

sid vale association



past • present • future

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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





A word from the Chair...

A year on from my first contribution to the magazine following my election as chairman we still have the covid virus with us more than two years on from the start of lockdown. To add to our woes we have war in Europe and a run on the pound!

On a more sombre note, Queen Elizabeth II died. As chairman, I signed the book of condolence at the town council office on behalf of the SVA.

The financial events have impacted on our investments and we are fortunate to have entrusted our portfolio to fund managers who monitor our affairs daily. These events have not affected our ability to award grants from our Keith Owen fund although the number of applications are down on pre-pandemic levels. There are however a number of projects in the pipeline.

The 18th September marked 176 years since the organisation was founded. Now, as then, we strive to enhance our beautiful valley and the recreational facilities.

Our planning and conservation team work hard behind the scene monitoring the fortnightly planning lists and commenting where appropriate. We also will be participating in the second round of consultation on the next Local Plan in the autumn.

Edmund Harrison

Editor's Note

Writing my editorial for the last magazine, we were about to celebrate the platinum anniversary of the Queen and the museum's 'centre piece' display paid homage to her majesty. Little did we know, only months later we would be paying our respects to the late Queen. Now we have to change to His Majesty, which for a lot of us has never happened before. Life has slowly returned to normal after the pandemic. Mother Nature carried on of course as you will see in the following pages. The buzzards nested and produced a somewhat noisy youngster, butterflies returned in vast numbers to Soldier's Hill, unusual moths were observed and who knew that primroses were so 'technical'? The weather was observed in detail by Alan Gadian, the Arboretum group have plans afoot to plant more trees to combat global warming and the AONB are working hard to restore the natural landscape on Fire Beacon Hill. We are facing a winter of gloom, possible power shortages and massive fuel price increases but looking back to the press articles in WW1, we always seem to find a way of saving money with numerous tips on running one's home and looking one's best. Nigel Hyman's latest publication reveals Sidmouth has seen a lot of extraordinary people amongst its population, whilst the stories of everyday folk are brought to life in the articles by Anna Philpot and Margaret Taylor. John Govier describes the demise of the fishing industry in Sidmouth as fishing gave way to recreation. In Edwardian times the ladies bathing tents unfortunately came to be a viewing point for a



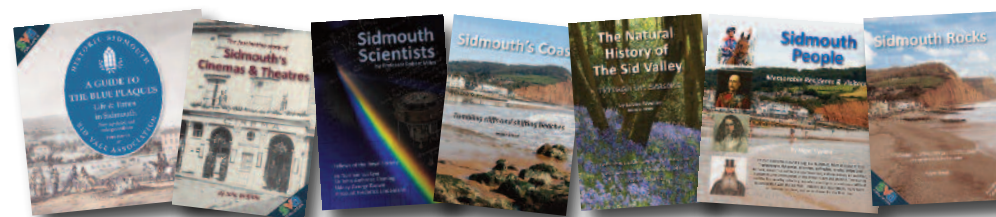
Cover photo: *Hypholoma fasciculare*, otherwise known as 'Sulphur Tuft' in woods at Salcombe Regis by Val Huntington

local peeping Tom as recounted in a Sidmouth Observer article from 1918.

Visitors to the museum will have noticed the addition of another long picture, which was donated by the HSBC bank on its closure. An award should go to Ann Tanner and Nigel Hyman who carried it through the town early one morning to its new hanging place. Annoyingly, I didn't get a photo!

Finally, all the time that I have been editor of this magazine, I have had the enormous support and help of John Dowell. His graphic design experience and knowledge of publishing has been a tremendous asset to the production of this magazine. Sadly, he is no longer able to continue. A massive thank you to John from the SVA for everything he has done for the publications, publicity and IT management teams.

Val Huntington



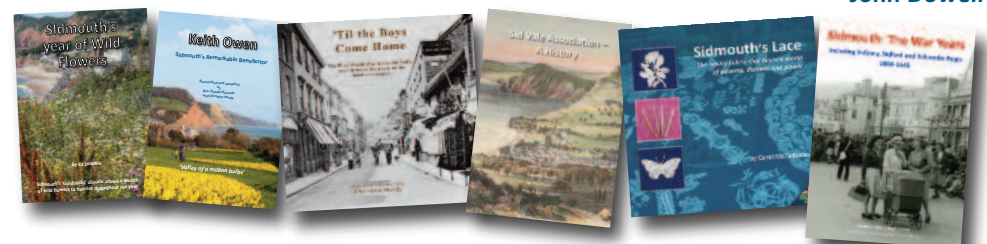
SVA Publications – the show must go on!

You may have heard on the grapevine that I'm having to give up working on the SVA's publications. I've been diagnosed with AMD – which basically means the bits at the back of my left eye are falling apart! It's an age thing – there's nothing can be done about it, and screwing my eyes up to work on the computer screen isn't doing it any good.

I'm pleased to have been able to contribute to the production of over 30 books and booklets, plus magazines, leaflets etc in the 10 years I've been involved and I've enjoyed putting the knowledge of artwork and printing I built up over the years when I was working for a living to good use in presenting what are hopefully "professional looking" publications for the SVA. I always say retirement means carrying on working, just not getting paid for it!

So, we need someone to carry on the good work. Ideally someone with experience in using publishing and photo editing software – word processing programmes are fine and getting ever-more sophisticated, but they still have lots of limitations when it comes to preparing jobs for printing. A knowledge of printing processes would also help. I'm happy to assist in any way I can with advice, photos, contacts etc, as well as existing artwork, so if you think you would like to help please contact me at jd@rockfordgraphics.co.uk or Nigel Hyman at publications@sidvaleassociation.org.uk who has overall responsibility for publications.

John Dowell



*** Important News For Members ***

Our longer standing members will know that we have kept annual fees very low for many years. This has been deliberate, to make membership accessible to everyone. Unfortunately, the fees for existing annual members will soon need to rise to the level we are now charging our newer members. The effective date for this will be 1st April 2023.

We know that this is a bad time financially for everyone and we are reluctant to have to do this, but it is a difficult time for the SVA too with the cost of everything increasing. We are now also having to pay bank charges for the first time ever, even though our branch in Sidmouth has now closed. So we are making some changes which are essential to keeping our running costs, and your membership fees, as low as possible.



Firstly, **for our Annual members**, we have engaged GoCardless to provide Direct Debit facilities from this October. This will now be our preferred payment method and all new members must use direct debits for annual fees. We will also encourage existing annual members to take up this method of payment. It is so much cheaper and more convenient than other payment

methods and it will greatly reduce our paper usage.

In the first few weeks of 2023, we will be contacting annual members to confirm the action being taken but, in summary, we will ask you to cease your existing payment arrangements, including **cancelling any existing standing orders in favour of the SVA** that you may have in place with your bank. We will contact you, by e-mail, with an invitation to create online a direct debit mandate with GoCardless. It is a very simple procedure which will take just seconds, making the annual renewal process much simpler and cheaper, thereby helping to secure the future of the SVA and the work we do for the whole of the Sid Valley.

Secondly, **for all members**, we are adopting e-mail as our primary communication channel with members, for everything apart from the bi-annual Members' Magazine. We already use e-mail for our regular news updates and event notifications but, from 2023, all communications will be by e-mail, including the AGM notification and associated papers.



There is a very small group of members for whom we do not have e-mail addresses. **We encourage those members to inform us of their address immediately.** Please note, we only use your e-mail for essential membership services and DO NOT share your address with any other third parties.

Thank you for your co-operation and support. For any queries concerning the above, please contact the Treasurer at treasurer@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Gary Turner, Treasurer

Volunteering at the Museum

My name is Marion Clarkson. I've been a member of the Sid Vale Association for quite a few years. I moved to this area from Edinburgh 55 years ago when my husband was sent here with his Job. I worked for many years in the Planning department of East Devon District Council. After retirement I went on a museum history walk and discovered how fascinating the story of Sidmouth, people and places could be and thought that after all the years of living and working in this area how little I knew. I decided to become involved with Sidmouth Museum and the history walks in the town 8 years ago and can thoroughly recommend it to anyone with an interest in and around this area to come along and join a friendly group of people volunteering, both in the museum and on the walks. The three walks I'm involved with are East, West and Central Sidmouth and along with many other walk leaders we cover the months from the beginning of April until the end of October, when the museum closes for the winter. The people who book on the walks tend to be adults of all ages, but on one occasion I had a delightful little girl of 7. When I was relating one story to the group she said "I know about this ... I saw it on Horrible History", so I asked her to tell us, she did so, perfectly, it was lovely to hear such a young child showing an interest. The oldest walker I have had was in his early nineties. He was particularly interesting as he had lived here until he was 15 and never been back until that week so it was lovely to hear his memories and he in turn was interested in recent Sidmouth. The number of people on a walk varies from 1 to over 20, anything up to 10 is particularly good, beyond that it's difficult for everyone to hear. Dogs are permitted so long as they are well behaved!

Volunteering in the museum is a delight, as everyone young and old enjoys and appreciates what they see. I'm sure most visitors understand that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes by the volunteers, even in the winter months when the doors are closed as there is still much to do to prepare exhibits for the following year. It's a pleasure to volunteer in the museum, and on a lovely summers day what can be better than an informative walk around Sidmouth.

Marion Clarkson

SVA Coach trip to Bodmin Jail and Buckfast Abbey

On a damp September morning, we all boarded the coach for the first SVA excursion since before the pandemic and it was nice to see a full coach of members and friends.

We trundled our way down to Cornwall and disembarked at Bodmin Jail. Steve Pemberton, the trip organiser had arranged for us to have a private guided tour and because of the size of our group, it meant that we had to be split into two tours setting off about 10 minutes apart. The first section of this was through an interactive section that explained all about the history of the jail. This had some super special effects which, because of my other interest in theatre, I found absolutely fascinating. It was a clever introduction that had seen a lot of money spent on it to get it to that standard. The guides picked up their respective groups after that and carried on the tour around the rest of the jail. The guides certainly knew their history and were happy to answer many



Photo Stephen Pemberton

questions. The session in the torture chamber was interesting! Graphic explanations of how each instrument of torture worked and an unsuspecting SVA member chosen to demonstrate one of these to the rest of the group under the watchful eye of the guide was good fun. I have recently visited the Shrewsbury Prison tour and it was not a patch on the Bodmin one. If you ever get a chance to see it, then do but I would advise booking your ticket in advance as it was very popular there.

After lunch, we then re-boarded our coach for the journey to Buckfast Abbey. Many of the party had visited here before but it is always a lovely place to go back to or to experience for the first time. The inside of the Abbey is beautiful but sadly on the day we visited we were not allowed access to the stunning huge stained glass window at the far end of the Abbey due to cleaning works being undertaken there. A lovely quiet walk around the grounds, a bit of shopping in the Abbey shops followed by a planned group cream tea served in the Abbey restaurant made for a lovely end to the day. Once we were all fed and watered, we boarded the coach again for the trip home and got back to Sidmouth around 6.15pm.

None of this could have happened without the organisational skills of Steve Pemberton. The hours and the effort he put into this trip showed for a flawless day out. It is well worth looking at joining any of the excursions that he plans in the future. Although it may seem expensive, I thought it was good value as the fee included the coach for the day, entry to the jail and the guided tours and the cream tea.

Heather Hodge

Please see back cover for 2023 excursion dates

14,000 Trees

I had a call from Ian Barlow a few weeks ago inviting me for a coffee. I suspected an ulterior motive and, sure enough, he had a job for me. He wants the Town Council Environment Committee to support something that will have an impact for good in the valley and he has challenged Sidmouth Arboretum to plant 14,000 trees in the next five years, the number approximating to the valley's human population.

I pointed out that the same idea had been proposed by Richard Eley in pre-Covid times. It was a great idea, but the Arboretum had decided it was beyond their capability, mainly because of lack of access to the required land. However, council backing along with Ian's extensive contacts has prompted a rethink and we are going for it with a slight modification, we intend planting 14,000 trees and hedgerow shrubs in the next five years.

There are many good reasons to plant trees and hedges. First and foremost, having a treescape makes a better place for humans to live. They provide visual delight, they cool hot urban spaces, and clean the air. They provide a home and food supply to a wide range of other life from nesting birds to butterfly caterpillars, to woodlice and fungi that break down the leaves and wood after they have had their life. Trees and hedges absorb some forms of atmospheric pollution. They help control the water cycle and avert flooding. In the long term, as they photosynthesise and grow, they also take up some of the carbon dioxide that affects the rate of climate change. Having trees and hedges is a good thing.

Most of the trees we plant will be young whips planted at 2.5m spacing for long-term development into woodland, but some will be planted as hedgerows to create wildlife corridors in strategic sites. There will also be a number of standard trees to provide instant impact.



This is an Arboretum project and the project needs three things to succeed, 14,000 trees and shrubs, about 20 acres or 8 Hectares of land, and lots of volunteers.

There are organisations such as the Woodland Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust who are giving away tree packs with up to 400 whips. There are organisations such as the Tree Council and East Devon AONB who can offer grants to buy trees, including standards. These funds are usually from carbon offset payments which has an element of controversy, but we can discuss that on another day.



The Benefits of Trees

We have made an excellent start on the search for sites with the National Trust and Donkey Sanctuary offering three sites totalling about a hectare for this planting season. We have an agreement in principle with one local farmer and will be approaching other landowners such as Sidbury Manor for future years. The planting will be done a block at a time over a planting season.

We hope to be planting about 500 whips

and twenty standard trees as a wildlife corridor in Salcombe Regis in November. This is where the SVA, along with other groups such as the Sid Valley Biodiversity Group may be able to help. Planting whips is relatively easy on a good site. You push a spade into the ground twice to make a cross, ease the spade sideways to create a gap, put the whip into the gap and heel it in to close the soil. Five hundred whips should take about 40 worker hours to plant and so 20 volunteers could do it in two hours. The twenty standards will take another half hour of team time. We will be sending out much more publicity as the planting season progresses. If you have a couple of hours to spend taking gentle and healthy exercise then you will be welcome, if you have your own spade that will be even better. The Keith Owen fund has supported the arboretum.

Ed Dolphin

Service Tree

Last December a small True Service Tree was planted in the Knowle, as a component of the Queen's Green Canopy. This tree has an interesting history. It was taken from a tree in the York Museum Gardens which itself was a descendant of the original True Service Tree, discovered in the Forest of Wyre in 1678. Based on this one tree, the True Service Tree entered the British list as a native.

The tree was burned down in 1862, but not before several descendants from cuttings and seeds had been planted in the Wyre Forest area, the cathedral grounds at Worcester and, most importantly, the Oxford Botanical Garden. From a tree at Arley Castle, a successor True Service Tree was planted in 1916 on exactly the site occupied by the original.

Confirmation that the tree was native to Britain came in 1983 and the subsequent decade when small populations of True Service Trees were discovered in inaccessible places on the coastline of South Glamorgan on the Horseshoe Bend of the Bristol Avon. As a result, the Bend has been delegated an SSI.



Ewan Anderson



Sidmouth & East Devon Walking Festival and The Sid Valley Ring

September 2022, after a two year break during lockdowns the Walking Festival was back up and running again. We were blessed with glorious late summer weather, sunny but not too hot, perfect for walking. There was a good mix of walks including the coast path, East Devon Way and special interest walks, not forgetting the regular walks laid on by the SVA.

We led walks two days running following the Sid Valley Ring. The route was established in 2019 by Sidmouth Town Council and the SVA using existing paths and lanes. It is a great way to introduce walkers to the town and the surrounding countryside of the Sid Vale.

On both walks we had a good mix of visitors from different parts of the UK. The first day we walked the west side of the Ring from Sidbury. The day coincided with the Queen's funeral and we stopped for a two minute silence at the top of Bald Hill. This quiet spot felt a particularly poignant place to remember and have our own private thoughts and contemplation. We then carried on to White Cross to look at the magnificent views out to Dartmoor. We stopped for lunch at Fire Beacon with further views over Sidmouth and out to sea. Coming back into town our visitors were interested to hear about the influence of Sampson on the town's architecture and we looked at some examples of the "Cottage Orn  ".

The next day we walked the eastern half of the SVR from Sidbury through Harcombe and out to the coast path. En route we stopped to look at the SVA's Trow Pump and the beautiful Whistler triptych at Salcombe church. The walk ended back at Port Royal where several of our walkers went off for a well-deserved ice cream or cream tea.

The week's Festival offers over 20 walks of differing lengths and difficulty so there is something for everyone. It is organised by members of East Devon Ramblers and supported by Sidmouth Town Council. See @SidmouthWalkingFestival on Facebook for more information.

Naomi Lott



Rosa hunting fossils.

Four Hours of Fun

As part of their plan to engage with more young people, volunteers from the Sid Vale Association's Museum organised a very successful Fun In the Sun event on the tennis courts just behind the Museum. A steady stream of families joined the free event where they could explore some of the Museum's fossils, have their picture taken dressed as Victorian characters, play fishing games, and even splat a rat. Members of the Sid Valley Biodiversity Group joined in with a table piled with some of the seaweeds to be found on Chit Rocks. Children loved handling the rubbery fronds while being told about these amazing plants. The volunteers hope to organise another free event during the school half term break in October.

Marian Gadian

Children's Coordinator, Sidmouth Museum



The Primrose

Botanical name... "Primula vulgaris"
 "Primula" from the female Latin of "primus", meaning first, or prime.
 "vulgaris" meaning common.
 "Primrose" from Latin "Prima Rosa" meaning first rose or flower.

Both flowers and leaves are edible as a "green salad". The leaves can be used as a tea, and the

flowers made into primrose wine. I personally would rather leave these early spring beauties alone, and visit a decent supermarket. The "Victorian language of flowers" associates "Primroses" with young love, protection and safety.

Medicinally, it has a long history. As early as AD 50, Pliny was using "Primrose" for muscular rheumatism, paralysis and gout. It contains salicylates which acts as an anti-inflammatory. "Primrose" contains phenolic compounds which are cytotoxic (kills cells). Modern research is ongoing as to its uses in treating certain cancers eg cervical. Primrose tea has been used as an expectorant for coughs, but historically it has been mainly used for the treatment of nervous disorders, headaches and menstrual conditions. It can be bought on line to "strengthen spiritual and emotional health". It should not be confused with "Evening Primrose" (*Oenothera biennis*), found usually in North America.

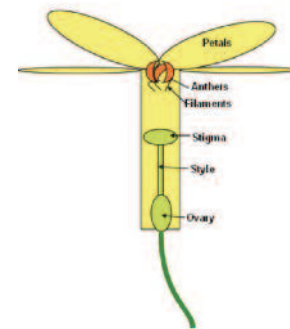
Now for a bit of botanical science! The male part of a flower produces pollen, the female part produces the ovum. Each Primrose plant either has "pin flowers", or "thrum flowers", but never both. These flowers have different internal designs. A long tongued insect is needed to pollinate the flowers. As it pushes into the Primrose to reach the nectar at the base, it gets pollen on its body in different places, depending if it is visiting a pin, or a thrum flower. The pollen from a pin flower is transferred to the female part of a thrum flower, and vice versa. Even more cunning is the use of "Elaiosomes" on the seeds. These are small, fleshy structures, rich in lipids and proteins, attached to the seed. They attract ants which collect the seeds, taking them to their nest. The ant larvae eat the tasty, fleshy bit, leaving the seed to be taken to the waste disposal area by other ants. This area is rich in compost from dead ant bodies and ant frass (a fancy name for ant poo!). The primrose seed then germinates in its own compost heap! I do love a good symbiotic relationship!

April 19th is known as "Primrose day". This date is the anniversary of the death of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, as the Primrose was his favourite flower. Every year, since his death in 1881, Primroses are laid at his statue by Westminster Abbey. It is the county flower of Devon.

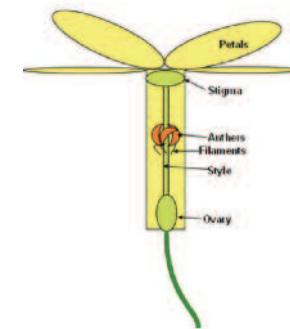
**Primroses, the Spring may love them;
 Summer knows but little of them.**

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

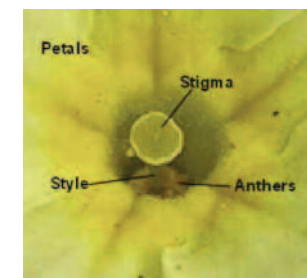
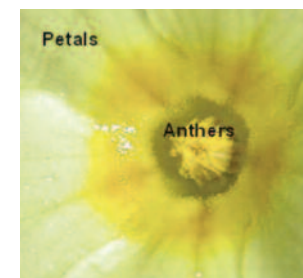
Simon Papworth



Thrum flower



Pin flower



Ed's note: Although we regard the primrose as a spring flower, in Devon they start flowering in early January. By the time Primrose Day come around, they are almost past their peak-a sign of warmer winters with global warming.



The Sidmouth Herald and Observer

Browsing through old Sidmouth Herald and Observer newspapers from the WW1 era I couldn't resist passing these tips for ladies on how to look after your husband and run your home.

From a court case dated 14/5/19 a judge in his summing up statement to a young wife, who complained that her husband stayed out with his friends until 3am.: 'You must make your home so delightful for him that

he won't want to go anywhere else'

The Observer ran a weekly column full of tips on how to run one's home. The following are selected quotes from the paper.

Rest after dinner

Hurry and half-masticated food are the direct cause of much ill health. Try to get ten minutes or even less rest after your big meal. Put your feet up on a chair, couch or lie on the floor flat on your back with no pillow and teach yourself to relax every tired muscle and make your mind a blank. No talking, reading or thinking. You will find this hard at first but you can teach yourself and once you have learnt and practised it you will feel like a new creature. In this way you store up energy for the afternoon's work and mind and body and lose the overstrung wound up feelings that arise from a morning's labour

Deceptive warm days

Autumn days have an underlying dampness which is so chilling that it is not well to doff too many wraps. It may be well to accustom one's self to going out in all sorts of weather but the great health preservative is to be suitably clad. Shoes instead of boots may look well to the beholder but nothing is more productive of a cold than wet skirts clinging around ankles thinly clad. The blood vessels are so near the surface in the ankles that when unprotected the blood is readily chilled and the whole body affected

Complexion

What a calamity it would be if the air we breathed were stale and impure and if instead of a wholesome meal we ate a pound of cheap sweets. A muddy complexion would surely result and the cure would not be a face cream but attention to the habits and general health.

Housemaid's knee

It cannot be cured without rest. This simple precaution will save a lot of trouble. The swelling should be painted with iodine night and morning for two days. Then stop the iodine and smear with Vaseline for a day or two. This treatment may have to go on for a week or two. It is much better to consult a doctor at the beginning

Look after your hands

There is no excuse for a woman having ugly hands even if she has to assist in light household duties. Keep a lemon on your washstand and rub your hands with this while wet. Have your nails properly manicured and then buy a manicure set and manicure them yourself. Avoid soda and wear gloves when dusting around the house.

Hand protectors

Save up old kid gloves for ironing days as they make excellent pads. Make a pad and you will find that this will save your hands from becoming blistered and scorched with the heat. *Ed: The former presumably applies to the lady of the house and the latter to the housemaid, who has to use a hot handled heavy flat-iron.*

Another excerpt found from a 1918 column which the housewife can try at home – I don't recommend you try it.

"The following recipe for a black hair dye is from The Chemist and Druggist (*ed. Note – this seemed to imply it was safe!*) Argent, nitr., 4dr.; Cupri sulph., 2 scruples; Aq. dist., 6oz; liq. ammonia: Dissolve the nitrate of silver and sulphate of copper in the water and add liquor of ammonia until the precipitate formed is redissolved. This strength gives an intense black and requires diluting for different shades of brown. Diluted with an equal bulk of water, it gives dark brown and chestnut. With twice its bulk of water, light brown and blonde."

Ed. Note I asked John Lott, a retired pharmacist and volunteer with the SVA his advice on the recipe and the measurements involved.

Weight

20 grains = 1 scruple

3 scruples = 1 dram

8 drams = 1 apothecary ounce

12 apothecary ounces = 1 pound.

Fluid

20 minims = 1 fluid scruple

3 fluid scruples = 1 fluid dram

8 fluid drams = 1 fluid ounce

The reaction of silver nitrate and copper sulphate releases a precipitate of silver which is re-dissolved into solution by the ammonia and producing an intense black colour. In the same way they used silver in black and white films because silver nitrate is light sensitive. The compounds aren't particularly toxic but would be quite harsh on the hair and an example of what was called secundum artum or chemical wizardry. Apparently a housewife wouldn't normally go into a pharmacy and buy the ingredients. She would either go in with the recipe and have it made up by the pharmacy or apothecary or they may well have had their own 'brand' made and ready for sale.

Avoid Hurried Toilets

Dressing in a hurry is a peculiarly trying experience for a woman especially when she is being waited for by an impatient husband or lover. She rummages drawers and boxes for her scarf which is probably all the time in full sight. Her gloves are nowhere to be seen; she is short of hairpins and her gold chain is hopelessly knotted. In the hurry, buttons

come off and string break and when she is at last ready. She is hot, angry and conscious of appearing at her worst. The remedy is to insist on notice of outings so that she may have leisure to dress in comfort and make the best of herself.

A sitting room Hint

When a pattern has worn off the carpet just by the door or where there is much traffic, the colours may be quite revived by painting them in with watercolour paints or 'Dolly dye' tints. The outline of the pattern always remains as a guide. This tip has been tried on a bordered art square with perfect success.

Home Made linoleum

"Take an old carpet that is whole and but not too shabby for use. Clean it and tack it down onto the kitchen floor. Then make a thick boiled starch of flour and water. Rub a layer of this starch onto the carpet with a whitewash brush and in about twenty four hours or when the starch is dry give it a coat of paint, any colour will do. Dark red is a cosy colour for the kitchen. When this is dry, give it a second coat and you will have a cheap and durable floor covering."

Heart Monitors

Many people believe that the time kept by a watch is affected by irregular heartbeats. A watch is usually carried in a pocket or on a pin near the heart. The theory is that if the heart beats are regular the watch ticks also remain regular; but that if the heartbeats become irregular the watch ticks also become irregular from running or excitement or any other cause, keeping time with the watch ticks for a few pulsations and then stopping between the ticks and then going more quickly than the ticks, the watch will get out of order. Those who believe in this theory claim that it is correct and can be tested by taking a watch which is keeping time accurately and noting the effect of wearing it for some weeks.

In 1917, this article appeared

Our attention has been called to the conduct of a certain individual who caters for bathing parties and provides chairs on the beach. Two young ladies were in the process of erecting their bathing tent on the foreshore when the man deliberately placed a couple of chairs in front of the opening. The ladies thereupon moved their tent further away but the man repeated his offence. They again moved and apparently the process was to be gone through a third time, but he altered his mind. This kind of thing wants to be putting a stop to. No one wants to interfere with the perfectly legitimate enterprise of bathing and seating on the beach. The public is entitled to protection against this kind of treatment.



The early cashless society?

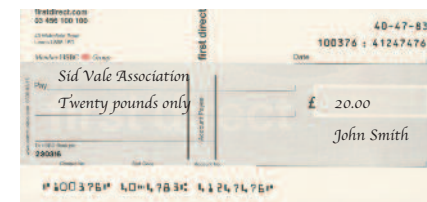
Who would imagine that the world of business is indebted to London fogs for the bank cheque? Yet such is the claim. Something like a hundred years ago the attacks of thieves and highwaymen in the streets upon the bank messengers and tradesmen going to settle their bills were a frequent occurrence in times of heavy fog.

These attacks were so severe as to interfere with the running of London business. It was easy for the thief to ambush his victim, club him till he was insensible and then disappear into the fog with little likelihood of apprehension or identification or that passers by would see him commit his crime. In these circumstances, bankers, traders and others set their wits to work with the result that the bank cheque was devised for the payment of debts. Soon the highway men found that a few blank pieces of paper was all that they were going to get from a victim. Accordingly, the activities of the daylight robberies soon came to an end but the convenience of the bank cheque proved so great that it survived not only in London but it was adopted throughout the civilised world.

This may have backfired somewhat as when browsing through a later Sidmouth Observer I came across an article entitled 'A Plausible Imposter in an Officer's Uniform' which ran along the lines of the following:

A Mr Edward Trelawney Clarence Ansell came before the petty sessions. A man of fairly smart military appearance he was charged with wearing an officer's uniform without authority. Mr A E Mitchell of the Royal York Hotel gave evidence that the prisoner had arrived at the hotel dressed as a lieutenant and introducing himself as Lieutenant Adams. He was treated and spoken to accordingly as his rank indicated. Major Reginald William Curtis -appearing for the prosecution- said the prisoner was not an officer, never had been and had no right to wear the uniform and he had in fact absented himself a few weeks after he had been posted. When the hotel presented the accused with his bill, he had paid by cheque for £12-0-8. The hotel had also accepted two other cheques which had been paid into the National Provincial Bank in Sidmouth but were returned marked 'no account'. It was owing to the prisoner posing as an officer that the hotel had accepted the cheques.

It was subsequently found that the prisoner had repeated the offence as telephone communications via a Police Constable Clarke of Ilfracombe -also appearing for the prosecution- had examined the hotel registers where upon he came across the name Lieutenant Grant about whom he had suspicions and accused him of being Pte Ansell. The trail led to a hotel in Exeter where the accused had also been staying. Two cheque books were found hidden behind the wardrobe. After further investigations, the cheque book had been issued from the bank to a Miss Anderson of Maida Vale who had recently been introduced to the bank by her landlady and £40 had been paid in to open the account. Miss Anderson had obtained the second cheque book by saying she had lost the first one. There was of course no trace of her. Cheques began to be improperly used in 1917 signed in various names Altogether 27 cheques had been improperly used. Prisoner Pte Ansell (aka Lieutenant Adams) was committed for trial at Exeter assizes.



Val Huntington

Sidmouth's 'Long Picture'

You'll probably have seen the original 1815 version of the picture hanging over the mantelpiece on the ground floor of the Museum and you may have read Julia Creeke's books about it.

When the HSBC bank closed its branch in Sidmouth recently, the Manager very kindly donated the bank's copy of the Long Picture to the Museum. He was worried that such an important piece of Sidmouth's history might end up in a skip otherwise!



What is interesting is that the bank's version below is a later print from around 1840, with several changes, particularly the enlarged library building in the centre.



And below is a photo of what the scene looks like today.



Double Winner

Philip Wragg photographed a photo which won first prize at the Sid Valley Horticultural Show and commented on the fact that it was a 'double winner' as the subject is the landscaped area next to the fish shop on the Ham. The area was part funded with a KOF award to Sidmouth Coastal Community Hub and was completed with volunteers from the residents of nearby Glenisla terrace and others to improve the appearance of the Ham.



William Arthur Morrish 1914-1943

I knew that my father Norman Morrish had a brother Bill Morrish who died in WW2. I was however sad to read about Bill in the book Sidmouth: The War Years, Including Sidbury, Sidford and Salcombe Regis 1939-1945 (1). Bill was the eldest son of Arthur and Gertrude Morrish of Manor Lodge Sidmouth and Bill had a career in the Royal Navy before WW2. Hardy and Hyman stated Bill was Yeoman of Signals and in 1943 he served on HMS Clacton (J151) and he died on 31 December 1943 (2). He had a service number of D/JX 134243 and the record of his death made in the year 1943 showed he was 29 (3) The HMS Clacton (J151) was a small Bangor class minesweeper built at Ailsa Shipbuilding Co Ltd Troon Scotland and she was launched on 18 December 1941. She had been the second ship named after the Essex town of Clacton on Sea. The shipbuilding company was a civilian shipyard as the steam turbines in these minesweepers were difficult to manufacture (4). HMS Clacton (J151) hit a mine near Corsica in the Mediterranean at 08.32am on 31 December 1943 and sank immediately with the loss of three officers and 29 ratings (5).

My father had told me that when he was a boy the Morrish family had lived in South Lawn, Sidford and he and two of his brothers attended Sidford School. A photograph in the book "Archive Photographs Series Around Sidmouth" shows a group of Sidford school-children, dated 1925, one of whom was Billy Morrish in a sailor's suit (6). Billy was born in the December Quarter of 1914 (7). In the school-group photo he looked younger than eleven and in the attached photo he also looked young. My father said that Bill Morrish was fun loving and good company and he might have had a daughter. When I was a child my parents and my sister visited the Plymouth Naval Memorial and many years later I noticed the WW2 War Memorial in Sidmouth Parish Church.

Norma Cox



References

- (1) Sidmouth: The War Years. Including Sidbury, Sidford and Salcombe Regis 1939-1945. Hardy, Christine. and Hyman, Nigel. Sid Vale Association, Sidmouth Museum. 2021; 121.
- (2) Hyman, Nigel. and Hardy, Christine. (Note 1) 2021:121
- (3) <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2484793/Morrish-william-arthur>.
- (4) [https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Clacton_\(J151\)](https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Clacton_(J151)).
- (5) See (Note 4)
- (6) The Archive Photographs Series Around Sidmouth Berry, Les. Gosling, Gerald. Chalford Publishing Company Limited, Stroud GL6 8NX. 1994: 78
- (7) <https://www.devonheritage.org/Places/Sidmouth/SidmouthWarMemorial1939-45.html>

The Demise of Professional Fishermen and Boats in Sidmouth in the 20th Century

It's hard to believe that centuries ago big fishing boats were being built of wood in Sidmouth, launched into the sea, kitted out at Exmouth and then sailed down to Portugal where they would be loaded with barrels and all that was necessary to sail on to Newfoundland to catch Cod to make cod liver oil. Some of the boats would return after many months or even years; but not all the crew did sadly.

The deeds of our house on the Esplanade refer to it as The Old Boatyard. The boats would have been built and probably taken to the river mouth and launched. After a boatyard it became a coal yard and over the years I have found lumps of coal in the garden!

By 1740 the population of Sidmouth was said to be 1,653 and growing. During the late 1800's fishing was the main occupation of the men folk and important to the local community for both food and a means of earning a living, but it was a very hard life with little money and very dangerous!

From the time the railway first came to Sidmouth in 1874, Sidmouth was to change quite a lot. Many houses were built, road traffic would arrive, hotels and shops opened, and Sidmouth was to become the fashionable regency resort that it still is to this day.



This early photograph was taken around 1890 and tells us quite a lot. Middle left shows the original Dunnings Pier. Note all the fishing boats right across the beach up to Clifton. No cars at all on the seafront, yet! You can see the flagstaff extreme right and no fishing boats at Port Royal.

In the late 1800's on a typical summers evening most of the townspeople would watch over 20 Drifters set sail along with the

Luggers rigged with big tan sails and mizzens. They would probably sail down the bay and drift all night for mackerel with their nets – it must have been a wonderful sight. The Luggers would catch herring in the winters and mackerel in the summer. There are, thankfully still a few Luggers nearby at Beer.

In around 1900 the average earnings of a fisherman was about a Guinea a week, if they were lucky. When the sea was rough the fishermen would be on land catching rabbits, mainly with nets and ferrets – that's why if you ever mentioned the word 'rabbit' when fishing you stood a good chance of being thrown overboard! At this time, beer was about 2p a pint (there were 240p to £1 in those days, so that's 120 pints of beer for £1)

Before the First World War there was no motor power for the fishing boats and the sailors relied on their expertise and a pair of oars, if the worse came to the worse.

Up until the First World War fishing had been the main industry, but soon things would change. Many men joined the Royal Navy or emigrated abroad to earn a living. However, the demise of professional fishing was mainly caused by the disappearance of the herring in the winter of 1909 – it happened very suddenly.

With many fishermen having emigrated and the loss of the herring from our shores, things changed. As a fashionable regency resort, Sidmouth was now attracting visitors and the remaining fisherman adapted by offering trips around the bay and manning the bathing huts on the beach alongside their fishing.

From the industrial revolution there were major advancements in fishing boats, steam trawlers would operate out of larger fishing ports, although the steam trawler was overtaken by the diesel engine.

During the Second World War a permit to fish was required. This is a copy issued by the Admiralty to my grandfather W.J Govier for his boat 'Joy'. It was not easy to go fishing during the war because there was barbed wire right across the seafront, with only a gap at Port Royal.

After the Second World War there were only two or three bigger boats running trips around the bay in Sidmouth and taking people mackerel fishing when weather permitted. Fishermen potted for crabs and lobster and used seine nets in the summer for mackerel. The larger boats then had inboard engines mainly powered by diesel.

It was and still is not easy to operate a fairly big boat – anything more than 16ft – off the beach in Sidmouth. Apart from anything else the shingle beach was always moving – there were times when there was no shingle on the beach at all!



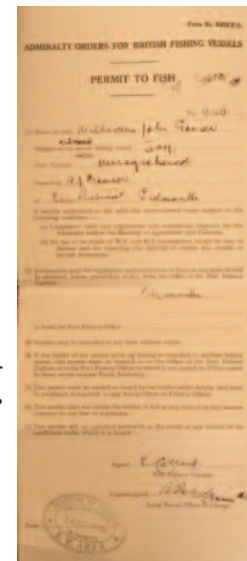
This picture shows the Duchess of Devonshire aground in 1934. Note there are now no large boats across the beach from Dunnings Pier to Clifton, they are now at Port Royal. You can see Dunnings Pier had been rebuilt and the drill hall had been built.

Fishermen ran their fishing trips from York Steps and Bedford and did a bit of trawling when they could. Potting was done in a small boat, usually with a Seagull outboard engine. There was also seining for mackerel in the summer and whelk fishing. A fresh fish shop was opened on the Ham that kept them busy too.

But many of the Sidmouth fishermen had better ideas than to work off a difficult beach and many opted for bigger boats from a larger harbour and so left for Brixham or Exmouth. This proved to be the final blow and the demise of professional fishing at Sidmouth, and indeed, many coastal fishing communities around the country.

I have written this with no mention of names as there were so many fishing families involved over the years, too many to mention. Much has been written from memory, with a little help from the late Vernon Bartlett's family memories book for which I am grateful.

John Govier



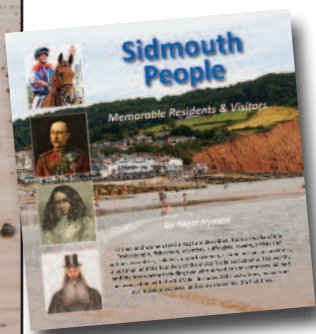


Sidmouth People: Memorable Residents & Visitors

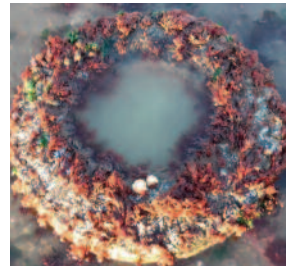
In 2014 I wrote 'People & Places' which described about 20 individuals. Over the intervening years it was apparent that there were important omissions and also some mistakes. We now know more about the fascinating individuals in our Sid Vale history and over 70 have been described in the new book. Many of us, after moving to Sidmouth, become very involved with our local history and I've drawn on numerous sources from colleagues as well as our Museum archives. I was keen to represent a wide spectrum of backgrounds especially tradespeople such as John Field and father and son, William and EG Trump. The town has been fortunate in its outstanding pioneers in both the early motor cars, Bill Dagworthy, and moving pictures, Arthur Ellis. My main criterion for inclusion was that he or she had an interesting story.

Incidentally, in 2014, in my brief summary of Nicholas Heineken I gave the date of his death as 1884 and in the more detailed description in the new book I wrote 1881.

It should be 1883. One day I'll get it right.



Nigel Hyman



The war on rubbish continues...

Somebody obviously thought our garden was worthy of a first prize as this balloon arrived in our garden one day this summer

On my many walks around our beautiful valley, I am always picking up bits of discarded rubbish. One of the frequent items I come across are bits of baler twine. So useful to the farmer for tying up bales but not so good for decorating our footpaths. Bits seem to get trodden into the mud and however much you pull them, it goes on forever until one is left with muddy hands and a yard or two of relatively unscathed twine. It seems to appear quite mysteriously on footpaths through woods, a long way away from where any straw or hay bale might have been used for animal husbandry.

Nature does eventually take over as I have written before. 'Trolley Island' on the River Otter is coming along quite nicely and I came across a wheel on a river estuary which had become a complete habitat for marine life.



Val Huntington

The Butterflies of Soldiers Hill

A Wildlife Spectacle

You have probably all seen on TV pictures of Monarch Butterflies congregating in the forest trees of Mexico, overwintering in their millions. Might the SVA's meadows on Soldiers Hill contain a million butterflies? I would not be surprised. A million butterflies sounds farfetched so I have decided to devise a system of estimating butterfly numbers to try out next year and will be very interested in the results. The point is that spectacular wildlife experiences are available on our doorstep and I would include the experience of Meadow Browns on Soldiers Hill as one of them. A neighbour and their children were very excited by how many they had seen



Meadow Brown on Bramble

when running through the grass, marvelling at them as they flew around. To experience this yourself I recommend a walk around Soldiers Hill, usually around the end of July, ensuring it is in good weather. As you amble along the path hundreds of Meadow Brown Butterflies can lift into the air. Last year in one 15-minute count I got 91 Meadow Browns. This year, during the Big Butterfly Count, I went up with the express intention of trying to log as many Meadow Browns in one 15-minute stretch as I could. I only got 54. This was because it was an exceptionally dry summer, so many hay crops were maturing early and by early August the long grass was cut, and most of the Meadow Browns were gone. Wildlife spectacles are by nature fleeting, this is one of the reasons they are so captivating.

Is Soldiers Hill special?

Soldiers Hill is an excellent example of a meadow habitat with flowering plants and many grass varieties. Since the 1930s over 97% of this type of land has been lost due to cultivation. This makes it a very special place. Many butterfly species have evolved to co-habit these environments. Their caterpillars feed on very specific grass species and then pupate there. It is only as an adult that the nectar rich plants are needed to energise their flight. Soldiers Hill provides this by the wide field margins especially on the north and west side. The knapweed, brambles, thistles and nettles that thrive nearest to the path, provide the nectar. There are many other notable butterfly species present. Once my wife and daughter came back and described the experience of seeing large numbers of Common Blues and Small Coppers. I was beginning to get a sense of how significant Soldiers Hill was as a wildlife haven in Sidmouth.



Common Blues on Knapweed

The Problem with Bracken

There is one issue on Soldiers Hill I would like to address. Bracken is encroaching on all sides of the field with some areas so densely covered no other plants grow alongside it. It is only where the bracken is thin or none existent that you will find the rather more exciting butterfly species. These include the beautiful Common Blue, Gate Keeper, Small Copper, Marbled White and Large Skipper. I spoke to a wonderful gentleman about controlling bracken, he was advisor to the Queen on the trees in Windsor Great Park. He told of wildfires fuelled by bracken thatch that killed 230 oak trees on a heathland in Surrey and of times he strimmed bracken leading to days of back-ache. It felt time to take some action on



Peacock caterpillars on Nettles



Gatekeeper on Bracken the bracken at approximately two-week intervals. But by the beginning of August and

the time of the Big Butterfly Count the regrowth seemed as strong as in other areas where I had not touched. I will try again next year, extending the 'flipping' for a couple more sessions. It will be fascinating to see if my actions lead to better butterfly numbers on this section of the field and a weakening of the bracken. I am humbled by the volunteer work of Heather Spratt in the Norman Lockyer Observatory grounds, just along from Soldiers Hill, who has been controlling the bracken there for 17 years.

Butterfly Watching

Successful butterfly watching is a fickle business. Several conditions need to be in place to increase the likelihood of wonderful experiences. First and foremost is the quality of habitat as I have described at Soldiers Hill. Then there is the restricted season, starting approximately in April, climaxing in the height of the summer and slowly declining through the autumn. After that the weather plays a massive part in the visibility of butterflies and also there are a variety of brood times in the life cycle of each species. Then there are quite a few species that are migratory and fly in from Europe, so we are dependent on



Small Copper on Thistle

their success abroad and favourable flying conditions to allow them passage to Britain. These species include Painted Ladies, Clouded Yellows, and Red Admirals. Many Red Admirals that you see in your garden will have flown from North Africa! The result of all these conditions means that occasionally you get wonderful congregations of butterflies, but more often they are only seen a few at a time. Hitting the jackpot is when, by good fortune or by experience, all these factors come together. Here on the east side of the Sid Valley, where there are habitats as good as Soldiers Hill, the Norman Lockyer Observatory and South Combe Farm, and the coast, we have the conditions right to experience spectacular butterfly events.

Charles Sinclair

Volunteer Opportunities in the Sid Vale Association

Sidmouth Museum is owned and run by the SVA. The museum relies totally on volunteers, without its amazing volunteer workforce it would not be able to open.

The best entry point into volunteering for any position at the museum is to first become a 'front of house' Steward. It is an important job – greeting visitors, taking their admission fee, giving them a brief introduction to the museum and assisting them with purchases from the shop.

Becoming a Steward is the best way to get to know more about other openings behind the scenes that may interest you, most of our individual Collection Curators stay on as Stewards, they say that it is helpful to hear first-hand a visitor's reaction to the displays.

We need Stewards for 2023. The most important attribute needed is that you enjoy interaction with people, the 'meet and greet' part of the job, it does help to have an 'inquiring mind' and perhaps to be interested in any of the following: archaeology, architecture, geology, lace or social history but it is not necessary

The Museum is open from the beginning of April until the end of October, initial training will be given before the museum opens with 'on the job' training during the first few working sessions until the recruit feels at ease. Working Sessions last for 3 hours, 10am-1pm or 1-4pm Monday to Friday and 10am-1pm on Saturday. There are always two Stewards on duty and new recruits are always scheduled to be on duty with an experienced Steward. If you are interested, please email: info@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Why include the SVA in your will?

it is so easy and the impact will last forever

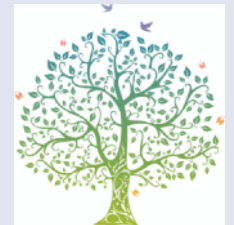
Did you know that the running costs of membership and our services usually exceeds our income? The Keith Owen Fund cannot be used to support the SVA's core activities, which recently have run at a loss, using up reserves accumulated over many years.

The pandemic-induced closures of the Museum sorely affected our donation income from visitors in 2020 and 2021. In addition, the financial markets' reactions to the pandemic and war in Eastern Europe has had a major impact on our investments and income.

More than ever then, in this our 175th Year, we are greatly appreciative of those giving to the Sid Vale Association through their wills. Any bequest, large or small, is valued by the Association (which is a registered charity no.1154749). In 2021 we received bequests from Rev. Handel Bennett, our former Chairman and President, and Mrs Cynthia Baker a long-time member.

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

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



Gary Turner, Treasurer

A Short Tale of a Gardener's Wife

There was once a man named Henry Nathaniel Byles (1780-1848) a coal merchant. He became successful maltster and distiller at Henley on Thames and established Grays Brewery there. Latterly, his erstwhile firm became Brakspears. Henry had seven children with his wife Elizabeth nee Fox, five girls and two sons. The fifth, Thomas Fox Alexander Byles, expanded his father's business, became wealthier and for his retirement had a fine mansion built in the Parish of Beer, on land he leased from Lord Rolle in 1868. He named the house 'White Cliff Glen'. But this tale is not about Thomas. It concerns his older sister, Mary Fox Byles born in 1814 at Henley, the third of Henry and Elizabeth's children.

Mary, who eventually died in Sidmouth, must have been a rebel, stricken with love or both. For, rather surprisingly, at 49 yrs. she was married in Scotland to a Frenchay-born 26 yr. old, William Hutton. In 1861, two years before their marriage, the 24 yr. old William was working as a servant in the household of the five Byles sisters at 'Glenfrome' Stapleton, then a rural suburb N. of Bristol. The sisters had moved there to be near where their brother Thomas and his wife Ella were living, at 'Cleve Wood' next door to 'Cleve Hill', the Bristol residence of the Cave family (also of Sidbury Manor). Some sparks were lit between Mary and William at Glenfrome. However, William Hutton moved far away from the 'situation' to Scotland to work.

He became Master Gardener at Leith Hall, Kings College Place, Edinburgh and Mary either eloped with William or followed him up to Scotland. For love had blossomed between the unlikely couple and they married there, on May 15th 1863. By 1871 they had moved back south again into Devon, near to where Mary's brother Thomas had built his new house overlooking Lyme Bay, on the edge of Beer. The Huttons settled at Sidmouth.

William's final employment was as gardener at 'Green Mount' (now Clevedon House) for the Staffordshire born, Mrs. Anne Willett Melhuish, widow of John J. Melhuish Esq. (1810-1868) a retired iron ship builder and broker and chair of the local magistrates. The Huttons occupied 'Green Mount Lodge' (today 'Sid Lodge' but much changed) at the entrance to Green Mount's driveway, opposite to Sid Lane.



Sid Lodge 2021 where in 1871 the Huttons' gardener's lodge stood.



Green Mount. The house itself was probably built in the 1830s.



3 Victoria Place – Mary Hutton's last home



Mary Fox Hutton's grave at Salcombe Regis bottom/3rd from left

Peter Orlando Hutchinson knew the owner in the 1880s and makes occasional references to it when he visited 'Seed', the small community on each side of Sid Road. Occasional visitors in recent years have been to the house and said that they stayed there in WW2. This relates to the evacuation of Queen Mary's Hospital for Children in Carshalton in 1940. The nearby Croydon airport was bombed and the hospital damaged. Children were evacuated widely ...including to Clevedon House. There were 30 boys and girls aged 5-12 as well as nursing staff. At Christmas 1940 the local residents donated toys, games, sweets, fruit and crackers. A local volunteer group of musicians, The Nightlights, made a special visit to the house'.

A happy ending... Seemingly, Mary Fox Hutton nee Byles's birth family embraced her choice of sweetheart. Because Mary's sister-in-law "Ella" included Mary in her will dated 1886, together with Ella's other Byles's sisters in law (who had moved to live at 'White Cliff Glen'). And later, Mary's younger sister Harriet Holness Byles, was Mary's co-executor with the widowed William. The latter, who was employed at Green Mount for 20 years or more, had retired by the age of 54 and before the death of Mrs Melhuish (buried at Salcombe Regis, on Feb.20th 1895). William then outlived Mary by 17 years, back with his birth family in South Gloucestershire, and was buried at Frenchay,

By 1891, the Huttons aged 54 and 77, had moved across The Byes to live quietly and inauspiciously in the charming end of terrace – No.3, Victoria Place, Temple St., Sidmouth. This is where Mary died aged 82 just before Christmas in 1899 and she (like William's employers) was buried in Salcombe Regis graveyard, on December 23rd., as the 19th century came to a close.

Although Mary's siblings were interred in Beer's old graveyard, Mary's executors, William and Harriet her sister, arranged for her last resting place to be at Salcombe Regis, where she is interred close to the Lockyers' and Floyds' just south of the Melhuishs' tomb. Clearly the Huttons' unlikely yet enduring marriage was embraced by those whose paths they crossed and from whom they had commanded respect.

Anna Philpot

Progress report on steam engine Sidmouth 34010

Since the frames of 34010 Sidmouth were moved to our site in Kent we've made good progress on the restoration. The main parts of the frames have been de-rusted, primed and painted. The section which supports the loco's cab was badly wasted and needs to be replaced. When we've established the grade of steel required we will order the sections and have them then cut to size. We have a friendly welder who'll join the new section to the rest. The joint also requires 'fitted bolts', which are bolts made to precisely fit the holes drilled through the steel plates being joined. We will make those bolts at our workshop in Swanage. We have moved the loco's drag box to Kent. That is a large fabrication which fits between the frames below the loco's cab, and connects to the tender and bears the load of the train being hauled.



A volunteer takes the wire brush to the drag box. It will be rivetted into place between the loco's frames beneath the cab.

The most complex and costly part of a steam loco is the boiler. As previously explained we will be swapping Sidmouth's boiler with one from another loco of the same design, 34053 Sir Keith Park, which was restored in 2013. Over the past two years our contractors at the North Norfolk Railway have been restoring Sidmouth's boiler so that it can be fitted on Sir Keith which has just finished its 10 year service certificate. In that way we can return Sir Keith to revenue-earning service next year, and then overhaul the other boiler (which needs much less work) to run on Sidmouth. The plan is for Sidmouth to return to Swanage in 2023 when final assembly can commence.

Southern Locomotives Ltd, (SLL) – the loco's owners – are a not-for-profit company, that has been

engaged in loco restoration for over 30 years. The focus has been locos built by the Southern Railway in the 1940's including two of the West Country class, Sidmouth and Eddystone, and three Battle of Britain class, Sir Keith Park, Manston, and 257 Squadron.

The company is owned by over 800 shareholders, some of whom also work as volunteers in the workshop. If you're interested in knowing more about SLL you'll find our website at www.southernlocomotives.co.uk, or drop an email to Nick Thompson at nicksidmouth@gmail.com

Sidmouth resident Nick is a board member of Southern Locomotives, their webmaster and a workshop volunteer.

If you take away the wheels, the boiler and the cab from a steam loco you are left with the steel frames and the cylinder blocks. Sidmouth has three cylinders, one bolted on each side and one between the frames.



34010 Sidmouth waiting to depart from Waterloo with a train for Weymouth, in the early 1960s.

Nick Thompson



The Manor's famous visitor

Sidmouth Manor is very much associated with its last Lord of the Manor, Colonel Balfour, for whom it was built. After his death it became West Bank Girls School and, since 1972, it was converted to multiple private occupation.

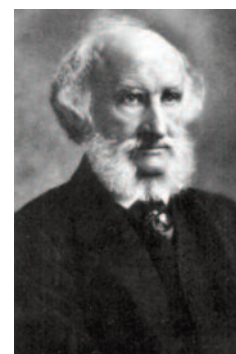
Between October 1908 and April 1909 it had a most distinguished visitor, Sir Donald Currie and, interestingly, there is no evidence that he and Balfour ever met.

Balfour was a professional soldier and lived in London or abroad for long periods before his marriage in 1910. He lived in Sidmouth much of the time thereafter. Before 1910 he occasionally leased the property as he did to Sir Donald who arrived with Lady Currie and other members of the family on a sunny day in October. Our Museum archive contains information of the stay. It was written in May 1944 by ECW French, the senior Librarian at the County Branch Library in Sidmouth then at Hope Cottage [now our museum]. The four pages of typed script are on poor quality paper due to the wartime



restrictions. Mr French's mother was a friend of the Curries and had suggested the Manor as well as seeing them during their six months residence. Her son used these memories in his account.

Sir Donald was born in 1825, the son of a wig maker and barber in Greenock, Renfrewshire. He had neither inherited money nor family connections to further his astonishing career and achievements. He was obsessed by ships as a boy and became a clerk for Cunard in Liverpool. Still in his 30s he had established the Castle shipping company of sailing ships between Liverpool and Calcutta. He then provided a service to Cape Town competing with the Union Company and by 1900 the two steamship companies were amalgamated under his control as the Union-Castle line. He was sympathetic to the Boer cause for



Sir Donald Currie



The Lorimer family

self-rule but could not influence government policy and his shipping line transported men and supplies to South Africa in the Boer Wars. Almost certainly Balfour, who served in the conflict, would have been carried in a Currie ship.

He was an active Liberal MP for 20 years and a close friend of Prime Minister Gladstone. He is still remembered for his exceptional philanthropy in later life with donations to mainly medical and religious causes in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. The

Currie Cup remains the most prestigious prize in South African domestic rugby.

This was the man who came to Sidmouth and he was, for 84, in apparent good health. He enjoyed daily walks in the surrounding countryside and, according to Mr French's account, he 'enlivened dinner parties with his singing. His favourite song was the Scottish ballad "There's nae luck about the house, (When our gudeman's awa.)"'

His death was sudden and unexpected on April 13, 1909. Frequently obituaries carry only positive accounts of a person's life and those of Sir Donald were fulsome in praise. However, over a century later, there have been no revisionist comments. He was a perfect example of a life well lived.

His great granddaughter, Fiona Lorimer, is now 88 and had never visited the Manor House nor the grounds. She came in early September with her son, Christopher, his wife, Mary and their daughter Emma. Ann Jones, our museum treasurer, lives in part of the property and kindly acted as host to their visit.

Nigel Hyman

Sarah Horn, Western Town coal dealer (1809-1891)

We begin our story on Christmas Day 1863, Bath born, Sarah Horn (nee Denner), born 1809, age 53, has just buried her husband Abraham, coal dealer, aged 63. He is likely to have been ill, as his trade was not recently listed on the census.

Sarah was a young widow, with 4 young children when she married him in 1836. I wonder how she ended up in Sidmouth. She would however, have travelled here on the Defiance Coach, which the 1830 guide informs us would have made daily trips to Bath and Bristol. Sarah and Abraham went on to have 4 children together. (Sadly, though she lost her eldest child, at the age of 18, in 1842).

That Christmas of 1863, Sarah must have been wondering how she and her family were going to cope. Her son Edward, is 25, and is already listed as a coal merchant. Daughter Anna Maria, 20 is working as a servant, living at home. They also have a young granddaughter Emily Sadler 5, who was born in Northwich Cheshire.

Sarah, in 1851, was listed as a Huxters Shop. This implies she is was a low-priced trader, selling food, either on her head in a basket, or from door to door, or perhaps at the

nearby Sidmouth Market.

Their address was Western Town; somewhere behind the present Denby Place. Her old Sidmouthian neighbours included: the Woolleys, Hooks, Conants, Bartletts, Sellys, and Wares. Local traders included: lacemakers, fishermen, char women, tailors, agricultural labourers, fly drivers, and many more. There were many washerwomen too; to cater for the nearby lodging houses. The area was filling up fast. Marsh Chapel had relocated here from the Marsh. In 1861 The Jolly Sailor pub was just down the road, to the south, along with Daniel Pearcey's Boarding House (he had the Marine) The Mason's Arms was just up the road, near the Woolley's residence, which was, much later to become The Poor Man's House.

This reference from Stephen Reynold's a Poor Man's House paints a picture, would have been just as relevant in Sarah's time. "Cats sun themselves on walls or squat about gnawing fish bones. A cockerel with bedraggled speckly plumage and ragged crest hanging over one eye struts from doorstep to doorstep. The children when any one strange walks through, run like rabbits in a warren to their doors, stand there and stare".

The area would have been draughty in winter, as the Cut; a narrow road leading from the Sea Front, was nearby. It was also an ideal channel for the sea to rush through as it did in the winter storms. Before Sarah's time, this sloping area would have been the foreshore.

Moving forward to 1871, and widowed Sarah is listed as a coal dealer in her own name. Her aunt, Betty Horn, unmarried lacemaker, b. 1787 and now 84 has moved in with them; she used to live next door. Anna Maria has married Frederick Patch, son of Richard Bolt (who was formerly 'King of Chit') and they are both living there too.

Sarah, in 1871, will have been relieved that her son George, b. 1832, is now settled in Eastern Town, with his wife and family. He was a Crimean war veteran after joining the Merchant Navy. Now he is a fisherman, and will become a valuable member of The Lifeboat service.

Moving forwards again to 1881, since 1871, Edward had been living in Barton House with his family, running the family coal dealing business, and he will remain there with his wife and children, until his death in 1891. Sarah is now living with her daughter and son in law, at Newtown in one of the new terraced houses, with a lodger. Sarah dies in 1891 and is buried in Sidmouth.

References:

Reynolds, S: A Poor Man's House.

Sutton, A: A Story of Sidmouth.

Census records from 1841 – 1891.

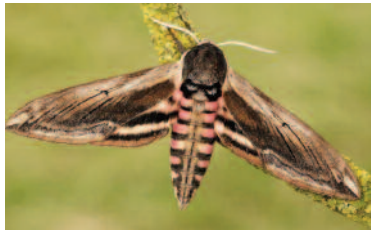


*A corner in Bedford Square.
A Story of Sidmouth.
By Anna Sutton. Sutton's
Story of Sidmouth.*

Margaret Taylor (nee Ankings)



First Gardener and Privet Hawkmoths. There is a piece of string around the post.



An unusual sight

“Come and look at this!” said First Gardener. I walked slowly up to her and bent down to look. On a post were two large moths, tail to tail. I had never seen moths so large. They were in the act of mating and must have been at it a long time as they usually fly at night. It transpired that First Gardener had cut back some *Crocsmia* leaves and exposed the post, so the moths may have felt secure prior to that.

They were Privet Hawk Moths and a first sighting for both of us.

Our garden is semi wild and contains a variety of plants that support Hawkmoths, including Bedstraw, under which the pupa overwinters.

The food plants of the caterpillar are Privet (of which we have none), lilac, guelder rose, holly, ash saplings, honeysuckle, viburnum, snowberry, forsythia and spirea. The moth has a wingspan of up to 4½ inches. and they like open woodland, gardens, downland, coastal scrub and fens.

The caterpillar pupates and overwinters underground when it emerges in summer as an adult. The moth feeds at night on strongly scented flowers and is considered to be fairly common. Our moths remained on the post until the evening and then flew away.

Second Gardener

Living next door to the Buzzard

Seeing a buzzard in Salcombe Regis for the first time is exciting. They nest in the Pine woods on the western side of the valley and soar magnificently on the air currents while looking for prey. They epitomize the “living next to nature” ideology that is part of the pleasure of living in Salcombe Regis.

I had grown up with the knowledge that they were very rare birds and was therefore like everybody else, delighted to see them. However it has not always been that way and the buzzard has had a very chequered history.

Since Henry VIII when buzzards were not offered the protection that other predator birds were, the buzzard has been persecuted. James I of Scotland went one step further and decreed buzzards were vermin, ordering the destruction of them all.

However they remained a common sight because of their ability to adapt and to live on carrion until the beginning of the 19th century.

Shooting for sport became more widespread at this time so the persecution of this

type of bird increased. Much of the killing occurred during its breeding season and several species including the white-tailed eagle, the osprey, the European honey buzzard, the goshawk, and the marsh harrier were driven to extinction from Britain.

Farmers also killed buzzards in the mistaken belief that they took lambs and sheep, perhaps in part influenced by the habit of buzzards to feed on carrion. Although buzzards will sometimes eat dead or stillborn lambs, live farm animals are too big for them to hunt as prey, although even today some people still mistakenly believe that buzzards kill lambs.

Buzzards are particularly easy targets and so are their nests, so it was not long before their population plummeted.

By the middle of the 19th century, buzzards only remained in the north and west of the UK and by the end of the century were only found in a few areas in the western parts of Britain and became extinct in Ireland.

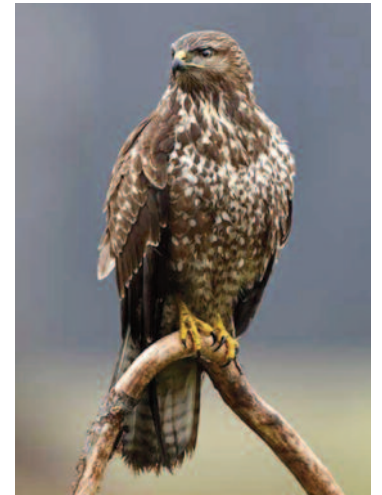
A change of attitude and the subsequent abolition of bounties at the start of the 20th century enabled the buzzard to recover.

However, in the 1950s disaster struck once more with the introduction of myxomatosis to the UK. Myxomatosis is a disease that kills rabbits. It had been used as a biological control agent in Australia to try and curb the feral rabbit population which had reached plague proportions.

Myxomatosis reached this country in 1953 from France and all but annihilated the rabbit population which was a major source of food for the buzzard. This, together with a rise in the use of pesticides had a big impact on the population and it fell to around 10,000.

In 1954 the Protection of Birds Act was passed which designated buzzards, amongst many, a protected species. With the withdrawal of pesticides, a recovery in the rabbit population, breeding and release programmes, and gamekeeper education, the population started to recover although they were still a rarity and I was amazed to see one in a field when on holiday in Sidbury around that time. Since then there has been a steady recovery and now buzzards have been seen in every county in the UK. It is estimated that the population is around 250,000. Nevertheless, there are millions of people in this country who have never seen one and thus I was delighted to find them on my doorstep when moving here.

However, it is often said that familiarity breeds contempt and after the buzzards moved their nesting site to the very end of our garden, our relationship seemed to change. It was no longer our garden but a mouse and vole hunting ground. Our greenhouse became a favourite perch for one of them. The youngster they raised behaved just like the seagull youngsters in Sidmouth, with constant hanging about mewing to be fed from dawn to dusk. It even ended up in the chicken run, which upset it more than the hens and I had to





go in and pick it up and release it (I have some very thick gloves!) . It's quite scary when it fixes you with those fierce eyes and that beak up close is very sharp.

That was a chastening experience for myself and the youngster who has not ventured into the run since.

Eventually it will move away, as I believe the parents just ignore it after a time and leave it to fend for itself. Salcombe Regis will return to peaceful skies.

Rambling Sid

King Charles Way

The change of monarch to King Charles III prompted an enquiry from a BBC Radio Devon reporter. Why was King Charles Way so named? The road in Sidford is off the A3052, opposite Burscombe Lane. Brian Golding's valuable guide, Street Names of the Sid



Valley, indicates that the source for the name was the legend that King Charles II, after the defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651, spent a night in Porch House in Sidford. This listed building on Church Street in Sidford has the date tablet 1574.

The route taken by King Charles from Worcester is well documented including the uncomfortable day in an oak tree. He first attempted to escape to Wales and then to Bristol. Finally, he reached Charmouth disguised as an eloping lover. After riding east to Shoreham, he went by coal boat to France on October 15, over six weeks after setting out.

Charmouth is of course fairly near to Sidford but I do not know of any primary sources. In Peter Orlando Hutchinson's watercolour his caption locates the upper room where the King supposedly stayed.

Nigel Hyman

Undergrounding of power cables on Fire Beacon Hill / Harpford Common

Plans have been drawn up to enhance the AONB landscape by undergrounding the visually intrusive 1.3 km of 33kv powerlines which dissect this popular nature reserve. , Forestry Commission and the Donkey Sanctuary. The land owners and managers include Sidmouth Town Council, EDDC, Woodland Trust. If approved by the planning inspectorate, it could be delivered by mid 2023. Funding would come direct from Western power, AONB, National undergrounding programme funding. The SVA are supporting the scheme.





An Unusual Visitor to the Museum

Last year (August 2021) I spotted an unusual visitor to the museum – a male Southern Hawker dragonfly seen on the granite millstone outside the building. It was so motionless and well camouflaged that the public were walking past and did not notice it, even though it was there for at least four consecutive days. Last year in mid August 2021 the temperature was barely out of the mid teens. The time was 4 pm by which time the millstone had gained enough heat from the late afternoon sun to enable the dragonfly to

absorb some of the warmth in to its own body to help it to continue flying. Like all insects they need a warm ambient temperature in their surroundings to keep them active, and the millstone gave the dragonfly enough of a boost to have an advantage when hawking and catching its insect prey in flight. This species of dragonfly regularly travels some distance away from ponds but it was unusual to see it at the same place for so many days. Temperatures for the same period this year were 10 degrees higher and so no help from a millstone was needed.

Mick Street

Weather in the Sid Valley

Sidmouth and Sidvale are glorious places to live. The pleasant climate and weather are large contributory factors. Queen Victoria and her grandfather King George III much liked Sidmouth. Over a century apart, both Elizabeth II and Victoria (Queen Elizabeth's great grandmother) contributed to the costs of the parish church window refurbishments; a testament to their affection for Sidmouth.

The weather in the Sid-Valley is warm and mild, not too hot and not too cold. July 2021's heat wave from about 15-25th July produced maximum temperatures in Sidmouth of more than 25C (77F); four days had a maximum temperature of more than 27C (81F). In Summer 2022 there were three heat waves, 3 days in both June and July and 6 days in August. However, the temperature never exceeded 28C (82F) except possibly for one day, 19th July when 29C was recorded at the Witheby weather station in Sidmouth. As far as I am aware, 29C is a new record for Sidmouth town. On the same day, Exeter Airport measured over 31C whilst London's temperatures were between 39-40C.

The threshold definition for a heat wave in Devon is 25C; the threshold value depends on the county. In March 2022, the Met office increased the thresholds by 1C in the Home Counties, in response to global warming, but left Devon alone! Why? The cooling effect of the summer sea breeze keeps the climate in the Sid Valley refreshingly cool. Temperatures in Sidmouth / Sid Valley infrequently rise above a pleasant 25C; inland much higher temperatures are common with the maximum temperature Exeter Airport often 4C warmer than Sidmouth. In July this year, temperatures in the Home Counties were commonly up to 12C warmer than Sidmouth.

The current average annual temperature in Sidmouth is given as 10.6C (51.1F) (climate-data.org). For years 1865-71, W. Cullen and Rev N. Heineken of Sidmouth took observations (thanks to Ed Dolphin and Mark Beswick, Archivist UK Met Office for this information). They used a thermometer checked for accuracy by James Glaisher himself and calibrated at Kew. J. Ingleby Mackenzie presented the data to the Devonshire Association in 1872. A seven-year average of 10C (50.0F) was calculated and discussed.

The maximum temperatures from the Met Office (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-61825371>) concluded that Earth is ~ 1.2C warmer than the 1850's. The average maximum summer (June+July+August) temperature in 1865-71 was 27C (80.6F), with a record of 27.7C (81.8F) in 1866. A recent record maximum temperature of 27.8C (82F) was observed July 2018 a small difference 0.1C from 1866. For 1865-71, the summer mean daily temperature range was 8.7C (15.7F) but for 1980-2010 is 7.4C (13.3F). Thus, the summer mean minimum temperatures are now 1.3C warmer than 150 years ago. The mean winter temperature minima are also consistently warmer than the past. The extreme minima values are similar, except for a minimum on 1867 of -8.5C (16.6F). This is 3.5C colder than any

recent measurements. The range between the extreme maxima and minima was 31.6F 150 years ago and is now (1980-2010) 32.0F, too close to be of significance.

However, this does not mean we should expect less storms. In 1924, a severe storm lashed the South-West Coast destroying the beach roads at Newlyn and Sidmouth, amongst other places. The November 1824 violent storm was a category 2-3 hurricane with strong 'south-westerly winds. Chit Rock, over 40 feet high, possibly bigger than the "Picket Rock", Ladram; was "thrown down and nothing but its base remains". The storm surge was ~ 2.5 metres, with waves up to 6 metres above the high-water mark (a combination of a very high spring tide and surge). Intense damage destroyed Plymouth Breakwater and many coastal communities in Lyme Bay. The storm is however well known in the annals of the Commons parliamentary records. "In the midst



A picture of "Dame Parkinson of Sidmouth sweeping away the Atlantic storm of 1824, used to caricature the House of Lords opposing the House of Commons reform law. Credit: Hathi Digital library trust (<https://victorianweb.org/periodicals/fun/ireland/12.html>)

of this sublime and terrible storm, Dame Partington, (of Sidmouth) who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, squeezing out the sea-water, and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean.” (see figure). Her house at Jacobs ladder and houses by the beach were destroyed. This tale was cartooned and used to lampoon the House of Lords, who opposed the widening voting rights. “The house rose, the people cheered, and tears of superabundant laughter trickled down the cheeks of fair women and veteran reformers” when the story was re-enacted in the Commons mocking the House of Lords which opposed the forces of reform.

Are we now due (in 2024?) a repeat storm? However, none of this will detract from the outstanding national beauty and climate of the Sid Valley.

Alan Gadian

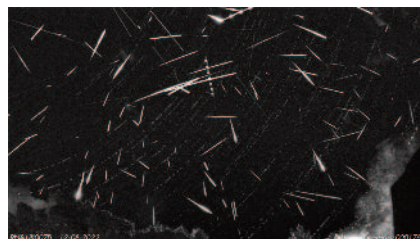
Norman Lockyer News

The Norman Lockyer Observatory had a great turn out for their annual Perseid Meteor Watch in August. 180 visitors came along with rugs and deck chairs to view this regular spectacle. Unfortunately the bright full moon competed with all but the brightest meteors. 178 meteors were detected on the dedicated meteor cameras which are aimed to the northern and eastern skies. We were also treated to a story telling session given by Exeter based David Heathfield and his



musician friend Kimwei McCarthy who enthralled all with tales about Perseus and Andromeda, Tanabata from Japanese mythology (The Shepherd Boy and the Weaver Girl) and the Reindeer Girl and the Moon from Siberian mythology. Visitors were also treated to views of Saturn, Jupiter the Moon and Albireo (a beautiful double star in Cygnus) through the observatory telescopes. (The Observatory has benefitted from KOF funding in the past).

David Strange



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

Dates for your Diary



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

TALKS – All Saints Hall 2.30pm

November 9 – **A History of the Sid Valley in its Street Names:** Brian Golding

January 11 – **RW Sampson: The man and his legacy** – All Saints Hall 2.30pm

FREE COUNTRYSIDE WALKS are held on the first Tuesday of each month and are typically 5 miles and of 3 hour duration. Please see the SVA website events page for details. SVA members emails also give details.

SIDMOUTH ARBORETUM invites all interested people to the return of their **Celebration of Trees**, 6.30-8.30pm on Friday 18th November in the Cellar Bar of Kennaway House. There will be short talks on various tree matters, some songs, and a range of trade and community group stalls.

2023 EXCURSIONS

Wednesday 3rd May • Wednesday 5th July • Wednesday 6th September

SVA LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Monday 7th November and second Monday of every other month thereafter in the SVA HQ at 36a Fore street, next to Coffee#1, at 7pm. The Group aims to promote and support research into the history of the Sid Valley and surroundings. The usual format is for members to introduce discussion on topics of research that they are working on, but occasionally a full presentation is made of a completed piece of work. For more information please contact Brian Golding at history@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

MUSEUM

The museum closes for the winter on **Saturday 29th October** and reopens to the public on **Monday 23rd April 2023**. Although the museum is closed for the winter, many of our books are available from Paragon books and Winstone's in town or by mail order from <http://www.sidmouthmuseum.co.uk>

COPY DATE for the next issue of this magazine is **30th March**. Short articles and photos of local interest are always welcome. Please email your contributions to the Editor – news@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

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
For the latest information about the SVA keep checking
our web page www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

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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