

Sid vale associatio



past • present • future

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

www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk



INCLUDING THE SVA
IN YOUR WILL IS SO EASY
AND THE IMPACT WILL LAST
FOREVER

In this time of rising costs, it might be that charitable giving is not a priority for you right now. Unfortunately, it is now more than ever that we need your help. The running costs of membership and our conservation activities have increased and are using up our valuable reserves.

Events in recent years have sorely affected our donation income from visitors. In addition, the financial markets' reactions to the war in Eastern Europe have had a major impact on our investments and income. More than ever then we are greatly appreciative of those giving to the Sid Vale Association through their wills.

Legacies are given from your estate after death and do not add to your daily cost of living. A fraction of your gift will be used immediately, but most of it will be invested for the longer term to protect the SVA and ensure we can provide for the Sid Valley's environment and residents in perpetuity. You can of course ask that your legacy be spent immediately on something specific, providing it is within our charitable objects.

In the last year have we received bequests from

Miss Angela Rosemary Astley
Mr Ronald William Bridges
Mr Graham Thornton

Any bequest, large or small, is valued by the Association (which is a registered charity no.1154749).

Lifetime donations are also welcome and can be made direct to our bank account no. 00016416, sort code 40-52-40, giving your full name as a reference.

We remain deeply grateful for the thoughtfulness and generosity of past supporters, and for all who make provision for our future endeavours. Please continue to remember the Sid Vale Association.

Gary Turner, Treasurer

Editorial



The SVA logo is past, present and future. You can read about the acquisition and renovations of our new HQ which will ensure we can preserve the past whilst looking to the future. In this magazine, the past is recalled in articles about an artist, a Sidbury girl, the rebuilding of 'Sidmouth' steam engine and in an amusing tale of a night spent with a young lady on the floor of a library! For the present, read about the state of the river and the wildlife on the land that we own. For the future, a Keith Owen fund award has helped the Girl Guides. Regarding the future, Alan Gadian's article on climate change is certainly food for thought.

My thanks to Andrew Calderbank-Vernon who has nobly stepped up to the task of producing the magazine and the delivery team who get it to your doorstep.

Val Huntington

Chairman's Update

Since our last magazine was published, the Sid Vale Association acquired its new headquarters in Church Street

In late May we opened the curtains and let daylight flood in, sadly to reveal the condition of the inside of our new building was worse than expected. The SVA Trustees invited members to view the premises on 21st June. We were delighted that over 160 of you attended. We used the opportunity to appeal for practical help with the refurbishment and we were not disappointed. The volunteers that offered their services brought with them experience and skills acquired over many years, and we are now very fortunate to work with such an amazing team. In August we moved from our old HQ in Fore Street to the first floor of the new building and Fore Street was placed on the market. We anticipate that with the support of both our volunteers and professional contractors the ground floor of the building will be ready by mid-January 2024,

Another achievement I have much pleasure in announcing is that we have been advised by the Arts Council of England that our application submitted in June has been approved, the Sid Vale Association has been awarded Full Accreditation status for Sidmouth Museum for a further five years. The Accreditation Scheme is the UK standard for museums and galleries, the scheme does this by making sure museums manage their collections properly, engage with visitors, and are governed appropriately.

On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank all our volunteers who work tirelessly throughout the year across the whole organisation, without their continued commitment there would be no Sid Vale Association.

Ann Tanner

KOF Girl Guide award

The Sid Vale Association/ Keith Owen Fund has yet again come to the rescue of the local community helping to keep a venue open not only for the Guiding Movement but for other local groups within the town. There is a need for Sidmouth Guide Headquarters to be available in the future and this can now be achieved.

A new management committee has recently come into being and it found that the Headquarters needed some updating and repair work. Because of the lack of income during the Covid pandemic there was not enough funds to do what was needed. Since the granting of the fund the outside of the building has been preserved, a new sign placed by the doorway and all the doors and windows have been double glazed. The difference is amazing in that it is much warmer inside and it has lost its echo. The sign has the correct contact details for the Sidmouth District Guiding groups, gates have been added to prevent accidents at the back of the building and another gate at the bottom of the garden to provide a Fire Exit. The improvement you notice most as you come up to the building is that the fences have all been preserved and look amazing. The good thing is they will now be there for some time and not rot away as was beginning to happen.

The project now being undertaken is to provide ramps and handrails to both doors so that everyone can be included.

When the ramps have been installed the Management team will be starting on the garden space. This will be wildlife friendly, and several features are already in place. An amazing Bug Hotel and Hedgehog House stand at the side of the garden. Raised beds will be installed allowing the Guides to grow flowers and salad crops. Five fruit trees will be planted at the bottom of the garden so that we can all enjoy some fresh fruit next autumn.



The Sidmouth District Girl Guides would like to thank the Sid Vale Association/Keith Owen Fund for providing financial support for this work to be done. Not only the funding but also the generosity of time and understanding. We would also like to thank the local Companies who have helped us reach our ambition. We can now move on into the future with the certain knowledge that the groups using the Guide HQ will be safe and warm, and Sidmouth has a venue it can be proud of.

Grace Essex

Linked by Coburg Road



When the SVA's acquisition of the 1922 Club in Church Street was announced, we were told the building dated from the 1830's and in past times was known as Villa Verde and/or The Retreat. I was already familiar with the name of 'Retreat' from 1901, when the building was a lodging house, in which two young ladies from Norfolk (subjects of another story) were boarding. This confirmed my previous guess that 'The Retreat' stood opposite to the church end of Coburg Road. The two paying guests of Mr. Gibbs, joiner and undertaker and his wife in 1901, were the enterprising schoolmistresses, Misses Amy Abbey (1870-1962) and Adeline E. Carman (1866-1928) who would eventually settle at 'Crossways' opposite to the Station Road end of Coburg Road. Here, they employed young Gertrude Bessie Giggs (1895-1974) who lived with her mother (née Bessie Caroline Davis a cab proprietor's widow) at Woodlands Cottage, (photo) halfway along Coburg Road.

14 years earlier, Balfour, Lord of Sidmouth Manor had appointed a 31yr.old Yorkshire born solicitor William H. Hastings as the Manor's agent, closely followed by young R. W. Sampson as the Manor's architect. They set about developing the fields beyond Coburg Road, westwards along Manor Road where Hastings leased the newly built 'Kenandy' as his family home, until 1900 when he moved to Hillhead. After Hastings left, the new arrivals Misses Abbey and Carman set up a school in the vacant property. Amy's father was Diocesan Temperance Society Secretary and Adeline's a Norfolk farmer. It is possible the spinster ladies met through teacher training at Norwich. Why or how they came to be in Sidmouth is unknown, but their school was successful, attracting the '*daughters of gentlemen*'. Advertisements for the school at Kenandy appeared in the press frequently. E.g., in 'Church Bells' the Illustrated Church News Parents and Guardians' Guide to Schools in 1906, as a '*High Class-Home School*'. Then in 1907, it was widely reported their '*Boarding School for Ladies...had lately been removed to larger premises*'. This was to 'Crossways' a 13-room property designed by Sampson in 1893, built at the crossroads of Coburg, with Station and Manor Road.



Co-Principals, Misses Carman and Abbey ran 'Crossways' (R) as a small school for 20 years, with pupils aged between 7 and 19 years, some with parents abroad, in Ireland, Africa and Singapore. They employed music and language teachers, as well as training local girl Gertrude Gigg (from Woodlands Cottage) to be their teaching assistant i.e. to work at Crossways as a 'governess'. The school was remarkably effective. In 1911, one of the boarders was 11 yr. old Winifred Mary Sampson,



the eldest of R.W.Sampson's three daughters, who attended Crossways at least to 16. Mary's success at 13 and 16 years in the Cambridge Local Exams was published in the press with others' academic results. She later studied medicine. After the school closed, following Adeline's death in 1928, Gertrude took her expertise to the 14th Duke of Somerset's family, at Sherborne.

Anna Philpott

Did anybody meet Queen Victoria at Sidbury fair?



The Sid Vale Association covers the area from the rising of the River Sid by the Hare and Hounds down through Sidbury, Sidford and to the river's mouth in Sidmouth. It also includes the valley of Salcombe Regis.

I would like to have more articles about life in this area as well as Sidmouth town. For example, why are there scarecrows at Sidbury fair and what is the tradition of the livestock sale? How did Salcombe Regis fair start? How did Snodbrooke get its name? Where did the name Vineycroft lane come from? Lots of topics which I am sure our members would be interested in reading about. If you have an idea for an article, please get in touch. The

long dark winter months are the ideal time to do a bit of research. There is an author waiting to burst out in all of us!

The next magazine is the spring edition which is combined with the AGM magazine. The last date for submission of articles will be mid-March. For full details of format, photos etc, please email the editor on publicity@sidvaleassociation.org.uk.

Val Huntington

Walking the Sid Valley - and beyond

It seems a long time ago now, but Spring 2020 brought glorious weather – and unprecedented restrictions on enjoying the county in which we live. The Covid 19 pandemic had brought normal life to a halt. We were among the lucky ones; we did not catch the virus; our income was not affected, and we did not lose relatives.

In the early stages of the first national lockdown, with exercise limited to one hour per day, we walked the footpaths, lanes, and eerily quiet roads around our home in Sidbury.

As lockdown eased in May 2020, we decided to extend our range, and try to walk all the rights of way, access land, nature reserves and permissive paths (where we found them) within Sidmouth parish. But the challenge would be to start and finish every walk from our house (i.e. without using a car or public transport). Sidmouth has more footpaths than any other parish in Devon. In total we covered about 275 miles, as we walked the paths and lanes closer to our house many times in order to reach those further away!

Longer walks involved frequent climbs and fine views. We saw our first bluebell near Burnt Oak on 28th March and our last near Chelson Cross on 9th June. We spotted buzzards, kestrels, sparrow hawks, jays, a red kite, dippers, stonechats, whitethroats, swallows, martins and ravens, roe deer, foxes, and a stoat. And quite a few donkeys. The signage was generally excellent, and we feel very lucky to live in an area with such a rich and varied range of paths. Even if it does have rather a lot of hills!



Once we had done them all we celebrated by walking the Sid Valley Ring on a warm June day. The Ring is an excellent if sometimes quite strenuous day's walking.

Since 2020 we have also walked all the rights of way in the 8 parishes that abut the Sidmouth Parish boundary, these being Otterton, Newton Poppleford and Harpford, Ottery St Mary, Gittisham, Honiton, Farway, Southleigh and Branscombe. We have not calculated our total mileage, nor the number of metres climbed, but it must be quite a few! Every walk, whether along clifftops, across fields, through woods or in the towns and villages has been enjoyable. Each parish has its own character, but the Sid Valley remains our favourite, with its exceptional scenery and criss-crossed by such a variety of well-maintained paths.

Nick and Marian Knapman, Sidbury

Sleeping 'rough' in Sidmouth, 1961

In August Mike Openshaw wrote to me at the SVA asking:

'Would I be correct in saying that Sidmouth Library was once situated elsewhere in the town? I ask this because of a bizarre experience a friend and I had here back in (I believe) 1961.

A friend and I had ridden from Bristol on a friend's Lambretta which we'd borrowed for the day. Unfortunately, the weather changed for the worse during the journey and our very inappropriate clothes for such a journey (approx. 80 miles, pre motorway M5) were now rather wet and worse for wear.



Mike Openshaw

On arriving in Sidmouth, we visited a mutual actress friend, Anne, who at the time was appearing in a play at a local theatre. After the show she invited us back to her shared digs for a meal. As I remember, her lodgings were situated above what was then Sidmouth Library.



Having climbed the stairs, we found that the door to her flat was locked and no amount of banging and calling alerted her flatmate to let us in. As Anne didn't have a key and it was already very late it seemed that we were now condemned to spending the night on the floor in the hallway outside of the flat.

To anyone not present, it must seem that spending a night with a young and attractive actress was a dream come true, but the reality was somewhat different. The floor and stairs were not carpeted so we tried, in vain, to get some sleep on the bare linoleum.

Anne Whitehead

It was a very long and far from exciting night and when, eventually, dawn broke we could scarcely wait to enjoy the warmth of the rising sun. And the joy in finding, at 7am, a cafe (Lyons Corner House?) open and serving cooked breakfasts cannot be exaggerated. Thus, fortified and assured by Anne that she was ok we set off post-haste for Bristol, returning the Lambretta as promised, before the midday deadline.

Mike finished his letter with 'Although time has dimmed the memory and Sidmouth must have changed considerably since then, hopefully someone within your group might be able to help. I thought the story might be interesting enough to stimulate a search for the missing library.'

My reply was:

'The town has had numerous libraries since the early 19th C but these were all 'subscription' and the first 'free' library was relatively late- 1936. This was the County Free Library. It was in Hope Cottage which is next to the Parish Church at the top of Church Street. It is less than 10 minutes' walk from the Manor Pavilion where you watched the play. Also, in the 1930s the Church House [Kennaway House] free Library opened and remained open until the 1960s.

In 1970 a purpose- built library opened in Blackmore Drive- its present location- and Hope Cottage then became the site of our museum. In the 'Library' days the books were on the ground floor and rooms on the first floor were rented. I believe Church House library was also on the ground floor. It is difficult to be certain, but it seems more likely that you spent the eventful, or more likely eventless, night at Hope Cottage.

It sounds as if Anne's friend was not in the flat and due to a misunderstanding, Anne only had a key to get into the building. There are two entrances.

I can imagine how uncomfortable you were, especially in wet clothes, but at least there was no shortage of reading material.

There was no Lyons Corner house but there were numerous cafés. There are now very many coffee houses, but I believe only one opens at 7.00am.

If you plan to repeat the event 60 years on and late at night then entry into Hope Cottage requires a key to the outer door, followed by a key fob for the inner door, followed by switching off the burglar alarm.'

Mike has agreed to return to Sidmouth in daylight hours for a coffee and visit to Hope Cottage to see if a memory is revived. The actress, Anne Whitehead, would now be about 80 and Mike has not seen her for 60 years.

Nigel Hyman

Algae – Strands of History

Planet earth formed around 4.5 billion years ago, and the earliest life forms were single cells, living without oxygen. 1 billion years later cyanobacteria evolved. These cells were capable of photosynthesis and released oxygen into the earth's atmosphere. They are the origins of plant life, which lived in the seas of the then, "water world".

About 700 million years ago, it is thought that earth was covered in ice, the "Snowball Earth" events. These events appear to have triggered cell division. A variety of filamentous algae evolved (seaweed is algae) and animal life evolved into sponge like creatures. As water levels fluctuated, plants developed methods to survive desiccation, and live on land. They evolved into a type of moss (550 million years). Free from animal predators, plants flourished, and, thanks to photosynthesis, oxygen levels on earth increased. This thickened the ozone layer, reducing harmful ultraviolet radiation, allowing animals to leave the protection of water, and live on land (428 million, first fossil millipede).

Animals evolved to waste energy chasing food. Plants took a more relaxed approach! Creating their own energy via photosynthesis, they slowly evolved stronger root systems and stayed put!

Dragonflies were flying around 250 million years ago, some with a wingspan of 75 centimetres (2 ft 6ins, in old money).

Fast forward to 16,000 years ago, and a time traveller could walk from Ireland, via the inland site of Sidmouth, to anywhere in Europe, in the area now called Doggerland.

The English coastline similar to todays, has been around for 10,000 years.



Algae Strands

It is now the year 2023, and "Sidmouth" is on the south coast of Devon. I have evolved from an early sponge to a human, standing on the edge of the "Lower Knapp" pond. The surface of the pond is mainly covered by a floating scum of brown, green filamentous algae.

Yes, after 700 million years, it is still on our doorstep. The algae could be mechanically raked out of the pond, but it now harbours a large variety of young pond life. Even in early September, dragonflies are mating and laying eggs on the surface. Yes, after 250 million years, dragonflies still patrol, with their incredible aerobic skills. The largest, the “Southern Hawker” only has a wingspan of 11 centimetres (4.5 inches), so they have shrunk a bit in 250 million years.

The “Lower Knapp” pond has more unsightly algae this year, than before. Light, warmth and nitrates are the algae’s best friends, but conditions have been similar to previous years. So why are the algae doing so well?

Our volunteers usually do any pond plant pruning in the Autumn. This got delayed until mid-Spring this year, and we unwittingly created a problem. By heavily pruning the leaves and roots of some plants, we caused them to release a “stress trigger”.

The damaged leaves released organic waste and ammonia, stimulating the early filamentous algae to become attached to the plants. As sugars and carbohydrates were released from damaged leaves, the algae thrived, aided by a warm June.

Most plants store energy for steady growth, but algae use the energy for immediate growth, trapping gases under the ever thickening, dense mat, which allows it to float to the surface. This has the effect of reducing light reaching plant leaves below the surface, allowing algae less competition.



Algae Strands with newly laid newt eggs

So, the strands of plant cells floating around for 700 million years have learned a few tricks, to compete with much larger sophisticated plants. The algae have become home to countless examples of minute pond life and will never go away. I shall, learn to accept it, cunningly control it, but never love it.

Simon Papworth

Doris Pidgeon - a Sidbury Girl

Doris Pidgeon was my father's cousin and my cousin once removed. Born in Sidbury in 1919 she was named Doris after the ship that her father had served on in WW1 - HMS Doris. She lived with her parents Arthur and Helen (Nell) and her brother Lewis in Pidgeon Cottage, one of the small cottages that hugged Chapel Street in Sidbury, which had a back lane named the Drang. Today the cottage has been absorbed into a neighbouring cottage.

Doris attended the King's School Ottery St Mary (in those days a fee-paying school) then onto teacher-training college in Salisbury to become a primary-school teacher. She taught her cousin John Morrish (her cousin and my uncle) at Woolbrook School Sidmouth when she was a student-teacher. During WW2 Doris taught at Brook Street Infant's School in Teignmouth, a town which suffered badly from German bombers. 79 people were killed and 151 injured in "tip and run raids" on the town. A plan was devised by the school's Headmaster Mr Whitear, for emergencies such as the school being bombed without the siren sounding -the children wouldn't reach the air-raid shelters in time. Doris and other teachers would call out "Rabbits" and the children would dive under their desks for protection. On 2nd September 1942 there was such a raid, and the children were saved by the "Rabbits" game. Sixty years later Doris returned to Teignmouth for a commemoration of those WW2 days and the game of "Rabbits". Today the museum in Teignmouth retells the "Rabbits" story to visiting schoolchildren.

Doris never married. She later taught in a primary school in Exeter. Doris had a wealth of knowledge about local history, and she wrote her family-tree working together with her sister-in-law Ellen. She also wrote about her family history in the 'In Britain' magazine, in particular about her grandfather William Henry Morrish, the Head Gardener at Cotford House who climbed Sidbury Church Spire to adjust the weathercock on payment of one penny (1d) a day danger-money. Doris also mentioned Sidbury sub-post-mistress Susan Pearson, also a family relative and a lace-maker. Doris said that her mother Helen (Nell) would help Susan Pearson with her lace work, but Doris said her mother did not have 'a nip of whiskey' as mentioned in Barbara Softly's book 'Tapping at the Garden Gate' and besides Helen was only seven in 1890.

After her father-Arthur -died in 1957 Doris returned to Sidbury to look after her mother in Pidgeon Cottage. She caught the bus into Exeter to work daily and one day when she wasn't at the bus-stop, the bus driver stopped the bus, got off and knocked on the door of Pidgeon Cottage to see if Doris was running late. She was in fact unwell, but it showed how much she was valued by the local community. Her mother died in 1970 in Sidbury and Doris moved to a flat in Barrack Road, Exeter.

Doris was a gifted writer and wrote poetry for a poetry club in Exeter as well as many letters to her family and friends. She travelled extensively around the British Isles and visited Rome.



In her later years Doris chose to come and live in Bindon Nursing Home in Winslade Road, Sidmouth where she died in 2015 aged 96. In the photograph Doris with her dark hair is seen on the right and her cousin Rene Tucker nee Morrish, daughter of Cllr W G Morrish of SUDC is seen on the left. (Photograph by Sandra Doyle daughter of Rene Tucker)

Norma Cox

Big Butterfly Count 2023

The Big Butterfly Count is a national citizen science project organised in the last week of July and the first week of August each year by Butterfly Conservation. On a sunny day, volunteers stop for 15 minutes to count how many butterflies from a list of 20 species they could see. All 20 species on the list are Lepidoptera but two are day flying moths, the 6-spot Burnet and the Silver Y, but I will refer to them with the general term butterflies.

Nationally, more than 92,000 citizen scientists carried out more than 130,000 counts and recorded more than a million and a half butterflies this year. Locally, just over 100 volunteers made over 160 counts and recorded more than 2,500 butterflies. There were 11 counts on SVA land, The Knapp, Margaret's Meadow and Gilchrist and James Cornish Fields.

Compared to the rest of the country, Sidmouth comes out well. Within the boundary of the Sidmouth administrative area, bounded roughly by Weston, Mutters Moor and Putts Corner, we had more butterflies per 15-minute count than the national average, 16.5 butterflies per count compared to 11.9 nationally. The counts on SVA sites were among the best of the local data with 403 butterflies recorded during 11 counts, an average of 36.6 per count.

Our top 5 species in Sidmouth were:

1. Gatekeeper 623
2. Meadow Brown 403
3. Red Admiral 365
4. Large White 279
5. Peacock 276

Perhaps unsurprisingly, on average nearly twice as many butterflies were found by volunteers counting in the countryside than in town, 22.1 per count compared to 12.8 per

count. The eleven counts on SVA land were all in grassland being managed at least in part for wildlife and this is working clearly. These grassland sites were dominated by Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, but there was an encouraging spread of other species. Dividing the Sidmouth count locations roughly into urban and rural, and separating out the SVA locations, the top 5 species were:

Rural 67 counts	Urban 100 counts	SVA 11 counts
1. Gatekeeper 314 (4.7)	Gatekeeper 294 (2.94)	Meadow Brown 146 (13.3)
2. Meadow Brown 235 (3.5)	Red Admiral 185 (1.85)	Gatekeeper 120 (10.9)
3. Red Admiral 188 (2.8)	Large White 165 (1.65)	Red Admiral 45 (4.1)
4. Large White 163 (2.4)	Meadow Brown 162 (1.62)	6-spot Burnet 25 (2.3)
5. Peacock 178 (2.7)	Peacock 137 (1.37)	Peacock 21 (1.9)

To allow a comparison between the three sets of data, figures in brackets are the average number of butterflies per count.

The James Cornish Field site had 4 counts with an average of 23.3 butterflies per count. Most of these were Meadow Browns, but Small Coppers, Gatekeepers, Red Admirals and Common Blues were also recorded.

Gilchrist Field had an excellent result with an average of 42.6 butterflies recorded per count. Ten different species were recorded but more than half of the butterflies were Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns.

Margaret’s Meadow yielded an average count of 47.6 butterflies per count. Again, more than half were Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, but ten other species from the list were recorded.



Gatekeeper



Meadow Brown

Unfortunately, only one count was carried out in the Knapp, but the result was very healthy with 39 butterflies of 7 species recorded in the 15 minutes. Less than half were Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns with 8 of each. The count was carried out near the large Buddleia and Bramble patch on the northern boundary and this was a feeding site for 7 Peacocks and 6 Red Admirals. Three 6-spot Burnets were seen buzzing from Knapweed to Knapweed.

The number of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, species dependent on traditional meadow style management, plus the other species shows that the management of the SVA grassland is doing well for butterfly biodiversity. The Big Butterfly Count recorded 20 target species, but other species were also seen including several Small and Large Skippers and very many small moths, but these need an expert if they are to be identified.

The SVA grassland areas are also home to many other invertebrates. There was no count, but the most visible are the many Grasshoppers and Crickets that jump in all directions as you walk through the meadow.



Holly Blue

Ed Dolphin

Richard Beavis - Our forgotten Sidmouth artist

Richard Beavis was born in 1824 in Exmouth, the second of four children. His father, William, was a boot and shoemaker in the town. In 1828 the family moved to Sidmouth and the family lived in several addresses including High Street, New Street and Fore Street. His eldest brother died aged 8 years in 1831 and his youngest sister died a year later. Within a month his mother, Elizabeth, also died with a diagnosis of consumption. William remarried in about 1834. Richard is thought to have attended the Parochial Boys' School (Counters Court) in Mill Lane. From a very young age he drew pictures on the walls at home.

The Reverend Nicholas Heineken was a minister at the Unitarian Church (Old Meeting) in 1825-1830 and again between 1835 and 1846. During this second appointment he visited the Beavis home and was very impressed by the boy's art work. Heineken told his close friend, Peter Orlando Hutchinson, who wrote in his Diary:

"...Richard Beavis, son of a shoemaker, whom his father tried to bring up to his own trade; but the boy neglected the lap-stone and passed his time scribbling all over the whitewashed walls of the house, very clever sketches intended for horses, dogs, men, cows, sheep and sundry other objects of everyday life – a species of pastime that caused many quarrels in the house. Mr Heineken, seeing the lad's irresistible turn of mind, gave him paper, pencils, and encouragement, and tried to persuade the father to let him have his way, which however, was long resisted."

Almost certainly with Heineken's support Richard made the break in 1846 and, aged 22, left his family and Sidmouth. He travelled to London and soon afterwards married Caroline Collings. He enrolled as a pupil at Somerset House, Government School of Design, in the Strand and subsequently received some teaching at the Royal Academy (RA). In a career initiative he became the designer to a firm of decorators who went on to win three international competitions. On the back of this success, he first exhibited at the RA in 1852, the first of 43 works in a long career working with both oils and watercolours. Ideas for subject matter were influenced by his overseas travelling to the continent and Egypt. Caroline died in 1857. He married in 1859 Laura Rafarel in Barnstaple. In so doing, and purely by chance, Richard was maintaining his Sidmouth connection. Laura's grandfather, Claude Rafarel, born in c1771, had fled France during the Revolution and settled in Sidmouth. He was a well-known figure and an expert pastry chef much sought after for social occasions.

Later in life, when Richard was an established artist, he sent Mr Heineken some oil and watercolour paintings in recognition of the minister's kindness and encouragement to him as a child.

In 1891 his fame was such that he became a member of the Royal Watercolour Society, an organisation which continues to flourish.

He died in 1896 aged 72. The death certificate showed long standing heart valve disease, a legacy of rheumatic fever. It was a good age considering his difficult conditions in childhood and the family history of TB.

It was a remarkable success story and Nicholas Heineken, the Sidmouth Minister, would no doubt have been delighted.

His great granddaughter, Clare Beavis Wiggill, and her husband, Theo, live in Melbourne and have recently completed the first comprehensive biography of the artist: **Richard Beavis RWS 1824-1896 Art Life & Times** National Library of Australia 2022. It is lavishly illustrated with especial emphasis on Sidmouth.



We plan a talk about this forgotten local artist to be held in the New Year.

Nigel Hyman

Remembered in wood

Back in March 2022 a large beech tree in Margaret's Meadow split and had to be partially felled as it was hanging over the pathway into Gilchrist field. The stump was left for wildlife along with a few large logs to rot down naturally and provide homes for beetles/insects etc. As a memento, this candle holder was crafted from the tree and given to the SVA by Sidmouth resident Martin Johnstone.



12 Church Street – The first four months

The Sid Vale Association acquired the 1922 Club building in Church Street on the 24th May 2023. Whilst from the outside, everything looks pretty much unaltered, internally it has been a hive of activity to prepare and refurbish the building.

Here is a short overview of the first four months since the SVA become the owners of our new Headquarters.

The first task was to assess the fixture and fittings, as we acquired the building 'as-is'. Basically, most of what was left in situ was ours. It was quickly decided that a table sale outside the building was the best way to dispose of items we would not need in the future. This proved hugely successful, both in the money that it raised – and in signalling that something was changing at 12 Church Street.

Some of the remaining bar fitments and chillers were owned by suppliers and arrangements were made for these to be removed. The first of (what proved to be) a series of skips was loaded with items not needed and not saleable.

The next priority was to prepare the upper floors to receive items from 36A Fore Street (our previous headquarters). This would enable 36A to be marketed for sale. The upper floors of our new building were deep cleaned and decorated through a combination of professional decorators and volunteer help.

Following this, the move from 36A to 12 Church Street has been completed. Our volunteers have erected all the racking in order to store the archives which were part of the move. On the upper floors we now have a separate archive store and research office, an office for SVA general administrative matters, a general meeting room and much more.

The ground floor of the '1922 Club' building had been added to and modified over many years. Stripping back these layers to prepare the building for our use has been a significant effort – almost entirely undertaken by volunteers. A veritable 'rats' nest' of wiring was exposed, and we are grateful to the electricians who have been working

tirelessly to sort this out and bring the building's electrics up to standard and in line with our future needs.

In the former main bar area, the suspended ceiling has been refurbished with new ceiling tiles. The stage area has been removed – much of the staging material was gratefully received by a local amateur dramatics' society. When redecorated this will be a splendid room for presentations and large functions.

In the former small bar area, we discovered that the suspended ceiling had obscured a lovely ceiling and round window. As a result, it was decided to remove the suspended ceiling and bring the room back to its former glory. Cupboards have been removed to create a more open area. This room will be a lovely space for coffee mornings or smaller meetings. It can also serve as an extension to the main room for larger presentations.

The old kitchen area has been completely gutted. From the building plans we discovered that part of this area was originally an open yard, and we will probably reinstate this in due course.

The cellar has been cleared of all the paraphernalia associated with delivering drinks to the bar.



A new audio-visual system has been installed on the ground floor. A broadband internet connection has been supplied and wi-fi run throughout the building.

In the lobby area the old defunct stairlift has been removed and a new handrail installed to improve the safety of the stairs.

So, in summary, a huge amount of work has been done over the past four months. Whilst there is still much to do, the goal of bringing the building fully into use is getting ever closer. All the work is being carried out sympathetically to the style of the building and its former history.

As mentioned earlier, a tremendous amount of this work is being completed by SVA volunteers. Whilst too many to mention by name, we are so very grateful for all your enthusiasm, skills and commitment to help refurbish and enable the move to 12 Church Street as it takes shape as our new Headquarters.

Alan Clarke



Relocation of Museum Archives

As many of you will know, the archives of Sidmouth Museum were located on the top floor in the Fore Street. The 'archives' consist of paintings and prints, photographs and slides, books, maps, bound newspapers, collections of historical documents, and research material; formerly known as the 'library'. We are now referring to them as the 'paper-based archive'.

The relocation began with plans being drawn up for the 'before and after'. It was all hands to the pump to get everything – including all the current and historic admin documentation and the IT from the office - packed. We just managed to achieve this in time so that the actual removal was relatively stress-free, in large part due to the efficiency of the Portbury's removal team who made light work of getting heavy bulky items such as map drawers and cabinets down the narrow, steep and winding staircase at Fore Street.

The archive room upstairs at Church Street is a large, open space with an office attached. It provides an opportunity to lay out the collection in a more accessible way. The two billiard tables used by the 1922 Club remain in situ. The wooden racking from Fore Street was reassembled in a more useable format to hold the bound newspapers. Photographs and slides, research material, and boxed collections put into cabinets and the boxed books were roughly grouped onto the tables.



What happens next is the most time-consuming part of the whole process and may take several years. The arrangement of the archives at Fore Street was constrained by the space available and its layout. We want to reassess the collection, as there may be objects that lack relevance to Sidmouth, are duplicated, or where the information is more readily available online. Once this is done, we will re-group the objects, bringing together those that were previously separated, e.g. research

material and books on the same subject, whilst at the same time updating the museum database and enriching the information contained in it, so that keywords enhance searches. We also hope to create a better storage system for the paintings and prints.

So, all in all, a successful move, and a bright future for this rich and infinitely interesting collection.

Liz Owen & Helen Hitchcock

Volunteering at the Museum

We always need more stewards!

Our volunteers come from all walks of life. You don't need to have any experience of stewarding, just an interest in history and enjoy meeting and working with other people.

Training days are held before the museum opens again the spring. You will be given a tour around the museum with an explanation of the exhibits-(don't worry, you don't have to remember it all!) shown how to find out information on the interactive screens and till operating procedures etc. When you do your shift which is either 9.50-13.00 or 12.50-16.00 Mon-Fri or Sat 9.50-13.00 you will be placed with an experienced steward. Stewards work in pairs so you won't be on your own. For more information email museum@sidvaleassociation.org.uk We would love to hear from you!

Volunteers Tales

I moved to Sidmouth in 2010 after I retired and, after an initial settling-in period, I was looking around for things to occupy my time. I joined the SVA amongst other organisations in the area (U3A, NT, etc.). It was not long before I was contacted about getting involved in volunteering for the SVA and I thought that working in the museum would be a good way to learn more about the history of Sidmouth and the Sid Valley. I started off, in 2014, stewarding for just one half-day a fortnight. When it became known that I had a background in geology I was soon recruited to help with the Wednesday geology walks from the museum. It then became a natural progression to help in updating the geology exhibits during the winter closures. Under the curatorship of Ann Tanner, I have also been involved in setting up a couple of exhibitions and have taken over the role of Geology curator. I believe it is important to highlight the special geological environment of the Sid Valley and the varied fossilised fauna and flora preserved within the cliffs – from Rhynchosaurs to Mammoth molars! I enjoy the time I spend at the museum, especially the interaction with the other volunteers and with the museum visitors, young and old, whose questions always keep us on our toes!

Colin Boynton

And another from our children's activity leader

I was born and brought up in North London and lived there most of my life. Married with children, I was a teacher for over 30 years spending most of my career working in a special school for children with severe and profound learning difficulties. My main hobby is designing and making stained glass items and also, since moving to Sidmouth 15 months ago, my new hobby is croquet.

Why Sidmouth? The decision to move came when we had both retired and our family commitments no longer meant we had to stay in London. Peter had always longed to live by the sea and Devon had been a frequent holiday destination when I was a child. I had also recently been walking some of the southwest coast path and had enjoyed the area. Our search started, and to cut a longish story short, when we came to Sidmouth we knew it was a place we could settle. And we certainly made the right choice. We have met lots of lovely people, made new friends and have friendly and excellent neighbours. We are settling down in a nice house near the town. What more could we ask for.

I was introduced to the SVA and Sidmouth Museum through people that we met at the croquet club. For me the SVA is an organisation that works for things I find important, making an impact on the local area, maintaining and conserving the environment and the culture of Sidmouth. I am also impressed with the museum and the way it preserves and displays the history of Sidmouth.

Very quickly I was brought into volunteering for the children's activity days and last year I was asked to help run an activity for the children's day, which I was happy to do. Then the SVA member who had been organising the days was unable to continue with the work and I put myself forward to take on the role.

So, this summer myself and a wonderful group of volunteers set up and ran a Summer Activity Day for the children. We ran different activities around the theme of Sea, Sand and Sunny days. The day proved very popular with approximately 120 children attending during the day. The atmosphere was happy and friendly, and the sun shone for us all day. More are now planned.



Margaret Regan

Climate Change

Sea Surface Temperatures in Lyme Bay

Last year a record high temperature of 29°C was recorded in Sidmouth; the previous record of 28°C had remained since 1868 but was below the 40°C reached in other parts of the UK. The Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) control the daily minimum and maximum air temperatures, reducing the extreme values. This year June was hot and sunny accompanied by an early September heatwave. However, the high Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) have largely been un-noted but have provided splendid paddle boarding / swimming conditions for many at the seaside.

The North-East Atlantic Sea Temperatures

This summer in the Atlantic, the SST's have been more than 2 standard deviations from the mean, (i.e. outside the 95 percentile range, as shown in Figure 1). This warming of more than 1°C has been replicated all over the Northern Hemisphere. Graphs of monthly surface temperatures in the North-East Atlantic for June this year give temperatures nearly 0.75°C warmer than the previous maximum last year. Further the data for the past 40 years, shows that the daily SST's anomalies / differences have gradually increased and are now over 2°C warmer than the values measured in the 1970's and 1980's (data from ECMWF).

<https://climate.copernicus.eu/record-breaking-north-atlantic-ocean-temperatures-contribute-extreme-marine-heatwaves>

For Lyme Bay, the two closest observing stations are 5 and 15 miles South of Rame Head. Similar positive temperature differences of 1-2°C were observed in June and July; data, which will be published shortly, has been provided by Tim Smyth and colleagues at the Plymouth Marine Laboratory.

The El Niño

Every few years, warmer surface water in the western equatorial Pacific moves eastwards bringing warmer sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in central east waters of the eastern Pacific. The consequence is noticeable in the tropics, causing droughts in Indonesia and floods in Brazil but also temporarily heats up the Earth's temperature. Its affects in the UK can cause colder winters. Importantly it is unlikely that the El Niño has little connection with the higher summer Atlantic SSTs.

Why have these high SSTs occurred, is it Sulphur reductions in fuel?

Lower than normal levels of Saharan Dust, (which reflect incoming sunshine back to space) is a possible warming factor. The abnormal summer high pressure areas over the Azores will have contributed to the high SSTs. However, this warming is visible over the whole Northern Hemisphere. The EU (Copernicus) project states that these

SSTs are “unprecedented” and “beyond extreme” producing a temperature excess of 1.4°C above the 1980–2020 average. Another possibility is that the removal of Sulphur from bunker shipping fuel, over the past 2 years which has reduced Sulphur Dioxide emissions from ~ 10.8 to 2.8 million tonnes p.a., is a factor. Sulphur Dioxide produces the sulphate molecule aerosol which reflects incoming sunshine. Less sulphate in the lower atmosphere, means more warming sunlight reaching the surface. Time will tell if this is an important factor.

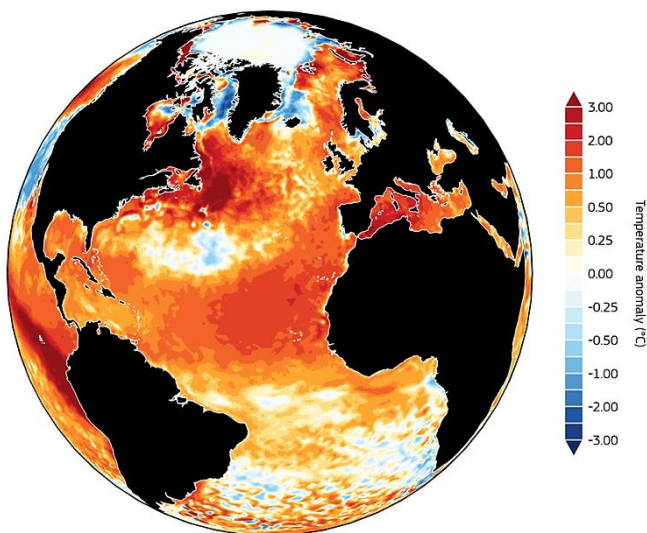
What impact will this have at Sidmouth / Sid Valley?

Warmer seas will provide higher temperatures with more likelihood of heavy rainfall, even hurricane strength depressions. The latitude of storm tracks across the Atlantic will change, bringing more rain over the UK. The warmer air will melt more of the Greenland Ice Cap, which is now maybe passed the point of no return. Some suggest a consequential sea level rise of 1.4 metres; others say over 7 metres. Currently, sea level is rising at ~ 4 mm p.a. in some areas but predicted to rise to more than 11mm p.a. in the next two decades.

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation

SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURE ANOMALY • JULY 2023

Reference period: 1991–2020 • Data: ERA5 • Credit C3S/ECMWF



PROGRAMME OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Figure 1. Sea surface temperature anomaly (°C) for July 2023, relative to the 1991–2020 reference period. Data source: ERA5. Credit: Copernicus Climate Change Service/ECMWF.

The largest near future impact is possibly the breakdown of the Atlantic Meridional Circulation (AMOC). This ocean current brings water northwards from the Antarctic, warmed in equator regions before sinking off Greenland and moving South again. Warm water from equator regions is brought to our shores. A recent scientific publication estimates this circulation will breakdown and not venture so far North. This could occur somewhere in the next 15 - 300 year with a best estimate of 50 years. Greenland / Arctic Ice meltwater will combine to prevent the warm water movement North. Some argue it could happen within 15 years. Our climate would be 3-5°C colder, countering global warming, but with stronger winds. South Devon would become more like the windswept North Devon coastline with rising sea levels and more storm surges.

Climate in the Sid Valley

If these anomalous Sea Surface Temperatures are not a one-off event, then 2023 summer will be regarded as a significant year, displaying the effects of climate change. Sidmouth / Sid Valley should still be largely protected from the temperature extremes found in other parts of the UK. As long as water storage capacity and drainage runoff are improved to cope with increased intense rainfall, then Sid Valley should remain a glorious place to live.

Alan Gadian

Restoration of steam locomotive 34010 Sidmouth

Southern Locomotives owns the West Country class locomotive number 34010 named 'Sidmouth', which is being restored at the group's site at Sellindge in Kent.

The focus is to repair the rear section of the loco's frames – the section under the cab and linking to its tender. It was built in 1945 and withdrawn in 1965, nearly 60 years ago. Since then, rust has crept in between the twin frame sections. This has required the rivets holding the sections together to be removed and split apart to remove the rust. Parts were too corroded to be repaired and had to be cut off and new sections fitted. The new sections have been cut to size and held in place by temporary bolts.

Much of this work was done by two volunteers, Alan Kyte and Derek Noden who both used a 9" angle grinder for hours, firstly cutting and then chamfering the edges of the plates – a perfect finish was achieved. The new drag box has returned from a contractor who fitted a pair of gun metal wear plates which bear on the trailing truck, thus distributing weight and facilitating smooth sideways movement.

Next step is a trial fit of the drag box, followed by welding and riveting the entire trailing frame assembly. The drag-box itself will then be permanently attached with 24 7/8" fitted bolts - all manufactured on site at Sellindge. Finally, all the double frame areas will be seal welded to prevent further rust ingress.

Lawrence Donaldson, who is the boilermith at the Kent & East Sussex Railway will be doing the welding. He has inspected and passed the work achieved so far.

Finally, the new front buffer beam will be installed. When all this work is complete Sidmouth's frames will be ready to move to our main workshop at Swanage for reassembly to commence.

In parallel work is being done of components of Sidmouth. Volunteer Allan Highman and his son Harry stripped the main manifold, which controls the supply of steam to ancillary parts of the loco and its train.

Another of our locos, Battle of Britain class 34053 Sir Keith Park, will move to a large workshop in Tyseley, Birmingham, to have its boiler removed. That boiler will be overhauled and fitted to Sidmouth when its chassis is complete. Thus, the loco will be completed and returned to service for the first time in around 60 years.

Meanwhile, further south, other locos in our fleet of nine have been in featuring on TV. Battle of Britain class 34072 257 Squadron was in the series Hornby – A Model World to illustrate how the model railway company gets details of how the real locomotive works, including the sound of its whistle.

Nick had arranged for the Works Manager at Swanage to be interviewed for the programme, but had fame thrust upon him when the boss said he was needed elsewhere!

Nick Thompson has lived in Sidmouth for 20 years, and is a board member of Southern Locos, and also a regular volunteer. For more details of 34010 Sidmouth you can reach Nick by email at nicksidmouth@gmail.com, or see the website at www.southern-locomotives.co.uk



Allan Highman and son Harry use heat and a large spanner to dismantle Sidmouth manifold.

Alan Kyte and Derek Noden take turns with the 9" grinder to get the new steel sections ready to weld to the frames.





Harry Highman cleans up the new steel section prior to welding



The frames of 34010 Sidmouth on arrival, rust had crept inside the steel sections.

Nick Thompson

How well is the River Sid for fish?

As Trustee for Land and River for the SVA, I was asked by the Sidmouth Biodiversity Group if they could sample the fish in the river Sid in Gilchrist Field. When I realised they did not want to eat anything I said "okay"

There was a sampling in 2014 and the records then showed the following: in the river at **Gilchrist Field**.

	Brown Trout	Trout Fry	Bullhead	Stone loach	Minnow	Brook Lamprey	Eel	Stickleback
2014	22	0	5	9	1	1	1	0

However, a different methodology for electrofishing was used in 2023 so figures cannot be compared although species presence can.

The sampling this year involved a temporary stunning of the fish using an electrified loop with a diameter of about a foot. The fish are then caught in an ordinary net. It is all over in ten minutes and the fish are then measured and counted and put back.

One person does the stunning and catching by walking in the river with the equipment. Some fish managed to avoid the stunning and escape so the results are possibly conservative. The work is undertaken by the West Country Rivers Trust and was on the same part of the river as 2014.

I observed several fish escaping the stun and they looked like trout, so with fisherman's luck there might have been a higher count for Adult Trout.

The survey was also conducted in other parts of the Sid and its tributaries, and those results are as follows:

	Trout adult	Trout Fry	Bullhead	Stone loach	Minnow	Brook Lamprey	Eel	Stickleback
Gilchrist	4	0	31	5	4	0	0	0
Sidbury	9	0	37	0	1	0	0	0
Plyford	1	5	20	0	0	0	0	0
Woolbrook	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Snod	6	0	38	0	0	0	1	0
Roncombe	0	0	63	0	0	0	0	0

There are some comments from the Trust about the count which are shown below.

A different methodology was used in the 2014 electrofishing survey of the Sid, so numerical scores cannot be compared, but species presence can.

The Woolbrook has again shown up no fish apart from an unexpected Stickleback.

Adult trout numbers were good. The presence of fry was only in one location, perhaps due to adverse weather conditions in 2022.

The lack of trout at the Roncombe site maybe due to the morphology of the site chosen or might indicate that the isolation of the Roncombe due to an impassable weir at Cotmaton Bridge has led to a failure of this population. The 2014 data was collected below the weir.

Bullheads are thriving in our river system, with the SW populations bucking the national trend.

Stone loach was only found at Gilchrist, a similar result to 2014

Eel was found only in the Snod whereas there were three sites in 2014.

No Brook Lamprey were recorded this year whereas there were three sites in 2014

Only one Minnow was recorded in 2014, whereas a total of five were found in two locations this year.

Given the nature of the Sid with its small catchment area and its consequent ability to be a roaring brown torrent after heavy rain and then be back down to normal levels very quickly, I find it a marvel that there are any fish at all.

The Woolbrook probably suffers from a lot of road and other runoff pollution which is not easy to solve but nevertheless it is disappointing that only one stickleback was found.



This is stunning!

There are various recommendations which include making weirs more fish friendly, improving conditions for trout and undertaking further surveys. All of which will be looked at with a view to improving the river environment for the creatures that depend on it.



The Bullhead or Millers Thumb



The Stone loach



Adult Trout

I would like to thank the Sid Valley Biodiversity Group and the West Country Rivers Trust for organising the survey.

Richard Huntington

Our new headquarters

It took 175 years for the SVA, in one form or another, to have its own HQ in the town. Many of you will have seen the premises at 36a Fore Street. It was a superb conversion, centrally sited, and provided storage for archives, including the very heavy newspapers, as well as a meeting room. Some of you will have been inside and, if so, recognised a problem. Two sets of steep and narrow stairs which made access difficult or impossible for some members.

An opportunity for a larger building with excellent access arose unexpectedly in November last year. The 1922 Club, at the top of Church Street, closed due to financial difficulties. The fine poppy displays from the balcony and its close association with Remembrance Days will be remembered with gratitude. The trustees approached us indicating their wish for their building to remain part of the community. This was unexpected and a wonderful opportunity but at the same time a considerable challenge. There is more room than Fore Street and, additionally, items inadequately stored in the Museum, such as lace and costumes, can now be moved across. The proximity to the museum is very helpful. The ground floor space offers a location for both 'Talks', with excellent audio and visual facilities, and meetings. Above all, access is straight forward.

The history of the new HQ has been surprisingly difficult to research despite our access to various archives. On walking down Church Street from the Museum it is clear that there are two buildings. The first, and much the older one, is mentioned in Mogridge's 1836 guide as Villa Verda (later spelled Verdé); perhaps some of the paint work was green. A building of that name is not described in Butcher's earlier guides.

By the middle of the 19th century it was named 'The Retreat' and was the residence of visiting curates to the Parish Church. The Reverend Henry Clements, later a longstanding vicar, was curate between 1854 and 1858. A source of confusion is that census forms from 1881 and 1891 give two names to the same building- both Villa Verde and Retreat Cottage and with different residents in each suggesting the house had a separate back entrance. It is adjacent and almost touching Harston (now Mitchelmores the solicitors). In the latter 19th century, The Retreat was a guest house. In the early 20th century, it was managed but not owned by Mr and Mrs Gibbs. The author/fisherman Stephen Reynolds lived there between 1917 and his untimely death in 1919. He had a high opinion of Mrs Gibbs's culinary skills.

Following WW1 there was a national demand for 'recognition' of those returning home as well as a memorial to those who had died. In Sidmouth, in February 1919, a public meeting in Manor Hall discussed both a Memorial and a Social Institute.

Two years later the War Memorial, designed by Sampson, was erected in the grounds of the Parish Church. The site for the 'Institute', almost exactly opposite, was Retreat Cottage. It was bought for £1,100 and from the onset it was clear that an extension was essential and feasible as the adjacent land was a large yard. The extension, the 'second building', was added by Sampson at a cost of a further £1,273. His initial plan was magnificent but impossibly extravagant. The simpler, cheaper final version was more in keeping with the adjacent house but only consisted of a ground floor. The initial Club now had a reading & recreation room, a writing room, a committee room, a billiard room for two full size tables and a kitchen.

It was named the Sidmouth War Memorial Service Men's Club. The three Trustees were Colonel Balfour (Lord of the Manor), Major Hamilton and Captain Maitland Paine. Major Hastings was appointed Club Chairman. His son, Leslie, had been killed in Iraq in 1916. It was no coincidence that Balfour's land agent was Hastings, and his architect was Sampson.

The official opening on June 22, 1922, was by General Sir John Hart Dunne who opened the door to the club with an engraved silver key. Sir John was the oldest (86) and most distinguished soldier in the town and lived at 6, Fortfield Terrace. He had fought in the Crimean War (1853-56) where the conditions were even more terrible than the trenches of the Great War. In 1860 he had been a captain with the British and French forces in the controversial Second Opium War. After the sacking of the Chinese Emperor's Royal Palace five lapdogs were taken and brought back to England, the first Pekingese to be introduced. Hart Dunne, only 25 years old, had the confidence to present one to Queen Victoria. She named it accurately but insensitively Looty. Its portrait is in the Royal Collection.

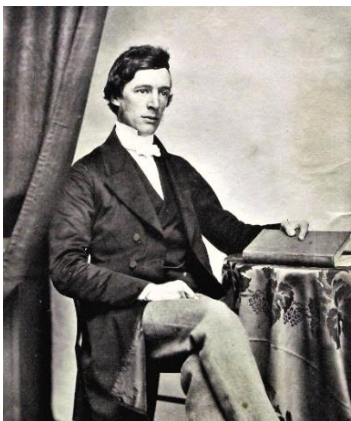
The silver key was thought to be lost but came to auction in 2017. One of our local historians, John McCarthy, bought it and kindly donated it to the Museum.

It was not until 1967/8 that the second floor of the extension was completed. In 2015 it was renamed 1922 Social Club which was certainly simpler than Sidmouth War Memorial Service Men's Club. Some non- members and visitors to the town mistakenly assumed a connection with backbench Conservative MPs.

The new official postal address is Sid Vale Association CIO, 12 Church Street although many members will no doubt refer to it as the HQ.

Whatever the name, it is a major milestone in our history and our intention is to encourage greater contact with the members.

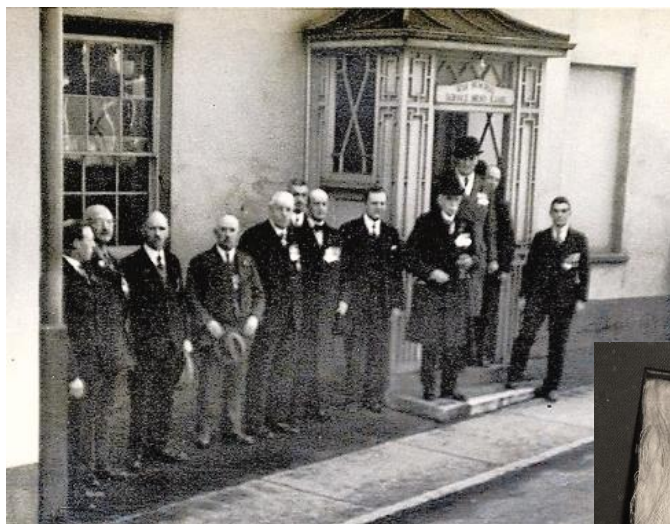
Nigel Hyman



Reverend Henry Clements (Museum Archive)



Retreat Cottage, late Victorian
(Museum Archive)



Opening of Club June 22, 1922, Hart Dunne
on step (L) (Museum Archive)

Inscribed silver key
(Museum Archive)



Footpaths and Bridleways

This year, the team has had to contend with rain on many recent Mondays our 'working' day. Indeed, as I write this in September, it is still raining! The Sidmouth and East Devon Walking Festival held at the beginning of the month unfortunately experienced a very mixed week of weather.

Earlier in the year we of course had the extreme heat which made daytime working very uncomfortable. Nevertheless, the team managed to complete many of the tasks identified in the "Work Programme". As autumn approaches and as the light fades the team meeting on Monday evenings will come to an end to be changed to Sunday mornings.



As with each year, the work team and other volunteers check the paths within the Sidmouth Parish to ensure the signage is intact and visible and the paths are cleared of undergrowth especially brambles. The section of the East Devon Way and Sid Valley Ring from The Strips at White Cross to Sidbury Goosemoor Farm area is included in the walks but was particularly overgrown and took the whole team many evenings to clear. The photograph shows this path after it was cleared!

The heavy rain we had earlier in the year before the spell of hot weather damaged some paths and more problematic was the undercutting of bridge structures, one in particular in the Core Hill area. Last year we moved the original path away from the watercourse after earlier damage. This year

the remnants of the path got washed away so that was a good bit of forward planning by the team.

As many will have noticed with the weather as it was this summer the vegetation growth has been rampant which meant the team spent many hours strimming the paths, cutting back hedges and removing fallen trees and branches. Less time to spend repairing stiles and gates although some work has been undertaken on the many steps in the Parish which seem to get damaged on a regular basis as the risers are timber supported by small stakes. We are looking at alternatives for this possibly with recycled materials. Having worked in two teams for some time this has meant more tasks have been completed.

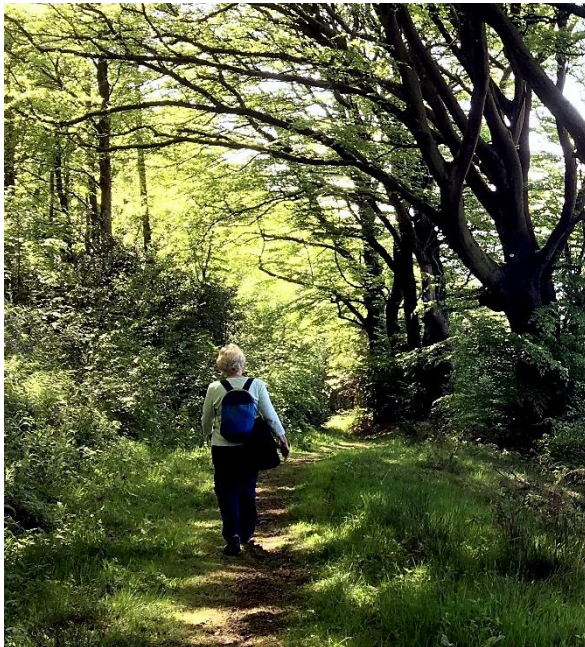
Unfortunately, I have to report again this year that some of the finger direction boards on signposts have been vandalised and broken off this time in the area of Fire Beacon Hill. This has been reported to the Town Clerk and local Police.

In other news the Government has put back the deadline for reporting lost paths from 2026 to 2031 most likely as there is a backlog thought to be 4000 applications.

The Rambler's organisation is leading the way with researching and investigating the paths history and making applications - well done to them. Locally we have identified one path in Sidbury which may become a permissive path - still work to do. Please get in touch if you know of any old paths not open to the public.

As ever I have to thank the group of volunteers who come out each week rain or shine to maintain the 60 miles of footpaths, bridleways and unclassified roads in the parish and also those who survey and help with replacing discs, the support of Sidmouth Town Council and the grant from Devon County Council.

Phil Bradbury – P3 Liaison Officer



Local wildlife celebrated during festival

The first Sidmouth Biodiversity Festival took place at the beginning of June. Participants enjoyed a varied week of events, in the sunshine, including guided wildlife walks, opportunities to learn about the river Sid, and expert speakers at Kennaway House.

There were some wonderful moments on the Saturday despite the rain; a beautiful outdoor performance of nature-themed songs by the Sid Vale Folk Choir, magical storytelling performances, fascinating bug hunts in the Byes and children's art workshops in the sensory garden. There were plenty of hands-on biodiversity-themed science activities from the Exeter Science Centre, including a mind-boggling virtual reality experience.

It was wonderful to see people enjoying themselves whilst learning more about the variety of local wildlife and the importance of protecting and enhancing habitats and increasing biodiversity. Many of our event leaders were local voluntary experts and we are grateful to them for generously sharing their knowledge. We are also grateful to the many volunteers who made the festival possible.

Our thanks go to the Sid Vale Association Keith Owen Fund who part-funded the festival along with Sidmouth Town Council.

Sheila Meades - Sid Valley Biodiversity Group



Sheila Meades and Alan Clarke Chairman of KOF

Walking with Alpacas

I've been buying jumpers, cardigans and socks made from Alpaca wool for over twenty years and it seemed a good time to actually meet them. Alpaca trekking has become popular in recent years and a fellow walker arranged for twelve of us to do a two-hour session at the centre near Sidbury one August afternoon.

Alpacas are members of the camel family, and this includes Llamas and Vicunas. They originate from South America, particularly Peru and have been bred in the UK since the 1980's. Their wool does not contain lanolin and is therefore very kind to the skin and is hypoallergenic. Unlike goats and sheep, they have padded hooves and their imprint on the land is much gentler. They also are gentler when they graze and do not pull-out grass along with roots, but just eat the tips.

I was not quite sure what to expect but we were all put at ease with a quick introduction on what to do and not do. They don't like their head or back touched but will allow their neck to be stroked. We looked at them in the field and the three young from last year looked very appealing. We were paired up and I was with a cream Alpaca called Mowgli. He liked to be towards the back near his larger friend Brian. We set off slowly and the three youngsters showed they were like any teenagers, a little frisky and eager to be different! As we turned from the road to a gravel track, we felt a few spots of rain. This quickly increased and after a while we sheltered beneath some trees while our guide told us about Alpacas. Mowgli was very well behaved, and we pressed on still hoping the shower would pass.



Unfortunately, the rain became very heavy and after going through a gate we sheltered beneath more trees. Alpacas don't like heavy rain and we fed them handfuls of mixed grains to keep them happy while we decided whether it would be prudent to return. It was decided it was wise to return before going down a steep path. Mowgli's pace quickened when we were almost home, and I can't blame him.

Despite the rain I very much enjoyed my first taste of Alpaca trekking and hope to try again some time, hopefully with better weather!

Sheridan Ralph

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email: info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk**

Data Protection regulations

The SVA is committed to the safety of its members' personal information and complies as far as possible with General Data Protection Requirements (GDPR). Member's names and addresses, together with the type of membership they hold (life or annual), are held on a computer file with limited access and minimal processing. These details are not given or sold to any third parties. To comply further with GDPR we are required to notify all members of the right to have such details erased in certain circumstances. Any member requiring further information should write to the Membership Secretary at The Sid Vale Association CIO, 12 Church Street, Sidmouth EX10 8LY.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Whilst we make every effort to ensure details are correct at the time of going to press, please check the SVA web page for latest details and any updates.

COUNTRYSIDE WALKS

These are normally held on the 1st Tuesday of each month

The dates are thus: Dec 5th, Jan 2nd. Feb 6th Mar 5th April 2nd. May 7th

Check our web page at www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk and posters on noticeboards for latest information

TALKS

January, February, March and April 2024. Talks will be held at 12 Church Street, Sidmouth, EX10 8LY

For dates and talks see our web page at www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk and posters on notice boards for further details

HISTORY GROUP

The planned dates are Nov 20th. Jan 8th, Mar 11th, May 13th

Meetings start at 7.00 at 12 Church Street, Sidmouth, EX10 8LY

MUSEUM

INVITATION

You are invited to the SVA Members reception, 2.30pm at the Museum on Sunday 24th March 2024, view the New Season's Displays enjoy a glass of wine and other refreshments.

Museum opens for new season on Monday 25th March 2024

Museum Town Walks commence Tuesday 2nd April 2024

[The Sid Vale Association CIO, 12 Church Street, Sidmouth EX10 8LY](#)

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.