

bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

Issue 56 • Autumn 2018

We Need Your Help!

Mike Hart appeals on behalf of the Planning & Traffic Panel



As readers will know from the regular updates in *Bridge*, the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society has an active Planning and Traffic Panel. The Panel guidelines state: The Planning and Traffic Panel's main purpose is to monitor and, if necessary, comment upon two related subjects affecting the parishes of Sonning and Sonning Eye: planning and environmental matters and highway matters, including public transport and the street scene. It should be guided by the purposes set out in the Constitution, particularly "to promote high standards of planning and architecture" and "to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic, natural or public interest".

The panel meets once a month in the Sonning Club (no hardship there!) to discuss current planning applications and traffic matters which are of concern to the two villages. It works closely with the Sonning Parish Council Planning Committee and often forms joint working parties with SPC, but it is independent and sometimes has different views. On important matters the Chairman of the Panel writes either in support or against planning and traffic matters to the relevant local authority: Wokingham Borough Council or South Oxfordshire District Council.

The Panel does good work in looking after the interests of the villages in respect of planning and traffic matters. We currently have five members

but would like our views to be more representative so we are appealing for volunteers to join the Panel.

If you are a member of the Society, share our concerns about the environment and are willing to devote a few hours a month to work with us on the Panel please call the Panel Chairman Patrick Hamblin on 969 3930 or 07917 300999 (leave a message if no reply), email to patrick.hamblin@btinternet.com or speak to any of the Society committee members.

Bridge is the newsletter of the
Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

email: bridge@sonning.org.uk
web: www.sonning.org.uk

Printed on paper from responsible sources by a
company supporting the Woodland Carbon Scheme

sweeper as the war with Japan was still on and, later, aged 21, even took command. Just before he left he had vocational leave and met Pamela at a dance, and they were instantly 'keen on each other.' He left knowing that they would not meet again for at least a year.

He took up his post on the mine sweeper. 'I was lucky again, I've been lucky at every stage, as the Japanese defeat happened before I got there. It was a dangerous job mopping up mines but interesting. It was very satisfying living close to people and making it work. One experience that made a mark was the reception of mail coming on board. The people I felt sorry for were the married ones who had left their family behind. At my age it was just exciting.'

In 1946 Sir Oscar applied to resume his studies at Cambridge encouraged by his old Professor who had saved a place for him. Two days after his return to the UK he took up his place at Trinity College and immediately had a tutorial in Russian going through a poem by Pushkin. He and Pamela (who had joined the ATS) had kept in contact and to his relief no one had 'knocked her sideways before I came back.' They married the following year and he finished his degree a year later. He still had no idea what he wanted to do eventually and the first careers' advice he received was to shave off his beard.

'I was thinking of teaching, but as a married man it was not necessarily a good idea, but by chance I filled in for the guy who was coaching the Eton boat crew. It was a real experience. I liked what I saw, very much, even though it was a privilege thing, but I saw it was a very, very good idea to stretch people and to teach them they could be stretched, which happens automatically in a place like Eton.'

He had been thinking of going into industry for some time 'to put right some of the things that were rather wrong'

and applied to Ford, was taken on and stayed for sixteen years. His interest was in industrial relations and he was appointed as the manager of recruitment and training at the young age of 28 and subsequently built up the well-known Ford training programmes. After Ford was taken over he decided to leave and moved to BICC in 1965 as chief of Personnel and then became a main board director in charge of UK operations. During his time there BICC out-faced a major strike and following this Sir Oscar took the opportunity to talk with the senior shop stewards and managers to discuss what it was about. One move he then made was for the contributory staff pension fund to be open to seasoned factory workers (with no union involvement). There was substantial take up of those eligible, meeting a real need. 'Good move and cemented relations.' He remained with BICC for twenty years, retiring at the age of 60.

By then Sir Oscar was very busy with other commitments. While at BICC he had become involved in industrial relations nationally. He was one of the three employer members of the Commission on Industrial Relations and was a founder member of the reconciliation body ACAS, and continued to work there for fifteen years. He was also on the Council of the CBI for seven years. During the 1970s, years of notorious industrial relation strife, as chairman of a special CBI committee, he successfully opposed Jack Jones's proposals via the Bullock Committee for the enforcement of TU membership of company boards — an achievement in which he still takes pride. 'It was interesting and a good key time'.

He was appointed as a non-executive member of the British Rail Board for five years and found this fascinating. In 1985 he was invited by government to be Chairman of the Review of Vocational Qualifications in England and Wales



Vulcanisation plant at BICC in Leigh

and became founder chairman of the NCVQ overseeing radical reform.

In 1991 Sir Oscar resigned from all committees and took up an academic life again. He had been interested in family history for over twenty years and had researched his family back to 1600. He realised that the name was very rare and the interesting time was in 1200 and 1300s so he registered as a research student with Birkbeck College in medieval history and completed his PhD in three years.

He was awarded a CBE in 1979 and became a freeman of the City of London in 1981. In 1990 he was appointed a Knight Bachelor.

When Sir Oscar retired from BICC the DeVilles were living in Knutsford but spent much of their time in London. They decided to move their base to the south and bought a house in Sonning. However, with his commitments in London and a flat as a retreat in Belgium it was only when he fully retired did Sonning become their main home. The DeVilles became well known figures in the community but now, both in their nineties they are, at last, leading a quiet life.

