

sid vale association



past • present • future

Magazine Number 93

Spring 2021

Including Annual Report and

Accounts for 2020

£2.50 – free to members



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

www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Login details for AGM Zoom

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place via Zoom. We will presume you have downloaded Zoom and are familiar with how to use it. If not, it is free to download from <http://zoom.us> and there are instructions on their website.

As numbers are limited, please let us know you wish to attend by emailing zoomtalks@sidvaleassociation.org.uk or you can go to the SVA website and click on the link from our 'forthcoming events' section.

Members who have registered will receive the login details by email the day before the meeting.

If you are unable to attend, we will be recording the meeting and it will be available to view from our website www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk a couple of days afterwards.

Resolution for the SVA AGM 2021

The Sid Vale Association CIO resolves to add the following power to the 5 listed within the current constitution: (6) to run a museum and own and/or hold collections

Background Information for Resolution at AGM

Trustees are proud that the Sidmouth Museum has achieved fully accredited status which brings with it a number of advantages. It is currently in the process of renewing this accreditation but we have been advised that there should be an explicit, rather than implicit, power within our Constitution that allows the museum (as part of the CIO) to own and hold collections. These might include items such as artworks, lace, geological samples etc. The Trustees are therefore asking for members' support to change the Constitution by way of adding a clause to the existing 5 powers. The proposed clause is as follows:

(6) to run a museum and own and/or hold collections

The resolution will be passed if 75% of the SVA members who vote, agree to this change.

The current Constitution document can be viewed on the SVA website www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk in the About Us – "What is the SVA" section.

Sid Vale Association CIO AGM 15th June 2021

2.30pm via Zoom

NB All voting to be carried out via post or email by 14th June 2021

See voting form on page 22

AGENDA

Chairman's welcome

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of SVA CIO AGM held on 22/05/2019
(the AGM for 2020 was cancelled due to Covid 19 lock down)
- 3 Matters Arising
- 4 Special Resolution to amend the Powers within the SVA Constitution
(registered 26/11/2013)
The association resolves to add the following power to the 5 listed within the current constitution: (6) to run a museum and own and/or hold collections
- 5 Election of Trustees

The following Trustees were appointed by the Management Committee and are now standing for election

- | | |
|-----------------|------------|
| • Heather Hodge | Membership |
| • Ann Tanner | Museum |

The following Trustees' terms of office end at this AGM, and are standing for re-election

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Richard Huntington | SVA Land |
| • Nigel Hyman | Local History & Publications |
| • Richard Thurlow | Chair, & Conservation & Planning |
| • Gary Turner | Treasurer |

- 6 Presentation of remaining Trustees

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Peter Brookes | River |
| • Ed Harrison | Vice Chair & SVA Buildings/Land |
| • Val Huntington | Magazine & Publicity |
| • Liz Warren | Secretary |

- 7 Presentation of Accounts for 2020

- 8 Appointment of auditor – the Trustees recommend to the members that the SVA continues to engage with the firm of Thomas Westcott Chartered Accountants, Honiton, in their role of Independent Examiner, or Auditor as required.

- 9 AOB (please notify the Chair prior to the meeting)

- 10 Presentation – SVA 175 Reflections

Close of meeting

Sid Vale Association CIO

Minutes of the 5th Annual General Meeting of the SVA CIO 2.30pm on 22nd May 2019 at The Manor Pavilion, Sidmouth

63 people attended the meeting

Richard Thurlow, Chair of the Association, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 **Apologies** Brian & Joyce Calloway, Christopher & Maggie Seaton,
Naomi & John Lott, John Warren, Mr Snelgrove, Julie Andrews

2 **Minutes of the AGM held on 25th April 2018** – Agreed and signed.

3 **Matters Arising** none.

4 **Election of Trustees**

The following trustees' term of office expired as at this AGM and was standing for re-election

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| • Peter Brookes | River Warden |
| • Edmund Harrison | Vice Chair |
| • Elizabeth Warren | Secretary |

Richard Thurlow proposed that they be re-elected en bloc. Agreed by the meeting and duly elected.

5 **Presentation of remaining Trustees**

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Di Fuller | Overview |
| • Richard Huntington | Woodlands & Estates |
| • Val Huntington | Magazine & Publicity |
| • Dr Nigel Hyman | Museum |
| • Richard Thurlow | Conservation & Planning |
| • Gary Turner | Treasurer |

6 **Trustees who stood down during the year**

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| • John Dowell | Publications |
| • Stephen Pemberton | Events |

Although they had stood down as Trustees, they continued volunteering for SVA.

Richard introduced the Trustees to attendees and thanked them for their work. He then went on to thank all the other people who had volunteered for SVA in any capacity during the past year.

7 **Presentation of Annual Report & Accounts**

Gary Turner, Treasurer, presented the Annual Accounts and explained the change of format that he had promised last year. All the figures were shown in 2 pages. He highlighted two key points. Firstly, real income is lower because of the absence of legacies. Secondly, there were significant unrealised losses because the investment portfolio had "taken a battering" in 2018. Legacies form an important source of income for the association's activities as most of the investment income is given out in Keith Owen Fund awards to community groups. He did not foresee any rapid improvements in investment income during 2019.

A number of questions followed:

Q Where are the unrealised gains?

A The increased capital value of SVA investments form the unrealised gains. Any decrease in capital value shows as unrealised losses.

Q What level of risk is applied?

A Medium risk – we use FTSE 350 and have around 30 stocks

Q Is there any reason that more stocks could be covered to spread the risk?

A SVA has sold some riskier stocks and has cash holdings

Q Could SVA use Investment Trust funds so investments are spread across many stocks

A Richard explained that Keith Owen had favoured a "DIY" approach to investments but Trustees are now reviewing the risks.

Q Is it SVA's intention to follow Keith Owen's wishes to invest in income producing funds?

A Richard said there needed to be a balance between Keith's wishes and current Charity Commission rules so we may need to modify our practice in future. Gary emphasised the need to protect the endowment in line with inflation.

Q Is there a list of the current investment funds?

A Top 10 are listed on page 14. For a full list please email the treasurer.

Q What exposure does SVA have to risky stocks and has SVA considered professional financial advice.

A This will be considered as part of the review.

Gary was thanked for his work as Treasurer and the reforms he has introduced.

8 **Appointment of Auditors for 2017**

Richard explained that SVA had terminated its relationship with Easterbrook Eaton & Co and proposed that Thomas Westcott be appointed as Auditor/Independent examiner for 2019. This was agreed by the meeting.

9 **AOB – None.**

Richard Thurlow closed the formal part of the meeting.

10 **Presentation re Buildings in Sidmouth**

Nigel Hyman gave a further amusing illustrated presentation about his personal likes and dislikes regarding the buildings and architecture in Sidmouth.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm

Tea and coffee was served in the bar

**Do we have your email address?
Send it to info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk**

Sid Vale Association CIO

Income & Expenditure 2020

	General Fund	Keith Owen Fund	Knaapp Fund	Museum	Trust Fund	TOTAL	2019
Income							
Grants Received				12,532		12,532	-
Donations & Legacies	1,050		20	1,594		2,664	10,918
Events & activities	510			1,038		1,548	6,721
Investment income	270	72,321			2,720	75,311	157,336
Membership Subs	2,025					2,025	2,526
Rental Income	1,100					1,100	1,103
Sales & Other Income				3,763		3,763	14,526
Total Income	4,954	72,321	20	18,927	2,720	98,942	193,130
Expenditures							
							124
Awards		16,176				16,176	59,741
Banking & Insurance	2,909	15				2,924	3,222
Blue Plaque Costs		42				42	6,396
Depreciation				3,841		3,841	3,841
Events & activities costs	302					302	4,529
General Admin, travel etc.	209			283		493	3,256
Governance	366			522		888	1,428
IT & digital activity	1,999			1,260		3,259	4,343
Museum Activities				2,317		2,317	6,430
Museum Major Costs		64,985				64,985	25,664
Office Furniture & equipment				2,700		2,700	1,247
Plaques		120				120	-
Premises other costs	1,563		86			1,650	4,863
Printing & publicity	555			2,788		3,343	7,221
Professional fees	1,060	18,616			701	20,377	830
Repairs & Maintenance	135			1,921		2,056	7,613
							45
Sundry Expenditure	1,754		10			1,764	15,302
Utilities	1,089			1,888		2,976	6,627
Woodlands & estates		4,966	17,780			22,746	56,819
Total Expenditures	11,941	104,919	17,877	17,521	701	152,959	219,542
Net Operating Income	(6,987)	(32,598)	(17,857)	1,406	2,019	(54,017)	(26,412)
Other Income							
Gains on Investments		216,573			8,152	224,725	338,633
Total Other Income	-	216,573	-	-	8,152	224,725	338,633
Net Income/(Expenditure)	(6,987)	183,974	(17,857)	1,406	10,171	170,708	312,221
Balance brought forward	-	3,136,279	38,967	-	513,071	3,688,317	3,376,096
Balance carried forward	(6,987)	3,320,254	21,111	1,406	523,242	3,859,025	3,688,317

Note: These are preliminary results subject to Independent Examination. Final approved accounts in accordance with the Charities SORP will be available from the Charity Commission website in due course or directly from the Treasurer. Investments are managed by Investec and are shown at market value as at 31st December 2020.

Sid Vale Association CIO

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2020

	2020	2019
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets		
Buildings	263,306	263,306
Furniture & Equipment	22,663	22,663
Furniture & Equipment Depreciation	(18,318)	(14,477)
Heritage Assets	401	401
Total Tangible assets	268,052	271,893
Non-Current Assets		
HL Capital account	-	456,733
Investec Capital	28,230	
Investments	3,185,625	2,530,233
Total Non-Current Assets	3,213,855	2,986,966
Total Fixed Assets	3,481,907	3,258,859
Cash at bank and in hand		
CAF Cash	327,461	378,632
HL Income Account	-	5,676
HSBC Landscape Fund	-	3,720
HSBC Treasurer's Account	7,771	18,328
Investec Income	18,967	-
Museum account HSBC	14,639	7,879
Total Cash at bank and in hand	368,838	414,236
Debtors		
Sundry Debtors	-	3,077
Total Debtors	-	3,077
Current Assets		
Stock Asset	13,000	13,000
Sundry debtors1	2,118	285
Total Current Assets	15,118	13,285
Net current assets	383,956	430,599
Creditors: amounts due within one year		
Current Liabilities		
Sundry creditors	6,838	1,140
Total Current Liabilities	6,838	1,140
Total Creditors: amounts due within one year	6,838	1,140
Net current assets (liabilities)	377,118	429,459
Total assets less current liabilities	3,859,025	3,688,317
Charity funds		
Designated (Premises)	20,000	15,000
Keith Owen Endowment	3,084,824	2,868,252
Keith Owen Revenue	230,429	268,027
Landscape Fund	21,111	38,967
Trust Fund	502,661	498,071
Total Charity funds	3,859,025	3,688,317

R Thurlow Chair
G Turner Treasurer



Chairman's Review for 2020

We did not have an AGM last year; this was cancelled due to the Pandemic, but the Annual Report is on our web site.

Well, what can I say about 2020? Whatever I say it will be brief as very little has happened. Covid has totally disrupted our activities, but we are managing, and hope to regain this year much of the momentum that we had achieved in 2019.

Your SVA Management Committee has met using Zoom every month, as has the Grants Committee.

We introduced a series of irregular Newsletters to try to keep members aware of what we were doing. They seem to have

been appreciated so we will continue to produce them and distribute them by email.

We were very grateful to those members who made donations; these were vital to ensure that we did keep our financial head above water.

As you may recall, an extension to the Museum was planned in 2019, and built in the very early part of 2020, and new double glazing was installed to reduce energy consumption. Ann Tanner had prepared new displays and exhibits. We were all set to open when COVID struck. The Museum has remained closed throughout 2020, and we hope that it will re-open in late Spring this year. Thus, we had no income from the public, although we did receive a Government grant to help us financially.

Good news was that our Publications sold well, with Ann Jones being instrumental in responding to on-line orders and deliveries.

Town walks, Geology Walks and Tree walks were all suspended, as were our Excursions and Countryside walks.

Our Talks in the Manor Pavilion were of course suspended as well, but Nigel Hyman with John Dowell, set up a series of talks over "Zoom" which I believe were very much appreciated. We have on several occasions, hit the limit of 100 members joining the on-line talk.

Work continued on our Land when it has been legally possible, The Knapp in particular is looking very refreshed, with the pond having been re-excavated, steps replaced, trees planted and a main path through the woodlands re-surfaced.

The Keith Owen fund was suspended during much of 2020 but was re-opened in January this year. The volatility in the Financial markets has had an effect on our income, and is discussed further by the Treasurer in his report.

After an appeal we collected about 30 laptops from members to donate to Sidmouth College to help students with on-line learning. My thanks to those who dug out all their old machines.

Finally, may I thank all of you for your understanding over the past year, and those volunteers who were able to contribute.

Let us hope that we are able to restart our activities soon. Meanwhile we preparing to do so in the light of current information, and hope to see you soon.

Richard Thurlow

Membership Secretary Annual Report 2020

I only took over the reins as Membership Secretary from Andrew Scott in May 2020. I have spent the time since then working my way through all the information passed onto me and creating a new database which will be easier to use for myself and whoever replaces me in the future.

We have re-established the Membership Committee which comprises of myself, Richard Thurlow, Ann Tanner and Di Fuller. Between us, we are looking at ways to encourage more membership and to ensure that all the information we currently hold on members is as correct and as up to date as we can get it. We are trying to encourage more members to let us have their email addresses so that we can cut down on the postage costs by having to mail items out to those who do not have such an address. Small steps at present but we have some good ideas to work on as the months progress.

Our membership as at the end of December was around 1850. We gained 32 new members but lost 69 during this year.

Heather Hodge

Data Protection Regulations

Members' names and addresses, together with the type of membership they hold (Life or Annual), are held on computer file. No details of subscription payments are held on file. This information continues to be held separately. To comply with General Data Protection Requirements, we are required to notify all members of any information held on computer file, and to give them the opportunity to have such details erased. This note is therefore published to meet this requirement, and will be published in each year's Annual Report. Should any member prefer not to have his/her name held on computer, they should write and inform the Membership Secretary accordingly at The Sid Vale Association CIO, 36a Fore Street, Sidmouth EX10 8AQ.

Editor's Note

As the AGM is very late this year, we have decided to combine the AGM report with an early summer magazine. As you will see when you read through the magazine articles, a lot of our volunteers have carried on with essential maintenance jobs. 'Zoom', for some of us, is now part of our vocabulary. Nigel Hyman and Simon Papworth bring a sense of humour in their articles. The river is in fine condition with more otter sightings and the Knapp and Margaret's Meadow teams have worked tirelessly to bring a piece of sanctuary in the middle of town. Kate's article tells us how we can improve the wildlife as individuals even more whilst some of us (mentioning no names) have inadvertently left behind more than we intended. The history of the valley is being kept alive through publications and research and Daphne recounts more tales of life on Weston beach. A huge amount of work has gone into getting the museum covid safe so please come and visit. My thanks as ever to everybody who helped getting this publication to your door mat.

Val Huntington

Sid Vale Association – points of contact

President

Alan Darrant president@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Chairman

*Richard Thurlow chairman@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Vice Chairman

*Emund Harrison vicechair@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer

*Gary Turner treasurer@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Secretary

*Liz Warren secretary@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Conservation and Planning

*Richard Thurlow conservation@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Policy Overview and Environment

*Di Fuller scrutiny@sidvaleassociation.org.uk (Resigned March 2021)

Footpaths

Phil Bradbury footpaths@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Museum Curator

*Ann Tanner museum@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

History Group

Prof. Brian Golding OBE history@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Keith Owen Fund Grants

Alan Clarke keithowenfund@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Museum Walks and Talks

*Nigel Hyman museumwalksandtalks@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Membership

Heather Hodge membership@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Publicity and Magazine Editor

*Val Huntington publicity@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Publications

John Dowell publications@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

River Warden

*Peter Brookes river@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Sales

Ann Jones sales@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Woodlands and Estates

*Richard Huntington estates@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership

Richard Huntington aonb@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Excursions

Stephen Pemberton excursions@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

The River

Much like the rest of our community, the river has had a turbulent year. Replacement of the Alma bridge, for a large part of the year, meant that the river bed was partially blocked by a large cofferdam, (a temporary access/structure) in the bed of the river, erected to enable safe construction. Whilst not causing a complete blockage, the river was partially restricted which affected the normal migratory passage of the river fish. As for the river itself, it proved a popular venue for both walkers and picnickers alike, particularly at the northern end adjacent to Gilchrist's field.



Fish Ladder?

Again the difficult question of should there be a fish ladder constructed at School Weir to enable fish (Brown and Sea trout, salmon and eels) to migrate to the up stream length of the river. The obstacle to natural migration of fish has been an issue ever since the weir was constructed as part of the Sidmouth's flood defence in the 1970s. There does not seem to be an easy answer to the fish transfer problem and so alternative solutions are being considered.

In recent years this has been partially addressed by the autumn "Fish Rescue", whereby we catch the fish waiting to try to jump the weir in a trawl net and without damage to the fish, transfer them to the higher river. Unfortunately with the onset of Covid restrictions, I am afraid that we have had to abandon it for the Autumn 2020. Ironically, this led to the local otter(s) having an easy diet, and many sightings were noted.

A recent riverside walk has revealed that there is still quite a healthy population of young trout and possibly salmon fry thriving in the upper length of the river.

Peter Brookes – River Warden

MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

The Sid Vale Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registration number 1154749.

At the Annual General Meeting, members of the association elect the charity trustees for a three year term of office. The trustees have collective responsibility for the whole organisation and meet every month.

In addition to these responsibilities each trustee takes on the role of an officer of the association and/or the lead or chair of a working group responsible for a particular activity of the SVA – for example Richard Huntington is our representative on the AONB. .

The full constitution is available on the website at www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk or by contacting the secretary 43, Primley Road, Sidmouth EX10 9LF.

Footpaths and Bridleways 2020

The year started on a promising note, the surveyors had undertaken the annual inspections by walking their allotted paths. I compiled the work programme for the year from their findings and from tasks not completed the previous year and Ian Collins organised the work parties.

After the Christmas break the team met in Sidford on Sunday morning 12th January and we started in earnest clearing FP50 which runs from Higher Brook Meadow to Burscombe Lane.

The annual Parish Paths Partnership (P3) evening event at the Sidmouth Sailing Club on 18th February was well attended with a very interesting speaker, Peter Youngman from the AONB, who explained the current workings of the organisation and its future with the possibility of the creation of a new National Park which would include part of East Devon.

Footpath work continued on Sunday mornings although with interruptions from heavy showers and prolonged periods of rain when some had to be cancelled. A task from last year's programme was completed: FP157 from Packhorse Bridge, Trow Hill, Sidford to Fortescue Road. This included piping the stream with a twinwall pipe, large stones placed over and topped with road planings brought on site by a local contractor. Handrails were also put up as an extra safeguard as the River Sid had scoured the bank adjacent to the footpath which looked like a problem for the future so this was reported to the County Council Public Rights of Way office (PROW) for their consideration.

The next four months saw no progress as we all obeyed the Government's "Lockdown" and "Stay Alert" instructions due to the Covid pandemic as we are all aware, although some work has been done by individuals clearing fallen trees.

The Sidmouth and East Devon Walking Festival had to be cancelled and although not involved I am aware of the hard work it took to organise the event which hopefully will

take place in September 2021. The work to include Sidmouth in the "Walkers are Welcome" national scheme also had to be put on hold but Cllr Jeff Turner and Ted Swan are hoping to pick this up again at the end of the year.

With the easing of the restrictions, work again started in the evening of 1st June clearing the footpath alongside Sidbury Cricket Club, social distancing not being a problem as we work at least five metres apart when strimming. We are meeting each Monday evening and have undertaken tasks on paths at the north end of Core Hill Lane and Soldiers Hill replacing rotted out timber boardwalks in a more sustainable way by using pipes and road planings. Hopefully we can continue the rest of the year and repair and improve more paths.



Tree across Bridleway 62a below Path Hill Sidbury.

I am very grateful for the enthusiasm of the volunteers who turn out week after week to maintain our paths, so a special thanks to: Ian Collins, Bill Hayes, Phil Lee, Kevin Dare, Pete Daniel, Ray Collins, Martin Ward, David Spring, Jade Collins and not forgetting our very helpful contractor with heavy machinery Simon Langworthy.

With regard to the use of paths, some have become very popular as you can well imagine with residents having more free time and I have had feedback from walkers as to the condition of paths which is very helpful. One path in Bulverton in particular was reported as having been vandalised with a chainsaw by cutting down a post and fence rails which had been erected to stop 4x4 vehicles using the bridleway. Also off-road motor cycles have ridden up a bridleway in Sidbury and damaged the surface, which is irresponsible. This is criminal damage to public property and the local police are looking into this.

Also as a reminder: Footpaths are for pedestrians (not cyclists), Bridleways are for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists but not motor cycles and 4x4 vehicles which are not allowed on either path.



Job done clearing Footpath 59 adjacent to Sidbury Cricket Club with social distancing.



New steps on Footpath 116a leading off Salcombe Hill Road.

I have received many thanks from those walking and running the Sid Valley Ring and especially for our efforts in signing the route. The missing waymarkers in Sidbury and the Donkey Sanctuary have recently been installed and we are now looking at the requirements for the route which crosses the new Alma Bridge.

Hopefully we will be back to normal in the near future but in the meantime enjoy the footpaths, respect other users and stay safe.

Phil Bradbury
SVA Footpaths P3 Coordinator

Excursions

Sadly, all planned excursions were cancelled. I hope to reschedule those that were arranged to later in 2021 and 2022. Details of the next outing, hopefully in September, will be confirmed when the current situation becomes clearer.

Stephen Pemberton

Annual Report for Land for 2020

Despite Covid 19, 2020 has been an interesting year for land management. It has been the first year of ownership of all the Knapp and that has generated a lot of work.

The footpath has been renovated by the socially distanced volunteer team lead by Ed Harrison and it has been extended with hardcore to circumnavigate the deciduous copse and now makes an attractive walk for any season. Contractors were used for laying the hardcore and also for excavating the pond which has been enlarged in an attempt to get it to retain water over the summer.



Excavating the pond at the Knapp

In conjunction with the SVA membership of the AONB group and the group's decision to support various species of flora and fauna, Devon Whitebeams have been planted in the Knapp and at Highfield Meadow. Examples of this rare Devon tree can also be seen in Gilchrist Field.

Nesting boxes have been renewed in various locations, particularly in Soldiers Hill copse and the planting of mixed deciduous trees continues in Combe Head Wood nature reserve.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped out this year under very difficult circumstances and who have behaved in such a responsible fashion by both turning out to do work and by shielding at home and supporting us.

Richard Huntington

Should the pond work be successful, it is hoped that the diversity of wildlife will be increased further.

Various surveys have been undertaken to understand the wildlife that the Knapp supports and plans laid to encourage more.

Like other areas open to the public, Margaret's Meadow and Gilchrist Field have seen unprecedented footfall and this has had a detrimental effect on both the ground surface and the flora and fauna. However Gilchrist pond has proved a success as a nature reserve with nesting moorhens and visits from Kingfishers. It is hoped to extend this reserve at a later date.



Gerry Turner holding one of the bird boxes he made in Soldiers Hill Wood

SVA Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee – 2020 report

This is my first year of writing a report as chair of the SVA Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee – and what a year!

Like many areas of the SVA, the activities of the Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee were severely restricted in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Social movement restrictions and financial market uncertainties made it necessary to close the Fund to new applications in March 2020 and, sadly, this situation persisted for the remainder of the year.

In total, the Grant Committee was able to meet just three times during the year.

On a more positive note the Grant Committee was able to approve a number of new grant applications in the early year meetings before the pandemic took hold. This, together with activities in progress from 2019, resulted in a total of 9 projects being delivered during 2020. These projects were all completed in a COVID secure manner and represented a total award figure of around £18,000. So, a modest year in terms of both award levels and community projects delivered – but by no means a 'write-off' year!

The projects supported included Sidmouth in Bloom (who gladly brightened up our town during the summer months and beyond), a contribution towards 'Friends of the Bays', and help to rejuvenate the Glen Goyle by the Sidmouth Daffodil Society. Sidmouth Arboretum volunteers have made a start planting for a 3 year "Jurassic Arboretum" initiative in the Connaught Gardens. Culturally, the Fund supported the Town Band as they moved into their new long-term premises at Woolbrook and aided the Sidmouth Community Hub in their production of the 'Fish out of water' radio play. From a wider community perspective, the Fund was able to support the Sid Vale Talking Newspaper with much needed replacement equipment, to help the Petanque Club renew their on-site facilities, to contribute towards new netting and training facilities at Sidbury Cricket Club, and to support Sidmouth Plastic Warriors installing a recycling station at the Primary School.

We have also allowed time extensions to some projects that were unable to progress in 2020/21 – but will be able to proceed when social distancing restrictions are relaxed.

All of these projects support and help make the Sid Valley a great place to live. They sit within our SVA objects – and we feel empathise with Keith Owen's own wishes when he made his generous bequest.

Many thanks are due. Firstly, thanks are due to the members of the Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee who have maintained their contact with and stewardship of projects through this most difficult of years. Thanks are also due to the SVA Investment Committee who work diligently to maintain the Fund on a firm footing for the years to come. Finally, our thanks are due to the SVA Management Committee – who oversee our work and provide wise guidance.

On a further positive note, the SVA Management Committee reopened the Fund to new applications from the beginning of 2021. So as a Grant Committee we are now able to receive and consider new applications. This is a positive step to help lift our town and the wider Sid Valley community from the doldrums and restrictions of the COVID pandemic.

Alan Clarke – Chair, Keith Owen Grant Committee



Information and application details for awards can be found on the Keith Owen Fund page of the SVA website. We encourage informal enquiries, and our Grant Committee members will work alongside organisations to help them understand the purpose of the fund and the information they need to supply to support their application.

Museum

2020 was probably the most trying year the Museum had experienced since it opened in 1950.

The year held such promise, with lots to celebrate, including our 70th anniversary, two book launches, the opening of the new ground floor extension, at last easy access for disabled visitors, new facilities for our volunteers, the transformed Lace Room, the newly installed Knowle Fireplaces and all the new displays.

The Museum was due to open on Friday 20th March following the SVA Members Annual Reception the previous evening. The team worked around the builders and decorators to be ready for Steward training on 2nd March.

Only 10 days to opening, on the evening of 10th March we welcomed representatives from the Arts Society and the EDDC to view the Knowle Fireplaces.

On 12th March, Anna Arousi of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery delivered some amazing work by the Sidmouth Low Vision Group and Sidmouth College students which we had agreed to display in the Museum through March and April.

Covid-19 was fast becoming a threatening reality which we finally had to accept. A decision was made on 16th March to cancel the reception for members and the opening the next day. We had to 'mothball' the Museum, for how long we did not know.

The museum sector was permitted to re-open again on 4th July. In June we carried out a thorough Covid Risk Assessment and concluded that the quaintness of our historic building, with the narrow staircase and some small rooms, made it almost impossible to follow the 2m social distancing guidelines. We were also particularly concerned about our volunteers as the majority, because of their age, were in the 'vulnerable' group.

In August we re-assessed the situation, we surveyed our volunteers and found that their confidence was still low and decided to stay closed until Covid was no longer an unmanageable risk.

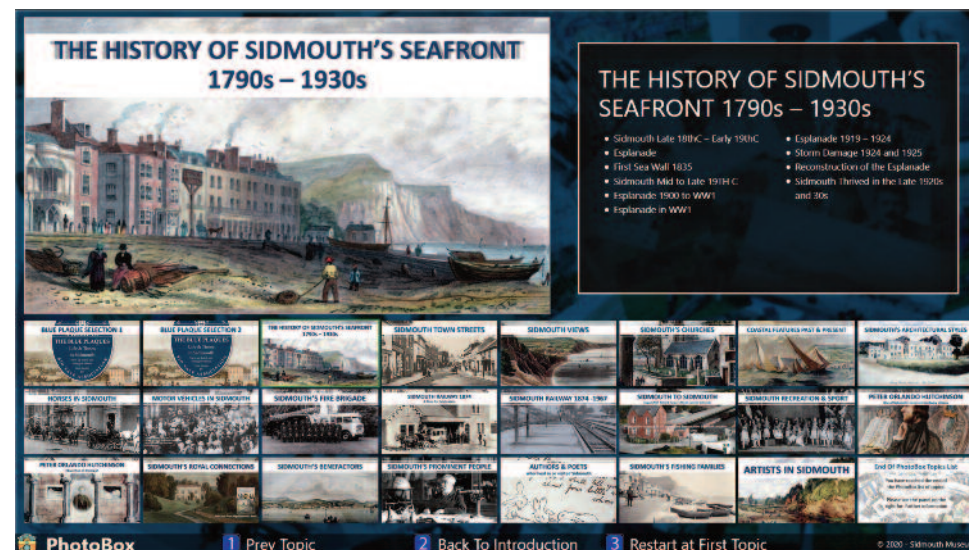
However, it was not all gloom in 2020, lots of work was accomplished behind the scenes.



One of the Knowle fireplaces

Our first Covid Risk Assessment in April identified that some of the museum displays were too reliant on visitors being 'hands-on' particularly the handling of the 'History of Sidmouth Photo Panels'.

Being closed gave us time to re-imagine the 'new normal'. We needed to find new ways to connect with our visitors and give greater access to our archives and collections. Digitisation seemed the way forward, we carried out an assessment, identified problem areas and



designed a project, applied for a South West Museums Recovery Grant for the cost of equipment and we were delighted to be notified that our bid had been successful.

From early summer until the end of the year, taking 1000's of volunteer hours, we achieved our desired outcomes. In 2021 visitors will enjoy guest Wi-Fi throughout the building with no 'dead zones', access to loads of information about displays with the aid of QR Codes, a screen display of the 1st floor for those who cannot manage the stairs and, the star of the show, two interactive 43 inch TV display units showing 'The History of Sidmouth' with over 250 slides. Topics are selected easily using a similar system to those used by most streaming services. These units are designed to be operated safely.

My thanks to Nigel Hyman and Gary Cross for all their work, without which this amazing project would not have been ready. I would also like to thank Tony Walsh who has retired after 15 years of caring for the Museum and Bee Barford for all her work on the lace collection.

We have to say thank you to those volunteers who, unbelievably, have reached a 'certain age' and retired, please do not be strangers when the Museum opens again.

Sadly, some volunteers have passed away during the year, they were all stalwart members of our team, and will be greatly missed.

The new look Museum will be ready to welcome you and the popular Town, Geology and Arboretum walks programme will now include a Natural History Walk. Unfortunately, this year we have had to introduce an admission charge of £2.50 for adults but entry will still be free to SVA members.

It now feels like there is light at the end of the tunnel. All being well, the museum will open on 21st June.

Ann Tanner – Curator

SVA Conservation and Planning Review 2020

There is nothing of any real importance to say regarding C&P activities over the last year. We maintained an overview of those planning applications relating to the Sid Valley, and objected to those which we felt detrimental to the area. We did not meet, corresponding by email and occasionally Zoom when we thought that a fuller discussion was necessary. The Knowle remained vacant for the whole of the year; only just before their Planning permission expired did the purchaser, Pegasus Lifestyle, start work on the site. We now understand that Pegasus Lifestyle are in discussions with EDDC about different options for the site. Nothing further has happened on the Sidford Employment site. The Drill Hall remains unoccupied and is increasingly looking more derelict. We understand that the prospective purchaser is still interested in developing the site. Sidholme Hotel was offered for sale by the Methodist Guild. We understand that it has been sold.

Richard Thurlow

AONB Annual report for 2020

As you can imagine, this year has been a quiet year for the AONB as most of it is shut down.

There were large increases in visitors, legal and illegal, although tourism as a whole was virtually non-existent.

The Government understandably has not yet responded to the Glover Report on AONBs although one AONB has rebranded itself as a National Landscape already.

East Devon AONB adopted several species of flora and fauna that required encouragement and they are: Bechsteins Bat, Greater Horseshoe and Grey Long Eared bats, Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterfly, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary and Brown Hairstreak, the Heath Lobelia plant (found only in one location in Kilminster presently) and the Devon Whitebeam tree.



Heath Lobelia



Brown Hairstreak

At the last meeting it was pointed out that the land covered by woodland target for the UK is 17.8% and it was also noted that East Devon is already above that figure. It was decided that tree planting should not be undertaken on meadow areas since many of our rarer species depend on meadowland.

Changes to farming payments since leaving the EU have been announced and the AONB is studying those to see how it can help farmers with environmental improvements which the new payment scheme encourages.

Richard Huntington
SVA AONB representative

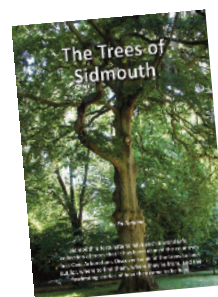
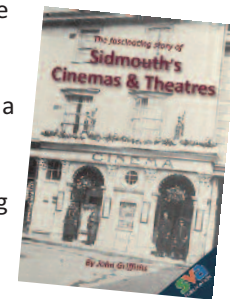
Publications and Talks 2020

The year began with a couple of new publications, as well as reprints of Julia Creeke's *A Picture in Time* about the Long Picture which hangs in the Museum, and revised versions of Nigel Hyman's *Sidmouth's Literary Connections*, and Andrew Rugg-Gunn's walks booklets. Printing of these had been delayed because we wouldn't expect to sell many copies over the winter while the Museum was closed.



The new books are *Sidmouth's Royal Connections* by Nigel Hyman, which describes the many connections the town has had with Royalty dating from the 1790s, and *Sidmouth's Cinemas & Theatres* by John Griffiths, which tells the fascinating stories of the surprising number of entertainment venues the town has had over the years.

Luckily, all were printed before lockdown put a stop to our activities, and only two further publications were in the pipeline. The book about Sidmouth's part in World War Two is a long term project involving several authors and much research. We are expecting to be able to publish it during 2021.



The other book was *The Trees of Sidmouth* by Ed Dolphin, which lists many of the trees in the country's first civic Arboretum, and where to find them. After much discussion it was decided to publish it in August as we wanted to let our members know that we were still in existence! Because of the association with the Arboretum, sales were very good, enabling us to recover most of the costs before the end of the year.

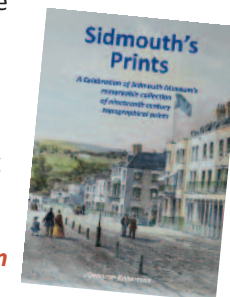
Because Coronavirus meant the Manor Pavilion talks could not happen, and again wanting to let the members know we were still thinking of them behind the scenes, we arranged a series of three

Zoom talks by the authors of those publications over the Autumn. They proved very successful, attracting getting on for 100 people to each one.

The talks have continued into 2021 with *A Sidmouth Quiz – with a difference* presented by Nigel Hyman, *Sidmouth's Coast: What's going on?* with Roger Trend, *The Sid Valley Biodiversity Project* with Jon Ball, *A Celebration of Sidmouth's Prints* by Deborah Robertson, and *Sidmouth Museum: Ready for the New Normal* by the Museum's Curator, Ann Tanner. The talks were recorded and are available to view on YouTube – just follow the links from the SVA website.

And finally, we have published a limited edition of 100 copies of Deborah Robertson's book *Sidmouth Prints – A Celebration*, detailing all the fine 19th Century prints of this area in the Museum archives. It is available from the SVA website and the Museum when open.

John Dowell & Nigel Hyman



Sid Valley Local History Group in 2020

The History Group started the year, as usual, with January and March meetings at SVA headquarters in Fore Street. Since lockdown it has continued to meet online using Zoom, thanks to Janet Dowling. After a low point in September, Zoom attendance has grown, and the group's dynamics have evolved with topics increasingly introduced and debated by email between meetings. The membership currently stands at 37, of whom 18 took part in at least one meeting during the year.

Ian Simpson continued work on the memorials and biographies of those buried in Sidbury cemetery. Frances Baker who moved to Sidbury in 1943, was a missionary, awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind medal in 1933 for her work in India with the Zulana missionary society. Ian's index to Sidmouth cemetery enabled several external enquiries to be answered.

An inquiry in August relating to a child at St John's convent in 1911 led to contact with the archivist of the Sisters of the Assumption in London and promise of a copy of their archive catalogue. Although the convent started an orphanage shortly after its opening in 1894, there were never more than fifteen children, most of whom were not actually orphans. In 1914, the presence of a school party from Belgium at the outbreak of war led to the orphanage becoming a school.

Phil Lee organised an online quiz which started several discussions, notably about locations occupied by Sidmouth councils. Research concluded that Sidmouth Urban District Council (SUDC) met in Norton Garth until 1968 when it moved to the Knowle. The

SVA Magazine

The deadline for entries for the next edition is September 18th. The next magazine will be celebrating 175 years of the SVA (see back cover). Any retired volunteers – we would love to hear about your volunteering memories and an accompanying photograph or illustration would be most welcome. Please e-mail publicity@sidvaleassociation.org.uk or write to SVA magazine articles. SVA HQ, 36A Fore St, Sidmouth EX10 8AQ including a phone number. Come along to our 175 event and tell us your memories.

The Sid Vale Association is affiliated to:

National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Campaign to Protect Rural England • The Devonshire Association
International Tree Foundation • Devon History Society
Campaign To Protect Rural England • The Open Spaces Society • Civic Voice
Association of Independent Museums • The Museums Association
Devon Museums Group • Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce

switch from SUDC to East Devon District Council (EDDC) and Sidmouth Town Council (STC) took place in 1974.

John Griffiths completed his book on the theatres and cinemas of Sidmouth ready for the museum opening that never happened due to COVID. He also built a wonderful model of the Radway.

Janet Dowling produced a mummers play about key women in Sidmouth's history. Whereas mummers traditionally perform on the winter solstice, the Sidmouth Sisters Guisers performed online on the summer solstice. Janet also recorded an online lockdown Christmas panto in which COVID is pitted against the Guisers and Mummers.

Ed Dolphin brought us a new approach to historical evidence in the Sid Valley using the relationship between hedgerow age and species abundance to map the development of enclosed fields, starting in the valley floor and spreading up the slopes.

Nigel Hyman continued to provide topics from his researches. In July he recounted extracts from the diary of an unmarried Sidford woman in World War II. Amongst her regular activities, she volunteered at the "canteen" in the evening, serving soldiers – probably the Toc-H canteen behind the Anchor. With friends, she gathered massive amounts of sphagnum moss for use in dressings. She went to the cinema once or twice a week and on charabanc trips to Dartmoor. She was frightened by air raid alerts and had no shelter – just the space under the stairs. She had a wireless, with a battery that needed recharging once a week – costing 6d at the garage.

In November, Nigel told us about the Radfords of Sidmouth. In 1860 William, the eldest, started providing spectacles to poor lace workers, which he later extended to other poor people across the Sid Valley. By his death it was estimated he had provided 32,000 pairs. His brother George was one of the instigators of the purchase of May Cottage as a hospital in 1885. George's daughter Constance inherited Hope Cottage, which she gave to SUDC on condition it was used for education. Constance was a keen archer and a picture of the butts on Coburg Field led to a lively debate. Sidmouth Archery Club was founded in 1860 and initially practised on the lower lawn at Peak Hill – now Manor Road car park. By 1890, they also had the practice ground in Coburg Field, which lasted until the Rugby Club took over.

New members are always welcome at our bi-monthly meetings, currently held on Zoom at 6pm on the second Monday of every second month. Please contact the chair for details.



Archery Butts in Coburg Field looking north towards Cedar Shade and Sidmouth

Brian Golding

Sid Vale Association CIO AGM
Tuesday 15th June 2021 at 2.30pm via zoom

Voting Slip

NB All voting to be carried out via post or email by 14th June 2021

You may vote for each proposal separately OR 1 vote to agree to all

Agenda Item		Proposed	Seconded	AGREE	DISAGREE
2	To agree Minutes AGM 22.05.2019	Richard Thurlow	Ed Harrison		
4	Special Resolution to amend constitution to add power (6) to run a museum and own and/or hold collections	Ann Tanner	Elizabeth Warren		
5	Election of Trustee				
	Heather Hodge	Richard Thurlow	Ann Tanner		
	Ann Tanner	Nigel Hyman	Val Huntington		
	Re-election of Trustees				
	Richard Huntington	Peter Brookes	Ed Harrison		
	Nigel Hyman	Richard Huntington	Ann Tanner		
	Richard Thurlow	Ed Harrison	Elizabeth Warren		
	Gary Turner	Richard Thurlow	Ed Harrison		
8	Auditors Thomas Westcott Chartered Accountants, Honiton	Gary Turner	Richard Thurlow		

OR	I AGREE to ALL of the above	
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If you have a question for the Trustees, or wish to raise anything under AOB please write it in the space below:

Name _____ date _____

Address _____

Post to: SVA CIO, Trumps, 36A Fore St, Sidmouth EX10 8AQ

or

Email: secretary@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Neville Staddon

Neville passed away in December, at the age of 82. He had been the Chief Financial Officer of EDDC before retirement and then worked tirelessly as the SVA Treasurer for over 12 years. He was enormously instrumental in keeping the SVA's financial affairs on well managed terms. He worked with Rev. Handel Bennett, (Obit Dec 2020), on setting up the Keith Owen Fund and acted as executor for Keith Owen's bequest to SVA, gathering Keith's funds from all over the world. The SVA grew and developed enormously during his time as treasurer – key points were the establishment of the Keith Owen Fund, changing charitable status to become a CIO, and the purchase of the new office. He was a kindly, friendly and generous man. We will miss him.



Remembering the Sid Vale

Since 1846 our indefatigable members and volunteers have manned the Museum and braved the elements to nurture the environment of Sid Vale. Their time, skills and generosity ensure Sidmouth and the Vale remain a beautiful place to live and a leading destination for visitors.

We are grateful to those volunteers who have been able to continue their work in isolation and in bubbles throughout the pandemic and the various restrictions we have endured so far.

The year 2020 presented a great many other challenges for everyone. For the SVA, it meant the Museum was closed to the public and we were unable to continue with our other activities which generate funds. The regular income from subscriptions and investments, sadly, is insufficient to fund our works at the best of times and the loss of donation and other income in 2020 has been sorely felt. The Keith Owen Fund is closely restricted to other purposes and cannot subsidise our other works.

More than ever then, we are greatly appreciative of those who, year after year, make one-off donations and remember the Sid Vale Association through their Wills. Lifetime donations can be made direct to our bank account no. 00016416, sort code 40-52-40, giving your name as a reference.

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

Sidmouth's Prints

It was not long after I started curating the prints at Sidmouth Museum that I discovered that they had been produced in incredible numbers. I was curious to know why this was the case and interested to find out not only who had created them and who they were for, but also to discover the major forces influencing their production.

In March 2020, the world changed, the country went into its first lockdown and the Museum was unable to open. This, I felt would be the ideal time to try to answer some of these questions and then considered that it could also be a wonderful opportunity to scan and photograph all the Museum's prints, incorporating them into a single volume.

My research journey turned into a worldwide adventure despite the impossibility of travel or face to face contact. I sought advice on printing techniques from a world expert who happens to live in New Zealand, I was inspired by a PhD thesis on steel-line engraving whose author now works in Paris and I also contacted Yale University whose collection and knowledge of prints is phenomenal.

My first task was to create high quality images from the print collection which was time consuming but enjoyable and during the process I began to appreciate the skilled workmanship involved in their production. It also gave me a chance to study them in detail and it was then that I decided that the title of the book should include the word Celebration because I believe Sidmouth should really celebrate its 247 prints, especially as, of all the places along the south Devon coast, only Plymouth, Exeter and Torquay have been the subject of more topographical prints than Sidmouth.



By Mr Rowe, Engraved by J. Walker (Sidmouth),
Published by J. Walker, London July 1796
11cm x 17cm.

London businessman, John Wallis, arrived in Sidmouth to become one of the town's most successful printer/publishers. He set up shop in the Marine Library on the seafront and during the next 20 years produced most of the prints ever made of the town including those by Henry Haseler and George Rowe, and arguably Sidmouth's most iconic picture, the panorama Long Picture/Print.

By the 1830s John Harvey replaced John Wallis as the major printer/publisher in Sidmouth and was responsible for continuing print production in the following two

The history of the Sidmouth print began just before the 1800s, which was around the time that the town was starting to have cachet as a resort, and that is where I decided the book should commence (1796). In the early chapters I introduce some of the first artist visitors that came to sketch in the town and describe some of the techniques the engravers used to create prints from them.

The next section of the book focuses on local production of prints and we meet some of the county's best-known artists of the Regency era. In 1803 a



By H. Haseler, Engraved by D. Havell (Miss Mill's
Cottage, Cotmaton) Published by J. Wallis,
1st August 1816 13cm x 20cm.

decades, including the beautifully illustrated guidebook to accompany tourists visiting The Knowle, some fine views by renowned 19th Century landscape artist David Roberts and scenes by Lithographer George Hawkins Junior, to name but a few.

By the 1850s the large-scale, colourful prints from earlier times were gradually replaced by small steel-lined engraved vignette views which were cheaper to produce and aimed at a much wider market. They often appeared in booklet form or on headed notepaper. Kershaw and Sons of London were active publishers of these, but for local production we are indebted to Henry Besley, one of the most innovative printers in Exeter during the mid-nineteenth century and the only significant Devon publisher in this field. The final Sidmouth prints were produced by William Rock of Barnstable and are dated 1876 at which point the picture postcard and photography took the place of the print.

In the eighty years spanning the first to the last known printed example, an insignificant fishing village grew to become one of the best loved seaside resorts on the South Devon coast, visited and lived in by some of the most distinguished people in the country. The heyday of our Regency town coincided with the production of a huge number of printed views, especially of the large marine villas built by returning Service Officers and minor nobility with distinctive architectural styles, many of which can still be seen in the town today.

The many men, and the one woman, who created these views of our town deserve to be better known. It was a little easier to find material about local contributors than those from further afield, especially the earlier ones. But in most cases, it was possible to discover at least some information about their lives and the techniques they employed to produce images of Sidmouth, all of which are described in the book alongside the pictures of their fine work.



By G. Townsend (Sidmouth from the Sea)
Published by H, Besley, 1862 10cm x 19cm

Deborah Robertson

**STOP PRESS! Deborah's book is now available to buy from the SVA
online shop and the Museum when open**



Visit the Museum

Early last year we were preparing to celebrate the museum's 70th Birthday but, like many others, we had to abandon our party, eat the cake and put the



wine back in the fridge. However, we have left some of the decorations for you to see when we reopen. There are many new exhibits, the star of the show being 2 interactive 43inch display units showing the history of Sidmouth seafront (see photo in museum report – page 17). Other displays in the museum include:

Ground Floor

- Fireplace from the Knowle.
- Sidmouth at War 1940-1941. Photographs of the coastal defences, exhibits from Home Guard, ARP, evacuees.
- Law and Order – truncheons, handcuffs and history of police and excise men in Sidmouth.
- Original exhibits from the 1950 museum collection (part of the 70th birthday)
- Cameras
- Perfumes and toiletries

If you only do one thing this year, make sure you visit the Museum!

SVA members free entry
(non-members £2.50)

Maureen Thurlow (deputy curator)



First Floor

- Annie Leigh Browne and the 1950 museum exhibits
- Scales and balances
- **Lace** Examples of different kinds of lace making
- **Archaeology Room** Knowle fireplace with Delft Tiles, Peter Orlando Hutchinson display
- **Geology Room** Several new additions
- **Gallery** Prints of Sidmouth's houses.



Vounteering at the museum

Ute Riches describes how she came to volunteer

I had lost my husband John to cancer two months earlier. John, knowing he didn't have much time left, wrote a plan for me: 'How to build my new life without him'. He knew how much I loved living in Sidmouth so becoming a Volunteer at the Museum was high on his 'To do List' for me. His thinking was, not only would it give me the opportunity to learn more about Sidmouth's history, it will be a good way for me to get to know new people and, most importantly, give me a new purpose. And boy was he right!

I filled in the form to join the SVA ticking the box to say I was interested in the Museum, assuming it would be something to 'tackle' sometime during the summer months when hopefully I would feel a little bit better. I was somewhat surprised that within a few days a person called Nigel got in touch and welcomed me to the Museum. He told me my timing was great as they were getting ready for the new season and training sessions for all volunteers would be held the following week. I must admit it was much sooner than I had expected, then I had to agree with him, what an excellent opportunity to meet other volunteers and be ready to join in at the start of the new season.

All I can say is I haven't looked back since I started. The Museum is a great place to meet new people, there are a large variety of ways to participate like becoming a Steward, joining the Admin Team, working with one of the many Collections, be a member of the Young Visitors Group, train as a Guided Walks Leader and much more.

By the autumn of 2019 I took over the role of Volunteer Coordinator. After the Museum closed at the end of October I joined the 'Winter Team', I helped to dismantle displays and then the reverse helped with the new displays ready for the 2020 season.

Sadly, due to the Covid-19, it was not possible for the Museum to open in 2020. So, it was with great joy that in late February I sent out a message from Ann, the Curator, to all Museum Volunteers announcing that the Museum will open on 21st June, providing there are 'no bumps' in the lockdown release road.

Training sessions will have taken place by the publication time of this article but there is always room for more volunteers, so any 'Newbie' will be teamed up with a more experienced Steward to learn the ropes and help them settle in.

I hope I have managed to give you an insight into 'life at the Museum'. Think about joining us as a volunteer in your local Museum. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ute Riches

The Amazing Story of The Wrecking of The SS Grindon Hall on 29th October 1916 at Sidmouth, Devon

The appalling dreadful weather on Friday 27th October 1916, with a very severe storm, was followed by thunder, lightning and rain. The seas had swept over the Esplanade from end to end. But that was nothing compared to the hurricane that was to hit Sidmouth on Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th October 1916.

The winds howled and screeched and by Saturday evening it was barely possible to reach the Esplanade at all. Huge waves pounded in and the spray was blown over the roofs of the houses. Little did the people know what was going to happen on Saturday night and early Sunday morning.

The Good Ship *Grindon Hall* of 2360 tons (light) was bound down channel from a port in France to Barry Dock, Cardiff. Her route was to pass seven miles off Portland and cross Lyme Bay to pass the Start 20 miles off.

The *Grindon Hall* had battled all night in the teeth of the hurricane and had been tossed around like a little baby in the huge, gigantic seas. She should have been at least 20+ miles off Sidmouth, when passing, but that wasn't to be.

On land that night hardly anyone slept in Sidmouth, the noise of the wind and rain and just wondering whether they were safe at home. Slates were flying off roofs – it was horrific!

The first lights of the ship were spotted off Sidmouth at approximately 3am Sunday morning, and the alarms were raised. At this stage the ship was out of control, limping and being blown towards land. It wasn't until approximately 7am that the Captain decided to fire his distress flares and rockets. There was no lifeboat at Sidmouth at that time, and even if there was it could not have been launched as it was far too bad. A small crowd of local people had gathered at Port Royal by then. The ship eventually ran ashore on the beach to the east of the river.

Stephen Reynolds was asked to lower a rope down the cliffs to get a man to the beach but conditions were too bad. That was aborted. They had to get the stricken sailors off the beach quickly.

The hero of the day, according to my Grandfather, William Govier, was the Bank Manager Mr E Bonner. Govier had fetched a rope which Tom Harris had tried to throw over the river which was in severe flood and very dangerous, but that had



Crew rescued from the boat

failed. Mr Bonner tied the rope around his waist and somehow got across the river – almost unbelievable!

The drenched and stricken sailors, many of them in a very pitiable state, were all rescued. The Captain, officers and crew totalled 27 including 6 men of mixed race. They were all rescued and one had to go to hospital but he soon recovered.

Among those who helped in getting the crew in were the following: Messrs Skinner, T Haselock, J Hayman, WJ Govier, AL Smith, W Turner, AC Drewe, Tom and Bob Wooley, TP Syres, H Spencer, F Russell, T Smith, W I-look, W Ware, TW and J Harris, D Hook, J Tapely, J Cordey etc. There are a lot of good old Sidmouth names there!

Preparations were going on ashore in Sidmouth to look after the shipmen and Sidmouthians did them proud; they were accommodated in many people's houses, reclothed, fed and well looked after, including the Captain who stayed with my Grandparents.

After one or two attempts to pull the ship off with a tug and waiting for the right tide, the Good Ship *Grindon Hall* was refloated.

Amazingly nobody had drowned and luckily the ship had suffered very little damage in coming ashore, she was a fine steamship and obviously very strongly built.

The Captain WM Brewis of the Steamship *SS Grindon Hall* wrote to the town later to express his deepest gratitude for the kindness showed to himself and his crew by the people of Sidmouth through his ordeal. That was a nice ending to what Rudyard Kipling may well have described as a *Triumph Over Disaster*.

It is a story that I hope Sidmouth people will never forget and a miracle that everyone survived.

John Govier

The Trees of the Knapp Complex

There are many different trees across the various parts of the Knapp. They are all interesting and support plenty of wildlife, many are British natives, some are more unusual. A few of the trees are labelled and there is a programme to extend the labelling in association with Sidmouth Arboretum. Also, Arboretum volunteers are working on a web-based guide to the trees with more information than can be accommodated here.

To whet your appetite, here are some of the things to look out for, although with some you have to look very carefully.

There are many English Oaks, but a Sawtooth Oak as well. From the Acer family, there are native Field Maples, and naturalised Sycamores and Norway Maples. It is not known why, but there are three Cappadocian Maples too.

The woodland area needs to be thinned to provide a home for a wider range of flora and fauna. Scattered among the stands of Oak, Ash and Aspen struggling upwards for light you will find native Cherries, Wild Service or Checker Trees with edible brown berries, and Spindle Trees with their vivid orange and pink poisonous fruits.

Along the field boundary with what is now Dean's Mead, a line of Scots Pines was planted about 100 years ago, possibly to improve the view from Balfour Manor, but another mystery. There are several other very old field hedges whose earth banks and old timber provide homes for all sorts of things. There are two large Black Poplars in the line, a favourite roost for bats. These native trees are now quite rare. Two more have been planted in corners of the site to succeed the older two in years to come.

On the hilltop is a large Turkey Oak hybrid, a relative of the Lucombe Oak whose story is worth exploring. There are the stately Small Leaved Limes and Western Red Cedars on the path down to Peasland Road. Don't be fooled, the Limes are nothing to do with citrus fruits, and the Cedars are actually in the Cypress family.

Finally, there are the fruit trees, various south west varieties in the orchard, and the old-fashioned Medlar and Mulberry among the fruit trees in the Knapp Pond area. Feel free to stop and have a nibble in the autumn but watch out for being 'caught red handed' if you try the Mulberries.



Hornbeam



Spindle

Ed Dolphin

Pitfalls of Presentations

Many of our readers will know from personal experience all the things that can go wrong and I guess most have happened to me. I was going to call it From Magic Lantern to Zoom but I'm not quite that old.

My earliest experience was using the slide projector in which the individual slides were moved on individually. I was a trainee neurologist in Oxford and we had weekly case presentations with occasional visiting speakers. Unaccountably I often found myself 'in charge' of the projector and two occasions stick in my mind. The first was when a very eminent neuroscientist arrived late and thrust his slides onto me. He explained that he had dropped them when coming through the car park and was unsure whether they were in the correct order. What he didn't tell me was that he must have dropped them in a large muddy puddle as some were damp. He assumed I had psychic powers and could arrange them in the correct order. I attempted to do so but when the talk started and some of the slides were shown the images consisted of numerous brown lines and blobs, more Jackson Pollock than Mark Rothko. I could see puzzled expressions on faces in the audience. The eminent speaker carried on regardless, not even turning to look at the screen. I think the talk was about pain which seemed appropriate.

The other occasion was when the visiting speaker gave me his slides and instructed me not to make any mistakes which was an odd but perceptive warning. Part way through his talk, the projector overheated and smoke emerged from the top. I looked with fascination as the slide being shown started to melt and the speaker started to shout at me- apparently his slides were valuable.

One of the most curious episodes occurred when I was giving one of the routine weekly case presentations. The audience was, as usual, the neurology staff and often included a nurse from the ward if a patient had been brought along. A retired and very elderly GP from Thame had become a regular attender. He was very pleasant but always asked questions which seemed to have no connection with the subject. On this occasion he arrived late and burst through the swing doors looking flustered and untidy. The nurse sprung up, wheeled him round and directed him swiftly back out of the room. She clearly thought he had come from the nearby geriatric ward. The curious feature is that we never saw him again.

To fast forward, as they say, to Zoom. Last September we were anxious for the SVA to continue the Talks and this was the obvious way forward. I should add that I was 'volunteered' to give the first talk as an experiment with John Dowell as 'facilitator'. Many of us now have much experience of this arcane IT programme but back then, less so. I'd attended a few meetings but never presented a talk and had no idea how to use power point on it. Chat Box and Waiting Room



Ellie Flaxman age 13

were new phrases. I asked my older daughter to instruct me and she did so with extraordinary patience. We had both forgotten the ‘audience’ who last year was as inexperienced as us. In the days before the October Talk, I worried about the sound and which room to use. I’d read that the backdrop was important. If it is a white tiled wall people may suspect you are in the lavatory. If there are bookshelves then the books will be scrutinised if the attendee is losing interest in your talk. The collected works of Dan Brown may suggest that you are half-witted. If travel books, then Eric Newby’s *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* is preferable to a Torremolinos budget guide. You may be proud of your comprehensive collection of erotic art in the ancient world, some with footnotes, but probably best to move them.

On the October day 2020, the sound was reasonable, the power point was fine, the books had been adjusted in the case. What could go wrong? Well, some of the audience failed to mute, especially those ‘arriving’ late, and loudly discussed with whoever was with them whether to have a cup of tea, feed the cat or go to the bathroom. Also, of course, their microphones were left on and conversations were shared with the rest of us.

Gradually we have all improved. Before long I will be able to dispense with beta-blockers and hypnotherapy in the days before the next talk.

Nigel Hyman

KOF award to Pentanque Club



We are delighted to acknowledge the generous grant of £300 awarded to the East Devon Pétanque Club from the Keith Owen Fund towards the purchase of a new club shed – or “Pavilion” as we prefer to call it.

The French game of pétanque, commonly known as boules, is one of the most inclusive activities available where people of all ages, gender, fitness, and ability (including wheelchair users) can play equally together. The East Devon Pétanque Club, which was established 8 years ago, meets at the Thorn Park Golf Centre, Salcombe Regis, every Sunday morning and Wednesday afternoon throughout the year (weather permitting).

The rural location of the Club provides an environment where its mainly retired members can enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the countryside combined with some gentle exercise. Our playing area, or terrain, is fine gravel, which requires neither water, fertilizer, pesticides, nor maintenance (apart from raking at the end of each session) – truly a green sport.

The new shed will replace an old garden shed where we store items such as playing accessories, boules, stationery and rakes, as



well as acting as a shelter should it start to rain and play is temporarily abandoned. The old shed, which was assembled by club members five years ago from discarded pieces, is no longer weather or waterproof and so we are delighted that, with the support of the SVA, we have been able to acquire a replacement.

Brian Diffey
Chairman, East Devon Pétanque Club

Nature Recovery in the Sid Valley

This year has brought us all much closer to the nature on our doorstep, as we’ve explored new places to walk, heard birdsong that isn’t drowned out by the usual traffic noise and spent time – often alone – in our gardens when we would have usually been at work, or shopping, or seeing other people. This increased connection with nature has come at a time when the government has made much stronger commitments to reversing the twin climate and ecological crises we are facing.

We are lucky to live in a valley which is buzzing with life and beauty. We have rolling hills all around us, parks and nature reserves within the town and ancient hedgerows hidden in our lanes and back gardens throughout the valley. Our old hedges still have woodland wildflowers clinging on and blooming year after year, despite our best attempts to garden them out of existence. We have bats flying across our gardens and up and down any remaining hedgerows, skipping over the gaps as best they can, and birds nesting in their shelter or grasping the chance to breed in any unnoticed patch of bramble or scrub before it gets “tidied up”. We have hedgehogs snuffling through our back fences and badgers galumphing throughout the valley, creating their solid little trackways as evidence of their passage. We have otters playing up and down the river and turnstones brightening up the beach.

To do our bit for nature recovery, there are some simple things we can all do. In our gardens, as well as the flowers and vegetables we want to grow for ourselves, we can allow grass to grow long for wildflowers, bees, butterflies and grasshoppers. We can keep big trees despite their shade or even plant some as perches or even nesting sites for birds. We can keep



dead wood in the garden, either on the ground or even buried under soil for stag beetles, or if we have the space to do it safely, leave standing dead wood for woodpeckers. We can create ponds – without fish – to provide somewhere for newts, frogs and toads to breed and for dragonflies to lay eggs and their nymphs to mature and emerge. If we're lucky enough to have old hedgebanks around our gardens, we can avoid the weedkiller and the mulch and just cut the vegetation once or twice a year, gathering up the cuttings, which will allow the native flowers to grow and spread. And we can leave the laurel and other evergreens at the garden centre, planting native trees back into old hedgerows instead. We can tolerate the bramble and appreciate the wrens nesting deep inside it, the bees visiting its flowers and the birds taking the berries. We can inspire our neighbours to do the same, so that we all work together to link up areas that are good for nature.

The SVA has acquired the Knapp, which is heaving with grasshoppers and crickets, with birds, bats and butterflies. Both the woods and the meadows at the Knapp are full of wildlife, some of it quite rare. Although the Knapp is only about 10 acres in size, the cemetery next door provides another 10 acres of potential nature recovery area and the surrounding gardens over 10 acres again. That makes a block of 30 acres of open space for nature to recover in our town, and only 200m away from the Byes, another 100 acres of space for nature. By thinking of our gardens as part of a bigger network, joining the dots, changing our perspective on the value of "tidy" versus "messy", and leaving or planting a few key features, we can help wildlife survive and even thrive.

Kate Tobin

Report on This Year's Valentine's Day Celebrations at the Lower Knapp Pond Reserve Insect Hotel

We are pleased to report that, following government advice, this year's celebrations of Valentine's Day went ahead, as usual. The insect hotel was not open to non-residents, and the rule of "six legs" applied.

During the previous summer, work was done to install improved heating in the hotel. This proved to be a big success. The fire place in the lounge area had been enlarged, and a new chimney built. Following Department of Health advice, it was decided not to purchase the chimney flue from China. (photo attached)

On Valentine's Day, the staff in hotel reception buzzed around all day to assist the smooth running of the programme. The hotel website was available to all guests, and was constantly updated by the spider team on the hotel roof, who welcomed visitors browsing their web.

For the special day's breakfast, the flies in the catering department had laid a feast of fresh grubs. Speciality dishes, such as smoked skippers, which had been butterflyed, were available. The egg section, as usual, served fresh fleas omelette. Boiled eggs with toasted soldier ants were available, and, love it or hate it, termite on toast continued to please a

number of insects. Lice Crispies were the most popular cereal, and insects were encouraged to eat some green fly, as part of their "five a day".

The catering department proudly told everyone that ... "We put the Ked in Kedgeriee"!

As in previous years, the Dung beetles had their meals served in the toilet area on the third floor.

Bowls of fresh fruit flies were available all day in the lounge areas.

As Valentine's Day fell on a Sunday this year, there was a morning church service. Due to travel restrictions, the visiting praying mantis had been unable to fly over. A Cardinal beetle led the service.

The theme of the day's lectures were "Mindfulness", led by Professor Parasitic Wasp. Her topic was "Explore one's inner self".

Other events throughout the day included "Pottery with Potter Wasps", "Lacemaking with Lacewings" and "Knitting with Nits". Unfortunately, due to huge demand, the Bridge Card club "No Trump" was fully booked.

The bar area was open from midday to midnight. As always, a large number of blue and green bottles were available to choose from.

The cocktail for this special day was "Insects on the Beach". It contained a hint of "Crème de Moth" which helped many insects fly into the night.

There were, as always, a heavy presence of Large Copper butterflies for security. They were required when a group of drunk Dung beetles messed with the stools in the lounge bar. They were promptly ejected to the toilet area.

The spin doctor was available on the web, all day, for medical assistance.

As it was very cold weather, leather jackets and earwigs were available in reception.

The main ball started at 8pm. Our Ladybird team did a great job organising the entertainment. The resident dance troupe this winter were from America. "The Damsel Flies" flew in from across the pond earlier in the morning, to join the hotel's tap dancing centipedes. The "Warble Fly Choir" performed again, this year, as did, the ever popular drag act, the "Painted Ladies".

Private viewings of some shows, for solitary bees, were arranged.

Traditionally, the late night comedy followed the Ball. This year, the hotel requested that jokes about Blow Flies, Bot Flies and Cockchafters were kept to a minimum, following numerous complaints the previous winter.

As most of the hotel guests were staying in the hotel to sleep, the rules were that in the dormitories, glow worms had to be switched off by 10.00 pm. There was a strict no smoking rule, unless all bees were already asleep. All rooms were bugged, and if sound levels went above a certain limit, security were informed. There were no major incidents.

How do we know so much about the Valentine's day celebrations? A grass, planted by the SVA last Autumn, told the whole story. He had been living under cover all winter!

Simon Papworth



Plastic everywhere!!

I recycle wherever possible down to the last micro scrap of paper, cardboard, glass etc. On walks around neighbouring Soldier's Hill fields and footpaths, I pick up discarded litter (which sadly has been all too often this year). Our food waste is almost zero. By the time scraps have been sorted out for the dog bowl and vegetable peelings cooked up for my hens there isn't a lot left for the blue bin apart from bones which have simmered in the slow cooker for stock. Growing one's own vegetables, odd shaped/half brown vegetables get carefully cut up and used as so as not to waste all the effort that has gone into them by discarding them willy nilly into the composting system. So I felt rather smug about my efforts. All that was about to change.

Last summer was spent in the garden catching up on jobs which had been on the 'to do' list for years. One of the first was to clear the grass away from the base of a mature Amelanchier tree. I was quite surprised to find a plant label which had been attached to it when purchased, buried amongst the roots – see photo. It was still in perfect condition after at least forty years judging by the phone number and price. Amazing for a cheap bit of plastic. I now remove all labels from fresh plantings – it's just a problem thinking of the best long lasting method of identification.

Our garden is on a steep slope and when we moved here twenty years ago – incidentally in the middle of the foot and mouth epidemic, almost the agricultural equivalent of Covid – our first task was to cut a series of steps to make life a bit easier. The treads were lined with weed suppressant material and covered with gravel and have served us well with the odd minimal blast of weed killer. Wear and tear had taken its toll so I decided to strip them back completely. To my horror, under the weight of footfall, the gravel had worn through aforementioned membrane and all that was left was ragged oblongs comprising of numerous strands of black plastic which had embedded themselves into the soil beneath, making them impossible to extract. I spent many days

picking it all out and restoring the steps with gravel again.

Slightly despondent about how much plastic we had inadvertently introduced made me start thinking about how much plastic we have



introduced unwittingly into the garden. For example, although we don't trim very much as we tend to leave the grass long for wildlife, where does all the strimmer 'string' go to? At the beginning of the season, the reel is full. Months later, it has all gone, worn away into micro bits of plastic spread around the garden.

A trip to the garden centre and one is confronted by acres of plastic pots and labels, bags of fertilizer in black plastic bags, plastic watering cans, plastic coated wire, plastic gnomes and so the list goes on – and we gardeners thought we were the salt of the earth.

Val Huntington



Fish Out Of Water

'A new play for radio holds a mirror up to our times'

Can a play about a gay early twentieth century fisheries pioneer, who died in the 1918/19 Spanish flu epidemic, resonate in these times of the Covid-19 virus? Sidmouth Coastal Community Hub (aka Sidmouth Sea Fest) produced a new radio play entitled 'Fish Out of Water' about Stephen Reynolds to widen the reach of this local heritage tale.

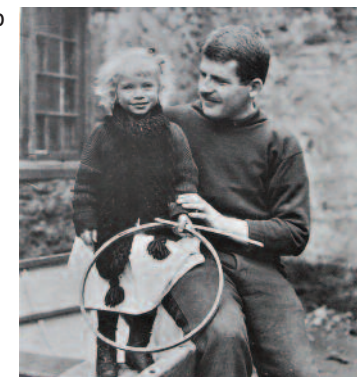
Reynolds, born in 1881 in Devizes, became a social commentator and author of *A Poor Man's House*, published in 1908. It was based on his life in Sidmouth. At the time it was acclaimed and praised by the likes of Joseph Conrad, but is not particularly well known locally. His personal struggle with his family, his sexuality at a time of intolerance, his reflections on social class and inequality are often overlooked. Reynolds's experience of life and friendship with the Sidmouth fishing family the Woolleys and his later influence on safety at sea are extraordinary. His life was cut short when Spanish flu turned into pneumonia – a development, that according to his friends, was compounded by overwork as Inspector of Fisheries for the south-western area during the First World War. He died on February 14th 1919.

The play has a contemporary resonance and explores themes of acceptance, homosexuality, belonging, class, perils of the fishing industry and a life cut by a virus. It was premiered on phonic.fm and on local Sid Valley Radio on Saturday 16th May which would have been the date of Sidmouth Sea Fest, also the anniversary of Reynolds's birth. BBC Radio Wiltshire. (Stephen's birthplace) also broadcast an extract from the play and an interview with the play's director and co writer Pippa Marriott who along with David Lloyd from Sidmouth, had written the play for Sea Fest.

The story was brought to life by a community ensemble celebrating diversity, and told with humour, song and personal testimony. Some of the original cast and some new young local voices recorded the play which was re-written for radio. Sidmouth Sea Fest choir and soundscapes that would have been part of Stephen's life with the Woolleys in Sidmouth feature in the play.

Louise Cole, Director of Sidmouth Coastal Community Hub, says: 'There is laughter, song and a great poignancy in the play which opens with Stephens' death – none of us could have known what a mirror the play would hold up to our current times. We hope it will be enjoyed and will entertain and give people a moment to reflect as they listen. It seems fitting that radio is the genre.'

Pippa Marriott commented: 'Creating this play has been such a positive community effort. Working with a predominantly older cast with widely differing levels of acting experience was a pleasurable challenge, and the authenticity of their Sidmouth voices is really apparent in the play. The convivial spirit of the ensemble has exemplified so much of the good humour, kindness and





“all in this together” spirit which is helping to make the current Covid-19 crisis bearable.’

The co-writers and Director worked with *Ear, Knows and Throat* at the Sound Gallery Studios in Exeter, a creative audio production company which specialises in community and arts projects. It was recorded at Sound Gallery Studios in Exeter, a social enterprise that aims to nurture and develop musical and creative projects in the local area.

Production credits: Additional sound recordings by Matilda O’Callaghan: Carlvus, mshahen and stevious42 on Freesound; Daniel Simon on SoundBible.com

The recording was supported by funding from the Sid Vale Association’s Keith Owen Fund. Sidmouth Coastal Community Hub are extremely grateful to have received the support from the Fund that enabled us to realise this project especially at such a difficult time.

The play can be enjoyed by anyone via Soundcloud

<https://soundcloud.com/earknowsthroat/fish-out-of-water/s-prfjcdgIM1u>

Louise Cole

Sid Valley – The War Years 1939-1945

New Publication Coming Soon

The idea of a publication arose for several reasons. The Museum plans an initial display, 1939-1942, to be followed by another, 1943-1944 and then 1945/6. There are still a considerable number of residents who remember the war years from their childhood but they are now in their 80s and 90s. We have included a very large number of personal memories and contemporary newspaper items. John Ankins’ admirable 2001 book did not include details of those in the services who performed gallantly overseas nor about the circumstances of those that died. We now have much more information about ‘RAF Sidmouth’ as well as ‘Churchill’s Secret Army’ whose local group was in Sidbury.

We also have learned more about the evacuees – the extraordinary migration from London to Devon. Sidmouth was unusual in having so many hostels for mothers and children as well as being the first town in Devon and one of the first in England to provide day care nurseries for the evacuee children. Just as surprising was the provision of a night nursery and a maternity hospital. Crises provide radical innovations as we are discovering at present.

There were many volunteer heroes at the home front in the town – perhaps the most practical was the WVS. There were also ‘villains’ but none very serious – a butcher marked up 1 lb of sausages a full penny over the fixed price. (The fine was equivalent to over £300 in today’s money.)

The 2020/21 pandemic highlighted dangers to the public with consequent restrictions on lifestyle which bear comparison to the war years. The main difference, of course, is that the present crisis prevents social events which were so important for improving

morale 80 years ago – a vast number of concerts, films, talks and marches.

The lockdowns had the single merit of concentrating our efforts to complete the book.

A group of us, Christine Hardy, Andrew Rugg-Gunn, John McCarthy, Alastair Watson and myself, has put together as much information as possible with very many illustrations. John Dowell will be setting it out with his customary expertise. Publication is planned for the summer months.

Nigel Hyman

Connaught Gardens Jurassic Coast tree collection



The exciting project where Sidmouth Arboretum volunteers are working with the SVA to rejuvenate Connaught Gardens on a Jurassic Coast theme has taken another step to fulfillment.

The project, to plant three areas of the gardens with trees and shrubs linked to geological history, is part-funded through an award from the SVA/Keith Owen Fund. The idea of a Jurassic Coast tree collection is the brainchild of Arboretum Chairman Jon Ball, and EDDC has provided a home in the award-winning gardens.

Strictly speaking, it is a Mesozoic Collection because it covers the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Although Sidmouth is on the Jurassic Coast, we do not have any Jurassic deposits, our rock base is Triassic.

The planting in the eastern end of the garden has been upgraded to include shrubs and small trees whose ancestors arose in the Cretaceous period, the time of the large dinosaurs. This was when the first flowering plants were evolving, among them were Magnolias, Acers, and Palms. The garden already had an interesting collection of palms, now it has the other two representative species. The trees and shrubs have a complementary underplanting from a plan donated by local garden designers Natural Habitat Design.

The next step will be to plant the walkway to the Cretaceous Garden with a range of dwarf conifers. Conifers were the precursors of true flowering plants and they arose in the Jurassic period. The final step will be a Triassic area which will be planted with Ginkgo trees, the only tree species that has survived from that period. There will be an underplanting of Cycads and Ferns, which were the main vascular plants of that period.

The Connaught Gardens project is linked to a similar planting scheme at Seaton Jurassic, which is being funded by Devon Wildlife Trust. Both projects will include information boards to explain the significance of the planting.

Ed Dolphin & Kate Tobin



Life on Weston beach in the 1950s

In the last magazine, Daphne wrote about early holidays on Weston beach. Part two recounts living permanently at the Watch House and a few tales about the neighbours

I was married in 1952 and the Watch House was turned into a very passable, if small, house to live in. We had water laid on but still used oil lamps. A Rayburn was installed for cooking and hot water which would burn anything – wood from the beach and also a lot of rubbish which had previously been composted or buried and tins and bottles taken out to sea and sunk. A vast Lister Diesel generator was acquired. It had to be disassembled to get it down to the beach and a concrete platform built. It took a lot of swinging to get it started, and one had to be very careful to hold the starting handle correctly otherwise a backfire could easily mean a broken thumb. Now we could have television and a very poor picture was received from Portland Bill. We said a thankful goodbye to the earth closets and Elsans and dug a large septic tank – probably too near the house to pass regulations but no building inspector would have cared to walk down to Weston to check. It worked well and never caused any problems. One outside loo was turned into the best shower I have ever known – and so simple – copper pipes were drilled with fine holes and set up in opposite corners, which sprayed you from head to toe. I now had a calor gas cooker, much better than the primus, and a paraffin fuelled oven. I still remember a disastrous dinner when the meat had a distinctly oily flavour!

One of our neighbours was a very enterprising Colonel Lane. He constructed an aerial cableway which ran from the terrace over the garden to the top of the cliff, and along the edge of the field. It was very simple to operate. You attached a load to the cable and walked back across the field, unhitched the tethered T bar and walking slowly forward allowed gravity to lower the load safely to the cottages. A friend of Lane's, who went to Sidmouth regularly for a morning's drinking session, went to the cliff top and attached a sack of coal to the cable and, thinking in his fuddled brain that he could save himself the walk to the beach, wrapped his arms around the sack and called to Lane to lower away – there was no way one person could control such a weight and the T bar was snatched out of Lane's hands. The extraordinarily loud whine and a heavy thud as the sack and John hit the terrace wall had us rushing out to see what had gone wrong. The coal sack had split, John was badly injured. Police and ambulance men had to carry him up to Dunscombe. He was very lucky as he had broken most of his ribs but had no other serious injuries. Unsurprisingly, he did not return to Weston after he left hospital.

During the fifties, all the cottages were occupied. Our neighbour, Vernon Hollingworth enjoyed a drink of beer and, tiring of carrying bottles down to the beach, he acquired a barrel of beer. All went well at the start of the Glen Path but it became more difficult when he reached the steps – so he proceeded backwards, easing the barrel over each step. Unfortunately he tripped and lost control of his precious barrel, which now, free from restraint, leapt over a couple of steps then rolled down the bank into the Glen stream and burst asunder. I cannot vouch for the truth but am told Vernon was seen on the beach lapping the beery water from a pool.

Elaine Hollingworth used to ride and as I kept horses in the cliff field just above the

huts this was easy. The cliff field was steep and putting out feeds in winter was quite exciting. Having climbed up from behind the Glen with the appropriate number of buckets you had to try and put them down well apart before the horses spotted you. Three horses galloping at great speed down the field towards you was slightly worrying, but they always stopped in time, and never knocked me or the buckets over. I hunted regularly with the Axe Vale from Weston, not easy to have you and your horse well turned out. Having caught the correct horse and tacked up I rode through the fields to the road at Weston to what is now a car park. One day I let go of the horse to open the last gate and she turned round and galloped back down to her friends. That day I was definitely late for the meet. It was also fun to ride along the beach when the tide was low enough to expose the sand.



We used to go to Salcombe Regis church. If we went to the 8am service we would often be invited to breakfast at the Vicarage (now called Soldiers Hill House). The Reverend Moore was the vicar, his wife was keen on folk dancing. It was well worth walking from Weston to take part in her lessons which were held in the old school, which served as a village hall. If only for Mrs Moore's sake we should have taken those sessions seriously, but alas, no, we all found it extremely funny and danced with an exuberance that often got out of control. Many happy evenings were at Northcombe Farm or School House; these were always improved by the arrival of Mr Pyle with his sackful of bottles. When enough had been consumed we were delighted when he sang to us, especially his favourite, 'It was only a beautiful picture'. Willy and Iris Blackmore from Thorn Farm were always there and a jolly evening was had by all. Of course, when the company dispersed we had to walk home to Weston, but walking was just a fact of life and day or night caused no problems.

Life at Weston came to an abrupt end when the landslide occurred. We never expected trouble from behind the cottages, it was always Coxes Cliff which had slippage problems. A Mr & Mrs Barter were now living with Colonel Lane and it was breakfast time when Mrs Barter rushed into my parents cottage screaming "the cliff is coming down". My father, not one to be rushed, finished his breakfast before going to look. Indeed the landslide was filling the passage behind the cottages. We thought at that time that the landslide could worsen and really threaten the cottages so we all had to move. The cottages were knocked down later for safety, leaving just the watch house which still stands today.



Daphne Sleight

KOF Award to Sidmouth Town Band

In 2018, Sidmouth Town Band signed the leasehold for St Francis Church Hall, with the intention of not only creating an ideal rehearsal space for the band, but also storage, tuition facilities and a possible community venue for small concerts or other uses. Thanks to a grant from the Keith Owen fund, a core part of this project, the construction of a moveable wall to secure a specialised band room, has been achieved, enabling other groups to continue using the hall, whilst allowing the band a permanent home. The moveable wall will provide a secure, and acoustically beneficial, rehearsal venue. With many of the band's instruments costing thousands of pounds, we can now secure these assets, whilst allowing the community continued use of the hall.

Sidmouth Town Band has played a rich part in the town's heritage for over 150 years. The band was formed in 1862, with the intention of "providing entertainment and enjoyment for visitors and residents alike" and to ensure Sidmouth had an "efficient, ever-ready town band". Local men were to be given free tuition, and public donations enabled twelve new instruments to be purchased. The band gave their first public appearance in June 1863, at a gala celebrating the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. In many ways, little has changed since then. Players are still given free instruments and tuition (though I am glad to say women and children are now included!), visitors from far and wide are attracted to Sidmouth by the band concerts, and the band plays a central part in community and civic events. Whether it be for the arrival of the first train to Sidmouth in 1874, a service to mark the death of King George V in 1928, or the town's street party marking the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012, Sidmouth Town Band is inextricably linked to the town's cultural heritage. Other traditions in the town which still continue (such as the Good Friday Hot Cross Buns giveaway) and newer traditions we hope will become part of the town's rich heritage, (including Remembrance and Armed Forces Day parades, and the now annual Last Night of the Proms concerts) are reliant on the band, and a core aim is to ensure such traditions can still be part of Sidmouth in the next 150 years. The band serves to enhance the life of Sidmouth for residents and visitors. The Sunday night concerts attract large, and regular, audiences. Many people travel from outside the area (including Cornwall, Gloucester and North Devon) every



The Hall with and without the partition wall.

week, bringing visitors to the town. A sunny evening in Sidmouth can see audiences of over 500 at the Connaught Gardens.

Taking over the leasehold of the St Francis Church Hall has given the band the necessary rehearsal space it needs to expand and develop. By dividing the main room, we have a space in which we can permanently keep the band's equipment set-up, and in which we can invite younger players to sit in with the main band and gain experience. By making the wall a movable one, it can be opened up, to enable concerts and other events to take place, not just by us, but other groups if required. As well as benefitting the forty or so players currently involved in the Town Band, the Youth and Training band and individual beginners (with ages ranging from 8-80), this project will support local groups (as stated above). In addition, it will benefit the brass band community. Brass bands are not as common in Devon as they are in other places in Britain, and we want to create a centre of excellence in Sidmouth that will attract the best players, by providing workshops with renowned conductors, providing the space for young players to sit in with the senior band to gain experience, and hold solo competitions to encourage players to strive for excellence in their own playing.

In addition to the construction of the wall, band members have made the most of the challenging lockdown conditions to completely refurbish the main hall. Although the band have had very minimal opportunities to rehearse in the last 12 months, the hall is certainly looking splendid, and ready for the return of the players later this year. We are very grateful for the grant from the Keith Owen Fund to support our long term project, in creating one of the best bandrooms in the country.

Fiona Harvey

Please encourage your friends to join the SVA.

Membership forms can be downloaded from the SVA web site, picked up from one of the boxes in Margaret's Meadow and the Knapp or from the Museum.

Local Business Initiative

Debbie Ellis from the newly opened restaurant '14 Miles East' in Old Fore Street has decided to help support three local charities. Customers choosing items from the menu labelled '14 Miles Extra', can make a donation to the charities of Debbie's choice. She has chosen SVA, Sid Valley Help and Hospitality Action. All monies collected by these means will be split between the three at the end of the year.

Do we have your email address?

Send it to info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk



Sid Vale Association 175th Anniversary Exhibition

Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th September 10 am – 4 pm
The Cellar, Kennaway House, Sidmouth EX10 8NG

Admission free to SVA members

The exhibition will celebrate the achievements of the organisation in the 175 years since it was founded. Illustrated displays will include:

- The formation on 9th September 1846 – *The Chairman and officers that included some Sidmouth benefactors and well known characters.*
- 1850-1870 – The organisation rented Fort Field
- 1855 – Alma Bridge
- WW1 and WW2
- 1950 The Museum opened
- The land owned and cared for by the Sid Vale Association for 175 years
- Keith Owen Fund
- Display of past publications of the Sidmouth Improvement Committee and the Sid Vale Association

SVA COUNTRYSIDE WALKS

Please book within the dates given as numbers may be restricted due to covid regulations.

Tuesday 1st June 10am Woods and River (5 miles no steep hills or styles) Leader: Jackie Stokes (01395 577651) Start: Bowd layby (same side as pub) Grid Ref: SY104 898: Nearest Post Code EX10 0NF Booking window: Friday 28 May - Sunday 30 May.

Tuesday 6th July 10am Pebble Beds and Common (5 miles, 1 moderate hill) Leader: Roger Livesey (01395 577651) Start: Newton Poppleford Recreation Ground Grid Ref SY088 899 Nearest Post code EX10 0JY Booking window: Friday 2 July to Sunday 4 July.



The Sid Vale Association CIO, 36a Fore Street, Sidmouth EX10 8AQ

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

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