

sid vale association



*past • present • future*

# Newsletter

Number 82 July 2015

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

[www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk](http://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk)

# Sid Vale Association Executive Committee

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## A word from the Chairman...

Firstly, I must celebrate the news that the latest draft of the Local Plan now omits the Sidford employment site. This is a major success, and great credit must go to Richard Thurlow and all those involved in the Save Our Sidmouth campaign. Now we have to await the inspector's verdict on this latest draft after he considers it at the public examination in July.

I am hopeful that the coming year could be a momentous one for the museum, as we seek to resolve its chronic shortage of space. As museum exhibitions change each year, there are, at any one time, many items in the collection which are not on display, and we need to have space to store them.

There is also a need for adequate room and facilities for research, and for office space. One consequence of this space problem is that sometimes exhibits in the museum can be more cramped than is ideal. If we can, as I hope, find a solution to this problem, our wonderful museum would be able to become an even more exciting treasure house! By the time of publication of this newsletter, we may be a step nearer to the end of this particular rainbow.

Now on to a local history matter. Many of you will be aware of FreeBMD, where it is very easy to search online for births, marriages and deaths of family members from the latter half of 1837, when national civil registration began, until the early 1970s. As the name suggests, such searches are free.

Volunteers across the country, and abroad, are involved in transcribing records, and they will eventually reach 1983. There is a parallel site called FreeREG, and volunteers again are transcribing parish records so that they can be freely available on line. There are, of course, millions of such records, and the progress nationally is understandably slow, though in some areas of the country, parts of Kent, for example, significant progress has been made. For the Sid Valley, on the other hand, not a single record appears on the FreeREG site.

These parish records allow people to research their own family tree, but they would also provide a fascinating picture across the generations of the local population. It seems that in Sidmouth records of the Parish Church reach back to 1588, the Meeting/Unitarian Chapel to 1753, the Wesleyan Chapel to 1809, the Congregational Chapel to 1815. Salcombe Regis records date to 1609.

In Sidbury, St Giles' records also reach back to 1609, and those of the Chapel to 1757. The list goes on, and there are sources for Roman Catholic and non-denominational records.

### **A word from the Chairman *continued***

I understand that the records are held at the Devon Heritage Centre, but the FreeREG site says that volunteers can work from anywhere in the world, so there would seem to be no requirement to commute into Exeter!

In the last week or two I have emailed a couple of people seeking more information, but at the time of writing I still await an answer, so I will write chapter two of this story in November.

If the idea seems viable, my thought is that a small group of volunteers, happy to spend some time during the winter months on this kind of research, might begin to make a coordinated effort to unearth something of the Sid Valley's history. I understand volunteers can spend as little as an hour or two a week, or as much as they wish. As I say, more on this in a few months' time.

*Alan Darrant*

## **Woodlands and Estates**

### **Peaslands Knapp**

The volunteers had a busy winter clearing lots of bramble on the meadow to reduce sheep snagging, which happened several times during the last grazing period. Altogether 90 volunteer hours went into the bramble clearing this winter, by around 20 different individuals, and the SVA is very grateful to everyone who took part. It has been decided to use a biodegradable herbicide to treat the regrowth this year, in order to keep on top of it, and in the future, the grazing and a bit of cutting back should do the trick.

Jon and Penny Ball have very kindly agreed to take on organising the volunteer days at the Knapp from now on, whilst Kate Tobin will continue with other aspects of running it such as liaising with contractors, tree management and leisure facilities.

The rope swing is being monitored every couple of weeks to make sure there are no signs of wear and tear and a register of any incidents or comments relating to the swing is being kept. If your children go up there alone, the SVA would encourage you to speak to them about being thoughtful towards the neighbours and maybe go up with them sometimes to check they are playing safely.

A butterfly day is being planned for Saturday 20th June, with a chance to come and find out more about the butterflies, moths and wildflowers on the meadow and in the surrounding orchard, woods and hedges.

### **Margarets Meadow, Gilchrist and Livonia Fields**

Planting of specimen trees has been completed in Gilchrist Field, fences repaired and fallen trees removed or cut back. Excess brambles have been cut back and will be kept that way.

An area for *Fritillaria Meleagris* is being considered as it thrives in river meadows, but may involve fencing off an area to protect them.

The extra snowdrops planted by the river were a great success. The planting of Yellow Rattle has resulted in less grass mowing required with a subsequent saving of money and labour.

The results of vandalism in the Golden Copse have virtually disappeared and soon some kind of thinning out will have to be considered before the trees grow too much into each other.

A minority of dog walkers not picking up their dogs mess continues to spoil the enjoyment of users of the area and is also a hazard for the volunteers who maintain it. It always amazes me that people will go to the trouble of bagging it up and then just leave it or throw it in the bushes where it hangs from a branch, rather than walk to a bin.

The pond is far from completed and its long term future is under review. The problems are still those of retaining a suitable water level, gaining more light and the prevention of fallen leaves turning it into a gaseous swamp. There is also the issue of it becoming a children's play area and thus not suitable for wild life. Anyone with pond management expertise amongst our members is very welcome to ring me.

### **Salcombe Regis**

Soldiers Hill Copse and Combe Head Wood put on an excellent display of bluebells, oxalis, campion and foxgloves. Wood anemones have been planted in the hope they will multiply.

More bramble clearing is required in the copse and will be undertaken this winter. Bracken and bramble clearing is in full

swing at Combe Head Wood, although it is a long term project. Hazel, Birch, Thorn, Rowan and Cherry whips have been obtained and will gradually replace the majority of the Ash plantation to improve bio-diversity. Open spaces are being created and grass is coming back so there is hope for the glowworms.

At the time of writing, Painted Lady, Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and Brimstone butterflies have been observed.



Owl boxes have been sited in Combe Head Wood and Soldiers Hill Copse and it is hoped these will prove popular.

The Cornish fields on Soldiers Hill are at their most attractive now ( time of writing is mid-May) with the young seed heads of the grass, the buttercups, the purple clover all bordered by yellow scented gorse. It is hoped that purple orchids will appear again although walkers have picked them in the past.

Anyone who likes the outdoors and fancies a couple of hours exercise a week is very welcome to ring me on 01395 519350 and I will put them in touch with the appropriate person.

*Richard Huntington*

## Peaslands Knapp 2014-2015



Volunteers have again been busy on the Knapp since last summer working to encourage wildflowers in the meadow.

Some more sheep were borrowed for a few weeks in October and again did a good job of shortening the vegetation. They were somewhat hampered by the brambles which had spread considerably since last year so it was decided to have

several sessions of cutting to remove them using a brush-cutter, ditching hooks, and loppers and a dedicated team of hard working volunteers.

This created some large piles of brambles which we decided to burn in the new year during a couple of bonfire days. This was very successful in reducing the rubbish but it was hard work rolling it up to the top of the hill. The pampas grass at the top of the hill was cut and treated by contractors so some of this was also burnt.

In the spring there were signs of increased flower growth,



including native bluebells by the steps where we had previously planted bulbs and masses of new primroses on the hillside where the brambles had been cleared. Since then the red campion, bugle, speedwell, birds-foot-trefoil, buttercups and red clover have all reappeared in increased abundance.

Some new young trees were planted at the top of the hill to screen the rope swing from the houses. We planted birches, hazel and hawthorn. Some more hazel and hawthorn were put in the hedge at the bottom of the hill where some had failed to thrive and grass was cleared from around all the young trees.

At the beginning of May we did a small mammal survey with Louise Woolley and found many wood mice, voles (bank and field) and some shrews, indicating a healthy habitat. Recently we have undertaken more bramble cutting outside the meadow and down the steps to keep the paths clear for visitors. Later in the summer there will need to be bracken and ragwort pulling before the sheep come again.

*Penny Ball*



## Sidmouth Arboretum holds 3rd successful Tree Day

Sidmouth Arboretum held their third Annual Tree Day at the end of May. The theme of the day related to the changes we may anticipate in our lives by the year 2050.

The keynote speaker was Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE, who gave a talk based on his book *The World We Made*.

The Vision Group for Sidmouth joined with Sidmouth Arboretum to present an excellent line up of speakers and supporting displays.



Photo: Louise Woolley

The day began with a presentation from local ecologist, Louise Woolley, who has recently completed her booklet *The Natural History of the Sid Valley*, (published by the Sid Vale Association).

Louise had some wonderful photos of the secret wildlife of the valley and she outlined the ecological services trees provide (provisional, regulating, cultural and natural capital), suggesting ways that we can maintain and improve the habitats which attract and nurture these plants and animals.

The next speaker was Paul Bartlett, who is garden manager at the Stone Lane Gardens near Chagford, which hold a National Collection of birch and alder.

Paul travels to Georgia in search of a rare type of birch and he gave an amusing account of the sometimes dubious excitements of camping in the mountains of this poor country, where local goat herds are devastating what remains of the wild forest cover. He was quite clear however on the scientific nature of his work, which seeks to retain the genetic material of wild collected birch trees.

In his presentation, Kevin Fredian, used the phrase “Urban Forest”, which means the trees in and around a built up area are a key component of our green infrastructure.

Our climate is changing, the population is growing, our food supply is in question and water quality uncertain – so how can trees help?

As a college lecturer, Kevin sees that new jobs are emerging and students need to study at an interdisciplinary level – studying trees and how they impact on soils and water availability, and studying health issues, such as a walk in the park is better than a drug prescription.

Mark Broadmeadow, policy adviser for the Forestry Commission, spoke about adapting to climate change and told the audience this is long term stuff.

A five year plan won't do – for trees we need to think 25/50 years ahead so we can make the changes necessary for 2050, given the climate changes already taking place.

Apart from the pests and diseases newly arriving in UK, such as Asian long horn beetle, and ash disease. The greatest threats to young newly planted trees are our own squirrel and deer. So there is a huge job to do in protection and maintenance of new tree planting in order to limit the damage and increase the tree canopy.

With 40 per cent budget cuts likely for councils and further cuts to Forestry Commission, action at local level is crucial. We need to know the asset values of trees: timber, wood fuel, health, tourism, fodder, and wildlife food. Together, local and regional landowners, communities, and agencies can plan for sustainable growth while conserving the beauty and benefits of the living forest heritage.

Sir Jonathon Porritt, founder of Forum for the Future, gave the keynote speech. Jonathan is an amazing speaker, no gimmicks, no pictures, just words delivered with knowledge and passion. His book *The World We Made* shows 2050 UK as a place where we'd all love to live. Exciting, aspirational, high-tech, fair and hopeful!

He asked: “Why are we waiting? Get smart, plant more trees.”

And be fair, consider events on a global scale. How would you justify that we campaign against destruction of the rain forest abroad, and yet fail to maintain and increase our own tree cover. We need to give more value to our natural assets.

Sidmouth Arboretum is a unique concept and, as Vicki Taylor of Connaught Road noted, “We are pioneers!” The Arboretum is well placed to work with the community and town and district council to plan long term for our parks and gardens, and not just public gardens – but to involve individuals in selection and planting and maintenance of trees.



Photo: Diana East

## Sidmouth Museum's season gets off to a good start

The Museum has had a good start to the season. Well earned recognition of the efforts made by all the volunteers to achieve this year's very ambitious programme of refurbishing some permanent exhibitions and presenting a wide range of 2015 special displays. Bear in mind this programme of annually changing displays is undertaken by very few small Museums and is something of which to be very proud.

After many years the "lace room" has been given a facelift. Cases now have new displays and striking new burgundy linings. Changing the linings isn't as easy as it sounds, as illustrated by Beryl McIndoe crawling under cabinets to cut the new lining. Motivation for the change was provided by the Axe Vale Lace Group. These experts, one of whom was involved with the new RAMM exhibition, offered to help us set up a new exhibition combining their own material with some of the Museum's previously unseen items. The results are well worth viewing, as the many visitors who attended our annual Lace Day will agree. Still on the subject of lace, Marion Wagstaff, our own expert, is on-site every Thursday morning for her ever popular demonstrations, help and advice.



Our "Land & Man" geology room has been completely re-vamped. New wall mounted panels depicting the development of the Jurassic Coast accompany updated displays throughout the room. Dinosaur footsteps could be a major attraction for the youngsters this year. Potential geologists can have a look on the Jurassic Coast website fossil finder to see items selected by Roger le Voir.

With the new Poldark series attracting much attention, our "Cornwall and West Devon mining landscape" exhibition couldn't be better timed. Using artefacts from the Museum and private collections we relate the story behind the South West's other World Heritage site. This extends in 10 separate units from West Cornwall to the Devon Tamar Valley. These sites together best represent the international significance of our historic deep metal mining. During this area's time of greatest development (1850's) this was one of the World's most important mining areas.



Another current subject of the media, in this case cinema, is Turner. We show and describe three prints of Turner's Art. The Focus is on Turner's painting of Sidmouth. This is a seascape being part of his English Ports project (sketched 1811). Although small it is of considerable interest in that it is claimed by art critics to make a powerful political statement. The original is in the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester.

Stephen Reynolds rejected his middle class background in Devizes and "escaped" to Sidmouth. He was effectively adopted by the fishermen Woolley family, became a proficient fisherman. Out of this he wrote the highly successful "A Poor Man's House", still in print and available in the Museum shop. During the Great War he immersed himself in fishery politics and became Inspector for the entire western fisheries, including Wales. For this work he was offered, but turned down an OBE.

### WW1 Postcards

The centenary year of the beginning of the First World War brought the horrors back to us in vivid detail. Nearly every family in the land was to experience their own personal tragedies. The humble postcard provides a view into that world. The 'e-mail' of their day, postcards were cheap to buy and send, and quick to write. It is estimated that as many as 12 million letters were sent from Britain to soldiers serving in France every week, many of them would have been postcards.



The most poignant of the postcards on display is a message. Look out for the postcard written in purple pencil, dated 10th April 1915, and addressed to a 'Miss B Lingard' of the West Riding Asylum in Wakefield, with its simple message:

"Leave for front Sunday night. Goodbye. C.R." Research has so far failed to identify recipient; nor do we know the ultimate fate of 'C.R.'. We may hope that they had a happy reunion; unfortunately, we will never know for sure.

### In the Shadow of Napoleon

At the beginning of the 19th century one man's ambitions to dominate the world had more impact than any other leader of his time. His actions had an influence on Sidmouth that has lasted until today. Unintentionally he encouraged the growth of the town and affected the lives of the people who lived here. This exhibition attempts to show some of the people and events connected with, or living in, the town...in the shadow of Napoleon.



For those who can't access the first floor, a binder full of information is on the ground floor and, together with the visual tour screen, will give a fairly good coverage of the exhibition, so nobody should be left out.

Away from exhibitions, a reminder of some activities you might want to re-discover yourselves or to offer your visitors. Our **town strolls** now start at 10.30, every Tuesday and Thursday, a very good way to learn all about the town's history. On Wednesday, the geology stroll along the Esplanade starting at 2.00pm from the Museum gives you the opportunity to learn about the Jurassic Coast.

August will be a very active month. Roger Trend, another of our geologists, and his talented daughter Emma, will be running the third "Singing the Rocks" event. A geology walk with songs! 12th August is another annual event, the Red Rocks celebration. Then on 26th there is a Natural History Family day, walks, talks and activities for all the family.



## Museum Personnel

We always welcome new volunteers. In particular we need the following:

**Marketing/Publicity:** Simply stated, this role involves the promotion of the Museum using all traditional and current media forms. Preferably this position is for one person to take on. However, if more people are interested in taking on various

roles, e.g. updating websites, writing press releases and so on, they can become part of a team. This person or team must be in place by 2016. Handover help is available if needed.

**Collections Team member:** The primary focus of the collections people is to document the standards and practices necessary to look after the collection objects within the Museum's care. We are looking for someone to join the current team with a view to taking over the group in the future.

**Grant Application assistance:** Many grants from government, arts council and other sources are available for the Museum to pursue. We could clearly benefit from some of them. In order to do so we need someone to help us with the application procedure. This could be someone with experience of the "nuts and bolts" involved with grant applications or someone who is computer literate with attention to detail. Help will be available through our Museum's Development Officer.

For further information on any of the above, please contact Bob Symes, Nigel Hyman or Hilary Briers at the Museum (516139).

*Hilary Briers*

sid vale association



## 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](http://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

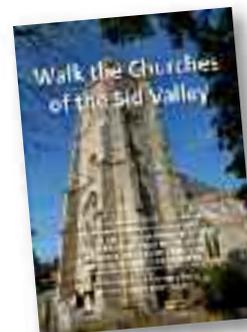
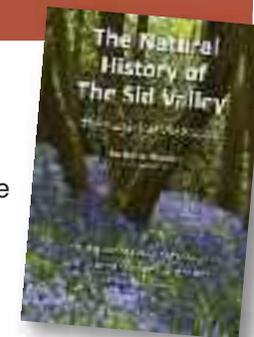
Photo: Devon Wildlife Trust



## New SVA Publications

### The Natural History of the Sid Valley

Written by Louise Woolley, this booklet introduces us to the amazing variety of plants and animals to be found in the different habitats of the Sid Valley through the seasons. While it is not an identification book, there are lots of photos and suggested walks for different times of the year to help you to look out for some of the more elusive species. £4.50.

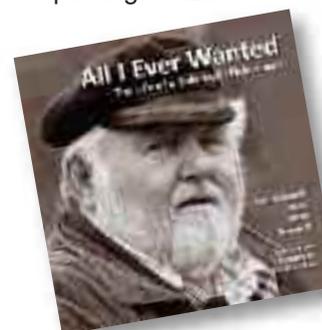


### Walk the Churches

This booklet, written by Prof. Brian Golding leads us around the 20 churches in the Sid Valley, starting with an easy stroll taking in the 10 places of worship in the town centre, followed by five longer walks covering the churches in Salcombe Regis, Sidford and Sidbury. £1.50.

### The 2016 Sid Vale Calendar

Our 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. £5.25.



### All I Ever Wanted

Although not published by the Sid Vale Association, this new book about Sidmouth fisherman Stan Bagwell will certainly be of interest to many members. Compiled by Christine Hardy, the book combines many photos of Stan's boats and family with 75 years of fascinating stories of growing up in the town, his life at sea and Sidmouth's fishing community. Produced in aid of the Fishermen's Mission and on sale in the Museum. £12.



### 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](http://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk)

## Memories of the school bus journey

True or not, I suspect the shafts of beauty glimpsed from the school bus must have pierced even the most lumpen of our teenage souls. Green in harmony with the countryside, downstairs was for passengers and the stray teacher, upstairs for us, students en route to a little country grammar school. Untrammelled by seat belts we swopped places, argued, dreamed, fell in love and as quickly fell out of love again. For half an hour each morning and evening this was our own small kingdom.



My own journey began at the hamlet of Bowd. Here was a pub; an old fashioned farm of the sort found in children's books and if memory serves me a wall thatched by some unsung craftsman to keep the stones from weathering.

Next came a brief glimpse of Harford Woods, always beautiful but especially so in late spring when it

became a sea of bluebells. There on a Sunday jaunt, a mild tussle with a boyfriend led to my necklace snapping and the beads snapping in all directions under moss and ferns. I have forgotten the name of the boy but I clearly remember those white plastic beads. Perhaps one day they will be catalogued by some future archaeologist under the heading 'circa 1956 a style much favoured by teenage girls.'

A patchwork of fields, some ploughed to show the rich Devon earth, others the greenest of green pastures and in my memory the verges and hedgerows were a cat's cradle of wild flowers, unpolluted, I imagine, by pesticides. My great uncle, a dowsing and fervent amateur naturalist had taught me their names, and what lovely names they were. Celandines and primroses in spring were followed by stitchwort, jack-by-the-hedge, tansy, ladies's bedstraw to name but a few.

High summer meant foxgloves, a froth of Queen Anne's lace and a bank covered with the garden escape of sweet alike. Autumn was hips, haws and a tangle of bryony berries and even winter had its own magic, holly and a lone oak wreathed in mistletoe.

At Tipton St. John there was sometimes a brief halt when the level crossing gates closed to allow passage to our rival the school train and here once or twice a term a collective hunger would arise for buns. Money was fished out of pockets and school bags, I remember donating a sixpence destined for National Savings and a runner, usually a sixth form boy, selected. A quick sprint to the local bakery and he would return with bags of still warm buns. Chudleighs we called them and even without butter they were delicious. I can only imagine that the bus driver colluded in the somewhat dubious activity.

Now we were on the last stretch. Wiggaton, another small hamlet that boasted a market garden and painted chapel and then we were descending the hill into Ottery St. Mary. This little town had none of the charms associated with the Devon countryside, no thatched cottages or village green.

What it did have was a slow winding river where I once saw a kingfisher and a splendid church to which the school walked in procession at the end of every term. But the crown of the year was November. The festivities started with a carnival, some of the elaborately constructed floats had been a year in the making, followed by a firework display. Later still there would be relay races between competing teams, the runners carrying not batons but flaming torches. I do not remember anyone getting hurt. Yes Ottery St. Mary held its own magic.

School bus and school train often arriving together would disgorge their passengers into the station yard. Caps and berets were straightened, sturdy brown satchels hoisted over shoulders. The school bell would begin to toll and imperceptibly we quickened our pace.

*Judith Drazin*

## Hello from the new SVA Newsletter editor

I fell in love with the area 14 years ago when I visited for the first time. It was a winter's day, with a biting January wind, but that did nothing to dilute the connection I immediately felt. As the years passed the regular bus ride from Honiton Station to Sidmouth via the Sid Valley lifted my spirits after the journey from London and the stresses of working and living in the big city. It continued to make a big impression through frequent holidays and weekends in the area. Each time I felt completely at home here.



During one of those breaks I discovered the Sid Valley Association and came to understand the value of the work it does looking after and defending our beautiful part of East Devon. A few months ago I moved here as a permanent resident and joined the SVA. Fairly rapidly I have become involved and was asked to take on the job of editing the quarterly SVA newsletter.

At the time of writing the main part of the summer lies ahead with the many opportunities to enjoy the surrounding area and countryside.

In no time at all I will be asking people for contributions to the next newsletter which will appear in late autumn. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage more members of the SVA to send in articles or items of news for consideration in the newsletter. I am also happy to research a topic or interview people if they would prefer that to writing something themselves. You can email me at: [lloydavidjohn@gmail.com](mailto:lloydavidjohn@gmail.com)

I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of the newsletter.

*David Lloyd*



## News about the Keith Owen Fund

Hopefully our readers will have enjoyed either seeing or engaging in some part of recent climate Week or Sea Fest events taking place in the valley this spring. The fund has supported these events as well as elements of the Folk Festival and a new Literary Festival for their role in directly engaging the local community and their cultural and educational activity.

Although not a purpose of the fund, many such events provide wider benefits including the added economic benefit to local businesses and an attraction for visitors. Having recently attended a food and drink event at River Cottage, it is clear that people often make choices to visit an area based around an event.

We do not approve all applications to the fund. However, where we can and within the remit of the SVA, the fund can support many kind of events, hoping that as and if they grow, they will develop sustainable ways of operating in the future.

Local sport clubs have made successful applications to the fund, including Sidbury Cricket Club for renovations to the club house and the Sea Surf Lifesaving Club for new equipment. These clubs add to the variety of opportunities for the youth of the valley to mix with older age groups, to engage in physical activity, to learn new skills and to develop in a wider social environment.

In addition our high profile million bulbs project, the restoration of historic local buildings, such as the Parish Church and the enhancement of the new Health Centre at Stowford provide good examples of the spectrum of opportunity for supporting enhancements to the heritage and environment of the valley and we welcome applications of this nature.



*SVA-KOF Grants Committee visit Beacon Medical Centre to discuss landscaping. L-R: Kate Tobin, Peter Moss, Di Fuller, Handel Bennett, Alan Darrant, Neville Staddon. Photo: Dr Duncan Hall*

The fund is open for applications at any time – the next grant meeting will be held on 14 July with applications due in by 30 June. If you or any contacts think the fund can assist, do not hesitate to enquire or apply at:

[info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk](mailto:info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk)

*Chris Woodruff*



## Sidmouth's Primary Schools 1955-1962

Manstone Infant School was my first school, I started there in September 1955. I was four years old. The school was situated at the top of the Manstone Avenue estate.

Entering the school site, the drive led up to the school building which was L-shaped. The first arm of the block contained an art-room/library, the girls' and boys' toilets and the head-mistress' room. The next arm of the block contained three classrooms, one of which converted into our lunch-room at midday.

There was a covered concrete verandah running the back length of the classroom block. In the front of the classrooms was a small garden and a lawn, where we did gardening.

Leading from the edge of the lawn was a concrete stairway, it led to a large grassed area where we had games and PE. Miss Wimbush was the head-mistress who also taught the first year.

Other teachers that I remember were Miss Brian and Miss Gough. Mrs Stokes was a classroom assistant and helped with art lessons. In the group photograph of 1956 Miss Wimbush is at the back on the right and I am bottom row third left.

In December the school invited the vicar of Sidmouth Parish Church to a party.

In my first year I was given the job of posting the invitation to the vicar, the Reverend Roderick King.

As I didn't know the difference between a letterbox and a post box, I posted the invitation into the school's letterbox. The mistake was rectified when the school

mail was collected the next day and the invitation re-posted correctly. At the party Miss Wimbush and the Reverend King called me over to discuss where I had posted the invitation. In a very gentle way they explained my mistake.

I also remember the fields at the top of the Manstone Avenue estate. These fields hosted the visiting funfairs that came.

My next school was St Nicholas Church of England Junior School in Vicarage Road. The school was built as three sides of a rectangle, surrounding a lawn. The school was approached by a long drive to the building's entrance, which was at the corner of the main classroom block and one of the smaller blocks of the rectangle, I believe there was a cloakroom as you entered the building.

The smaller side blocks contained one classroom and an office each. The main block had four classrooms. There was also a separate art-room/classroom to the south of the main building and nearby the toilet-block and the bicycle sheds.

A large playground to the west of the art-room/classroom completed the site. In the main classroom block, the outside walls were adorned with the four house shields, I believe the houses were Grenville, Drake, Patterson and Raleigh. Inside the classrooms, the three wall partitions between the four classes, when folded up, transformed the building into a large hall for the school assembly. We went to the parish church for services on religious days and usually got the rest of the day off.

The lawn in front of the main building was used for May Day celebrations which included maypole dancing and the crowning of the May Queen. The photograph



Susan Webster, Mr Payne, Myself, Margaret Pinney, Penny Parnell, Jean Nothcott, Marilyn Elliott, Julie White, Frances Ravenscroft and Jane Ware.

Other teachers I remember are Mr Fred Jasper, Miss Doreen Inglefield, Miss McCloughlin, Miss Smale, Mr Hansford, Mr Norrish, Mr Mews and Mr Ford the new Head teacher.

In the early summer term, children from the travelling fun fairs came to St Nicholas School for a week for schooling. I remember how pretty the girls were with their healthy suntanned skin. I admired the romance of their lifestyles. I do not remember any boys coming to school to be educated although they might have been in different classes.

On Sunday afternoons many of us children returned to St Nicholas School for Sunday School lessons given by Miss Gladys Quaintence.

In Sidmouth at the same time there was also All Saints Church of England Primary School in All Saints Road and St Teresa's Roman Catholic Primary School in Vicarage Road.

The two school buildings that I attended are still there today. They are part of Sidmouth Church of England Primary School, which has three school sites – Manstone Avenue, Vicarage Road and Woolbrook Road.

on page 22 shows the May Queen, Susan Webster, in 1962 with four of her attendants and her page-boy. In the photograph from the left are Monica Lee, Susan Webster, Margaret Pinney, myself, Elizabeth Pinney with Graham Shepherd in the front.

The Head-teacher was Mr Payne. He retired at Easter time in 1962. The photograph on this page shows Mr Payne and some of the senior girls in a farewell photograph. The names from the left are Lesley Griffiths, Trudi Parkin,



## On Sidmouth Beach

Hello little pebbles. So many different shapes and colours. Where have you all come from?

You reddish-brown ones seem plentiful, looking like scatterings of copper coins. Smooth you are, lovely flattened ovoids, shaped by years of tumbling by the sea. One can guess where many of you might have come from – erosion of the

red sandstone stacks at Ladram Bay just to the west. For the prevailing south-west winds cause the waves to break obliquely along this shore, nudging pebbles along imperceptibly eastwards wave by wave. This is the longshore drift at work all along the south coast. It might take many years to move you just along this stretch of beach, urged on by an occasional SW storm.

But what of all you others? You big grey and white knobby ones, looking like half-rotten Jerusalem artichokes, are clearly flint, so hard that thousands of years have not yet smoothed your lumps. You are a puzzle, for there are no remaining chalk cliffs to the west. But from the west you must have come, along with all the others: smooth quartzite from the pebble beds beyond Budleigh Salterton, limestone, slate and the coarser-grained granite from Torbay and down from Dartmoor and beyond all the way from Cornwall.



There are real treasures among you too. Rare exotics like jasper and agate from Cornwall, and green and red serpentine from the Lizard, worth a search. And maybe some of you are from overseas. Small ships would sometimes dump their shingle ballast before entering one of the many ancient trading ports along the southwest coast to pick up a cargo. And so they would have joined the ever eastward flow like pilgrims drawn inevitably towards Mecca. Keep travelling, little pebbles.

*Kenneth Dent*

## SVA Excursion – Thursday 10th September 2015 Visit to Somerset – Hestercombe Gardens & Cheddar Cheese

We travel along the M5 to the famous Hestercombe Gardens and grounds. The 18th century Georgian landscape garden was designed by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde. Walking plans are available on arrival. All paths are easy walking, but some are up and down. Choose the ones that suit you! Wander through fifty acres of lakes, temples, cascades, tranquil woodland walks, formal terraces, vivid colours, and views that take your breath away! The Edwardian Gardens, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and planted by Gertrude Jekyll, are considered a supreme example of the famous landscape partnership.

Entrance into Hestercombe House and the art gallery is included on your ticket. (The house is relatively bare since the departure of County Fire Brigade Offices). It includes a gift shop and secondhand bookshop. Morning coffee and light lunches are available from the Courtyard Café, and there are places to picnic. We expect to spend 2½ hours here.

In the afternoon we visit Cheddar, the historical centre of English traditional hand-made cheese since the 15th century. We visit the Cheddar Gorge Cheese Co., the only surviving cheese makers in Cheddar. We will view the process of making prize-winning cheeses. Afterwards we will enjoy some cheese tasting! Time in Cheddar is limited. We drive up the famous Cheddar Gorge to continue along the Mendips, and through the Mendip AONB, to join the old Fosse Way, leading to the historic market town of Shepton Mallet. We continue to Kingdon village for a Somerset cream tea, provided by ladies from the church, (a repeat visit!), and then return home.



## SVA Coach Excursion to Hestercombe & Cheddar Thursday 10th September 2015

### Price Includes:

- Coach
- Hestercombe House and Gardens
- Visit to Cheddar Cheese Company
- Cheese tasting, opportunity to buy
- Somerset Cream Tea.
- Driver's Gratuity



Our tour commences at 8.30am from the Three-Cornered Plot, with pick-ups en route. We arrive at Hestercombe around 10am. (2½ hours). Afterwards we continue to Cheddar. Later a drive through Cheddar Gorge and Shepton Mallet to the Somerset village of Kingdon, where ladies of the Church congregation will serve a cream tea. (Repeat visit – we still remember the last one!) Then we continue following the original Roman route leading towards the South West. We return around 6.30pm.

**Tickets** are available by post, from

- Handel Bennett, 2 Victoria Road, Sidmouth, EX10 8TZ. Tel. (01395) 514211.

**YOU MAY APPLY AT ONCE** by completing the form below, but bookings **WILL NOT COMMENCE BEFORE JULY 20th** and will continue until all seats are sold.

*We regret that the Association cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage or injury that may be suffered by anyone taking part in this event. Tickets cannot be 'reserved'. Refunds will only be given if tickets can be re-sold.*

### BOOKING FORM

Please supply ..... ticket(s) at £25 per person for the Somerset Coach tour on Thursday September 10th

Joining at ✓      The Triangle 8.30am       Radway 8.33am   
                          Exeter X 8.40am       Green Close 8.43am

PLEASE SUPPLY FIRST NAME AND SURNAME OF EACH PERSON TRAVELLING

Surname: Mr/Mrs/Miss ..... Tel. No.....

Address .....

\*E-mail ..... Post Code .....

*\*Will not be disclosed to third parties.*

Please make cheques payable to the **SID VALE ASSOCIATION**  
**Have you enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope?**

## Sid Vale 2017 Calendar Photo Competition



The Sid Vale 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 of 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.

We are looking for photos of Sidmouth, Salcombe Regis or the Sid Valley with that **WOW FACTOR!** If you would like to have one or more of your photos considered for inclusion, please submit them by email to [ejw01@talktalk.net](mailto: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.*



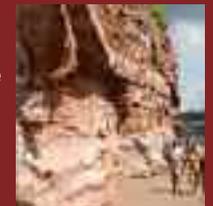
### Museum walks

**Western Town – Tuesdays 10.30am**

**Eastern Town – Thursdays 10.30am**

**Geology walk – Wednesdays 2pm**

Accompanied by knowledgeable guides, discover some of Sidmouth's fascinating landmarks and historic locations, or take a leisurely stroll along the Esplanade to see the evidence of Sidmouth's geological past over the last 240 million years. All walks depart from and return to the Museum and last about 1½ hours. No booking required. All walks are free, our guides are all volunteers. All donations are welcome.



## Dates for your Diary

**Tuesday July 7th – SVA Countryside Walk 10am** Meet: Beerhead Carpark (£)  
Grid Ref: SY 227 887 Leaders: Doug and Sheridan Tel: 01395 577891

**Wednesday 29th July – “Kids in Museums”**

Organised by the guides as part of a national initiative. Activities will take place in the Church and the Museum.

**Tuesday August 4th – SVA Countryside Walk 10am**

Meet: Picnic area at Higher Eype It may be useful to arrange car-sharing as Higher Eype is quite far. Grid Ref: SY 452 922 Leader: Vivian Tel: 01404 811267  
(It may be useful to arrange car-sharing as Higher Eype is quite far.)

**Wednesday 5th August – “Singing the rocks”** This highly successful afternoon combines the geology walk with songs and music

**Wednesday 12th August – Museum Red Rocks Day**

Our annual celebration of our Jurassic Coast red rocks

**Wednesday 26th August – Museum Natural History Family Day**

Walks, talks and activities for all the family. Rock pools, trails, trees & plants.

**Tuesday September 1st – SVA All day Dartmoor Walk**

Meet: Woolbrook Lidl carpark at 9.00am for car share. Return to Sidmouth at about 4.00pm Leaders: Cliff and Pam Tel: 01395 578699 Bring a picnic lunch and there may be the opportunity for a cup of tea at the end.

**Saturday 12th-Thursday 17th September – Sidmouth Walking Festival**

**Tuesday October 6th – SVA Countryside Walk 10am**

Meet: Escot Grid Ref: SY 080979 Leader: Margot Tel: 01395 512693

**Monday 12th-Sunday 18th October – Sidmouth Science Festival**

The Museum will feature strongly with displays in Blackmore Hall.

**Wednesday 28th October – Museum Big Draw Day**

Under the guidance of our local artist, Margaret Adams, help paint a picture. All ages.

**Saturday 31st October** – Museum closes for the winter

**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](mailto:andrewscott@sidford.orangehome.co.uk)

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