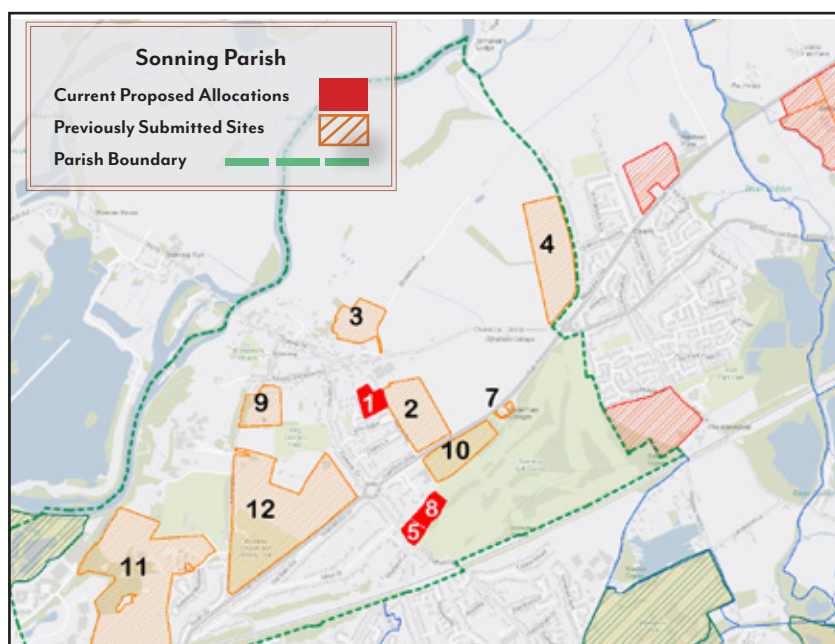


Local Plan Update: Revised Growth Strategy

Mike Hart, Chairman



the revised LPU includes the following two developments in Sonning:

- 5SO001: 25 houses at Bull Close, Garde Rd
- 5SO005/8: 37 houses in Sonning Golf Course

Both sites were included in the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire that residents received last year. The first site is site 1 (Bull Close), the second was shown as a combination of sites 5 & 8 (Sonning Golf Course). The Bull Close site has been in the earlier Local Plans for some years and site 5 has already received planning permission on appeal for 13 houses, so the only surprise is that this site has been expanded. An initial Sustainability Appraisal carried out by consultants for WBC expresses some concern that there is a risk that this site could lead to development creep across the golf course, a concern shared by SPC and the Society.

Sonning residents will have received a flyer from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) drawing attention to the ongoing public consultation on the Local Plan Update (LPU) which runs from 22nd November 2021 to 24th January 2022. The flyers advertised presentations by WBC and invited residents throughout the borough to express their views on the draft strategy. You can complete their survey by visiting www.engage.wokingham.gov.uk and use the "Take the survey" button. Here you'll also find links to the hour long presentation and the supporting documents.

WBC have one more drop-in session at their Shute End offices on 20th January between 9.30am-12 noon.

The revised LPU, which will cover the period up to 2038, replaces the version put out for public consultation last year, which proposed a new 15,000 home town at Grazeley. As this site is no longer tenable WBC is proposing a new garden village south of M4 between Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham called the Hall Farm/Loddon Valley development, together with additional homes in the major new development in South Wokingham and a number of smaller sites. Sonning residents will be pleased to see that none of these major developments are in our parish, however

Your responses to question 2.3 on the 11 potential sites ranked the above sites 5, 8 and 1 as 2nd, 4th and 6th respectively in terms of acceptability (the ranking of all sites was 7, 5, A, 8, 4, 1, 10, 11, 9, 3 and 2 in terms of acceptability). See overleaf for a diagram explaining this.

Incorporation of a site in the LPU indicates that the planning authority is highly likely to approve development of that site although the fact that site 1 has not yet been developed shows that it isn't certain and that it can take some time to materialise. Once adopted, the Local Plan is the most important document defining where development will take place, the Neighbourhood Plan sits below it in the hierarchy and must be consistent with the Local Plan, since it must eventually be adopted by WBC it ...

Continued

overleaf ->

Bridge is the newsletter of the
Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

email: bridge@sonning.org.uk

web: www.sonning.org.uk

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>>Eye on Sonning a view from the Bridge

Mike Hart, Chairman

Having optimistically said in the last edition that life is getting back to normal, here we are with renewed restrictions due to the Omicron variant. Fortunately we were able to hold our AGM and dinner on 20th November before the new restrictions came into effect on 30th November. Recognising that we weren't totally in the clear we had limited attendance to just 60 guests so we were able to accommodate everyone on tables of 6, the reduced numbers worked well as only one table was needed instead of the usual two tables for 8 or 10 guests resulting in much more space available in the hall. The AGM proceedings went quickly with presentation of the

summaries of the reports (circulated to all members by email in advance of the AGM) and the committee nominations which resulted in confirmation of re-election of the same committee members as last year.

This was Heather Kay's first year heading up our Social and Education Panel, Heather hails from Lancashire and she suggested Lancashire hotpot for the main course. As there were only 6 guests per table and as the recipe was straightforward, 6 volunteers cooked two hotpots each. The starter was salmon pate with Melba toast, the main course was accompanied by peas and pickled red cabbage and the dessert was cheesecake. It was absolutely delicious and the evening went very smoothly thanks to Heather, the chefs and the many helpers. Special thanks go to Lynn Woodhouse who sourced the lamb from Shiplake butchers and managed the kitchen, this turned out to be a bit of a marathon as the helper who had

been arranged was prevented from coming at the very last minute so it was all hands on the tiller.

As is our custom, after-dinner presentations were made during coffee and mints. Pete Thomas, Headmaster of Reading Blue Coat School, introduced himself to the guests and explained the plans to widen co-education progressively throughout all school years. He apologised for the traffic congestion caused by pupils arriving and leaving and explained that several ideas to mitigate the impact on Sonning residents and road users are being considered.

Pete's brief introduction was followed by guests Ruth Pilbeam (née Holwell) and Sacha Clements talking about the Round Britain Climate Challenge. Their participation was arranged by Ali Driver and a more detailed description is included later in this edition of *Bridge*. Many thanks go to Ali for suggesting this interesting subject and arranging the speakers.

Local Plan Update - Continued from front page

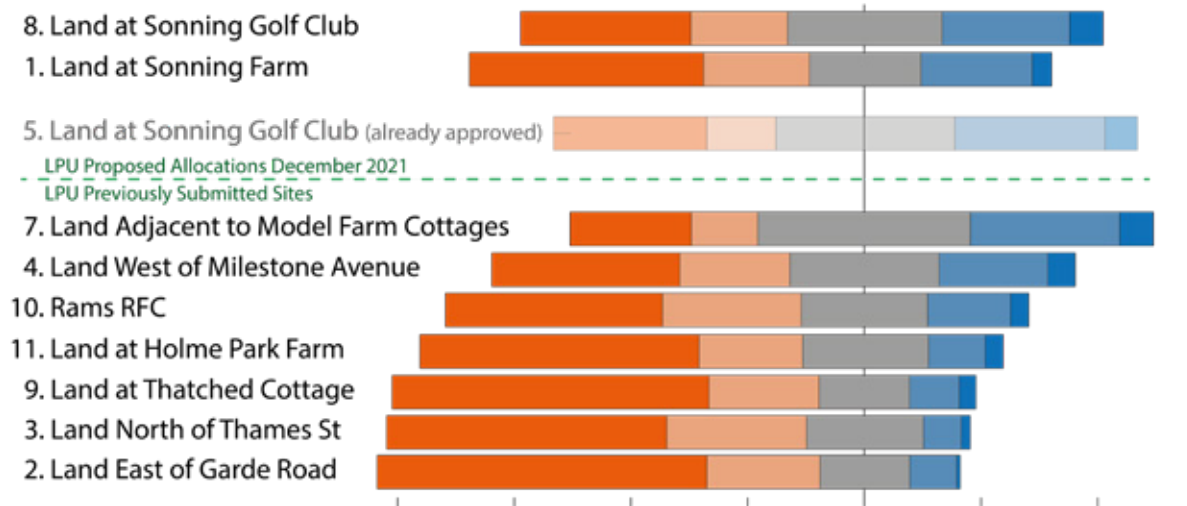
... recommend that development does not take place on sites that are included in the Local Plan.

For the above reason it is important that you voice your opinions through the LPU consultation process if you disagree with either of the above 2 sites. However WBC have made it clear that opposing one or more sites without suggesting an alternative is not an option. The consultation closes on 24th January 2022 so there isn't much time to voice your opinion. Sonning Parish Council and the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society will make representations guided by the results of the

recent questionnaire whilst recognizing that site 1 has been in the plan for many years and that site 5 has already been approved.

Some of you will know that several new projects have been suggested including two new care homes in Pound Lane as well as a proposal for 100 dwellings on the site of RAMS RFC. The Neighbourhood Plan is our best defence against unwelcome new developments but first we must ensure that we are in agreement with the LPU since that will define the minimum development that we can expect to take place.

Responses to Q2.3 in the NP Questionnaire rating site suitability for housing development



Executive Committee & Panels

Patrick Hamblin, Planning & Traffic Panel

Meetings & Planning Applications

Monthly meetings of the Panel have continued to be held since the last edition of *Bridge*. At the September, October, November and December meetings a total of 18 applications were discussed.

Comments were sent to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) relating to the removal of some trees in Pound Lane adjacent to the Sonning Golf Club site to allow development to take place.

Comments were sent to South Oxfordshire District Council relating to proposed alterations to Lydden, Sonning Eye and a development in Pauline's Field, Sonning Eye.

Local Plan Update

WBC issued information on the revision of the Local Plan Update in late November. There are only two pieces of land included in the Sonning Parish. These are as follows:

Site reference 5SO001 – land at Sonning Farm (1.37 hectares – 3.4 acres). Land use proposed for housing (25 dwellings). This piece of land was a reserved site in previous plans for affordable housing. In February 2019, the Society recommended this site was accepted as previously for affordable housing, but it was strongly recommended that part of the site becomes a car park for Sonning. Suitable justifications were given at that time.

Site reference 550008 – Land east of Pound Lane, Sonning. Land use proposed for housing (24 dwellings). This land adjoins the area of land (1.34

hectares – 3.3 acres) at the Golf Club, where planning permission has already been granted, after appeal, for 13 houses on 0.77 hectares (1.9 acres). But see ‘additional planning issues’ below.

The Society will be commenting to WBC on this revised Local Plan Update in advance of the revised deadline of 24th January 2022.

Additional Planning Issues

Information was circulated to some nearby residents by Savista Developments with a plan to build an 80 suite dementia care home on the site at Sonning Golf Club, where previously permission had been granted (after appeal) for 13 houses. A presentation was made by the developers at Sonning Golf Club on 19/20th November and was attended by a Planning Panel representative. The developers requested feedback on the outline plans and, after discussion by the Panel, comments were sent to the developers. The significant issues seem to be the problems of access off the busy Pound Lane, already highlighted in the past but seemingly ignored by the planners; and parking, where there is to be an underground car park but very limited parking for visitors. Some residents near the possible development are concerned that the narrow side roads (West Drive, Mustard Lane, and Sonning Gate, and also Pound Lane itself) will become parking areas for overflow parking for visitors.

Just prior to the exhibition referred to above, information was provided by a Pound Lane resident that a letter had been received from another developer – ‘Aspire LLP’ - relating to developing a care home for high dependency care for the elderly frail for an unstated number of persons on the site of two existing properties in Pound Lane (nos.101 and 101A). The Society has not commented on this proposed development at this stage.

Liaison with WBC relating to planning and traffic matters

A meeting was held with Theresa May relating to how the Society might better consult with WBC. With her involvement in arranging, a meeting was

subsequently held with John Halsall, the Leader of Wokingham Borough Council. This meeting was attended by Mike Hart, Trefor Fisher (SPC) and Michael Firmager (Local Councillor for Sonning on WBC).

A meeting was also held with Pete Thomas (Headmaster, Reading Blue Coat School) and Peter Bartram (Chairman of the Governors of RBCS).

The traffic problems in Sonning were discussed, particularly those that would inevitably arise from the planned increase in pupil numbers. It was indicated the increase in numbers would be a slow build-up and the school was looking for workable solutions to minimise the problems.

Traffic

As noted previously, Panel members are participating in a working group consisting of representatives of Sonning Parish Council, WBC, and others to endeavour to find solutions to the road safety problems in Sonning. Improvements in Pound Lane, being the extension of the 20mph area, are understood to have been agreed by WBC but we are still waiting for the signage, etc to be installed.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

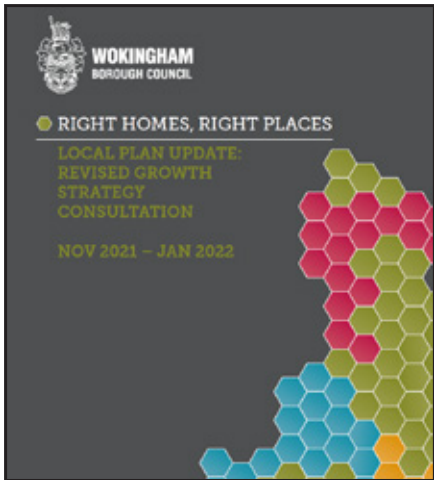
Work is continuing on the development of the Plan. The majority of the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire has now been completed and the team are concentrating on creating the Visions and Policies that will form the core of the document. The bar chart on the facing page shows how the data collected is already being used to demonstrate the views of the residents and to ensure that the Plan that is produced reflects the wishes of the community.

Third Thames Crossing

No further developments to report.

Sonning Parish Council Planning Committee Meetings

The Society continues to monitor all the applications and ‘attends’ the virtual meetings, where appropriate.





Left: Sacha Clements, Rt. Hon. Theresa May, Ruth Pilbeam, Philip May & Alastair Driver



Right: A distanced Supper for a select few in Pearson Hall

The Society's 18th AGM

Saturday 20th November 2021

Professor Alastair Driver

Our guest speakers at the AGM and dinner were Sacha Clements and Ruth Pilbeam from the Round Britain Climate Challenge team. Fortunately for us, our Executive Committee member Prof. Alastair Driver, who is also the director of the environmental charity, Rewilding Britain, has strong connections with the team leader Sacha Dench, and had linked her up with many rewilding landowners around the country for her to visit as part of her Round Britain Climate Challenge journey. In the first ever public presentation of their story, our guest speakers took us on a roller coaster ride through this pioneering journey with a fascinating presentation including striking images and video clips of some of the people and places they visited and in so doing they showcased many positive solutions for mitigating the impacts of climate change.

On the 18th June 2021, Conservation without Borders

first expedition, the Round Britain Climate Challenge, was launched from the Glasgow Science Centre. Ambassador for the UN's Convention on Migratory Species, Sacha Dench, set off on a 3000+ circumnavigation of Britain by electric paramotor to answer the question: 'Britain drove the Industrial Revolution, can we drive the Green Revolution too?'

As the journey commenced, Sacha met with our nation's climate pioneers, including Alastair himself, many of whom offered their concerns and solutions towards tackling climate change. Our individual climate stories became part of a collective, creating a network for grassroots climate action across the UK and proving that there is a growing community committed to a green revolution.

Through the creation of a short film and an interactive map, Conservation without Borders was able to showcase these climate stories at the

COP26 conference in Glasgow, while the Round Britain Climate Challenge was featured in over 200 articles, receiving regional, national, and international interest.

Devastatingly, the Conservation without Border's team lost their friend Dan Burton, Sacha Dench's co-pilot, in a major incident at the end of the expedition. Sacha herself was originally lined up to present to us but she was seriously injured in the accident. She continues to heal in hospital and is receiving positive news for her recovery plan.

As they close the Round Britain Climate Challenge project, the Conservation without Borders team are already planning their next expedition, Flight of the Osprey, which will commence in 2022.

You can donate at:

www.conservation-without-borders.org/make-a-donation



Left: Some of the Executive Committee

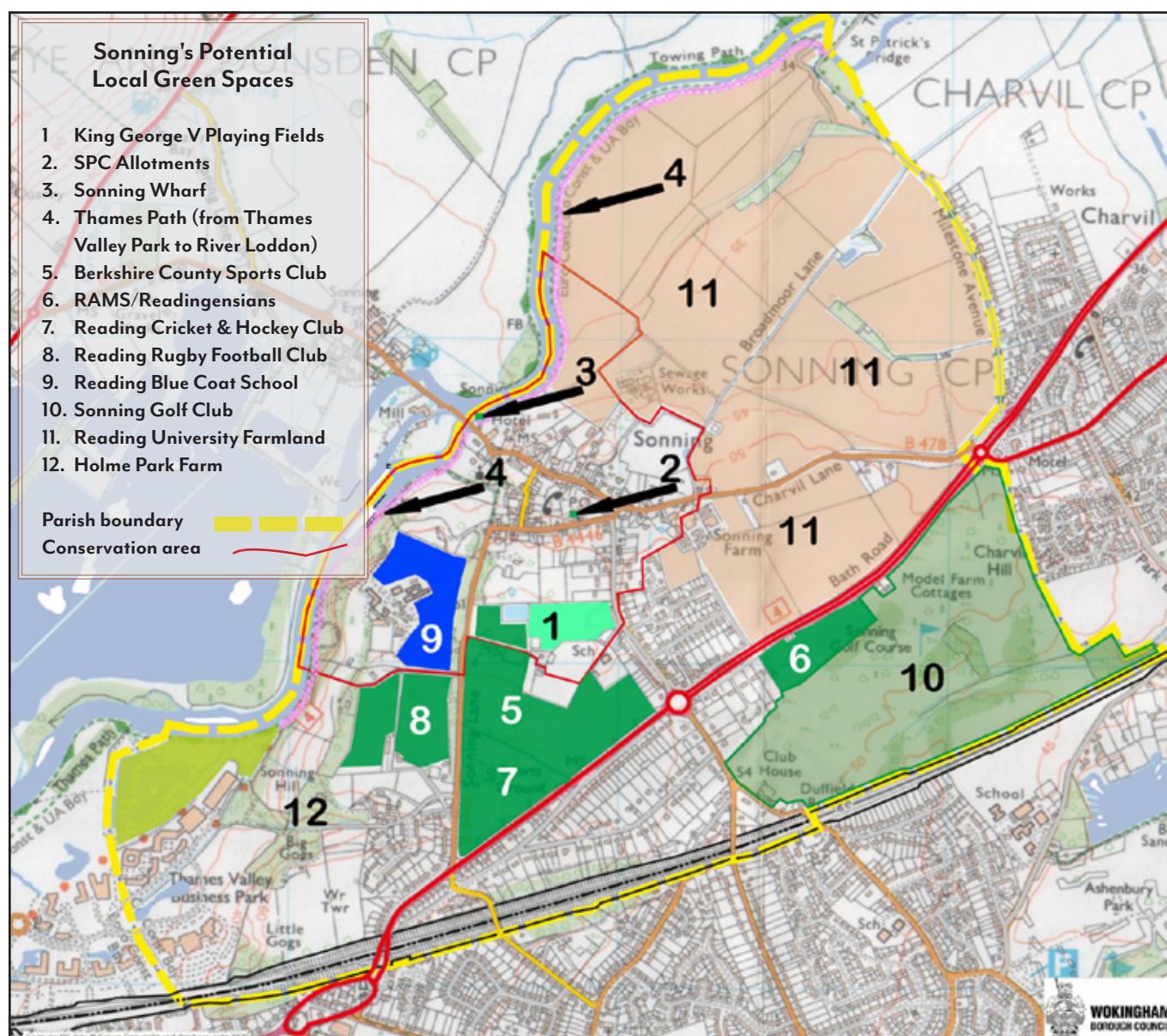
Right: Ruth Pilbeam and Sacha Clements from the Round Britain Climate Challenge Team

Many thanks to Ali for the photos



Protect Our Green Spaces

Jeremy Gilmore, Chair of Sonning's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group



Sonning is known for its rural village character and countryside landscapes; for its attractive green spaces and thriving natural environments. A mainstay of our developing Neighbourhood Plan is that we should protect and improve our green spaces and ensure that Sonning remains a unique entity and does not merge with Charvil, Twyford or indeed Reading.

As part of the current Local Plan Update Wokingham Borough Council have identified various pieces of land in the borough which they feel should become Local Green Spaces. Once so designated these areas are afforded some protection against future development. So it's a shame that WBC didn't bother to ask our Parish Council for their recommendations within our area. Now we have to act swiftly if we want to protect our important green areas and get them designated. As you'll have seen on this issue's front page, there are some green sites in the parish which are

already being considered for development and many others that are under threat.

There are three criteria that a Local Green Space must fulfill:

1. It must be reasonably close to the community it serves; and
2. It must hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
3. The site must be a self-contained area and not an extensive tract of land.

Please take a minute and visit sonning.info where we have created a one-page survey for you to vote on these green spaces. Don't delay, we need to register your support before 24th January to ensure we protect the landscape for the future of our community.

Sonning Support

Trefor Fisher

We would like to say a very big **Thank You** to all the volunteers who have helped Sonning residents since the start of this ongoing pandemic.

Assistance has been given in many ways - shopping, picking up prescriptions, dog walking, calling anxious and vulnerable residents etc. We have had many expressions of gratitude in return from those that have received help.

Now that the Covid-19 virus is becoming much more part of our daily lives, most residents are back to their (almost) normal lives. Our dedicated phone line and email address have been very little used in recent months and have now been taken down. That of course is good news but we would like to stress that Sonning Support is still very much in operation. Should you or your neighbour / friend require assistance with anything,

not necessarily Covid related, do call Trefor on 07789 880072. We shall then do whatever we can to help you.

Best regards,

The Sonning Support Team

**SONNING
SUPPORT**
We're here to help
07789 880072

Sonning Barn Owl Box Inspection

Organised by Prof. Alastair Driver

In November of last year I enlisted volunteers from the Friends of Ali's Pond to help professionals, Sadie Shepherd and Katy Thomas, check on the owl boxes in Sonning. The team inspected and cleared out 15 barn and 2 tawny owl boxes.

Key observations were:

- Signs of barn owls (pellets) were found in two of the boxes on Sonning Farm but no signs of nesting were found this time - for the first time since the boxes were installed 5 years ago. We know there is still a pair around however as they are regularly seen in fields alongside Broadmoor Lane.
- Stock dove nests (mainly guano and small twigs) and grey squirrel nests (mainly leaves and large twigs) were found in most of the boxes - often a foot deep!
- Remarkably, addled Egyptian goose eggs were found in a couple of boxes. This is a first for me and it's remarkable because I wouldn't have expected that they could get through the aperture. This non-native species is steadily colonising the Thames corridor and they nest in trees as well as on the ground.
- The nest hole in a tree at Manor Garden which had been

used by breeding kestrels in recent few years, now appears to have been taken over by Egyptian geese. Interestingly kestrels have been nesting in the large horse chestnut tree in Bishop's Close for the last two years, so I suspect this is the same "displaced" pair.

- Jackdaw nests were found in a few boxes. The photo (middle right) shows a couple of larger plain white Egyptian goose eggs and two smaller speckled jackdaw eggs.
- Whilst we were checking the owl boxes at the nature reserve, Katy (who is bat licensed) spotted bat droppings in the entrance of one of the bat boxes on the small oak tree in the Reading Blue Coat School field. This is the first confirmed sign of bats using the boxes in this field.
- And finally, a special shout out to Jackie Wright who had the pleasure of celebrating her "special" birthday by cleaning guano out of a bird box. Paul sure knows how to treat a lady!

Many thanks to the volunteers: Richard & Janine Moore, Caroline Gilmore, Trefor Fisher, Paul & Jackie Wright and Jim Reed. And of course our thanks to Sadie and Katy.



Our Next Events

More information and links to purchase tickets to all our events can be found on sonning.org.uk

In order to keep everyone safe it would be a good idea if we all took a lateral flow test before attending an event at Pearson Hall. We will happily refund your ticket cost if you test positive and are therefore unable to attend.



FILM CLUB: The Last Bus

Tuesday 18th January, 7.30pm - Doors Open 7pm

Winner of the International Competition Award at the BARI International Film Festival. Stars Timothy Spall with Phyllis Logan. A heart-warming tale of a pensioner.

Film Club Suspended Until Things Improve
The cost of running the film nights is around £170 per session, mainly due to the need to obtain a public viewing licence costing almost £100. Takings from the reduced numbers attending the film nights in Pearson Hall last year didn't even cover half the costs and it has been decided to suspend future showings until we can expect audience numbers to improve. Consequently the film nights planned for 18th January, 15th February and 15th March 2022 are cancelled.

FILM CLUB:

Tuesday 15th

A true story about a Soviet scientist, responsible for a gigantic radio telescope in Australia, suddenly required to receive a TV broadcast from Neil Armstrong following the moon landing. The film is a jaunty comedy, telling the story of the team of underdogs who fight against the elements in an entertaining footnote to the Apollo 11 mission. Tickets are £5 for members; £6 for guests and can be purchased online.



TALK: The Pursuit of Pleasure

Leisure on the river in Victorian & Edwardian times

Friday 25th March, 7.30 for 7.45pm

Our Speaker, Simon Wenham is a part-time tutor in the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford University. He has written several social history books about the importance of leisure during that period. His talk will explore how society had fun and entertained themselves - with particular emphasis on boating and the growth of Thames-side boatyards like Salters and Hobbs of Henley.

To book a place email penny.feathers@btinternet.com or book online.

Tickets as usual are £4 for members or £5 for guests.

TALK: From a Ford to a Flight

Crossing the Thames, a journey with Tony Weston

Friday 22nd April, 7.30 for 7.45pm

2000 years of getting to the other side, across, under and over the Thames.

To book a place email penny.feathers@btinternet.com or book online. Tickets as usual are £4 for members or £5 for guests.



Society Membership – Subscription Renewals

Lesley Heaney, Membership Secretary

It's that time of year when your subscription to the Society needs to be renewed. We've not increased the fee since 2005 so please don't delay.

Some of you are on Direct Debits and so can relax knowing that the bank will sort things out. For everyone else please would you go to our online shop and purchase your renewals. Thank you.

sses.sumup.link/category/membership



Double
£8.00



Single
£5.00



Under 18
£3.00

Dates For Your Diaries

The events that are organised by the Society are shaded in brown, other events within the environs of Sonning and Sonning Eye have a green background.

Please note these events are what we hope will take place but they are subject to whatever Covid restrictions are in place at the time. Check our website for information and to book tickets.

Future Events



18 th January Doors open 7.00pm	S&SES Movie Night: Film Club Suspended Until Conditions Improve O'Grady from John Timothy Spall	Members of the Society and guests are very welcome
20 th January - 29 th January 3pm & 7.30pm	The Mill at Sonning: Noel Coward's Still Life. An immersive theatrical event in the Waterwheel Bar	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
15 th February Doors open 7.00pm	S&SES Movie Night: Film Club Suspended Until Conditions Improve	Members of the Society and guests are very welcome
2 nd February at 7.45pm	S&SES Executive Committee meeting (in Pearson Hall or Zoom)	Members of the Society are very welcome
3 rd February - 26 th March 2.15pm & 8.15pm	The Mill at Sonning: Peter James is back with a spine-tingling new ghost story	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
8 th March 2pm	S&SES Heritage Walk: Around Reading Abbey and Museum with John Painter	Tickets available online, members of the Society and guests are welcome
25 th March 7.30pm	S&SES Talk: Simon Wenham introduces The Pursuit of Pleasure - Leisure on the river in Victorian and Edwardian times	Tickets available online, members of the Society and guests are welcome
6 th April at 7.45pm	S&SES Executive Committee meeting in Pearson Hall (or Zoom)	Members of the Society are very welcome
22 nd April 7.30pm	S&SES Talk: From a Ford to a Flight - Tony Weston details the many different ways that the Thames has been crossed	Tickets available online, members of the Society and guests are welcome
28 th April - 25 th June 2.15pm & 8.15pm	The Mill at Sonning: Busman's Honeymoon, Brian Blessed directs this adaptation of a Dorothy L. Sayers whodunnit	Tickets available from millatsonning.com
15 th June at 7.45pm	S&SES Executive Committee meeting in Pearson Hall (or Zoom)	Members of the Society are very welcome
21 st June 10.30am	S&SES Visit: Tour of Fairmile Vineyard in Henley to hear how their famous sparkling wine is made and, of course, to taste it	Members of the Society and guests are very welcome

>> Membership information

A warm welcome is extended to new members:

John Turney & Kate Hodges

Paul & Lorna Benton

Mr J Desai

Welcome packs for new residents are available from Lesley Heaney, our Membership Secretary (membership@sonning.org.uk), so please mention the Society when you chat to your new neighbours. We can also be found on Facebook and at www.sonning.org.uk.



**Bridge is the quarterly newsletter published by the
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email: bridge@sonning.org.uk web: www.sonning.org.uk

