

sid vale association



past • present • future

Magazine Number 99

Spring 2024

Including Annual Report
and Accounts for 2023

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 2.30 pm

Venue: SVA Headquarters, 12 Church Street

Please bring this magazine with you

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

www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk



Illustration: The Tree of Life

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

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

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

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

In 2023 we received bequests from

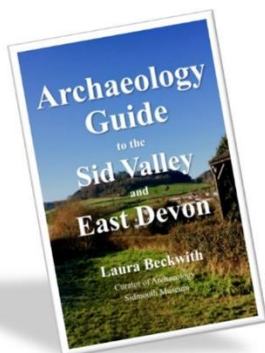
Miss Angela Rosemary Astley - Mr Ronald William Bridges - Mr Graham Thornton

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

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

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

Gary Turner, Treasurer



Cover photograph by Laura Beckwith, Archaeologist
Sidmouth Museum

Laura is the author of the SVA's latest publication
*Archaeology Guide to the Sid Valley and East
Devon*.

Available from the museum, independent
bookshops in Sidmouth and online - price £5

Sid Vale Association CIO AGM 19th June 2024 at 2.30pm

12 Church Street, Sidmouth

Agenda

Chairman's welcome

- 1 **Apologies** for absence
- 2 **Minutes** of the SVA CIO AGM held on 24th May 2023
- 3 **Matters Arising**
- 4 **Special Resolution to change section 15 of the Constitution.**
To insert the following new clause 15.1 (c) and renumber the remaining clauses in 15.1 (see Background and all of clause 15.1 on page 2/3)

15.1.(c) becomes involved in any organisation and/or activities which may be in conflict with the charity or may bring the charity into disrepute or which causes concern to the remaining Trustees. In these circumstances, the Trustees may then hold a Vote of No Confidence. In such a case, 2/3rds of Trustee votes cast at that meeting will be required for that vote to pass. The Trustee concerned will then be informed in writing and given 14 days to respond. If the matter is not resolved, then section 15.2 and 15.3 of the charity's constitution may be invoked.

(c) to become clause (d), (d) to become clause (e), (e) to become clause (f), (f) to become clause (g)

- 5 **Election of Trustees** Trustees are elected for a term of 3 years.

The following Trustees are standing for re-election:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| • Heather Hodge | Membership |
| • Nigel Hyman | Publications/Talks/Walks |
| • Ann Tanner | Chairman & Museum Curator |
| • Gary Turner | Treasurer |

6 **Presentation of remaining Trustees**

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| • Alan Clarke | Vice Chair & Chair Keith Owen Committee |
| • Gary Cross | IT and Email |
| • Richard Huntington | Land & River (resigned March 2024) |

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Val Huntington | Publicity & Magazine |
| • Peter Rose | Volunteers Co-ordinator |
| • Liz Warren | Secretary |
| • Philip Wragg | Planning & National Landscapes |

7 Presentation of Annual Report and Accounts for 2022

8 Appointment of auditor

The Trustees recommend to the members that the SVA continues to engage with the firm of Westcotts Chartered Accountants, Honiton, in their role of Independent Examiner, or Auditor as required.

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

Close of formal meeting

10 Talk by Nigel Hyman ~ Peter Orlando Hutchinson

Tea and Biscuits

The full constitution is available on the website at www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk or by contacting the secretary, Liz Warren
secretary@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Special Resolution to change Constitution

Background

Section 15 Retirement and removal of charity trustees

Trustees recognise that they have very limited powers to censure a fellow Trustee in the circumstances that their behaviour or actions become such that the majority of Trustees feel that they are no longer acting in the best interests of the Charity. Trustees would like the power to hold a vote of no confidence in that Trustee, should this situation ever arise. It is anticipated that following such a vote, the Trustee would either agree to change their ways or resign. A new clause 15.1.(c) has therefore been proposed.

The power to remove any Trustee remains with the Members as per clause 15.2 and 15.3

Section 15 including the proposed new clause would read as follows:

15 Retirement and removal of charity trustees

(1) a charity trustee ceases to hold office if he or she:

(a) retires by notifying the CIO in writing (but only if enough charity trustees will remain in office when the notice of resignation takes effect to form a quorum for meetings);

(b) is absent without permission of the charity trustees from all their meetings held within a period of six months and the trustees resolve that his or her office be vacated;

(c) becomes involved in any organisation and/or activities which may be in conflict with the charity or may bring the charity into disrepute or which causes concern to the remaining Trustees. In these circumstances, the Trustees may then hold a Vote of No Confidence. In such a case, 2/3rds of Trustee votes cast at that meeting will be required for that vote to pass. The Trustee concerned will then be informed in writing and given 14 days to respond. If the matter is not resolved, then section 15.2 and 15.3 of the charity's constitution may be invoked.

(d) dies;

(e) becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing and administering his or her own affairs;

(f) is removed by the members of the CIO in accordance with sub-clause (2) of this clause; or

(g) is disqualified from acting as a charity trustee by virtue of section 178-180 of the Charities Act 2011 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision).

(2) A charity trustee shall be removed from office if a resolution to remove that trustee is proposed at a general meeting of the members called for that purpose and properly convened in accordance with clause 11, and the resolution is passed by a two-thirds majority of votes cast at the meeting.

(3) A resolution to remove a charity trustee in accordance with this clause shall not take effect unless the individual concerned has been given at least 14 days' notice in writing that the resolution is to be proposed, specifying the circumstances alleged to justify removal from office, and has been given a reasonable opportunity to making oral and/or written representations to the members of the CIO.

Sid Vale Association CIO
Minutes of the AGM held at 2.30pm on Wednesday 24th May 2023
at All Saints Church Hall, Sidmouth

57 people attended the meeting.

Ann Tanner welcomed everyone to the meeting. She paid tribute to Ed Harrison who had stood down as Chairman and Trustee after many years of hard work for the organisation.

Ann thanked all the volunteers who worked in various roles throughout the SVA and then said she had some exciting news for members.

Within the last hour, SVA had acquired the grade 2 listed building known as the 1922 Club in Church Street. She expressed gratitude to the 1922 Club Trustees for their proactive approach in offering the SVA the opportunity to acquire and retain the building as an historic feature in the town. It will become the SVA's new headquarters and will be a much more accessible building for members to use. The presentation at the end of the meeting will be about the history of the building and there will be a members' open day from 2.30pm – 6.00pm on 21st June.

1. Apologies

Philip Wragg, Sylvia Brownlee, Naomi & John Lott, Heather & Steven Knight, Jenny Fricker, John & Jackie Loudon, Rosemary Rooke, Peter Gill, Colin Boynton, Angela Caton, Elizabeth & Derek Carter, Lyndsey Barber, Simon Papworth

2. Minutes of the last SVA CIO AGM held 15th June 2022

Agreed and signed.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Election of Trustees

The following Trustees were appointed by the Management Committee and are now standing for election: Gary Cross, Peter Rose and Philip Wragg. Agreed unanimously.

5. Presentation of remaining Trustees

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Alan Clarke | Keith Owen Committee |
| • Heather Hodge | Membership |
| • Richard Huntington | Land & River/AONB |
| • Val Huntington | Publicity & Magazine |
| • Nigel Hyman | Publications/Talks/Walks |

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| • Ann Tanner | Museum |
| • Gary Turner | Treasurer |
| • Liz Warren | Secretary |

6. Presentation of Accounts for 2021

The Income and Expenditure 2022 and Balance sheet as at 31st December 2022 had been circulated prior to the meeting via the spring edition of the SVA magazine. Gary Turner, the Treasurer, explained that the full Trustees' Report and Annual Accounts as presented to the Charity Commission were on the SVA website, and that he also had hard copies available at this meeting. He pointed out a discrepancy of £102 between the two as the draft accounts had been used in the magazine and an adjustment had since been made.

Gary explained that the recent global crises had badly affected the value of our investments but they were slowly recovering.

Gary was thanked for looking after the Charity's finances so studiously.

7. Appointment of Auditor

Gary said that following the acquisition of the 1922 club, the SVA would need to have a full audit for the 2023 financial year. Westcotts Chartered Accountants, Honiton, had continued to act as SVA's auditors or independent examiners (depending on income) and he recommended that we retain them for the forthcoming year. Agreed unanimously.

8. AOB

None had been notified.

Ann Tanner thanked all those attending and closed the formal meeting at 2.42pm.

9. Presentation – The History of the 1922 Club – SVA's New Headquarters

Nigel Hyman gave an illustrated presentation on the history of the original Villa Verde or The Retreat as it was also known and of some of the people who lived there. He then explained the town's decision to create the Servicemen's Institute after the 1st World War. The building was extended, and later a second floor was added to become what until recently was the 1922 club.

Tea and biscuits were served.

**Sid Vale Association CIO
Income & Expenditure 2024**

	General	Church St	Museum	Keith Owen	Land-scape	TOTAL 2023	2022
Income							
Admissions			7,865			7,865	7,115
AONB 60th Anniversary			5,000			5,000	9,768
Donations & Legacies	7,591	234,880	1,275		10,775	254,521	3,548
Event Income	3,328	736	3,461			7,525	1,922
Investment income	8,418			81,815		90,233	86,249
Membership Subs	7,950					7,950	3,879
Rental Income	1,103					1,103	1,100
Sales & Other Income	14		6,260			6,274	7,248
Total Income	28,404	235,616	23,862	81,815	10,775	380,473	120,828
Expenditure							
AONB 60th Costs			3,941			3,941	
Aquisitions			22			22	
Awards				26,894		26,894	27,662
Banking & Insurance	3,529	1,392	705		60	5,686	4,122
Depreciation							504
Events costs	3,350		173			3,523	3,136
General Admin	495	24	178			697	359
Governance	920		374			1,294	1,559
IT & digital activity	2,990	1,988	973			5,951	3,780
Museum Activities			2,359			2,359	5,261
Office F&E		9,194	1,630			10,824	3,196
Plaques				93		93	56
Premises Major Items	1,188	35,862				37,050	
Premises other costs	1,954	3,035	48		132	5,169	2,422
Printing & publicity	863		354			1,217	3,252
Professional fees	5,096	4,565		22,145		31,806	23,632
Regulatory Costs	576	526				1,102	
Repairs & Maintenance	112	2,228	2,317			4,657	6,387
Sundry Expenditure	40	37				77	
Utilities	929	3,520	6,613			11,062	3,364
Woodlands & estates				1,195		1,195	9,914
Total Expenditure	22,042	62,371	19,687	50,327	192	154,619	98,606
Net Operating Income	6,362	173,245	4,174	31,488	10,583	225,853	22,222
Other Income							
Gains on Investments	3,449			91,641		95,090	(389,595)
Total Other Income	3,449	-	-	91,641	-	95,090	(389,595)
Net Inc/(Exp)	9,811	173,245	4,174	123,129	10,583	320,943	(367,373)
Balance b/f	524,758	-	-	3,292,934	13,618	3,831,310	4,198,683
Transfers	182,420	(173,245)	(4,174)	(5,000)	-	-	-
Balance c/f	716,989	-	-	3,411,063	24,201	4,152,253	3,831,310

These statements have been extracted from the draft Report & Accounts 2023, which were subject to a statutory audit by Westcotts Chartered Accountants. The final document can be downloaded from the SVA website. Investments are managed by Investec W&I and shown at the market value as at 31st December 2023.

Sid Vale Association CIO
Balance Sheet as at 31st December

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Fixed Asset		
Tangible assets		
Buildings	584,756	263,306
Furniture & Equipment	22,663	22,663
Furniture & Equipment Depreciation	(22,663)	(22,663)
Heritage Assets	401	401
Total Tangible assets	<u>585,157</u>	<u>263,707</u>
Non-Current Assets		
Investec Capital	26,964	46,301
Investments	3,221,927	3,035,188
Total Non-Current Assets	<u>3,248,891</u>	<u>3,081,489</u>
Total Fixed Asset	<u>3,834,048</u>	<u>3,345,196</u>
 Cash at bank and in hand		
CAF Cash	237,159	431,971
HSBC Landscape Fund	750	-
HSBC Treasurer's Account	22,014	9,495
Investec Income	26,104	-
Museum account HSBC	16,758	41,582
Petty Cash 1922	396	-
Total Cash at bank and in hand	<u>303,180</u>	<u>483,048</u>
Current Assets		
Stock Asset	8,000	8,000
Sundry Debtors	10,813	3,000
Total Current Assets	<u>18,813</u>	<u>11,000</u>
 Net current assets	<u>321,993</u>	<u>494,048</u>
Creditors: amounts due within one year		
Current Liabilities		
Sundry Creditors	3,788	7,934
Total Creditors: due within one year	<u>3,788</u>	<u>7,934</u>
Net current assets (liabilities)	<u>318,205</u>	<u>486,114</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>4,152,253</u>	<u>3,831,310</u>
 Charity funds		
Designated (Premises)	35,000	30,000
Keith Owen Endowment	3,103,479	3,011,838
Keith Owen Revenue	307,584	281,096
Landscape Fund	24,201	13,618
SVA General Fund	681,989	494,758
Total Charity funds	<u>4,152,253</u>	<u>3,831,310</u>

A Tanner Chair
G Turner Treasurer

Chairman's Review

2023 was a significant year in the history of our organisation. The acquisition and refurbishment of our new headquarters was not without problems but looking back we have all grown stronger working together.

This magazine contains the Annual Reports from the many SVA Activity Groups. On behalf of the Trustees I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers in these groups for the great work they continue to do for Sid Vale Association.

Through 2023 the number of members in our organisation grew significantly, and we hope this trend will carry on. I would like to thank members for their continuing support and give new members a very warm welcome.

Ann Tanner

Editorial

I would like to thank June Diffey and her team for delivering the magazines in 2023. **Please let us know of any change of address/details by email or post** so your magazine gets delivered safely.

The first half of this magazine contains all the SVA AGM reports plus those from SVA activity groups followed by some excellent articles submitted by members.

There are articles on Butterflies and Moths, Commonwealth War Graves in Belgium, the 'Magic' that occurs in the Byes, 'Sticky' the stick insect, the Man from St Helena, Reverend Philip Story - the man who gave us Blackmore Gardens, Sidmouth's First Permanent Cinema, Returning to Salcombe Regis to Remember in November 2023 and a Community Food Forest for Sidmouth People and Wildlife.

The next magazine is due in the autumn. Articles or any queries about writing articles should be sent to the editor by email to publicity@sidvaleassociation.org.uk by mid-September. Articles about people and places in the Sid Valley, coast or sea are accepted at the editor's discretion.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the magazine. As ever, thank you for supporting the SVA.

Val Huntington

SVA Annual Report: Membership

For 2023, our membership increased by 162 new members to 1,930 including 15 new life members. In 2022, we had 105 new members so it is encouraging to see even more people very much interested in joining our organisation and we hope that this increase will continue, the beginning of 2024 is already encouraging.

The leaflet information boxes containing Membership Application Forms at Margaret's Meadow and Peaslands Knapp were still being vandalised.

In 2023 we lost 89 life members and 30 annual members. The three main reasons for leaving were moving away, into care or died.

As of the 1st January 2023, all subscription rates increased but, although all members had been notified of this, many standing orders still went through at the old rates meaning extra work for myself and the Treasurer to chase those members for the outstanding amounts. If you still have a standing order set up to pay your subscription over the next 12 months, please amend it as follows:

- Individual within the Sid Valley £12 (was £8)
- Individual outside of the Sid Valley £15 (was £11)
- Two adults at the same address within the Sid Valley £20 (was £14)
- Two adults at the same address outside of the Sid Valley £22 (was £16)

The new direct debit (DD) system as the preferred means of payment rolled out on the 1st January after a considerable amount of effort by all concerned. As with all new systems, there were teething problems – mainly that some members set up a DD but forgot to cancel their standing orders, so payments were duplicated.

We are in the process of contacting those members to resolve this overpayment, but can we remind members whose DDs have yet to be drawn to ensure that their standing order has been cancelled. Some kind members have converted their overpayments to donations.

June Diffey and her team of magazine distributors have been doing a sterling job, but it would help if you updated us with any changes to your mailing address, telephone number or email addresses, otherwise we cannot run efficiently. We are hoping to use email as our preferred means of contact, so it is important we have the correct details for you. Please send any of the above amendments to:

membership@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Heather Hodge

SVA Annual Report: KOF Grant Award Committee

The SVA Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee met on its regular 2-monthly cycle throughout 2023.

A total of fourteen award applications were received during the year. From these eight awards were made with a total value of £64,000.

This compares favourably with 2022, when seven award applications were received, from which four awards were made with a total value of £34,000. This suggests that many activities across the Sid Valley are recovering post-Covid, reigniting the interest towards making applications to the Keith Owen Fund for grant funding.

Looking back at 2019 further supports this view. 2019 was the last ‘clean year’ before Covid. In this year, there were sixteen award applications received – a number largely comparable with those received in 2023.

The range of awards made in 2023 was varied, and many were communicated through articles in the Sidmouth Herald or in our own SVA magazine. We were pleased to help Sidmouth Girl Guides and the YMCA in the refurbishment of their premises. We made an award towards the Riverside Walkway enhancement, and we thank Nigel Hyman for advising on the elements that this award is supporting. We have helped support young people in the Sid Valley through equipment to assist Sidmouth Youth Centre in their street-based youth work and for kit to help Sid Valley entrants in the Ten Tors challenge to teenagers. We supported the Sid Valley biodiversity group with their very successful Biodiversity Festival. At the end of the year, we were pleased to make a significant award to the Sidmouth Watersports Hub to help repurpose their facility for the changing use of the sea for leisure and relaxation.

In addition, the Keith Owen Fund investment income contributes to the SVA Woodlands and Estates upkeep. Whilst not directly overseen by the Grant Committee, this is also a very worthy part of the SVA Objects and Activities that the Keith Owen Fund helps to support.

From a Grant Committee membership perspective, we were delighted to welcome Pascal Bisson as a new member. Nancy Craven, who has been a part of our committee for a number of years has left us. We thank Nancy for all that she has contributed to the Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee.

Looking back, the first award made by the Keith Owen Fund was in 2008 – and so 2023 represented its 15-year anniversary. Over these 15 years the Fund has made awards

totalling £1.14 million to a wide range of worthy causes throughout the Sid Valley. These awards have been made entirely from the investment income accrued from Keith Owen's incredible bequest – with the capital of the fund being sustained and managed under solid stewardship.

Our request to you as members of the SVA continues - please be active ambassadors of the Keith Owen Fund. If you know of a voluntary organisation considering a worthwhile project needing support and that fits with our SVA Objects – then please point them towards us.

Overall – we are confident that the Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee continues to be a stable, strong and collaborative part of the SVA.

Alan Clarke – on behalf of the Keith Owen Fund Grant Committee.

SVA Annual Report: Publicity

On 20th May we attended Sea Fest, the stand generated a lot of interest in the SVA which resulted in some new members joining. The museum team organised some activities for the children which were greatly enjoyed. (Sea Fest 18th May 2024 come and see us at the SVA stand)

At the AGM on 24th May we announced the acquisition of our new headquarters and extended an invitation to members to come along on the afternoon of 21st June to see the building before refurbishment work began.



In 2023 we agreed to support the SIDBASHERS campaign against the spread of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, the new Sid Valley Ring leaflet and the 2024 Sid Valley Horticultural Show.

For various reasons we had to delay the 2023 Volunteers thank you lunch party until 24th January 2024, it was very well supported. Fort Café supplied a magnificent spread.

Val Huntington

SVA Annual Report: The Knapp

The Knapp was chosen for a bird listening activity in Biodiversity week and continues to attract walkers throughout the year.

The Knapp working party meets every 2 weeks on a Monday from 09:30, we have a team of 10-12 volunteers who help out, this includes Peter Rose on strimmer and Phil Lee on chainsaw who have both been kept very busy. Two contractors have been appointed to work The Knapp the first to work on the Lime Trees following a safety survey above Peaslands Road and the second to start routine thinning in the woodland and shredding of the material for paths.

Peaslands Meadow and steps.

The volunteers have maintained the steps and added new steps to the path up from Peaslands Road. Work is on going to lay the boundary hedges.

The meadow was grazed in spring and autumn by sheep kindly lent to the SVA by Graham Hill. The route from Station Road gate to the meadow has been cut back to allow easier access for the sheep trailer.

The Orchard

Work has begun on a path around the bottom of the Orchard which will eventually give an alternative route around the perimeter of the orchard, to be completed in 2024. The trees have been pruned and boundaries cleared.

The Central Wood

An additional 100 whips were planted in the hedge behind Deans Mead.

Some clearance work has been done including the removal of large fallen willow behind the allotments.

Plans to do more thinning have been put on hold by the illness of our contractor.

Winslade Meadow

The boundaries and newly planted trees are kept clear of weeds by the volunteers.

The meadow was mown for wildflower seeds by Toby Taylor and his crew from RSPB.

Plans for 2024

Complete the work on the lime trees and central woodland either in the spring or next autumn. Graze the Peaslands Meadow in spring and autumn and mow the Winslade Meadow.

Ensure the Knapp is included in the new Visit Sidmouth walking route application.

Jon Ball

SVA Annual Report: Margaret's Meadow & Gilchrist Field & Livonia Field

Seasons change and life goes on at Margaret's Meadow and Gilchrist Field.

We can count on a regular twelve to fifteen volunteers every Monday morning helping to keep them manageable.

Livonia field is thriving. The group has spent many hours cutting back the undergrowth and brambles to bring on the trees, which are mostly Crab Apples.

The Snowdrops on the River Walk let you know Spring is coming.

We have had some damage to the pond fence, also litter left which is sad, but fortunately the moorhens are oblivious to it all.

Every Monday eleven o'clock soon comes round, we meet up back at the shed and invariably another birthday cake appears to complete our morning.

Mike Davies (Margaret's Meadow co-ordinator)

SVA Annual Report: Volunteers Co-ordinator

With some 170 volunteers working for SVA on a range of different activities, the Trustees decided to review their approach to volunteering early in 2023. They invited me to begin the review at that time, using my background in human resources and health & safety management, with the intention of establishing best practice for a charity of its size. I was also appointed to the newly created role as Volunteers Co-ordinator

With the help of many, we have updated policies and procedures, updated risk assessments and introduced a registration system for every volunteer. All SVA volunteers are now registered (or in the process of doing so) which greatly helps with proper communications and ensures our insurance covers their activities. A big thank you is due to everyone who has supported these changes.

Peter Rose

SVA Annual Report: Footpaths and Bridleways

August Bank Holiday weekend was a welcome break for the volunteers as we had all been working very hard keeping down the summer overgrowth which many of our paths are subject to, these are on the annual cutting list which is updated each year.

Bramble growth this summer has been prolific and is uncomfortable if caught on clothing and can give a painful scratch on the skin. As well as strimming and cutting back fallen branches etc. the team also managed to undertake some larger projects.

We had a request from a member of the public regarding the condition of the path which runs from near Sidbury Mill to the Millennium Field alongside the cricket ground. This particular path had become muddy and narrow in places from vegetation overgrowth and was a route used by school children on their way to Sidbury Primary school so they don't have to walk along the A375 which has few pavements along its length.

On closer inspection the short sleeper bridge which crosses the mill leat was showing signs of rot at the ends of the timbers which meant a temporary repair so as not to close the bridge. Replacement sleepers were ordered and delivered a couple of weeks later and the team removed the old timbers and set in the new ones, refixed the handrails which meant one member going into the leat to fix new steel brackets, luckily, he did have a pair of wellington boots on.

The team continued clearing paths during this hot dry spell but by mid-October the weather had changed, and we had a period of heavy showers and prolonged rain although temperatures kept up. This was the time when many reports of fallen trees were being received from walkers, members of the public and our Devon County Council Ranger. The team endeavoured to clear these some being removed over weekends which shows their dedication remembering we are all volunteers.



Other small repairs were also being undertaken such as replacing broken steps and backfilling with hardcore which meant much lifting and carrying.

Coming up to the Christmas period as in every year teams of surveyors are invited to undertake condition surveys of paths in one or more of the 13 areas which cover the whole parish. This in general terms is 60+ miles of paths roughly clockwise from the sea north to East Hill Strips, Putts Corner (Hare and Hounds), and to the A3052 Branscombe Cross and south back to the sea.

The results of their findings I am processing currently as I write this article in February and these will be collated and sent to the County Council Public Rights of Way Team for their records and approval of a maintenance grant.

Whilst I was carrying out my survey in the Sidbury area I was reminded that we are coming up to the lambing season. A farmer who has fields with a footpath nearby and a path which crosses his field has mounted photographs on large boards displaying mutilation of ewes and lambs. Dogs attacking sheep is obviously illegal but it means that if we expect the farming community to support walkers then we must respect their livestock by keeping dogs on leads at all times near farm animals.

I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to all the volunteers who help with maintaining our path network, the support of the Town Council P3 Committee and the kind words of appreciation from walkers met whilst maintaining paths.

Phil Bradbury - SVA Footpaths & Parish Path Partnership (P3) Coordinator

SVA Annual Report: Planning

The SVA's Planning Group considers and comments on individual planning and tree works applications in the Sid Valley. Our aim is to make a positive difference to the quality of planning consents granted by East Devon District Council. We comment on the scale, architectural merit and impact of proposals on our special landscape and historic village and townscapes. By maintaining and improving the quality of our environment, the Sid Vale will continue to be a wonderful place to live, work and enjoy.

Recent examples where we have opposed applications include:

Former Council Offices, Sidmouth "The Knowle"

We objected to the application for another retirement living and Care complex, which EDDC then refused. A revised application has been submitted and is being opposed that too mainly because of its scale, loss of trees and adverse impact on the neighbourhood.



We have opposed plans to convert the site manager's house into a permanent house and replace areas of the camping site with static caravans. We felt this would have an adverse impact on the Salcombe Regis environment and could lead to conversion of the whole site to permanent residential use. These applications have been refused by EDDC. The new owners have made further planning applications and appeals.

We have opposed the current proposals from EDDC for a limited number of toilets to replace those being lost at Port Royal by the proposed Rockfish development. Although we welcome the inclusion of toilets for disabled and other people, we continue to oppose the current application because we feel the location will have an adverse impact on the streetscape, as an “off the shelf” design which has little regard to the area and there simply won’t be enough toilets to cater for the needs of the town.

EDDC's Local Plan 2020-2040

This is a 20-year strategic plan for housing, employment, biodiversity etc. EDDC's proposals will shape the future of the whole of East Devon. We carefully considered those likely to affect the Sid Valley. To date we have opposed the proposed development sites focused around Sidbury, Sidford and Sidmouth. The next stage of this long process is a further consultation and a "public enquiry" in 2025. We hope to be invited by the Planning Inspector, so the voice of the Sid Vale is represented.

Would you be interested in joining the SVA's Planning Group? We are currently looking for people with an interest in architecture and town planning. If you think you would like to contribute, please contact Philip Wragg by email on philip@wragg.co.uk.

Philip Wragg



Please encourage your friends to join the SVA
Membership forms can be downloaded from
www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk
or pick up from one of the boxes in the Knapp,
Margaret's Meadow of the Museum.

SVA Annual Report: Museum

Our winter team of volunteers worked tirelessly from November 2022 onwards for the museum to be ready to open in March. On 9th March the Sidmouth Forum visited (this counts as our Access Audit, the group point out, for example, where more labelling in displays would improve the visitor experience). The SVA Members preview was in the afternoon of 26th the day before we opened to the public on the 27th. The preview was very well attended, our thanks to SVA members for their continued support.

2023 was another successful year for the museum, our visitor numbers increased, and we received some excellent visitor reviews.

From the day we opened it was clear that visitors were enjoying the new season's displays. During the season we had visits from Sidmouth Primary School, many students from the Sidmouth International School, U3a groups, local Brownies and Beavers plus some special museum guided tours, talks and walks.

From late May through to September a team of museum volunteers worked extra shifts at the new headquarters clearing and cleaning ahead of the Archives move from Fore Street in August and so the general refurbishment work could begin.

Meanwhile at Fore Street the Archives and Collections team worked diligently packing the archives, maps, newspapers, paintings, photos and prints ready for the move in early August.

The summer and autumn Children's Activity Days were a great success, thanks to Margaret Regan and all the volunteers for their work both before and on the event days.

I would like to say a special thank you to Nigel Hyman who, throughout the year, gave talks to various groups at many different locations, flying the flag for the museum and also generating income.

The season closed on Saturday 28th October.

Early in November we held a debriefing meeting for the museum volunteers to review the past season and share their suggestions for improvements. This was a very productive session which we will repeat in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank our whole team of museum volunteers for their dedicated and exceptional work in 2023.

Ann Tanner

Children's Activity Days

I have been responsible for organising the 2023 SVA Children's Activity Days.

Our first Activity Day in 2023 was held in the churchyard of Sidmouth Parish church and was based around the theme of Sun, Sea and Sunny Days. Thankfully the sun really shone, and we had the perfect day. About 120 children attended and took part in a variety of activities.

Jo Earlam, a local children's author, came and read stories to the children. Guy, one of our local lifeguards, gave talks about seaside safety and the Rockfish Café gave away children's games packs which proved to be very popular.

The children enjoyed stone painting, making foam pictures of the sea and fossil rubbing, there was also a story tent and skin art. We had a Feely Box game, guessing items from the beach and the always popular "Splat the Rat".

The second Activity Day was in October held in the Parish Church. We would like to thank the church for all the support they are giving us with Activity Days.

The theme for October was "things from the museum" and we selected themes that we thought would be of interest to the children.

There was peg doll making, blue plaque designing, a table about food rationing in the war and a very kind lady from Axe Lace Making Group demonstrated lace making and allowed the children to try themselves. Skin Art was again very popular, the queue was getting longer and longer, definitely an attraction to have at every event.



At the end the day the Ceilidh Group Pila Pala with their caller Olly entertained the children (and adults) who had a wonderful time dancing.



My thanks to all the volunteers who were involved in planning and those who worked tirelessly on both days to make them such a great success.

Margaret Regan

SVA Annual Report: IT and Website

In 2023, the move of the HQ to No 12 Church Street required some investment in our IT infrastructure. The extensive rewiring and building works allowed us to install a modern audio-visual system covering the whole of the ground floor. We intend to use this system for the monthly talks programme later this year and expect to develop some new initiatives for other types of member events. Whilst the ceiling was down, we also took the opportunity of installing a through building WiFi Internet system to give us more reliable communications.

Across the road at the Museum, the TV displays have been updated with new material supporting the new exhibits. The TVs have proved quite popular with our visitors since they were introduced back in 2021 and display a wealth of information that we wouldn't have room otherwise to show. A new till system at the Museum should simplify life for our team of stewards and provide better information to our busy Treasurer.

The website remains largely as it has been for the last few years, containing an introduction to many of the facets of the work the SVA undertakes, whilst giving some News updates on the front page and listing forthcoming events for members. As most members will know, we also send out newsletters by email two or three times a month listing forthcoming events, and here work has been successful at increasing the number of members the system can reach. If you would like to be added to this circulation, all we need is an email address for your household, which you can email to our Membership Secretary at membership@sidvaleassociation.org.uk

Gary Cross

SVA Annual Report: Talks, Walks & Publications

SVA Talks 2023

Held in All Saints Hall. Two were combined with another group (see below).

Attendances for all were very good, averaging about 80 and up to 10% non-members.

- Jan 11 Sampson: Sidmouth's prolific architect by Martin Mallinson
- Feb 8 Sidmouth and the Sid Valley: Old film footage 1950s to 1980 by Nigel Hyman
- Mar 15 Your East Devon Pebblebed Heaths by Kim Strawbridge
- Apr 12 (With Devon Gardens Trust) Georgian Arcadia: Architecture for the Park and Garden by Roger White
- Sep 13 Knowle: From Stately Pleasure Dome to Burnt Remains by Rab Barnard
- Oct 11 Science Festival/ SVA Sidmouth Amphitheatre: A flood defence in plain sight by Paul Hargreaves & Gloria Rugual Munoz
- Nov 15 Sidmouth Then and Now by Steve Jellyman

Museum Walks

Town (9 Walk Leaders) Mondays/Tuesday/Thursdays

Geology (2 Walk Leaders) Wednesdays

Tree (with Arboretum, 2 Walk Leaders) Fridays

Countryside Walks

1st Tuesday of the month 10.00-12.30

Steve Haynes passed over the walks to Martin Pratt and Hugh Sutherland in April.

Highly successful with often approaching 20 taking part. 12 regulars and a pool of 73 who have walked. It is well advertised.

Excursions

On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank Stephen Pemberton for organising the SVA Excursions his dedication and commitment were greatly appreciated.

Publications

There were no new publications in 2023, the two new titles below were prepared in 2023 for printing in early 2024.

Archaeology Guide to the Sid Valley and East Devon by Laura Beckwith
Sidmouth and Sid Valley - Notable Buildings by Nigel Hyman

Nigel Hyman

SVA Annual Report: History Group

The Beach – Brian Golding, Nigel Hyman

Brian revisited the history of the Sidmouth shoreline. He pointed out that the seaward boundary point in the 1322 deed would have been at the sea's edge. Since it is close to today's high tide mark, it appears that the tide mark in the bay has not changed significantly since that time, whereas the surrounding cliffs have probably retreated about 100m. Nigel opened a discussion on boat building. It seems that the Conant family were the boat builders, we have references in 1779 and from 1838-1878.

Sid Valley cemeteries – Ian Simpson

Ian Simpson led several discussions based on his surveys of Sid Valley cemeteries, which are now lodged with the Devon Record Office and the Devon Family History Society. His final survey was of burials at Sidbury Chapel. The chapel has records from 1820 to its closure in 1999.

An exciting find was the presence of an early dissenting chapel at Sandcombe above the Roncombe Valley, probably dating from 1664-5, when Charles II's parliament introduced restrictions on protestant worship outside the Church of England. The building is currently used as a barn, but its windows clearly show its earlier function.



*The old Sandcombe dissenting chapel
built about 1665*

Ian highlighted the burials of James Edwin Hooke, 1816-1884, who spent much of his life as a baker in London, and Edward Stanford, who founded Stanfords the London map sellers in 1853, and came to live at Helens in 1887. Margaret Ankens was also interested in the Hooke family – particularly Joseph Hooke, miller at the Mill House next to the ford, 1816-30. Margaret consulted the group to proof-read her book on the 19th Century Sidmouth census returns for ordinary people.

An outside enquiry led to a discussion about Clement Hartnell's wartime service. Ian identified several Hartnell memorials in Sidbury cemetery, while Nigel located aspects of his civilian life, including his son's birth in 1939.

Sid Valley Landscape History – Ed Dolphin

Ed led discussions on the spread of farming. There is evidence that Gilchrist Field has been cultivated since Neolithic times. Whereas the Bronze Age barrows on the hill tops are very visible, recent excavations have revealed evidence of bronze age farming activity in the valley.

Ed also reported his research into the planting at Bicton, including the original history of the Araucaria (monkey puzzle) avenue, grown from seeds brought back in 1828 by McCrae for the Horticultural Society. Christine Horth was also researching Bicton – James Barnes, who was gardener in 1842. He was well known in national gardening circles but was sacked by John Rolle for not doing his job. Barnes subsequently successfully sued Rolle.

Interesting Sidmouthians – Nigel Hyman

Nigel led a discussion on the artist Richard Bevis (1824-96), based on a recent book of his works. Born in Exmouth, he moved to Sidmouth when he was 4 years old. From the age of six, he drew on the walls of their home. He was encouraged by Rev'd Heineken, the unitarian minister, who provided drawing materials. When aged 20 he left for London and became a successful artist. He married Laura Rafarel, grand daughter of Claude Rafarel, who fled France during the Revolution and settled in Sidmouth as an expert pastry chef.

Maps – Brian Golding

Brian led a discussion on early maps of Sidmouth. The first Ordnance Survey was at 3 inches to the mile which is rather coarse. The manor map of 1790 and the tithe map of 1840 are probably more useful in Sidmouth. The 1804 manor map is the best for Salcombe Regis. A discussion on the origin of the name Land Part was inconclusive. It is believed that this was originally the Ascerton farmstead, which had disappeared by 1800. It was always separated from Sidmouth by the glebelands.

Other items – Peter Bloomfield, Barbie Moul

Peter reported on the archives of Sidmouth Bowling Club (SBC), which include minute books, photographs and playing records. It was formed in 1908, became moribund in WW1, and moved to its current location in 1922.

Barbie described her research into the history of Escot House. She is currently working on the 17th Century when the Young family owned it.

Brian Golding

Butterflies and Moths

Moving to the much larger building in Church Street has allowed the SVA to review its very important archive of local materials. One set that has not been able to receive full attention before is a group of wooden cases containing butterflies and moths collected in the middle of the last century.

Whatever you might think about the old practice of collecting and pinning butterflies and moths in display cases, these collections can provide important data for modern environmental scientists. If we can establish where and when the specimens were caught, it can provide a baseline for modern researchers wanting to know how things have changed, which species used to live here and have now disappeared.

We think the different cabinets were collected by different people and some were definitely not collected locally, we don't see Painted Jezebels (*Delias hierta*) flying around Sidmouth, well not the Chinese butterfly anyway.

We do know that at least one set of moths was collected locally by a Mr R F Holmes, and he was collecting between 1936 and 1945. Unfortunately, there are no paper records and there will need to be some detective work to obtain the maximum benefit from the collections.

Starting with R F Holmes enquiries through local Facebook groups established that he was a local man who lived in Water Lane and helped at the Museum when it was housed in Woolcombe House.

Some of the moth cases are of mainly specialist interest as most of the specimens are small, fawn and brown moths that only a Lepidopterist could identify. The Hawk Moth trays are more spectacular. It is perhaps ironic that one case has a line of three Death's Head Hawk Moths each with a pin stabbed through the skull markings on their thoraxes.



Death's Head Hawk Moths

[illegible]

Devon Wildlife Trust is engaged in a survey currently looking for Brown Hairstreak butterflies. Local citizen scientists have failed to find any in the Sid Valley. There are two beautifully iridescent Green Hairstreaks in R F Holmes' collection but no Browns. Did he find some that have since been destroyed, we will probably never know.

Ed Dolphin

Around Christmas 2023 my husband and I were looking at old family photos, as the storage boxes they were in had become stained with condensation.

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I had never met my Grandmother Gertie because she had died the year before I was born. I knew that she had a brother George who went to Belgium to work on the war-graves and that he was due to meet the King, when His Majesty George V came to visit the War-Graves site, but something happened, and George didn't meet the King and another Sidmouthian took his place.

I was sure the man in this photo was Uncle George for in later life he always wore a large-brimmed hat. I didn't know much about the war graves in Belgium other than the headstones were extremely white and that they were in rows which produced an immense feeling of emotion. I had come across Commonwealth War Graves in cemeteries in south west London, my home now, the simplicity of the dressed white stone with a cross and the deceased details were moving and majestic amongst the local grave stones.

It was in 1922 that King George V came to visit the War Graves Commission sites in Belgium. The British War cemeteries on the Western Front were designed with the intention of being not just a pretty place. There were principles in the design and devices were employed so that there was a sense of being in the landscape. These principles were reflected in the earliest ideas by Sir Edwin Lutyens for the War Grave Commission which was founded by Fabian Webb. The Commission made the ribbon of cemeteries permanent, and everything was designed, from the White Portland Gravestones with the Cross of Sacrifice. The cemeteries have an active relationship with the landscape to keep stories alive. The cemeteries perimeter walls served as frames and architects used devices to lift visitors' gaze thus the perimeter walls were not too high to disconnect.

At Tyne Cot, the horizon at Ypres is seen, as designed by Herbert Baker the architect of Tyne Cot. When King George V toured Tyne Cot he said, *"Keep the Bunker"*. The site was laid out around the graves nearest to the blockhouse. King George V asked for the blockhouse to remain, and it was as a pyramid of stepped stones and words in bronze on a small concrete square 'This was the Tyne Cot Blockhouse' the words were by Kipling. On the top at Tyne Cot was a cross. Junior architects were given responsibility here (1).



Norma Cox

(1) From notes made during a NAM lecture (10/11/23) 'A Guiding Point: Designing British War Cemeteries' by Dr Tim Godden. Kent University.

The magic that happened when you clear a bramble patch

Monday morning volunteers in the Byes have many tasks. We plant trees, mend steps and fences and keep the paths clear of undergrowth. One of our most satisfying jobs was clearing a patch of ground between the river and the pond in Gilchrist. It was completely overgrown with brambles and nothing much else seemed able to grow there. We spent two years methodically removing them and gradually other plants started to appear. This summer it was a riot of colour as red campion flourished there instead.



By clearing patches of ground and keeping the grasses down we are making spaces for a greater diversity of plants to thrive. Each year we seem to have more flower species appearing in Margaret's Meadow and Gilchrist. At the beginning of the year we have snowdrops and aconites. Then as the year moves on the meadows are filled with buttercups, yellow rattle and birdsfoot trefoil and in a quiet corner you can find orchids. Gradually over the summer they are joined by the lovely purple knapweed.

PS. For those of you who enjoy blackberrying in the summer there's no need to worry there are plenty of brambles left!

Naomi Lott

Sticky - our stick insect

We moved to Fortescue in Sidmouth last April, on a rainy spring day, with lots of colourful tulips blooming in the front garden.

In July our new window cleaner came in and asked me to look at something on the window frame - and we both agreed that this large insect sitting there looked like one of those stick insects that children used to keep at school in glass tanks - ie a stick insect. But surely not living wild in our temperate climate?

I then looked online for information about these insects in Britain, and the first site that came up was Cornish stick insects, full of interesting facts. It appears that stick insects have been living in sheltered areas of the UK, especially Cornwall and South Devon, for the past hundred years or so, and are thought to have been introduced by the importing of exotic plants from New Zealand and other warmer climes. The many tiny eggs they lay would have been in the soil around the plants. The insects living in Britain are all females and produce thousands of eggs without needing a male to fertilise them, a process called parthenogenesis.

They are now considered indigenous, and Malcolm Lee, who runs the website, is keen to record any stick insects spotted, so that he can add them to his numbers. "Sticky" (imaginatively named!) was the first recorded in Sidmouth apparently. He identified it as a green adult Unarmed Stick insect.

He/she settled quickly on to the straggly climbing rose by the window, a constant food source, and stayed there for the whole summer, never moving to another plant, but moving from branch to branch. Sometimes it was so well-camouflaged that we thought it had gone, but later was spotted.



Predictably, it disappeared with the first hard frost before Christmas - they only live for a year apparently. So, we await the warmer months when we may see some offspring - or maybe not?

If you are interested to read more, the website is www.phasmidstudygroup.org

Ruth Bryant

A man from St Helena

Head up through the town to Temple Street and just past the Spar shop you'll find the iron gates to Sidmouth Cemetery. It was here that Robert Stroud's grave was found in the higher level above the chapel.

Known as Bobby he arrived in England in 1958 and died in Sidmouth on the twenty-first of November 2001.

In many ways his life mirrored that of many of his ten siblings by leaving his remote mountainous home, just 16 km by 10km, to work in Britain where, as citizens of a British Overseas territory, they have rights to reside. Until an airport, carved out of volcanic rock in 2017, came into service the only way to get there was via a five day sea voyage from South Africa.

On a visit to Ascension Island in the middle of the Atlantic I was asked by conservation officer Stedson Stroud MBE to locate his brother Bobby's grave and I was able to send him a photograph. Stedson himself had come to England working for the Earl of Bradford, joining the Merchant Navy and finally to Ascension Island. His hobby there took him to Buckingham Palace where the Queen made him an MBE for services to conservation of flora and fauna in the challenging terrain of St Helena and Ascension Island.

Bobby returned to St Helena with his brother Lionel when Stedson was five years old while being employed on Ascension Island repairing the American airstrip there, living in Tent City now the American Base. Bobby's working life here in Sidmouth was at the Belmont Hotel on the west end of the sea front. His brother recalls him as a very quiet man who only spoke when he was spoken to but he was considered a good worker. He lodged first with Mrs Glasspoole and later lived in Lymebourne Park.

During his time in Sidmouth he would take his holidays with his sister Hazel in Leicestershire and with Stedson who was then working in London. This was a happy time for them both giving Bobby time to get to know his brother and for Stedson listening to Bobby playing the harmonica which he loved so much. There were also reunions with his other sisters, also resident in England, Edna, Ivy, Diana, and Enid.



Then came the lost years when he left his job and lost contact with his family. His mother was sad that he didn't write for many years. He was eventually found by the owners of the Belmont Hotel together with the Salvation Army living on the streets of London and was brought back to the hotel where he worked for the rest of his life. His brother reports that the owner was a very nice man and liked Bobby very much. His sister Enid, now 86, describes him as a quiet humble brother who was dearly loved by all his siblings.

There are 4439 habitants on St Helena as of the 2022 census and even after all these years its inhabitants are still leaving to work abroad either in the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island or Britain but nearly always seem to make their way back home again.

Liz Dicker

Sidmouth Museum's Butterfly Collection

Originally, a museum was a "temple or shrine of the muses". The "Muses" were the Greek goddesses of literature, science and the arts. In December 2023, I volunteered to be a temporary assistant, to the goddesses of the Sidmouth shrine, of butterflies.

On March 25th the museum opens the door to a fresh season, amongst the displays will be a selection of their butterfly collection.

In the 17th century, collecting butterflies became a popular pastime. Rich and privileged explorers left these shores to travel to exotic lands. There, they collected examples of the local flora and fauna, including butterflies. These were often pressed in written diaries, but some were displayed in "cabinets of curiosities", on their return.

Fast forward to the 1960's, and butterfly collecting was still a popular hobby. I spent hours as a young boy with my butterfly net, observing and learning about nature. In those early years, I had no guilt about placing an insect in my "killing jar". The dead butterfly was later placed in a relaxing tin (a moist environment) and then "pinned and set" to be added to my collection.

At the age of ten, I was able to purchase a bottle of chloroform over the chemist's counter, for a small amount of pocket money. There was no "Health and Safety" official to question whether I was "gassing grannies"!

Society changed rapidly in the 1960's and 70's. Conservation movements quite rightly educated us to think differently about our environment. Cameras became more

sophisticated, and eventually, more reasonably priced. The lens replaced the net, to capture the insects.

Loft spaces in homes often contain childhood memories, and many collections of butterflies could be found there after the 1970's. By the time the owners died, the collections had often been destroyed by the carpet beetle larva, known as the “woolly bear”. These long living, hungry creatures can turn a beautiful “Swallowtail” butterfly into brown dust. Some collections in tight fitting boxes, with naphthalene moth balls to ward off hungry larvae survived and were donated to museums for display.



Damage by carpet beetle larva

Sidmouth museum has, over many years, had butterfly, and other insect collections, donated. A lot of the butterflies are from the continent, as well as the UK.

The museum butterfly display will show examples of a number of the 44 species seen and recorded in Devon in 2023. Some of these are migrant, non-resident butterflies. The “Painted Lady”, a common visitor to Sidmouth and beyond, is a non-resident, and spends winters south of the Sahara Desert, in Central Africa. Visit the museum, find out how it navigates a passage from Kenya to Iceland, at speeds of 30mph, and heights of 2,000 feet.

One of the smaller butterflies in the collection is the “Silver-studded Blue”. It has a close relationship with ants. The larva produces sugar to feed worker ants, who then escort the small creature back to the ant colony. They protect it overnight, and escort it outside in the morning!



Silver-studded

The largest family of butterflies in the museum are called “Brush footed” (Nymphalidae). Their fore legs are reduced in size and the feet have been replaced by hairbrushes. They use these for smell and taste. A lot of familiar UK butterflies are from this family, for example, the beautiful “Peacock”.

The museum will have on display, a large number of brightly coloured, international specimens. Some of these are impressive in size, as well as beauty

I have written some “butterfly basics” for children and beginners, using terms like “caterpillar” and “chrysalis”, and even “feeler” (antenna)! These notes will be

accompanied by information on life cycles, hibernation, migration and even a bit of interesting anatomy!

For example, adult butterflies actually have a “heart” in their wings, as well as their main heart.

We are hoping to educate and inspire, as well as reminding people of the beauty that surrounds us every day.

Simon Papworth

Reverend Philip Story - the man who gave us Blackmore Gardens

In the SVA's 'A Guide to the Blue Plaques' John McCarthy wrote:

'Detailed archival research by the Arts Society Sidmouth found that in 1813 the Reverend Philip Story purchased 2 acres from this larger estate (Blackmore Fields) for £2,500 and built Blackmore Hall....'

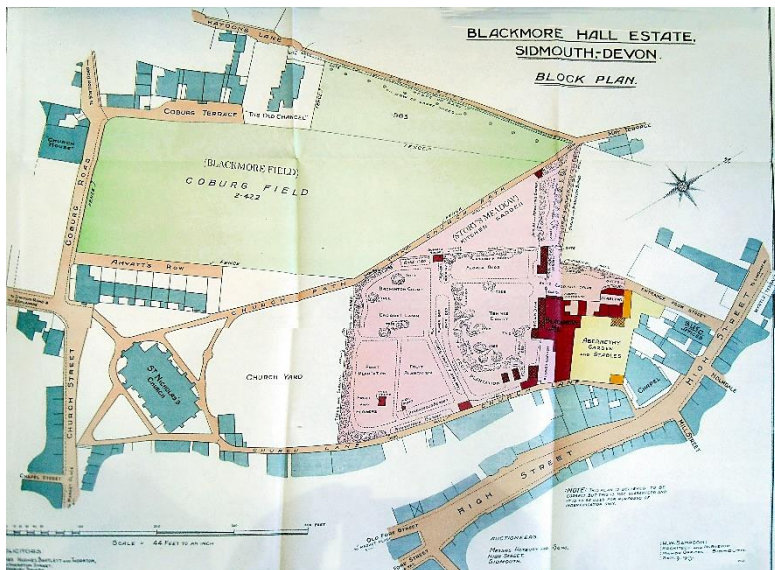
Without him we would not have Blackmore Gardens today, yet Reverend Philip Laycock Story (1747-1819) fails to gain a mention on EDDC's information board. So, who was he?

His father, John Story, was High Sheriff of Nottingham. Reverend Story spent 7 years at Jesus College, Cambridge, was ordained in 1776 and appointed rector of Walton on the Wolds as well as vicar of Lockington in Leicestershire where he may have lived in the Hall. He also worked as a JP and at thirty married a parson's daughter and had 14 children.

Through his cousin once removed and being related to both the wealthy Bainbridge's of Leicestershire and the Laycocks of Nottinghamshire, in 1797 the Reverend Story inherited at least 2 estates - Lockington Hall near Castle Donnington in Leicestershire and Woodborough Hall north-east of Nottingham. He immediately undertook a major remodelling of Lockington, adding an attic storey, stuccoing, a colonnade, and sashes. At Woodborough the old gable and tiled roof were removed and again another storey added, most likely by Reverend Philip. The additions to Lockington can be explained by his large family but Woodborough was usually let so perhaps he just liked improving properties. Once the children were grown, building a brand new house in a fashionable sea bathing resort may well have appealed.

However, in 1813 it would have taken between 3 and 6 days to cover the 200 miles between Lockington and Sidmouth by carriage. Whilst the Storys could afford multiple changes of horses and hence achieve over 60 miles a day, the roads were rough going and easily affected by weather. More of an expedition than a journey! That the Fosse Way runs from Leicester to Exeter virtually in a straight line, may have influenced their choice of Sidmouth over, say, Brighton.

Eschewing the Regency Gothic of Salcombe Lodge (1810) or the Royal Glen Hotel (1809) yet towards the end of the feverish activity which brought us Peak House (1793), Fortfield Terrace (1790–95) and Herbert Cornish's Long Picture, in 1814 Reverend Story built Blackmore Hall (sadly demolished in 1955) and established the gardens. Reportedly purchased with a third party, let in 1816 and bequeathed to three friends and relatives who promptly sold it on his death ... Blackmore may have been as much a depository for spare money as it was a holiday home. Nonetheless, it proved a valuable investment in our future enjoyment.



Blackmore Hall 1913 auction plan by RW Sampson showing the site of the house.

For it is only because Reverend Philip Story created flower and kitchen gardens (Story's Meadow) for his house here, and Sidmouth Urban District Council later had the foresight to preserve them 'as a *Public Park or Pleasure Grounds*', that we have this beautiful legacy in the heart of our town rather than a multi-storey monstrosity.

Angela Charnock, née Story

Sidmouth's First Permanent Cinema

Local photographer Arthur W. Ellis was well-known in the town for his slide shows and moving pictures which he presented at various venues. He decided that Sidmouth needed a more permanent, purpose-built cinema and employed renowned local architect R. W. Sampson to convert the lower part of a property in Fore Street. This building had been in use as retail premises with flats above, and part of it was now the disused Belle Vue Restaurant. Sampson converted it into the entrance and foyer leading to the cinema auditorium, which was built on land at the rear.

It opened on 17th February 1913 with a film entitled "Under Two Flags". A quote from the press on opening night: "To the locals it must seem that the luxury of a London West End Picture House had been transported to Sidmouth". This early silent cinema served the people of Sidmouth and surrounding areas, continuing through the First World War and well into the 1920's. It became affectionately known as "Ellis's Little Cinema".

The venture was so successful that Ellis decided to build a bigger cinema, The Grand, at the top of the town in the High Street. It was also a building that could accommodate the new "Talking Picture" craze. Ellis's Little Cinema closed on Saturday 2nd February 1929, when the last silent film "Sons of the Sea" flickered across the screen. The building then became used for various ventures before 'Knights' a clothing outfitter transformed the whole building, plus the shop next door, into their premises. It remained in this use until 2010 when the whole building was once again converted, this time into the clothes retailer 'Fat Face'.

Many changes have taken place since it's cinema days; false walls, ceilings and staircases but many of the original features are still visible, including plaster work on the side walls and proscenium.

My model is based on old photographs, descriptions in the local press from its opening night and viewing what is left of the original.

John Griffiths



Returning to Salcombe Regis to Remember, November 2023

I so enjoyed my return visit to St Mary & St Peters, Salcombe Regis just before Remembrance Day this year. The church looked splendid, and it was an apt time to come back to remember my grandfather Brigadier Charles Churchill Crick OBE. Known as the “Brigadier” he was commissioned into the Indian Army and served in both the World Wars as well as on the North West Frontier (Waziristan), in Aden and Persia. He retired to Sidmouth in 1945. In 1947 he started his service to the church and served as church warden for twenty-five years until 1972. He served three Vicars and is remembered along with my grandmother in the south facing window of the church. They are both buried some yards from the window by the wall in the church yard. Back in the 1960s I was living near Sidbury and as a young boy, from about the age of five, I would accompany my grandfather each Sunday morning in his black Morris Minor car to Salcombe Regis arriving at 7.30am in time for Holy Communion at 8am. I would spend the morning at the church, and we would return home once we had set everything straight after the 11am Matins service. Needless to say, I learnt all the prayers and many hymns by heart! The vicar in those days was Donald Peyton-Jones who was a charming man. He often took pity on me and allowed me to spend the morning in the vicarage which was a lot warmer and more comfortable than the church!

My parents, sister and I left the area in 1967 and the Brigadier moved from our house into the Elizabeth Hotel in Sidmouth where he stayed until shortly before his death in 1973. Following his retirement from the army he was very active in the community particularly with the Rotary Club and the Royal British Legion. He also served as Chairman of Sidmouth Urban District Council and was presented to the Queen when she visited Devon in 1956.



As a Devonian I cherished my days in Devon and latterly followed in my grandfather's footsteps also serving for a period of time as a soldier. I have many happy memories of my grandfather and of Salcombe Regis. It is a very special place for both my grandparents to be at rest. Revisiting the day before Armistice Day to Remember them was very poignant.

“Lest We Forget”

John D. Campbell OBE

A Community Food Forest for Sidmouth People and Wildlife



In 2014 the SVA Keith Owen Fund made an award towards the Preschool Buzz Garden at Sidford. Sadly, the Sidford Preschool didn't survive the ravages of Covid - but thankfully the garden has and is now being adapted to become a food forest for the local community.

Alan Clarke – Chairman, Keith Owen Fund

Sidmouth Community Food Forest is emerging from the Buzz Garden that was built on the EDDC land behind the children's playground at Sidford. Its aim is to convert the quarter of an acre of partly wooded grassland into a food forest for both people and wildlife. The results of volunteer days are beginning to show results.

The fencing, pond and the remaining planting has been retained. One hedge has been laid, with plans to rotationally layer all the hedges in time. And more plants have been added.



Food Forests traditionally comprise seven layers with each layer growing food for humans, wildlife and improving biodiversity.

High in the established birch trees there are bat boxes. Below this layer is the lower tree layer. In our case we have planted fruit trees - mulberry, elderberry, plum and fig whilst on the adjacent plot there is a mix of crab and culinary apples.

Next comes the shrub layer of blackcurrants plus unusual veg such as perennial kale ... that many might not regard as true shrubs ... that thrive for years, providing feed for cabbage whites in summer and humans in winter.

Our herbaceous layer comprises a range of plants including mint, which is great for pollinators, raspberries that are loved by humans, magnificent cardoons, squash, Alexanders, Hablitzia tamnoides and a mix of herbs. Under these plants is the rhizosphere layer full of root crops such as Jerusalem Artichokes, Apios americana and other wonderful perennial veg.





On the soil surface are strawberries and a range of wildflowers and other plants that are edible yet rarely eaten. Have you tried the leaves of dandelions in a salad? What about *Cardamine hirsuta*, aka hairy bittercress, it adds a wonderful pepperiness to salads. Buckshorn plantain is another culinary delight many people never experience!

As for climbers, a few hops have been planted and grapes are being considered. They will be joined by other climbers and scramblers in due course.

Food forests take a while to establish and ours is very young. But we have already started to harvest food from it, and so have the local wildlife. In the longer term we will see the forest flourish, but it will take many decades to reach maturity.

In the meantime, on a recent visit, I was able to sit and listen to a wren in the tangle of discarded buddleia branches we pruned last year. Bees were visiting the primroses and the frogs have already spawned. Early butterflies were apparent, and buds were bursting in the hedges. This may not be Eden, but it feels very close to it.

Stefan Drew

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 funds and the information they need to supply to support their application.



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

2024 Diary Dates

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

COUNTRYSIDE WALKS

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

Check our web page at www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk and see posters on notice-boards for latest information

MUSEUM GUIDED WALKS

Every weekday morning until the end of the season. Start 10.30 from the museum and last about 2 hours. FREE to SVA members. Register for walk in the museum. For further details www.sidmouthmuseum.co.uk

TALKS

Talks will be resumed in September held at 12 Church Street, Sidmouth, EX10 8LY

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

HISTORY GROUP

The group meets every second month on a Monday for more details see our web page at www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY DAYS

Thursday 15th August held in the Churchyard, Sidmouth Parish Church

Thursday 31st October held in Sidmouth Parish Church

THE SVA STAND WILL BE AT THE FOLLOWING EVENTS:

Saturday 18th May SEA FEST held at the Ham, Sidmouth

Thursday 30th May SALCOMBE REGIS FAIR held at Salcombe Regis Church

Saturday 14th September SIDBURY FAIR held in the Churchyard

Further details of the above will be available on www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk

The Sid Vale Association CIO, 12 Church Street, Sidmouth EX10 8LY

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

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