2020/2021

Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2020/2021

Executive Committee Report

Mike Hart, Chairman

The Society's Executive Committee members this year have been: Mike Hart (Chairman), Bob Hine (Vice Chairman), Andy Bell (Hon. Secretary), Ali Driver, Joan Collins (Hon. Treasurer), Jeremy Gilmore, Patrick Hamblin (Chairman of Planning & Traffic Panel), Lesley Heaney (Membership Secretary), Heather Kay (Chairman of Education and Social Panel) and Annabella Marks. Trefor Fisher has continued to play an active role as the Sonning Parish Council observer at committee meetings, further strengthening the links between the two organisations.

Heather Kay agreed to take on the role of Chair of the Education and Social panel from Pauline Simmonds who retired last year. Heather has got to grips with the challenging role and we are very fortunate that she volunteered to take it on. All the current committee members are willing to stand again for election.

Your committee met six times during the year with good attendance at every meeting. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation the earlier meetings were held remotely on Zoom, since August they have been held in the Pearson Hall committee room.

Following the successful public meeting held in Pearson Hall in February 2020 and the decision by SPC to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning the Working Group prepared and issued a Questionnaire to every household. The response was very good (53%) and the results are currently being analysed. Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has revised its Local Plan Update and will put it out for consultation later this year, because our Neighbourhood Plan must be consistent with the Local Plan the timing is good.

Our quarterly magazine, *Bridge*, has continued to be published with 8 pages in each issue, thanks to Jeremy for keeping up his high standard. We would welcome articles from members especially if they are of local interest. The Society's web site has also been updated thanks again to Jeremy.

As described by Heather later in this report the Education and Social panel recommenced the programme of talks as soon as the Covid restrictions were relaxed and it was good to have very interesting talks in September and October. Thanks to Rod Thomas the film club also re-started in October for the winter season.

We have increased our membership during the year. We welcome our new members and thank them and our regulars for their interest and involvement in the Society's activities this year, details of which are given in the following pages.

I would like to thank the volunteers who helped Heather with the organisation and running of social and educational events and those who distribute copies of *Bridge* to our members. Their willing assistance is invaluable.

Memories of our 2020 AGM: The Joys of Zoom

Financial Report for year ending 31 August 2021

Joan Collins, Honorary Treasurer

For this year's report, the General Fund is analysed between the Village Voices project and Other Activities.

Sales of the Village Voices book continue, with income during the last year amounting to £32.00 for 3 copies sold. By the date of this report total income from book sales was £3691.40 and 404 books had been sold.

As regards Other Activities, the excess of income over expenditure for other activities is (£107.60) as analysed in the Financial Statement below, which together with the previous year's credit balance brought forward, shows a credit balance carried forward of £4164.38

SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY

GENERAL FUND AT 31ST AUGUST 2021

BALANCE AT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2020		
General	4,271.98	
Village Voices	2,990.01	
		7,261.99
EXCESS INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR		
General	(107.60)	
Village Voices	32.00	(75.60)
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2021		
General	4,164.38	
Village Voices	3,022.01	
		7,186.39

GENERAL FUND REPRESENTED BY:

CASH AT BANK - RESERVE ACCOUNT	6,750.00
CASH AT BANK - CURRENT ACCOUNT	336.39
CASH IN HAND	100.00
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2021	7,186.39

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2020 TO 31ST AUGUST 2021

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,241.00	NEWSLETTER	800.13
AGM	0.00	AGM	21.00
SUMMER TEA PARTY	608.90	SUMMER TEA PARTY	607.51
FILM CLUB	0.00	FILM CLUB	0.00
BANK INTEREST	0.69	SUBSCRIPTIONS	109.95
MISCELLANEOUS	68.16	GENERAL EXPENSES	155.94
		LIABILITY INSURANCE	331.82
VILLAGE VOICES INCOME:		VILLAGE VOICES EXPENDITURE	0.00
VILLAGE VOICES BOOK SALES	32.00	Miscellaneous	
		EXCESS (DEFICIT) INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE PERIOD	
		General	(107.60)
		Village Voices	32.00
	1,950.75		1,950.75

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 2021.

Sonning
26th October 2021

A. Furness
Chartered Accountant

Planning & Traffic Panel Report

Patrick Hamblin, Chairman of Panel

This is my eighth year as Chairman of the Planning and Traffic Panel. The current members of the Panel are Mike Hart, Andy Bell (Secretary), Bob Hine, David Bates, Bob Hulley and Jeremy Gilmore, with additional assistance from Prof Ali Driver (Environmental Advisor). I would like to thank the Panel members for their support throughout the year. We are pleased to have representation on the Panel by Parish Councillor Trefor Fisher, acting as an observer.

Panel meetings continue to take place monthly, with almost all the meetings in the last year being held on Zoom. The meetings are open to any member who wishes to attend. Please check before attending with a Panel member as it is sometimes necessary to change the date at short notice. If you wish to attend a virtual meeting, please contact me at patrick.hamblin@btinternet.com.

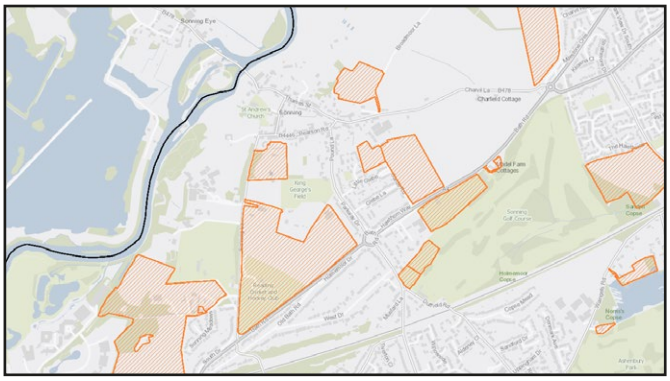
On occasions, based on the agenda items, the Society is also represented by an observer at the meetings of the Sonning Parish Council (SPC) Planning Committee, so that the views of the SPC can be considered by the Panel.

Lists of planning applications for both Sonning (published by Wokingham Borough Council) and Sonning Eye (published by South Oxfordshire District Council) are reviewed and are available on-line. It is these applications that are discussed at the Panel meetings or by email if urgent.

From October 2020 to September 2021 a total of 59 applications have been reviewed. This is in fact more than the 2019/2020 year figure of 50 applications and the 2018/2019 year with 31 applications. Representations are made to the respective Planning Authority on issues that are seen to be significant, including supporting applications where appropriate. In the past year representations have been made to the appropriate authorities relating to various issues, including the following:

- Support for the rebuilding of a listed building's boundary wall
- Lighting levels at the Berkshire County Sports Club
- Holme Park Sports Ground pavilion
- Mill Farm, Sonning Eye
- Ground water monitoring, Sonning Quarry
- 20 metres 5G telecommunications mast
- Fairway, West Drive
- Lydden, Sonning Eye
- Support for the Mill at Sonning proposals to convert a small area to dwellings
- Pauline's Field, Sonning Eye

The latest Local Plan Update has just been released as this report is being written. The possible large development at Grazeley has now been dropped, as there has been an unexpected extension of the emergency planning zone around AWE Burghfield to include that area. Virtually all the sites included in the 2019 draft version of the plan have been included in the 2021 version, together with the Old Redingensians Sports Ground (4.3 hectares), land at Holme Park Farm (25.5 hectares) and Berkshire Sports and Social Club (21.6 hectares), although there is a question mark over the inclusion of this last location. The Society is giving careful consideration to these proposals and will be responding with views in due course.



Map of Local Plan Update from WBC's site Nov 2021

In connection with the traffic problems in Sonning, the Panel is taking part in a working group with Sonning Parish Council and hopefully with Wokingham Borough Council, Thames Valley Police, and other interested parties. The major problem continues to be speeding vehicles.

The Panel has continued to support the Sonning Eye Action Group relating to flooding issues.

The aspect of the Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning is covered in a separate report.

Your Planning and Traffic Panel will continue to make comments to the relevant authorities where it is considered appropriate. We are endeavouring to improve our relationship with the Wokingham Borough Council Planning Department. Whilst we do not have success in every case, we continue to believe that we have made a difference to Sonning and Sonning Eye.

Membership Report

Lesley Heaney, Membership Secretary

The Society's membership stands at 234, which is made up as follows:

4 Corporate	192 Double	34 Single	4 Honorary Life Members

Please let me know of any newcomers to the two villages, I will then deliver a welcome brochure to them. I can be contacted via membership@sonning.org.uk.

Education & Social Panel

Heather Kay, Chair of Panel

Pauline decided to step down after many years of doing an excellent job and I tentatively agreed to take over. Our sincere thanks to Pauline for her hard work and dedication.

Getting together once again! Gordon & Mary Jones hosted our Garden Party this year

Due to Covid our first gathering was a Garden Party held in the beautiful garden of Gordon and Mary Jones. Delicate sandwiches and delicious cakes were enjoyed with a glass of champagne. 60 members and guests attended.

Our first speaker in September was Owen Green who spoke about William Strata Smith who published an important, coloured, geographical map in 1815. A legacy to subsequent geologists. We then enjoyed John Painter who fascinated us with the rich,royal history of Reading Abbey dating from 1121 to present day. We are planning a guided walk next Spring.

We are extremely pleased that Ruth Holwell and her colleague Sacha Clements are here this evening to tell us about the "Round Britain Climate Challenge", introduced by Alastair Driver. Sadly Sacha Dent herself is unable to be here but we send her our very best wishes.

My thanks to all the committee for their help and advice this year and to you our members for your continued support.

Our first speaker next year will be Simon Wenham on "The Pursuits of Pleasure". We will publish more details in *Bridge* closer to the time and look forward to welcoming you all.

The Film Club has a full schedule for the winter season:

Nomadland - 7th December
The Last Bus - 18th January
The Dish - 15th February
Promising Woman - 15th March

Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

Jeremy Gilmore, Chair of Steering Group

We were very pleased with the excellent response to our lengthy questionnaire in late Spring. We had a survey returned from 53% of the housholds in the parish.

As expected with so many responses to collate the analysis is a lengthy process but work is proceeding well and we hope to be able to publish the results early in the new year. Keep an eye on our website (www.sonning.info).

This is not the place to discuss the results but as an example of some of the data we gathered, this "word cloud" represents the answers to the question regarding showing a visitor the best thing about Sonning. As expected the River Thames was a very frequent response but we found a lot of residents also used words such as Historic, Architecture, Walk, Rural and Surrounds.

An impression of the responses to Q1.6 - Show a visitor the best thing about Sonning

Minutes of 17th AGM, Virtual Meeting, 21 November 2020

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Mike Hart welcomed everyone to the 17th Annual General Meeting of the Society. He said that it was a shame that it had to be a virtual meeting and very much looked forward to next year when hopefully it could be a physical meeting with a delicious supper and guest speaker to follow.

2. APOLOGIES

Andy Bell said that apologies for absence had been received from Penny Feathers and Pat Morgan.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the 16th Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday 16 November 2019, were approved without amendment on the proposal of Gordon Jones, seconded by Annabella Marks.

4. BRIEF REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS

a) Chairman's Report

Mike Hart said that his report was set out in the Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2019/2020, which had been emailed to all Society members prior to the Annual General Meeting. He said that it had been a very strange year for all of us and thanked the retiring Committee for all their hard work in what had been very difficult circumstances. Mike Hart went on to say that under the Constitution, Jeremy Gilmore had to stand down from the Committee but was willing to continue to serve as a co-opted member. Pauline Simmonds was also standing down after nine year's valuable service. She had done a great job in conceiving and organising interesting talks and events and would be a great loss to the Committee. Apart from Jeremy and Pauline, the current members of the Committee were willing to stand for re-election. He said that the Society could not rely on this happening year after year and that new volunteers were needed to rejuvenate the Society.

Mike Hart went on to say that before lockdown in March 2020 a public meeting had been held in the Pearson Hall to discuss the idea of producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning. Over 100 people attended the meeting, which had been most encouraging, and the project had got off to a good start, working closely with Sonning Parish Council. A questionnaire was being prepared, which hopefully would be issued for completion early in the New Year.

Mike Hart continued by saying that Jeremy Gilmore had done an excellent job in producing further issues of *Bridge*. The Spring edition had been delayed because of the pandemic but this was compensated for by the issue of a bumper edition in the Summer. A further issue was due out in December.

Regrettably, the Film Club had suffered because of the Covid-19 restrictions. The March screening had been cancelled but the previous five screenings had been quite well attended. It was hoped that the club could resume screenings early in the New Year. Mike Hart thanked Rod Thomas for managing this initiative.

Mike Hart concluded his report by saying that the membership of the Society had remained stable during the year. He said that the Society welcomed new members and thanked all the regulars for their interest and involvement in the Society's activities. Mike Hart also thanked all the volunteers who helped with the organisation and running of events and those who distributed copies of *Bridge* to our members.

b) Planning & Traffic Panel Report

Patrick Hamblin said that his report was also set out in the Annual Report & Accounts. He continued by saying that it was his seventh year as Chairman of the Planning & Traffic Panel. Patrick Hamblin thanked members of the Panel for their support throughout the year and said that he hoped that it would not be too long before meetings could resume in the Sonning Club. The Panel had reviewed 50 applications during the year, which was a marked increase on the number reviewed in the previous twelve months. Representations were made to the respective Planning Authority on issues that were seen to be significant. Sadly, not all representations were successful, which at times was very frustrating. Patrick Hamblin went on to say that the Panel continued to monitor Wokingham Borough Council's Local Plan Update. Only one site in Sonning had been included in the draft plan with most of the additional housing being provided by the proposed new Garden Town at Grazeley. In conclusion, Patrick Hamblin said that traffic was still a problem in Sonning and that the Panel had offered to take part in a working group with Sonning Parish Council and others. Previous efforts had greatly improved the parking situation in Sonning Lane. Patrick Hamblin then invited questions on his report. Michael Firmager commented that Wokingham Borough Council had been set a ridiculously high number of houses to build each year. He said that he was not keen on any development in the borough and that the Prime Minister's objective of levelling up the north may ease some of the pressure. Patrick Hamblin responded by saying that the Panel had objected to a recent proposal to build 57 dwellings in three blocks for older persons on land south of the Old Bath Road. Michael Firmager added that he had listed the application for consideration by Wokingham's Planning Committee and that Theresa May had strongly objected to the application.

c) Education & Social Panel Report

Pauline Simmonds said that her report was also set out in the Annual Report & Accounts. Because of the pandemic, there had been little activity during the year. Two talks had been held in the Pearson Hall before lockdown. Both had been well attended. Sadly, all the later plans for talks and village walks had been cancelled. Pauline Simmonds went on to say that this was her last year as Co-ordinator of the Education & Social Panel. She said that she had greatly enjoyed working with everyone and thanked her team warmly for all their support. Mike Hart said that Pauline Simmonds had planned to stand down two years ago but had been persuaded to stay on. He added that it was with great reluctance that he was now letting her go. She had organised an eclectic mix of talks and walks and was leaving a big hole to fill. He was sorry to see her go and as a mark of the Society's appreciation was going to deliver to her home a small gift, suitably sanitised!

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan Collins said that the financial report for the year ended 31 August 2020 was set out in the Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2019/2020. She said that it had been a relatively easy year with reduced activity because of the pandemic. Further copies of the *Village Voices* book had been sold, which had contributed to excess income over expenditure during the year of £515.32. The General Fund remained very healthy with a credit balance as at 31 August 2020 of £7,261.99.

6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mike Hart said that at last year's Annual General Meeting, Allan Williams had been appointed as Independent Examiner for a further year. He went on to say that Allan Williams had regrettably been unable to fulfil the role. Alan Furness had kindly stepped in to replace him and had

now said that he was willing to continue as Independent Examiner. Mike Hart thanked Alan Furness for stepping in and for agreeing to undertake the role for the forthcoming year.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Andy Bell took over the Chair for the election of the Chairman. He said that there was one nomination only. The nominee was Mike Hart, whose nomination had been proposed by Judith Hart and seconded by Sue Bell. He invited someone from the floor to propose the election of Mike Hart as Chairman. Ken Peters did so and Jean Hutchinson seconded the motion. The proposal was put to the meeting and agreed unanimously.

Andy Bell handed back the Chair to Mike Hart for the election of the Society's three other officers. Mike Hart said that the nominations were as follows: Vice Chairman: Bob Hine, proposed by Jane Gascoine, seconded by Geoffrey Harvey; Honorary Secretary: Andy Bell, proposed by Jean Hutchinson, seconded by Roger Hutchinson and Honorary Treasurer: Joan Collins, proposed by Bob Hine, seconded by Linda Peters. It was proposed by Jeremy Gilmore and seconded by Ken Peters and agreed unanimously that the three aforementioned nominees be elected en bloc.

8. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Hart said that there were four nominations for election to the Executive Committee. These were: Alastair Driver, proposed by Ken Peters, seconded by Linda Peters; Patrick Hamblin, proposed by Andy Bell, seconded by Sue Bell; Lesley Heaney, proposed by Shelagh Flower, seconded by Peter Flower and Annabella Marks, proposed by Nicholas Marks, seconded by Andy Bell. It was proposed by Roger Hutchinson and seconded by Gordon Jones and agreed unanimously that the four aforementioned nominees be elected en bloc.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Hart invited members to raise any other items of business.

a) Nature Conservation

Ali Driver gave an update on a couple of ongoing initiatives. He said that the Sonning Habitat Enhancement Programme was still being delivered. It was funded by monies received from Network Rail and involved tree and shrub planting, the sowing of wild flowers near Ali's pond and the restoration of the Bluecoat pond. Additionally, a working party of 12 people had recently cleared 'The Pound' and had planted spring bulbs, which Sonning Parish Council had funded.

b) Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire

Jeremy Gilmore said that the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire was soon to be tested prior to its issue in February 2021. He said that it was important that younger members of the parish got involved and encouraged everyone to look at the website and fill in the questionnaire.

Gordon Jones thanked everyone involved in the running of the Society for all that they do. He said that their efforts were greatly appreciated.

Mike Hart thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.05 p.m.