www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Regular visitor to Sidmouth?

You don't have to live in Sidmouth to be a member of the Sid Vale Association, and we know that lots of people love the Sid Valley so much that they return again and again. There was an article in the *Sidmouth Herald* recently about one couple who had visited the town twice a year for the last 45 years, and stayed in the same hotel bedroom each time! By joining the Association, visitors can help make sure the town is worth coming back to, as well as keeping in touch with what's going on through our newsletter.

New members add to our strength

The more members the Association has, the more our views are taken seriously when it comes to issues about conservation or undesirable development, so the more effective we can be in fulfilling our aims.



SVA Activities you can join in with include bramble-bashing, Museum walks, apple pressing, river maintenance, conservation projects, bulb planting...



Photo: Devon Wildlife Trust



Membership Application Form

Please send completed form, with payment, to
The Membership Secretary (SVA)
67 Malden Road, Sidmouth EX10 9LZ

Please make cheques payable to *The Sid Vale Association*

I/We wish to become Members of the Sid Vale Association

I/We enclose my/our Annual/Life Membership subscription of £

Title Surname
(BLOCK LETTERS, Please)

First Name(s) 1.

First Name(s) 2.

Address

.....

Post Code Tel. No.

E-Mail Address

GIFT AID SCHEME

I wish to make payments under the Gift Aid Scheme. I want the Charity to treat as Gift Aid ALL donations and subscriptions I make to the Association, from the date of this declaration, until I notify you otherwise.

I confirm that I pay an annual amount of Income Tax which is not less than the amount of tax which may be redeemed by the Sid Vale Association.

Signature Date

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Life Member £30 for one person **or** £40 for two persons at the same address

Annual Member £5 (Plus £2 for each additional household member)

NB: Postal supplements of £20 for Life Members and £2 for Annual Members, per household, apply outside the Sid Valley

Office Use Only

Area

Date

Receipt

Memb.Card

WG

NMM

GA

Help us – and make new friends at the same time!

I/We will be happy to help (as and when available), and would like more information about one (or more) of the following: (Please ✓)

- Membership** Local delivery of newsletters to members
- Newsletter** Writing articles and editorial
- Museum** Stewards Archivists Computer Operators
 Administration Shop
- Meetings Team** Planning Setting up in the Manor Theatre
- IT Presentations** Powerpoint presentations
- Website** Updating of content Technical management
- Social Activities** Planning for social events
- Excursions** Planning
- Walkers** Monthly walks in East Devon
- Youth work** Contact with schools and young people
- Keith Owen Fund** Grants to community projects Investment planning
- Footpaths** Monitoring and maintaining access on country paths
- River Patrol** Monitoring rivers and streams
- Woodlands and Estates** 'Hands-on' managing grass, hedging, trees, wild-life
- Conservation and Planning Team** Monitoring planning applications

Photo: Devon Wildlife Trust



SVA Publications

The 2015 Sid Vale Calendar

The ideal Christmas present for your friends and family!

The new A4 format calendar, sold in aid of the Sidmouth Landscape Fund for the conservation of the unspoiled Sid Vale

countryside for future generations to enjoy contains 14 stunning new pictures by local photographers. Complete with envelope for posting. £4.75.



Christmas Cards – Exclusive Christmas card featuring a Victorian design from the Museum's collection.

COMING SOON – in production as we go to press is '**Brandy for the Parson**' – a new book about Sidmouth's smuggling history written by Rab & Christine Barnard – just the thing for a Christmas stocking filler, so we plan to have it on sale on Sidmouth's Late Night Shopping Day – Friday December 5th when the Museum will be open from 4-8pm.



Online Sales

When the Museum is closed, many of the Sid Vale Association's publications are now available to buy online from our website

www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Saturday 1st November is Million Bulb Planting Day



Meet at Peak Hill any time from 9.30am-3pm, stay as long as you like, or until the bulbs run out!

Knapp Flowers 2013-14

Peaslands Knapp has a variety of flowering plants due to its various habitats.

In the wooded area around the steps leading up from Peaslands Road there is an abundance of lords and ladies (cuckoopint), Spanish bluebells, non-native daffodils and celandines amongst the masses of nettles, cleavers, ferns, ivy, sowthistles, brambles and stinking iris. Native bluebells, snowdrops, daffodils and wood anemones were planted in autumn 2013. Some snowdrops and bluebells have flowered this spring but very few daffodils and no wood anemones yet. Other flowers of interest in this area by the road are a clump of comfrey, common vetch and some fumitory as well as more common alkanet, herb robert and convolvulus climbing the fence.

At the top of the steps, along the newly planted hedge, grows cow parsley, red campion, spotted medick, more alkanet and foxgloves. There is also an increasing amount of three-cornered leek (wild onion). There was a great mullein flowering in 2013 near the path to the orchard but it was unfortunately decapitated and there is no sign of any more. Teasels grow just inside the gate to the meadow.

The meadow boasts plenty of primroses and celandines in the early spring on the south facing slope and of course has lots of knapweed in the summer as befits its name. There are two sorts of buttercups: creeping and meadow, lots of speedwell, lesser stitchwort, self-heal, ground ivy, and cranesbill, amongst the ubiquitous ribwort plantain, sorrel, dandelion and hawkbit. Since being grazed by sheep in the autumn of 2013 there are noticeably more violets in the meadow as well as more bugle, birds-foot trefoil and cinquefoil, the latter particularly on the tops of the ant hills where the grass is shortest. Strangely many chives have also sprung up. Common spotted orchid seeds were sown near the anthills last summer but have not materialised yet. At the bottom of the hill on the south side amongst the brambles and hogweed are some lovely clumps of red campion. Ragwort was removed from the meadow last summer before the sheep arrived as it is poisonous to them.

Many of the flowers in the meadow are food plants for butterfly caterpillars. Birds-foot trefoil supports common blues, the dingy skipper and the wood white. Tufted vetch is also a food plant for the wood white. Fritillaries of several types lay their eggs on violets, the small tortoiseshell and comma use nettles and the small copper, sorrels. Garlic mustard feeds the orange-tip and green-veined white which also feed on lady's smock (cuckoo flower). The peacock butterfly favours teasels. The flowering shrubs also support many butterflies. The holly blue feeds on holly and spindle, the white admiral on honeysuckle and the gatekeeper on brambles.

All these butterflies except the fritillaries, wood white and dingy skipper, have been sighted on the Knapp during the past year. As a fairly isolated habitat some of these species may not be able to reach the flowers there any time soon.

There are also many flowers on the Knapp which are favoured by bees for nectar and pollen collection including red clover, honeysuckle, foxgloves, comfrey, birds-foot trefoil, tufted vetch, knapweed, ox-eye daisy, red campion, self-heal and wild carrot.

This summer the brambles on the meadow have been stamped by a team of volunteers in an attempt to control them and allow more room for flowers. It remains to be seen whether this will be effective. Some saplings were also removed. Sheep will be returning again this autumn, to the delight of many local residents, so we can look forward to even more lovely flowers next year.

Penny Ball



Fancy Writing an Article?

We welcome any article that has a relevance to the Sid Valley area and may interest our members. The maximum word count is about 800 words and accompanying digital pictures are much appreciated.

This newsletter is published twice a year in July & November and articles are required two months prior to publication. We cannot guarantee that all articles submitted will be published.

Send your articles to Felicity Carver sva@thetowerhouse.com



Sidmouth Museum

Our final event of the season is on 29th October, the annual Big Draw Day. Hopefully this newsletter will reach you in time for it. This year we're joining in a big national event which runs throughout October, the theme of which is "it's our world". Without giving too much away, I can say that Margaret Adams and our Young Visitor's organiser, Ann Walsh, have put together something slightly different this year. All ages are welcome.

Our season then ends, another successful one. We say goodbye to our 2014 special exhibitions: Fortfield to Sanditon, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Devon, the Connaught connection and WW1 displays in their current format.

There is one more chance to see them this year. The Museum is again opening for the late night Christmas Shopping evening on Friday, December 5th, from 4pm – 8pm. As well as offering the opportunity of buying some really interesting & unusual gifts and a broad range of locally based books, this evening always proves to be a popular focus for meeting up with friends and viewing the displays. This year all the rooms, upstairs and down, will be open.

After that, the curatorial team go into action to prepare new exhibitions for 2015, one of which has the intriguing title "What Napoleon did for Sidmouth". We continue the never ending maintenance our old building needs. To cure something as apparently simple as a dripping tap raises a number of problems in an old listed building! Then there is the small matter of shop stocktaking and analysing sales figures to help decide what to stock next year. At least we now have better heating so the winter months are not quite so daunting.

Some 2014 highlights

The Jurassic Coast Museums Partnership, supported by Arts Council England, initiated a number of projects designed to enhance the appeal of nine Museums, including Sidmouth, along the Jurassic Coast.

A new online database, the Jurassic Coast Fossil Finder, showcases almost 1,000 fossils held by museums along the Dorset & East Devon Coast.

It includes specimens that date back over 500 million years. Each fossil has been professionally photographed and is accompanied by a magnifier which reveals the most intricate details. Information about each fossil is provided in a description and fact sheet designed to appeal to children and beginners as well as specialists. Many of the objects come from our collection.

Another project resulted in our Land & Man room gaining new display boards relating the story of our own section of the Jurassic Coast.





“**Brickosaur Day**” saw workshops of youngsters building a Lego mosaic of a Rynchosaurus. The enthusiasm was not confined to the youngsters, accompanying adults seemed just as eager to get involved!

Each youngster was given a Lego set of a Rynchosaurus to take home. We didn't offer prizes for the quickest build, but I suspect the winner wasn't an adult.



Museum Personnel

A major responsibility in all Museums is to keep the exhibits on display and in storage in the right conditions. Display cases and exhibition rooms need to be at the ambient temperature and humidity. Checks need to be made to ensure that collections in storage, and the storage space, do not become home to unwelcome pests, for example various types of beetle and, in our case, squirrels.

The person carrying out this role is our Environment Officer. Due to ill health, our current officer has, regrettably, had to resign so we are looking to recruit someone new. Experience is not particularly necessary. We can provide training (professional if necessary), help and back up. There is no need for daily involvement, just regular checks and updates. For more information please contact Dr. Bob Symes, Curator, at the Museum on 01395 516139. There is a voicemail, so “please leave a message”.

We always welcome new volunteers, so if any new SVA members would like to get involved with helping please contact the Museum at the above number. There are many ways in which you can help.

Nigel Hyman, the Museum's Chairman, is giving the SVA talk on 19th November in the Manor Pavilion at 2.30pm. The subject is “The Great War: Stephen Reynolds in Sidmouth – The Forgotten Story”. Nigel will be recounting the tale of how Stephen Reynolds organised and controlled inshore fisheries in the entire south-west during the Great War.

The 2015 season runs from Saturday 28th March – 31st October.

Hilary Briers

sid vale association



A New Look for the SVA

You may have noticed from the front cover of this newsletter that we have taken the opportunity of the Sid Vale Association's change of status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, to update our logo. Because it is impossible to represent the breadth of activities in which the Association engages, we have opted for a simple design which indicates the natural landscape associated with the Sid Valley – blue for the sea and sky, green for the countryside, and red for the Jurassic coast and cliffs, which are a very distinctive part of the valley.

We also felt it was important to retain the existing 'strapline' *past • present • future* as a reminder that much of what we enjoy about the Sid Valley today is a result of the work of the Association's volunteers over nearly 170 years, and we need to maintain that work for generations to come.



T.S. Eliot

Exploring Somerset

On our September excursion, we enjoyed wonderful sunny weather. With an excellent driver, we were taken to East Coker, a small village to the south west of Yeovil. They don't see large coaches there, and we had to research a passable access route. The churchwarden was pouring coffee as we arrived. The ashes of T.S. Eliot, the 1948 Nobel prize winner for Poetry, who died in 1965, are interred in the parish church. Eliot, an American, came to Britain 100 years ago, and in his poem *The Four Quartets*, one section is entitled *East Coker*. We listened while some of the party read selections of his poems to us, which they found moving – like *Little Gidding*, and the humorous: *A cat called Macavity!*

Our next visit was to Somerton, (just off the A303), called the *First Capital of Wessex*. As we viewed the beautiful Somerset countryside, I was placing lunch orders on my mobile, for 36 members at four different eateries, to be served at two different times. (To my amazement it all worked, and I had no complaints!) On



Our Party gather round to hear the guide at Brympton House

arrival in Somerton at the old Buttermart, the party divided into two. Half to lunch, and the other half receiving a tour of the historic town by guides from the Local Information Centre. At half time the two groups switched over. We were greatly impressed by the way the community valued their heritage, and the way everyone takes a great pride in what was once the county town of Somerset.

The party were helpfully punctual, and we were off once again to visit Brympton House, set in the countryside west of Yeovil. A house was built here before the Domesday Book in 1066. It was added to in the 13th C and 18th C. For a thousand years It has been owned by no more than 5 families!

Christopher Hussey, writing in *Country Life* in 1927, described Brympton as 'the most beautiful house in England'. Sadly its wonderful treasures of fine art and furniture, were all sequestered in a 5-day auction, to pay death duties in 1956.

As usually happens, we ended up with a cream tea, but still had time to stroll on the terrace of the south front, and explore the grounds. We were back in Sidmouth by 6pm having enjoyed a warm September day – filled with poetry, local history, and a fine country house to muse over!

We regularly operate two or three coach excursions in Summer, in Devon and to fascinating places in the South West. Usually we have a full coach of 53, and a waiting list (for any late drop-outs). **If you think you might like to help arrange two or three excursions a year for our members, please give me a call, and come round for a chat (01395 514211).**

Handel Bennett

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 29th October – Big Draw Day

Come and try your hand at painting a picture at the SVA Sidmouth Museum

Saturday 1st November – Public Million Bulb Planting Day

Meet at Peak Hill, Sidmouth, 9.30am-3pm, stay as long as you like!

Tuesday 4th November 10am – Countryside Walk

Meet: Donkey Sanctuary. Grid Ref: SY 159 891 Refreshments afterwards available in restaurant. Leaders: Doug and Sheridan Tel: 01395 577891

Wednesday 19th November 2.30pm – SVA Meeting – Manor Pavilion Theatre

Speaker: Nigel Hyman.

'The Great War: Stephen Reynolds in Sidmouth; a forgotten story'

Tuesday 2nd December 10am – Countryside Walk

Meet at the Golden Lion, Tipton St John. Grid Ref: SY 091 918
Christmas Lunch after the walk. Non-walking friends and relatives welcome.
Leaders: Jeff and Liz Tel: 01395 514690

Dates for your Diary *continued*

Friday December 5th – Museum open 4-8pm

Late night shopping day in Sidmouth – don't forget to call in at the Museum for your calendars, books and a great range of stocking fillers.

Tuesday January 6th 10am – Countryside Walk

Meet: National Trust car park on Salcombe Hill. Grid Ref: SY 139 882
Leader: Joyce Tel: 01395 515274

Wednesday January 14th 2.30pm – SVA Meeting – Manor Pavilion Theatre

Speaker: Fiona Eaves 'Athens: not just the Acropolis'

Tuesday February 3rd 10am – Countryside Walk

Meet: Branscombe car park behind the forge. Grid Ref: SY 196 886
Leader: Phil Tel: 01395 512339

Wednesday February 18th 2.30pm – SVA Meeting – Manor Pavilion Theatre

Speaker: Prof Brian Golding OBE 'A History of Sidmouth in its Street Names'

Tuesday March 3rd 10am – Countryside Walk

Meet: Layby west of the Bowd Pub. Grid Ref: SY 104 898
Leader: Graham Tel: 01395 445872

Wednesday March 18th 2.30pm – SVA Meeting – Manor Pavilion Theatre

Speaker: Dr Rosalind Leveridge

'Proud of our little local picture palace: Sidmouth and the cinema 1896-1918'

Saturday March 28th – Sidmouth Museum opens for the 2015 season

Tuesday April 7th 10am – Countryside Walk

Meet: Livonia Road roadside parking. Grid Ref: SY 130 887
Leaders: Jackie and Roger Tel: 01395 577651

Wednesday April 29th 2.30pm – SVA Annual General Meeting Manor Pavilion Theatre

Including pictures of SVA achievements and volunteers throughout 2014

**IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A MEMBER OF
THE SVA, WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN NOW**

Contact Andrew Scott

01395 519797 andrewscott@sidford.orangehome.co.uk

PLEASE NOTE: Owing to the considerable expenses incurred, it is necessary to make a small admission charge for **talks at the Manor Pavilion**, including SVA members.

The Sid Vale Association CIO is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registration number 1154749. The Association promotes conservation and heritage, the museum, and facilities for recreational and cultural activities in the Sid Valley