2021/2022

Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2021/2022

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.

Conservation Without Borders were our guest speakers at last year's AGM
Thanks to Ali Driver for the photo

Ali Driver has decided to stand down from the committee next year due to pressure of work but remains available to advise on environmental matters. All the remaining current committee members are willing to stand again for election but Bob Hine has given notice that next year will be his last on the committee so we need new recruits. Fortunately interest in joining the committee has been shown by four new volunteers, to be confirmed at the AGM once nominations have been received and voted upon. I look forward to new members' ideas to further increase the role of the society in fostering our local community.

Your committee met six times during the year with good attendance at every meeting. Due to the Covid-19 situation some of the meetings were held remotely on Zoom.

The Planning and Traffic panel continued to be represented on the Sonning Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the first draft of the Plan is now out for consultation within the community. Patrick Hamblin's report on other activities of the panel can be read within.

Our quarterly magazine, *Bridge*, has continued to be published with eight pages in each issue, thanks to Jeremy for keeping up a very high standard. Future issues will alternate between eight pages and the original four pages unless we receive more articles - members are encouraged to submit articles that would be of interest to our members. The Society's web site has also been regularly updated thanks again to Jeremy.

As described by Heather Kay later in this report the Education and Social panel organised an interesting programme of visits and talks and Rod Thomas organised the Film Club which re-started in October for the winter season with an encouraging turnout that bodes well for the remaining five showings.

We have maintained our membership numbers 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.

Financial Report for year ending 31st August 2022

Joan Collins, Honorary Treasurer

For this year's report, it was agreed by the Executive Committee to combine the Village Voices project with the General Fund analysis of activities.

As regards to the activities, this year the excess of income over expenditure for all activities is (£24.62) and as analysed in the Financial Statement below, which together with the previous year's credit balance from the Village Voices, combined with the General Fund brought forward, shows a total credit balance carried forward of £7161.77.

SONNING & SONNING EYE SOCIETY

GENERAL FUND AT 31ST AUGUST 2022

	£
BALANCE AT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2021	7,186.39
EXCESS INCOME (DEFICIT) OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR	(24.62)
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2022	7,161.77

GENERAL FUND REPRESENTED BY:

CASH AT BANK - RESERVE ACCOUNT	7,000.00
CASH AT BANK - CURRENT ACCOUNT	61.77
CASH IN HAND	100.00
BALANCE AT 31ST AUGUST 2022	**7,161.77**

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 1ST SEPTEMBER 2021 TO 31ST AUGUST 2022

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
MEMBERS SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,258.41	NEWSLETTER	683.88
AGM	1,098.00	AGM	1,156.64
OWEN GREEN TALK	118.00	OWEN GREEN TALK	125.69
READING ABBEY TALK	121.00	READING ABBEY TALK	86.28
READING ABBEY WALK	80.00	READING ABBEY WALK	31.64
RIVER THAMES TALK	119.00	RIVER THAMES TALK	149.87
FORD TO A FLIGHT TALK	108.00	FORD TO A FLIGHT TALK	139.62
VINEYARD TOUR	140.00	VINEYARD TOUR	142.75
FILM CLUB	296.00	FILM CLUB	382.35
TEA PARTY	0.00	TEA PARTY	0.00
VILLAGE VOICES PROJECT	58.50	VILLAGE VOICES PROJECT	0.16
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING	0.00	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING	0.00
BANK INTEREST	3.36	SUBSCRIPTIONS	156.94
GENERAL EXPENSES	67.75	GENERAL EXPENSES	95.00
		LIABILITY INSURANCE	341.82
		EXCESS (DEFICIT) INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE PERIOD	(24.62)
	3,468.02		**3,468.02**

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 2022.

Sonning
5th October 2022

A. Furness
Chartered Accountant

Planning & Traffic Panel Report

Patrick Hamblin, Chairman of Panel

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

Panel meetings continue to take place monthly. 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.

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

Lists of planning applications for both Sonning, published by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and Sonning Eye, published by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), 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 2021 to September 2022 a total of 62 applications have been reviewed. This is slightly more than in the 2020/2021 year but looking back a few years to the 2018/2019 year there were only 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:

- *Recommending an archaeological survey prior to an extension being constructed to a High Street property*
- *Two care home applications for Pound Lane*
- *Development of the former golf club site in Emmer Green (Reading Borough Council)*
- *Lydden, Sonning Eye*
- *Pauline's Field, Sonning Eye*
- *Land south of Old Bath Road (57 dwellings suitable for older persons)*
- *Reading Rugby Club floodlights*
- *Holme Park Sports Ground, Sonning Lane*
- *The Acre, Thames Street*
- *5G telecommunications mast*
- *Old Redingensians Sports Ground floodlights*

Local plan update

Following the publication of the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation document by WBC in November 2021, extensive comments were provided by the Society. The WBC response is expected in the next few months.

Gateway in Sonning Lane

The Society has been in discussion with SPC regarding the replacement of the gateway at the bottom end of Sonning Lane. SPC has in turn been consulting with WBC. The suggested design has not yet been made available.

Third Thames Crossing:

A recently published document 'A Strategic Investment Plan for the South-East,' published by 'Transport for the South-East' makes brief references to a 'Reading Third Crossing' and a timetable for considering all the various improvements in the document. The timetable does not suggest there is anything going to happen soon!

Sonning Boats Moorings

There was an initial strong reaction to the removal of a large number of trees on the Oxfordshire bank of the Thames. There is concern that this is to allow parking for approximately 12 cars of boat owners moored on that bank, plus hard standing for boats, as part of a business venture by Sonning Boats. However, there have been discussions by Prof Alastair Driver (AD) with Savills Rural Management, who are acting on behalf of Phillimore Estates. Comments have been given as to the type of species mix for the area and the need for the creation of ponds and scrapes in the former plantation area with a view of significantly increasing its value for wetland biodiversity by AD. No planning permission has yet been sought for the change of use but there has also been the involvement of David Woodward, Chair of Eye & Dunsden Parish Council.

Community Speed Watch

The Sonning Community Speed Watch (CSW) team was set up earlier this year and has been active since July 2022, when it completed the first session in Sonning Lane. So far permission has been given to conduct checks at five sites - two locations in Charvil Lane, two in Pound Lane and one in Sonning Lane.

The Sonning CSW team has recorded almost 300 offenders in our six sessions to date. 151 of those were logged within a two hours period in the 20 mph limit in Charvil Lane.

Offending vehicles, those exceeding the speed limit plus 10% plus 2 mph, are reported to Thames Valley Police. The vehicle owners are then automatically sent a warning letter. The registration number of vehicles accruing three or more warning letters (from anywhere in the UK) is entered into the Police National Computer. The vehicle will then get flagged up by any ANPR-equipped patrol car and a special watch will be kept in case of any further offences.

continued....

Sonning Golf Club Practice Ground

Those of you who are members of Sonning Golf Club will have received details in early November of a possible proposed development on the practice ground. This will consist of approximately 54 new homes, of which there will be 32 open market homes (26 houses and six flats) and 22 affordable homes (14 houses and eight flats). Access is proposed through the existing golf club car park into Duffield Road. The outline plan submitted by the golf club owner to members also gives details of the proposed practice arrangements using simulators to replace the practice ground. The Society is considering its comments and liaising with Sonning Parish Council.

Conclusions

Your Planning and Traffic Panel believe that in the various areas detailed above it has made a difference to Sonning and Sonning Eye. We will continue to work to meet the objectives of the Society.

Education & Social Panel

Heather Kay, Chair of Panel

We started the year with a walking tour of Reading Abbey which followed on from John Painter's talk on the same subject held in Pearson Hall last year.

Our Spring lectures comprised Simon Wenham on "**Leisure and Pleasure of the Victorians**" and Tony Weston took us back over 2000 years with "**Crossing the Thames**".

In June we had a wonderful tea party in Pearson Hall to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee, which was very well attended.

Our Summer event was a trip to **Fairmile Vineyard in Henley** where we had a talk, tour and tasting of two delicious sparkling wines. Some of the party enjoyed a picnic in the grounds.

The Society had a stand at the Sonning Village Show in September and also helped man the adjoining Neighbourhood Plan stall. In our first Autumn lecture Graham Horn went into the history of "**An Heir and a Spare**" and those that never reigned, in our next talk Sarah Somerville described the rich and varied history of **Shaw House, Newbury** and we look forward to hearing about **Waltham Place** from Niki McCann who will be giving the after dinner talk at the AGM.

The Film Club recommenced its winter season with **The Last Bus**, subsequent films were selected by that night's audience. Namely: **The Dish, Operation Mincemeat, The Railway Children Return, Promising Young Woman** and **Top Gun Maverick.**

Next year we hope to arrange a varied selection of lectures and visits where we will once again welcome you all...

Membership Report

Lesley Heaney, Membership Secretary

We have continued to maintain our membership numbers this year, which means the Society's membership stands at 233, which is made up as follows:

5 Corporate	194 Double	30 Single	4 Honorary Life Members

We are always happy to hear of potential new members - please contact Lesley Heaney on *membership@sonning.org.uk*.

Sonning Neighbourhood Plan

Jeremy Gilmore, Chair of Steering Group

A great deal of work has been done on the Plan during the year. The results of the 2021 questionnaire have been evaluated and the findings used to develop the visions and policies that form the framework around which the Plan is created.

A Neighbourhood Plan is the best way that we can, as residents, shape the future of our parish. When it is in place, and to a certain degree even before that point, it will be used (alongside the Borough Council's Local Plan) to decide what types of new homes are relevant for Sonning and where they should be built.

The paperwork is constantly being reviewed - the latest draft version is available for download from *sonning.info*.

We organised a stand at the Sonning Show in early September where residents had their first chance to see and discuss our proposals.

In October all Sonning residents received a summary of the draft Plan through their letterboxes and were urged to go online to read the full version.

On November 5th we held an Open Day in Pearson Hall to allow everyone interested to drop in and chat to us about the plans. We are grateful to those who did and were pleased to hear that, broadly speaking, you approve of what we have produced.

We urge all residents to send us their comments on the draft Plan, be they positive or negative, before the end of November.

We are now close to a final document that will be sent to Wokingham for consultation and examination by an independent consultant before being submitted to a public referendum, hopefully well before the end of 2023.

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

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Mike Hart welcomed everyone to the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Society. He said that it was good to be back in the Pearson Hall after a year's absence due to Covid-19. In recognition of the need to allow more space between tables in the hall, the number attending had been reduced from the usual 80 to a more comfortable 60. A delicious supper and interesting guest speakers would, however, follow as usual

2. APOLOGIES

Andy Bell said that apologies for absence had been received from Lesley and Alf Heaney, Patrick and Jo Hamblin and Jeremy Gilmore.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the 17th Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday 21 November 2020, were approved without amendment on the proposal of Peter van Went, seconded by Lesley Runnells.

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 2020/2021, which had been emailed to all Society members prior to the Annual General Meeting. He said that it had been a 'half bad, half good' year and thanked the retiring Committee for all their hard work in what had been very difficult circumstances. Mike Hart went on to say that Heather Kay had agreed to take on the role of Chair of the Education and Social Panel from Pauline Simmonds who retired last year. Heather had got to grips with the challenging role and the Society was fortunate that she had volunteered to take it on. Mike Hart added that all members of the current Committee were willing to stand for re-election. However, the Society could not rely on this happening year after year and new blood was needed to rejuvenate the Society.

Mike Hart went on to say that Society events restarted in August 2021 with a garden party. Two talks followed in September and October and two sessions of the Film Club were held in October and November. Sadly, attendances at both film showings were disappointing such that the income received did not cover the cost of staging the events.

Mike Hart continued by saying that Jeremy Gilmore had continued to do an excellent job in producing further issues of *Bridge*. He said that Jeremy Gilmore would welcome articles from members to fill the eight pages in each issue, especially if they were of local interest.

Mike Hart concluded his report by saying that membership of the Society had increased 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 social and educational events and those who distributed copies of Bridge to our members

b) Planning & Traffic Panel Report

Mike Hart reported in the absence of Patrick Hamblin. He said that the Planning & Traffic Panel report was set out in the Annual Report & Accounts. The Panel had continued to meet monthly during the year with almost all of the meetings being held via Zoom. A total of 59 planning applications had been reviewed with representations made to the relevant Planning Authority where deemed appropriate. Mike Hart continued by saying that an application was expected before the end of the year for an 80-suite dementia care home on Sonning Golf Club land where permission had previously been granted, on appeal, for the construction of 13 houses. This followed the granting of permission for the construction of 57 flats on land south of Old Bath Road despite considerable local opposition.

Mike Hart said that work on the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Sonning was progressing. There had been an excellent response to the lengthy questionnaire that the Steering Group had issued in late Spring. The responses were now being analysed and objectives were being defined. In due course, a draft plan was to be produced, which would be made available for comment.

Mike Hart concluded his remarks by saying that Wokingham Borough Council had just released its latest version of the Local Plan Update. The large development proposed for Grazeley had now been dropped. Only two sites in Sonning had been included in the draft plan, namely land at Sonning Farm and land east of Pound Lane. The Panel was to carefully consider these proposals and would be responding to Wokingham Borough Council with its views in due course.

c) Education & Social Panel Report

Mike Hart said that Heather Kay was helping behind the scenes and was unavailable to present her report on the activities of the Education &

Social Panel. He said that Heather had been thrown in at the deep end following Pauline Simmonds retirement and was doing an excellent job as Chair of the Education & Social Panel. She was instrumental in organising tonight's supper as well as the garden party in August and the two talks held in September and October. The second of these was on the history of Reading Abbey. This was to be followed by a guided tour of the Abbey in Spring 2022.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan Collins said that the financial report for the year ended 31st August 2021 was set out in the Annual Report & Accounts of the Society 2020/2021. She said that again there had been reduced activity because of the pandemic. Overall, there had been excess expenditure over income of £75.60 with Village Voices showing a profit of £32.00 and the General Account recording a loss of £107.60. Joan Collins concluded her remarks by saying that the Society's financial position remained healthy with a credit balance as at 31st August 2021 of £7,186.39

6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mike Hart reported that Alan Furness had kindly offered to continue as Independent Examiner for the forthcoming year. He thanked Alan Furness for agreeing to undertake the role for another 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 Barton Guthrie and seconded by Judith Hart. He invited someone from the floor to propose the election of Mike Hart as Chairman. Ted Davey did so and Theresa May 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 Carole Collier, seconded by David Collier; Honorary Secretary: Andy Bell, proposed by Jean Hutchinson, seconded by Roger Hutchinson and Honorary Treasurer: Joan Collins, proposed by Heather Kay, seconded by Andy Bell. It was proposed by Lesley Runnells and seconded by Penny Feathers and agreed unanimously that the three aforementioned nominees be elected en bloc.

8. ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Hart said that there were six nominations for election to the Executive Committee. These were: Alastair Driver, proposed by Linda Peters, seconded by Jean Hutchinson; Jeremy Gilmore, proposed by Andrew Barker, seconded by Andy Bell; Patrick Hamblin, proposed by Josephine Hamblin, seconded by Sue Bell; Lesley Heaney, proposed by Shelagh Flower, seconded by Peter Flower; Heather Kay, proposed by Sue Bell, seconded by Suzanne Farquhar; and Annabella Marks, proposed by Nicholas Marks, seconded by Andy Bell. It was proposed by Judy Baldwin and seconded by Carole Collier and agreed unanimously that the six aforementioned nominees be elected en bloc.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MMike Hart invited members to raise any other items of business but none were forthcoming.

There being no other business to discuss, Mike Hart thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.55 p.m.