



Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2005

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOCIETY

2005-06

For presentation at the Annual General Meeting

Saturday 25 November 2006

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting

SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY
Minutes of the 2nd AGM
Held in Pearson Hall on Saturday 19 November 2005

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Chris Clarke welcomed everyone present, especially our guest speaker David Penny.

Membership of the Society stood at 227, and he was enormously grateful for the work of all the panels, Treasurer Dennis Mason, executive committee secretary, Penny Feathers, and all the members of the Executive.

Sadly, John Edmonds would be retiring as Chairman of the Planning & Environment Panel, although he would remain as Vice Chairman of the Society. It had been an excellent year for the panel and the Chairman thanked him for all his work. The Chairman was grateful to Pat Doyle who would be taking over the position of Chairman of the Panel after the AGM.

Sally Hughes would be standing down as Co-ordinator of the Traffic & Transport Panel, but would be succeeded by Ken Henderson. Again, many thanks for all the work by the Panel during the past year, and welcome to Ken.

The Education Panel, co-ordinated by Diana Coulter, had produced a brilliant number of events throughout the year, and the Chairman was especially grateful to Diana for everything she had done to make the Society such a success.

A Social Committee, led by Penny Feathers had recently been formed, and would be grateful for more members. As always, thanks to the two Carole's for the delicious meals they had provided.

The Society was still looking for a Press Officer to liaise with local press, and the Chairman would welcome anyone who would be able to undertake this important role.

APOLOGIES AND MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM.

A number of apologies were recorded and the minutes of the previous AGM approved and signed.

REPORTS FROM THE PANELS:

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

John Edmonds said he had described the Panel's work in the Annual Report which members had before them. Since that was written, Wokingham D.C representatives had given an interesting briefing on the South East plan in the Pearson Hall on 11 November.

He urged all members to take an active interest in planning matters and to consult Panel members and/or Parish Councillors about applications of concern to them. He thanked those who had helped with some important and complex cases.

With two other Society members, he had recently attended a meeting of over 15 civic societies from towns and villages in Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. The hosts were the Farnham Society and the guest speaker their local Principal Planning Officer, who worked with the Society and the Town Council in "the Farnham Conservation Area Partnership", which seemed to be a model well worth following.

It had been a privilege to be the Panel's first Chairman, but he was sure that it was right to have a younger Chairman – although it had proved surprisingly hard to find one! He was grateful to Pat Doyle, and was confident the Panel would keep up the good work.

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

Ken Henderson also did not need to repeat his written report. However, at the meeting in the Pearson Hall on 11 November, Councillor Frank Browne expressed his fear that, if the study came

to the conclusion that an extension to the A329M proved to be the optimum solution this would be rejected by South Oxfordshire because of strong fears of subsequent housing development. In that event, he concluded that the only way to progress would be by means of a formal application to government to extend the A329M. Steve Chapman, Chairman of the Sonning PC, said that Frank Browne had agreed to come and talk to the Parish Council.

Finally, the Panel would broaden its sources of information by monitoring the web sites of Wokingham, Reading and Oxfordshire councils as well as attending meetings of the TCCG and Sonning Parish Council.

EDUCATION

Diana Coulter thanked those who had assisted with talks and walks during the past year, particularly for the support given for the Heritage Open Day. The next talk would be "Bricks" by Nick Siney in January, and in the New Year Alastair Driver would be leading walks. She appealed for volunteer guides for the next Heritage Open Day.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Dennis Mason said the accounts were attached to the annual report. The Society had over a £1,000 in the bank and he had decided to open a savings account so that money not immediately needed would earn interest. The accounts were unanimously accepted, proposed by Gordon Barnett and seconded by Lynn Woodhouse.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chris Clarke said that all officers and members of the executive committee were prepared to stand again and nominations had been received. He therefore suggested that the Executive Committee be elected en bloc, which was unanimously agreed.

The officers were:

Chairman: Chris Clarke proposed by Wendy Williams, seconded by Bob Hine

Vice Chairman: John Edmonds proposed by Alastair Driver, seconded by Pat Doyle

Hon. Secretary: Penny Feathers proposed by Dawne Vincent, seconded by Kate Garstone

Hon. Treasurer: Dennis Mason proposed by Diana Coulter, seconded by Penny Feathers

Executive committee members:

Nick Marks proposed by R. Hille, seconded by Mr. D Woodward

Lynette Padfield proposed by Jane Gascoigne, seconded by Penny Feathers

Diana Coulter proposed by Pauline Simmonds, seconded by Joyce Reed

Sally Hughes proposed by Alvin Rakoff, seconded by Eileen Richards

Brian O'Callaghan proposed by A Swell, seconded by P. Swell

Pat Doyle proposed by Carole Rose, seconded by Brian O'Callaghan

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Chris Clarke said Allan Williams was prepared to continue in this post and his appointment was unanimously agreed.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Thanks were given to Stephen Humphreys for his work on the website and Alastair Driver for his walks and advice.

There being no further business to discuss, the formal meeting ended at 8p.m.

SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06

Annual General Meeting, 25 November 2006

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 – co-opted), Diana Coulter, Mark Green (co-opted), Ken Henderson (co-opted), Sally Hughes, Nick Marks, Brian O’Callaghan and Lynette Padfield.

The Executive Committee met on 14 December 2005 and 15 February, 19 April, 21 June, 16 August and 18 October 2006. The meetings have been open to Members to attend, a few of whom have joined us periodically.

It has been a great privilege to have been Chairman of the Society during the past year. I hope you have enjoyed the varied programme of events and the meetings and publications we have arranged and produced. Thank you for being a member of the Society and for your support during the year. As I have said before the more members we have the greater our influence will be.

During the past year we have strengthened our links with Sonning Parish Council and I am particularly grateful to Steve Chapman for the help and advice he has given me. I know there have been occasions when a few members have thought we should have responded differently to some of the planning applications and other issues. My feeling is the great majority of you have supported the views we have expressed and the submissions we have made on your behalf. With so many members it is inevitable that some would have done things in a slightly different way but I believe we have responded consistently and in accordance with our aims.

A huge amount of work has been done by our committees and I wish to thank those who serve on them and especially those who chair them. The combination of the Social Committee and the Education Panel has brought us variety in our publications, our walks and talks as well as our social events. Without the many hours the members of the committees have given, the Society could not function. When you read their reports you can see how much has been achieved during the last year.

I know you will also join me in thanking Carole Barnett, our Membership Secretary, and Penny Feathers the Secretary to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee takes overall responsibility for the running of the Society and the views it expresses. The meetings have been enjoyable and business-like and my job as its Chairman has been made very easy by the hard work, understanding and cooperation of the members.

Chris Clarke, Chairman
October 2006

REPORT FROM THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT PANEL

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

The Panel has met several times during the year.

The Panel's second year has been as busy as its first. We have continued to monitor all planning applications for Sonning and Sonning Eye and to send our comments to the planning authorities when we consider it necessary.

In nine different cases we made comments objecting either to the plan as a whole or to certain aspects of it. This often called for liaison and discussion with concerned local residents and sometimes required more than one intervention, including the presence of the Chairman or other Panel Member at the Development Control Committee of the District Council, to speak in support of the objections, usually in association with a Parish Council representative.

Most of these cases concern proposals to build one or more dwellings in the gardens of existing properties. Our concern, in line with the Sonning Parish Design Statement of 2004 (and similar considerations apply in Sonning Eye), is to try to ensure that the character of the village and its environments are conserved and if possible enhanced. Even when objections are accepted by the District Council, and an application is refused, applicants quite often appeal against the decision.

The present position on some cases of particular interest can be summarised as follows:

- Duffield Road//Pound Lane South. The original plan for 33 dwellings (in place of 3) was refused, as was the revised application for 15 dwellings (in place of 2).
- 5 and 7 West Drive. The proposal for 3 dwellings in rear gardens was refused. The applicant appealed and the Inspector recently dismissed the appeal.
- Greendown, Pearson Road/Pound Lane. The proposal to build a house in the rear garden was refused. The applicant appealed. The Inspector dismissed the appeal, emphasising the importance of not disturbing the street scene, including the Pound Lane embankment, in the Conservation Area.
- August Field, Charvil Lane. The application is for 6 dwellings (in place of one) on a site in the Conservation Area close to the listed buildings of Little Court and Spring Cottages. We considered that it would have a significant impact on the environment at an attractive entrance to the village. Wokingham District Council has refused the applications.

We continue to be consulted by Wokingham District Council about the South East Plan.

Pat Doyle, Chairman, Planning & Environment Panel
October 2006

REPORT FROM THE TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT PANEL

Ten members of the Society have served on the Traffic & Transport Panel, namely Jane Gascoigne, Ken Henderson (Chair), John Hicks, Sally Hughes, Lynette Padfield, Alvin Rakoff, Eileen Richards, Stan Robinson, John Russell and John Scivyer.

With the exception of August, monthly meetings have been held to monitor and discuss the range of subjects included within the Panel's remit.

As approximately half of the Panel members have access to the Internet, it has been possible to monitor the web sites of local authorities such as Wokingham, Oxfordshire and Reading particularly in connection with planned new road networks. At a slightly higher level in the local bureaucracy, the Panel regularly checks web sites of the Government Office for the South East and the South East England Regional Authority to see what infrastructure developments might impact on our local traffic problems. In this latter context the Panel, on behalf of the Society, has expressed its concern to Reading Borough Council about the knock-on effects of the new IDR on surrounding areas, which appeared to have received little consideration.

Last year, in the Panel's report, mention was made of the Joint Working Party from Wokingham, Oxfordshire and Reading Borough Councils which had been set up to carry out a computer study aimed at highlighting the optimum location for a third bridge over the Thames. Six months after the proposed deadline and £60,000 of taxpayers' money later, the Joint Working Party failed to produce an agreed result. The Panel is trying at the moment to obtain a copy of the computer study report rumoured to have favoured the extension of the A3290.

In late January, the Conservative MP for East Reading, Rob Wilson, organised a Private Member's Debate to discuss "Transport in the Greater Reading Area". During the debate the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Karen Buck, replied indicating that (at that time) the Government had asked the local authorities to work together to address the issue of a new Thames crossing. Given that this is the failed Joint Working Party referred to above, the Panel will be raising with the Society's Executive Committee whether an MP's question can be put to Karen Buck on the Government's intentions now.

The aim is to be proactive as well as reactive.

Ken Henderson, Traffic & Transport Panel
October 2006

REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION PANEL

Our members are: Diana Coulter (Co-ordinator), Stephen Humphreys (Webmaster), Joyce Reed, Pauline Simmonds, and Tony Swell (Social Committee liaison). We are sorry to report that Tony Swell will be stepping down, and understand that our Webmaster may do so for personal reasons although he anticipates maintaining our website.

The Panel has met 5 times during the year,

Programme

The Programme for 2005/06 consisted of two talks (on bricks by Nick Siney, 27 January 2006, and on heraldry by John Allen, 9 March 2006), both well attended. There were two walks in October 2005 and May 2006 based on geology of the area (courtesy of Brice Sellwood) and Thames Valley Park Nature Reserve (courtesy of Alastair Driver), both of which were very popular. The Society celebrated its second anniversary by participating in the nation-wide Heritage Open Days with four walks *Sonning: Architectural and Historical Walks* led by Village Guides on 8 September, 9 September and 10 September 2006. The walks attracted 76 people overall, including visitors from Australia, Canada and the US.

Projects

There are four Village Guides, who came into their own with the Heritage Open Day Walks in September 2006. Plans to publish a complementary booklet are temporarily on hold, but all being well should reach fruition for September 2007. The Guides' research, however, continues to enliven *bridge* and the *Buildings in Focus* section of the website.

Thanks to Pat Doyle who has created an elegant notice board for the Society positioned at The Bull near the entrance into the churchyard. This is changed about once a month to inform people of our activities.

This year has seen the Society be active in developing Welcome Packs for new residents. Discussions with the Parish Council are awaited to make the packs more inclusive.

Press, Publicity and Publications

Mark Green has kindly taken on the role of Press Officer, and is already sharing the responsibility for a presence in the Parish Magazine.

Four issues of *bridge* have been published covering a range of topics. The "Page 3" special articles have covered trees and hedges (John Woodhouse), the Fire Brigade (Mark Green), The Eyot House (Pauline Simmonds), and the bells of St Andrew's (Rob Needham).

The website continues to be updated periodically and both Co-ordinator and Webmaster accept that it has been difficult sustaining momentum. An increase in the size of the space leased should help considerably in 2006/07.

Diana Coulter
October 2006

REPORT FROM THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Committee was formed in the summer of 2005 with the aim of organising suppers and other social events for the society.

Led by Penny Feathers, members comprised Carole Barnett, Carole Rose, Tony Swell and Dennis Mason. Meetings are only held once or twice prior to a function to ensure that everyone knows their roles and the event runs smoothly.

The supper at the AGM in 2005 was the first time the committee worked together in this way, and was followed by the first purely social occasion in June of this year when, thanks to the kindness of Lynette and Philip Padfield, a summer luncheon was held in the garden of their home at The Eyot House in Sonning Eye. 60 society members attended this event, and greatly enjoyed the beautiful surroundings and imaginative menu, once again master-minded by Carole Barnett.

Joyce Reed joined the committee shortly before the luncheon, and many other society members helped to make it a success. Our thanks go to everyone involved.

A scarecrow depicting Henry Woodyer was made on behalf of the society for the Scarecrow Trail this year, and displayed on the lawn beside North Lodge.

Sadly, shortly before writing this, Tony Swell had to stand down from the committee due to continuing severe back problems. Thanks go to him for all his help and support in the past and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Welcome to new committee member John Russell, who will work with Dennis in organising the bar at future events.

If society members have any ideas for future social events they would be most welcome. Please speak to any member of the committee.

Penny Feathers, Honorary Secretary & Co-ordinator
October 2006

**PLEASE NOTE:
THE SOCIETY'S ACCOUNTS WILL BE PRESENTED AT THE MEETING ON
25 NOVEMBER 2006**