

Minutes of 7th AGM, Pearson Hall, 20 November 2010

1. **CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME:** Bob Hine welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **APOLOGIES:** Apologies had been received from Sally Hughes, Alvin Rakoff and Sharon Robinson.
3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:** The minutes of the AGM, held on 21 November 2009, previously distributed, were unanimously agreed to be an accurate record on the proposal of Gordon Barnett, seconded by Mike Hart.
4. **BRIEF REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS**
 - a) **Chairman:** Bob Hine said that he was very pleased with the way that the Executive Committee was pulling together. There had been two new members in key positions, both of whom now had a year's experience under their belts. The Society had continued to hold some excellent social activities, organised by Penny Feathers and her Social Committee. He thanked everyone involved for their hard work, which was greatly appreciated.
 - b) **Planning & Traffic:** Gary Robinson drew attention to his report, which was contained in the Annual Report 2009/10. He commented on the excellent work being carried out by the HGV Survey team, led by Ken Peters, and issued a plea for volunteers to assist with this important work. He added that the work of the joint Sonning Parish Council and the Society's Highways Group was to be described in the next edition of *Bridge* and encouraged people to consider getting involved for the benefit of the village.
 - c) **Education:** Diana Coulter said that if local head teacher and Panel member, Lesley Green, were to prepare an end of year report on the performance of the Panel it would read 'could try harder'. There are only three member of the Panel and conflicting commitments meant that meetings were few and far between. Despite this, the Panel had kept the noticeboard up to date, produced four editions of *Bridge* and the Annual Report. She said that they needed more people to get involved, either with some of the chores or to come up with ideas for events and articles for *Bridge*. Next year, the Panel would be looking for a 'gold star'.
 - d) **Social Committee:** Penny Feathers said her written report gave details of the Social Committee's work during the year. She thanked everyone for their efforts in staging the evening, which involved new hostesses and bar staff. Carole Barnett was singled out for thanks. She had masterminded the menu and meals for the Summer Luncheon and AGM over the past six years but now wanted to step back. Penny Feathers said that she would be a great loss. At this point, Bob Hine called Carole Barnett forward and presented her with a gift in appreciation of all her hard work.
5. **TREASURER'S REPORT:** Alan Furness said that the financial report for the year to 31 August 2010 was set out in the Annual Report 2009/10. He invited questions but there were none. Bob Hine said that Alan Furness does a sterling job with the Society's accounts. He operates within a tight budget, which has allowed subscription rates to remain unchanged for a further year. Bob Hine went on to say that *Village Voices* continues to live on with several new initiatives. It had transferred successfully to the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading for a three-month run. There was to be a book and the equipment used in the recording of interviews was to be made available for others to use. Copies of the DVD were still available, which Judy Baldwin would be selling during the evening. He suggested that they would make excellent Christmas gifts.
6. **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:** Bob Hine said that the Society was grateful for the work that Allan Williams does in reviewing the accounts and for agreeing to continue as Independent Examiner. He added that Allan Williams had said to him that his review was relatively easy because of the excellent job that Alan Furness does in keeping the accounts.
7. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** At this point, the Society's President, John Edmonds, took over the proceedings and said that there were four nominations for election as the Society's officers. These were: Chairman: Bob Hine, proposed by Alan Furness, seconded by Heather Hine; Vice Chairman: Brian O'Callaghan, proposed by John Edmonds, seconded by Alan Furness; Honorary Secretary: Andy Bell, proposed by Alan Furness, seconded by Linda Peters and Honorary Treasurer: Alan Furness, proposed by Ken Peters, seconded by Sue Bell. It was proposed by Mark Green and seconded by Mike Hart and agreed unanimously that the aforementioned be elected en bloc.
8. **ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** John Edmonds said that there were four nominations for election to the Executive Committee. These were: Diana Coulter, proposed by Caroline Rimell, seconded by John Edmonds; Gary Robinson, proposed by Sharon Robinson, seconded by Andy Bell; Annabella Marks, proposed by Carole Barnett, seconded by Penny Feathers; and Penny Feathers, proposed by Gordon Barnett, seconded by Allan Williams. It was proposed by Gordon Barnett and seconded by Lyn Woodhouse and agreed unanimously that the aforementioned be elected en bloc.
9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** Bob Hine took over the Chair and invited the meeting to raise any other items of business, of which there were none. He then invited Ali Driver to the platform who proceeded to tell the meeting about the Environment Agency's submission for an international award for the work that had been done in bringing back to life the River Thames, which had been biologically dead in the 1950s. Now salmon, sea trout and otters were thriving in the river. It had been a staggering achievement, which had involved people from many organisations, including societies like our own. The Agency had heard in the summer that the bid had made the final, where it was up against competing bids from China, Australia and Russia. He had travelled to Australia to present the bid, which was declared the winner at a gala event in Perth. The meeting was then shown the trophy, which the Agency had received along with a prize of A\$350,000. Some of the prize money was to be used in restoring a river in India. Bob Hine congratulated Ali Driver on his achievement, which the meeting endorsed with warm applause.

There being no other business, the meeting closed.



2010/2011

Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2010/2011

Executive Committee Report

Bob Hine, Chairman

The Committee's present members are: Bob Hine (Chairman), Brian O'Callaghan (Vice Chairman), Andy Bell (Hon. Secretary), Alan Furness (Hon. Treasurer), Carole Barnett (to June 2011), Diana Coulter, Mark Green (to October 2011), Lesley Heaney (co-opted from October), Annabella Marks, Colin McCulloch (co-opted from August), Gary Robinson (to April 2011), and Penny Feathers (co-opted).

The Executive held six meetings during the year which were all well attended.

It has been another interesting year for the Society not least because of several changes on the Executive.

Gary Robinson resigned following his election to the Parish Council. The combined

Planning and Traffic Panel which was formed two years ago, under Gary's chairmanship, has continued to be most effective and we thank him for all that he has achieved. We were most fortunate that Colin McCulloch agreed to be co-opted to take over especially with his knowledge gained as a Parish Councillor.

We also said farewell to Carole Barnett having served as a most efficient membership secretary and we thank her for her considerable contribution towards the continuous

growth of the Society since its inception seven years ago. Lesley Heaney has recently taken over from Carole and I am particularly pleased as this has enabled the Society to maintain a seamless continuity for new members.



Calm space in the garden of Dunsden Lodge, venue for the 2011 Champagne Tea

Our Press Officer, Mark Green, has recently stepped down to enable him to concentrate on chairing Sonning Parish Council and we thank him for maintaining a valuable link for the Society.

The activities of the Society's Panels are reported on overleaf. I would just like to add in this my third year as Chairman, how encouraged I have been by the support and willingness of the Executive team and their Panels.

The Village Voices team has been actively preparing the text in readiness for the

publication of the book which we reported on last year. We look forward with great interest to Spring 2012 when the book goes to print.

Finally, my thanks to the Social Committee who have provided some excellent catering during the year and especially on the occasions of the AGM and also the Champagne Tea held in the garden of Dunsden Lodge.

The Society membership has continued to increase and currently stands at 232 and 3 corporate.



Financial Report for year as at 31 August 2011

Alan Furness, Honorary Treasurer

For this report, the General Fund is analysed between the *Village Voices* project, the Conservation Area Appraisal Project and Other Activities.

There has been very little activity for *Village Voices* during the year. However, the project is progressing and it is planned to publish a book in the early part of 2012.

We have received donations from The Fire Brigade Trust and Sonning Parish Council for The Conservation Project

although no expenditure has occurred during the year.

As regards Other Activities, our membership subscriptions increased by 3% over last year to £1,153.00. The excess of income over expenditure for the current year for other activities is £598.69, as analysed in the Financial Statement below, which together with the previous year's credit balance brought forward shows a credit balance to carry forward of £3,147.76.

SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY

GENERAL FUND AT 31ST AUGUST 2011

	£	
BALANCE AT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2010		
General	2,549.07	
Village Voices	<u>1,653.54</u>	
		4,202.61
EXCESS (DEFICIT) INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR		
General	598.69	
Village Voices	(42.11)	
Conservation Project	<u>1,500.00</u>	
		2,056.58
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2011		
General	3,147.76	
Village Voices	1,611.43	
Conservation Project	<u>1,500.00</u>	
		<u>6,259.19</u>

GENERAL FUND REPRESENTED BY:

CASH AT BANK - RESERVE ACCOUNT	6,000.00
CASH AT BANK - CURRENT ACCOUNT	168.69
CASH IN HAND	30.00
WINE & SOFT DRINKS STOCK	60.50
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2011	<u>6,259.19</u>

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2010 TO 31ST AUGUST 2011

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,153.00	NEWSLETTER	521.75
AGM	1,096.00	AGM	790.46
CHAMPAGNE TEA	700.00	CHAMPAGNE TEA	519.78
HERITAGE TRAIL	134.80	HERITAGE TRAIL	212.32
SONNING BELLS	118.00	SONNING BELLS	56.98
HISTORICAL WALK	60.00	HISTORICAL WALK	45.00
WALK ON THE WILD SIDE	94.00	WALK ON THE WILD SIDE	89.60
DONATIONS	14.00	SUBSCRIPTIONS	131.00
BANK INTEREST	1.70	GENERAL EXPENSES	135.37
		LIABILITY INSURANCE	270.55
VILLAGE VOICES INCOME:		VILLAGE VOICES EXPENDITURE	
Sales of Photos/DVDs/Books	95.00	Miscellaneous	137.11
CONSERVATION PROJECT INCOME:		EXCESS (DEFICIT) INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR	
FIRE BRIGADE TRUST	1,000.00	General	598.69
SONNING PARISH COUNCIL	500.00	Village Voices	(42.11)
		Conservation Project	<u>1,500.00</u>
			2,056.58
	<u>4,966.50</u>		<u>4,966.50</u>

I have reviewed the above General Fund and Income and Expenditure Account which are in accordance with the books and records maintained. In my opinion the accounts represent a fair summary of the General Fund and Income and Expenditure of the Society for the year ended 31st August 2011.

Sonning:
17th October 2011

A.G.A. Williams
Chartered Accountant

Planning & Traffic Panel

Colin McCulloch, Chairman of Panel

A new Chairman of the panel was co-opted in August following Gary Robinson's election to the Parish Council. The other members of the panel are John Argent, Judith Cassingham, Alastair Driver, John Edmonds, Mike Hart, Maureen Meer, Brian O'Callaghan, Trevor Ottlewski and Allan Williams.

Each week we scan planning lists received from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and South Oxfordshire District Council for Sonning and Sonning Eye respectively. A recent development concerns a new minerals plan for gravel extraction at Sonning Eye. The Society is working with Sonning Eye Action Group to oppose this and any future planning application to extend excavation, which would result in further erosion of the conservation area and add to the risk of flooding.

We continue to be concerned at the cumulative erosion of the historic environment in the centre of Sonning, particularly in Pearson Road. We have joined the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages of the United Kingdom (ASHTAV) and already received valuable advice and information. ASHTAV will be a valuable resource for us in the future. The need to achieve understanding by officers of the Wokingham Borough Council is important. We were therefore pleased when the Conservation Officer responded positively to our invitation to join one of our Heritage Walks.

The consultation on government's draft planning policy ended on 17 October. The minister has said that the new framework

will be sustainable and hand power back to local communities. Others have suggested that the plans threaten to put short-term economic gain ahead of all other considerations.

Highways

We continue to be represented on Sonning Parish Council's Highways Group and we participate in the 'HGV Watch'. We undertake regular spot checks and earlier this year achieved our first prosecution. The number of HGVs exceeding the weight limit has declined over the past 12 months.

The Panel has also continued to work with the Highways Group to develop a long-term strategy to reduce the impact of the large volume of traffic. It is proving difficult to agree on the means of achieving this. We need to reach a consensus, as WBC will not implement new measures as long as there is disagreement among us. Work to reduce the excessive number of street signs also continues.

Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal 2011/2012

We have just embarked on the Sonning Conservation Area Assessment 2011/2012 in partnership with the Parish Council. This will enable us to address many of the issues already outlined in this report and bring our influence to bear on future planning. Although we are working in partnership, we are conscious of our independence and will work with the Parish Council on this and other matters as a "critical friend".

Education Panel

Diana Coulter, Co-ordinator

Lesley Green, Joyce Reed and Pauline Simmonds comprise the Panel, and we have met as necessary. The Panel remains grateful for all ideas brought to our attention for either events or articles in *Bridge*.

Hopefully Lesley, momentarily wearing her Headteacher's hat, will award us a star for effort this year! The talk by Rob Needham on the bells was well-attended despite the intense cold of the church. A cool wind dogged Ali Driver's walk through to Thames Valley Park in early May, but tea at the lock more than compensated. Our Woodley afternoon was well-subscribed in October, and after the walk with Pauline Needham, the event was brought to a fascinating conclusion with Mark Green's talk on the Airfield. This followed closely on the heels of the well-received Heritage Open Day walks conducted by Mark, Brian O'Callaghan and the Co-ordinator.

The following articles appeared in *Bridge*: a consideration of Sonning Eye's lost tradition of osier production, an introduction to the West Drive tree management policy, Pauline Simmonds' excellent piece about the last Barker memorial in St Andrew's, and following the Champagne Tea in June the history and development of Dunsden Lodge in Sonning Eye. We always welcome contributions to Page 3 that celebrate or enhance our understanding of our communities.

Social Committee

Penny Feathers, Co-ordinator

During the year, the Committee has supported other events by providing refreshments following the talk about bell ringing in March. In October they also provided a welcome tea break in St. John's church hall in Woodley between Pauline Needham's walk and Mark Green's talk about the history of the Airfield.

The Committee's major social event was a Champagne Tea held at Dunsden Lodge in June. The unsettled weather yielded a fine day so everyone was able to appreciate the beauty of the gardens and all the hard work which Nick and Annabella Marks had put into ensuring a very special afternoon. The occasion was used to celebrate our President, John Edmonds' 90th birthday, and also to say thank you and a fond farewell to Carole and Gordon Barnett who had contributed so much to the Society since its inception. Thanks go not only to the Marks for allowing us to use their home and gardens, but also to all those who helped to provide a memorable afternoon.

Finally thanks go to Annabella Marks who earlier in the year stepped forward to help plan and organise our events together with Catherine Penny and Sally Andreou who joined the team in time to help plan the AGM Supper. Existing committee members, John Russell, Gordon Owen, Joyce Reed with her husband Jim, and many society members continue to provide great help for which we are all most grateful.