

Minutes of 3rd AGM, Pearson Hall, 25 November 2006

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Chris Clarke welcomed everyone present, and thanked Carole Barnett, Penny Feathers and all the hostesses for a delicious meal. He said the Society was in good shape thanks to everyone who worked hard to make it so, and particularly thanked Diana Coulter for *Bridge* and all the functions she organised.

APOLOGIES AND MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM.

Apologies had been received from Sally Hughes, Theresa and Philip May, Mr and Mrs Guthrie, and Mr and Mrs Hunt. Approval of the minutes of the previous AGM were proposed by Gordon Barnett, seconded by John Russell, unanimously agreed and signed.

REPORTS FROM THE PANELS:

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

Pat Doyle said the panel had done a lot of work during the year, and he thanked everyone for the contribution they freely made, particularly Allan Williams for keeping an eye on development on the south side of the A4, Alastair Driver for his advice on flora and fauna and Brian O'Callaghan for his help on listed buildings. Since writing his report, the Parish Council and Society had contributed to the cost of planting new trees. Mr and Mrs Argent had begun a sympathetic renovation of the Green House at the top of High Street and an application to remove the side garden at Glendale was in the pipeline. Finally, he thanked Carole Rose for all her hard work on behalf of the panel.

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

Ken Henderson said the panel were using the Internet to monitor the actions of local councils. In April, the leader from WDC had said he would raise an application for the extension of the A3290, but sadly no money was available for this. It was proving difficult to find out what had happened as a result of the computer study into the Reading Transport Scheme, but he would continue to try and do this. At the time of the AGM, Reading was occupied with the proposed changes to the IDR. How would this affect nearby towns and villages? S&SES had asked for a public enquiry, but the Chairman had spoken to the Chief Engineer and been told there was no obligation to hold one. Labour were voting en bloc in support of the proposed changes. The northern area of the IDR would be developed first.

EDUCATION

Diana Coulter thanked everyone who had written for *Bridge*, and Pauline Simmonds for her research on The Eyot House. Sadly, Tony Swell had decided to resign from the panel, and it was also possible that Stephen Humphreys would be moving away. Happily Lesley Green would be joining in the panel in the New Year.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Penny Feathers welcomed John Russell to the panel and thanked everyone for their help during the year. She too was sorry that Tony Swell had been forced to leave, and wished him a speedy recovery. She also thanked Lynette and Philip Padfield for allowing S&SES to use their lovely garden for a summer lunch and thanked all the hostesses and many others who had helped to make that and the meal served at the AGM so successful.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Dennis Mason said it had not been possible to produce a fully audited set of accounts in time for the AGM, but there was £1,500 in the bank. Chris Clarke proposed that the final accounts should be approved by the Executive Committee at their next meeting. This was unanimously agreed.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chris Clarke said that nominations had been received and all officers were prepared to stand again. He therefore suggested that they be elected en bloc, which was proposed by John Russell, seconded by David Sims and unanimously agreed. The officers are: **Chairman:** Chris Clarke proposed by Brian O'Callaghan, seconded by Barton Guthrie; **Vice-Chairman:** John Edmonds proposed by Valerie Moncur, seconded by Allan Williams; **Hon. Secretary:** Penny Feathers proposed by Colin Pierce, seconded by Valerie Buxton; **Hon. Treasurer:** Dennis Mason proposed by Carole Rose, seconded by Penny Feathers

Chris Clarke thanked Brian O'Callaghan for standing down to allow the election of a new member to the committee. Bob Hine had agreed to do this and nominations for him and the other members, all of whom were prepared to stand again, had been received. He therefore suggested they be elected en bloc, which was proposed by Alastair Driver, seconded by Malcolm Stansfield and unanimously agreed. Executive Committee members are: Diana Coulter proposed by Joyce Reed, seconded by Peter Van Went; Pat Doyle proposed by David Penny, seconded by Catherine Penny; Bob Hine proposed by John Edmonds, seconded by Pam Sims; Sally Hughes proposed by Ken Henderson, seconded by Alvin Rakoff; Nick Marks proposed by David Woodward, seconded by Carole Barnett; Lynette Padfield proposed by Jane Gascoine, seconded by Pat Doyle.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Chris Clarke said Allan Williams was prepared to continue in this post and his appointment was proposed by Colin Pierce, seconded by John Edmonds and unanimously agreed.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (Please see reverse of Annual Accounts tipped in)



2006/2007

Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2006/2007

Executive Committee Report

Chris Clarke, Chairman

Our members have been: 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), Bob Hine, Sally Hughes, Nick Marks, Brian O'Callaghan (co-opted) and Lynette Padfield. Pat Doyle was elected to the Committee in November 2006, but stepped down on being co-opted onto the Parish Council.

The Executive Committee met on 14 December 2006 and 15 February, 18 April, 21 June, 15 August and 17 October 2007. The meetings have been open to Members to attend, a few of whom have joined us periodically.

The last year has been another successful one for the Society. We have continued our varied programme of events both social and educational and those on the committees have worked harder than ever on our behalf. I am sure you join with me in thanking them for all they do.

There was one major change during the year when Pat Doyle, because of his commitments with Sonning Parish Council, resigned as Chair of the Planning Panel and Dr. Brian O'Callaghan very kindly agreed to take over from him. This panel is one of the most important

of our working groups. I was particularly grateful that Brian, who has many demands on his time, was willing to take this on. We are also grateful to Pat for all that he did and for the help and advice that he still gives us.

Dr. Ken Henderson has been the Chairman of the Traffic and Transport Panel and, as you will see from his report, it too has been working hard during the past year. The question of the third Thames crossing is one that has been with us for many years and occupies much time. We are grateful that The Rt. Hon. Theresa May has given us great support and has attended meetings with the Panel.

The Education Panel is the one which is most visible and in many ways holds the Society together. The various and varied

speakers and events have been well supported but as we are all aware these things do not just happen and take a great deal of time to organise. The Panel is also responsible for our publications and *Bridge* keeps us all informed about what the Panels have been doing and what events are planned. It is a very good publication and I know you will join with me in thanking and congratulating Diana Coulter for all that she has done to help us.

The final group of people who work extremely hard to help are those on the Social Committee. Penny Feathers chairs this group and I know she will not mind if I mention Carole Barnett who works



John Edmonds, Vice-Chairman 2004-2007, deputising for the Chairman by giving the vote of thanks at the 2006 Eyot House lunch.

tirelessly, planning and preparing such elegant and clever menus. The lunch in Sonning Eye took a huge amount of time to plan and prepare and, like the other events when we have had a two- or even three-course meal, it was most memorable, enjoyable and wonderful value.

The Annual General Meeting this year will see several changes because under our constitution the Vice Chairman and the Treasurer have to stand down having served for three years. John Edmonds was instrumental in founding the Society and for that we thank him. He too has worked tirelessly for us since the Society was started and in the months before that. We are

extremely grateful to John and I will be proposing at the AGM that he be appointed our first Hon President.

Dennis Mason willingly took on the task of being our first Treasurer and we have been very grateful to him for all that he has done and the many hours he has spent looking after our finances.

I look forward to welcoming you to this year's AGM. The speaker will be The Rt. Hon Theresa May MP, who in addition to being a member of the Society and our Member of Parliament, is also Shadow Leader of the House of Commons. I do not have to tell you what a good speaker Theresa is and we appreciate it that such a busy person has been willing to come and speak at our AGM.

November 2007

Traffic & Transport Report

Ken Henderson, Chairman of Panel

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

Throughout the year, members of the Panel have shared the task of monitoring the web sites of the Borough (or District) Councils of Wokingham, Reading and Oxford looking for any references to plans for a third bridge. Similar regular checks have been applied to the sites of the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA), the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the Highways Agency. The yield for this work has been essentially negative. In the current Local Transport Plans, running from 2006 to 2011, little other than a token mention is made of any interest in the construction of a third bridge to relieve traffic congestion.

In an endeavour to broaden its search for information, the Panel made contact with Peter Brett Associates, professional traffic consultants to Reading Borough Council. The company runs sophisticated computer models of the traffic flows in and around Reading and were heavily involved in studies for the controversial anti-clockwise IDR. Their thoughts on a third bridge had something of a cold shower about them. Comprehensive studies of traffic flows followed by computer modelling could take two to three years to develop while the whole project from initial studies to completion of construction could be 12-14 years. Meanwhile the availability of funds and the focus of the government's attention are likely to be somewhat diverted by problems related to the 2012 Olympics.

With the aim of keeping abreast of any developments at Borough Council and parliamentary levels, our own MP, Theresa May, the East Reading MP, Rob Wilson, and Borough Councillor, Steve Chapman, all kindly accepted invitations to address the Panel and discuss traffic matters in which they were directly involved.

Meanwhile the availability and use of the local bus services has been monitored and liaison with Wokingham's officials has resolved a malfunction in the traffic control electronics at Sonning Bridge.

October 2007

Planning & Environment Report

Brian O'Callaghan, Chair of Panel

2007 has been a year of change for the Planning Panel, at least in terms of membership. At the AGM in November 2006 the members elected Pat Doyle as panel chair. Shortly afterwards he was co-opted onto the Parish Council, looking after planning, and thus felt he had to step down from his role in the Society. At this point, I was prevailed upon to take over as Panel Chair. Pat is certainly proving to be a hard act to follow. We are grateful for his boundless energy and enthusiasm in the past but also equally pleased that his experience with the Society is leading to productive collaboration on planning matters with the Parish Council.

I must also pay tribute to two founding members of the panel who left in the course of the past year. Mark Bodley Scott who had provided advice on architectural matters has left the area, as has Carol Rose. Carol will be greatly missed. Although she consistently

refused to accept any official position, it was she who was constantly keeping the rest of us up to the mark, reminding us of deadlines, contacting councillors and officials on our behalf, attending planning meetings and drafting innumerable letters. The panel has also recruited some new members: Bob Hine, John and Rachel Argent, and Gary Robinson. Some of these have already been pressed into service on some difficult cases. Ali Driver, John Edmonds, Nick Marks, Maureen Meer and Allan Williams continue to serve.

The main work of the Panel is to respond to planning applications on the Society's behalf. The early part of the year was particularly busy. We have had to deal with some high profile cases, and although we have not always prevailed, we have a high success rate; and even some of our losses may turn out to have a positive outcome.



The Green House, Pearson Road: an excellent example of conservation and restoration. Fixed-top sash windows, c.1720, have been retained and restored. 1960's metal casement windows facing the High Street have been replaced with more appropriate windows.

Whilst the panel will always seek to maintain amicable relationships with neighbours, we will, where necessary, vigorously engage with the local planning authorities in pursuit of the Society's aims.

November 2007

Education Panel Report

Diana Coulter, Co-ordinator of Panel

Our members are: Diana Coulter (Co-ordinator), Lesley Green (Oral History Group liaison), Joyce Reed (Social Committee liaison), and Pauline Simmonds (Researcher par excellence). The Panel has met 4 times during the year.



Dennis Mason, Hon Treasurer 2004-07 proudly shows off the Sonning Eye-1 drill bit (Bridge, Issue 12).

Programme

The Programme for 2006/07 consisted of a successful film evening in January 2007 arranged with the Wessex Film and Video Archive and a talk in March about watermills of the Thames Valley given by Brian Eighteen. Our outdoor events were a hedge-laying demonstration organised by John Woodhouse in November 2006 and a twilight celebration of the diversity of our natural environment at Ali's Pond in June 2007.

The Society celebrated its third anniversary by participating once again in the nation-wide Heritage Open Days Weekend. A dramatic conversion, the opening of The Mill Theatre, was the star attraction on Sunday 9 September courtesy of Sally Hughes. This was complemented by two Architectural and Historical Walks in Sonning. Both events attracted in excess of 100 people overall. The Society's participation in the Heritage Open Days Weekends is an important illustration of our commitment to sharing for free our history, both architectural and social, with a wider community.

Projects

Many thanks are due to Mary Chapman, who kindly attended an introductory training event at The British Library on oral history. Equipment has been purchased, with generous assistance from the Fire Brigade Trust, and the first interviews undertaken by Mary's team of four. The plan is to put on an exhibition in September 2009 as one output from the project. A book of Sonning memories will follow in due course also.

Press, Publicity and Publications

Gary Robinson has joined forces with Stephen Humphreys to manage the website. We still have some way to go and plan to have the website more up-to-date and relevant by Easter 2008.

Four issues of *Bridge* have been published covering a range of topics. The "Page 3" special articles have covered The Robert Palmer Cottages (Lynn Woodhouse), census data (Diana Coulter), memories of growing up in Sonning Eye (Jimmy Edwards, via Pam Glasspool), and prospecting for oil in Sonning Eye (John Argent).

November 2007

Social Committee Report

Penny Feathers, Co-ordinator of Committee

Once again, the Social Committee and their wonderful band of hostesses and helpers provided supper and a bar for the AGM in 2006, and as in previous years this provided an important and enjoyable addition to the evening's events.

In June, Alastair Driver organised what turned out to be a highly successful, enjoyable, and despite fears, dry evening at Ali's Pond. Those who attended had a fascinating evening learning about local wild life and the Social Committee provided a finger supper. Again, we were grateful for the help of many members.

Thanks to the hospitality of Lynette and Philip Padfield, the committee organised another luncheon in the garden of The Eyot House at the beginning of September. About 70 members attended, and despite a wet summer, the weather was fine and the event enhanced by the playing of a string quartet who added greatly to everyone's enjoyment. Without the help of Society members who collected and set up marquees, tables etc., loaned by the Robinsons, our hostesses, Jim Reed on the bar and not least the provision of a portaloos by John Hicks - these events would not happen - 'thank you' to you all.

On Saturday 13 October, the Education Panel organised another enjoyable and informative day, this time about timber framed buildings. The morning was spent in Pearson Hall and the Social Committee provided light refreshments to those attending.

Finally, thanks to all members of the committee, and everyone who supports the society's events by assisting us. We look forward to welcoming John Sandall who will be joining us for the first time at the forthcoming AGM.



Alastair Driver displaying pond-dipping results during Twilight at the Oasis in June 2007 (Bridge, Issue 12).

October 2007