



Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2004

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOCIETY

2004-05

For presentation at the Annual General Meeting

Saturday 19 November 2005

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting

SONNING AND SONNING EYE SOCIETY
Minutes of 1st AGM
Held in Pearson Hall on Saturday 27 November 2004

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Chris Clarke welcomed over 80 members and guest speaker Malcolm Stansfield to the inaugural AGM.

He also gave grateful thanks to the many people who had worked to ensure that the Society had reached this place and time.

Since the Society's inception there had been two highly successful events. The first had been the evening at the Mill on 12 September, when Jane Balfour had been the speaker. A Walk, led by Alastair Driver, Brian O'Callaghan and Diana Coulter, followed this on 17 October. Diana had also produced the first Newsletter. All had been very well received, and Chris thanked everyone involved.

At the time of the AGM the Society had 200 members. It was hoped to increase this number, as the more members the Society had, the greater its influence would be.

REPORTS FROM THE PANELS:

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

Chairman John Edmonds introduced the other members of the panel - Carole Rose, Brian O'Callaghan, Philip Padfield, Alastair Driver, Allan Williams, Mark Bodley Scott and Maureen Meer. Members concerned about planning issues were welcome to contact any Panel member.

Wokingham District Council had invited S&SES to comment on the review of the local plan, and we had done so in some detail. Amongst other things, we considered it important to maintain the railway as the natural boundary between Sonning and Woodley. The Panel also worked with SODC and SE & Dunsden PC.

In Sonning Eye, the Panel had suggested modifications to the plans for the new building at the Sailing Club and had opposed plans for a hard tennis court by Sonning Bridge – which had since been refused.

He hoped the Society would give the people of Sonning and Sonning Eye a sense of belonging. Finally, he said Armine was sorry not to be able to attend, but delighted that the Society was holding its first AGM.

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

Ken Henderson said the Panel were watching the progress of the Thames crossing group, and after a struggle had reached agreement that the meeting to be held on 30.11.04 at Wokingham District Council should be open to the public. However, South Oxfordshire District Council were resistant to any suggestions.

The purpose of the Panel was to keep an eye on development within the District and Parish.

EDUCATION

Diana Coulter said it was hoped to give people the opportunity to learn something new.

Her thanks went to David Bates for the Society's logo. Stephen Humphreys for setting up the website, Claire Grove for publicity in the Twyford Times and Carole and Gordon Barnett for the program of events in the "Bridge", the Society's Newsletter.

TREASURER

Dennis Mason thanked the Fire Brigade Trust and the French Horn for their generous donations. To date the Society had income of £1,391.68, outgoing of £452.00.

ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chris Clarke said nominations had been received for these posts, and suggested that if no others were forthcoming, the executive committee be elected en-bloc, which was unanimously agreed.

These were:

- Chairman: Chris Clarke, proposed Keith Nichols, seconded Bob Hine.
Vice-Chairman: John Edmonds, proposed Carole Rose, seconded Brian O'Callaghan.
Secretary: Penny Feathers, proposed Carole Barnett, seconded Hermione (Midge) Russell.
Treasurer: Dennis Mason, proposed Diana Coulter, seconded Brian O'Callaghan.

Committee members:

- Brian O'Callaghan, proposed Stephen Humphreys, seconded John Edmonds.
- Sally Hughes, proposed Diana Coulter, seconded Brian O'Callaghan.
- Diana Coulter, proposed Tony Swell, seconded John van Went.
- Lynette Padfield, proposed D.A. Woodward, seconded P.S. Padfield.

Chris then asked the membership to elect Allan Williams as Independent Examiner. This was proposed by Gordon Barnett, seconded by Lesley Bates and unanimously agreed.

The adoption of the Constitution was proposed by Nigel Rose, seconded by Colin Pierce and unanimously agreed.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chris announced that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting was Thursday 9th December at 8p.m. in St. Sarik Room, and said any members who would like to attend would be most welcome.

Diana said the next event would be at Reading Blue Coat School on Friday 28 January 2005 when Dr. John Elliott would speak about "Henry Woodyer – Gentleman Architect". Tickets were available.

Robert Baldwin suggested that the Society speak to the life-long residents of Sonning and Sonning Eye to record their memories and preserve them.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting ended at 7:35p.m and was followed by supper and a talk by Malcolm Stansfield.

SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05

Annual General Meeting, 19 November 2005

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Our members are: Chris Clarke (Chairman), John Edmonds (Vice-Chairman), Penny Feathers (Hon. Secretary), Dennis Mason (Hon. Treasurer), Carole Barnett (Membership Secretary), Diana Coulter, Sally Hughes, Nick Marks, Brian O'Callaghan and Lynette Padfield.

The Executive Committee met on 9 December 2004 and 23 February, 20 April, 15 June, 17 August and 19 October 2005. The meetings have been open to Members to attend, a few of whom have joined us periodically.

Thank you for joining the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society. This has been our first full year and I hope you will agree with me that it has been a very good one. The Society has provided a varied programme of events during the year and these have been very well supported.

The working groups of the Society have met regularly and worked hard during the year. You can read about their activities elsewhere in this report. I know you will wish to join with me in thanking those who have served on the working groups. We are fortunate to have found so many people who care about our villages and who have been willing to give considerable amounts of time to the work of our Society.

They have set very high standards for the publications, which have been produced and in finding speakers of such high calibre. The first year of any new group or society can be difficult but I consider myself fortunate to have been the Chairman for this year and to have been surrounded by so many able and enthusiastic people.

It is always invidious to name a few when so many have helped but I must thank John Edmonds, Sally Hughes, Diana Coulter and Dennis Mason. The first three did an enormous amount of work in chairing the working groups and Dennis proved a very good treasurer. I know that many others have also worked hard but without those I have already named, as well as Carole Barnett, our Membership Secretary, and Penny Feathers, our Secretary, I do not think we would have got off to such a good start.

In addition to providing some very interesting talks and walks, which members seem to have enjoyed, the Society has been able to make significant comments on planning applications, roads and footpaths. We have tried not to become a group of busybodies expressing views on everything but endeavoured to make considered comments on more important issues.

I hope you will support our Annual General Meeting. The existing Office holders have said they are willing to stand for re-election so you should not get “lumbered” with a job. If you are willing to stand for election we would be glad to hear from you.

Chris Clarke, Chairman
October 2005

REPORT FROM THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT PANEL

Our members are: John Edmonds (Chairman), Mark Bodley Scott, Pat Doyle, Alastair Driver, Nick Marks, Maureen Meer, Brian O’Callaghan, Carole Rose and Allan Williams.

The Panel has met several times during the year,

The Panel’s first year has been a busy one. We have learned a lot, and, I believe, been able to put that to good use. Our routine task has been to monitor all planning applications for both Sonning and Sonning Eye and to investigate and comment in cases where one or two Panel members think it is appropriate for us to do so.

We have made written representations to the local authority in ten cases, seven in Sonning and three in Sonning Eye. We are now recognised by those authorities (Wokingham District Council, WDC, South Oxfordshire District Council, SODC, Oxfordshire County Council, OCC) and also by the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol.

In a wider context, members of the Panel have attended meetings and workshops organised by WDC in connection with the Government’s South East Plan, and Wokingham’s *Land Use Vision for the 21st Century*. The main issue is new building in the years ahead – how much and where?

We have answered several questionnaires on this subject and hope individual members and other residents are responding to those recently sent out by WDC. Responses so far have urged the Council to concentrate on re-development of brown-field sites, safeguarding recreational and other green spaces, protecting the local character and ensuring that neighbouring towns and villages do not merge.

These are admirable objectives, and the need is to ensure that they are followed in practice – by Councils and by individual property owners and developers. It is a great help if members take an active and continuing interest – to adapt Edmund Burke’s maxim, “For eyesores to succeed, it is enough that good men do nothing”. Moreover it is always worth finding out what others think of a planning proposal and Panel members are very ready to advise those concerned about particular cases.

In conclusion, I offer a few personal thoughts:

- The high value of houses and land in this area is often a significant factor.

- The planning process is complicated, the many regulations change from time to time, and some cases drag on for years.
- Parish Councils have many other responsibilities. The Panel, as an independent body, can concentrate on particular issues, which appear to us to important and/or controversial. We keep the two Parish Councils informed of our views, and Panel members regularly attend Parish Council meetings, as well as encouraging informal contacts with individual Councillors on a case-by-case basis.
- The planning process is often adversarial and liable to become confrontational. It is not always easy to achieve rational discussion among the different interests, with a view to at least reducing the areas of disagreement, but the effort to do so should be made whenever possible.
- I must record my grateful thanks to the members of the Panel for the time and trouble they have freely given. Inevitably some find this more difficult than others, but I am confident that all will allow me to single out Carole Rose, whose energy, alertness and efficiency have been the greatest contribution to the effectiveness of our work. For 2005, at least, she is “Planning Panellist of the Year”.
- We are fortunate to live in beautiful surroundings and owe it to future generations to keep them from harm

John Edmonds, Chairman, Planning & Environment Panel
October 2005

REPORT FROM THE TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT PANEL

Our members are: Sally Hughes (Co-ordinator), Jane Gascoine, Ken Henderson, John Hicks, Lynette Padfield, Eileen Richards, Stan Robinson, Alvin Rakoff and John Scivyer.

The Panel has met several times during the year,

Since the inception of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society in the autumn of 2004, the Traffic & Transport Panel has monitored a variety of discussions on the traffic congestion, which continues to plague the residents in our area of the Thames.

In reality nothing has actually been done to alleviate this situation but, at least, one potentially useful study has been set in motion and its conclusions, though very late, are expected to be announced in the near future.

This study, set up in mid-summer 2004, involved a joint working party of district councillors from Wokingham, Reading and Oxford. With a budget of £60,000, the aim was to employ a specialist consulting group, PBA, in the use of a working computer model of the traffic flows across the area between Wokingham, Reading and Henley.

Possible sites for a new Thames bridge would be tested in the programme and the effects on traffic flows monitored with a view to identifying an optimum position.

The initial plan anticipated preliminary results in April/May 2005 with final conclusions available in July 2005 and a submission to government following fairly soon after. To date, the plan has not yet achieved these objectives though preliminary reports have been made by the consultants to the Joint Working Party elected by the three district councils. Similar information has also been provided to Parish Councils in the affected area through their representation on the Thames Crossing Councils Group but, as yet, this has not been disseminated to the public at large.

It is, however, believed that the computer work done so far indicates that an extension of the A3290 would be the most practical answer with the “Eastern Option” coming a rather distant second. (Members may recall that Frank Browne of Wokingham insisted on the inclusion of the “Eastern Option”, which bore a disturbing resemblance to the “Northern Bypass” strongly rejected by Sonning residents.)

If and when the three Highways Authorities agree on the computer study results, the next step will be the joint preparation of a Major Business Scheme Case for submission to the Dept. of Transport requesting central government financial support. Estimates of the time required for planning and construction following the submission of the Major Business Scheme are currently put at a minimum of 10 years.

Meanwhile the on-going situation will need careful monitoring.

Ken Henderson, Traffic & Transport Panel
October 2005

REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION PANEL

Our members are: Diana Coulter (Co-ordinator), Clare Grove (Press Officer to August 2005), Stephen Humphreys (Webmaster), Joyce Reed and Tony Swell (Social Committee liaison from July 2005).

The Panel has met 8 times during the year,

Programme

The Programme for 2004/05 consisted of an Inaugural Meeting and Lecture (Jane Balfour on Jekyll and Lutyens, 12 September 2004) and two talks (Henry Woodyer by Dr John Elliott, 28 January 2005, and Biodiversity by Andy Glencross, 18 March 2005), all well attended. There have also been two walks in October 2004 and April 2005 based on Sonning and Sonning Eye respectively, both of which were highly popular. The Society celebrated its first anniversary by participating in the nation-wide Heritage Open Days with “Henry Woodyer in Sonning” on Sunday 11 September 2005. For this St Andrew’s, Reading Blue Coat School (Holme Park),

North Lodge (exterior only) and Masters (former boys' school and master's house, exterior only) were opened. A small exhibition focusing on Woodyer's work and showing old photographs or copies of original drawings was much appreciated by visitors. Based on the information in our visitors' books, the event attracted at least 140 people.

Projects

A Village Guides' project is up and running with six Members researching individual buildings with a view to being able to offer guided tours. These tours might form the basis of future Heritage Open Days once fully operational, while the research enlivens *bridge* and the *Buildings in Focus* section of the website.

At the AGM in November 2004, the Panel was challenged to revive an earlier oral history project, which has lain dormant for some time. This has proved to be far from easy. A number of steps taken to foster its revival include a Society Member attending a special Oral History Society course of training as well as other members working on a small, related project with the local School.

Press, Publicity and Publications

The Panel has ensured that the Society has featured in The Twyford Times in particular (October 2004, August 2005). But there is scope for further work. Due to other commitments Clare Grove has resigned, but a successor has been approached who will come on board when convenient.

Four issues of *bridge* have been published, utilising from Issue 2 a design by University of Reading Typography students, Colin Hall and Andrew Kemp. The Newsletter carries regular reports from the Chairman and the other two Panels. It could easily expand in size, but time commitments for the time being recommend that it remains a 4-page document.

The Panel used the Heritage Open Day in September 2005 to launch its first publication, *Henry Woodyer in Sonning*, sales of which remain steady. As this report is written, the Society is close to recovering the costs of production.

The website went live in Autumn 2004, and is updated periodically by the Co-ordinator liaising with the Webmaster.

Diana Coulter, Co-ordinator, Education Panel
Approved by the Education Panel 3 October 2005