

bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

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Capturing Memories - Village Voices Recalled

Jeremy Gilmore

Ten years ago this September, the Pearson Hall saw a “most professionally designed and presented exhibition” which was the culmination of three years’ work and over 80 recordings reflecting the oral history of Sonning and Sonning Eye. The objective was to capture, through voice and photos, the experiences of those who had grown up in the area and allow us to preserve them for posterity.



The small team of volunteers from the Society was led by Mary Chapman and, as well as organising, transcribing and cataloguing all the interviews, they borrowed hundreds of photos and ephemera for the exhibition itself.

Over 1,000 people visited the show in Sonning and it then moved to the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading where it stayed for four months in 2010.

The exhibition and the resulting book, published three years later, divided the memories into ten themes

spanning Home Life, Schools, Rural Life and local Businesses, through the War, Events and the Fire Brigade to the River, the Mill and the Community.

Each section consisted of the recordings of the individuals’ reminiscences used as a sound track to a selection of photos and documents. This was accompanied by relevant memorabilia from the period. The result was that those, for example, who had never experienced rationing could appreciate what the local community had lived through.

To mark the anniversary of this momentous project and its resulting exhibition we asked the four main members of the project team for their thoughts on the experience. Turn to page 3 of this issue of *Bridge* to learn what it was like making history come alive.



VILLAGE VOICES
SONNING & SONNING EYE



Events Events Events Events Events

Sonning and Sonning Eye people have always enjoyed celebrating.
At the Queen’s Coronation in 1953 some lucky children had a miniature gold coach with wheels and eight horses.
The Festival of Sonning in 1976 with its Victorian Market, hog roast and Son et Lumiere, was so hot the tarmac melted on the road.
The Queen’s 1977 Silver Jubilee procession had decorated floats.
The Fire Brigade sprayed red, white and blue water over the fields.



LOTTERY FUNDED

One of the ten panels describing the themes, designed by Jean Jacques Vizern

Bridge is the newsletter of the
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